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[SPEAKER_03]

Hello, welcome back to another episode of Challenging Nordic Innocence, a podcast series that scrutinizes the depiction of the Nordic region as particularly benevolent, egalitarian, or green.

Through a series of conversations, we aim to make an online archive that combines a catalog of critical scholarships and activist accounts seeking to undo this master narrative.

My name is Anders-Riel Müller, or Song-Yeon Jun, and I'm an associate professor in city and regional planning at the University of Stavanger and a member of the research group Social and Spatial Justice here at the University.

This podcast is a collaboration between the Social and Spatial Justice Research Group here at UAS and the Center for Sustainable Futures at the University of Copenhagen.

My co-host is, as always, Sebastian Lundsten-Nielsen, who is a postdoctoral researcher at the Center for Sustainable Futures.

Hello, Sebastian.

Hello.

Today, we are excited to have with us Sarah Philipson Jsaac, who is currently a postdoctoral researcher at the Stockholm School of Economics, where she is working on a project that investigates labor exploitation in the Swedish construction industry, with a particular focus on how an increasingly restrictive migration regime shapes work conditions.

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Sarah holds a PhD in sociology from the University of Gothenburg,

And today we are going to talk to her about her PhD dissertation from 2024 titled Temporal Dispossession, the Politics of Asylum and the Remaking of Gracious Capitalism in and Beyond the Borders of the Swedish Welfare State.

Welcome, Sarah.

[SPEAKER_01]

Thank you.

Thank you for having me.

[SPEAKER_03]

I was really excited because I've been thinking about racial capitalism for a long time and also thinking about how I should write about it myself and how I should use it.

So I'm really grateful that you can tell me how to do it during this podcast.

[SPEAKER_00]

Amazing.

Let's see what I can do.

[SPEAKER_03]

Yeah.

So...

Maybe we can start out like, can you talk a little bit about how did you get into this research?

What was the motivation?

What were the reasons behind it when you started out your PhD?

[SPEAKER_00]

Yeah, definitely.

So I think growing up in Sweden, I always sort of was surrounded and socialized into this idea of Swedish exceptionalism, which is, of course, then part of this Nordic exceptionalism that this podcast so brilliantly is interrogating and unpacking.

And when I started my studies and sort of got more into racism, Swedish history, the colonial history, there's this sort of very extensive silence on Swedish colonialism and racism, but even more so this highlighting of the welfare states as a protector and a sort of safeguarding

And when I started my master studies, I looked at racial profiling within the police and from a more institutional perspective.

But then I started my PhD in 2017, which was just in the aftermath of changes to the Swedish migration legislation in 2015.

And I was also engaged in an NGO visiting detention centers in Sweden, trying to support migrants advocating for their rights.

But so my research started in this sort of, I wouldn't say, many people use shift to describe this sort of more restrictive progression, but I would say that it's more a continuation of how Swedish migration policies have worked in the past and continue to work today, but now with much more legitimacy in terms of having an explicit goal of expelling and dispossessing of people positioned as migrants.

So I decided then, when I had this longer project that I was able to do, to engage with people who had sought asylum during the so-called temporary asylum law in Sweden, which was a law that was

introduced in 2015 and then put into effect in 2016, and then was made permanent in 2021, which basically means that Sweden went from having permanent residence permits as the main rule to having temporary residence permit as now the main rule.

And now there are discussions of abolishing permanent residence permits altogether, even revoking those that have been given out.

So there's currently a governmental investigation suggesting this.

[SPEAKER_03]

Great, thank you.

So that's sort of the background.

So before we go really into your study, I think we need to sort of maybe discuss some of the central concepts in your thesis, which is, of course, racial capitalism.

And then you also have like this sub, or what you could say like, derived from racial capitalism, neoliberal racial capitalism.

and then temporal dispossession.

So could you talk a little bit about what are these concepts?

How did you get to them?

Yeah.

[SPEAKER_00]

Definitely.

So first of all, I came to racial capitalism quite late, and I think I worked more in the tradition of border temporalities, a more Balibarian approach to borders, which even though they are sort of Marxist, it doesn't really spell it out in the same way.

And then I attended a seminar that discussed sort of how can we understand the larger structures and the larger processes that inform this and what happens if we treat borders as something that can be used metaphorically instead of more material.

pushed me to think more about the political economy of migration and the political economy of borders, where I think racial capitalism is such a wonderful tool to do that.

And you could say that racial capitalism sort of foregrounds how capitalism has always relied on racial differentiation to produce value and disposability.

So it recognizes that capitalism has developed through layers of racialized exploitation, such as slavery and colonialism, while also continually producing new racial distinctions and inequalities as part of its ongoing functioning.

And I think what is important with this is that it breaks with an understanding of capitalism.

So there's these ideas that in Orthodox Marxist theory that

capitalism gave birth to European proletariat as a universal subject and that it also sort of was a break with the feudal order.

But racial capitalism as a tradition rather stresses that the feudal order already built on these distinctions and what capitalism did was to utilize them and exaggerate them for the means of capital.

So instead of seeing capitalism as a revolutionary negation of feudalism, it sees it as a continuation of the racial hierarchies that already permeated the Western feudal order.

And then if I move on to sort of neoliberal racial capitalism, I think it helps us sort of highlight how contemporary welfare states are increasingly governed through market logics, through flexibility and precarity,

And under these conditions, rights become more conditional, they become temporary and tied to productivity, while racialized populations are rendered permanently provisional.

