

#### Zitierhinweis

Auzká, Tereza : recension de : Johannes Feichtinger / Gary B. Cohen (eds.), Understanding Multiculturalism. The Habsburg Central European Experience, New York / Oxford : Berghahn, 2017, dans : Südost-Forschungen, 76 (2017), p. 336-338, <https://recensio-stag.lorax.syslab.com/r/8ad4f594978a4ea1b50fdbb323d7790f>



#### copyright

Dieser Beitrag kann vom Nutzer zu eigenen nicht-kommerziellen Zwecken heruntergeladen und/oder ausgedruckt werden. Darüber hinausgehende Nutzungen sind ohne weitere Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber nur im Rahmen der gesetzlichen Schrankenbestimmungen (§§ 44a-63a UrhG) zulässig.

**Understanding Multiculturalism. The Habsburg Central European Experience.** Hgg. JOHANNES FEICHTINGER / GARY B. COHEN. New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books 2017 (Austrian and Habsburg Studies, 17). X, 246 S., 2 Abb., 3 Tab., ISBN 978-1-78533-344-6, £ 24,–

In today's public discourse, multiculturalism is a commonly used term. Since the 1960s when multiculturalism was perceived as a progressive approach to culturally diverse societies, its meaning in the discourse of certain segments of society shifted, making multiculturalism synonymous with unsuccessfully managed situations of Western nation-states. The concept of multiculturalism as a political strategy – how to cope with linguistically and religiously different groups – also became a target of scholarly critique. The editors of this volume, JOHANNES FEICHTINGER and GARY B. COHEN, decided to contribute to this discussion from the perspective of the historical experience of Central Europe.

As elaborated upon in the introduction, the authors strive to use the notion of multiculturalism as a category of analysis for the examined reality in areas ranging from Lombardy to Transylvania and from Vojvodina to Silesia, the territory of "Habsburg Central Europe". The volume aims to focus on the everyday practice and identity negotiating of these pluricultural societies while also questioning the essentialist perception of identity based on nationhood. The chapters are divided into three main sections: (1) Identity formation in multicultural societies, (2) The dynamics of multicultural societies, politics, and the state, and (3) Identities expressed, negotiated, and challenged in multicultural settings.

In the first chapter (17-46), ANIL BHATTI critiques the concept of a multicultural state, which she perceives as segregationist because it constructs differences and preserves boundaries within society. Instead, Bhatti favours the notion of pluriculturalism based on overlapping cultures and pluralist practices. Giving the example of Habsburg Central Europe and India, she shows the plurilinguistic reality that resisted the homogenisationist practices of mono- or bilingualism, which is characteristic for contemporary Europe. According to Bhatti, contemporary multicultural states should follow the motto "similarity with diversity", which embodies the solidarity across cultures and simultaneously reflects the complex reality of pluralist societies and their permanent changes.

MICHAEL RÖSSNER also uses his chapter (47-60) to parallel non-European experiences by showing the fluid cultural situations in heterogeneous societies. He presents the Latin American concept for mixed European and indigenous identity – *mestizaje*. This concept is based on essentialist perceptions of static identity descended from common roots. In opposition to this, Rössner depicts Latin American identities as multiple, overlapping and dynamic, similar to the context of Habsburg Central Europe.

In the final chapter of the first section (61-82), PIETER M. JUDSON succinctly asks, "Do multiple languages mean multicultural society?" The focus lies on the multilingual rural parts of the Habsburg Monarchy, whose inhabitants resisted nationalist politics and attempts to create language boundaries. Judson stresses that a different language does not mean a different identity and puts forward the situational choice of using a particular language. The

decision of speaking a certain language in rural regions of the *fin de siècle* Habsburg Monarchy was also connected with opportunistic and variable claims of adherence to a nation, which meant an ideological problem for the nationalists. The rural and multilingual areas were thus labelled as ignorant towards the national idea, which was explained by the backwardness of such regions.

