

# Challenging States of Illegality From “Managed Migration” to a Politics of No Borders

Cynthia Wright

Volume 62, Fall 2008

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/11t62re01>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

ISSN

0700-3862 (print)

1911-4842 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this document

Wright, C. (2008). Challenging States of Illegality: From “Managed Migration” to a Politics of No Borders. *Labour / Le Travail*, 62, 185–198.

This document is protected by copyright law. Use of the services of Érudit (including reproduction) is subject to its terms and conditions, which can be viewed online.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/en/users/policy-on-use/>

## REVIEW ESSAY / NOTE CRITIQUE

# Challenging States of Illegality: From “Managed Migration” to a Politics of No Borders

**Cynthia Wright**

Harald Bauder, *Labor Movement: How Migration Regulates Labor Markets* (New York: Oxford University Press 2006)

Justin Akers Chacon and Mike Davis, *No One is Illegal: Fighting Racism and State Violence on the U.S.–Mexico Border* (Chicago: Haymarket Books 2006)

Philip Martin, Manolo Abella, and Christiane Kuptsch, *Managing Labor Migration in the Twenty-first Century* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2006)

Jonathon W. Moses, *International Migration: Globalization’s Last Frontier* (London: Zed Books 2006)

UNDER REVIEW HERE are four books that deal – in very different ways – with labour markets, global migration, and the politics of open borders. Published in the wake of the millions-strong May Day 2006 strikes and demonstrations led by working-class undocumented immigrants in the US, Mike Davis and Justin Akers Chacon’s *No One is Illegal* is the most explicitly oriented to contemporary immigrant justice movements. As such, it provides an important point of departure for examining neo-liberal labour regimes, globalization, sovereignty, and citizenship from the standpoint of migrants and the deported. As the book’s subtitle indicates, *No One is Illegal* is a primer on the racism, violence, and class exploitation which organizes working-class migrant lives in the US; it is also an anatomy of the organized attacks on immigrants by the state, employers, powerful right-wing coalitions, and vigilante groups such as the Minute Men. At the same time, the book aims to chart a course (both inside and outside the labour movement) for a new civil rights movement of

---

Cynthia Wright, “Challenging States of Illegality: From “Managed Migration” to a Politics of No Borders,” *Labour/Le Travail*, 62 (Fall 2008), 185–198.

undocumented people. Indeed, the massive May Day demonstrations which stunned the US were built on years of difficult organizing, backed up by the power of community organizations, immigrant workers' centres, organized labour, Spanish-language media, and the Catholic Church. But crucially, as US labour scholar Kim Moody has pointed out, they also rested on the new strategic power of undocumented people in key sectors of the US economy such as construction; meat processing; and landscaping, among others.<sup>1</sup> The mass character of these campaigns and movements in the US has been reflected in cultural production, further demonstrating the ways these struggles have captured the imagination of many. Films such as Ken Loach's feature, *Bread and Roses*, based on the US Justice for Janitors struggle, come to mind, as does the hilarious Mexican-US co-production, *A Day without Mexicans*. The latter in fact inspired the very title, "A Day without Immigrants," of the mass May Day mobilizations.

While excellent activist journals such as the California-based *ColorLines*, and independent writers such as David Bacon and Elizabeth Martinez, have often provided crucial orientation to these movements, there are relatively few accessible full-length left-wing treatments of immigration politics and activism today.<sup>2</sup> Drawing on existing immigration scholarship and journalistic accounts, Chacon and Davis's *No One is Illegal* was clearly written to address this gap. Co-writer Mike Davis, a well-known leftist scholar currently in the Department of History at University of California at Irvine and the author of many influential books including *City of Quartz* and *Planet of Slums*, is actually the junior writer here; the great majority of the book was written by Justin Akers Chacon, a professor of US History and Chicano Studies based in San Diego, California. Along with Arizona, California is one of the key fronts of anti-immigrant and anti-immigration organizing, and Chacon and Davis are able to build on their knowledge of the ugly history and politics of that state to develop many of the book's key themes.

*No One is Illegal* is divided into five sections, of which only the first – a powerful and very disturbing historical analysis of white vigilante violence in California – was written by Davis. The remaining four sections of the book, all authored by Chacon, take up the history of the US conquest of Mexico and the contemporary organization of the US-Mexican border economy; the making of the Mexican-American working class, including the history of the *bracero* programs; the contemporary "war on immigrants" both before and after September 11; and, finally, the current immigrant rights movement. The

1. Kim Moody, "Harvest of Empire: Immigrant Workers' Struggles in the USA," in Leo Panitch and Colin Leys, eds., *Global Flashpoints: Reactions to Imperialism and Neoliberalism. Socialist Register 2008* (London 2007).

