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Reading Reece Jones's *Violent Borders: Refugees and the Right to Move*¹.

Introduction. Violent borders and the space of political futures

Sara Fregonese and Jonathan Rokem

The news in those days was full of war and migrants and nativists, and it was full of fracturing too, of regions pulling away from nations, and cities pulling away from hinterlands, and it seemed that as everyone was coming together everyone was also moving apart. Without borders nations appeared to be becoming somewhat illusory, and people were questioning what role they had to play. Many were arguing that smaller units made more sense, but other argued that smaller units would not defend themselves." (Hamid 2018, 155)

This forum is around *Violent Borders: Refugees and the Right to Move* by Reece Jones, the winning volume of the first edition of the biennial book award of the Political Geography Research Group of the Royal Geographic Society with IBG (PolGRG)² in conjunction with *Political Geography Journal*. The book award³ was established in 2016 to give recognition to new academic volumes that engage with the thematic remit of PolGRG and contribute to develop the diverse field of political geography more widely. In line with the diversity of PolGRG interests and membership, the PolGRG Book Award is aimed at published volumes advancing the debate around themes spanning territoriality and sovereignty; states, cities, and citizenship; geopolitics, political economy and political ecology; migration, globalization and (post)colonialism; social movements and governance; peace, conflict and security. All this appreciating the implications of these phenomena with gender, race, class, sexuality and religion. Importantly, the idea of a book award was conceived to reward the slow and cumulative work that goes into publishing scholarly volumes. This kind of academic endeavour reclaims the topics of "quality" and cumulative work into the recent debates around neoliberal competitiveness, standardised bibliometrics (Benjaminsen et al. 2019; Berg, Huijbens, and Larsen 2016) and the pressure mounted by the academe on rapidly 'churning out' outputs in order to satisfy those metrics. The first edition of the book award had a successful response, with ten outstanding nominations, and was at the same time a learning process for organisers both in PolGRG and *Political Geography*. We want to use this

¹ Reading Reece Jones's *Violent Borders: Refugees and the Right to Move*. 224 pages, Verso, New York and London (2017). £16.99 (hardback), ISBN: 9781784784713.

² <https://polgrg.wordpress.com/2017/06/15/the-polgrg-book-award-2017-2018-in-coordination-with-politicalgeography-journal/>

³ <https://polgrg.wordpress.com/2019/09/06/the-polgrg-book-award-2019-2020-in-coordination-with-politicalgeography-journal/>

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space to thank the five judges of the first edition for dedicating their time to read and write extensive reviews of the nominated books, and for participating in the shortlisting process.

As we write, the second edition² of the award is under way, overseen by a new PolGRG committee and, soon, a new panel of judges. We trust we initiated a process that is rigorous, but also enjoyable and that above all highlights the excellence and variety of the field and its scholarly community. For this, the book award is open to all scholarly volumes published in the two years preceding the call for nominations, and we are clear that this process ought to be inclusive of the most diverse range of authors, positionalities, contexts, approaches and topics across and beyond UK and anglophone political geography, with emphasis on early career authors and on contributions from/on the Global South.

Borders, doors and the space for political futures In his novel *Exit West*, Mohsin Hamid (2018) describes a planet strained by conflict and consequent mass displacement, and eventually redesigned in its national and urban boundaries and territories. One of the key components of the planetary geopolitical shakeup in *Exit West* is the presence of ‘doors’: secret passages – increasingly controlled by profiteering traffickers - connecting different locations throughout the globe, and accessed by individuals and groups escaping from their places of origin in order to save or improve their lives, but not knowing where any door will lead. The book presents a dystopic urban geography where mounting societal polarisation, explodes into urban clashes and military operations to evict communities of migrants from vacant mansions in London’s wealthiest areas. After a period of turmoil, the migrants are employed in precarious conditions to construct new satellite towns on the outskirts of metropolises. Much like the fictional escape doors and changing global geographies of *Exit West*, *Violent Borders* presents the (often violent) implications of the global trend towards stopping population flows, but it also signals the presence of possibilities: new spaces for transnational mobility to happen beyond the violence of the border. It allows to devise new political narratives of migration and movement: spaces for political futures that offer counter-narratives to the multi-scalar ruptures (territorial, urban, personal, of kinship) that borders create and perpetuate.

Three themes emerge from this forum, which we envisage can shape future geographical discussions on migration to help decipher how borders work now, how they could be in the future - and if they ought to be at all. These are: the distinctive role of political geographers in informing current migration and displacement debates; the role of sub-national and urban spaces; and the attention to history.

The first theme concerns the role and impact of political geography in producing original spatial understandings and perspectives that can provide solid evidence usable in policy and activism. In an academia that is rife with migration-related work from a variety of disciplines, what specific perspectives and real-world approaches can political geographers bring? This question resonates in Nando Sigona’s piece, when he discusses the possibility of reconciling the scholarly effort of accounting for the vastity of the issue of governing migration globally, with the particular and embodied perspectives from particular locations, in a way that makes justice to the localised nuances of border politics. Political geographers

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are well placed to relate micro- and macro-scale accounts of space and politics, and to relate ethnographic attention to context with (geo)political mappings at larger scales. Political geographers are also well positioned to question - even pose the bases for resistance against - those mappings. For example, as the conflict in Syria is giving way to reconstruction, new political maps of the area (especially NE Syria) are being drawn, with the aim of (re)framing specific national minorities (like the various Kurdish organisations) but also to, effectively, create what are refugee-free zones at state borders. How can we push back on such questionable macro-mappings of migration management, and use microaccounts to posit the geographies of more sustainable political futures?

The second theme that emerges is partially related to the first, as it remarks the importance of scale and of accounting not only for national borders, but also for the sub-national impacts and dynamics of bordering to govern migration and movement. As Jonathan Rokem argues in this forum, pressured municipalities are left to deal with varying degrees of local polarisation and social acceptance and asylum legislation in terms of where in the city and in which cities migrants are permitted or not to live – a point remarked also by Beste İşleyen in this forum. Cities are changing with the migration crisis: not only in size and functions, but because the very practices of border securitization are currently implemented inside cities (Bialasiewicz 2015; İşleyen 2018). A sub-national look at migration allows therefore to tell different stories, identify new actors and connect them with less explored local urban geopolitical contexts (Rokem and Fregonese 2017). The local scale is left to deal with providing refuge and sanctuary where the nation state and its violent bordermaking practices have not only failed to ‘keep out’ migrants and asylum seekers, but also strip them from basic human rights in the host society.