The Polish case of nation-building and Polish multiculturalism during the interwar period is the topic of the fourth chapter by PATRICE M. DABROWSKI (85-100). After outlining the main conceptions of the Polish state during and after World War I, this chapter concentrates on the ethnically diverse region of Eastern Galicia, which was part of Poland at the time. Dabrowski analyses the relationship of the Polish state and the Hutsul community, whose members were admired as pure mountain people. She mentions the concept of *swójsczyna* (nativeness) as the key idea of Polish multiculturalism. Its aim was to preserve the nativeness of the remote border areas since cultural diversity was seen by certain part of Polish society as a positive feature of interwar Poland.

The following chapter by PAMELA BALLINGER provides another example of a multicultural political concept – “Istrianism” (101-121). This idea is characterised by strong regionalism based on the long-time cohabitation of Croats, Slovenes and Italians on the Istrian peninsula. Ballinger acknowledges “Istrianism’s” opposition to the nationalism of former-Yugoslavia, but she also criticises this concept by pointing out its limits – mainly its creation of boundaries between the native Istrians and “Others”. According to the author, the idea of “Istrianism” still embodies the ideology of territorialised states.

The heritage of the multicultural experience in the Habsburg Monarchy is examined in the next chapter “Migration in Austria”. MICHAEL JOHN gives us an overview of the migration waves that influenced Austrian society from the interwar period until today (122-157). He concludes that multiculturalism was a popular topic in the late-Habsburg Monarchy and then again in the 1980s and 1990s; however, today’s multiculturalism, which is embodied as the heritage of the Habsburg Monarchy, is not regarded as a positive political strategy.

The third section begins with a chapter by OTO LUTHAR on the intercultural practices in the multiethnic region of Prekmurje before World War I (161-173). Taking two cases studies into consideration (multilingual diary and cookbook), Luthar excellently shows the situational choice of language usage as theoretically discussed in the Pieter Judson’s chapter. Oto Luthar reconstructs the individual identities of the diary and cookbook authors. In doing so, he shows the everyday practice of language in the multilingual society. He deconstructs the concept of “mother tongue” in this particular context and presents the reality of overlapping cultures in the Habsburg Empire.

ANDREI CORBEA-HOISIE uses his chapter to look at the categories of “locals” and “strangers” within the context of Bukovina (174-186). He considers the provincial capital Czernowitz as the place inhabited by “strangers”, i. e. Germans and Jews, and focuses on the representation of their relationship with the “local” Romanians in literature. The author explores the depiction of the coexistence of the two groups as a clash between colonial

gentry and primitive villagers. Based on the relevant literature, the author derives the conclusion that Bukovina's multiculturalism failed to prevent the collision of the rival groups.

The last chapter by MORITZ CSÁKY appears as a sort of theoretical conclusion to the whole volume (187-208). At first, Csáky again addresses the terms "pluriculturality" and "multiculturality". He devotes a huge section to the discussion of culture and attempts to create a national culture in concrete territories. Csáky denounces national culture as a category of analysis used by some contemporary scholars, mainly in the field of memory studies, and calls for resistance against the adoption of nationalist categories. He proposes an alternative concept of culture as a dynamic space of overlapping and fluid categories in what, according to him, is the reality of Central European history.

This volume provides the readers with a wide range of topics connected to the Habsburg Central European experience. I appreciate the territorial width of some chapters, which enables the understanding of multiculturalism in a broad and even global context. The only shortcoming, when looking at the territorial range, is the omission of the Hungarian part of the monarchy. I would be curious as to whether we could find any differences between the pluricultural reality of Cisleithania and Transleithania after 1867 because it was under a Hungarian administration and subjected to significant Magyarization. Besides this tiny deficiency, this volume is excellent. The chapters are based on significant academic literature, which is together included in the last part of the book. The authors dealt not only with very concrete and territorially focused topics, but also theoretically contributed to the contemporary discussion about the concept of multiculturalism.

Prague

Tereza Auzká