2. David Bacon's new book, *Illegal People: How Globalization Creates Migration and Criminalizes Immigrants* (Boston 2008) is very likely to be a vital contribution to analysis and activism.

book is illustrated with photographs by Julian Cardona, himself a Mexican migrant to the US. Many of the photos are disturbing portraits of migrant lives and of Minutemen on the militarized US/Mexican border. Unfortunately, however, the text does not offer any commentary on the photos and they exist as a parallel text, inviting us to reflect on the everyday normalized violence done to migrants both at the border and in other sites where "bordering" of migrants takes place.

*No One is Illegal* makes a number of important contributions; one of these is its treatment of violence, of the "extraordinary centrality of institutionalized private violence in the reproduction of the racial and social order." (15) The opening section of the book, in particular, is a strong reminder of exactly how much brutal violence – beginning with genocidal violence directed against indigenous peoples – backs up the institution of wage labour and how much violence it takes to create and secure hierarchical white geographies and landscapes out of multi-ethnic/multi-racial spaces such as California. This section offers a solid understanding of the long history of vigilantism – very often operating in conjunction with official law enforcement – at the border and in the workplace and serves as a crucial orientation to the "political, class, and racial origins" (8) of today's powerful anti-immigrant/anti-immigration formations. Out of this violence – as well as the defeat of radical proletarian motley crews such as the Industrial Workers of the World – came the production of key divides among working-class people that continue to haunt our analysis and organizing today, shaping who does – and doesn't – get taken into account as part of the "national" working class.

Chacon opens his four-part contribution to *No One is Illegal* with two parts focussed on the US-Mexico relationship, past and present. He highlights how often ignored (at least in immigration debates) histories and practices of colonialism, imperialism, and the "capitalist development of agriculture and its integration into the world market" (110) have shaped the massive displacement of generations of Mexican workers. Today's migrant justice movements have often returned to the history of the US *bracero* programs (the migrant agricultural workers schemes from 1942–1964) in order to understand undocumented working lives today. Indeed, Chacon usefully establishes two points: one is that the *bracero* programs from the beginning *also* attracted undocumented labour including those who had been rejected from the *bracero* programs but came anyway. They quickly found out that they were, relatively speaking, better off than those who came as "legal" workers. The result was that, historically, "the undocumented flow of labor soon eclipsed the stream of bi-nationally negotiated *braceros*." (146) A second point is that the absolutely appalling conditions of today's agricultural workers, rooted in the violent processes that in the 1930s produced divides between agricultural workers and the urban industrial working class, have led some 40 percent of the undocumented to move into construction. This in turn has led growers to call for yet another guest worker program. (153–54) It is this call which has been opposed

by the more radical wing of the US immigrant rights movement which has continued to insist on unconditional legalization with a pathway to citizenship.

However, throughout the 1990s, undocumented immigrants would face not comprehensive legalization but – as Chacon details in the fourth section of *No One is Illegal* – further criminalization and policing, raids in workplaces, the consolidation of highly-organized anti-immigrant formations and white vigilante groups, massive investment by the state under Clinton in the militarization of the US-Mexico border, moves to deny basic social services including healthcare, housing, and food to the undocumented, and death and violence at the border and beyond. After September 11, as Chacon observes, right-wing forces regained the initiative against an advancing immigrant rights agenda (215) coming from a new generation of working-class immigrant leaders. (Many of the latter were now coming up through US unions that had at last ended decades of nationalist exclusion and had begun to organize the undocumented.) The result has been a deadly mix of attacks from above (anti-immigrant legislation at the federal and state level initiated by both Democrats and Republicans) and below (racist anti-immigrant groups). (221)

Despite some clear strengths, *No One is Illegal* also has a number of weaknesses. For a start, it needed a serious edit: the sections written by Davis and Chacon have been sutured together without apparent regard for the fact that aspects of Davis's discussion are repeated in the sections written by Chacon. Chacon's account of white racism – "the privilege of being white accrues only to the white elite, since white workers are made to suffer from racism and the divisions it creates in the working class" (254) – is unconvincing, to say the least. The book's gender analysis is also rather weak and largely addresses a masculine immigrant working class. Relatedly, the book does not examine the crucial ways in which anti-immigrant discourse and practice have shifted in recent years with the advent of greater Latina immigration to the US and the "threat," therefore, of permanent non-white communities.<sup>3</sup> For example, the "they're taking our jobs" focus is now also accompanied by racist/sexist attacks on the reproductive rights of immigrant Latina women and on their right to access hospitals and social services. It's no accident that among the top goals of the US anti-immigrant forces right now is restrictions on birthright citizenship and so-called "passport babies."