And where these austerity measures and market logics help exaggerate the techniques and mechanisms that render certain lives disposable.

And then if we move on to temporal dispossession,

I've been heavily, the one who, the people who read my thesis will see that I'm heavily inspired by Shahram Khosravi and his theorization on time.

And this thesis I also build on the concept of temporal dispossession, which is Georgina Ramsay's brilliant theorization.

And I think what it helps us do is to see the productivity of time

or the enactment of not only borders, but also these processes of differentiation that are so central to racial capitalism.

So in the thesis, I analyzed this through different types of temporal logics, so acceleration, deceleration, and so forth.

But we can't understand these processes without linking it to sort of a Fanonian understanding of racial time.

So how time itself is racialized and how time is differently distributed and allocated depending on race.

So, yeah.

[SPEAKER_03]

And that was a really good explanation.

And then, so maybe from there, because I think that also sort of reconfigures your whole, like, how could you say, not definition, or your understanding of the Scandinavian or Nordic welfare state.

So could you say a little bit about, like, how do these concepts and theories sort of reconfigure the way you think about the welfare state?

Yeah.

[SPEAKER_00]

Definitely.

And now I'm just going to like name drop a lot of people, but they've been crucial to my thinking.

So I think it's important for me to sort of bring them in dialogue here as well.

So I would really recommend reading the book Resisting Racial Capitalism, an Antipolitical Theory of Refusal, which is written by Ida Danewid.

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And in this, she brilliantly helps unpack the role of the state in terms of understanding its role for racial capitalism.

And here I think in Western tradition of political thought, the state has often been portrayed as a safeguard for maintaining order, for fostering progress, for preventing violence.

And this perspective that is especially championed not only by conservatives, but also by social democrats, emphasizes the state's role as the defender of chaos and violence and disorder.

And I think that

challenging this is racial capitalism helps us to understand that the state has always been central to capital and for capitalism.

And rather than seeing sort of witnessing or witnessing a decline or withdrawal of the state right now, we see a

a consolidation of a late modern form of state power characterized by intensified punitive measures, including control, surveillance, border enforcement, policing, disciplinary welfare measures.

And this is also, it allows us to think beyond this very simplified idea of the welfare state, because I think in the Nordic context, specifically in Sweden, this is emphasis of the welfare state's sort of decommodifying role.

And I think what we see when we look through the lens of racial capitalism is rather that it decommodifies certain bodies, but it hyper-commodifies other bodies that are made, when excluded from the welfare state, made hyper-exploitable.

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So in that sense, it helps us to understand how, and I also think that that's interesting for today's conversation where we are focusing on migration bureaucracy, because this is sort of seen as one of the protective measures of the welfare state.

It's an ingrained part of the welfare state, but when we pick it apart and we understand how state categorizations and the limitations between the worthy and unworthy subjects, that that gets very, very violent consequences.

So yeah, I think this framework really helps going beyond and looking beyond the very superficial understanding of the welfare state as something benevolent and something that is the enforcer of rights, because it is also a mechanism of withholding rights or withdrawing rights and rendering certain lives unlivable.

[SPEAKER_03]

Thank you so much.

So many

Really good answers.

Thank you so much.

So maybe we can go on to the focus on your dissertation.

So the politics of asylum.

And you studied the period from 2015, which you already said, when Sweden's asylum legislation was experienced.

Was it a continuation or a shift?

That's what we can discuss now.

But I was actually thinking, could you say a little bit about, because your dissertation is also quite anthropological in many ways, I think, because you have done a lot of fieldwork with migrants waiting for asylum or being in the asylum system.

So maybe you could talk a little bit about that.

So now we're moving away from the very conceptual part to the more like your fieldwork part.

[SPEAKER_00]

Definitely.

I would love to say something about the methodology, because I loved doing the research with the participants.

Or in the thesis, I called them interlocutors.

But basically, I followed 14 people over the course of four years during their asylum process.

A few of them had just applied for asylum when I met them.

Many of them had appealed their first rejection.

Some of them had temporary residence permits already.

So I met them in very different stages of their asylum process, you could say.

And then I would follow them in intense periods.

There would be long periods of silence between us.

There would be a lot of... Yeah, more of them hanging out together, following people to...

their meetings with the migration agency in Sweden.

But also, as I describe in the thesis in more detail, is how we try to negotiate how can we do research in a more responsible and participatory way that would benefit the interlocutors.

And for many of them, that also involved me waiting for them instead of them having to wait in the sort of welfare office lines, because that's also this effective stealing of people's time within the border regime.

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But so yeah, I would say that.

And then I also did a few interviews with sort of street level bureaucrats, which is also sort of configured by case officers in the migration agency doing conducting the asylum interviews, but also with lawyers and NGOs and similar actors that sort of supported or encountered at Interlocutor in their every day.

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But what I can say about the sort of changes to the Swedish sort of migratory landscape in 2015 was that quite rapidly.

So we had people usually talk about these two very different images occurring during the autumn of 2015.

So the first was the Swedish prime minister saying that.

"My Sweden does not build walls" in September.

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And then that was followed by a press conference on the 24th of November in 2015, where the Swedish prime minister and the vice prime minister announced that they were introducing a temporary asylum law that rendered all asylum, yeah, the granting of asylum would be temporary, 13 months for those who were not deemed as refugees and 36 months for those who were deemed refugees.