The third theme pertains to the importance of writing spatial histories of the current ‘migration crisis’: histories that understand its spatial production, genealogy, and take a critical stand on its supposed unprecedentedness. One of the most powerful lines running across *Violent Borders* is that we cannot separate the history of borders from that of modern capitalism, and that the former are the spatial mechanism for the latter. This is aptly argued by İşleyen’s, as “the national border ...becomes integral to policies and practices of refugee labour extraction during crisis times.” (İşleyen, this forum); but also, we would add, the border is part and parcel of capital accumulation and its shifting global geographies of power, risk and inequality.

Reece Jones’ response to his three reviewers in this forum is an occasion to present *Violent Borders* in the wider context of his other published and forthcoming books, and the direction that his scholarship is taking towards historical inquiry into the evolution, presence and politics of border making. Spatial histories are certainly not lacking in political geography (Elden 2013b; 2010; 2013a). However, it seems now imperative, in the current fog of fake news, populism, and polarised politics, that systematic and rigorous historical accounts of borders and of bordering – and relatedly of migration and border crossing – are necessary to bring more clarity to the current geopolitical mappings, to trace not so much the original truths about the violence of borders against population movement, but the

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spatial process that got us to this point throughout successive moments in history. Here, the critical historical work of scholarly networks like Refugee History (<http://refugeehistory.org/about>) and of scholars like Mezna Qato and Benjamin Thomas White into the politics of archives, the geographical thinking of stateless societies (Qato 2018; 2019), and the historical enquiry of practices and politics of humanitarian evacuation (White 2019) are few but powerful examples of much needed historical lenses to questions of refugeeness and displacement, which political geography could certainly benefit from. We ought to engage the specific strength of political geography in showing how particular and localised experiences are never disjointed from wider geopolitical dynamics and Jones is right in pointing his “unique position to write a comparative account, drawing together these disparate strands into a broader global study” (Jones, this forum). It would require a major shift in the modern nation state’s political economy to allow for more inclusive and open border practices. The current European and international political climate favours keeping control of immigration as the top priority, leading to further border surveillance and national security (Sigona this forum), often using narratives of “unprecedentedness” to justify its approaches. This is when historical analytic tools can add value to political geography’s spatial (counter)imaginings and politics of resistance, pointing us towards new ways of preventing violent borders and domestic battlefields from being the predominant way of envisaging the political spaces of migration and instead imagine new spaces for alternative political futures.

Borders and the violent politics of boundary making

By Nando Sigona

In June 2016, the United Kingdom (UK) voted by a majority of 52% to leave the European Union (EU). In the run-up to the EU referendum, public concerns about migration and antiimmigration sentiments reached record levels which translated into support for the Leave option. The Vote Leave campaign, designated by the UK’s Electoral Commission as the official campaign in favour of leaving the European Union in the Referendum, captured public imagination with a simple and alluring slogan: ‘Take back control’, which effectively combined a sense of a positive future, with a not-so-subtle undertone of Empire nostalgia. Similarly, days before the referendum, Nigel Farage, the leader of the other pro-leave campaign Leave.EU, proudly posed in front of a large billboard portraying a long queue of refugees, accusing the EU of ‘having failed us all’, hinting to an alleged invasion of the UK by refugees which official data show never occurred (Sigona 2016) . Offering some insights into what ‘take back control’ means to Brexit-supporting politicians, Farage’s billboard calls for Britain to ‘break free of the EU and take back control of our borders’.

Both during the referendum campaign and in the protracted negotiation period that followed, immigration and borders have been at the core of the narrative on ‘taking back control’, intimately connected if not inseparable. Former PM Theresa May used ‘the hostile environment’, her flagship immigration policy as Home Secretary, as a proof of her suitability to lead the country through the Brexit negotiations. And, despite data show that

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not only antiimmigration sentiments declined since the EU referendum but also less EU nationals are moving to Britain and more EU residents are leaving the country, May insisted in keeping control of immigration, and consequently the end of freedom of movements for EU nationals, as a red line in her negotiation strategy. The UK pro-leave political landscape is by no means an exception in what is by now considered as a Europe-wide turn to nativism, populism and anti-immigration sentiment and policies.

At the southern border of Europe, Matteo Salvini, Italy's Home Secretary and Deputy PM, made the fight of 'illegal immigration' his flagship political battle. Echoing Farage's script, he successfully managed to link two agendas, the Eurosceptic and the antiimmigration ones, blaming the EU for not doing enough to support Italy in dealing with sea arrivals and/or constraining Italy's capacity of closing Italian ports to Search and Rescue (SAR) boats. In June 2019, the tension between Salvini's far-right anti-globalist agenda (sovraniista in Italian) and Italy's obligations vis-à-vis the EU and the international community came to the fore when a SAR vessel, Sea Watch 3, with 53 rescued people on board was refused disembarkation for over two weeks until eventually its captain Carola Rackete decided to defy the order from the Italian authorities and disembarked in Lampedusa. She was successively arrested, but soon released following a judicial review of the case that found the order given by the Italian authorities on the basis of the recently passed Security Decree was in breach of international law and obligation regarding sea rescue.