*No One is Illegal* is particularly weak in the section (the fifth and final in the book) that one expects it to be strong, that is, in the analysis of strategic alternatives. In keeping with an emphasis in many wings of the immigrant justice movement, the campaign for immigrant rights is defined as a "new civil rights movement." (7) Indeed, US labour and immigrant rights activists have sought to renew the African-American civil rights legacy by making various claims

3. Pierette Hondagneau-Sotelo, "Women and Children First: New Directions in Anti-Immigrant Politics," in Stephanie Coontz, ed., *American Families: A Multicultural Reader* (New York 1999), 288–304.

to the institution of citizenship, often on the basis of the labour contributions of those illegalized by the state. Unfortunately, however, Chacon does not explore some of the tensions and limitations with the civil rights strategy. One problem is that claims by undocumented to US citizenship have sometimes been challenged by those who have also known historical racist exclusion from the institution of citizenship and who are still differentially included within the US state. This includes African Americans, or indeed those who may reject colonially-imposed citizenship: that is, indigenous peoples. The historic gains of the US civil rights movement have been massively eroded in recent years, leading a minority of conservative African Americans to oppose immigration and legalization to save "national" jobs. Other African-American groups have come out solidly in alliance with the immigrant rights movement, while also cautioning against immigrant narratives which serve to exclude and further racialize African Americans. Similarly, the large migration of illegalized indigenous people from Mexico (some 25 percent of Mexican migrants to the US now are indigenous people and many are in agricultural labour) is forcing some important new conversations and challenging old binaries of migrant/indigenous that have long troubled immigrant rights movements. The Winnebago/Ojibwe scholar, Renya Ramirez, makes this clear in her recent book, *Native Hubs*, an analysis of transnationality, migration, and re-spatialization among indigenous people in the US. She notes that new perspectives are opening up as illegalized Mexican indigenous people seeking US citizenship dialogue with Native Americans who are also "without papers" (either because of disenrolment from tribal communities or because of state non-recognition of them as indigenous). Native Americans have often rejected appeals to rights within the US state in favour of appeals to the United Nations for "rights and reparations." These decolonizing dialogues, Ramirez reports, are about "think[ing] beyond dominant categories, which have created confusion within and between Indigenous communities."<sup>4</sup> Some consideration of these questions, among the most pressing in North American immigrant rights movements now, would have been welcome in *No One is Illegal*.

A second broad problem with civil rights approaches to immigration is, of course, that they often constrain activists to talk about the merits of immigrant workers through mobilizing nationalist narratives of "integration," work, and other criteria of "moral worthiness" for citizenship which are themselves highly classed, raced, and gendered. As Aihwa Ong observes, "Historically, the intertwining of race and economic performance has shaped the ways different immigrant groups have attained status and dignity, with a national ideology that projects worthy citizens as inherently 'white.'"<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the call for

4. Renya K. Ramirez, *Native Hubs: Culture, Community, and Belonging in Silicon Valley and Beyond* (Durham 2007), 168.

5. Aihwa Ong, "Latitudes of Citizenship: Membership, Meaning, and Multiculturalism," in Alison Brysk and Gershon Shafir, eds., *People Out of Place: Globalization, Human Rights, and*

legalization (with a pathway to permanent residence and citizenship) has itself been controversial among some quarters of the left even though others see it as the most progressive position on offer. Steve Cohen, radical Manchester lawyer and author of a call for the abolition of immigration controls, also called *No One is Illegal*, has forcefully opposed a regularization campaign in the UK on the grounds that such programs simply make people more vulnerable to detention and deportation given that many who come out from underground to apply are criminalized rather than legalized.

