

BOOK REVIEWS

Brigitte Bonisch-Brednich, Catherine Trundle (eds.) *Local Lives. Migration and the Politics of Place*, Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2010, 203pp. ISBN: 978-1-4094-0103-2 (hbk)

Review by Magda DANCIU

This timely collection of studies, addressing the issue of migration and migrants' identities within the context of an enhancing world fluidity, focuses on how places turn into very sites of identity development, both social and place-identities, generating those transmigrant identities to shift affiliation and to reconfigure subjectivities within this process of movement and mobility which seem to have become "the analytic key to understanding the modern world" (p.2).

The book is divided into four parts according to the perspective they use to demonstrate how people make sense of themselves while changing places within an apparently boundless global(alized) spaces in search of an ontological stasis. Part I, *Migrants and the Politics of Land Ownership*, gathers together ideas related to the individual's link to the land, to the relational and contextual features of any locality, the moral dimensions of place-identity continuum, as well as the civic, political, and mostly cultural aspects that emerge from the migrants' engagement in the dynamics of place making (see Chapter 3).

A suggestion for a critical rethinking of "the 'local' as a category of belonging for transnational migrants" (p.67) is the core of Part II: *Landscapes of Belonging*, presenting a research on how everyday practices in rural France become more value-laden within a context of experiencing difference at the level of

localities, foregrounding the difference in which individuals within transnational social fields combine ways of being and ways of belonging (see p.73), on one hand. On the other hand, Jacqueline Waldren's findings reveal that space, place, identity fluctuate according to the circumstances, as perceived and values by outsiders and insiders against a Spanish background (Mallorca), in a general attempt of becoming aware of one's own landscape or the landscape that one is hosted by. The connectedness between space and individuals is continuous and constitutive as people are defined by the space they belong to, nurturing certain 'placed-based sentiments' (p.102) and striving for gain control of space by reinforcing the concepts of *Houses and Home: Intimate Migrant Place* as referred to in Part III, which examines these particular issues within the globalised context of deterritorialization, the diaspora, the transnational, when place attachment is specifically and individually experienced. As a result, the politics of place, states Erin B. Taylor in her contribution on the issue in Santo Domingo, "may rest upon the production of locality", but it highlights both the state and the transnational sphere when reflecting the "wide range of interests in the lives and livelihoods of residents" (p.116) who are all allocated a multiplicity of spaces to adjust to. An interesting reference is made to the concept of neighbourhood perceived as being characterized by "actuality and potential for social reproduction" (p.121) where the very sense of locality can be re/produced in a more concrete, personalized way than the rather abstract term related to locality in its common definition.

The last section, *Contesting Urban Place*, includes three studies covering three major dimensions in the analytical field of place identity, namely the local community as a resource for identity formation and expression, then citizenship experiences in case of migrants evolving in post-war times (i.e. Bosnians in suburban Melbourne), respectively, the condition of the campus migrant represented by academics working in a foreign university, a multinational institution with a multiplicity of scholarly backgrounds, international networks, and diversity of attitudes to scholarship (see p. 169). The last category points to the completion of one's academic achievements with developing other abilities, such as to build local, as well as global networks of communication, or administrative skills to face the new emplacement requirements, to grasp to "campus contexts"(p.174), to be ready to explore, detect, read, and compare personal and new cultural codes. Nigel Rapport's *Epilogue: The Cosmopolitan Justice of a Direction Home* foregrounds the way in which human beings make sense of their



own experiences related to their contribution to the construction of the 'locale', a space of identification and belonging, to the creation of a home locale, constantly demonstrating that "home is a directionality" (184) and that 'home spaces' continue to be vital to both migrants and locals, to both hosts and guests. He reveals several thematic dimensions of the present collection of studies particularly focused on migrants' responses to the discourse of localization and on the process of their engaging with ideas of locality, namely, the physicality of localities consisting of the physical space of a locality, of its inhabitants, of the community's everyday practices and relations, the way in which a locality gets globally mediated by accepting a glocal identity, the means by which "the local sets the discursive terms of its global appropriation" (185), the fact that the local is a product of exterior expectations existing prior to the decision to migrate, and the observation about the indeterminate nature of 'locality, displaying how ambiguous and unstable the 'local' is (see p.186).

Examining and contrasting issues of identity, citizenship, and cultural diversity within migration theory are part of contemporary debates regarding building societies in which "all members are able to participate fully on a non-discriminatory basis" as their "ultimate objective of integration" lies in their permanent attempt to avoid "marginalization and fragmentation" (Issa&al. 2006: 1). The examples of migrant communities in the present volume represent cases where the process by which individual life gains its right to a home in a glocal space with all the promises of a future just global society is validated by recognition of the complexities and the anxieties that identity construction represents for uprooted, relocated people and of the essence of transculturalism and transnationalism.

References

Issa, T., Dinvaux, A., Petrucijova, J., 2006, *Citizenship Education: Identity issues in a time of Diaspora, Migration and Settlement*, London: CiCe Publications.