To Matteo Salvini's supporters, including in mainstream media, the landing of Sea Watch 3 was the proof of Italy being under siege, its sovereignty and national borders violated, not only by migrants, but by a German captain and a woman. Commenting on the day of the arrest of Carola Rackete in Lampedusa, Italy's Home Secretary stated: 'We are not fools, we have rules, laws and borders. So those who made this mistake will pay for it. I guarantee that to the Italian people'⁴. For days national and international media covered the Sea Watch 3 case, references to the 'migration crisis' peaked both among supporters and detractors of Salvini, paradoxically ignoring the fact that compared to previous years there is no evidence of a 'migration crisis', at least in terms of sea arrivals. According to UNHCR (2019) data in June 2019 the Italian authorities recorded 1218 arrivals, the average for the month of June during the so-called 'migration crisis' (2014-2017) was over 22,000. Farage's billboard recalling not just a refugee 'invasion' that never was, but also a fictional queue of refugees at the British border, and Salvini's carefully choreographed 'migration crisis' without migrants are illustrations of what Nicholas De Genova termed the 'Border Spectacle', in which the materiality and performativity of border enforcement practices is 'persistently and repetitively' implicated 'in the symbolic and ideological production of a brightly lit scene of 'exclusion' that is always in reality inseparable from an obscene fact of subordinate inclusion that transpires in its shadows' (De Genova 2014: 24; see also Tazzioli and Walters 2016) In other words, borders operate as filtering technologies that turn people on the move into 'immigrants' and attribute (or not) them rights and entitlements as well as

⁴ The videoclip of the Al Jazeera piece on the disembarkation of Sea Watch 3 is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mS9Dkl27MzI> (accessed on 22 July 2019).

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a position in the social hierarchy. But, as Karakayali and Rigo (2010) argue, they are in turn activated by migrant mobilities.

These examples chronologically follow the publication of Reece Jones's fascinating and compelling book *Violent Borders*. They help us to focus on some aspects at the margin of Jones's analysis of what and who are borders for, in particular concerning the spectacular politics of boundary-making. *Violent Borders* takes the Mediterranean 'refugee crisis' and in particular the tragic deaths of tens of thousands migrants who perished during the sea crossing as a point of departure to examine the different forms of violence embodied in borders and their root causes. From a parking lot in Tangier in Morocco, to a garment factory in Bangladesh, from the desert of Arizona to the contested border zone in Kashmir, from the US of Roosevelt's New Deal to the 1607 Midlands peasant revolt led by Captain Pouch, Reece Jones takes his readers to distant places in search of commonalities and connections. The publication of this book came at a crucial time. In the US President-elect Donald Trump was promising to build an 'impenetrable, physical, tall, powerful, and beautiful' wall between the US and Mexico⁵, a project that has encountered strong resistance during his first mandate, including from politicians who had previously supported similar arrangements. Meanwhile the EU was forced by member states to partially and temporarily suspend the Schengen treaty and reinstates long disused internal border crossings, and to transfer enormous resources to the EU Border Agency FRONTEX to deter and monitor irregular crossings. Interestingly, since the publication of the book, the focus of EU responses to Mediterranean crossings has gradually shifted away from the sea, towards border externalisation and proxy border enforcement (McMahon and Sigona 2018), leaving the Mediterranean relatively empty of migrant vessels, and yet vividly present in public imagination and political discourse.

Responding to the EU rhetoric that proclaims war to smugglers, which are accused to be the main cause of the 'migration crisis' and of migrant deaths at sea (Crawley et al. 2017), Jones argues that for the tragic deaths at the EU's southern sea borders, it is not the smugglers but EU border policy and practice that should be blamed. This argument echoes sociologist Bridget Anderson's examination of the weaponization of the language of harm prevention and protection by policy makers as discursive device to capture migrants – and, in this case, conveniently save them from migrating to Europe (Anderson 2012).

In the book, Reece Jones argues for a borderless world as an answer to the forces of globalisation that have produced unprecedented levels of income inequality in the world. He argues that 'the structural violence of borders is at the foundation of the state' and 'walls, borders, maps, properties, identity documents, and enclosure laws are technologies of governance that are fundamentally about controlling and excluding' (2016: 65) the global poor. He identifies in the removal of barriers to the movement of migrant workers the solution to global inequality interpreted in an Immanuel Wallerstein's world-systems

⁵ <http://www.wsj.com/video/trump-reups-plan-for-wall-paid-for-by-mexico/C4773FE7-116B-48B2-8AEA-53D562C4E6DD.html> (accessed on 22 October 2019).

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tradition. The global poor, Jones argues, is the primary victim of violent borders, among them the thousands who died crossing the Mediterranean in the last decades⁶.

The breath and spread of historical examples and empirical case studies makes the book a stimulating and engaging reading, although at times a bit bird-eyed on details, with idiosyncrasies and nuances lost in the process. The unfolding of the argument occasionally suffers from abrupt transitions, with the connections between parts hinted to rather than fully developed, including the lack of attention to the interaction between the border and the production of different nomenclatures of mobility (Zetter 1991; Sigona 2018).

In the quest for establishing the foundations of his global political economy of borders, Reece Jones leave aside some of the other functions, political, cultural and symbolic, that the borders play especially within the state. Jones' borders are largely mono-dimensional in that they are all projected towards the outside, separating imagined homogeneous nations, and relentlessly working to deny access to the global poor, who as a result remains locked in dangerous and exploitative factories in countries like Bangladesh working in miserable conditions for the Western textile industry. But, going back to the powerful image on the book cover, while the tragedy of migrant deaths at sea has certainly made the Mediterranean a huge cemetery, the wider picture is that the large majority of those crossing the sea at the time of the Mediterranean 'crisis' landed safely.

The question that *Violent Borders* leaves largely unanswered is: what does the border do to them? For Anderson et al (2009: 5), 'the growing restriction on the freedom of people to move has not led to fewer people crossing nationalised borders. Exactly the opposite'. Borders are productive and sorting devices that shape the position of foreigners in the host country and whose reverberation can be felt across generations, as research on the experiences of

undocumented children in US and Europe reveal. Undocumented migrants, deportable and detainable in Nicholas De Genova's (2005) terminology (See also: Bloch, Sigona, and Zetter 2014), are produced by the inclusionary exclusion of borders and are confined to niches in the job market such as care, agriculture and food packaging: jobs that can't easily be outsourced abroad. Reece Jones' borders are physical, made of concrete and barbed wire. They build fortresses (like Fortress Europe) that are meant to be inexpugnable, even against the evidence of over a million irregular entries in 2015 alone. Despite the intentions of the author, who emphasise the disruptive power of mobility, this image of borders can ultimately also obscure migrants agency and everyday struggles by reproducing the illusion of a very clear cut distinction between inside and outside, an image that the actors involved in the border control business love to sell to states together with their latest drones, heat sensors and nightlight cameras.