Chacon does seem to be calling for legalization as an important tactic along the way to open borders, a call he articulates to the internationalism of classical European revolutionary socialism. He does recognize the fact that border control is fundamentally ideological, serving as it does not to stop migration but rather to make workers more vulnerable. Chacon further notes, "Over generations, borders have been reified as natural extensions of 'nationality' even though they have existed for perhaps one percent of the history of humankind." (201) It is within this context that one would have liked to have seen a more detailed discussion of the politics of open borders and the right of free movement, as well as a critique of nationalisms and the institution of citizenship itself. Indeed, a more explicit debate on the politics of open borders has been opened in the US labour journal, *New Labor Forum*, a recent number of which includes an exchange between Dan LaBotz, an independent scholar and labour journalist, and AFL-CIO staffer, Ana Avendano.<sup>6</sup> It remains to be seen how much such interventions will re-position the debates within labour and the left in the US.

Jonathon W. Moses's *International Migration: Globalization's Last Frontier*, despite its rather neutral-sounding title, is in fact a call for the abolition of immigration controls. Indeed, it has not escaped the attention of many migrant activists that, while capital may move freely about the globe, current migration regimes constrain the right of free movement of workers with a view to better securing their exploitation. Others have noted that, while workers who move within nation-states are celebrated for their entrepreneurial initiative, those who cross borders are hounded and criminalized. Still others have wondered why the accidental and arbitrary fact of being born in a particular place with a particular citizenship ought to be so determining of one's life chances and access to the labour market. Moses's book joins other recent interventions on the same theme, including Teresa Hayter's *Open Borders: The Case Against Immigration Controls* (first published in 2000 and now in a second edition) and the above-mentioned *No One is Illegal* (2003) by Steve Cohen.<sup>7</sup> The latter

---

*the Citizenship Gap* (New York 2004), 53–72.

6. *New Labor Forum*, 17, 1 (Spring 2008).

7. Teresa Hayter, *Open Borders: The Case against Immigration Controls* (London 2004); Steve Cohen, *No One is Illegal: Asylum and Immigration Control Past and Present* (Stoke on Trent 2003).

books come directly out of the experience of UK activists with hard-fought anti-deportation and anti-detention campaigns; both Hayter and Cohen reject the position that immigration controls can be made more just and fair, and challenge their fundamentally undemocratic, racist, imperialist, and class-based character. Moses's book, by contrast, and this is a major weakness of the text, is not written in conversation with any of the relevant movements (or the academic literature they have inspired) such as the European No Borders network or the French collectives of *sans papiers*.

*International Migration: Globalization's Last Frontier* is organized as follows: two brief introductory chapters examine the inequalities and displacements of people produced by the current round of capitalist globalization, and outline some of the contemporary conditions which merit a reconsideration of contemporary border regimes. A third introductory chapter examines the history of the development of state control over borders and the movement of people. Indeed, some fascinating and recent historical work has begun to look in more detail at the origins of border control and refugee regimes; the modern passport system; and how control over movement within and between states has become so central to ruling. Much of the literature has focussed either on the history of European border regimes or on slavery and indenture within the Atlantic world. More recent work is attending to migrations within and between Africa and Asia and their implications for subsequent global migration regimes.<sup>8</sup> Moses's emphasis on World War I as an important turning point, an argument now debated among historians of European mobility and border control,<sup>9</sup> need not detain us here for it does not alter Moses's two conclusions: border controls are now more pervasive than ever in human history, and they also represent an apparent contradiction within liberalism. (55) He returns to the latter point in his consideration of moral arguments against border control.

The core of *International Migration: Globalization's Last Frontier* is contained in Moses's three chapters on the moral (Chapter 4), political (Chapter 5), and economic arguments (Chapter 6) for free mobility and against border controls. Moses summarizes the moral arguments for open borders as of two types: those that argue for the right of free movement as a basic human right (a position he examines through a brief review of classical liberal philosophy), and those that see free movement as fundamental to securing other goods such as economic justice – especially important in contexts of profound global economic inequality. This chapter also considers the very morality of national citizenship itself given that it invites us to ground solidarity on the basis of "fellow nationals" who are assumed to be more important than the

8. John Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport* (Cambridge 2000); Adam McKeown, "Global Migration, 1846–1940," *Journal of World History*, 15, 2 (2004), 155–189.

