

BOOK REVIEW

Çağlar, Ayşe & Glick Schiller, Nina (2018) *Migrants and City-Making. Dispossession, Displacement, and Urban Regeneration*, Durham and London: Duke University Press. 280 pp

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With their recent co-authored book, Ayşe Çağlar and Nina Glick Schiller, two eminent anthropologists who have both collaboratively and individually contributed significantly to studies of migration, immigration, transnationalism, cities and urban life, and a host of other related topics too numerous to name over the years, have produced a sophisticated study resting on voluminous data collected at multiple localities and dating back to nearly two decades. In the words of the authors, the book 'addresses how the globe-circulating, contemporary urban regeneration agendas were implemented in cities that were clearly not global powerhouses' and '[focuses] on the relationships between these cities and their migrants as these relationships became part of projects of urban transformation' (p. 3). The cities in question are not New York, London, Istanbul, Beijing, Berlin, or Sydney, which are usually known as political, economic, financial, and/or cultural capitals or hubs. They are, instead, Mardin in southeastern Turkey, Halle/Saale in Germany, and Manchester in the state of New Hampshire in the United States. These are localities the authors highlight as three seemingly disparate cities seeking their former glorious statuses. Over time, they became 'interconnected by geopolitical events within the current historical moment' (p. 2) characterized, among other things, by wars, conflict, displacement, and various public and private investments that did not produce the intended or promised results for their respective migrant and non-migrant inhabitants.

As they describe and theorize from the trajectories of urban regeneration initiatives undertaken in what they refer to as *disempowered* cities, Çağlar and Glick Schiller launch a solid and methodical criticism of recovery projects promising unbounded happiness for the residents of Mardin, Halle, and Manchester. Key to their analytical framework is their comparative approach built on an elegant research design incorporating the following five variables: a) the objective and subjective indicators of decline over time, b) city-wide regeneration efforts and their outcomes at various scales for migrant and non-migrant constituencies alike, c) where migrant and minority populations fall within the narratives of recovery issued by city leadership, d) the services and resources made available by the respective city to migrants and minorities, and e) the amount, or lack, of synergy between the goals/outcomes

of regeneration projects and the increase/decrease in migrants' and minorities capacities for place-making, including via transnational practices (p. 26). To compare the regeneration paths of the three cities across these variables, the authors rely on a wealth of data sourced from traditional participant observation, interviews with individuals in multiple snowball samples, local, regional, and supranational sources available on the Internet, census documents, and promotional narratives.

One among the many noteworthy aspects of the book is that this comparative analytical framework allows the authors to craft an ingenious, trans-continental anthropology of *commonalities and similarities* without necessarily doing injustice to peculiarities and specificities of the places and groups of individuals involved in the respective locales. Halle, Mardin, and Manchester all emerge as contexts disempowered by regional, national, and global developments. Leadership in all three, despite sizeable amounts of goodwill and optimism at the outset, failed to attract sustained flows of human and material capital that would be required to realize the promises of renewal, recovery, and regeneration. Likewise, it was the developers and multinational corporate entities who benefited from city leaders' acquisition of public funds through regional, national, and supranational resources, and not the migrant, minority, or poor residents whose presence in the urban space facilitated such acquisition in the first place. Additionally, the migrant and non-migrant inhabitants of the three cities in question found ways to improve their relative economic, political, and cultural positioning within the respective locale even as they continued to face escalating levels of discrimination primarily in the form of increasing anti-immigrant discourse. In all three cities, regeneration processes were affected significantly by changing sociopolitical dynamics at various scales, including, for instance, the Syrian civil war, with reverberations across the globe (pp. 91–93).

The book's emphasis on the coevalness of migrant and non-migrant experiences and trajectories is commendable and enhances its multiscale approach. In the words of the authors themselves, '...we are all actors within simultaneous processes that make and remake the mutually constituting scales of locality, region, nation-state, the supranational, and the global' (p. 218). The strong implication here, of course, is that migrants and minorities do not exist outside of, or are merely tangential to, processes of city-making. One lesson this implication offers is that as underprivileged, disempowered, marginalized, or otherwise politically, religiously, ethnically, and/or culturally outcast populations hope for better futures in the cityscapes they come to inhabit whether by design or accident, those in positions of power would do well to pay closer attention to these populations' regenerative capacities for city-making in the 21st century.

A few quibbles are in order. The first one concerns the problem of scales, or the multiscale analysis favored by the authors. Çağlar and Glick Schiller define their perspective as multi-sighted rather than multisited. Their goal is not to offer an atomized study of everyday life in three cities. They want to get rid of levels of analysis and nested conceptual hierarchies. It is connections, networks, and even networks of networks that matter to them in this exemplary piece of scholarship. Yet, one wonders: What ties the scales together? What and where are their boundaries? Where does, for instance, *the local* start and end? What is the scope of *the global*? Are the local, regional, national, supranational, and global scales to be thought of as concentric, intersecting, tangential, or eccentric circles?

A second involves a suggestion: the excellent comparative *narrative* analysis of the book would most likely have been enhanced with a basic tabulated representation depicting the cities, the variables in summary form, and the similarities/differences found among the three trajectories of urban regeneration. A third point pertains to the actual mechanics of data analysis. Brief remarks on any tools and technologies, such as any qualitative data analysis software the authors may have used to code and analyze the miscellaneous streams of data

they gathered, would add to the otherwise exquisitely detailed methodological discussion provided in the Introduction. A fourth and last one has to do with the goals and means of a *public* anthropology. The authors note that '[they] see this book as a political act' (p. 226). Assuming this means, at a minimum, they intend the book to reach non-academic audiences such as social justice activists or policymakers with practitioner backgrounds, the authors may have, at times, preferred more publicly accessible and relatively jargon-free language than *multiscalar emplacement* or *dispossession capital accumulation*.

All in all, *Migrants and City-Making, Dispossession, Displacement, and Urban Regeneration* offers a very compelling anthropological analysis that students and scholars of urban life and governance, globalization, and refugee and immigrant studies will learn a great deal from. The book, in the opinion of this reviewer, shines as an example of comparative inquiry inspired fundamentally by, but not restricted to, traditional ethnographic practice. It deserves to be incorporated into graduate and advanced undergraduate syllabi and other scholarly conversations focusing on the interconnected lives, promises, problems, prospects, and ongoing evolution of cities and city-making practices around the world.

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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