And it was going to be put in to force in 2016.

And sort of claiming that the Swedish welfare state required a so-called "breathing space".

And what happened was it was a very accelerated process, but it was motivated by the fact that it was going to be a so-called temporary asylum law.

But I think all NGOs and sort of asylum rights organizations working around this sort of proclaimed from the beginning that this is not going to be temporary, but this is sort of shifting the norm of how we can work.

understand asylum, which then came into effect when it was prolonged.

The so-called temporary asylum law was prolonged in 2019, and then it was rendered permanent in 2021.

So now you would have to, so if the main rule before was that you would get permanent residence permit, now the main rule has been that you get temporary residence permit and then you can renew it.

And if you fulfill certain requirements, then you can get permanent residence permit.

But it is now more tied to your labor productivity because you need to fulfill certain provisional measures to receive a permanent residence permit.

But again, this also feels weird to talk about right now, because now we're in a discussion if the government is going to be able to withdraw the already given permanent residence permits and revoke them and then give people temporary residence permits instead or deport them.

So we're in this in-between space right now, which is in Sweden since 2022, it has been abstracted.

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development into even more repressive measures when it comes to citizenship, making citizenship revocable as well.

If you have dual citizenship, that is making it more difficult to get welfare provisions as somebody who comes through the asylum system.

So we're seeing attacks on the sort of asylum rights from many different venues within the law.

[SPEAKER_02]

So I just have like a question of, I guess, like for context and perhaps for a little bit of clarification, both for me, but also for the listener.

So you talk about this kind of specific moment in 2015 and you see like this ongoing conversation.

And it was not like a rupture, but actually a continuation or a decline where you'd have like the punitive state and the kind of like the state as kind of enforcing this.

Yeah, I guess like these harsh immigrant laws.

So I guess our policies, I guess.

you know, what stands out from my own kind of like knowledge about these politics is from Denmark, where you've seen a very kind of like an assault on asylum seekers, I mean, and like really, really harsh policies.

But I guess like what could come for some people as a surprise is that it's the Danish Social Democrats who have been actually, you know, proposing this.

and central to their kind of argument.

And this comes in a series of assaults towards different groups in society, from wokeism to people of Arabic heritage and so on.

And it all comes in through a discourse and a narrative of the welfare state, about protecting the welfare state and so on.

And now you see kind of like a lot of people, especially from like the center left all around Europe and especially in England, are also like trying to adopt these kind of like policies because basically what the Danish social democrats did was completely, you know, disassemble any kind of like political momentum the right have had.

So now you have like the right, you know, scrambling for, you know, any policy because like what they would, you know, be really successful about would to be like hard on immigrants and hard on like asylum seekers and so on.

So they've kind of captured that kind of politics, which has left them, yeah, totally scrambling.

But I wonder like in Sweden, you know, in like a larger kind of regional storytelling, you know, Sweden is like the progressive, the critical and so on.

But you also had this moment where you had the Swedish Democrats who suddenly came to rise of power.

But maybe you can just give us a little bit of fleshing out or mapping out.

What is the specific political context that these kind of policies emerge from?

Is it from the success of the far right to kind of do this?

Or is it more like also like a center policy?

Can you give us a little bit about what's going on within the parliament and so on?

[SPEAKER_00]

Yeah, there's a lot of great points here, and I want to first go back to what I said before, and I want to say that when the so-called temporary asylum law was enforced, it was done so by a social democratic government, with the support of the Green Party, and of course the sort of coalition of the right-wing parties that were also... But what we're seeing now is that we have a right-wing government, but

Even though the Sweden Democrats are not in the government, they are one of the sort of supporting parties that have sort of enforced a lot of the problem formulation and shifted agenda.

I would say that Sweden is going through a rapid authoritarian development where we see the erosion of rights, not only in relation to migration, but where migration is used as sort of the entry point to dismantle rights in all other arenas, which we also, of course, see around the world right now.

But I would say that when I say that this is a continuation and not a shift, a lot of people talk about that the enforcement of the temporary asylum law was a shift rather than a continuation.

And I think it's important to mention that.

permanent residence permits were not made the main rule in Sweden until I think it was between 84, 85, 1984, 1985.

But then an exemption was applied already in 89.

So there's been these like constant exemptions to the law.

So whenever there's been a bigger need for a bigger group of people for asylum, then Sweden has enforced these exceptions to have temporary residence permit.

And that has been to sort of

argue that people need to integrate, but also be ready to repatriate.

So there's this sort of conditional welfare.

And I think that what happened in 2015 was that years of

austerity measures were made explicit by the arrival of more people needing the resources of the welfare state.

But instead of having the momentum of pointing to this is what happens when you dismantle the welfare state or you dismantle basic social security for a larger group of people,

this argument that "there is no alternative": it's either the welfare state or it's migrants and what would happen to Sweden if we don't have the welfare state because Sweden is the welfare state so then this sort of conflation between Sweden and the welfare state and then making immigrants sort of its sort of antithesis has been strengthened and made use of by both the social democrats but also the sort of center and right-wing parties and I think now I mean when the Social Democrats introduced the law.

It was made, but sort of this excuse that we need a breathing space.

And then they wanted to sort of distance themselves a little bit from this.