9. This formed the subject of a panel, "Rethinking immigration controls after World War I," at the November 2007 annual meeting of the Social Science History Association, held in Chicago.

nation's "others" or "foreigners." Chapter 5, on political arguments for open borders, considers the relationship between migration, political communities, and modalities of sovereignty, a complex and vexed question on which Moses spends relatively little time here though he returns to it later in the text. It is a key question since, as Moses acknowledges, control over movement and of borders is today recognized as integral to state practices of ruling – so much so that to question it appears as a direct challenge to the state. Rather than taking up sovereignty here, Moses instead focuses on the politics of apartheid, both its South African variant and also what some have called, in reference to the contemporary system of migrant control, "global apartheid." South African apartheid – anchored by the migrant labour system and by the bantustans – was, as Moses writes, "a political system of differentiation, grounded in the concept of nationhood, or autonomous self-development." (84) While the South African apartheid regime was eventually condemned by the international community, the fact is that contemporary controls on movement bear a rather striking reference to it. (85) Indeed, political theorist Etienne Balibar, unfortunately not referenced by Moses, has extended the global apartheid analysis further. He has continued to insist that the nation-state, far from becoming more inclusive over time or disappearing under conditions of globalization or within supranational frameworks such as the European Constitution, is in fact becoming more exclusive: "A world that is now broadly unified from the point of view of economic exchange and communication needs borders more than ever to segregate, at least in tendency, wealth and poverty in distinct territorial zones...Borders have thus become essential institutions in the constitution of social conditions on a global scale where the passport or identity card functions as a systematic criterion. It was for this reason that I found it appropriate to speak of a *global apartheid* being put in place after the disappearance of the old colonial and postcolonial apartheid."10

References to apartheid, colonial and contemporary, and to migrant labour lead us into Moses's chapter on economic arguments for the decriminalization of immigration. This chapter provides a very general overview to many of the conventional themes in what is a massive literature: so-called "brain drains;" the economic role of remittances (increasingly significant globally); the impact of migration on wage levels; and the relationship between migration and development. To his credit, Moses also considers the economic costs of "mak[ing] people prisoners of territory" through massive spending on militarized border control (134) and recognizes that, ultimately, much mainstream migration literature is deeply flawed and completely fails to consider the subjectivities and self-activity of migrants themselves except as economic units subject to "push" and "pull" factors.

The final two chapters of *International Migration: Globalization's Last*

10. Etienne Balibar, *We, The People of Europe? Reflections on Transnational Citizenship* (Princeton 2004), 113. Ellipsis is mine; emphasis is his.

*Frontier* are more policy and public debate-oriented and focus on who opposes open immigration, and why, and how those arguments might be challenged and mainstream debates reframed and broadened. He suggests that we think about democratizing the right of free movement in the same way that the right to vote was extended beyond elites. Some of the material in these chapters is a useful overview of the "commonsense" on immigration, but it is not especially analytical. Some of the argument is just way off: "In the United States... it is difficult to find many established interest groups opposed to more open immigration." (154) A similar wildly inaccurate claim is that the Republicans and the Democrats have backed away from limiting immigration. This is just wrong, as a reading of Davis and Chacon, not to speak of a survey of US media, makes very clear. And bizarrely, towards the end of the book, Moses starts making policy proposals which themselves are seriously problematic (many have been proposed by the right) and which seemingly contradict his call for open borders and his critique of monoculturalism and fears of "flooding" by migrants. He suggests, for example, that "immigrants could be encouraged to pass fluency tests in the host-country language(s), or attend basic civic education classes, before being granted access to nation-based citizenship and/or welfare rights." (201) While Moses admits that there might be other ways to organize social provision for all (for example, on the basis of residency), in the end he wants open borders while still rescuing the nation and exclusive citizenship. In short, Moses's book is rather a mixed bag. It lacks a sustained critique of racism, nationalism, and citizenship. Sometimes the book is conceptually flabby and a number of the arguments are based on sketchy, inaccurate, or out-of-date empirical research or observations. Those looking for an introduction to the politics of open borders are still better off starting with Teresa Hayter, Steve Cohen, or Nandita Sharma's influential essay, "Rejecting Global Apartheid" – and the manifestoes of the French *sans papiers*.<sup>11</sup>

Co-authored by International Labor Organization (ILO) experts Philip Martin, Manolo Abella, and Christiane Kuptsch, *Managing Labor Migration in the Twenty-first Century* is a policy-oriented book that offers a global survey of migration trends and issues in 167 pages (minus the notes and appendix). The book's big-picture theme is "managing migration;" that is, harnessing migrant labour for the benefit of state and capital while being "fair." Like a lot of the managed migration literature, the book is haunted by the ongoing reality of various kinds of unfree labour for, as Robin Cohen has noted: "many migrant workers are still locked into forms of labour exploitation that marked the birth of global capitalism... employer demand for cheap, often illegal, labour has not abated despite the spread of an evangelical form of neo-liberal capitalism."<sup>12</sup>

11. Nandita Sharma, *Home Economics: Nationalism and the Making of 'Migrant Workers' in Canada* (Toronto 2006). See especially Chapter 6.