Jones's *Violent Borders* is a wake-up call for researchers, practitioners and the public that border struggles have not only to do with human mobility, and they don't only concern the

⁶ IOM Missing Migrant web portal: <https://missingmigrants.iom.int/mediterranean> (accessed on 22 July 2019).

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West. Jones reminds us that what we are witnessing is the result of geopolitical shifts of global relevance, including the ongoing environmental crisis which exacerbates tensions on resources and produce forced displacement internally and across borders. However, De Genova's warning to scholars of migration is relevant here: we ought to avoid the risk of becoming unwitting accomplices 'to the spectacular task of broadcasting the one-dimensional falsehood of border enforcement as the perfect enactment of ever more seamless and hermetically sealed 'exclusionary' barriers' (2014: 24). Further and more research and debate are needed, to look beyond the homogeneous view of the border, beyond the rhetorical (and practical) binaries of inside/outside, domestic/foreign, and into the everyday spaces and politics that borders make.

Moving Beyond the Nation State: Towards An Urban Geopolitics of Migration

Jonathan Rokem

Tackling one of the most acute challenges in our contemporary world, *Violent Borders: Refugees and the Right to Move* (2016) depicts a wide-ranging global migrant crisis and the on-going expansion of violence by nation-states. This timely and politically charged manuscript engages with the resurgence of borders emphasising their vast spatial and social dichotomies and inequalities. The proliferation of regional conflicts in Latin America, Asia, Africa and the Middle East, has led to a mass movement of refugees and asylum seekers from insecure war-torn countries desperately seeking shelter in more stable and secure world regions.

Before probing Reece Jones manuscript and its important contribution to Political Geography and migration scholarship more widely, it is worth noting that the book primarily engages with the nation-state and its significant political and institutional role in (mis)managing the so called 'global migration crisis'. In the later part of this text I question the nation states competence to control migration, suggesting a need to move beyond the state-centric approach to a more local urban focus. Doing so I point to some recent developments in Athens and Berlin and the more general pivotal position of cities as geopolitical migration hubs (Ramadan and Pascucci, 2017). The first three chapters of *Violent Borders*, represent an extensive worldwide view, from the European Union's deadly Southern shores (which I return to in further detail below), the US Mexico border, the West Bank Wall, Australia, and the India-Bangladesh-Myanmar border.

The second part of the book explores the proliferation of borders charting their origins and tracing the historical roots from hunter-gatherers bordering practices and their significance in the 21st century post-colonial "fortress world". 'Borders', Reece Jones argues, have always been part of the Anthropocene and have functioned to exclude those seen as a threat and

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as unwanted strangers. The wide-ranging overview of boundaries and how they have been an inherent part of human existence comes with a certain lack of attention to specificity. With such an extensive global overview digging down to the devil in the details and bringing out some of the local nuances is sometimes overlooked. The strength of the book lays, however, in its wide geographical comparative scope and critical scrutiny of the politics of fear and security prioritising privileged citizens' mobility rights over migrant human rights. This is echoed in Achille Mbembe (2018) recent critic of the European liberal landscape and its exclusionary bordering politics. Mbembe challenges the justification of predatory border practices by nation-states in the name of opens, liberalism and security:

“One of the major contradictions of the liberal order has always been the tension between freedom and security... The question now seems to have been settled... Security is more important than freedom” (Mbembe 2018).

The liberal justification for ‘freedom’ for the privileged few in need of ‘protection’, allows for the hostile use of ‘security’ to exclude irregular migrants in the name of ‘public safety’. Selective structural violence practiced by nation states bring to the fore heavily securitised border practices and the infliction of suffering and death at a mass-scale, turning a blind eye to universal human rights. This is evermore true today as all aspects of life have been breached by unequal geographies dividing those disparately trying to flee from the ‘wrong side of the fence’, with an almost certain exposure to brutal state violence and deportation. Militarised fault-lines have become the violent infrastructures underlying our global world order, with an ongoing war against mobility that excludes those in dire need of protection and basic lifesaving provisions (Mbembe 2018).

Denouncing the rise of new and increasingly deadly security practices, throughout the book, Jones advocates that all borders should be open allowing people to move freely. But is this enough to open all national borders when migration, asylum and refugeeness, is becoming a challenge that is predominately urban and complexly woven inside the everyday and security infrastructure of cities? Where is the ‘border’ when the main state functions are now being embedded into urban settings? A major proportion of asylum seekers and refugees arrive in larger cities (at least those fortunate enough to cross the increasingly violent border regimes) fortified by nation states. This resonates with Jacques Derrida’s words foreseeing a political shift towards the urban scale; “the future prospective for cities to reorient the politics of the state and transform and reform the modalities of membership and participate in the ‘construction of solidarities yet to be invented’ holds much potential” (Derrida 2001: 4, emphasis in original).

The migration crisis impact on major European cities, has shifted the political geographies of urban districts and neighbourhoods. Their populations coming together or becoming polarised within often-underexplored patterns; and urban geopolitical processes triggering local violence and conflict (Rokem and Boano 2018), the more long-term injustices of state led spatial planning and housing policies, and, how this affects the formation of ethnic and racial segregation (Musterd and Ostendorf 2013) and everyday ordinary practices of sanctuary (Rokem 2017). In other words, shifting the geopolitical focus from the national to

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the urban scale is a timely conviction in the widely established migration literature focus concerning nation-states as the main geopolitical entities governing migration (Rokem and Fregonese 2017). This motivation extends beyond analysing the violence that border regimes inflict on migrants and refugees. Cities do not merely serve as places of diversity and acceptance of difference; they also hold the local infrastructures to accept and reject new arrivals (Sandercock 2003). A prominent example of collective moral state failure to act is the European Union's lack of a unified response to irregular migration. This enduring tragedy with numerous undocumented deaths and displaced population lacking any basic aid from increasingly anti-migrant right-wing national governments, is fuelling internal and external political disagreement across the continent (Sigona this issue).