But what they're doing now in this contemporary political climate is to try to tell the voters that we were the first ones to enforce all of these more repressive measures.

We are the ones.

So now it's sort of.

a race to the bottom in terms of where we're going with asylum rights.

I mean, what happened in 2015 was also that Sweden wanted to be one of the countries, I think it's like at the EU minimum level, so one of the most restrictive countries within the EU.

And it was all made to be this sort of simple politics to show that you've seen us, it's generous, but don't come.

So a lot of these measures are also to be felt.

The temporary residence permit is to discourage people from coming.

It's explicitly made as a discouragement policy.

And I think that's really important to mention.

And I mean, for example, now with the claim, the argument to withdraw permanent residence permits altogether is to give people incentive to apply for citizenship.

But of course, they're also making citizenship more

even more difficult to get.

So this is, in reality, just a deportation game.

And I would say that that's also an important dimension that I failed to mention with the temporary residence permits.

And I think it's Maya Sager and Klara Öberg have said that the implementation of temporary residence permits was an "institutionalization of temporality and thereby deportability", because having temporary residence permits also means that you constantly run the risk of being deported.

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And this deportability is also very productive for the system because it makes people more exploitable, it makes the system more conditional, and it gives power to the state over people.

[SPEAKER_03]

Thanks.

I think that actually leads us well into the next question about, so what you write about in chapter five of your dissertation is this idea of temporal dispossession for asylum seekers when they meet the bureaucracy.

And I think sort of

Maybe we can start with the concrete and then we can go back and say, what does this also say about the capitalist welfare state and so on?

But could you talk a little bit about this temporal dispossession?

And I think what you really show very well is this lack of control over time and pace for these asylum seekers.

So could you say a little bit about that?

[SPEAKER_00]

Yeah, so maybe I'll try to do it in two steps.

So I think what I start with in this chapter is to show, so the entire chapter zooms in on the asylum interview, because it's sort of the most important aspect of the asylum procedure, where the applicant is supposed to give a very detailed narrative of their asylum claims.

And this is then sort of transcribed and makes the most central document for the rest of the process.

So it's important to mention that the asylum interview is three hours.

It can be prolonged for another additional three hours, but very seldom so, because this

The asylum interview follows a strict neoliberal sort of new public management governance where the case officers at a migration agency are expected to conduct a certain number of interviews, a certain number of decisions a week.

And if they sort of deviate from the statistics, they will be reprimanded by the higher ups.

So this is also where the interviews with case officers and decision makers at the migration agency became very central in dialogue with the experiences of interlocutors who sort of talked about how the very asylum interview and the timings of the asylum interview and the temporal logics around it prohibited them from giving a coherent asylum narrative.

So I think

whereas the case officers argued that the applicants should speak freely, sort of the free narrative as the methodology of investigating asylum claims.

In reality what happens is that there's this constant turn-taking in between the applicant, the case officer, the translator or interlocutor.

But how do they

the translator and then potentially a legal counsel that is sharing this time over the three hours, which then also includes a break.

And I think I talked, this is not part of the thesis, but I talked to a lawyer afterwards that told me that in reality, she doesn't, she only estimates that it's like 30 minutes effective time in which you get to tell your asylum claim.

So what I talk about there is the acceleration of time that happens within this new public management governance within the asylum interview, that is also governed by these logics of the case officer having to treat it as sort of a police investigation, asking repetitive questions to see if the applicant responds in a similar manner.

where the interlocutors would then tell me how they were sort of kept from moving forward in their narrative.

They were asked to repeat these useless questions or answers and how they were constantly robbed of their time and making themselves intelligible for the system.

But then this is sort of turned on its head on them because if they are seen as leaving a

too detailed or a narrative that is lacking in detail, that is seen as a flaw on them, rather than a flaw within the system that constantly fragments the asylum narrative.

So there's like this one line of argument where I talk about the need for management and acceleration of time within an asylum interview to the logic of three hours not renewing them because then you're getting disciplined but like not prolonging it because then you get disciplined within the system and then the inability for the interlocutors to make themselves intelligible within that space but there is another argument and I think that because if you if you get stuck on the new public management acceleration

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if you could think that the solution would be to just give people more time and that would solve the problem.

But what I then also look at is

the necessity of understanding this time as racialized and understanding it in Fanonian terms, where he also talks about like to a Western white world, the colonized subject will always arrive too late, will never be seen as in time, with white time.

And this was very prominent for several of the interlocutors where they were either

dismissed, they had their asylum claims dismissed if they were seen as having applied for asylum too early, for example.

So for those who had had death threats, there's one of the interlocutors who was a war correspondent in Afghanistan, he had threats for his life from the Talibans, and that this was also investigated by Reporters Without Borders that could confirm these death threats.

But he was dismissed in the Swedish court of migration because the talibans had not sort of, what would you say, like materialized their threats, he was still alive.

So he was not seen as trustworthy in a sense.

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And in a similar way, one of the other interlocutors who had, I think he had lived in

In similar ways, for example, if somebody had converted to Christianity from Islam and the very timing can be used against them, then their 16 years of practice was dismissed because the timing was used against them.

So what I looked at in

In the other examples that I bring up within this chapter is then how time is mobilized against.

So it's not only accelerated or sort of what we can also see in the asylum interview when you ask repetitive questions, how it's decelerated, so sort of emptied of content and emptied of meaning, but it's also how the asylum interview works as a timing device that places people outside of time as either having applied too early or too late or in a timing that may

it renders them suspicious.