12. Robin Cohen, *Migration and its Enemies: Global Capital, Migrant Labour and the Nation-State* (Aldershot 2006), 1. Ellipsis is mine.

Another spectre is the marked refusal of the “right” women, the right national subjects, to have the appropriate number of children to reproduce the labour force – thereby further underlining the importance of properly managing sizeable numbers of “foreign” workers. An even bigger problem from the “managed migration” standpoint is the large numbers of “unauthorized” migrants: those who come on their own as “illegals.” As the book notes, “there are more unauthorized than legal foreign workers in most industrial democracies, which raises the major question we tackle in the book – how should the rising number of migrants be managed?” (xii) The book advocates “best practices” for temporary workers programs in order to avoid the “errors” (i.e. workers and their families choosing to stay and – still worse! – making political claims) of past experiments, whether the *bracero* schemes or the various guest worker arrangements in post-WWII Europe. While the book’s focus is substantially on Europe and North America, the introductory survey of migration does offer a picture of global trends, including in Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, the Middle East, and Latin America. The final section of the book looks at Thailand and the interesting, increasingly important and too-little studied phenomenon of so-called “south-south” migration – as the authors note, “[A]bout 40 percent of the world’s migrants are in developing countries...” (131)

After an opening discussion of migration trends and issues (Part I), the book turns in Part II to a discussion of two major categories of workers on the move: those in the professional category (healthcare workers, science and technical professionals) and those defined as “guest workers” (e.g. domestic and agricultural workers). From the standpoint of managed migration, it’s all about regulating the latter category who are constructed as “dependent” in ways that so-called professionals are not. This section on migrant professional and guest workers aims, in policy terms, to figure out ways of doing temporary workers programs without them leading to “brain drain” (in the case of professional migrants from the global south) or “distortion” and “dependence” (in the case of guest workers). (121) The authors suggest tackling the “brain drain” by allowing the private sector to organize education for jobs in the global south so that people do not migrate. When it comes to guest workers, they propose a mixed array of policy proposals while admitting that there is in fact a class bias revealed when skilled professionals are courted by employers and states while those defined as “unskilled” are rotated through guest worker programs and hounded into criminality if they choose to settle. Like much of this literature, the authors admit that conditions for guest workers are often appalling, so much so that the numbers of “unauthorized” workers are always higher because people don’t want to (or can’t get into) guest worker programs. Nonetheless they refuse fundamentally to abandon the idea that states and employers should have the right to indenture people.

Martin, Abella, and Kuptsch make some useful points on the contemporary organization of guest worker programs; these points are important clues as to why organizing temporary workers is a difficult proposition (aside from

the obvious fact that these workers are highly vulnerable to deportation). For one thing, "in deregulated labor markets government labor agencies have less detailed information on whether migrants are needed" and "[a]s a result, employers have gained more power over the border gate." (85) Moreover, the proliferation of different kinds of programs, each with different conditions and regulations, with different (or no) entitlement to services, family reunification, and citizenship, makes organizing especially difficult since only the most persistent and invested will spend time figuring out, for example, "which provisions of German construction union contracts apply to project-tied workers." (96)

However, the authors' understanding of so-called migrant labour "dependence" on work in their destination countries is deeply annoying – as well as ideological. (85) For one thing, would these same workers be politically and culturally represented as "dependent" in their countries of "origin"? Second, who is dependent on whom? The fact of entrenched employer dependence on workers who are systematically marginalized (legally, economically, politically, and culturally) is never raised in the text. Nor do the authors ever take up the argument (advanced by a number of migration scholars) that global economies themselves are *structurally dependent* on migrant labour.

