

BOOK REVIEWS

Atto, Naures (2011) *Hostages in the Homeland, Orphans in the Diaspora. Identity Discourses among the Assyrian/Syriac Elites in the European Diaspora*, Leiden: Leiden University Press. 607 pp.

In the last decades, substantial numbers of indigenous¹ Christians have come from the Middle East to the West. In her historical anthropological analysis, Naures Atto aims to describe and clarify the impact of this migration on the self-perception of the *Suryoye*, Syriac-Aramaic-speaking Christians, as expressed in an intra-communal debate on the 'name' of this community; in English terms Assyrians or Syriacs. Amongst them, Atto focuses mainly on members of the Syriac Orthodox Church, being the dominant group in Sweden and Europe.² The analysis is mainly based on interviews with members of their – mostly secular – 'elites' in Sweden. She has also visited cultural and other meetings in order to experience expressions and rituals of self-expression.

The book consists of 11 chapters in total. In the first chapter, Introduction, the terminology and composition of the book is explained. After a chapter on the advantages and problems of Discourse Theory in an anthropological analysis, Atto then first describes in three chapters the historical background to the migration process and the processes that formed the identity perception within the community until the late 1960s. Certainly after the genocide of 1915,³ the community felt as 'hostages' in their homeland⁴ under pressure from society and government. As a result, when it became possible to leave the country in the late 1960s – first as *Gastarbeiter*,⁵ later also as asylum seeker – Assyrians/Syriacs moved in ever increasing numbers to 'Christian' Europe. Consequently, there are nowadays more Syriac-speaking Christians in Europe than in Turkey and the Middle East.

In the following five chapters, the process of how forms of group identity evolved in response to the crisis of *dislocation* is analysed, i.e. being 'orphans' in a new world. Aspects that Atto is dealing with are *Umthonoyutho* ('nationalism' stressing cultural independence and ethnic identity but not necessarily political independence), the institutionalisation of antagonistic discourses, the origin and logic of the chosen names, the boundaries of the intended 'us-group' and the leadership within the community. These aspects are all part of the motivations for the internal struggles as reflected in the name debate. In a final concluding chapter, all elements are brought together in a synthesis. In a set of appendices, the history of the Syriac Orthodox community from the beginning of Christianity and the terminology for the various languages used within the community, as well as a collection of documents related to its history, have also been added to the book.

In her book, Atto describes how within this Syrian Orthodox community two ideologies have taken hold. The first is a relatively more secular 'Assyrian' ideology, which derives the name used for the community from the ancient Assyrians. In part, due to a reaction of the church hierarchy to its ecumenical and secular aspects, others began to promote the Aramean origin of the community. The Aramean/Syriac ideology also evolved from being closely linked to the Church into an independent, dominant movement. Other forms of social tension within the Syrian Orthodox community are often also expressed by taking sides in this name debate.

Atto, for the most part, achieves her goal neither to 'justify' either set of claims of the two ideologies nor to establish 'a normative set of criteria' for the debate, but to 'arrive at an understanding, in the sense of *verstehen*, of how these political discourses have been shaped, what their contingent relations are and hence to explain the extent of antagonism between the two main competing discourses by contextualising them from a socio-historical perspective' (p. 9). To be able to do that the discourses also need to be contextualised, more specifically the relationship between the migration and the articulation of identity discourses needs to be analysed, using the concepts of *dislocation* and *split subject*. According to Atto, this will ultimately help to understand 'the hegemonic struggle between the Assyrian/Syriac elites' by looking at the role 'of ideologies, myths and social imaginaries in the formation of identity discourses' (p. 10).

¹ I.e. belonging to Christian denominations that do not have their origins in Europe but have existed in the Middle East from the start of Christianity.

² Up to about 100,000 members on a total Swedish population of 9.5 million.

³ Part of, but distinct of, the Armenian Genocide.

⁴ Roughly speaking South East Turkey, Northern Iraq, North Eastern Iran, most of Syria and Lebanon.

⁵ This term is commonly used for contracted migrant workers from the Mediterranean region, who came to Germany, Netherlands, Belgium and other countries in Europe from the 1960s to 1980s of the 20th century.

Although 'history-heavy' for an anthropological study, I agree that this is needed in order to understand the process of identity formation, or rather transformation, which is expressed by this debate over the 'name' of the community. As Atto concentrates on the internal aspects of the debate, it would be intriguing to know if and how this debate has a more direct impact on the relationship with the wider Swedish society. She has announced to address these aspects – e.g. the role of Assyriska FF for the Assyrian/Syriac community and Swedish soccer fans – in a later book. In addition, the perspective of those of the community, which has remained in the Middle East, would also be a much appreciated counterpart to this study.

