

BOOK REVIEW/ COMPTE RENDU

Faist, Thomas, Margit Fauser, and Eveline Reisenauer, *Transnational Migration*. Cambridge, UK and Malden USA: Polity Press, 2013. 209 pp., \$19.99 paper 97080745649788

In *Transnational Migration*, German sociologists Faist, Fauser and Reisenauer provide an introduction to the subject of migration using a transnational lens, focussing on transnational spaces, and outlining transnational methodologies. This book, aimed at senior undergraduate students, goes beyond a review of the existing literature on migration. While, most scholarly work on migration emphasizes the experiences of migrants in their new country, the institutional structures guiding migration, or on the connections of migrants to their country of origin, Faist, Fauser and Reisenauer look to the “multi-sitedness of immigrants” and the continued transactions and relationships between “migrants and non-migrants across the borders of the state” (1). They offer an evolving and increasingly comprehensive transnational perspective on cross-border migration and its consequences in the twenty-first century, which they call transnationalization.

The authors define transnational migration as a perspective focusing on “how the cross-border practices of migrants and non-migrants, individuals as well as groups and organizations, link up in social spaces criss-crossing national states, mould economic, political and cultural conditions, and in turn are shaped by already existing structures” (2). They argue that the transnational approach is a lens, not yet a coherent theory, but that this book represents an attempt to further develop the transnational approach to the study of migration. The transnational focus on non-state actors engaged in cross-border transactions differs from both internationalization in international relations and theories of globalization in that it is multi-directional (not linear) and moves beyond the container of the nation-state without simply dismissing the nation-state in favour of a global or post-national organization. In doing so, the authors focus transnational social spaces, which are spaces consisting of “combinations of ties and their contents, positions in networks and organizations, and networks of organizations that can be found in at least two nation-states” (13).

The book is based on three objectives. First, the book aims to provide an overview of transnationality by looking at cross-border ties and

practices and the concept of transnational social spaces. Second, the authors strive to prove that the transnational perspective offers significant benefits for understanding migration and its consequences. Third, the book attempts to provide a “methodological toolbox” (135) for empirical studies of transnational phenomena. The book focuses primarily on civil society and social spaces (as opposed to the state exclusively) as a social, economic and political container for the study of migration, and on North-South cross-border migration. The authors recognize that this represents only one type of migration, but argue that it is one that elucidates the power differences between North and South and is able to capture the multi-faceted nature of transnational migration. As such, the examples in the book draw heavily on the transnational relationships between Mexico and the United States and between Germany and Turkey, while recognizing that other more complex examples exist.

The utility of the transnational perspective is evident throughout the text, but a closer look at integration politics and methodology provides a glimpse of the over-arching project of this book. The chapter on transnationality and migrant integration challenges the existing study of immigrant integration, which has tended to focus on the integration of immigrants in their new country of settlement. Commonly, these approaches focus on the national level, with national policies and markers of integration, such as employment and education, as their focus (e.g. Scholten 2011). A transnational perspective enables us to understand integration as a process that involves both the “here” and the “there” and can occur at many different levels within different groups. In doing so, this approach challenges both assimilationist approaches, which fail to recognize ongoing relationships and ties to the country of origin, and cultural-pluralist approaches, which tend to be based on essentialist understandings of culture, by asking questions about who we are integrating and into what. This, in turn, encourages dialogue on the nature and limitations of communities.

The chapter on transnational methodologies provides an important contribution to the existing literature on migration through its attention to the methodological challenges of multi-disciplinary, multi-sited and multi-dimensional research on transnational practices. The authors outline three primary challenges: methodological nationalism, which tends to view the nation-state as the appropriate site for collecting and comparing data (see Amelina 2012); essentialism, which fails to recognize the heterogeneity of migrant groups; and the positionality of researchers working across national borders, including power relations between researchers in the global north and south. The book proposes a number of concrete methodological options for researchers, including multi-sited

ethnography, that offers students and established scholars valuable resources for engaging in transnational and cross-border research.

Ultimately, while this book may not offer much that is new to those who are already acquainted with previous work in the area and the earlier work of the authors, it provides an excellent introduction into both understanding and doing transnational research on migration.

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REFERENCES

- Amelina, Anna. 2012. *Beyond methodological nationalism: research methodologies for cross-border studies*. New York: Routledge.
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