



UvA-DARE (Digital Academic Repository)

Reading Reece Jones's *Violent Borders: Refugees and the Right to Move*. 4

Borders, law and capitalism [Review of: Jones (2017) Violent Borders, Refugees and the Right to Move]

İşleyen, B.

DOI

[10.1016/j.polgeo.2019.102129](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2019.102129)

Publication date

2020

Document Version

Final published version

Published in

Political Geography

License

Article 25fa Dutch Copyright Act (<https://www.openaccess.nl/en/in-the-netherlands/you-share-we-take-care>)

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

İşleyen, B. (2020). *Reading Reece Jones's Violent Borders: Refugees and the Right to Move*. 4: Borders, law and capitalism [Review of: Jones (2017) *Violent Borders, Refugees and the Right to Move*]. *Political Geography*, 79, Article 102129. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2019.102129>

General rights

It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations

If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: <https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact>, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.

UvA-DARE is a service provided by the library of the University of Amsterdam (<https://dare.uva.nl>)



ELSEVIER

Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](#)

Political Geography

journal homepage: <http://www.elsevier.com/locate/polgeo>


Political Geography

Review forum

Reading Reece Jones's *Violent Borders: Refugees and the Right to Move*. Verso, New York and London (2017). 224 pp £6.99, (paperback), ISBN: 9781784784744

¹ <https://polgrg.wordpress.com/2017/06/15/the-polgrg-book-award-2017-2018-in-coordination-with-political-geography-journal/>.

² <https://polgrg.wordpress.com/2019/09/06/the-polgrg-book-award-2019-2020-in-conjunction-with-political-geography-journal/>.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2019.102129>

Received 22 November 2019; Received in revised form 5 December 2019; Accepted 6 December 2019

Available online 6 January 2020

0962-6298/© 2019 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

4. Borders, law and capitalism

4.1. *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 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 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 intertwining 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 \(2018\)](#) 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 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 territories.⁶ 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 Iran.⁷ 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 on the grounds of case backlog (İduygu & 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.

⁶ EU-Turkey Statement, 18 March 2016, Available at: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/03/18/eu-turkey-statement/> (accessed on 10 August 2018).

⁷ Attending an event organised by Turkey's Directorate-General for Migration Management, Turkey's Minister of Interior, Süleyman Soyulu, 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/haberler-tur-kiye-43893911> (accessed on 20 September 2018).

Declaration of competing interest

We declare with this submission that there is no financial/personal interest or belief that could affect our objectivity. There is no conflict of interest that we are aware of.

Acknowledgements

This forum stems from the first edition of the PolGRG/Political Geography Book Award (2018). The authors thank the Political Geography editors for providing support to the Award and a platform for the forum; the Book Award judges for their selfless dedication; the authors of this forum for their precious availability and participation and in particular to Reece Jones, who welcomed the idea of the forum and engaged with it so elegantly.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2019.102129>.