The book's conclusion, or Part III, returns to the theme of "sustainable migration." Like "managed migration," "sustainable migration" is another highly problematic concept and, in this text at least, is never really defined. It appears to refer to developing transnational consensus and cooperation between north and south, and among regions, on how migration ought to be managed. This includes how migrant remittances should be regulated, and how economic development ought to proceed so that people don't migrate – at least to the extent that it becomes a problem for ruling elites. (132) Indeed, observers on both the right *and* the left often advocate development as a remedy for migration. In the first place, many development and investment projects actually *produce* displacement and migration, something Martin, Abella, and Kuptsch are at least honest enough to conclude: "There may be ways to reconfigure aid to reduce the number of economic migrants and political refugees, but the record of the 1970s and 1980s is not encouraging." (163) Secondly, I think we need to follow Bob Sutcliffe who has argued against what are essentially anti-immigration arguments in which the movement of people is always conceptualized as a scandal and a catastrophe for which better economic and foreign policies are positioned as the solution. Sutcliffe suggests that people out to advocate against tyranny, displacement, and economic exploitation as democratic goals *in themselves*. The fact is that "a less imperialist foreign policy might also create more voluntary migration," thereby leading to a true cosmopolitanism from below.<sup>13</sup>

13. Bob Sutcliffe, "Crossing Borders in the New Imperialism," in Leo Panitch and Colin Leys, eds., *The New Imperial Challenge. Socialist Register 2004* (London 2003), 277. For a more de-

Finally, Martin, Abella and Kuptsch discuss a range of international human rights declarations and other instruments for enforcing migrant rights, among them the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families. Many of these are popular NGO instruments for campaigning but all of them, as the authors admit, are caught up in the contradiction that such declarations ultimately do not challenge "the sovereign right of countries to determine who can enter and stay." (166) As such, they can provide little protection and enforcement for migrant workers' rights.

The final book under review, Harald Bauder's *Labor Movement: How Migration Regulates Labor Markets*, is a well-written, scholarly, and accessible piece of politically engaged scholarship, the only one of these four books based on original research. Bauder is a labour geographer at the University of Guelph and has contributed to a number of debates on migration, including the politics of open borders. Early in the book, he observes, "The strategic control of migration is a way of managing the geography of capital accumulation;" (6) thinking about migration, therefore, at a variety of scales, and within a transnational framework, enables an analysis of the movement of people that is more satisfactory than seeing it as an inevitable outcome of globalization. *Labor Movement* is organized into four sections: after an opening section which lays out the theoretical framework of the book, Bauder devotes a section each to his research on labour markets, citizenship, and processes of exclusion and distinction in three settings: Vancouver, Berlin, and southwestern Ontario where he also lives and works. Centrally, he is interested in "the forces that divide workers along the lines of mobility, origin and citizenship." (vii) Bauder understands national citizenship as a fundamentally exclusionary institution, but he also draws extensively on French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's discussion of "processes of social, cultural, and institutional distinction" (8) and applies them to understanding labour market segmentation. Bauder's argument that analysis of such processes, rather than a critical race perspective, is a more comprehensive framework for understanding social exclusion is likely to be hotly debated, perhaps especially with reference to the book's discussion of the differential fates of South Asians and Eastern Europeans in Vancouver's labour market.<sup>14</sup> Regardless of whether one agrees with Bauder's emphasis, his broad point – that ideological and cultural representations of im/migrants are central to legitimating the inequality produced through the institution of

---

veloped critique of the construction of migration as pathological, see Sutcliffe's "Migration and Citizenship: Why Can Birds, Whales, Butterflies and Ants Cross International Frontiers More Easily than Cows, Dogs and Human Beings?" in S. Ghatak and A. Showstack Sassoon, eds., *Migration and Mobility: The European Context* (New York 2001).

14. For a very different deployment of Bourdieu for an anti-racist and anti-nationalist critique, see the brilliant and often brutally funny critique of Australian multiculturalism by Ghassan Hage, *White Nation: Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Nation* (New York 2000). Thanks to Mary-Jo Nadeau for reminding me of Hage's reading of Bourdieu.

citizenship, and are therefore crucial to social reproduction – is an important one. It's also a key theme in the text.