In her analysis, Atto clearly illustrates that the process of identity formation and reformation is never ending, never straightforward, that no migrant community is a monolithic unit, but that there are many factions or opinions within the community, which also – often rather quickly – evolve and transform. Her analysis shows that groups conglomerate around symbols and myths, which provide a framework on which these opinions about group identity can be formulated and discussed. These discussions can be heated, as identity is based mainly on emotion and belief.

In general, the book is easy to read. However, it slightly suffers from a typical ailment of dissertations, i.e. wanting to be all inclusive – and as a result is at times slightly repetitive. It also lacks an index. Atto uses Discourse Theory mainly for the analysis of the debate in the diaspora, but sadly, hardly ever for the historical parts. However, the book is very informative about a piece of history of the 20th century, which most people are unaware of.

This book is not only important for this specific case study, but it will also provide an interesting material for a comparison with other migrant groups, who struggle with expressing their identity in a strange society. In trying to preserve their identity by way of symbols and myths, while at the same time showing their participation in their new society, many migrant groups are not always fully understood by members of the receiving community. In the debates resulting from this lack of understanding, especially those that concentrate on Muslim communities from the Middle East, religion takes centre stage as the predominant source of these symbols and myths. This book provides the opportunity to study a group from the same region, also built around 'religion' – but this time Christianity – which has to adapt and integrate into a Western society. Even though there are many other – non-religious – differences between these groups, it will nevertheless help to test some 'assertions' in the debate over Islamic migrants in Western societies. Therefore, advanced students and scholars in Anthropology related to the field of migrant studies will profit from this book as well those who are interested in the history of this specific minority in Western European societies in general.

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Charsley, Katharine (ed.) (2012) *Transnational Marriage. New Perspectives from Europe and Beyond*, New York and London: Routledge. 249 pp.

While the number of transnational marriages has increased substantially over the last few decades, the attention of the phenomenon in migration research has lagged behind. In this anthology, editor Katharine Charsley has brought together studies on transnational marriage with a broad range of perspectives, varying from legal contexts to integration processes and gendered dynamics. The book hopes to 'contribute to knowledge, debate and conceptual

development in this expanding field' (p. 22) and to present substantial new empirical material while taking a fresh look at key concepts in this area.

The editor is a Britain-based lecturer in sociology, researching mostly Pakistani transnational marriages and marriage-related migration to the UK. The other contributors are researchers and lecturers at other European universities, research centres and think-tanks, from the fields of development studies, anthropology, social policy, cultural studies and law, with the common link between authors being influenced by migrant transnationalism. Many chapters are based on qualitative research methods, supplemented with some survey findings and other statistics. The book consists of four parts, with main concepts being discussed in the first part, whereas the other three examine legal contexts; marriage, transnationalism and belonging; and gender, power and visibility.

In the first chapter, Charsley notes that the field of transnational marriage has remained conceptually underdeveloped, partly as a result of the very different academic traditions in the field. Charsley argues that, 'these multiple levels of variation (empirical, scholarly and terminological) combine to create a complex academic literature presenting challenges for synthetic understanding' (p. 5). According to Charsley, some of the most widely used terms are: family formation/marriage migration, family reunification/family reunion, family migration, and dependent or tied migration. Lucy Williams presents an alternative delineation of transnational marriage in Chapter 2 and places it within a broader context of global marriage migration. The various actors that are involved in marriage migration are described, each using their own frameworks, being academic, legislative or policy-framed.

The best chapter of part II on legal contexts contextualises one of Europe's most restrictive immigration and integration policy frameworks: Danish marriage migration regulations, written by Martin Bak Jørgensen. The Danish political discourse, aimed at integration, views migrants' transnational affiliations as undesirable as they would hamper integration. The chapter describes how integration and immigration policies have structurally discouraged homeland marriages and spousal reunification. An interesting chapter in the third part of the book is from Iain Walker, examining marriages by the highly mobile people from Ngazidja in the Comoro islands. These migrants' spatial belonging to their villages of origin is reinforced through marriage rituals, which do not seem to subside over time.

