

## Zitierhinweis

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BOOK REVIEWS

**Caroline Hornstein Tomić/Robert Pichler/Sarah Scholl-Schneider, eds, *Remigration to Post-Socialist Europe. Hopes and Realities of Return*, Vienna: LIT Verlag (ERSTE Foundation Series, Bd. 3) 2018. 468 pp., ISBN 978-3-643-91025-7, € 39.90**

Return migration is among the most relevant topics of mobility studies in an ongoing 'age of migration'. For good reasons does this collected volume deal with (e)migration and the question of return, a topic which is full of suspension. The subtitle indicates that returning home in some cases may be indeed a story of success, but the 'journey of hope and despair' (as mentioned by Russell King almost two decades ago) in other cases could be negatively connoted and overloaded with experiences such as individual failure as well as permanent exclusion and marginalisation. However, the book's overall intention is to analyse the extent to which returnees have been involved in social, cultural, political and economic transformation processes in the postsocialist sphere. For that, the edited volume offers a multifaceted range of information exceeding expectations. Studies cover postsocialist Europe from Lithuania to North Macedonia and include even Kazakhstan, but set a certain emphasis on Southeastern Europe. The thirteen contributions' foci cover issues of inclusion and exclusion, family and generation, conflict and refuge as well as, and not least, work and education.

The division into four sections provides the volume, consisting of fifteen chapters

in total, with a good structure. The first part ('Transf(er)ormation Projects') sets the lens on the established topic of the transfer of experiences and know-how as well as on the question to what extent returnees have valorised the innovative potential gained through emigration in their countries of origin. The second section mainly emphasises family and generational aspects under the umbrella of 'Be-longing. Generation, Family, Space', with a focus on transnationality. The 'Impact of State Dissolution' stands in the foreground of the four contributions in section three, where questions of diversity and conflict are analysed primarily with examples from the successor states of Yugoslavia. The final section highlights 'Labor and Educational Migration' and deals mainly with the post-2004 migration, that is with the time after the first EU enlargement towards Eastern Europe. Case studies include Romania, Poland, and (non-EU) Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The volume is framed by a groundbreaking thematic introduction and the epilogue offers a literary reading of the topic. The introduction by the editors seems to me more than essential, especially since not every chapter is sufficiently embedded in the wider research context and connected to relevant theories. Due to this shortcoming, the editors' reflections on 'Contexts, Approaches and Conceptual Considerations' are more than helpful. The twenty plus pages serve well as a concise theoretical framing of both the research and the perspectives of migration and return in the giv-

en regional as well as thematic context. Readers who are not overly familiar with the relevant concepts and findings of migration studies, will find important basic information. However, experts too will gain fruitful insights in the anthropologist's view displayed here. As the editors explain, it is part of the volume's overall concept to link contemporary issues to the necessary historical retrospection, an approach that is implemented in almost every contribution.

With regard to the number and diversity of the chapters, it is hardly possible to review every one of them in detail. Taken as a whole, they share an anthropological perspective on the interdisciplinary field of migration studies, even if the individual authors' expertise includes, among others, sociology, history, ethnology and political science. This kind of multi-perspectivity makes up the volume's distinctive character—its idiosyncratic momentum. Especially those passages that utilise 'storytelling' as a methodological tool contribute to this character. The result is a good read even for those who are usually inclined to trust a more quantitative approach in migration studies.

Therefore, I fully support the editors' credo that relying on idiosyncrasy as a metaphor is perhaps the only possibility to tackle the phenomenon of return migration beyond its fashionable aspects, such as transnationalism and the migration-development nexus. Instead, seemingly marginal phenomena of 'just coming home' are at stake here. Absolutely worth reading in this context are for example, recommended from my perspective as a human geographer, the contributions by *Caroline Hornstein Tomić* on the different aspects and estimations of a Croatian family's migration project, and *Thomas Schmidinger* on the forced re-

turn of Gorani to their empty villages in Kosovo. An equally valuable read is *Robert Pichler's* study on the fading power of the Kurbet language and how this is connected to ethnically divergent migration patterns. Pichler is among those who uses the tool of 'storytelling', approaching his topic through the voice of a 'protagonist of this story [!]' (253).

