

Anghel, Remus Gabriel, Margit Fauser and Paolo Boccagni (eds.). 2019. *Transnational Return and Social Change. Hierarchies, Identities and Ideas*. Anthem Press. 206 pp. Pb.: 80 £. ISBN: 9781785270949.

The edited volume *Transnational Return and Social Change* gathers the work of fourteen scholars from different disciplines, mainly sociology and geography. This book fits into the fields of migration and transnationalism studies. It focuses on return migration and on returnees' impacts on social changes in their place of birth or ancestry within the theoretical framework of transnationalism.

The introduction (Fauser & Anghel) dwells upon the spirit and the unity of the book. The two authors introduce the concept of 'transnational return', which is relevant in each chapter to varying degrees. Transnational return aims to shed light on the transnationality of return. Returnees maintain transnational ties, which they mobilise in their place of origin as economic, social or cultural resources, which impacts the home society. Additionally, these transnational connections may trigger further emigration. Therefore, through the concept of transnational return, a large variety of types of return is considered, which is reflected throughout the chapters (permanent and seasonal returns, visits to family or friends, holidays, among others). Return is not the end of a migratory cycle, but an event in a broader trajectory of transnational mobility.

The impact of return on social change in the place of origin is looked at from three domains, which constitute the three parts of the book. Part 1 focuses on how transnational returns modify, reinforce or disturb local social status and hierarchy. Anghel (chapter 1) shows how Roma returnees to Romania improve their socioeconomic status through their migration experience, but nonetheless stay at the bottom of the ethnic hierarchy. The prestige

of Germans who seasonally return to their place of birth in Romania is reinforced, as Oltean contends (chapter 2), through their organisational contribution to local German associations. As Kandilige & Adiku argue (chapter 3), involuntary return of Ghanaian migrants has the effect of deteriorating their social status and that of their family at home, as they move from being breadwinners to becoming dependent on their relatives and as they are stuck with the stigma of failed migration.

Part 2 addresses the theme of collective identities. Coşciug's chapter shows how Romanian returnees' commitment to the Orthodox Church helps to develop their local networks, which contributes to the success of their transnational business. Lulle, Krişjane & Bauls (chapter 5) explore the shaping of belonging in Latvia in cases of permanent return, diaspora tourism and visits to friends and relatives and the changes caused by returnees' involvement with their home society.

Part 3 analyses the impact of knowledge, ideas and norms acquired abroad on home contexts. In Ghana, returnees from Germany mobilise their acquired knowledge and system of values in specific spaces only, while in others they are deactivated, according to Olivier-Mensah (chapter 6). White (chapter 7) argues that the diffusion of returnees' liberal ideas is articulated with other endogenous factors, so that in Poland big cities are more open to social change than small towns, because the former are already more liberal. As Kılınç & King (chapter 8) examine, mostly second generation Turkish returnees from Germany to the city of Antalya mobilise their transnational/transcultural knowledge to develop businesses in the tourism industry and to contribute to the cosmopolitan atmosphere of this touristic area.

Although the geographical focus is limited (mainly Eastern Europe and Ghana), the different chapters raise issues of broader interest, such as transnational mobility, belonging, sociocultural status, circulation of ideas, norms and lifestyles. The different contributions rely mainly on qualitative methodologies (mostly in-depth interviews, few adopted participant

observation) and the scale they privilege is the ‘meso-level’ – namely the community and town level, and interpersonal relations – so that the book remains a useful resource for anthropologists, who are not represented.

As Boccagni argues in the Afterword, the notion of ‘social change’ – addressed in each chapter – avoids the bias of the widespread concern of ‘development’ in migration studies. However, in my view, social change is mostly taken-for-granted. Indeed, what constitutes change – be it seen positive or negative – appears to fit scholars’ developmentalist concerns, even if in a more nuanced way as they consider many more aspects than the economic dimension. A deeper engagement with ethnographic methods (as Boccagni calls for) would help to unpack this notion and to add to the analysis the transformations returnees and non-migrants aspire to in their place of origin.

Finally, the book is recommended reading for any anthropologists and social scientists who address the diverse phenomenon of return migration, which is still understudied. The transnationalism approach advocated in this book encourages us to consider the connections across borders that returnees maintain and create from their migratory experience and these connections’ impact on the places of origin and on the types of return.

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