Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson have written an ambitious work of politically engaged social theory that attempts to reconceptualize issues of labor, migration, sovereignty, and governmentality. Central to Mezzadra and Neilson’s approach is a methodological framework that treats the border as “research ‘object’” (p. viii) and “‘epistemic’ angle” (p. viii); the border becomes both a field site and a conceptual lens. The authors weave together numerous case studies from across the globe, including such diverse examples as the internal borders erected by the Chinese *hukou* system and the European *cordons sanitaires* created by high seas migrant interdiction. Mezzadra and Neilson range as widely over theoretical terrain as they do across the various borderlands from which they draw their examples; in the process, they attempt to synthesize strains of Marxist and Foucauldian thought into a perspective that is at once a scholarly contribution and a political manifesto. Despite the drawbacks inherent in its genre shifts and the enormity of its topical scope, *Border as Method* is punctuated by moments of valuable insight and provocation that will undoubtedly prove interesting to anthropologists grappling with contemporary shifts in the spatiality of capital and the subjectivities it produces.

The book is built upon several core theses that take the form of hybrid theoretical formulations. The authors argue that borders are both softening and hardening; that the violence of sovereign power and the softer regulatory features of governmentality combine to form a “sovereign machine of governmentality” (p. 204); and that borders, broadly construed, both obstruct and facilitate the articulation and circulation of people, goods, and money. Mezzadra and Neilson attempt to reveal new social and economic formations, which, if they are to be properly interrogated, require that the rift between theories of governmentality, sovereignty, and capital be repaired or replaced with more powerful and nuanced perspectives. The book is an attempt to lay the groundwork for such an approach, one which is responsive to the proliferation of borders in the 21st century and the heterogeneous labor regimes they help to structure.
Border as Method is at its best when Mezzadra and Neilson ground their theoretical discussions in historical and ethnographic examples. Two chapters in particular exemplify this: chapter two, with its account of the world-making power of cartography, and chapter five, with its discussion of the different temporalities of skilled and unskilled labor circulation created by migration “[p]oint systems” (p. 139). The case studies, however brief, bring to light complicated regimes by which labor is managed within and across borders and the ways in which the proliferation of borders and what the authors call the heterogeneity of contemporary labor practices are co-constituted. Their deep familiarity with a wide range of materials on international and domestic migration frameworks allows them to draw out the connections and divergences between processes occurring on a vast scale. Their ability to narrate the global borderlands is part of the allure of the book and an opportunity to spur conversations across geographic and disciplinary spaces.

Despite the book’s many fascinating contributions, its overtly political nature may alienate some readers. Mezzadra and Neilson characterize their work as an effort “at reconstructing the material basis of a new communist politics” (p. 283). Many of the arguments throughout the book build up to the final chapter, which lays out Mezzadra and Neilson’s idea of the common: “a radical perspective on social, juridical, and political matters pertaining to the commons, common goods, the public, and the private” (p. 278). The authors’ theoretical claims and methodological approaches are deeply intertwined with this project of “radical political thought and action” (p. 280).

Border as Method’s strength and weakness perhaps lie in its own ambition. In order to tackle the wide array of examples and theoretical literatures presented in the book, the authors are unable to explore any of them in much depth. In this sense, the text has a paradoxical structure: it contains lengthy literature reviews that presume a detailed knowledge of much of the literature being reviewed. The target audience is the scholar already at home in the philosophical debates that drive the work. As such, it is probably more appropriate for graduate seminars than undergraduate classes. Nonetheless, it is shot through with highly suggestive insights and manages to bring numerous works from multiple disciplines into productive dialogue with one another. Anthropologists interested in issues related to migration, sovereignty, labor, and the state would do well to read this book.