

Exclusion Created by Borders

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14394/etyka.1350>

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Exclusion Created by Borders. Review of *Violent Borders. Refugees and the Right to Move* by Reece Jones

Jones, Reece. 2016. *Violent Borders. Refugees and the Right to Move*. London: Verso.

In his book *Violent Borders. Refugees and the Right to Move*, Reece Jones, Professor of Geography at the University of Hawaii, Manoa, describes how borders, fences, and walls create symbolic and structural violence against many people, especially migrants (including refugees), and how they produce their political and institutional exclusion. The book addresses the problem of the global migration crisis; as of 2017, there were 258 million international migrants (Rubinstein and Orgad 2019, 38). War, persecution, and poor living conditions are just a few among numerous reasons for massive population shifts in the globalised world. Jones points out that the construction of borders is a political process which results in the formation of a belief in the superiority of rich and developed colonising states over colonies. Today, the former colonies are poor and undeveloped. In Jones's work, borders are shown as, on the one hand, a part of the system of security of interests of states because within their borders they can establish their own law; on the other

hand, they are presented as instruments by which developed countries have the privilege of controlling and managing the frontiers of poor states. Therefore, borders are tools by which relations of power and spheres of influence in the world are stabilised and perpetuated. In seven chapters of the book, the author analyses from different perspectives the impact of the construction of borders on many aspects of life in society. The creation of borders affects the economic and living conditions of people functioning within them. The book addresses the way of treating human life, especially of those who are unprivileged in society. Environmental issues are also worth mentioning: within borders, there are established laws allowing free use of natural resources without taking responsibility for other organisms. Above all, however, the creation of barriers and fences deprives many people of the right to move freely, especially to cross borders. Depriving them of this right leads to the preservation of social inequalities and global poverty. These are the main axes around which the researcher organises his study.

In the first chapter, Reece Jones depicts borders as places of structural and symbolic violence, which is the starting point for his further analyses. Borders stabilise the exclusion of many people who are in difficult living situations and who are trying to get to a safe territory. Violent borders also create conditions that deepen social inequalities between people and stigmatise refugees and migrants. The author describes such a violent border, the fence in Melilla, on the border between Spain and Morocco. The whole structure consists of three different barriers, of various heights, up to 20 feet. Migrants wanting to get to the European side must overcome all three

obstacles – only then do they reach Spanish territory. The journey through this fence is dangerous and poses a threat to the health and lives of refugees; nevertheless, the whole structure is called humanitarian because it does not have barbed or razor wire. Jones writes that the European Union, or the world's deadliest border as he calls it, does not remove walls and fences but moves them into less visible places, for example, to the area of external borders in the Mediterranean. The European Union does not want a wave of new migrants, so decisions about not helping newcomers are often made; the law requires that refugees be helped only when the boats touch the shore. Jones points to the case of Greece, where migrant boats were returned to the sea to make it impossible for the sailors to reach the shore; in this case, help was not required. The author argues that the construction of borders, fences, and walls is actually an attempt to separate citizens of a country from poor and defenceless migrants who are calling for help and mercy. Preventing a direct passage through the European borders is a means of protecting rich states against the less affluent or the poor. These exclusionary border policies lead to the unnecessary deaths of many people, including children. In the first part of the book, Jones also discusses the definition of a refugee and indicates the need to extend it. He holds that people who are forced to leave their countries for economic reasons should also be called refugees because poverty deprives them of the opportunities to function normally in their homeland. In the second chapter, Jones writes about militarising borders and equipping them with modern technologies, thus continuing his considerations of borders as spaces of structural and systematic exclusion. As an example, he discusses a fence at the border of the

United States with Mexico. The author claims that it is a militarised zone where people are unnecessarily dying during their attempts to get to the United States. This wall symbolises the security industry, which is characterised by the control of people and is closely correlated with the mechanism of securitisation (Bauman 2016). The author emphasises that the technologies that were used so far only by the army are now used at the borders of states, making traffic control possible not only on land but also in the air and under the ground. In addition, a specialised patrol operates on the border, which is actually a kind of army.

The third chapter addresses the problem of the global border regime. Jones presents walls and fences separating countries in other parts of the world, for example, in Israel, where the security industry is the best developed in the world; on the border between India and Bangladesh, where the largest number of deaths is recorded; and in Australia, which has a precise and strict border policy. Jones emphasises that constructing borders and building walls favours the creation of divisions between communities, for example, between Palestine and Israel – borders constitute spaces for exclusionary practices and hatred. In the fourth chapter, Jones continues his deliberations on the global border regime, but here he focuses on the issue of global poverty, which is closely related to the process of colonisation, which in turn contributed to the formation of contemporary borders. Rich countries have given themselves the right to colonise and subjugate the poorer ones, thereby widening their borders and turning themselves into mighty powers. Progressing colonisation excluded subordinated countries, which led to the stabilisation of economic, political, and social inequalities

between states. Jones writes that “the violence of borders goes hand in hand with protecting the privileges that borders created” (2016, 88). These privileges rest in the hands of rich colonising states.

