

## BOOK REVIEW

# Ambrosini, Maurizio, Cinalli, Manlio and Jacobson, David (eds.) 2020. *Migration, Borders and Citizenship: Between Policy and Public Spheres*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. 309 pp

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**Keywords:** Migration; Borders; Citizenship

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The book *Migration, Borders and Citizenship: Between Policy and Public Spheres*, edited by Ambrosini, Cinalli, and Jacobson, is a volume that is both theoretically challenging and empirically rich. It proposes to address the relationship between borders and citizenship in a multilevel governance setting where policy at different levels interacts – in cooperation or in conflict – with the public sphere and its various actors. The book gathers authors from different disciplines (chiefly sociologists but also lawyers and geographers) who, resorting to different qualitative methods, tackle a wealth of interesting issues, such as *inter alia*: borders in the European Union (EU) and in the larger Euro-Mediterranean region (Chapter 3), the contorted situation of the Dreamers in the United States (Chapter 4), the roles of medical expertise in the EU's hotspots (Chapter 7), and the narratives surrounding the construction of the French–Italian border in a historical perspective (Chapter 8).

This brief review does not do justice to the variety of contributions, but selects some of the main take-aways the book offers for academics and students interested in migration and governance. In the lines that follow, I first present the theoretical contribution of the book and notably the original conceptualization of borders as seams stitching entities together rather than dividing them. Second, I outline some of the empirical findings of interest, which I group in two categories: one that reflects the local turn in migration policies while nuancing the role of local authorities, and another that provides insights in the activities of non-organized civil society as actors of solidarity.

From the theoretical standpoint, the book proposes a range of approaches to the border–citizenship relationship. While borders are looked at as limits between territories, which consequently determines membership to the citizenry, they are also considered as less tangible walls that may erect within the state and entail different treatment between natives and foreigners or between different categories of citizens. But, the key conceptual contribution

of the book lies with Cinalli and Jacobson's contribution (Chapter 2). They propose to depart from the roles of exclusion and inclusion that borders traditionally play – which is very interestingly portrayed in De Nuzzo's chapter (Chapter 8) – to adopt a less-conventional, post-national definition of borders. As Cinalli and Jacobson posit, if they have historically played an essential role in determining membership to the citizenry, the multidimensional nature of the concept of citizenship (membership but also the practices of citizenship as well as its purpose) puts into question the role of borders as containers of the various forms of social, cultural, and economic association. The growth of social transnational networks, intersecting across borders (take, for instance, the increase of dual citizenships, the growth of international law or economic exchanges), bear witness to the role of borders as 'Global Seams' stitching states together rather than dividing them (p. 40).

From the empirical standpoint, this book is in line with the growing literature on multilevel governance of migration policies. Migration policy is not decided by the state alone but includes a myriad of actors, which may influence its direction. Goodwin-White's chapter (Chapter 4), which touches upon the integration of irregular migrants in the United States, is very interesting in that regard. Interestingly, whilst a good deal of the literature has focused on the inclusive role of local authorities (think of the numerous studies on the sanctuary cities; see Delgado 2018; Bauder 2016), this book goes the other way and points at the role of local policies in erecting further borders that include or exclude migrants and asylum seekers. Marchetti's chapter (Chapter 11) illustrates local authorities' reaction towards the reception of asylum seekers in Italy and their attempt to eschew the installation of accommodation facilities on their territories. She outlines the recurrence of five prevalent types of discourses: nationalistic, securitarian, bureaucratic, assumptive (asylum seekers are bogus refugees that should not be accommodated in reception centres), utilitarian, and paternalistic. In a similar fashion, Ambrosini focuses on the adoption of local policies of exclusion on the part of Italian cities. These can entail exclusion from social benefits, preventing the opening of worship places or limiting the opening of so-called ethnic stores and restaurants. These practices, however, do not go unchallenged. Civil society organizations resort to a battery of means – advocacy, protest but also provision of services – to try and include foreigners; thus, transforming local policies in what Ambrosini refers to as a 'battleground' (p. 197). On a different note, Oomen and Leenders (Chapter 12) shift the focus to the Netherlands, and, instead of pointing the exclusionary role of local authorities, they focus on the room for manoeuvre local authorities enjoy in implementing national civic integration measures. They notably show how different practices, involving different constellations of actors (including municipalities, non-governmental organizations [NGOs] but also commercial companies), convey different understandings of citizenship. To most actors, however, attention for the pragmatic challenges faced by newcomers seem to be more important than the attention for Dutch values.

Besides the role of local authorities, the book looks into the mobilization of non-organized civil society; individuals who, either through facilitating passage across borders or providing first-necessity aid, help asylum seekers during their journey. Giliberti and Queirolo Palmas (Chapter 6) propose an ethnographic study of informal solidarity at the French–Italian border in the aftermath of the refugee crisis. The authors provide a detailed description (enriched with pictures and drawings) of the discourses and motivations, either political or humanitarian, at the basis of citizens' engagement. Differently, Müller (Chapter 5) concentrates on the criminalization of spontaneous solidarity in France. Highlighting the tension in the law (and in its application) between security matters and the imperative of solidarity enshrined in the Republican Fraternity, she posits that criminalization of solidarity may appear as a good 'political gamble' for political actors (p. 98). In the wider context of failing restrictive

migration policies (characterized by irregular entries and difficult returns), criminalization gives political actors the opportunity to show results while masking any remaining deficiencies in the management of borders.

Everything considered, *Migration, Borders and Citizenship: Between Policy and Public Spheres* touches on a wide range of topics, from various perspectives, relating to different contexts, but what the book gains in variety seems to be at a loss of connection between its parts. Although the introduction does a good job at explaining the core concept of the book, it is not always clear how the chapters contribute to a common objective. Resultantly, the different contributions may be better read as stand-alone pieces than as an integrated ensemble. In a different manner, a significant share of the attention is set on Italy and France (either individually or together). While it makes the book particularly interesting for scholars studying these two countries, it begs a series of questions as to why those two countries matter so much when it comes to considering the relationship between borders and citizenship. A discussion on how or whether those two countries present specific or representative characteristics of the topic under scrutiny would have been useful.

### Competing Interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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**How to cite this article:** Van Wolleghem, PG. 2021. Ambrosini, Maurizio, Cinalli, Manlio and Jacobson, David (eds.) 2020. *Migration, Borders and Citizenship: Between Policy and Public Spheres*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. 309 pp. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*, 11(4), pp. 485–487. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33134/njmr.490>

**Submitted:** 14 June 2021    **Accepted:** 14 June 2021    **Published:** 02 December 2021

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