This approach does have its problems, though, for example when personal involvement comes into play, as seems to be the case in Schmidinger's chapter. It is even more critical when the empirical basis refers only to one or two (qualitative or narrative) interviews, as is the case in *Klaus Roth's* study on postsocialist return to Bulgaria, or in the otherwise quite remarkable and certainly innovative study on German-Russian remigration to Kazakhstan by *Sara Reith*. In these case studies, in particular, one would wish for a wider theoretical basis. Nonetheless, besides that caution, they are definitely more purposeful than the vague generalisation and presentation of well-known facts on post-2004 migration that one can read about in *Remus Gabriel Anghel's* and *Anatolie Coşciug's* chapter on Romania.

This leads me to a point of serious criticism: the absence of any comparative perspective. Several of the authors are aware of that shortcoming. Hornstein Tomić for example argues that the 'insights cannot be generalized' (98). In fact, I miss any attempt of wrapping-up at the end of this highly interesting volume. The epilogue would be the right place for such a summarising, generalising and comparative reflection. I am not sure if the figure of 'Literary "Home-Trackers"', as the epilogue's title has it, is conducive to a better understanding of the challenge of 'returning home'. This would have rather been the place for a thorough reference

to contemporary migration studies that point out the unique position as well as the outstanding excellence that the editors combined in this volume.

While, except for the introduction, references to theory are definitely the weakest point of the volume, its bibliography with plentiful links to predominantly regional issues is a stronghold. The volume includes about thirty pages of references at the end, and a bulk of endnotes after every chapter. There are only a few illustrations; some contributions include photos or maps (for example, Pichler, Schmidinger, and Anghel/Coşciug) which aptly assist the reader in understanding the framing or context. The photo chosen for the front cover comes as a curiosity for me, not only because the building does not fit its location at all, along a road in inner Albania, but also because there is no chapter included in the volume that addresses this region. All in all, the book offers fascinating insights to a broad bundle of facets of migration and transition in postsocialist Europe and comes as a must-read for everybody who is involved in that region and/or research on return migration.

Daniel Göler (Bamberg)

**Bojan Bilić/Marija Radoman, eds, *Lesbian Activism in the (Post-)Yugoslav Space. Sisterhood and Unity*, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018. 239 pp., ISBN 978-3-319-77753-5/ISBN 978-3-319-77754-2 (eBook), € 96.29**

The collection under review is the fourth in a quartet of collective volumes on activism in the post-Yugoslav space, all of which have been edited by Bojan Bilić, or Bilić and associates. The first three collections deal with antiwar organisation

in former Yugoslavia, LGBT activism and European integration in the region, and LGBT activism and multiple oppression in Serbia and Croatia. This volume brings together contributions from scholars/activists interested in feminist and L(BT) topics in the region of former Yugoslavia.

The structure of the volume is intriguing, as its six chapters (not counting the editors' introduction, conclusion and epilogue) seem to echo the number of constituent units of former Yugoslavia. Yet, while four of the former socialist republics, today's independent states of Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and North Macedonia, are represented by a chapter of their own, one chapter deals with the first pride marches in Belgrade and Zagreb, thus combining Croatia and Serbia. This pairing is reminiscent of the linguistic situation in former Yugoslavia, where the Serbian and Croatian languages were officially joined and called Serbo-Croatian or Croato-Serbian (depending on which of the two republics one happened to find oneself in). Such a structure opens up the space for the sixth chapter, which is about transnational cooperation in lesbian activism, both within and outside the region. The other four chapters describe the history of autonomous lesbian organisations in Slovenia, lesbian activism in North Macedonia, non-heterosexual women's activism in Montenegro and the PitchWise Festival in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The book hinges on three key notions, the most prominent of which is 'sisterhood and unity', featuring in the subtitle and opposed to the patriarchal notion of brotherhood and unity, a notion of great importance in socialist Yugoslavia. The brotherhood dissolved together with the Yugoslav experiment; yet the ties between like-minded people were not severed. The