Series Preface

Michelle Peterie’s book is the eighth in the Global Migration and Social Change series. Visiting Immigration Detention offers a captivating account of Australia’s onshore immigration detention system and its negative individual and societal impacts. The aim of our book series is to offer a platform for original, engaged and thought-provoking scholarship in refugee and migration studies, open to different disciplinary perspectives, theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches. Peterie’s book fully matches our aim by painting a vivid and worrying portrait of the working and function of Australia’s onshore immigration detention facilities, contrasting the care and friendship exchanged between detainees and regular visitors with the institutional violence of the immigration regime.

The book will resonate with students, researchers and everyone keen to understand the impact of immigration detention regimes, offering in-depth insights into one that, since the early 2000s, has attracted extensive international attention and produced highly polarized views – for many the Australian approach institutionally violates the human rights of migrants and refugees and breaches the country’s international obligations towards those in need of international protection. For others, like the current UK Home Secretary, it offers a template to follow for the reform of the immigration system. The New Plan for Immigration promoted by the British government under Boris Johnson explicitly refers to Australia as a positive example to follow in its attempt to deter the arrivals of asylum seekers to the UK. The UK has been looking closely in particular to Australia’s policy of offshore asylum processing, which has removed detainees from public view and reduced accountability by placing detention facilities outside the jurisdiction of its courts. However, as Peterie’s book shows, Australia also has an onshore detention system which is also opaque. Detainees in this system, Peterie argues, ‘are hidden in plain sight – held in prison-like centres’, many in remote and hard-to-access locations. The book offers unique insight into detention facilities and the harm produced by immigration detention through the accounts of 70 detainees’ friends and loved ones as they enter detention as private visitors. In doing so, the book makes three important contributions to scholarship on immigration detention. First, it exposes everyday carceral
practices and their consequences on health, hope and relationships. Second, it expands our understanding of who is harmed by such practices, and how harmful practices reverberate and affect inmates and visitors. Finally, the author makes a compelling case for understanding these harmful practices and effects not as accidental or unintentional, but as epitomising a policy logic that accepts cruelty as a mechanism of control.

Nando Sigona
Oxford, March 2022