

IPW LECTURES

Humans, Pigs, and Genomes at the Borders: How the Danish Welfare State Metabolizes Life

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Department of Political Science, lecture room (Hörsaal) 2 (A 0218)
Universitätsstraße 7, 1010 Vienna

Abstract:

In this talk, I track policies and public discussions in relation to the border crossings of humans, pigs, and genomes in and out of Denmark. By bringing together these diverse forms of life, I aim to think anew about who or what may cross the physical and electronic borders of Denmark. Regulating the flow of bodies and genomes to enter this collectivity has been the center of gravity in welfare state life politics and central to building up the Danish welfare state, itself, from eugenics, through breeding of livestock—especially pigs—to prenatal diagnostics, and genomic and migration policies. In scrutinizing how the welfare collectivity gains its shape from what enters, is rejected, or becomes connected and transformed in the welfare state, I introduce the concept of the welfare state metabolism. I ask how this metabolism works, how it regulates what can go in and out Denmark, and how various forms of life—humans, pigs, genomes—are transformed to life-sustaining fuel for the collectivity. I show how these figures are metabolized in ways that are not only parallel but also intersect. Borders and border crossings reveal themselves as being at the center of the welfare collectivity.

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