And then of course, once this asylum interview is transcribed, it's also frozen in time.

So any amendments that is made to the asylum protocol after the first interview is seen as a late disclosure.

And late disclosure is, per definition, seen as something that is suspicious.

So anything that is

added on to it is just seen as an illegitimate claim.

So what I'm trying to show in this is how these different temporal logics makes it impossible to be in time with the asylum system for the interlocutors, but then the violence within this temporal regime is rendered invisible through the sort of

[SPEAKER_02]

seemingly neutral operations of bureaucracy yeah it's it was so fascinating uh reading this section of your of your thesis um also i guess it's kind of like a you know a banal point but like you really really show how time is not only a construct but it's uh constructed in specific ways for specific purposes and you know and it's not just you know about like

slow or fast, but it's like, it's about strategic movement and strategic exploitations of, you know, temporality and so on.

And I, and I really love how you kind of tease out kind of the subtleties of temporalities that is going on, but that you also showed like this kind of moments of incoherence, or you also talk about like

time as resistance so you can be like foot dragging or like hesitant and so on but there's one thing that I was like really really interested about because like so you kind of unfold this enormous and fantastic you know conceptual apparatus you know where time becomes like your primary kind of like analytic mode of engagement and you have like yes as you said acceleration deceleration frozen time and so on but I want to and you know it's

It's not like for putting you on the spot here, it might be a little bit unfair because I didn't really prepare you for this.

No, no, nothing, nothing worrying.

No, no, no.

No, but there's something that I thought of while I was reading this kind of chapter.

You seem to, maybe you can reflect a little bit on, you know, other ways of thinking about time and temporality.

And I'm thinking specifically about futures here.

kind of like closing specific futures.

I mean, there seems to be like, you know, what futures are being produced, kind of like the welfare futures, but also like the impossible futures and sort of like, but also there seems to be like this kind of futures and pasts that continue being also mobilized and used to kind of like, they're used to kind of produce this specific type of bureaucratic temporal discrimination.

Yeah.

[SPEAKER_01]

Ooh, I mean, I want to hear your thoughts first.

Do you want to elaborate?

[SPEAKER_02]

Yeah, so then you can buy yourself some time here.

Speaking of, no, okay, bad pun.

No, I mean, you know, there is something about, you know, when you're talking about the welfare state, you also talk about welfare futures and like who is the welfare state for and what kind of like, you know, there's a future orientation, which is very kind of closely associated to the kind of

modernity progress and so on but it seems also to be sort of like this you know this the you have an idea of the future as being you know um

perhaps a little bit within reach due to the kind of like the temporary, the semi-permanent or like the temporary permits, you know, where the future is kind of like, is always kind of being postponed in specific ways because they're not permanent.

But it seems like, you know,

that there are specific futures that are being produced in order to have these people being caught in the system.

But also, you know, there's this kind of like always, but not really.

[SPEAKER_01]

Yeah, yeah, excellent.

Yeah, I think that

I don't know how well I develop it, but it sort of follows.

[SPEAKER_00]

So the migration bureaucracy is the first analytical chapter, and then it's sort of followed by a chapter that I call Islands of Dispossession, where I talk more about this sort of spatial configuration of temporal dispossession and this sort of ongoing process.

the ongoingness of deportation.

So some of the interlocutors have been in the different asylum systems for over 15 years.

So sort of in this possessive forces of the migration industry.

But in the final, so it's only three analytical chapters, in the final analytical chapter, which is on the labor market, I also show how sort of the asylum system, which is sort of seen as sort of this rights-based system, it's ingrained in the welfare state,

um it gives this so i think certain i don't know i'll see like i think Annjka Lindberg calls it "minimum rights discourse" i think that Ansem de Vries and Welander calls it "politics of exhaustion" and then there's someone else talking about this as violent in action and it's sort of how the minimum

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um access to the welfare state so in the swedish asylum system you get 2000 swedish kronor which is basically nothing to survive on an entire month so that is the maximum you can receive to the duration of the asylum process a month and then imagine that the asylum process drives out for four years and this is supposed to cover food basically all of your costs outside of housing

So I think what happens within this migration system is also then, OK, so this is one example of the production of certain futures.

But if we take the example of how people who are in the asylum system are then seeking to ensure their economic survival or social survival as well during the process, within the migration bureaucracy, that's also where it's decided if you're allowed to work.

during the asylum process or not, if you have an exemption to the work permit.

But very few people get this.

So then it makes it impossible to work during the asylum process in a legal manner.

But of course, people cannot survive on 2,000 kronor a month.

So a lot of people are then sort of brought into the informal economy to survive.

And I talk about this as the state production of informalization, where the state creates these conditions where people are sort of pushed into informalized labor

But this is also very effective for the system because it makes people even more exploitable and sort of hyper exploited in the sense that working informally breaks with the law and thereby people become deportable.

But then now they can be blamed for their own deportability because they are the ones who have broken the law while seeking to ensure their own survival.

So I think that what this law does is that it creates these impossibilities and this sort of hyper precarious surplus population that is very productive for the economy, that is very productive

for the system and for politics, because they can also be mobilized as scapegoats and then disposed of when not needed.