References

- Allen, W., Anderson, B., Van Hear, N., Sumption, M., Düvell, F., Hough, J., et al. (2018). Who counts in crises? The new geopolitics of international migration and refugee governance. *Geopolitics*, 23(1), 217–243.
- Anderson, B. (2012). 'Where's the harm in that? Immigration enforcement, trafficking, and the protection of migrants' rights'. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 56(9), 1241–1257.
- Anderson, B., Sharma, N., & Wright, C. (2009). Editorial: Why No borders? *Refugee. Canada's Journal on Refugees*, 26(2), 5–18.
- Anil, M. (2006). The new German citizenship law and its impact on German demographics: Research notes. *Popular Research Policy Review*, 2, 443–463.
- Beaugrand, C. (2017). Borders and spatial imaginaries in the Kuwaiti identity. *Geopolitics*, 23(3), 544–564.
- Bélanger, D., & Saraçoğlu, C. (2018). The governance of Syrian refugees in Turkey: The state-capital nexus and its discontents. *Mediterranean Politics*.
- Benjaminsen, T. A., Costalli, S., Grove, K., McConnell, F., Menga, F., Steinberg, P. E., et al. (2019). Beyond bibliometrics. *Political Geography*, 68(January), A1–A2.
- Berg, L., Huijbens, E. H., & Gutzon Larsen, H. (2016). Producing anxiety in the neoliberal university: Producing anxiety. *Canadian Geographer/Le Géographe Canadien*, 60(2), 168–180.
- Bialasiewicz, L. (2015). An urban geopolitics. In V. Mamadouh (Ed.), *Urban Europe. Fifty tales of the city*. (pp. 317–322). Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Bloch, A., Sigona, N., & Zetter, R. (2014). *Sans Papiers: The economic and social lives of young undocumented migrants*. London: Pluto Press.
- Brian, T., & Laczko, F. (2014). *Fatal journeys: Tracking lives lost during migration*. International Organization for Migration.
- Clemens, M. (2011). Economics and emigration: Trillion-dollar bills on the sidewalk. *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 25(3), 83–106.
- Crawley, H., Düvell, F., Jones, K., McMahon, S., & Sigona, N. (2018). *Unravelling Europe's 'migration crisis'*. Bristol: Policy Press.
- De Genova, N. (2005). *Working the boundaries: Race, space and "Illegality" in Mexican Chicago*. Duke University Press. Full text in Italian available here: <https://www.camera.it/temiap/documentazione/temi/pdf/1170328.pdf?1563793683168>. (Accessed 22 July 2019).
- De Genova, N. (2014). 'Citizenship's shadow: Obscene inclusion, abject belonging, or the regularities of migration 'irregularities' in Gonzales R G and Sigona N (2014) within and beyond citizenship (pp. 17–34). Routledge.
- Derrida, J. (2001). *On cosmopolitanisms and forgiveness*. London: Routledge.
- Doevenspeck, m. (2011). Constructing the border from below: Narratives from the Congolese–Rwandan state boundary. *Political Geography*, 30(3), 129–142.
- Elden, S. (2010). Thinking territory historically. *Geopolitics*, 15(4), 757–761.
- Elden, S. (2013a). *The birth of territory*. Chicago ; London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Elden, S. (2013b). How should we do the history of territory? *Territory, Politics, Governance*, 1(1), 5–20.
- Hamid, M. (2018). *Exit West*. London: Penguin.
- Heller, C., & Pécoud, A. (2017). Counting migrant deaths at the borders: From civil society's counter-statistics to (inter)governmental recuperation. *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales*, 33(2), 63–90.