Several conflicts in Africa, Asia and the Middle East have been ongoing for decades with Europe as the main vowed for 'promised land'. In the absence of a coordinated migration response, with each country adopting specific strategies to suit local conditions. The default policy formation of a 'Fortress Europe' is stirring the continent as a whole towards nationalist rightwing anti-migrant politics. Such, defensive national policies have shifted an even larger number of irregular migrants to seek protection away from the hostility of national authorities. The bulk of migration arriving in larger cities where local municipal sanctuary and aid from community groups can provide varying degrees of protection and services beyond the national authorities' hostile grip.

The 'European migration crisis' has shifted since its 2015 peak (Sigona, this issue), but is still having a major impact on the political imaginary of the continent. Varying conditions of local acceptance and resistance determine the fate of migrants rather than international law and national treaties. Democratic processes and decisions made by the public in referendums such as; Brexit in 2016, and, the election of right-wing nationalist Hungarian and Italian governments, drive towards the formation of exclusionary migration policy that halts any further acceptance of irregular migration and even on the political definition of 'migrant' as a unified legal category (Allen et al. 2018). The lack of capacity and political agreement by European national governments, is moving the policy agenda focus to mass detention and deportation for all new irregular migrant arrivals. The outsourcing of border practices to unstable regimes such as Libya is becoming the norm, where migrants face life threatening conditions and frequent torture and death at detention camps.

In the last two decades European nation states consider mass-influx a burden and thus favoured swift repatriation, despite evidence of a positive impact on economic development (Türk and Garlick 2016). Policy decisions regulating the capacity to welcome or deport new irregular immigrants and refugees are decided according to political agendas at the national level. The continued disagreement over a coordinated European irregular migration policy contribute to a surge in nationalist and populist politics demanding borders to be tightened and public transport infrastructures to be securitised.

The hostile national environment endorsed by the UK and other European governments promoting an aggressive pursuit of irregular migrants, is part of what Yuval-Davis et al., (2018: 239) frame as 'everyday/everywhere bordering' by the state apparatus and its institutional infrastructures towards migrants and ethnic minorities. This is shifting, more inclusive city administrations with an open approach towards ethnic diversity, to form local

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flexible migration policies at the city scale. Two examples of cities which have taken different actions in receiving those who were fortunate to survive the tortures journey across the Mediterranean are Athens and Berlin. In Athens the division of immigrants and native Greek was relatively low by international standards until 2014, mainly because of the spatial structure of the housing market. This comprised a combination of stability in occupational structures, reduced immigration, high rates of home ownership and low levels of residential mobility at the time of the crisis, as well as vertical segregation within buildings (Maloutas 2015). In recent years a large proportion of the Syrian and other Middle Eastern and African migrants have landed on Greek shores with over one million documented in 2015. As this is their first port of arrival in route to other European destinations such as Berlin and Stockholm for example, the nature of settlement differs due to its assumed transience from the other cities above, that are seen as final destinations. This has created mounting pressure on housing and has resulted in several temporary shelters to cope with the crisis, with the Athens port of Piraeus turned into a makeshift city hosting several thousands of Syrian refugees (UNHCR 2016).

There were over 1.1 million refugees arriving to Germany in 2015, whereof approximately 400,000 children mainly from Syria. The country admitted more individuals than any other country in Europe (UNHCR 2016). As a result, the pressure on major cities such as Berlin has increased, adding to what has historically predominantly been migrants arriving as guest labour with about 30% of noncitizen residents in Berlin coming from a Turkish background (Anil 2006). The German political system grants strong local powers and most decisions are taken on the municipality level (Schmidt-Eichstaedt 2001). Thus, Berlin is regarded as an autonomous 'city state' and maintains its own sovereign authority powers and legal framework which have had a deceive impact on the capacity to accommodate a large number of migrants through municipal sanctuary housing and economic aid. The lack of adequate national and international responses in managing the migration crisis has meant local municipalities some with more and others with less resources are left to lead the way in aiding refugees and asylum seekers establishing their own localised versions of "municipal foreign policy" (Hobbs 1994).

Setting aside the book's lack of urban focus, shifting back to some of the significant points made in *Violent Borders*, Jones concludes with some thought provoking proposals for the creation of a conception of an alternative world. Calling for a global movement against borders and the construction of global laws for more just employment and education conditions and the application of social safety nets for the poor and the environment. The book appeal to a wider readership lays in its political manifesto. It is a timely wake-up call to re-visit one of the most taken for granted institutions of modern politics: the 'border'. Jones' closing argument is both positively provoking and daring: violent borders are not a given condition. An alternative world where freedom for all is prioritised over security for the privileged few is possible. This alternative, nevertheless, begins with a radical redefinition of the nation-state and its current protective and violent borders to a more local focus.

Pointing towards one such re-definition, this brief text has proposed a need to shift some of

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the attention in political geography and migration studies from national militarised faultlines to more local urban geopolitical sanctuaries and rifts. Cities and their local political infrastructure provide important opportunities and support for irregular migrants, and, hold part of the key in forging a more just global politics of migration. There is growing indication that local municipalities and civil society groups are better placed to grant sanctuary and protection to irregular migrants. While national governments violent and oppressive policies directed towards marginalised and excluded migrant populations are becoming part of the norm rather than an exception. In turn, this amounts to a need for politically charged resistance against national governments and their exclusionary migration policies.