So definitely there and I mean now there's also additional then amendments to the law where there's an introduction of what is called "good conduct" so if you break with "god vandel" then that is also what is called in Swedish then you're also made deportable so for example or you can you could have your rights withdrawn so we had a student engaged in the Palestinian movement who was denied citizenship because she had been part of

a protest against the university supporting Israeli genocide, and now that is seen as breaking with god vandel, and she is denied citizenship.

So of course this is mobilized in different ways to target specific bodies.

[SPEAKER_03]

Thanks.

I think what I was also maybe thinking about here was

I was just looking up, because I was looking up this book called Race, Time and Utopia by William Parris, if you've heard about it.

But he also talks about race and the fragmentation of time and also this idea of always be out of sync.

That you're sort of being forced to be out of sync with the system all the time.

And I was wondering if that's something... I think that's also what you're talking about, all this...

Like what happens both in the labor market, in the asylum seeking process and so on.

[SPEAKER_00]

Definitely.

And I think that, I mean, when I use the metaphor of islands in Islands of Dispossession, that is also this sort of enforcement of becoming an island in this larger archipelago where you're never sort of connected to a mainland.

um so how people talk about uh becoming isolated in the system that and and this is not only through time but then also done spatially so within the system and what we've seen here in

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sweden is also this privatization of the asylum system so there's been a lot of asylum accommodations owned by private accommodation or private ownership

when it's no longer sufficient for them to have them open, they've closed them down.

So people who have established themselves in a certain part of the country, may be moved to another part of the country quite rapidly.

So I would have participants who have been in the far north and the far south, and then in the middle of Sweden as well.

So to have shifted in between,

these different locations and sort of being uprooted and being forced to start on square one again.

And this is what Shahram Khosravi talks about as stealing time, that the constant stealing of time is also making sure that people are out of sync and not in time with others.

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And I think that it's important to see that it's both a construct in terms of how the racialized other is always sort of pushed outside of modernity and seen as not belonging to white time, but then all the different mechanisms in which that is enforced, both spatially in terms of distribution of resources, in terms of, I mean, also how

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um how they can imagine a future i mean certain people who i followed would have their families in Sweden and they would all live with different temporal statuses so one would have permanent residence permit one would have citizenship and one would they could also have different temporary residence permits so one would have 13 months and one would have 36 months and what does this have what what does this do to family life when you all live with very different futures and very different temporal horizons under the same roof

[SPEAKER_03]

I was thinking, so maybe now we can go back towards the neoliberal welfare state or what you want to call it.

I think it's on page 86 you're quoting or you're paraphrasing Ramsey and some other people.

First of all, you're arguing that

You also said that it was not a shift, it's a continuation, right?

But also, so on one hand, we have the formation of the neoliberal welfare state.

And on the other hand, you're also saying like, well, these border regimes and austerity measures have sort of turned precarity and its temporal insecurities into reality for us all.

So from the perspective of...

of your dissertation, how can I say it?

This neoliberalization of the welfare state, does it originate from these border regimes, or is it a lens through which you can see what's going on?

Does that make sense?

[SPEAKER_00]

Yeah, I think what Ramsey does so brilliantly, because she helps unpack, or maybe not unpack, but de-exceptionalize displacement.

So temporal disposition as a conceptual tool for her is very much embedded within the larger framework of displacement.

And I think what they are doing, because she's also developed this together with Heath Cabot in another article, and I think it's important to see

the border regime as a central aspect of the remaking of states in contemporary times, but also historically, and that what we can see with border regimes is maybe that the intentionality of it is more explicit.

But if we see this as the condition of our time, then we need to understand it as broader than

enforced by border regimes.

And I think this is also an attempt that I tried to make it theoretically because

empirically I don't do it, but to connect and see the continuum between citizens and non-citizens.

So for example, one of the participants, and I never wrote it, I had this idea of writing a chapter about how the interlocutors reflected upon their own position in relation to territorial stigmatization in the suburb of Sweden, because a lot of them live in these areas that are heavily stigmatized, but also surveilled and policed.

where she talked about, particularly one of the participants, Rupi, would talk about how she thought it was her position as a migrant first, but then she came to understand that it was Sweden's specific racist history that excluded her in these matters, and the border regime was just one of the tools for doing that, but she could see the continuations with citizens of color.

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So I think the border regime creates certain conditions

But if we think about neoliberal racial capitalism, it is that this precarity, this makes it impossible to imagine a future or sort of foreclose the possibility of pursuing aspirational future horizons and then hear them even more so and with more violent consequences for those subjected to the border regime.

Was that a response to your question?

[SPEAKER_03]

Yes, it was.

Just jump in if you have any questions.

I just also had another thought that I was thinking about, like, you know, in Denmark there's been, and I don't follow Danish news as much as I should anymore, but there has been this discussion about, like, what the politicians from the Social Democrats and to the right have talked about, like,

that citizenship no longer is a right, it's a privilege, right?

So you can revoke citizenship.

Yeah.

Which I also think could sort of, like, before you would have sort of thought that, okay, now I have citizenship, so now I hold rights and I cannot be revoked.

But by being able to revoke citizenship, you put people in this situation

position again, right, where they have to sort of always prove themselves.

[SPEAKER_00]

And this is also the case in Sweden, because here the discussion is now making

citizenship revocable if you have dual citizenship.

So again, it's also targeting certain bodies.

But I also think that that's why this concept of temporal dispossession is so brilliant, because it moves.

