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Agents of change? (Hi)stories, perspectives, and everyday practices of Polish border guards

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Biography

Maryla E. Klajn is a socio-legal scholar and qualitative researcher specializing in migration governance, border control, and the discretionary practices of state authorities. She has finalized her doctoral studies at Leiden University, where she is affiliated with the Van Vollenhoven Institute for Law, Governance, and Society at Leiden Law School. Alongside her doctoral research, she is employed by Leiden University as a Lecturer and Research Fellow, with teaching and research expertise in qualitative research methods and critical discourse analysis.

Maryla obtained her Bachelor's degree in Socio-cultural Anthropology from the University of Washington in Seattle (United States) in 2011. During her undergraduate studies, she developed a strong interest in power, identity, and social control, particularly in relation to state institutions and marginalized populations. She subsequently pursued graduate studies in Socio-political Anthropology at the University of Amsterdam, where she completed her Master's degree in 2017. Her graduate training provided a strong theoretical and methodological foundation in political anthropology, ethnography, and critical approaches to law and governance.

Her doctoral research entitled “Agents of Change? (Hi)stories, Perspectives, and Everyday Practices of Polish Border Guards,” started in 2017 and forms part of the five-year research project “Getting to the Core of Crimmigration,” funded by the Dutch Research Council (NWO) through the VIDI scheme, which ran from 2017 till 2022. The dissertation examines how border control is enacted at the Polish–German border within the Schengen Area, focusing on the everyday practices, discretionary decision-making, and emotional labour of Polish Border Guard officers. Based on extensive ethnographic fieldwork, the research contributes to socio-legal and criminological debates on crimmigration, discretion, securitization, and internal EU borders.

During her PhD trajectory, Maryla Klajn authored several scholarly publications. Her work is characterized by ethnographic immersion, strong ethical reflexivity, and critical engagement with the intersections of law, power, emotion, and identity. Through her combined roles as researcher and lecturer, Maryla contributes to advancing qualitative socio-legal scholarship and the teaching of rigorous, reflexive research methodologies.