- Hinnant, L., & Janssen, B. (2018). *56,800 migrant dead and missing*. Associated Press. November 1 <https://www.apnews.com/e509e15f8b074b1d984f97502eab6a25>.
- Hobbs, H. (1994). *City hall goes abroad: The foreign policy of local politics*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- International Organization for Migration. Website for the missing migrant project. N.d <https://missingmigrants.iom.int/>.
- İşleyen, B. (2016). Rendering space and people economic: Naguib Sawiris' refugee 'country'. *Mediterranean Politics*, 21(2), 326–330.
- İşleyen, B. (2018). Transit mobility governance in Turkey. *Political Geography*, 62 (January), 23–32.
- İçduygu, A., & Karadağ, S. (2018). Afghan migration through Turkey to Europe: Seeking refuge, forming diaspora, and becoming citizens. *Turkish Studies*, 19(3), 482–502.
- Jones, R. (2012). *Borders walls: Security and the war on terror in the United States, India, and Israel*. London: Zed Books.
- Jones, R. (2016). *Violent borders: Refugees and the right to move*. London: Verso Books.
- Open borders. In Jones, R. (Ed.), *Defense of free movement*, (2019). Athens: University of Georgia Press.
- Karakayali, S., & Rigo, E. (2010). Mapping the European space of circulation. In N. De Genova, & N. Peutz (Eds.), *The deportation regime*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.
- Maloutas, T. (2015). Socioeconomic segregation in Athens at the beginning of the 21st century. In T. Tamaru, S. Marcińczak, M. van Ham, & S. Musterd (Eds.), *East meets West: New perspectives on socio-economic segregation in European capital cities* (pp. 156–185). London: Routledge.
- Mbembe, A. (2019). *Deglobalization*. Eurozine. <https://www.eurozine.com/deglobalization/>. (Accessed 8 July 2019).
- McMahon, S., & Sigona, N. (2018). 'Navigating the central mediterranean: Disentangling migration governance and migrant journeys'. *Sociology*, 52(3), 497–514.
- Musterd, S., & Ostendorf, W. (2013). *Urban segregation and the welfare state: Inequality and exclusion in western cities*. Routledge.
- Pew Research. (2019). *Majority of American continue to say immigrants strengthen the U.S.* <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/01/31/majority-of-americans-continue-to-say-immigrants-strengthen-the-u-s/>.
- Qato, M. (2018). A primer for a new terrain: Palestinian schooling in Jordan, 1950. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 48(1), 16–32.
- Qato, M. (2019). Forms of retrieval: Social scale, citation, and the archive on the Palestinian left. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 51(2), 312–315.
- Ramadan, A., & Pascucci, E. (2017). Urban geopolitics of refuge, 2017. In J. Rokem, S. Fregonese, A. Ramadan, E. Pascucci, G. Rosen, I. Charney, et al. (Eds.), *Interventions in urban geopolitics* (Vol 61, pp. 253–262). Political Geography.
- Raza, S., & Shapiro, M. (2019). Introduction: Politics on border – critical reflections on the Pakistan-Afghanistan borderland. *Geopolitics*, 24(2), 277–283.
- Rokem, J. (2017). Ordinary urban geopolitics, 2017. In J. Rokem, S. Fregonese, A. Ramadan, E. Pascucci, G. Rosen, I. Charney, et al. (Eds.), *Interventions in urban geopolitics* (Vol 61, pp. 253–262). Political Geography.
- Rokem, J., & Boano, C. (Eds.). (2018). *Urban geopolitics: Rethinking planning in contested cities*. London: Routledge.
- Rokem, J., Fregonese, S., Ramadan, A., Pascucci, E., Rosen, G., Charney, I., et al. (2017). Interventions in urban geopolitics. *Political Geography*, 61, 253–262.
- Sandercock, L. (2003). *Cosmopolis II: Mongrel cities of the 21st century* (London and New York, Continuum).
- Schmidt – Eichstaedt, G. (2001). National level planning and institution in the Federal Republic of Germany. In R. Alterman (Ed.), *National-level planning in democratic countries: An international comparison*. Liverpool University Press.
- Shewly, H. (2013). Abandoned spaces and bare life in the enclaves of the India–Bangladesh border. *Political Geography*, 32, 23–31.
- Sigona, N. (2016). 'There is no refugee crisis in the UK'. *Postcard from*. available at: <https://nandosigona.info/2016/04/12/there-is-no-refugee-crisis-in-the-uk/>.
- Sigona, N. (2018). 'The politics of naming in Europe's 'refugee crisis''. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 41(3), 456–460.
- Slack, J., & Martínez, D. (2019). The geography of migrant death: Violence on the US–Mexico border. In K. Mitchell, R. Jones, & J. Fluri (Eds.), *Handbook on critical geographies of migration*. London: Edward Elgar.
- Tazzioli, M., & Walters, W. (2016). 'The sight of migration: Governmentality, visibility and Europe's contested borders'. *Global Society*, 30(3), 445–464.
- Türk, V., & Garlick, M. (2016). From burdens and responsibilities to opportunities: The comprehensive refugee response framework and a global compact on refugees. *International Journal of Refugee Law*, 28 (4), 656–678, 1.
- UNHCR. (2016). *United nations refugee agency website*. www.unhcr.org/uk/eur/ope-emergency.html. (Accessed October 2019).
- UNHCR. (2019). *Refugee situations: Operational portal*. <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean>.
- Vallet, E. (2019). 20190 Border walls and the illusion of deterrence. In R. Jones (Ed.), *Open borders: In defense of free movement* (pp. 156–168). Athens: University of Georgia Press.
- White, B. T. (2019). A grudging rescue: France, the Armenians of Cilicia, and the history of humanitarian evacuations. *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development*, 10(1), 1–27.
- Yuval-Davis, N., Wemyss, G., & Cassidy, K. (2018). Everyday bordering, belonging and the reorientation of British immigration legislation. *Sociology*, 52(2), 228–244.
- Zetter, R. (1991). Labelling refugees: Forming and transforming a bureaucratic identity. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 4(issue 1), 39–62, 1991, Sigona, N (2018) 'The politics of naming in Europe's 'refugee crisis'', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. 41 (3): 456-460.

Sara Fregonese

School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences, University of

Birmingham, B15 2TT, UK

E-mail address: s.fregonese@bham.ac.uk.

Beste İşleyen

University of Amsterdam, Netherlands

Jonathan Rokem

University of Kent, United Kingdom

Nando Sigona

University of Birmingham, United Kingdom