The final part of the anthology dealing with gender, power and visibility may be the strongest part of the book, starting with a contribution from Anika Liversage, examining divorce among Turkish immigrants in Denmark. The instability of homeland marriages is approached by mixed methods. Interviews with Turkish divorcé(s) reveal the changing power dynamics of generation and gender, with those unhappily married in the 1980s not divorcing because of prevailing norms against divorce, poor options upon return in Turkey and a lack of familiarity with Danish society. The chapter illustrates the frictions people living in transnational social fields, with influences from culturally distant countries, may experience. Next, Jessica Mai Sims describes media stereotypes of 'Thai-brides' in the UK, which centres on gender, race, marriage and sexuality. Mai Sims examines the integration experiences of these migrants, showing that these women are strong in building community networks in Britain, despite being geographically dispersed. In the concluding chapter, Charsley discusses marriage, migration and transnational social spaces, applied to the UK. She states that marriage-related migrants are more diverse than those found in academic, governmental and

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popular representations. This is supported by UK statistics on marriage-related migration, focusing on nationalities, gender aspects and statistics on those that were rejected settlement. Charsley sketches some contours of transnational social spaces, formed by the migrants' networks including those with non-migrants, using four migrant groups as examples. In doing so, she shows the diversity of marriage and transnational social spaces.

The main drawback of the book is the absence of common terminology. Instead of using a unifying definition of transnational marriage, the book 'bring[s] together a constellation of forms of marriage which in one way or another cross national boundaries' (p. 15). Charsley does propose a set of terms and definitions, but 'these categories are not necessarily those employed by the contributors to this volume' (p. 19). All chapters employ their own, varied definitions of transnational marriage, or strikingly in some, do not define the marriages studied. This is a missed opportunity and causes confusion and a somewhat incoherent compilation of chapters. Nevertheless, most marriages studied in the book refer to so-called homeland marriages, such as Pakistanis in the UK marrying Pakistani migrants from Pakistan, focusing on marriage migration from low-income to high-income countries. With a few exceptions, other types of transnational marriages are not mentioned whatsoever, such as intra-European marriages, mixed marriages between partners who meet locally, and so forth. Perhaps, these relationships were not considered by the authors as they are less visible in society, do not encounter the same legal issues as other transnational couples or are met with less prejudice. In the last chapter, the editor writes that the focus of the book actually reflects academic, policy and media discourses, and is not in accordance with actual marriage-related migration patterns.

As is often the case with anthologies, the styles used in the different chapters vary significantly. This is not a huge drawback; it is more of an issue that they are not equally well structured and are of inconsistent quality. In addition, only some authors have included a methodology section, whereas others do not include vital information on definitions, data and methods. Furthermore, I would have liked to read on the role of language in the processes described. Migrant groups such as Indians, Pakistanis and Filipinos have the advantage of speaking English when they come to the UK, where much of the research in the book is based. Others, such as Turks in Denmark or Thais in the UK, lack this linguistic advantage and consequently will have to face more challenges to social integration.

Those looking for interesting studies on transnational marriage with a legal, integration or gendered perspective will be happy to find this book. The merit of the compilation is that it shows that the phenomenon has so many angles to it, involving many government and other actors having a decisive role in such personal affairs. In addition, each and every chapter is interesting from a cultural perspective, showing the importance of local cultural traditions and national policies. Migration researchers have a lot of work to do in the field of transnational marriage and this is something that needs to be addressed. In general, there is a lack of appropriate data on transnational marriages in many countries. Those fortunate enough to have access to better data, such as information from registers, should seize the opportunity and utilise these to produce studies that reflect different types of transnational marriages in present-day societies. In a nutshell, many challenges remain, both theoretically and conceptually, in the intriguing field of transnational marriage.

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Lancee, Bram (2012) *Immigrant Performance in the Labour Market – Bonding and Bridging Social Capital*, Amsterdam University Press: Amsterdam. 184 pp.

Over the last two decades, *social capital* has become one of the most popular and widely used concepts within the social sciences. Usually defined as the networks and relationships that bind people together and the norms of trust and reciprocity which underpin these relationships, the concept of social capital is routinely applied to explain such different phenomena as economic performance, the functioning of political institutions, corruption, voter turnout, public health and crime, among other things. Sometimes social capital is used as shorthand for the positive consequences of sociability for individuals, and sometimes it is used to define the collective social resources of communities and nations. In recent years, social capital has been extensively applied to the study of immigrants and their performance in the labour market. Because immigrants often lack the kind of networks and relationships that help access jobs and opportunities, social capital is used to explain both disadvantage and success in the labour market among immigrants. Yet, there is no widely held consensus neither regarding the proper definition, application and measurement of social capital nor regarding its potential effects for individuals and societies.

In this book, Bram Lancee provides a valuable contribution to both the social capital literature and the literature on immigrant performance on the labour market. The overall question is to what extent different kinds of social capital can help immigrants make headway on the labour market. The book offers a rigorous and extensive test of key hypotheses from the literature, applying state-of-the-art statistical research methods and comparative survey data on immigrants in Germany and the Netherlands. Lancee's approach is strictly quantitative and deductive. The book is based on Lancee's PhD thesis and starts out with an informative review of social capital theory, where he takes on some of the major debates within the literature. His approach focuses on social capital as an individual resource, borrowing a definition of social capital from Van der Gaag and Snijders (2004: 200) as 'the collection of resources owned by the members of an individual's personal social network, which may become available to the individual as a result of the history of these relationships'.

