

# Book Review: Enduring Uncertainty: Deportation, Punishment and Everyday Life by Ines Hasselberg

[blogs.lse.ac.uk/lseviewofbooks/2016/07/12/book-review-enduring-uncertainty-deportation-punishment-and-everyday-life-by-ines-](https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/lseviewofbooks/2016/07/12/book-review-enduring-uncertainty-deportation-punishment-and-everyday-life-by-ines-)

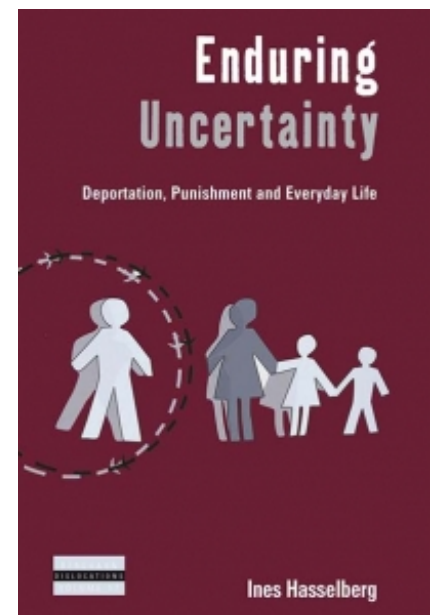
**Enduring Uncertainty: Deportation, Punishment and Everyday Life** explores how foreign national prisoners and their families understand, experience and feel about the process of deportation from the UK. **Ines Hasselberg** gives voice to this stigmatised group, challenging the reader to question received ideas of 'foreignness', belonging and citizenship. **Patrycja Pinkowska** recommends this timely book not only to everyone seeking to understand the challenges faced by those categorised as both foreign and criminal, but also readers interested in issues of border controls and migration at a time of increasingly punitive immigration policies.

**Enduring Uncertainty: Deportation, Punishment and Everyday Life.** Ines Hasselberg. Berghahn. 2016.

Find this book: 

In 2006, in a climate of highly politicised discussion around migration controls, the British public was confronted with the news that within the last seven years, over one thousand foreign national prisoners had been released after serving prison sentences without being considered for deportation. This so-called scandal led to the resignation of then-Home Secretary, Charles Clark, and prompted a series of changes in immigration law and policy, culminating in provisions for automatic deportation under the UK Borders Act 2007. Since then, foreign national prisoners have become one embodiment of criminal migrants who are seen to be abusing British generosity and hospitality, and an easy target of many political battles.

After the events of 2006, criminologists have started paying closer attention to the situation of foreign national prisoners, critically assessing the racialised characteristics of the growing interdependence of the UK Border Agency and HM Prison Service (Bosworth 2011). *Punish and Expel: Border Control, Nationalism and the New Purpose of the Prison*, a recent book by Emma Kaufmann based on a prison study, focuses on the relationship between punishment, border control and race, while other scholars have examined the convergence of the criminal and the foreigner in the production of citizenship (see Griffiths 2015).



In *Enduring Uncertainty: Deportation, Punishment and Everyday Life*, Ines Hasselberg adds another perspective by offering a rare insight into the lived experience of deportation from the UK. Rather than an event, elucidates Hasselberg, deportation is 'a process that begins long before a migrant is forcibly removed from one country and sent to another' (1). From receiving a deportation order through to time in immigration detention to bail that involves ongoing surveillance, control and employment bans, the post-sentence lives of migrants convicted of criminal offences and their families are pervaded with uncertainty.

*'Hi Ines, Well, my partner is currently facing deportation back to Uzbekistan after coming to the UK 19 years ago as a child with his family [...] My partner was never aware that he was not a UK citizen. [He] assumed that his father had completed all relevant paperwork and we never had any reason to doubt otherwise. [...] He went to school here and lived like any other British citizen.'*

Choosing this letter from J, one of the research participants, to stand alone as a preface to her book, Hasselberg not only signals her methodological commitments, but from the start of the book also allows the perspective of research participants to subvert the mainstream narrative. Above all, this letter indicates that foreign prisoners may be much less 'foreign' than we think. This and other personal stories show people who, after serving prison sentences for more or less serious offences, are fighting against separation from loved ones with whom they have been sharing their lives in the UK.



During a year-long research period, Hasselberg followed eighteen deportation cases, some from the perspective of the appellant and some through the lens of a family member. To be able to engage this hard-to-reach, vulnerable and non-spatially-bounded group, Hasselberg had to manage her positionality as both researcher and volunteer. Aside from interviews and focus groups, she visited detainees in immigration removal centres, attended bail and deportation hearings open to the public and accompanied people to their reporting events. As a result, she managed to portray the lives of foreign national prisoners once they are out of penal institutions. She shows how their experiences of 'freedom' are conditional upon regular reporting to the Home Office and other forms of surveillance, experienced as another type of punishment. Added to this is the employment ban, an additional element that makes the lives of foreign prisoners in Britain unbearable. Often, years after serving their sentences, they feel that they are still being punished for being foreign, without any possibility of rehabilitation. The time spent building their lives, close relationships and families in the UK is dismissed by authorities, leaving them feeling unworthy, yet aware that they are causing incredible pain to those closest to them.

This question of double punishment offers an important contribution to the migration debate and to ongoing discussions on the role of detention and deportation in citizenship formation. Interestingly, by giving voice to foreign national prisoners' families, Hasselberg also demonstrates how deportation affects British citizens. Amongst research participants, she writes, in all cases but one, the deportee was the only member of the immediate family who did not hold a British passport at the time of the research. We hear therefore from citizens who are about to lose partners, spouses, the parents of their children, from siblings and from parents whose child is about to be deported. Their right to family life is eroded by the perceived foreignness of their loved ones.

The exploration of deportation offered in this book – a process felt by many as an exile rather than a return to their country – also reveals an uneasy relationship between research participants and the state and its deportation policy. Despite being affected by it, reports Hasselberg, many agreed with the principle of deportation and the state's right to invoke it. They felt strongly, however, that through compliance with everyday conditions of deportability they

experienced as unduly harsh, they could resist 'the very notion that they themselves were a danger to the public and hence had no entitlement to stay' (151).

Hasselberg's book is an important contribution at a time when migration to Europe is being widely discussed. While politicians and tabloids steer this debate to suit their own agendas, large aspects of the increasingly punitive migration policies in the UK remain out of public sight. By choosing foreign national prisoners and their families as her research participants, Hasselberg is not only offering them a voice, but also telling a different and undoubtedly more complex story about citizenship and belonging in Britain today.

---

**Patrycja Pinkowska** is a PhD student in Human Geography at the University of Exeter. Her ESRC-funded research with deportable migrants examines the experiences of, and responses to, punitive migration policies in the UK. Patrycja holds an MSc in Gender and International Relations. Before embarking on this PhD project, for 5 years she had been working with organisations supporting asylum seekers and refugees.

*Note: This review gives the views of the author, and not the position of the LSE Review of Books blog, or of the London School of Economics.*

- Copyright 2013 LSE Review of Books