

Zitierhinweis

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The volume is a highly valuable contribution to the research of postconflict societies. Chapters successfully show the complexity of the peace processes and the postconflict resolution, as well as how the conflicts helped shape the national, ethnic and confessional identities that are now taken for granted. Along these lines, societies and cities are divided, with borders present in space, time and symbols.

The multidisciplinary and comparative approach presents both similarities and crucial differences in the postconflict realities of the Northern Irish and Bosnian societies. Besides dealing with traditional problems of divided and postconflict societies, the chapters in this volume go beyond the obvious in analysing the identity-creation processes, adding a gender and class dimension too. The volume could have benefited from a study dealing with the role of the European Union in forming the dominant identities in Northern Ireland and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Minor complaints go to a certain lack of literature in the native languages in the case of Bosnia and to the

minor relevance of some chapters to the overall theme. The volume will be of interest to researchers in cultural studies, sociology, political science, conflict management and resolution studies, transitional justice, border studies, art, literary and film studies and, not least, history.

Sven Milekić (Dublin)

Tatjana Thelen/Larissa Vetter/Keebet von Benda-Beckmann, eds, *Stategraphy. Toward a Relational Anthropology of the State*, Oxford, New York: Berghahn Books, 2017 (Studies in Social Analysis, 4). 170 pp., ISBN 978-1-78533-699-7 (hardback), 978-1-78533-700-0 (paperback), \$ 135.00 / £ 99.00 (Hb), \$ 27.95 / £ 22.95 (Pb)

Thinking about the state is not an alien endeavour to the anthropological inquiry—the editors of the book *Stategraphy. Toward a Relational Anthropology of the State*, Tatjana Thelen, Larissa Vetter, and Keebet von Benda-Beckmann, however, argue that anthropologists mostly concentrate on how the state is imagined in their respective fields. What the state does, on the other hand, and how the state practices are related to the imaginations, does not seem pertinent in the discipline. To redress this oversight, they collected this edited volume, aiming to establish a stategraphic research principle that would bridge the gap between state images and practices and to shed new light on the sometimes-masked complexities of the state.

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servations of the mid-twentieth century Manchester School anthropologists, such as Elizabeth Bott, Bruce Kapferer and Max Gluckman, who argued that what makes a political system stable are the relationships between the actors that cut through the individual's belongings such as kinship, gender, age, class. 'Stategraphy' proposes to take these relationships as the lens for re-thinking state formations, images, and practices.

The introduction is followed by eight case studies that demonstrate the method of 'stategraphy'. All are situated in Europe and observe the state as the welfare provider. The editors believe that the analysis in the field of welfare accurately illustrates how different images and practices interplay in the daily encounters between the citizens and the state employees. The case studies are organised around three domains of analysis: relational modalities, boundary work and embeddedness. The first domain aims to show how state employees and citizens create different relational modalities depending on the scale of their acting and the sociohistorical context. The editors believe that when the reality of the state is faced with the expectations on the local level, relational modalities become the first and foremost instance of experiencing the state. The second domain of the analysis builds on the long-standing question in social sciences of where the state ends, society begins and what the differences and overlaps could be. Boundary work, observed in this domain, shows how the state actors sometimes create unexpected practices when involved in different relationships. Thematising this unexpectedness can reveal the porousness of the borders between the state and various social institutions. The third domain takes into account the interplay between the actors'

embeddedness in the state hierarchies and private networks. The focus on the question of embeddedness exposes complex patterns of belonging that the state employees must navigate in their daily practices.

Although the editors announce these three domains of the 'stategraphy' as separate, they mostly overlap and draw from each other in the reality of the analysis. Chapter 3 'Relationships, Practices, and Images of the Local State in Rural Russia' by *Rebecca Key* successfully shows how the movement of the state actors across scales produces different relational modalities and, as they get closer to their private networks, the boundary between personal and public gets more and more complicated and blurred. Two chapters specifically deal with the boundaries of the state— 'Images of Care, Boundaries of the State. Volunteering and Civil Society in Czech Health Care' by *Rosie Read* and 'State Kinning and Kinning the State in Serbian Elder Care Programs' by *Tatjana Thelen, Andre Thiemann and Duška Roth*. The Czech case shows how a state/civil society dichotomy is reproduced on the wing of the neoliberalisation of the healthcare system and state hospitals, while the Serbian ethnography brings a counterintuitive case in which the state overtakes a traditional kinship role. Still, these two chapters also expose the importance of the embeddedness of the actors for the transgression of the public/private domain as well as the different relational modalities that they employ. The quality of the contributions rest in the successful attempt to bring these three avenues of analysis together and show complicated patterns of state formations.

While the chapters could be read separately as good examples of local particularities, this edited volume in its whole

shows that ethnographic inquiry of the local context plays a vital role in understanding continuities and discontinuities with the traditional image of the European states as the welfare providers. By juxtaposing the realities on the ground from West European and East/postsocialist European states, this book also challenges many pre-conceived binaries ascribed to Europe, such as those of centre and periphery or those of a developed West and an underdeveloped East. Even though these case studies had not been initially done as part of a comparative project, the thorough editorial effort dynamically brings them together into a meaningful dialogue. Throughout the book, the case studies refer to each other and always go back to the general questions posed in the introduction. While every case study for itself makes an argument for particular localities, read together, they paint a broader picture of the sweeping change of the European states under the neoliberal influences on the welfare systems.

The 'stategraphic' method demonstrated in this edited volume successfully fulfils the promise of exposing states in their processual nature—as a network of institutions that are structured by social relations in interactions. However, the question remains whether it tells much about the complexities of the state if employed outside the field of welfare studies. Also, as promised in the introduction, the book

offers a notable contribution in bridging the gap between state images and practices in anthropology. Still, it is debatable if this method could adapt to the localities where the nation state is not historically the axis of the organisation of society. The edited volume represents a significant contribution to the scholars of contemporary European welfare matters, while how far it communicates outside of that specific arena remains questionable.

What is particularly notable in this book is that it narrates the complexities of the state and specificities of the local contexts in an accessible language. It also successfully escapes alienating disciplinary concepts while it does not lose the rigor of the ethnographic approach. The accessibly presented content could, therefore, easily engage in the interdisciplinary dialogue about the issues of the contemporary state. It could be of particular importance for policy makers and political scientists who often employ top-down perspective and neglect the local specificities that this edited volume brings to the fore. Therefore, while the method of 'stategraphy' aims to facilitate anthropologists to approach the often-conflicting relationship between state images and practices, the book conveniently opens anthropological knowledge to other disciplines that imagine and/or practice state.

Astrea Pejović (Budapest)