Borders, Law and Capitalism

Beste İşleyen

One of the main contributions of Reece Jones' *Violent Borders* concerns its conceptually and empirically rich engagement with the relationship between borders, law and the history of capitalism in general and that of private property in particular. In this short piece, my aim is to sketch out Jones' main arguments around this relationship while also trying to find connections with practices, policies and experiences in another geography through the specific example of the governance of refugees in Turkey. The Turkish case deserves specific attention given the ever increasing number of refugees arriving in the country and related development of national policies and international cooperation, primarily with the EU as exemplified by the 2016 EU-Turkey Statement. Turkey's governance of refugees shows how the historically contingent interaction between the national and the international works to capture mobility in ways that help move the wheels of capitalism. The discussion here is primarily based on chapter 5 and chapter 6. With the title of *Maps, Hedges, and Fences: Enclosing the Commons and Bounding the Seas*, chapter 5 traces contemporary borders back to earlier attempts in history to enclose land, territory and oceans. It does so by revisiting key historical moments, such as the Midlands Revolt that started in 1607, the Peace of Westphalia, decolonization and the newly independent states and the enclosure of the ocean. In re-reading these events, Jones examines the ways in which boundaries have served the purpose of configuring and reconfiguring space, whereby physical and structural violence has been central to the establishment of political and legal authority over people and the environment. Cautioning us against an essentialist and ahistorical understanding of boundaries 'as if they have existed eternally' (p. 117), Jones emphasizes their historical conditions of emergence, development and transformation as well as contestation.

In revisiting the Midlands Revolt, Jones points to the centrality of boundary-making in 'the enclosure of common lands into private property', which disturbed the conventional relationship between land usage and people/peasants in England (p. 101). The Magna Carta and the Charter of the Forest as 'The founding documents of England guaranteed the protection of and access to the commons' (p. 96), where 'land was conceived of as a space that might be controlled by someone but did not necessarily belong to anyone besides the king' (p. 97). A few years prior to the Midlands Revolt, important developments took place, which transformed the access to and use of common lands by all. Population growth and

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the commodification of agricultural goods were crucial but it was through practices of mapping and the physical control over space that the idea of private property took concrete shape. While new maps - available only to 'an elite group that was often limited to the monarchy, the lords and their agents' - were the visual means to draw boundaries around lands, 'hedges and fences allowed a new form of control over space to materialize on the ground' (p. 98).

The Peace of Westphalia moved a similar idea of enclosure and control to the scale of the state, through which 'the emergence of a system of borders to designate ... new zones of territorial sovereignty' (p. 106) meant the replacement of a preceding system of 'overlapping and contested claims to resources, people, and land' (p. 107). The third focus of chapter 5 is the role that artificial borders played during colonial times, which was followed by the maintenance of arbitrary forms and practices of boundary-drawing throughout the formation of post-colonial states across Africa, Asia and the Middle East. Here, Jones draws an analogy between the colonial and the post-colonial periods as regards to the interplay between resource extraction, wealth accumulation and the control and enclosure of distant lands by European states. The consequences specifically for Africa have been 'internal conflicts, the lack of economic development, and the difficulty of acquiring quality education (which) are key factors in driving many migrants to leave their homes ... and look for better opportunities elsewhere' (p. 111). The artificial boundaries in the Middle East are also at the core of internal and inter-state conflicts causing millions of people in the region to flee from violence, which can not to be reduced to armed conflict but should be studied by looking at multiple and interconnected economic, political and social origins. Finally, Jones examines the enclosure of the ocean as another example of the administration of space, where the Law of the Sea Convention (1982) provided the legal means to enlarge 'the area of sovereign state control over resources' while at the same time managing both movement and the 'commercial extraction of the resources' (p. 115). The analysis in chapter 5 forms the basis for the further exploration of the relationship between capitalism, borders and law in chapter 6 entitled *Bounding Wages, Goods, and Workers*. Jones starts with the recounting of the collapse of the Rana Plaza building in the Bangladeshi city of Savar, which is known for its evolution into a key site for the international textile industry. Having killed 1,127 people in April 2013, the incident threw into relief the ways in which the reproduction of capitalism and the accumulation of wealth are heavily reliant on income disparities and insecure and dire working conditions for populations living in certain parts of the world. Starting from the end of the 19th century as 'the golden age of capitalism' up to the present day (p. 122), 'borders have hardened to prevent the movement of workers and create piecemeal national regulations that corporations can manipulate' (p. 121-122).

This, as Jones continues, goes hand in hand with variations in national jurisdictions and restrictions imposed on human mobility through various forms of control, including passport and visa regulations and more physical types of territorial control through walls, fences and border surveillance technologies. Particularly relevant for the case of Savar are Jones's arguments concerning the transfer of capital and production to distant geographies. Jones explains how, since the 1980s, a growing number of United States (US) companies

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have relocated sites of manufacturing to those countries with different jurisdictional and regulatory authorities. This outsourcing has allowed US companies, as well as others, to eschew their respective national laws regarding workers' rights, including collective labor agreements, environmental regulations and safety at the workplace. As sovereign 'lines of distinction between different systems' (p. 128), state borders are the underlying institutions for corporations to 'capture labor' by restricting movement, which helps maximize profits (p. 132). In other words, 'borders artificially create different wages, labor pools, environmental regulations, taxes, and working conditions' (p. 138), and the containment of people's movement worsens income disparities, poverty and the horrid conditions in which capitalist production takes place in certain geographies.

In the following, I will shift the focus to the governance of refugees in Turkey and attempt to provide new insights with the goal of moving Jones's arguments relating to the relationship between law, borders and capitalism forward. Hosting the highest number of refugees in the world, Turkey exemplifies the simultaneous operation of the national border as a force of extraction and containment through state asylum policies and laws. Drawing on interviews with employers and workers of the Turkish industry along with domestic advocacy groups, Belanger and Saraçoğlu (2018) demonstrate the intertwinement of Turkish state laws and policies on the one hand, and the interests of the market forces on the other hand, in the governance of almost four million Syrian refugees residing in the country. Belanger and Saraçoğlu challenge the idea that neoliberalism has pushed the state into the background. Just the opposite, the state maintains its crucial position in devising strategies and implementing policies and measures with a view to assisting businesses and capital owners so the latter are able to endure economic crises at and beyond the national level. Already facing domestic and international pressures, Turkish businesses were severely hit by the 2018 currency and debt crisis. As I have argued elsewhere (İşleyen, 2016), the so-called 'refugee crisis' has been productive in the neoliberal sense as it opened up a discursive space for state and non-state actors to develop humanitarian recipes for refugees that are in line with the interests and expectations of market forces. For Belanger and Saraçoğlu, it has been Syrian refugee labor that has come to the rescue of the Turkish state in its pursuit of a cure for the domestic economic crisis. Similar to Jones' argument on the interplay of law and capitalism, Belanger and Saraçoğlu argue that the Turkish state's temporary protection regime specifically designed for the Syrian displaced population ensured cheap and informal refugee labor, thereby satisfying the crisis-ridden domestic businesses, whose survival has become overwhelmingly dependent on an easily replaceable refugee workforce.

