



## Migration and globalization: a tragic tale

Olivier Thomas

**Reviewed:** Marc Bernardot. 2012. *Captures*, Bellecombe-en-Bauges: Éditions du Croquant; Migreurop. 2012. *Atlas des migrants en Europe*, Paris: Éditions Armand Colin Atlas.

*At a time when flows of capital, goods and information are increasing, more and more material, ideological and institutional obstacles are limiting the movements of international migrants. Two works published in 2012 propose a critical analysis of this state control of inward migrants.*

The works of Marc Bernardot and the Migreurop network provide two complementary views that enable us to grasp the political, economic and social stakes of Western nations' migration policies, and more specifically those of European countries. These policies – restrictive and militarised – serve not so much to reinforce borders as to redefine the place of foreigners in our societies.

In *Captures*, Marc Bernardot summarises several years of research dedicated to migration policy. For this sociologist, the reinforcement of border controls at the entry points of Western nations in recent decades has gradually revealed a movement towards a greater militarisation of the issue of migration. This concise (189 pages), jargon-free work provides an original analysis of this phenomenon. The author first of all addresses the concomitant transformations of state structures and of the way foreign nationals are managed in the West (Part I), before examining the role played by the capitalist economic system over the last 50 years in the enforcement of a war against migrants (Part II), and finally the cultural dimension of the power relationship between “Westerners” and “foreigners” (Part III). The author's analysis develops the metaphor of the “mourning wars” (p. 19; *guerres de capture* in French, literally “capture wars”) that took place within Iroquois confederations between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The aim is clearly to underline the warlike and economic dimensions of the migration controls implemented by Western nations today. Indeed, in Marc Bernardot's view, the anthropological model of the mourning wars, based on the mobilisation of men captured from the enemy, can today be transposed wholesale to Western societies:

“The current methods used to manage migratory movements consist of obtaining workers from peripheral areas and reinforcing border controls at the same time, before proceeding to deport a portion of these migrants with the aim of controlling and destabilising them.” (p. 22)

In this way, Western societies redefine their relationships with foreign nationals through the prism of migration. The current construction of otherness takes place via a system of arrests and expulsions of undocumented migrants, via the deregulation of employment, and via the spread of a culture of “mourning wars” that seeks to clearly define the boundaries of the national social space. By proceeding in this way, Western states perpetuate “colonial and imperial models as much in terms of governmentality and exploitation as in terms of class, ‘race’ and gender relations and relationships to space” (p. 24).

The *Atlas des migrants en Europe* is the result of collective work by the members of the Migreurop network, composed of researchers and/or activists. Directed by Olivier Clochard, a geographer and research officer at the CNRS (French National Centre for Scientific Research), this second edition is a revised and updated version of the work produced for the 2009 *Atlas*. This latest edition has been reorganised, offering the reader a critical view of the architecture of migration policies in Europe. Immigration control measures, having dispensed with the traditional border model, now increasingly tend to be founded on a large-scale network-based model. The authors approach this question from four different thematic angles: barriers to globalised migration; the protectionism of European states regarding movements of populations; detention as the central measure of European immigration policies; and, lastly, the effects of such policies in sending areas and transitional areas. Each of these approaches sheds light on a particular aspect of migration control policies – for example, the case of unaccompanied minors in Europe (pp. 26–28), the border security economy (pp. 68–71), the changing geography of open and closed detention centres in Europe and beyond (pp. 80–83), or the number of people who die during the migration process (pp. 134–137). The text complements the many maps in the atlas, and from time to time incorporates other documents as well, such as graphs, charts and photographs. Furthermore, a critical chronology of European migration policies has been added to this second edition. This original summary measures the rising frequencies of both political declarations and changes to the European legal framework, rendering it more complex, as well as operational border control measures.

### **Detention centres and confinement at the heart of control measures**

The control of human mobilities (marked by a striking inequality between the elites and the rest of the population) is currently an integral part of the “strategies coordinated at national and international level” (Bernardot 2012, p. 11). In concrete terms, Western nations have passed legislation enabling them to extend their monitoring and surveillance networks targeting foreign nationals. They have also created military and police bodies, in both the public and private sectors, that work together to control land, sea and air borders. Finally, they have developed a “large-scale internment-based system” (Bernardot 2012, p. 14) that forms the core of these measures. The *Atlas des migrants en Europe* proffers a critical analysis of this architecture of migration policies, particularly with respect to its geographical dimensions. From the heart of the Schengen Area to the rest of the world, the authors show how, in the space of just a few decades, Europe has managed to implement the material, technological and human resources necessary to monitor non-residents and control undesirable populations at its fringes. Today, the migration control policies enforced by the European Union are part of a vast, international raft of network-based measures.

