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The Commercialization of Migration Control

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_Introduction_

In her chapter entitled ‘The Convergence of the Criminal and the Foreigner in the Production of Citizenship’, Melanie Griffiths discusses the emergence in the United Kingdom of a figure of so-called ‘foreign national offender’ (FNO) or simply, the ‘Foreign Criminal’. This figure merges the figure of the ‘criminal’ with the ‘foreigner’, and is commonly deployed to denote a ‘young, black or Muslim man (or, more recently, as also a white Eastern European man)’ (Griffiths, this volume, p. 75). The Foreign Criminal is a legal and moral construction and stands in relation to the citizen as its significant Other. The chapter illustrates the social and political implication of this normative category on three individuals by exemplifying the punitive measures that the three men were subjected to by the police and the Home Office as well as the adjustments that the men made to cope with the situation. They all endured heightened police control, imprisonment for minor crimes, prolonged immigration detention and threat of deportation. These are political, social and symbolic processes that produce a particular type of a marginalized political subject marked by its gender (that is male) and its race (that is black). The logic of the Foreign Criminal is, Griffiths argues, less about reducing criminal risk or removing those without the right to remain in the country than of maintaining the social order and defining the Community of Value. In this piece, I suggest that there is also another logic at play, and that this logic is best comprehended when we examine the on-going privatization of migration control. I argue that the current legislative changes that broaden the category of criminality and make it easier to detain and deport foreign nationals
are best understood as devices entrenched within the growing business of the commercialization of migration. In what follows, I show that immigration control, detention and deportation are integral parts of the migration industry and are as such driven by the logic of the market and the transnational financial flows.

The migration industry

Ninna Nyberg Sørensen and Thomas Gammeltoft-Hansen (2013) suggest that today it is almost impossible to speak of migration or migration management without also speaking of the migration industry. The study of international migration, the authors suggest, focuses traditionally on the departure/destination country axes, the determinants and processes of migration (such as ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors), and routes to social and political incorporation into the countries of destination. Consequently, insufficient attention is paid to the variety of actors that facilitate or constrain the international migration. Earlier studies on the facilitation of migration focused on the ‘intermediaries’ such as travel agents, recruiters and brokers (Cohen 1997; Kyle and Koslowski 2001; Salt and Stein 1997) and on migration ‘entrepreneurs’ like money lenders, formal and informal remittance and courier services providers, and legal and paralegal specialists (Hernández-León 2008). Nyberg Sørensen and Gammeltoft-Hansen expand the scope of inquiry from facilitators of informal or illicit activities to ‘control providers’ such as private contractors who offer legal solution and services, for instance, staffing border checkpoints, checking travel documents, running detention centres and carrying out deportations. These private contractors usually work in very close connection with governments that, for their part, actively outsource border control, immigration detention and deportation. For example, what is officially called the UK Immigration Estate is comprised of 11 Immigration Removal Centres (IRCs), four residential and one non-residential Short-Term Holding Facilities (STHFs), 19 Holding Rooms based at or near ports of entry and 11 reporting centres. Except for four IRCs managed by the Prison Service, the Home Office has outsourced the management of detention facilities to private firms – Mitie, GEO, G4S, Tascor and Serco.¹ The global expansion of privatization is apparent when we take into consideration that both Serco and G4S are key contractors in Australia where, according to the analysis of Guardian Australia conducted of AusTender database, mandatory immigration detention has benefited private contractors by up to $10bn since mid-2007.² The figure of the Foreign Criminal, while certainly used to mark