A remarkable finding common to Jones's and Belanger and Saraçoğlu's findings is the significance of the textile industry as a major site of informal employment, particularly those businesses producing famous US brands. Belanger and Saraçoğlu's interviews with Turkish employers illustrate a lack of interest on the side of US companies in the domestic conditions of employment and the security of the workspace. In other words, informal refugee labor in Turkey is more than a formula to treat the wounds of the domestic economy as it also nicely dovetails with capitalist profit accumulation at the global level. Based on this, I will make two additional points. As for the first point, it is useful to come

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back to Jones's point about the relationship between borders, law and capitalism. The informalization of Syrian employment in Turkey is intertwined with limitations on human mobility through the control of national borders. In this regard, decades of Turkey-European Union (EU) cooperation in border and migration governance deserve particular attention, especially the infamous Turkey-EU Statement of March 2016. As a candidate for EU membership, Turkey has, over the last two decades, undertaken significant reforms towards the stated objective of curbing border crossings of irregular nature into Bulgaria and Greece, both of which are EU member states. The 2016 Turkey-EU Statement is both a reiteration of this goal and a further step in migration cooperation between the two parties, who agreed that Turkey would take back from Greek islands all newly arrived irregular migrants who crossed into the EU from Turkish territories⁷. What is noteworthy to point out for our discussion here is that Turkish-EU border cooperation feeds into the precarity and informality surrounding refugee employment in Turkey. If national borders serve the capturing of labor as argued by Reece Jones (pp. 132-136), Turkey's stopping of irregular mobility at its borders with the EU inevitably sustains and even exacerbates the existing exploitative and disciplinary state of refugee labor to be taken advantage of by the crisis shaken Turkish businesses and industries.

Relatedly, and as second point, Turkey's refugee policy indicates context-specific legal hierarchies in movement and labor conditions that go beyond the citizen/non-citizen dichotomy. In addition to differential rule applying to internal population circulation (İşleyen, 2018), non-citizen population in Turkey are subject to different legal and administrative categories, which determine the level of their access to basic services as well as to employment opportunities. This legal plurality is due to Turkey's geographical limitation on the Geneva Convention meaning that only those coming from Europe can become refugees in the country. For the sake of illustration, I will briefly compare Syrians with Afghan refugees. As stated above, Turkey has introduced the so-called temporary protection regime to govern Syrian refugees, who have been granted some basic rights, such as access to education and health services. Afghan refugees on the other hand are considered as asylum seekers who have the right to apply in Turkey for re-settlement in a third country through the United Nations High Commissioners for Refugees (UNHCR). Since the beginning of 2018, Turkey has been witnessing a high increase in the number of border crossings by irregular Afghans at the border with Iran⁸. It would not be wrong to assume that these Afghans are either potential irregular border crossers into the EU or new victims of exploitation in the Turkish informal economy. It is because of the fact that limited possibilities exist in Turkey for Afghans for asylum and settlement. Despite their formal right to apply for re-settlement through the UNHCR Turkey, the latter announced in June 2013 the suspension of new asylum applications from Afghans and the freezing of ongoing ones

⁷ EU-Turkey Statement, 18 March 2016, Available at: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/pressreleases/2016/03/18/eu-turkey-statement/> (accessed on 10 August 2018).

⁸ Attending an event organised by Turkey's Directorate-General for Migration Management, Turkey's Minister of Interior, Süleyman Soylu, stated that before the end of the first quarter of 2018, 29.899 irregular Afghans entered Turkey, of which 7.100 have been returned. <http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberlerturkiye-43893911> (accessed on 20 September 2018).

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on the grounds of case backlog (İçduygu and Karadağ, 2018). Furthermore, unlike Syrian refugees, Afghans are not officially permitted to live in big cities but have to reside in the so called satellite cities with meagre opportunities for employment and alternative forms of state and social support. Here again, the national border not only contains mobility but becomes integral to policies and practices of refugee labor extraction during crisis times. In short, *Violent Borders* offers empirically and conceptually thought-provoking insights into the entanglement of borders and the interests, practices and processes of capitalism with law as their backbone.

The Violence of borders has only gotten worse

Reece Jones

I wrote *Violent Borders* in 2014 and 2015, just as the so-called European migration crisis was beginning, but in the halcyon days before Brexit and the 2016 US presidential election. The idea for *Violent Borders* had emerged as I was completing my first book, *Border Walls* (Zed Books, 2012), which theorized the turn to walls in the US, Israel, and India as well as a dozen other countries in the first decade of the twenty-first century (Vallet 2019). I argued that walls were not particularly effective as a security measure, but rather were a symbol of exclusion that marked the inside-outside space of the state and the nation. As I worked on that book, I noticed the dramatic increase in the number of migrant deaths globally in the late 2000s. While in the 1980s or 1990s, there were only perhaps a few hundred migrant deaths in any year, by 2014 the International Organization for Migration counted 5,287 deaths, which, as many scholars have argued, is a problematic source and likely a severe undercount (Allen et al 2018; Brian and Laczko 2014; Heller and Pécout 2017; Slack and Martínez 2019). When *Violent Borders* came out in 2016, the IOM count was over 8,000 migrant deaths (Missing Migrants Project n.d.). In 2018, the Associated Press documented 56,800 missing or dead migrants between 2014 and 2018, a staggering 11,000 per year (AP 2018).