The two works converge in particular on the following point: the confinement of foreign nationals is at the centre of Western nations’ migration management systems. Open and closed detention centres, numbers of which have multiplied in recent decades both at the margins of and within Europe (as well as in North America, Australia, etc.), are the physical embodiment of administrative, legal and political measures that seek to receive, sort, control and deport foreigners (Migreurop 2012, p. 80). In 2000, Migreurop identified 324 detention centres in Europe and the Mediterranean region; in 2011, this figure had grown to 420. As the authors of the *Atlas* remind us, the functions of these centres are almost always vague and ambiguous. The authorities generally differentiate between reception centres and detention centres, but the same centre can, in practice, accommodate individuals whose differing statuses indicate their position in the “capture” process: asylum seekers, rejected claimants, “illegal” or “irregular” immigrants, etc. In all cases, the places in which they are confined are there to enable the arrest of “undesirable” individuals upstream and the isolation of these populations downstream.

## **“Capturing” foreign nationals, or the migration control business**

The construction and management of closed detention centres now forms the backbone of the border security economy. Major industrial groups have managed to use their experience (in building hotels or prisons, for instance) to win tenders from the French interior ministry. This is the case for the Bouygues group, which, through its subsidiaries, has been selected to build several administrative detention centres in Lyon, Marseille, Nîmes, Rennes and other cities (Migreurop 2012, pp. 68–69) – and the same dynamics can be observed across the West. Border surveillance and the management of foreign nationals is an economic opportunity for the private sector, which has managed, in the space of a few years, to form profitable alliances with the public sector:

“The sovereign functions mobilised in the ‘mourning wars’ are increasingly being privatised. Private companies intervene at various stages of these policies with regard to surveillance and detection, arrests, incarceration, and transport, all of which are now subject to the laws of the market” (Bernardot 2012, p. 77).

The implementation of migration control policies thus involves more and more privatisation as a result of the development of a significant market, whether it is for managing foreign nationals in detention, developing information and biometric technologies, or using military equipment (drones, helicopters, frigates, etc.). And business does not stop at the border, as the other – and probably most important – issue at stake, that of “capturing” migrants, depends very much on the ability of Western economies to integrate new arrivals as a flexible and disciplined workforce:

“For those that initiated this global action, it is a question of building up a new light infantry of capital, formed of ‘illegalised’ and deportable workers, and adapted to the deregulation of economic systems. This new gendered and globalised proletariat is used as an army of comfort at the service of world elites, there to carry out exposed and degrading tasks, and serves to redefine the intimate and sexual boundaries of a new racial order” (Bernardot 2012, p. 25).

In this way, the author of *Captures* shows how the figure of the “illegal immigrant” is today closely linked to that of the insecure worker. He proposes a highly pertinent analysis of the position occupied by these “super-workers” in our societies, whether in the food, catering, tourism or transport sectors. Marc Bernardot considers the examples of care-related jobs and prostitution, and shows in particular how categorisations by gender, social class and race play a key role in the strategies for recruiting and controlling migrants who come to form what he calls the “army of comfort of globalisation” (Bernardot 2012, p. 103; Falquet *et al.* 2010).

## **Migration and the importance of sharing knowledge**

Both the works presented here are essential reading for anyone who wishes to understand the current dynamics of migration at play across Europe and the Western world. The critical view that the authors bring regarding migration policies (and their consequences), founded on extensive empirical research, most probably contributes to the “renewal of paradigms” that Smain Laacher talks about in his *Dictionnaire de l’immigration en France*:

“The issues surrounding migration are of great political and scientific importance: politically because state, regional and international institutions take decisions practically every day that affect the immediate and future lives of millions of non-nationals (single men and families); and scientifically because the accumulation of empirical data and innovative research leads, to a

greater or lesser extent, to a renewal of paradigms and therefore to different ways of addressing the issue of how foreign nationals are dealt with” (Laacher 2012, p. 39).

Bearing this in mind, if researchers have a responsibility to produce knowledge in order to stimulate the debate on migration, then the dissemination of research will most probably provide some of the leverage necessary to change the status and conditions of the women and men at the heart of international migration.

### **Bibliography**

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