In the fourth chapter, the author focuses on the control of people living within fences. He analyses the category of citizenship which strengthens violent borders. Jones writes about poverty and deprivation of the right to cross borders freely, which historically was the privilege of the rich and noble-born persons. They could receive a document entitling them to move abroad. These documents gave rise to the citizenship regime – each state member had to be identified. Thanks to identification documents, it is possible to control citizens and monitor them at borders. The citizen becomes the “property” of the state, and therefore the state grants them the right to move, which it can also take away. In the 21st century, this right is mainly taken away from those who come from the colonised countries: “From its early origins through the present day, citizenship has always been a two-sided concept, with the state guaranteeing rights for some people while excluding many others from the right to have rights” (Jones 2016, 79). This is particularly visible in the fifth chapter, in which the author focuses on the political process of creating borders – on how maps were drawn. Jones points out that the colonising states, mostly European, are responsible for the shape of today’s maps. These states usurped the right to construct the borders to protect their own interests. In this way, care was taken only for the welfare of rich states, depriving the poor ones of access to natural resources, which were controlled by colonisers. The creation of borders by European states did not take into account the needs of the inhabitants of colonised countries. Moreover, during

the creation of borders, colonisers frequently separated members of ethnic communities from each other, depriving them of the possibility of crossing the borders freely.

It seems that the violent aspect of the construction of borders is shown to the fullest in the sixth chapter. Using the example of the fast fashion industry, the author describes how exploitation takes place in controlled spaces of borders and how structural, social, and economic exclusion and inequalities are perpetuated within them. It can be seen in unequal access to goods or unfair wages. Jones describes the unethical and immoral activities of corporations, which transfer the production of their clothes to Bangladesh, where workers, mostly women, are deprived of basic labour rights and receive a very low wage. By controlling the borders and workers within them, companies support the stabilisation of structural violence and acquire tools to prevent employees from crossing the borders of their states. Jones writes:

[...] it is a systemic problem with how power is organized in the world. The problem is that borders artificially create different wages, labour pools, environmental regulations, taxes, and working conditions. [...] While corporations are able to operate in many countries in order to take advantage of these differences, workers are usually contained by these borders and regulators are unable to enforce rules outside their jurisdiction. The problem crosses borders, but the solutions are contained by them (Jones 2016, 138).

In the last chapter, the author draws attention to the care for the Earth. He shows that the creation of borders, fences, and walls leads

to negative consequences for the natural environment. Jones emphasises that borders make it impossible for animals to move freely and also prevent plants from unfettered growth. As an example, the researcher points out that in order to put a wall in Israel, it was necessary to dig out olive trees; on the Indian border, through the construction of the fence, the path along which elephants had moved so far was blocked. It seems, therefore, that the construction of borders also enables control over the natural environment and the functioning of animals, plants, and other organisms. Jones writes about ecological privilege, i.e. the usurpation of rights by rich states, those which formed the shape of the borders, to exploit natural resources. This results from the fact that we are currently living in the Anthropocene when human destructive practices lead to the degradation of the environment and climate change. United Nations Climate Change Summits, as Jones writes, do not bring the expected results because the issue of climate change and environmental protection is less important to the states than their interests with their rights created within borders. As long as humans do not treat themselves as a part of the natural environment but only as owners or managers of natural resources, states will care mainly about their own interests without respect towards the environment, and anthropocentrism will be in force.

Reece Jones's book is thought-provoking and needed. In each chapter, the author shows from a different perspective the negative consequences of constructing borders, fences, and walls. The research perspective presented by Jones is interesting. As a geographer, he shows how the lay of the land is disrupted by artificial borders which affect the function of human and non-human beings

in the world and enable governments to control people. It seems that the author demands political and institutional changes so that borders will no longer be a symbol of divisions and exclusions of poor people, especially migrants (including refugees). Everyone should have the same right to be able to take a responsible voice, be visible in the public space, and move freely. Importantly, Jones refers to the nomadic past of humankind, demonstrating once again the absurdity of restricting movement and implying that there is a strong need to turn towards what Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari describe as “Nomadology” (1987). Although seven years have passed since the publication of *Violent Borders*, the book is disturbingly current. The border regime still constitutes a tool of possibly the most deadly and inhumane form of control.

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