

**BOOK REVIEW****Anghel, RG., Fauser, M., and Boccagni, P.  
(eds.) 2019. *Transnational return and social  
change: Hierarchies, identities and ideas*.  
London: Anthem Press. 200 pp**

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Book review of *Transnational return and social change: hierarchies, identities and ideas* (London: Anthem Press, 2019) by Remus Gabriel Anghel, Margit Fauser & Paolo Boccagni.

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Return migration has received more attention during the past decade. A primary reason for the growing interest has been an increasingly holistic understanding of international migration, whereby issues related to sending states have gained more attention. Some particular literatures have given migrant return great prominence, including studies of migration and development as well as remittances. Moreover, studies looking at forced and voluntary return of post-2015 asylum claimants have elevated the importance of return migration. Expanding interest of return migration is highly welcome, because a significant share of international migrants eventually return, and the phenomenon has often remained in the shadows of mainstream migration and integration research.

Remus Gabriel Anghel, Margit Fauser, and Paolo Boccagni have edited a collection of eight case studies that aim to cast new light on return migration. The book, *Transnational return and social change: Hierarchies, identities and ideas*, focusses largely on voluntary returnees, though one chapter (chapter 3) deals explicitly with forced return of irregular work migrants in Ghana. The book aims to broaden our horizons on return of international migrants by incorporating it with a transnational perspective: it 'suggests new ways of understanding the dynamics of return migration and the associated social changes in countries of origin' (2). The book has contributions from altogether 14 authors, including researchers at various stages in their careers.

International return migration is rarely a simple return, but rather a continuation and transformation of transnational ties, as well as a carrier of many kinds of minor and major changes in individual lives, social groups, and societies. The book's focus is on the meso-level of groups, communities, organizations, and networks, as the authors claim that previous

research focused more on the individual (e.g., motivations for return, reintegration) and economic impacts (e.g., remittances, entrepreneurship) (2). Moreover, the chapters deal with small and large everyday changes that may over the long-term have 'cascading effects that concatenate into deep transformations' (2). Importantly, the editors 'conceptualize return migration from a dynamic, transnational perspective rather than seeing it as a closure of a migration cycle' (2).

This multidirectional understanding of international migration resonates well with contemporary discussions on mobility, an affinity that the editors also note (6). International migration does not end with return but may take place again, and, importantly, it may create lasting relationships across borders that continue to influence by various means for a prolonged period of time. This allows the editors to talk of 'transnational return' (7) as the guiding concept of the volume. In their own words: 'we distinguish [...] first, the relationship between the ways in which transnational ties and practices shape return, and, second, how return (re)produces transnationality' (7–8). In the book, 'return migration [is] an "unsettled" and transnational process' (10).

The editors approach the phenomenon with three general questions. First, what is being transferred by the return migrants? The authors depart from broad understanding of remittances, which include financial resources as well as social remittances. Migrants may bring with them a variety of skills and ideas that can be introduced in their new location, such as new types of restaurants or business ideas. Second, what is changing? If the migrants bring with them new financial resources, that may help to change the social hierarchies at arrival. Previously poor and disadvantaged families may improve their social standing, which can also have material dimensions, such as houses, ways to dress, and various consumer goods, as well as new lifestyles. The return migrants may also have changed their collective identity vis-à-vis pre-existing social groups and communities. For example, it is not rare that migrants bring with them new religious ideas. Migrants bring with them new cultural capital that can be used, for instance, in tourism to serve visitors from the country that they left. Third, how do processes of change occur? Migrants often innovate and bring new ideas, but if the social context does not allow it, it may also be that no significant change takes place. The role of receiving context is highlighted many times as a key issue regarding the larger potential for change (10–15).

The conceptual and substantive discussion is largely found in the introductory and concluding chapters, so an impatient reader may only read these two sections of the book. However, the actual case presentations provide a much more nuanced picture of return migration. They discuss several return locations, including Ghana, Latvia, Poland, Romania, and Turkey, in relation to various departure countries, including Canada, Germany, Libya, Spain, and the UK. The editors have succeeded in providing a fascinating combination of case studies.

Great variety of return cases are presented in the book. Chapter 1 looks at poor Roma from two Romanian localities, who had conducted mainly informal labour around Europe, and how they socially realign themselves on return. Chapter 2 focusses on a historically German area of Romania that is reimagining its German heritage in a process including German returnees, German and other migrants, as well as locals. Chapter 3 presents involuntary 'returns of failure' from Côte d'Ivoire and Libya to Ghana of persons who did not make their fortunes abroad and thereby had problems in reintegrating into their local society. Chapter 4 analyses how returned Romanians use their transnational as well as religious networks to be successful in second-hand car sale. Chapter 5 deals with return of descendants of post-World War II emigrants to Latvia, which is also related to 'diaspora tourism', and how that relates to newer, post-Soviet emigrants and their returns. Chapter 6 looks at Ghanaian returnees from Germany and studies their readaptation to Ghana. Chapter 7 analyses social remittances of

return migrants from the UK to Poland. Chapter 8 concentrates on Turkish second generation return to Turkey, though to a different area than their parents place of departure.

*Transnational return and social change* is a well-edited anthology, but the editors have allowed individual authors to develop their own conceptual toolboxes. While this is almost unavoidable in an anthology, I would have liked to see the contributors stick more with the discussion presented in the introduction, as it would have given more uniformity to the volume. In addition, the book would have benefitted from a small introductory section providing an overview of international return migration, including its scale and numerical development. Return flows are such a significant element of international migration that it would have strengthened the editors' argument of its potentially significant social impacts around the world.

For the more established researcher, the book is a concise and highly informative guide into the latest conceptual developments of return migration. It also provides many ideas on how to design multisited research. For students and teachers, the book is a good supplement for courses that discuss migrant integration, because return migrants are often not part of such considerations. As several chapters explicitly discuss, there are many ways in which return migrants can be meaningful even after they have left and thereby remain a part of the extended local community and social networks. Including return migration into discussion of migrant integration gives tools for avoiding the national gaze, as well as serving as a useful reminder that not all migrants stay *in situ*. Finally, any courses dealing with transnationalism will find the volume's introductory chapter very helpful in presenting various understandings of international return migration and its related vocabulary.

### Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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