

Asylum for Sale: Profit and Protest in the Migration Industry. Edited by Siobhán McGuirk and Adrienne Pine. Oakland, CA. PM Press, 2020. 343 pp. \$27.95. ISBN: 978-1-62963-782-2

Processes of securitisation and militarisation increasingly define contemporary asylum systems, shaping how states and NGOs operate, respond to and represent refugees. From narratives of ‘deservingness’, to representations of ‘bogus’ economic migrants, the politics of asylum becomes disbelieving and exclusionary. This edited collection makes an incisive intervention here, exploring how capitalism, neoliberalism and profit-making have not only helped drive such processes, but are central to them. From the outsourcing of responsibility for refugees by states in the Global North who sign border security contracts with multinationals, to the procurement of cheap exploitable labour in detention centres, we see how rights-based norms have been eroded by the lure of profit.

The edited volume aims to “expose and examine profit-making as a significant force driving contemporary asylum regimes” (4). This moves beyond legal, ethical and moral questions common in forced migration and asylum scholarship, toward a focus on new systems of governance and profit that are prospering at great human cost. The volume is clearly animated by questions of practice and action, merging academic critique with a clear-sighted commitment to activism and protest. In particular, the volume recognises and builds on the work of activist groups who are organising to challenge contemporary asylum systems and their reliance on profit. This gives the volume an urgency sometimes lacking in refugee scholarship, in part because it both names the structures and processes shaping contemporary asylum systems and addresses how different groups are responding to and resisting them. This makes the volume of great relevance to both academic audiences, and those working in the non-mutually exclusive arenas of activism, campaigning and asylum support. The volume features a diverse set of creative, personal, theoretical and practice-based reflections from practitioners, activists, detained migrants, asylum seekers, artists, writers and academics. As a result, this collection persuasively exposes an industry of profit making by state and non-state actors alike and brings to the fore instances of protest and resistance as they are taking place in different spaces and contexts.

The first section, ‘Crossings’, focuses on the visible and invisible forms of exploitation that unfold when and where people are on the move, from the Mediterranean to the US-Mexico border. The chapters included here reveal how the profit-making practices of smugglers and security services go hand in hand, commodifying both mobility and its regulation at the expense of those who are forced to move. José López recounts his experience of becoming an asylum seeker from Honduras in USA and encountering systems of response, detention and deportation intimately shaped by profit at the expense of protection. Alva, Uyi and Madi’s chapter recalls their time aboard the MSF-operated Mediterranean rescue ship *Aquarius*. They explore how such NGO interventions both fill gaps in state responses, whilst also rubbing up against state-driven, outsourced border security operations. Garry Leech’s chapter explores the contradictions of free trade agreements and how they sustain conditions of economic fragility that both creates refugees, as well as the conditions in which they are intercepted, detained and deported for profit. This is echoed by Sara Dehm whose chapter shows how market logics justify the outsourcing of responsibility by the Australian state to offshore detention facilities run by multinationals in Papua New Guinea, such as Manus Island. This section concludes with Nancy Scheper Hughes’ shocking account of the illicit trade

in organs and human trafficking that traps many displaced people in situations of extreme exploitation. Across these chapters, the scale and consequences of profit-making on the mobility of displaced peoples is laid bare, presenting a bleak picture of exploitation and the erosion of state responsibility that defines shifts toward border securitisation.

In the second section, 'Waiting Games', chapters focus on the "profit extraction" that takes place in asylum detention systems. Louise Tassin's chapter explores the market of control and securitisation that has sprung up in France and Italy. This is echoed in the chapter by Detained Voices, which examines how detainees and advocacy groups in the UK have sought to fight back against exploitative hiring practices and indefinite detention. Behrouz Boochani and Omid Tofighian's chapter builds on this theme of resistance, offering a poignant account of what constitutes "creative and intellectual protest" (101) in contexts of detention, notably Manus Island. As with the rest of this collection, this chapter leaves you bereft and angry through the melding of political critique and powerfully personal testimony. Boochani and Tofighian's chapter in particular is a testament to the power of literature to identify and hold to account the inhumanity of contemporary asylum systems. Sidonia Lucia Kula and Oreva Olakpe's chapter highlights how humanitarian support, asylum and security have become commodifiable products in Nigeria, opening up new spaces of exploitation linked to the melding of profit-making, capital and support. The final chapter by Sam Wallman, Nick Olle, Pat Grant, Pat Armstrong and Sam Bungey presents an account of a Serco employee working in an Australian detention centre. Depicted as a graphic novel, it tells of the affective and disturbing consequences of working in such an industry, as well as the banal inhumanity that emerges in spaces characterised by violence.

