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Book review: *Atlas des migrations dans le monde*

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Migreurop: Atlas des migrations dans le monde. Libertés de circulation, frontières, inégalités, Armand Colin, 160 pp., EUR 25.00, ISBN 978-2200632823, 2022.

Renewing our political imaginaries is the purpose of *Atlas des migrations dans le monde* (Atlas of migration in the world), published by Migreurop, a collective of researchers, activists, and NGO members, and edited by Sara Casella Colombeau. After having edited three atlases focused on the strengthening of mobility controls in Europe (Migreurop, 2009, 2012, 2017), the collective adopts a new approach in this volume. Subtitled "Libertés de circulations, frontières, inégalités" (Freedom of movement, borders, inequalities), it explores the theme of freedom of movement. Gathering contributions from 89 authors, 54 thematic double-page spreads, and almost 100 illustrations (photos, maps, comic strips, drawings, and infographics), the volume analyses various configurations that either facilitate or hinder the movement of people, goods, services, and capital and the way they reflect global asymmetries and social inequalities.

The polysemy of the notion is the starting point: "freedom of movement" serves as both an activist goal against deadly migration policies and a foundational principle for regional organisations like the European Union to codify the circulation of people and goods. The dual nature of freedom of movement as an ideal to be achieved for some and an already existing reality for others shows that, more than a global increase in control and blockage of movement, we are currently witnessing the intensification of a regime of what the authors frame as "migratory apartheid". Drawing from numerous fields of social sciences and activist knowledge, as well as paying particular attention to illustrations, this atlas is a precious tool for disseminating critical approaches from migration studies to a wide audience. This makes it a useful addition to academic summary works aimed more at researchers, such as the *Handbook on Critical Geographies of Migration* (Mitchell et al., 2020).

To do so, the book bases its contribution on a double perspective to freedom of movement. The first is to investigate the temporalities, spaces, actors, policies, and means that make circulation possible. This investigation emphasises the inequalities on which regimes of free movement are grounded, as well as how migrants exercise their own freedom of movement. Moreover, it shows the utilitarian nature of most of these projects, be they implemented for imperialist reasons, to achieve geopolitical objectives, or for economic profit. The second perspective of this exploration of regimes of free movement aims to open up new political imaginaries by undermining the idea that there would be no alternative to the current dominant discourse framing restrictive migration policies as inevitable. Rather, the situations described in the volume invite readers to repoliticize migration issues by accounting for the choices made, showing that other choices are possible, and renewing their political perspectives on the basis of past or present realities.

The first two sections, respectively dedicated to "Historical forms" and "Regional spaces" of freedom of movement, provide numerous examples of free-movement configurations. Looking at several historical periods and regional contexts reveals useful experiences for fuelling political imaginaries. The volume reminds us, for instance, of the significance of circulation in precolonial west Africa or among the First Nations in North America. However, even at a time where border regimes were more open, the possibility of movement was often precarious, as seen by the fragile "freedom to travel" for Algerians to France during the colonial period, marked by fluctuating control. The institutionalised migration of single women from the United Kingdom to settler colonies, aimed at both reducing the labour surplus in the UK and ensuring the reproduction of the Anglo-Saxon race in the empire, further illustrates how organised forms

of movement were intertwined with gender, class, and race power relationships. The early forms of thinking and institutionalising freedom of movement also already contained a liberal economic objective: the 1868 Burlingame Treaty between the United States and China recognised migration as an "inalienable right" but primarily to acknowledge the right to travel and trade, legitimising the migration of American merchants to China and that of Chinese workers to the United States.

As the second section emphasises, facilitating the movement of people is rarely in itself the main objective of the organisations established since the 1950s by states of the same region to formalise their cooperation on free movement. Each regional space of free movement arises from specific objectives, from developing common economic markets to serving as a political declaration. For example, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines have developed a powerful migration industry strongly integrated into the development model of both labour-exporting and labour-importing countries. Moreover, the institutionalisation of free movement remains a way to control it, as it facilitates the circulation of certain categories of people only, creating inequalities, sometimes even within the agreements themselves. The use of biometrics to authenticate migrants within the Economic Community of West African States illustrates such ambiguities: while presented as a means of facilitating mobility between member states, biometrics are also promoted and implemented by private and international actors aiming at data interoperability and exchange with European Union agencies, turning it into a new tool for tracking migrants headed to Europe.