As the title suggests, his main concern lies in the distinction between *bonding* and *bridging* social capital: the former referring to within-group connections based on dense ties to family and kin and 'thick trust'; the latter referring to between-group connections to outsiders based on sparse ties and 'thin trust'. Both kinds of social capital are broken down into their *structural elements*, referring to relationships and their institutional embeddedness, and their *cognitive elements*, referring to the attitudes and values that underpin these relations. Using complex measures and scales based on a large comparative set of survey data, Lancee goes on to analyse the causal relationship between the possession of these various types of social capital and the individuals' outcomes on the labour market in terms of accessing jobs, increasing their income and occupational status and avoiding unemployment for various groups of immigrants in the two countries.

His main finding is that bridging ties to people outside one's own ethnic community is generally associated with positive labour market outcomes – while bonding ties within the ethnic community is not. His main finding thus confirms Robert Putnam's claim from more than a decade ago: 'whereas bonding is to get by, bridging is to get ahead' (Putnam 2000: 20). However, Lancee's analysis adds significant nuances and elaboration to the relationship between social capital

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and labour market performance. For example, he finds that social capital – both the bonding and bridging type – has a stronger positive effect for men than for women, and that the structural elements of social capital are more consequential than its cognitive elements, although cognitive social capital to some extent is found to be foundational for structural social capital. None of these findings come as a big surprise, although the lack of help which immigrants in Germany and the Netherlands can derive from their intra-ethnic bonding social capital to some extent appears to go against earlier findings on ethnic niches and enclaves from the US. The importance of intra-ethnic networks – or lack thereof – is something which definitely warrants further comparative research.

However, the most important contribution of this study is not its findings nor its theoretical discussions, but the methodological innovativeness and rigorousness through which the hypotheses are being tested. Lancee tackles head on the considerable problems of measurement and causality involved in establishing the relationship between the different forms of social capital and labour market outcomes, including reversed causality and unobserved heterogeneity, using both cross-sectional and panel data, and controlling for a wide number of background and intervening variables. His relentless attempts to falsify his own hypotheses are exemplary, and the outcome is highly convincing.

At the same time, the rigorousness of the analysis reveals some of the limitations in the concept of social capital itself. Lancee's application of social capital as an individual-level resource avoids the tautological pitfalls for which the more collective and macro-level applications of the term have been criticised (see e.g. Portes 1998; Portes & Vickstrom 2011). Nevertheless, it could be claimed that the conceptual distance between social capital as an explanatory factor and the outcomes that are to be explained is really not that far. The study leaves no doubt that forging social ties to the native population has a positive effect on labour market outcomes for immigrants, but this is probably not very surprising to most readers. Instead, this finding begs the question of why some immigrants are able to bridge the ethnic divide and access such networks and thus reap the economic benefits which comes along while others are not? What conditions promote the establishment of productive inter-ethnic relationships, and what conditions hinder them? The concept of social capital offers few answers to these questions. Social capital may be an important mechanism through which integration occurs, but it is less satisfying as a root cause.

Despite such objections, social capital will continue to be a useful concept in the tool-box of social scientists. Lancee has managed to overcome significant methodological difficulties in his application of the concept to the empirical material. This well-written, thoughtful and convincing book should be essential reading for anyone interested in the concept of social capital or in the labour market performance of immigrants. It will also be of value to any student or researcher looking for an example of excellent quantitative methodological craftsmanship.

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Lentin, Alana & Titley, Gavan (2011) *The Crises of Multiculturalism: Racism in a Neoliberal Age*, London: Zed Books. 285 pp.

In a Bourdieuan sense, *The Crises of Multiculturalism: Racism in a Neoliberal Age* is a demonstration of how to make an epistemological break with an unquestionable reality in today's societies, namely the unquestionable reality of 'multiculturalism' and its supposed failure. This is a reality presented to us every day, year after year, in almost every place and corner of the Western societies we move in. Alana Lentin and Gavan Titley invite us to question, and indeed confront this given reality.