I set out to do three things in *Violent Borders*. First, I wanted to explain why so many people were dying at borders today, when they had not in the past. The evidence is clear that increased security and immigration restrictions do not stop people from trying to migrate, but they do send them along more dangerous routes, which results in far more deaths at borders. Second, I wanted to humanize the experiences of people making these journeys by telling their stories. Reporting that 11,000 people died per year at borders from 2014 to 2018 is important, but it is only a statistic, and statistics are easy for many people to disregard. Numbers do not have the power of the stories of a few individuals such as the two fifteen-year-olds I profile in the book: Sergio Hernandez Guereca, who was joking around with three friends before he was killed by the US Border Patrol at the El Paso-Ciudad Juarez border in 2011, or Felani Khatun who was killed by the Indian Border Security Force at the Bangladesh border in 2010 as her father looked on, helpless to do anything to save his daughter. The final question of the book is whether the violence of borders today is a new and unique phenomenon. I argue that it is new only in the scale and location of the violence, but that it is tied to past systems that protected privileges of a wealthy few by

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restricting the movement of the many. In the past, slavery, indentured servitude, poor laws, and vagrancy laws protected privileges in a similar way to passports, citizenship documents, immigration rules, and border walls do today.

These three reviews and engagements with the book provide useful analysis and critiques, as well as productive extensions of how the argument can be applied elsewhere. One of the most frequent critiques of *Violent Borders* is that it misses the particularity of specific borders and borderlands. This point is made by two of the reviews here. Sigona writes “The breath and spread of historical examples and empirical case studies makes the book a stimulating and engaging reading, although at times a bit bird-eyed on details, with idiosyncrasies and nuances lost in the process.” Rokem similarly notes “With such an extensive global overview digging down to the devil in the details and bringing out some of the local nuances is sometimes overlooked.” This is undoubtedly a feature of this book. One of the strengths of the disciplines of geography and border studies are the careful and detailed local studies of individual borders. Beyond the many studies of the US-Mexico and EU borderlands, some excellent examples from other places around the world are Hosna Shewly’s work on the India Bangladesh border (2013), the articles in this special issue on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border (Raza and Shapiro 2019), Claire Beaugrand’s work on borders and Kuwaiti identity (Beaugrand 2017) or Martin Doevenspeck’s work on the Congo-Rwanda border (Doevenspeck 2011). However, as I watched the turn to border walls and the global phenomenon of migrant deaths, I felt like I was in a unique position to write a comparative account, drawing together these disparate strands into a broader global study. *Violent Borders* is a big picture overview of the global situation that also runs through several hundred years of history. Inevitably, some details will be overlooked or flattened out in this approach, but the comparative insights are valuable and make it worthwhile. So, these critiques are correct, but miss the point.

Just as writing *Border Walls* led to the questions that drove *Violent Borders*, the process of writing about migrant deaths at borders led me to two other projects in order to fill in what I saw as the gaps or oversights of the book. The first project expanded on the conclusion, which lays out some general principles for how to address the violence of borders: freedom of movement across borders, global rules for worker protections, and global environmental regulation. I gathered together an interdisciplinary group of scholars and activists to flesh out what a world of open borders would look like, which became *Open Borders: In Defense of Free Movement* (University of Georgia Press 2019).

For me, the biggest gap in the book came into focus as *Violent Borders* went to press in 2016. I watched with alarm as the presidential campaign of Donald Trump rode the slogan “build the wall” and the racial animus of white nationalism to the presidency of the United States. As President, Donald Trump has continued to rely on the tropes of the racist right wing by describing immigration as an invasion and accusing immigrants of being murders, rapists, and criminals. His supporters in the media go further talking openly about racist theories of replacement and white genocide. *Violent Borders* mentions the power of othering and the dehumanization of migrants, but does not focus on the role of race in immigration debates. As I became more aware of this gap, I immediately dove into the archives of American immigration law and found startling parallels between the first

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immigration laws in the United States, such as the Page Act of 1875 and the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 that explicitly banned racial groups, and the racially charged antiimmigrant rhetoric today.

My next book will tell the story of race and immigration laws in America from Chinese Exclusion to the Muslim ban in order to delineate the racist origins of immigration restrictions at borders. That book will be out in 2021 with Beacon Press. Now that *Violent Borders* has been out for three years, it has been interesting to see where it is read and how it can take on a life of its own. Two of these reviews demonstrate how the idea of violent borders can travel. Rokem asks us to think more about how the border is implanted in urban spaces while İşleyen emphasizes the connection of borders and capital by detailing Turkey's governance of people from Syria. Rokem points out that while much of the focus on borders and migration studies is on the edges of the state, the impact of recent asylum seekers and refugees is often in urban areas. Consequently, he correctly suggests that simply allowing more freedom of movement is only part of the solution. A more just world would also include expanded worker protections in both receiving and sending countries as well as more robust programs for providing aid when people arrive. The reaction to arrivals also poses interesting questions, as Rokem suggests. While media narratives often focus on the rise of the far right, and there were indeed substantial increases in their support in countries ranging from Sweden to Austria, very few of these parties actually won elections. On the other end of the spectrum, there is evidence that suggests in spite of the anti-immigrant talk, more people are open to more immigration now. In the US, for example, in 2019 a Pew survey found 62% of people said that immigrants make the country stronger, which was the highest number ever. In 1994, the same survey found only 34% of Americans agreed with that statement (Pew Survey 2019). A fertile ground for additional research is on the geography of these different views of immigrants within particular countries, regions, and cities. Similarly, İşleyen focuses on the connections between neoliberal economies and border control. Although research has repeatedly demonstrated that immigrants have a positive impact on the receiving community (Clemens 2011), border controls also benefit corporations by controlling labor and suppressing wages.

As İşleyen writes “the containment of people’s movement worsens income disparities, poverty and the horrid conditions in which capitalist production takes place in certain geographies.” It has been gratifying to see the term “violent borders” migrate out of geography and take root in other areas. *Violent Borders* has seeped into the activist lexicon as a something to protest against and was even the title of a documentary film. Somewhat surprisingly, most of my speaking invitations after the book was published have been at universities that do not even offer geography. However, I am a geographer at heart and it was an honor to receive the inaugural PolGRG/Political Geography Journal book award. Thanks for the recognition of the book and for these three deep engagements with it.

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