The third section investigates "Free movement of goods, services, and capital", challenging the common distinction between the movement of people and the movement of goods: the former is seen as highly restricted, while the latter is perceived as free and fluid. This opposition overlooks people who make the just-in-time circulation possible, such as low-paid migrant workers or merchant sailors, often at the cost of poor living and working conditions. Certainly, they access mobility, but an extremely limited and subordinated one. The circulation of capital also reproduces global inequalities and does not necessarily contribute to a better allocation of financial resources at the international scale, as promoted by neoliberal policies.

The fourth and fifth sections are the most original ones, as they propose new perspectives on free movement. Section 4 investigates the autonomy of migrants and solidarities as a freedom of movement in actuality, showing how migrants – and sometimes their supporters – create various forms of movement and installation "from below" through their individual and collective practices to counter restrictive migration policies and defy borders. Various practices are documented, such as the establishment of autonomous transnational social protection systems, the exchange of annotated maps to plan border crossings, the organisation of migrant caravans, or the attendance at community-based associations helping to address socio-economic precariousness and difficulties in accessing healthcare in the host country. This allows us to shift the normalised perspectives on migration, moving away from the image of migrants as mere victims in a state-centred framing towards reflections on freedom of movement.

The closing section of the volume addresses "Re/thinking freedom of movement". It unpacks the palimpsest that has led to the current common definition of free movement as framed in international law, emphasising both its liberal philosophical roots and the utilitarian and sedentary bias in its approach by international organisations. However, this section also provides alternative conceptions and imaginaries of free movement that put forward demands for justice, equality, and dignity. For example, it introduces various theoretical insights, such as anarchist or feminist and queer approaches to circulation. But it also highlights existing practices challenging the international legal order, as illustrated by the use of indigenous passports to tackle the state monopoly on the means of circulation and to promote a principle of free movement detached from affiliation with a state territory.

Overall, this atlas stands apart from traditional atlases on migration or borders, which aim mainly to provide data and information, taking a descriptive approach to contemporary phenomena. Rather, the *Atlas des migrations dans le monde* undertakes a vast analytical project of critical reflection on migration; borders; circulation; and more broadly, globalisation through its exploration of free movement. The richness of the illustrations is remarkable, and they directly support the analytical project. Not only do they incarnate the discourse through numerous infographics representing individual trajectories, such as the life of William Ellis through national and racial borders or that of Andrea navigating against transphobia from Bogota to Paris, they also contribute to bringing forth a counter-narrative about circulation by moving away from the usual way of representing and thus thinking about it. This volume constitutes a valuable tool for people eager to renew their vision of global circulation and offers useful pedagogical material for teaching critical approaches to migration or borders.

Geographers attentive to multiscalar thinking may find the local scale and micro scale underrepresented. Yet the local scale has great heuristic potential for thinking about inequalities of movement and for mirroring "migratory apartheid", with various spaces and places characterised by the copresence of individuals subjected to unequal access to movement. For example, analysis of control practices in tourist areas located in border spaces emphasises how the differentiation between "legitimate" and "undesirable" foreign populations relies on class and race power relationships (Bachellerie, 2020). Informal camps of illegalised migrants in northern global cities, for their part, showcase these inequalities but also provide a way of countering them. The visibility they ensure in urban spaces can also serve as the ground for local

political mobilisation or speed up the actions of public actors towards those who live in these camps, thus enabling them to go on with their journey (Piva, 2025). The volume could also have given more space to privileged migration, a subject that has recently received increasing academic attention (Duplan and Cranston, 2023) and that offers another perspective to think about inequalities. But this atlas' contribution lies not so much in its exhaustiveness as in its successful objective: to present some thought-provoking case studies nourishing alternative political imaginaries.

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