Throughout six chapters, the authors demonstrate the dilemma of the Keiser and his invisible cloths, and how our world is packed by the 'recited truths' that create this illusion. In the first chapter, Lentin and Titley deal with the established, mediated reality of our time in which claims about multiculturalism and its supposed failure are presented. This is more of a story that goes like this: 'For long, immigrants in Europe have enjoyed the opportunity, created by us, Europeans, to preserve and cherish their cultural uniqueness. But now we realise that we did wrong to believe that multiculturalism could be the solution to manage the diversity. Our societies are now packed with unease, and social and cultural segregation. It is time to stop being naïve. Multiculturalism – the idea that we are able to build societies based on differences – has failed, and now is the time to make them, the immigrants, understand that we want our societies to be based on sameness, shared values and visions. Immigrants have to understand that they have to become integrated by becoming more like us'. This discourse of the failure of 'multiculturalism' is a strong one, with extensive implications. The most vital implication, again employing Bourdieu, is the condition of *euphemism* surrounding the debate on multicultural Europe. Euphemism is to say something but not to say anything at the same time.

Chapter 2 is an account on a major implication of this ruling discourse, i.e. the process of culturalisation of diversity management. In this culturalist thinking, everyone claims to be against racism, even the former French President Nicholas Sarkozy, whom Lentin and Titley throughout the book present as an example on how politicians in the European political landscape can at the same time racialise the Other and claim to be anti-racists, and defenders of liberal rights in their societies. In this culturalist discourse, emphasis is placed on challenging the 'primitive, backward culture' of the Others in the West, particularly referring to Islam and Muslims. The narrative of fear is introduced: the threat is presented as resulting from 'them' entering 'our' societies with their particular culture and way of life, and by that creating disorder and chaos. Yet, this narrative is believed to have nothing to do with race, and racism. Even the Norwegian extreme right killer, Anders Behring Breivik, claims not to be a racist. In the discourse of the failure of 'multiculturalism' everything is about culture, and by that racist actions are justified and indeed covered. Lentin and Titley demonstrate how this process of culturalisation is in fact the contemporary form of racism.

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In the third chapter, the authors further account on neoliberal ideology and the struggles to preserve supposedly liberal values. Debates in the West, whether about Mohammad cartoons in Denmark, headscarves in France, or minarets in Switzerland, constantly turn to be scenes to fight for liberal values. Particularly, Islam and Muslims are criticised for the lack of ability to comprehend and implement liberal values in their culture, religion, ways of life and processes of integration into Western societies. Lentin and Tittle remind us that at the heart of the liberal world view, there is a massive essentialisation of the Other. In the following chapter, they continue to demonstrate the extension of neoliberal ideology within Western public sphere; there is often an astonishing alliance, or symmetry, between neoliberal ideas and media discourses on the existing diversity in the West. The commonality is perhaps to be found in the narrative of fear. While neoliberal discourses present fears of the rise of illiberal values and thus societal changes to the worse, the media discourse operates within the narrative of fear by presenting examples and warning us about what is going to happen if we do not challenge the Other and her values.

Chapter 5 illustrates the ways culture, today, stands as a tool for control by governments. According to Lentin and Tittle, governments are involved in continuous reproduction of control and legitimisation. This reproduction is possible by employing culture in order to define good and bad diversity. Good diversity is a diversity in which the Others are like 'us', act as 'us' and believe in the same values. On the other hand, bad diversity is defined as diversity marking the difference – for example, minarets or Muslim women's headscarves/full cover because they fall outside Western definitions and categories of right or wrong. Once again these definitions and categories are presented as having nothing to do with race and racism. In such accounts, racism is no longer a relevant category, and it never occurs in our societies. Instead of racism, the focus is on private matters, often linked to the qualities of the immigrant subject. This is the euphemistic practice: to speak about challenges caused by the existing difference in our societies, but never to address the ongoing racial practices. This is the echo of Stuart Hall reminding us of the white people's difficulties to speak of questions of race and racism.

The last chapter of the book brings us back to the public sphere by presenting new areas of culturalist and essentialist approaches towards the Others, particularly Muslims. While the previous chapter explored the symmetry between liberal ideology and media events, politics and governmentality, the final chapter explores the symmetry of feminism and sexual democracy when discussing Muslims. In fact, I read this chapter as a demonstration of how 'a turn to the political Right' is not only restricted to the established institutions in the European societies but can also be seen in progressive social movements such as feminist and gay rights movements. The book should surely be read as both an examination of the right wing's racist attacks on multiculturalism, as well as of the engagement of the progressive movements on the left in the processes of culturalisation and essentialisation of the Other.

The Crises of Multiculturalism is a very important book for all those who want to understand the processes of racialisation in contemporary Europe. For those interested in gaining knowledge regarding the complicated ongoing debates on multiculturalism and immigration, the book offers a wonderful reading, packed with references and examples from almost every corner of Europe.

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Svašek, Maruška (ed.) (2012) *Moving Subjects Moving Objects: Transnationalism, Cultural Production and Emotions*, New York: Berghahn Books, 286 pp.

