

Evacuation and indistinction: law, mobility and power

In this paper I explore how evacuation as a set of arts, logics, technologies, practices and ideas, is produced through and outside of law. Evacuation has long been considered a form of protection, a way to move someone or something out of the way of danger. But it is much more than this, and its legal and extra-legal prosecution deserves far more intensive scrutiny, more precisely, for the ways in which evacuation produces particular kinds of subjects – perhaps made out of place, or deserted of their rights or property; spaces – designated as uninhabitable, unsafe, empty, places where the evacuated cannot leave, or are placed indefinitely; boundaries – that cordon or produce thresholds and perimeters that are secured and policed; mobilities – trains, vectors, highways and marches that whip people away, and bureaucracies – that plan, categorise, sequence but also obscure. Indeed it is through the logic of evacuation that discrimination, persecution, eviction and even killing, have occurred by another name. And yet, the paper aims to explore evacuation as much more than a euphemistic concealment, but through a range of legal regimes it emerges as a political technology that names and rearranges subjects, space and property by causing important definitions, categories and processes to become indistinct. In some instances evacuation produces the entire absence of legal processes, forcing the law to be taken into one's own hands.

Peter Adey
Professor of Human Geography
Department of Geography
Royal Holloway University of London
peter.adey@rhul.ac.uk