And I think it also moves in a direction that we see a lot of migration scholarship doing, where, for example, Bridget Anderson has talked about also de-exceptionalizing citizenship, also looking at

I think it's because it's like methodological de-nationalism.

So to see this continuation across citizens and non-citizens and not sort of make them, see them as exceptional in this way.

And I think what the policies that we see in Denmark and in Sweden really give testimony to that.

[SPEAKER_02]

Yeah, so I mean, just for the listeners, I mean, you know, when you're listening to the show, we will make sure to put up an extensive reading list because there's so many references that's being dropped that it's amazing and so many I haven't even heard of.

So that's what a treasure.

So, I mean, there's so many things that I found super, super interesting.

First of all, I mean, so this way that you kind of like criticize the state and especially the welfare state also kind of makes me, you know, I begin thinking about like the huge issues when people are talking about, you know,

UBI, universal basic income and, you know, like state guaranteed, all of these kind of things, which really comes down to the question about like how the state perceives as citizens, like who is included and who is not.

And, you know, like any kind of like...

political left progressive, I guess, like idea of like state support necessarily entails also a complete exclusion of anything that is not considered within the state.

So I think like that is what your thesis is also, that's some of the implications of the critical scrutinization and theory that you're doing about like thinking about the welfare stage, which I just really love.

It's so great.

But I have like maybe like, I don't know if it's like a bonehead question or something, but there's something when you kind of mentioned and you kind of like your ethnographical methods and I can see you're really inspired by feminist and ethnographers and so on.

And I think there's a lot of kind of to unearth there, but there's something that I just want to ask you, maybe you kind of touch upon it in your dissertation.

So we get like all of these kind of like great ethnographic vignettes and examples, quotes and so on from the asylum seekers.

But there's also like occasions where you kind of introduce the street level bureaucrats perspective, because I think like also, I mean, so politicians, they don't care about people that they care about.

I don't know.

publics and polls and voters, but not people.

But you also have these people who work within the system upon which they have all of these rules and things that are being enforced on them that they have to carry out.

It's like the dirty job of immigration policy.

So how do you...

How do you work ethnographically with people that I guess they're not all bad people, but they are like bounded by all these like rules and things that they have to do, which comes from like further up the hierarchy.

So maybe, yeah.

How do you develop a sensibility for the street level bureaucrat who carries out the dirty work?

But it's also like, I guess like also...

at least some of them, a bit discouraged or also feel that this is fucked up, this is a fucked up system?

[SPEAKER_01]

I think that I tried to do it.

[SPEAKER_00]

I don't know if I managed to, but in the chapter on migration bureaucracy, primarily then,

Because it is the case officers own reflections about the disciplining about around new public management and how they try to adjust to this and how they also, I mean, of course, also then resisted.

But I've chosen not to write about the practices of resistance to a very explicit extent or to a very large extent in the thesis, because, of course, those strategies needs to be remain

implicit for people to being able to continue doing them.

But I think what I try to show here is that both the people seeking asylum and the street-level bureaucrats within the migration agency are both under the threat of dispossession, but with very different consequences to each.

So for the people working within the migration agency, it's the future within the agency that is threatened if they don't follow this.

I think one of them mentions it as having a whip behind your back if you don't follow

is able to measure up to the goals that are put on you to achieve during a week.

So in that sense, I try to show how it's not a matter of this evil individual that should be replaced, because it's the system that produces the conditions under which

this governance is taking place.

And I also try to show how within this framework, there's also these governmental reports that are constantly requesting the migration agency to accelerate the pace of the asylum interviews, of the asylum cases that they are going through, and also withdrawing resources.

So both asking for an acceleration, but also withholding resources.

So what I try to make visible is how the system in itself is producing something, and then how people try to navigate it, but with very different abilities to do so.

And then, of course, there is also these discourses on the untrustworthy asylum applicant, the sly native, that is enforced within these discourses of racial time, of being inside and outside of time.

So even though, I mean, some of the people that I met, they had so much evidence, for example, who was this war correspondent who also had this report from Reporters Without Borders, but then the Migration Court just said that the report was too similar to his story.

So it was like, okay, because they overlap so much. then that was deemed untrustworthy.

So then the question is who is a trustworthy asylum seeker and some migration scholarships suggest that it's a dead asylum seeker because that's the only one who can prove that they had a legitimate claim.

[SPEAKER_03]

Unfortunately.

And just also

I think it makes me think about... So what you're also describing, of course, is how a racialized surplus population is produced.

And I think that's something really interesting, also from the perspective of the welfare state, that it's both...

like at least politically, rhetorically unwanted population, but at the same time also a needed population for the neoliberal capitalist system to sort of reproduce itself.

Could you talk a little bit more about that?

[SPEAKER_00]

Oh my God, yeah.

I'm trying to find a brilliant quote.

I don't want to speak about it myself.

I want to quote other people.

Let me see if I can find it without taking too much time.

I'm sorry, I'm not going to be able to find it.

There's this brilliant quote by Stephen Castles in my thesis where he talks about how a lot of European states are very happy to explicitly state they don't want people seeking asylum and so forth, but they're very happy letting people in through the back door.

where they can sort of feed the economy.

So how people are very much included economically, but excluded socially.

And this is also something that a lot of scholars within the black radical tradition and within racial capitalism talks about sort of this distinction in how people are included financially in how they are exploited as the surplus population, but then excluded from all the social rights.

which I think is a very productive way of understanding what is it that the system is doing.