A recently edited book by Maruška Svašek entitled, *Moving Subjects Moving Objects: Transnationalism, Cultural Production and Emotions*, provides a lively and fresh approach to synthesising an interdisciplinary platform for a set of ethnographically rich, empirically and theoretically grounded accounts of how materiality is mediated in the dynamic interplay of people, places and emotions. A now burgeoning field of research in the social sciences, emotionality, serves as the core analytical tool in the volume in the interpretation of the mobilities of social subjects and material objects. The volume presents a series of case studies on migration processes, transitional objects and artistic production within the threefold analytical prism of *transit*, *transition* and *transformation* that the editor expertly develops and theoretically grounds in a thorough introduction.

The volume is an excellent contribution to the ongoing debates about globalisation and cultural production as it explores the aspects of the mobilities of objects and subjects. The contributions come from anthropologists, sociologists, historians and art historians who draw eclectically from cultural and migration studies in addition to their respective disciplinary fields. Materiality and emotionality are also explored through transnational experiences within an extensive range of regional contexts in Europe, the US, Asia, Africa and the Caribbean.

The volume consists of 11 contributions. Chapters 1–8 focus on migration processes, whereas Chapters 9–11 deal with transition in the artistic domain. Chapter 1 by Fiona Parrott presents a view on migration from a street in South London in examining materiality, memories and emotion. The author explores how emotions and memories are evoked by ordinary, everyday possessions such as clothing, music, furniture and photographs. The ethnographic analysis in this chapter offers rich insights into a global city, London and the complex interactions that take place in an ordinary residential location, articulated through the stories of residents as narratives of sensory, material and social identification.

Chapter 2 by Kathy Burrell examines the lives of Polish immigrants as shaped by a politics of a festive materiality through objects of Christmas. The study offers an interesting example of the complexity of migration as both an emotional and material journey. Moreover, intriguing homemaking processes in the diaspora during Christmas are discussed as entwined with the material components of the holiday/celebration signifiers.

Chapter 3 by Eddy Plasquy looks at a Spanish migrant community in Belgium. This contribution contextualises how the statue of the Virgin Mary of El Rocio has gained emotional and social agency among the migrant community. The focus of the analysis is the materiality of the statue and how the symbolic power of such an object has made the community visible as a social body within the wider society. The chapter offers an interesting account of how identity, religion and the agency of images are intertwined with the migratory experience of Spanish migrants in Belgium.

Chapter 4 discusses the sweater business and the Tibetan diaspora in India as a commodity exchange and a process of mediation of agency. The chapter examines how Tibetans construct relationships and boundaries between themselves and Indians through the process of trade and its inherent interactions. The ethnographic material is given a narrative prominence through the very object of trade, namely, the sweater. Sweaters, in this context are sold, bought, displayed, stored, transported, along with

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mediations of trust, distrust, exchange and belonging. The chapter develops theorisations of social aspects of commodity exchange and the trade of sweaters as objects mediating agency. As mediators of agency, sweaters are also objects constructing both belonging and non-belonging of the Tibetan diaspora in India.

In Chapter 5, Anne Sigfrid Grønseth explores how Tamil refugees in northern Norway construct self-identities, belonging and emotional well-being through blessed amulets of images of Hindu deities and ritual entities. The author draws from a previous study on illness and well-being among Tamil refugees by revisiting the material and focusing on relations of the refugees in exile with artefacts as part of their everyday transnational life and relations with kinship, homeland and religiosity. Such diasporic relations are underpinned by intersubjective emotionalities and new identities. The objects in this study mediate time, space and emotion by providing comfort and togetherness and leading to a sense of self and identity.

Chapter 6 by Sameera Maiti discusses 'dying arts' among the Karen of Andaman Islands in India. This chapter analyses the dynamic relationship between emotion and art in a critical manner in order to argue the impact of this dynamic on the protection of cultural heritage. The case studies offer particularly fascinating accounts of the interplay of emotions, art and the politics of tribal relations.

Chapter 7 presents the case of the Italian diaspora originating from the island of Lussin which is located in the Adriatic Sea between Italy and the Balkans, and artefacts as mediators of space, time and self. Emotional and multi-sensorial engagements with photographic publications point to how memory is mediated through artefacts and how a sense of belonging is constructed. In this research, photographs provide a transitional experience that trigger particular emotional effects and the reproduction of roots.

Chapter 8 by Maggie O'Neill provides an analysis of an arts research project that incorporated participatory action research and participatory arts to examine belonging and its meaning to four transnational communities in the Midlands region of Britain. The author discusses her engagement with a particular arts gallery and exhibition and reflects on her experiences of the emotional, relational and sensory dynamics involved. The research aims to inform social and cultural policy in relation to migrants and to challenge existing stereotypes. There is a particularly intriguing methodological approach used by the author, what she names as 'ethno-mimesis' during which she explores the sensuousness of ethnography of arts by immersing herself in the lives of her participants and by combining biographical research with ethnography. Some of the narratives are particularly emotional as they are evocative of memories of suffering that dislocation and loss often stimulate.

