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BOOK REVIEW: AFRICAN MIGRANTS AND EUROPE: MANAGING THE ULTIMATE FRONTIER

Mária Štupáková *

RINELLI, L.: *African migrants and Europe: Managing the ultimate frontier*. London; New York: Routledge, 2016. 149 p. ISBN 978-1-138-80051-9.

Lorenzo Rinelli graduated from University of Rome, La Sapienza (Doctor of Law: International Public Law; Master's degree: International Human Rights Law) and from University of Hawaii at Manoa (Doctor of Philosophy: International Relations and Affairs), where he participated in the curriculum development at the Department of Political Science. He designed a class on border theory focused on state control, fundamental rights of individual, refugees and migrants. His research interests have been for a few years focused on immigration and social change in European cities, European institutions, societies and EU migration control policies within the Mediterranean basin and over the Maghreb. Until the year 2007, he served as a Liaison Officer of Italian Red Cross. Nowadays, he works as a teacher and researcher at the University of California in Rome Study Center, Italy, and at University of Hawaii. He is active researcher on International Migration and Comparative Politics with a particular focus on Africa and migration to Europe, European minority, religion rights and racism in Europe. At the University of California, he leads the following courses: *The Changing Face of the Mediterranean: Migration in Southern Europe* and *Globalization and Crisis in Spain and Italy*. His strong interest in mentioned topics is based on the fact that his parents were migrants themselves.

The reviewed book entitled *African Migrants and Europe: Managing the ultimate frontier* was first published in 2016 in London and New York for the

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scholars and student of European Studies, African Studies, Security Studies, International Relations, Global Studies, Comparative Politics, Cultural Geography, Migration Studies and Border Theory. The volume represents a contribution also to Migrant Studies, filling information gaps of current understanding what is happening in the Mediterranean basin and what political practices are implemented by EU and Italian government with the main purpose to secure their territory. „*Book was born out of indignation and inspiration, caused by the relentless political strength*“ (author).

The book offers information about the historical trajectory of the flows from Africa towards the European continent, deals with the contemporary migration flows and explains the dynamics of African migration in the context of misleading information from media images and news. The author points out how border controls have become diffuse, transformed, and he reveals aspects that were deliberately withheld due to improper approach during the unwelcome increase in migration flows from Africa. Author perceived and clearly introduced critical analyses against externalisation of European migration controls (externalisation of migration management in Europe). At the same time, he describes the plight of African migrants, accompanied by inhumane treatment in the various camps in the Sahara Desert, Libya and the Mediterranean, and later further accentuated in detention camps for migrants and the attitude to the issue of migration in various European cities. In the book, we can see the collision of two different worlds: the global North, deliberately turning the blind eye on the problems associated with migration, and on the other hand enormous area stimulating what the European Union now calls migration crisis. The book demonstrates how a small island such as Lampedusa, almost invisible on a map, constitutes a barrier to the continuation of migration flows, but at the same time serves as migration flows accelerator, the place of stoppage for the migrants, thus having direct impact on the entire European space. This Italian island with its community, and consequently Italy as a state, has become the centre of a discussion that surpasses the national importance. The author asks and answers questions: *What's the picture about migration? What can be heard? What can be seen? What cannot be heard, and what must remain invisible?*

The main purpose of the book is to restore basic idea of borders (the author also succinctly points out the difference between borders and frontiers) in the light of contemporary African migration interventions on European territory. The author criticises contemporary artificial borders, created and conserved by the

state, and fuelling tensions. „*Feuilles éparses*“ is epigraph of the book taken from Abbé Pierre, French priest who set up Emmaus International made up from 350 member organisations operating in 37 different countries in Africa, America, Asia and Europe. Abbé Pierre has spread a testimony of solidarity among people who have experienced exclusion in attempt to achieve their fundamental rights, values of sharing, humanity and justice, who wholeheartedly fought against poverty and exclusion. I identify with the authors statement: "*This book is for those who walk strenuously from one life to the next, always with courage and faith.*"

It is important to point out that the book offers highly sophisticated approach to the issue of African migrants and Europe. From my point of view, author has written by now unrivalled and original book, with many challenges for EU and also for us as individuals. Book offers not only the expansion of the territorial and ethical boundaries, but also an expansion of boundaries of the issue well beyond what can be presented by international media and politics. Only time, however, will show whether the author was wrong in his assumptions or not.

It is important to point out the book has many positive aspects. Lorenzo Rinelli personally visited Lampedusa and affected areas, where he did his research with considerable impartiality and neutrality to the European institutions. The work is enriched by the testimonies of African migrants, who reached the European borders, and by author's own photographic archive. To explain complex issues related to the African migrants and their relations with the EU, author uses various comparisons and inspiration from documentaries touching upon the same topic, such as *Golden Door*, *Like a Man on Earth*, and *L'Orchestra di Piazza Vittoria*. He investigates how the entire EU apparatus and complex framework of immigration laws and policies shape the life conditions, choices, expectations and behaviours of the migrants

The book is divided into eight chapters, each one dealing with the issue of African migration from another part of the journey into Europe. The author compares different areas of migration flows from the Central Africa to Europe. Each part of the journey represents a "door" which migrants need to open in order to continue. On one hand, border represents a crossing point and point of passage, but at the same time, it is an obstacle in transitions, where selection and filtering take place. Thus, it becomes an area of potential outbreaks of violence. *The Sand door*, *Blue door*, *Brick door* and *Virtual door* are the main doors that migrants need to pass. Individual chapters discuss those borders, which are not neutral lines, but are defined by power relations, including trade or

investments. Each chapter starts with an impressive citation, which outlines the basic idea of the next pages. The author is dealing very precisely and expertly with the term of externalisation, its genesis and changes leading to singled out and undocumented immigrants. He perceives also the security dimension of this issue, because illegal migrants may represent a threat to international peace and stability. In his words, „*there is migration, therefore, there is a risk...*“ The book explains how the bureaucratic European migration control and practices have been implemented in the North Africa and Mediterranean basin and how migrants deal with the crossing of the Sahara Desert and Sea. Author dissociates from a scientific approach to migration perceived as "privilege" for host countries or governments. He outlines the problematic concept of borders, discusses different kinds of possibilities to design them, focusing on natural character of frontiers and intersections between African migrants' trajectories and national identities. The Mediterranean Sea represents a „*Blue door*“, combined with the so-called "*Virtual door*", represented by satellite and security technology employed by the EU to guard the area of Mediterranean basin. In this part of the book, author answers the question what is the real importance, function of Lampedusa, and presents the intimate relations between African migrants, borders and justice. He defines the relationship between law, institutions, and the individuals that transforms into visible boundaries. Consequently, Rinelli described the southern limits of Europe as the complex net of relations between legal framework, institutions and individuals, both migrants and not. Author also looks into productive tensions generated by the interaction between migrants and new available technologies.

An important contribution of this volume is the idea of new urban development plan for the city of Rome, envisaged as "Rome – Peace Capital of the Mediterranean". The author analyses the shortcomings of the current state, and proposes solutions not only for Rome, but also for other European cities facing the issue of migration. The book is an invitation to "see differently" as we pass through a series of various „doors“; it provides numerous questions that will not leave you indifferent to the issue of *African Migrants and Europe*.