Bauder's three rather different spaces (Vancouver, Berlin, and southwestern Ontario) allow him to look at both "temporary" workers (as in the case of seasonal agricultural workers in Ontario) as well as more middle-class immigrants on the path to permanent residency (Vancouver and Berlin). As is well known, both Berlin and Vancouver are important immigrant-reception cities, and typically acknowledged as such, while more rural southwestern Ontario – a destination for generations of Mexican and Caribbean agricultural labouring people – often represents itself as a landscape without migrant workers. But even Vancouver and Berlin differ considerably in key areas related to both immigration practices and labour markets – so much so that a comparative structure for the book was not quite possible, as Bauder acknowledges. (12) Moreover, Germany is a state with several categories of immigrants not comparable to the Canadian reality (e.g. Russians and Eastern Europeans of "ethnic German" origin who are in fact seen as returnees rather than immigrants). Then there is the fact that the transnational EU framework also structures citizenship and immigration in ways with no Canadian equivalent. And while Berlin may be an important immigrant city, Germany has, as Bauder notes, "long denied being an immigration country." (104)

Nevertheless, there is an important theme that knits together both the Vancouver and Berlin sections of the book. Bauder is interested in identifying the mechanisms of exclusion (formal and informal) which operate in instances where highly educated immigrants with professional credentials have access to permanent residency and citizenship but still end up subordinated in the labour market – and are often in fact proletarianized. Particular kinds of distinction (and requirements for "Canadian experience," for instance) operate to systematically privilege some workers and not others: "institutionalized cultural capital in the form of credentials enables privileged groups to control their own reproduction." (136) The result is that many immigrant professionals in both Vancouver and Berlin end up in jobs where the employer benefits from highly trained people who can be paid a lot less than their "native"-born equivalents. The section on Berlin also has a chapter on social networks, immigrant neighbourhoods, and the "ethnic economy" which is a useful critique of the "mysterious entrepreneurial spirit that immigrants supposedly possess" (145) and the neo-liberal purposes to which such ideological constructions are put: further entrenchment of low wages and "flexibility."

I found Bauder's discussion of seasonal agricultural workers in southwestern Ontario – a category of workers for whom exclusion from Canadian citizenship very much matters – particularly interesting. Migrant agricultural workers in Canada have been the subject of both extensive scholarly literature by academics and also some important experiments in advocacy and organizing by mainstream unions and para-labour formations such as Justicia for Migrant Workers. Bauder's contribution to an already rich literature is to

examine three things: first, how print media narratives of migrant workers erase in various ways their exploitation by employers and the Canadian state; second, how cultural representations of the southwestern Ontario landscape erase the presence of migrant workers by, among other processes, rendering entirely marginal their social-spatial practices outside of work; third, what the “farmfare” debate tells us about citizenship and different modes of regulating labour in neo-liberal context. “Farmfare” was a workfare proposal floated by the former Tory regime in Ontario. It would have replaced migrant seasonal workers with Canadian citizens living on welfare. While workfare was introduced into Ontario, farmfare was not. Bauder’s analysis of why this happened is illuminating and also illustrative of just how destructive it is to divide one category of worker against another. He also shows that much of the organized response to the farmfare proposal largely served to reinforce these divides rather than fundamentally challenge them.

Bauder’s sobering account of the farmfare debate makes a highly relevant stepping stone for the conclusion of the book, an essay on ways to address the political divisions that have been created between citizen and non-citizen workers (and among various categories of citizens and non-citizens). As Bauder rightfully argues (and one wishes that Davis and Chacon had paid more attention to this point), however welcome trade union initiatives to organize undocumented and seasonal workers are – and many of these forays are themselves still limited in Canada – they are never going to be enough if citizenship and border controls are not frontally challenged. As he notes, “Citizenship exploitation seems to be on the rise, not in decline” (123) and remains a big determinant of wages, access to the labour market, and conditions and term of work. (112–113) This leads Bauder to articulate a politics of open borders, one which he distinguishes from calls for a “borderless world” articulated by elites or by their tribunes such as *The Economist*, by linking it to a political fight for the re-scaling of labour, welfare, and other rights from the national to the global. His call for a renewed politics, one which focuses centrally on politicizing the organization of citizenship and other divisions among workers, echoes themes in radical migration literature. Indeed, as we have seen, the managed migration perspectives which rule (in all senses of the word) right now are a classic example of what James Scott has called “seeing like a state,”<sup>15</sup> they provide no window into understanding the lives, standpoints, and self-activity of transnational migrants themselves, including their role as political actors or organizers. But migrants and migrant movements have consistently shown that they see differently and, in the process, have demonstrated that migrant struggles are no mere sectoral issues but are central, as Etienne Balibar has argued, for thinking about how we do politics now.

15. James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven 1998). My thanks to Nandita Sharma for pointing me in this direction.