In Chapter 9, Deborah Schultz discusses the artist Arnold Daghani and his life as a series of displacements and relocations and settlement in the UK in search of his artistic dream. The basis of this study is formed by an examination of Daghani's books as they have a particular object-like character and the fact the Daghani transported them whenever he moved allowed him to create a sense of homeness across space and time. The books have a complexity of emotional significance as he worked on them for many years while reflecting on his life of displacement and his troubled personal history. Memory also figures significantly as the layers of memory extend his agency through the books as objects and containers of emotions. Schultz demonstrates through her analysis that emotion, motion and memory interact in a complex way in Daghani's work by also communicating artistic elements, the impact of migration and trauma, and the historical legacy of the Holocaust.

Chapter 10 by Leon Wainwright explores Indo-Trinidadian emotional and aesthetic dimensions of diaspora experience. The chapter offers an emotional chronology of 'Indian art' in Trinidad and the cultural production of this particular art, which illustrates how Trinidad's changing demands for ethnic difference are constructed visually in aesthetic terms. The volume's metaphors of transit, transition and transformation are particularly significant here as in Trinidad they demonstrate how ethnicity and creative practices intersect and underscore the emotionally affective presence of cultural practices.

Finally, the last chapter, Chapter 11, a contribution by the editor of the book volume, Maruška Svašek evaluates subjects and objects through emotions. The chapter discusses a gathering for an artistic performance by the US-based Ghanaian migrant artist, George Hughes, entitled, 'What You Perceive is What you Conceive'. Svašek discusses the event of the art performance as a transnational artistic setting during which both objects (photographs) and subjects (participants) are implicated in the cultural production of meaning and the emotional dynamics of the event. Not only the artist but also individual members attending the event were involved as agents of cultural production in the creative imagination and symbolic construction of perception and conception of hybridity, mobility and art.

As both material objects and social subjects continue to circulate in a world of movement, the global landscape of cultural and affective production becomes even more pertinent to new ethnographies and interdisciplinary theorisations. In a world of transit, transition and transformation, more research is needed to underpin the nuanced relations between materialities and subjectivities and the underlying dimensions of their sensorial, aesthetic, cultural and emotional processes on a local and global scale. This volume is a stimulating and vibrant start to the discussion of the dialectics of object-subject, the agencies in the mobility processes and the dynamics of such emotional interactions that shape individual and collective experience. The in-depth case studies in this volume contribute to such a discussion and will certainly initiate further study in this exciting field of materialities, mobilities and emotionalities.

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Valenta, Marko & Berg, Berit (eds.) (2012) *Asylsøker – i velferdsstatens venterom*, Oslo: Universitetsforlaget. 252 pp.

This volume, edited by Marko Valenta and Berit Berg, is an important and highly relevant contribution to new knowledge on the development of the asylum area in contemporary Norway. There are two main reasons for its actuality. First, the volume sheds light on Norwegian asylum policy and asylum system in a time of change through a holistic approach on relevant issues at, respectively, macro, meso and micro level. Secondly, the vulnerability of asylum seekers' situation is addressed from various angles, giving this research field a much needed documentation of the group's precarious living conditions.

The book, consisting of 12 chapters, does not just explore the development of Norwegian asylum policy and the asylum system per se. It also goes into details on how factors at the institutional level influence the lives of asylum seekers living in asylum centers while waiting for a reply on their application or to be returned (voluntarily or involuntarily). A significant part of the analysis is linked to the

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classical sociological discussion on relations between structures and individuals, where the specific situation of asylum centers is seen as a complex system with relevant environments and sub-systems. The understanding of asylum centers as more or less closed sub-systems brings attention to the very relevant concept of *total institutions* (Goffman 1961), where the link between the institutional level and the individual level is discussed in relation to asymmetric power relations between asylum seekers and asylum center staff.

The structure of the book makes the reading progressive, starting out with two chapters that serve as both a historical and theoretical framework. After an introductory chapter, Chapter 2 by Berit Berg gives thorough background knowledge on the development of different parts of the asylum area in Norway during the past three decades. Berg shows how various trends have influenced the asylum area in general and the reception system in particular. This chapter provides a useful backdrop for the entire volume. In Chapter 3, Marko Valenta draws a sociological theoretical frame for analysing the central issues addressed in the various chapters. Of particular interest is the approach to the asylum system as a complex social system that includes various issues and actors at macro, meso and micro level. Chapter 4 by Jan-Paul Brekke is mainly concerned with the arrival and migration processes of asylum seekers and provides a more detailed and comprehensive explanation on the choice to seek asylum in Norway. In Chapter 5, Nora Sveaass, Vigdis Vevstad and Brekke explore how vulnerable migrants are identified and categorised by the system, and discuss implications connected to lack of institutionalised guidelines and practices when working with this group.

