

Forest

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Forests are a prominent natural landscape for migrant movements in countries on the **Balkan route**. The forested areas of these countries are used by migrants to clandestinely move towards the centers of the European Union (for example, through Gorski Kotar in Croatia), as well as places where, when their movement is halted, they erect temporary shelters (for example, in the vicinity of Bihać and Velika Kladuša in Bosnia and Herzegovina, near the border with Croatia). These forests can differ from each other, aside from their natural characteristics, narrow geographic locations or degrees of anthropization, in terms of their roles in migrant movement. While forest shelters and improvised settlements (so-called jungle camps) outside the European Union borders are places from which people go on the **game**, or its starting point, the forest landscapes inside the European Union borders, which cut across the territory, are spaces where the game, or its central phase, takes place and should be passed imperceptibly and as fast as possible. The forest as a migrant landscape therefore has the role of providing protection: it, along with all the dangers present in the more or less wild nature, enables people on the move to travel (to some extent) unnoticed or offers them a (harsh) refuge, a place where they can temporarily reside, removed from the settlements where they are not welcome. Aside from the fact that the forest can be presented as an aid in migrant movements, it can also be approached as an element that participates in the deterrence of migrants and the creation and maintenance of the (European Union) border control regime (**weaponized landscape**). In this sense, the forest is also a place of suffering and struggle in nature, a place of surveillance (using **cameras** and other technical devices), encounters with the police and police interception, capture, violence, and expulsions or **pushbacks**, which are well documented, for example, in the border area of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina (cf. Hameršak and Pleše 2021).

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Literature

Hameršak, Marijana i Iva Pleše. 2020. "Forest, forest, forest. Sometimes we sleep. Walking, sleep, walking, sleep. It's dangerous on this way. Weaponized Migration Landscapes at the Outskirts of the EU". *Etnološka tribina* 51/44: 204-221.