The third section covers 'Complex Industries/Industrial Complexes', focusing on how multinationals, corporations, small businesses and states profit from efforts to prevent people from accessing asylum. Mark Akkerman details how military and security industries are playing a formative role in shaping EU border and migration policies, constituting the emergence of a "border security industrial complex" (158) where European security concerns are increasingly aligned with the profit goals of military and security companies. Julia Morris' chapter explores how and why people are "made into refugees" (177) through a focus on offshore detention on Nauru. She argues that capital has become invested in the "figure of the refugee" – a sensational product that shocks and scares and warrants expansive industries of control and security. This is echoed by Marzena Zukowska's and John Grayson's respective chapters: both differently call into focus the commodification of the entire immigration process. Zukowska's radical resistance to capitalist and liberalist modes of 'reform', and Grayson's commitment to community based and coalitional forms of advocacy and solidarity building seek to tackle the commodification of support in refugee housing and reception in particular. Adrienne Pine's chapter deepens this section's discussion by reflecting on the complicity and impossibility of reforming such industrial complexes from 'within'. As an 'expert' witness, she concludes that working within US asylum systems driven by "capitalist logics" (213) may actually be counterproductive in addressing its problems. The diverse perspectives in this section speak to the complicated intersections of industrial, profit-related motivations and the politics of supporting and or working within the asylum 'system'.

The penultimate section, "nonprofit'/nongovernmental", is the most compelling, offering original insights into the relationship between NGO actors, state and corporate interests, and

how this legitimises and/or de-legitimises different forms of support and advocacy. The chapters here speak to a theme that runs through the collection, where profit-making motivations give rise to “new regimes of monitored vulnerability” (2). By focusing on NGOs, this section demonstrates how entire industries of support have been created that mobilise professionalised, middle-class, often Northern workforces to advocate for “select categories of ‘deserving’ persecuted people” (3). Lynn King, Bridget Ng’andu, and Lauren Wroe explore the challenges NGOs face when working adjacent to government goals whilst seeking ways to hold states to account, especially when they withdraw from or abdicate on their responsibilities. Echoing this is Jo Wilding’s chapter that highlights how legal aid reform in the UK has deformed the market, hollowing out decent legal representation, in turn highlighting the dependency of good legal representation on market logics. Tim Schütz and Monic Meisel’s chapter demonstrates the entanglement of state, industry and ideologies of “free/open software” that shape the availability and cost of internet access for refugees and asylum seekers. The intervention of capital and profit-making logics into the work of NGOs is also addressed, offering some of the most conceptually interesting discussions in the collection. Annika Lindberg’s chapter focuses on how the doing of “care” in the context of the Danish Refugee Council allows already privileged people in NGO and volunteer settings to acquire social capital, money and donations by mobilising and commodifying the suffering of refugees. She powerfully concludes that such processes fuel “the moral and material economy of a growing asylum industry” (227). Similarly, Siobhan McGuirk’s chapter highlights the uneven terrain of capitalist interventions to ‘save’ refugees, and how these close down or fail to recognise more long-term, community-oriented support structures in favour of flashy, well-funded and visible interventions.

The final section, ‘Aftermath’, focuses on asylum seekers who are rejected and returned, and looks ahead to consider the “future entrants to the asylum industry” (13) in light of climate change and postwar instability. Todd Miller addresses climate catastrophe and its relationship to displacement. Paloma E. Villegas reflects on the profits extracted from migrants in Canada. Jordine Bilj and Sarah Nimführ’s chapter explores the link between asylum rejection and ongoing exploitation. Ruth Potts and Jo Ram focus on the Stansted 15 anti-deportation protests in the UK and the fierce backlash from the Home Office which tried to prosecute their act of solidarity under terror-related laws, demonstrating how mutual aid is increasingly securitised. Finally, Joël van Houdt discusses the exhibition *Kuja Meri* (“where are you going?” in Dari) which was held in Kabul in October 2017. This final chapter offers a poignant end to the collection through a series of photos and reflections that speaks to the volume’s powerful entanglement of art, literature and stories that collectively address those counter-entanglements of capital and profit making in contemporary asylum systems.

Ultimately, this collection offers original and invaluable insights on the politics of asylum. Its central focus on profit-making, capitalism and neoliberalism in the context of displacement provides a rich and important framework for addressing the inequities, injustices and structural violence facing many refugees and asylum seekers. The interdisciplinarity of the collection is noteworthy, made all the more so by the diversity of perspectives featured. At times, the chapters veer between searing critique, highly focused on the sinews of capital and commercial interests, before grasping the deeply personal, often profoundly moving accounts of those trapped in hostile environments. Admittedly, as with any edited collection, some chapters are less engaging than others, and – by admission of the editors (11) – the themes

addressed by this collection remain Northern-focused, pointing to the need for further research to better understand how the profit-making functions of the asylum industry operate in Southern locations too. Nevertheless, this volume is an important addition to the field of refugee and forced migration studies, which often lacks a closer analysis of capital and its impact on displacement. The discussions covered by the volume offer a vital frame for further research, with similar value to practitioners, activists and academics alike. The collected chapters create space for transformative and explorative thinking and action, perhaps the most important tools we have in resisting the ongoing securitisation, militarisation and commodification of asylum.

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