The following three chapters deal with issues related to everyday life, social interaction and identity. These chapters focus on both the arrival phase and the process and challenges of adapting to life in the asylum center. The subject of power is central in Chapter 6 where Valenta describes how everyday life and social relations in an asylum center are conditioned by the inequality of social and legal positions. The asymmetric power relations between asylum seekers and staff representing the system are enhanced by the limited rights of the asylum seeker. The relations between actors at the interactional level is described as being constantly negotiated, producing and reproducing constellations of 'us' and 'them'. In Chapter 7, Valenta develops a detailed analysis of asylum seekers' experience of being stigmatised and how they cope with the situation of being treated as deviants. In Chapter 8, Kristin Thorshaug and Valenta analyse and discuss challenges related to employing ethnic diverse staff in asylum centers. The question of diversity is not only related to the relationship between staff and asylum seekers but also to the position of employees with ethnic minority background – being employed in low-skilled or part-time positions. In Chapters 9 and 10, the special situation of children and minors in asylum centers is analysed and discussed. Chapter 9 by Kirsten Lauritsen places focus on the lack of equal rights to inclusion in ordinary institutions such as kindergartens and schools. The lack of rights is problematised in relation to the children's quality of life and the effect on their psychological development and wellbeing. In Chapter 10, Ketil Eide and Hilde Lidén discuss how the vulnerable group of unaccompanied minors is met by the Norwegian asylum system, the uncertainty of their life situation and lack of close contact with significant others. Insecurity is a general challenge in all modern societies (Hughes 1964), but this is, however, increased in the situation of asylum seekers.

The final two chapters of the book address issues related to rejection as well as return and reintegration programmes. Chapter 11 by Erlend Paasche and Arne Strand deals with the challenges

of reintegration processes and life course development in relation to repatriation programmes. Finally, in Chapter 12 Valenta analyses how rejected asylum seekers who resist deportation make use of networks and social relations, and how the dependency on these relations affects them.

The book addresses central challenging aspects of the asylum system in Norway. The various contributions bring together a detailed and comprehensive document of a very complex research field. One of the strengths is that the volume does not only focus on various levels of analysis and discussions, but to a large degree sheds light on the relation between levels. Across the chapters, there are several significant themes. One of these is loss of control. This plays an important role in relation to how everyday life in a total institution prevents asylum seekers from conducting a normal life with the possibility of keeping ones biographical project going (Giddens 1991). Life in a total institution such as asylum centers tends to be characterised by suffering, where the individuals gradually lose control over their lives (Strauss 1959). The descriptions from interviews with asylum seekers show how the deprivation of control is connected to isolation from the ordinary world, which is often experienced as being stigmatising (Goffman 1963).

Another important theme addressed is the vulnerability of this migrant group. Asylum seekers have special needs that must be met, such as medical care or psychological support. But also children and minors are in particular vulnerable in the absence of carrying on a normal life. The risk of permanent damage to vulnerable minors is shown to be particularly high due to isolation and passivity, and it is therefore crucial that the living conditions in the centers supports a normal life as much as possible. The matter of rights is essential to the possibilities of conducting a kind of normal life with participation in common activities and institutions such as schools and kindergartens. An especially strong critique of the current policy is that unaccompanied minors between 16 and 18 do not have equal access to social institutions as other children have. This difference in rights and treatment among young people is problematised and questioned in relation to human rights.

The critical voice of how life in asylum centers seriously affect the wellbeing of asylum seekers could, however, have been developed more in the direction of how various groups of asylum seekers react to and cope with their life situation in general and with living in an asylum center in specific. Furthermore, it would be relevant to address the transformation of asylum seekers' life course and how this affects their identity construction and the future development of their biographical project. Finally, a scrutinising analysis of the power relations between the various actors and groups of actors would be a highly appropriate and interesting dimension to include in the book. Not at least because power positions are crucial for both the experiences and opportunities related to being an asylum seeker.

The book is in many ways an important documentation of the need for increased attention on the asylum area, both regarding policies and discourses at macro level, in relation to implementation and practices in the asylum centers at meso level and the impact hereof on individuals. Even though the volume concerns the Norwegian asylum situation, it is highly relevant to draw upon in a broader Nordic context as there are certain similarities between the countries, which in particular makes the analysis of the Norwegian situation applicable to other Nordic country cases.

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