And that is also why racial capitalism as a theoretical lens becomes so productive because it keeps stressing the political economy behind migration and behind borders.

That I think if you want to do responsible migration scholarship, the political economy needs to be accounted for because otherwise, what are we talking about?

What is the phenomena at hand?

[SPEAKER_03]

So I was also trying to fight it now.

Was it Rajaram or no?

Deleted: Ratcharam

[SPEAKER_01]

No, wait, it's Castles.

I'm going to see.

[SPEAKER_00]

Castles.

I think it's here.

It's here.

I found it.

I found it.

It's on page 42.

So he says...

“Policies that claim to exclude undocumented workers may often really be about allowing them in through the side doors and back doors so that they can be more readily exploited. This can mean that politicians are content to provide anti-immigration rhetoric while actually pursuing policies that lead to more immigration because this meets important economic or labour market objectives.”

[SPEAKER_03]

Yeah, and it also reminded me of the whole discussion in Denmark about, like, fast-tracking care workers into the country, right?

So, especially for healthcare.

But also, yeah, how these, like...

it's still racialized labor, but it's all, again, categorized in very specific ways, like what kind of racialized worker would want to get into the country and what kind of functions, like now, it's

not like just having a pool, but like having very specific pools of people ready to take up the jobs that we wanted to conduct.

[SPEAKER_00]

Definitely.

Definitely.

Yeah, we have seen changes to

labor laws as well in Sweden, so one particularly in 2008 that tied

work permit closer to the employer, which made people so much more dependent on the employer.

So the threat of deportability became more in the hands of the employer.

And we also had previously that if you got a rejection in all three levels of the migration asylum system, it would be migration agency, then the migration court, and then the higher court of migration, then you could change to an application on work permit if you had already worked for a certain period of time and fulfilled some very difficult requirements.

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And this was called track change, but this has not been revoked.

So 5,000 people who got a residence permit based on this are now threatened with deportation.

And there is a more restrictive labor migration regime enforced now, but then they're also creating these pockets of exceptions where they want to have sort of, in quotation, a low-skilled migration to be more readily available because people in Sweden or citizens will take not take on those works.

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Brittany

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So, yeah, I think this quotation by Stephen Castles is really great because it sort of sheds light on this dual

dual effect of anti-migration rhetoric is not enforced in practice, but in practice, it just renders people more easily exploitable if we have these more repressive migration measures that make people more vulnerable to exploitation.

[SPEAKER_02]

Yeah, and I mean, it also kind of produces this kind of like progressive liberal idea of benevolence, because like, so some of the, at least in Denmark, to my awareness, you know, you have like these kind of like...

I wouldn't call them anti-racist, but like pro-immigration parties, you know, who seemingly belong to the moderate or the center-left, but basically it's just like neoliberalism, you know, dressed up as progressiveness.

And like one of the kind of like one of the arguments against the far right is usually sort of like,

oh, no, no, no, you can't really, you know, have those kind of harsh immigration policies because we need that care workforce.

But, you know, the implication of that is always that the immigrant will always be, you know, the frontline worker, the care worker and so on.

It kind of produces a specific subject, you know, but it's dressed up as like, as being, you know, pro-immigration.

Definitely.

So it also has like that consequence where it just comes down to, you know, it's about economy for them and like who maintains like these kind of pieces of economy that they don't think that, you know, white people or, you know, the majority, you know, should work with.

And I think like that's a really, really interesting point.

[SPEAKER_00]

No, I think what you're saying is just so important in terms of this dehumanization that is part of the processes when you talk about people's value through their productivity to the economy.

because this is what is happening and people see it as, I see it all the time within migration discourse that people who try to argue for the rights of migrants does so by pointing to how they are good for the economy or how we are dependent on migrant bodies for the economy.

Who is going to clean the hospitals?

Who is going to do this and that?

And it's all part of this hyper racist devaluation and dehumanization that is so normalized today that we associate certain bodies with human value only if they are productive to the economy.

And we can't see any value outside of that.

And I think that's also central to racial capitalism is to see these processes of devaluation, but also differentiation as a key concept, like how does capitalism itself

produce this inequality.

And I think it's the Ruth Wilson Gilmore who says, "capitalism requires inequality and racism enshrines it".

And we can really see it in these systems, how it requires this surplus population and racism makes sure that we have migrants for this readily available workforce that can be devalued, disposed at any time.

So yeah, I think it's really important to be very fucking careful when talking about, when we sort of unpack discourses surrounding migration and the labor market, because those very easily fall into the trap of this devaluation.

[SPEAKER_03]

All right.

I can see time is running.

So I think we have to end it here.

But I just want to say thank you so much, Sarah.

And we will link to your dissertation and other publications and a whole reading list in the notes for the podcast when it comes out.

But do any of you have any last words before we end?

[SPEAKER_02]

No, I just want to say, oh, sorry.

Go ahead.

[SPEAKER_01]

No, you go ahead and you start.

[SPEAKER_00]

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no i i i love how we end on a high here we got super excited and agitated and then yeah we need to stop but it's great yeah no i just wanted to say thank you so much for having me and for producing this podcast i think it's such a brilliant uh brilliant space to participate in and to be able to continue to listen to so thank you and i'll send you the reading list of all my name dropping thank you so much