

BOOK REVIEWS

Jansen, Yolande, Robin Celikates, and Joost de Bloois, eds. *The Irregularization of Migration in Contemporary Europe: Detention, Deportation, Drowning*, United Kingdom: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2015, 238 pp.

Review by Sylvie BURIANOVÁ

The Irregularization of Migration in Contemporary Europe edited by Yolande Yansen, Robin Celikates and Joost de Bloois, brings together border studies experts across Europe to reflect on the transformation of borders, we are witnessing today. The aim of the book is to “*rethink the basic schemes through which we perceive and conceptualize migration and its irregularization*”. Contributing authors mainly from the field of political science and sociology demonstrate in eleven essays that the change borders and our perception of the nature of them have been undergoing is an underlying cause for the growing impression of migration as ‘not regular’ and thus the need to strengthen border controls.

This book is a great contribution to the recent efforts to deflect from the meaning of borders just as protective walls and fences. By taking more theoretical approach it stands out in prevailing deliberation about the design of European migration and border policy as it goes behind this debate and raises the question of the meaning of erecting borders and their significance for our interpretation of inclusion and freedom of movement.

The focus of the book is on European external borders. The events in the Mediterranean region are showcased for their prominence to be an example of the “*deportation global regime*” much deeper rooted than in the recent dramatized increase in immigration flows to Europe. Europe, in this case more so equated with

the European Union, is nevertheless unique from the viewpoint of the authors due to the substantial shifting of sovereignty which takes form of the European integration project. The contest accompanying this transfer of power vent into practices carried out at the southern border.

The volume is well structured into three thematic parts, each of them focusing on different aspect accompanying the transformation of borders. At the first glance, the selection of topics covered can look at first glance unsystematic and confusing, however, the wide range appropriately demonstrates the premise of the book from many angles and puts together the intended image of European immigration management. In this sense, the volume connects elastically the past (Jansen, Chapter 2; Buckel, Chapter 9), the present (Karakayali, Chapter 3; Jeandesboz, Chapter 6; Dijstelbloem, Chapter 7) and the future (Amaya-Castro, Chapter 10; Peeren, Chapter 11). First chapters attempt to set the institution of border into a wider context of identity, race and liberal democracy. Following parts centre on concrete ways the irregularization of migration in Europe takes place and the last third of the book introduces the expanding modes of resistance against this phenomenon.

The book's premise is the ongoing transformation of borders. Borders do not longer represent just things like erected walls and fences. Their aim is not to block the entry but rather select who can entry and how fast. In their principal, borders are liquid, selective and regulatory instruments of biopolitics. Their character reflects the struggles for control, not only between the member states and the Union institutions but also between NGOs and private sphere, caused by liberalization of the borders complementing the integration process (Bigo, Chapter 4; Jeandesboz, Chapter 6; Dijstelbloem, Chapter 7). Ultimately, borders are "*complex social institutions*" as they are shaped by the interaction of these actors and by the geopolitical reality combined with its cultural inheritance (Mezzadra, Chapter 8; De Genova, Chapter 1). The violence stemming from this interaction that accompanies border controls is understood not only with regard to physical harm but also as tracking, screening and subsequent stigmatization of immigrants (Jeandesboz, Chapter 6).

The selective feature of borders implies that they divide people not only in terms of geographical location but also in terms of their rights and encompassment. As De Genova says: "*Borders cross everyone, including those who never cross borders*" (De Genova, Chapter 1). Their selectivity constitutes



irregularization as opposed to inclusion in the form of citizenship. These two are mutually constitutive conditions as irregularization of migration is *“the active and tactical constitution of noncitizenship”*. Nonetheless, authors of this book seek to deemphasize the role of citizenship in migration studies and open space for new concepts that will enable formulation of inclusion behind European cultural and normative dimensions of citizenship (Mezzandra, Chapter 8; Jansen, Chapter 2).

The main contribution of the book is the formation and application of new concepts in migration and border studies. Worth highlighting is the *“capture”* of Jeandesboz (Chapter 6) which is supposed to be an alternative to *“blockage”* as it accentuates the permeability of borders and the shift towards new forms of control. The *“bordered identity”* of De Genova (Chapter 1) then directly links citizens and deportability and underscore the complex set of relations borders create. Engaging is the work with the concept of *“visibility”* primarily carried out by Amaya-Castro (Chapter 10) and Peeren (Chapter 11). Trivially said, describing the rising of the movement *“We are here”* in Netherlands Amaya-Castro proves how fundamental is *what* can be seen and Peeren analysing the recent attempts to refocalize migration, reminds the importance of *how* it is seen. Two points need to be underscored here. First, the degree of visibility of migrants has a direct influence on formulation of migration policies. The pressure on irregular migrants to stay invisible is one of the instruments of control over populations which European migration policies employ. Second point is that we will never be able to understand and observe fully until we are aware of the limitations of our views. This means simply that looking through the eyes of one subject is not reliable.

Furthermore, the Eurocentric outlook on migration is limited per se. The book fittingly demonstrates that the externalization of border controls, aka *“rebordering”*, still carries the logic of postcolonial imperialism and present Europe as an ideal of liberal democracy with perspective of citizenship with normative and cultural implications. These undertones are displayed in reality in the treatment of Roma community in the European Union (van Baar, Chapter 5). As De Genova (Chapter 1) argues, though, citizenship was proven to be a flexible category in the past. Hence, the crucial message of the volume is that before we try to formulate common European migration policy we should rethink our understanding of citizenship with its link to the freedom of movement and come with more suitable alternatives for studying contemporary international migration.

The strength of this book lies in its theoretical work intended to expand our

comprehension of recent developments in international migration. Building on Foucault's biopolitics and emphasizing the human's perception as the creator of "objective" reality the authors of this volume present irregularity as an instrument of control flourishing in contemporary struggles for power at European borders. The tone of the book is rather critical and even though it aims to be especially an epistemological tool it does not present more specific proposals how to revise implemented migration policies. It would have been beneficial if the authors connected their conceptual work with more explicit schemes how to affect the policy in practice. There is also little space dealing with the causes of European immigration and migrants' and policy makers' motivation. Overall, mainly aimed at migration scholars and researchers, *The Irregularization of Migration in Contemporary Europe* shows only a narrow picture of immigration in Europe highlighting the exploitation and deportation practices, nevertheless, it fulfils its set objectives and it extends the conceptual framework for examining the predominant trends in current migration regimes.