

Coercion

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Coercion represents one of the central concepts in the modern understanding of different types of migration. Divisions into different types of migration have been politicized and used in order to manage and control migration (Faist 2018; Malkki 1995; Scheel, Garreli and Tazzioli 2015). One such division is the categorization into forced and voluntary migration. For this division, the issues of coercion and choice are essential. This division is based on the motivation to migrate and it is assumed that some people migrate voluntarily, usually in search of a better and economically more secure life, while others are forced to leave their homeland by circumstances. Coercion, therefore, represents a driving force, a structure, a set of external circumstances, outside the individual and independent of personal choice.

Refugeehood is often equated with forced migration. Refugees are presented as victims of circumstances, violence and structures, as people who had no choice but to leave a certain territory. The process of forming the conceptual category of **refugee** is closely related to the institutionalization of the refugee as a legal category, as defined in the Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees from 1951 and the accompanying 1967 New York Protocol (Malkki 1995).

During the 1990s, migration studies developed the idea that forced and voluntary migration should not be viewed as a binary opposition, but as a continuum or spectrum (Van Hear 1998). Although the framework of this idea still includes a classification of people and their motivations for displacement into categories somewhere along a continuum, it represents a step towards the reconstruction of the basic division. It follows that elements of coercion and choice can exist in both types of migration, that the boundaries between forced and voluntary movements are often blurred, and that in practice the motives for emigration are often intertwined (Turton 2003). Also, coercion does not have to refer only to movement. **Immobility** can also be forced on someone, in the sense that people are forced into staying in a certain territory (Lubkemann 2008). Another theoretical step towards deconstructing the understanding of migration exclusively through the division into forced and voluntary migration is the approach of the **autonomy of migration** (e.g. Casas-Cortes, Cobarrubias and Pickles 2015; Mezzadra 2011). As part of this approach, migration is seen as a creative force or driving force, rather than a mere consequence or object of force.

People on the move are also exposed to different forms of coercion during their journey, after the initial moment when they leave a certain territory. The more or less visible coercion at state borders is manifested in various border control mechanisms, in which a significant role is played not only by states, but also by private companies (Bloom and Risse 2014). The **securitization** of migration leads to different types of coercion. Thus, the physical and structural violence against people on the move, which is carried out at the EU external borders in the name of securitization of migration, produces various forms of forced movement and immobility. Deportations can also be categorized as forced movements (Gibney 2013). Some authors also recognize coercion in **assisted voluntary return** programs (Sökefeld 2020).

In the context of the Balkan border regime, we can identify forced movements and immobility that people on the move face during their journey to EU countries (Jovanović 2021). We can witness **pushbacks**, deportations, readmissions and involuntary relocations to camps as specific forms of forced movements. Forced immobility also includes the practice of encampment, keeping people on the move in various detention centers, camps, reception and asylum centers, but also in facilities that people on the move have occupied themselves. The Balkans, as one of the European **buffer zones**, also provide an opportunity to examine the mutual effect of securitization and the autonomy of migration (Lipovec Čebren and Zorn 2016). This is where we can see that coercion and violence (in the context of migration) are not connected only with the reasons for emigrating from the countries of the **Global South**, but that, for people on the move, they continue to be a part of life along the external and internal borders of Europe.

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