

Book reviews

Activism

GREENBERG, JESSICA. *After the revolution: youth, democracy, and the politics of disappointment in Serbia*. ix, 235 pp., table, bibliogr. Stanford: Univ. Press, 2014. \$27.95 (paper)

On 5 October 2000, Slobodan Milošević's reign in Serbia was brought to an end. For diverging and sometimes opposed reasons, this 'revolution' saw politicians, students, NGO activists, and others, supported by Western governments, turn against a common enemy. As in subsequent 'colour revolutions' across Eastern Europe, slogans revolved around that most floating of signifiers: democracy. And, as elsewhere, a hangover ensued as change was judged, from diverging perspectives, to be too minor and too slow.

Rather than assessing to what degree Serbia has 'democratized' since 2000, a more interesting question for political anthropology is what such processes can reveal about democratic politics today. In that vein, Jessica Greenberg's thoughtful book *After the revolution* is a study of the political after 5 October through the prism of the activism of students with a collective anti-Milošević pedigree. Based mainly on ethnographic research between 2002 and 2004, the author traces how student organizations in Serbia's three largest cities navigated past and present expectations in street protests, assemblies, press conferences, meetings with academic and government functionaries, and so forth. After the heady events of 5 October, they relocated their terrain of intervention into institutions, mostly focusing on university reforms and student representation. This took place in the wider landscape of the

'Bologna' process and, thus, of steps towards EU accession. Greenberg shows that many activists conceived of their engagement as enactments of democratic citizenship, geared towards a prosperous 'European' Serbia-to-be. With most other citizens of Serbia, they also shared an anxiety that no future path, on whichever scale, could be taken for granted, and that any engagement in 'politics' was itself compromised in advance. Student actions, and their reflections about them, were therefore haunted by a tension between expectations of youthful revolutionary promise and a pragmatic, procedural commitment to incremental improvement. Greenberg shows how this resulted not exactly in apolitical resignation but in a continuous process of contingent, ambiguous, non-teleological politics without illusions in an institutional landscape that was considered treacherous, unstable, and incomplete. This was a politics of the present, knowingly conceived of as existing *after* illusions.

Greenberg weaves her argument around the trope of disappointment, which she productively considers not as a 'failure of political modernity but a central feature of it', indeed, as an 'affective form in its own right'. Above all, disappointment here pertains to the *temporal* dimensions of the political. In that way, the author elucidates transgenerational dynamics and political engagement converging around ethical projects of self-government. Student activism, and its preoccupation with expertise, procedures, accountability, and transparency, thus serves as prism to disentangle contingent conceptions of democratic citizenship in a particular place and time. Greenberg urges us to take seriously interventions that could easily be dismissed as 'merely' procedural, neoliberal, apolitical (and

Europe occupied by Nazi Germany during the Second World War, but during the last decade it has been redefined to focus critical attention on the EU's policy to prevent immigration to its territories. EU border policies have developed since 1985, when the Schengen Agreement brought European states together to create a territory free of internal borders but with increasingly heavily policed external boundaries. In 2004 these boundaries were shifted to the east as the EU expanded to incorporate eight postsocialist countries as new members. This authoritative volume addresses the particular problems encountered on and beyond the EU borders at the frontier between Poland and the Ukraine, addressing the context in which new developments are distorting previous practices.

The introduction outlines a number of concepts that are developed through the ethnographic analysis. Follis reviews the substantial cross-disciplinary literature that has developed within the field of border studies over recent decades (pp. 6–10). These works address the proliferation of the means through which migration is constrained and limited as a result of various border works and practices. Follis uses the concept of 'rebordering' (pp. 10–13) to address how bureaucratic, legal, and policing practices serve to open up EU internal borders while closing external borders, and explores the 'lived and practical ramifications' of the challenge facing EU policy. The research was based on multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork conducted in various locations and involving a series of stakeholders caught up in activities in the borderlands, including border guards, officials, economic migrants, and asylum seekers (p. 18). This ethnographic methodology involved 'zooming in and out – from close focus on particular lives affected by reordering to a panoramic picture of national strategies of Europeanization' (p. 25). Follis argues that the policing of the border is caught between a number of contradictory EU initiatives, including border security, the economic needs of member states, and their declared human rights commitments (pp. 24–5).

The main body of the book is contained in chapters 2 to 6, which include ethnographic case studies. The detailed ethnography of the lives of migrants and their patterns of mobility is interweaved with the experiences of border guards and officials. Chapters 2 and 3 explore the experience of Ukrainian citizens who regularly seek to cross the border for trade and to exploit Poland's demand for cheap labour. Chapters 4 to 6 focus primarily upon border officials and the techniques adopted to enforce the border

regime. This research addresses local border guards, and it is unfortunate that Follis was unable to talk to other officials involved in the EU's border agency, Frontex; she notes that 'My own experience with Frontex is one of a secretive and uncommunicative institution' (p. 232 n. 19). Chapter 7 attempts to draw together a number of fragmented observations and encounters to address new narratives and is followed by a brief conclusion and an appendix that addresses methods.

The co-ordinated research involving multiple stakeholders is particularly significant and outlines the complexity of the contexts in which policies and practices are developed and transformed. The focus on the transformation of border regimes since the collapse of the Iron Curtain in 1989 is also deeply relevant to those with an interest in the genealogy of border works and rebordering. The volume suggests that only a political effort to address certain tensions in border policy will lead to fairer and more human border practices (pp. 209–12). This book raises issues that have a far broader relevance across the border regions that surround the EU and, indeed, also for other parts of the world that are currently responding to migration by rebordering. Additional ethnographic research involving migrants and officials elsewhere at the margins of the EU would doubtless develop contrasting themes regarding transforming border territories.

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HAINES, DAVID W., KEIKO YAMANAKA & SHINJI YAMASHITA (eds). *Wind over water: migration in an East Asian context*. xii, 270 pp., map, figs, tables, bibliogr. Oxford, New York: Berghahn Books, 2012. £75.00 (cloth)

Expectations are high when a scholarly work promises to rethink the existing literature, in this case the one on migration. In the introduction, the three editors (two anthropologists and one sociologist) place East Asian migratory patterns within broader regional developments such as the growth of the middle classes and the rise of life-style migration. They identify crucial issues, particularly in cities, such as questions of citizenship, pressures on the welfare system, and nationality and ethnicity. Recurrent themes cross-cutting the various contributions comprise the various mobilities of people and objects, the meanings of 'skill', the importance of families, the blurring of conventional (migrant) categories, and the complexity of migratory processes.

The sixteen chapters are grouped in three sections. The first one offers selected impressions of the context in which migration occurs in East Asia (broadly conceived). It starts with a chapter on human trafficking in Vietnam during the colonial era. By way of a 'multi-level ethnography', we learn about the intricacies of the interface between fluid migration flows and established social structures and institutions in China. Chapter 3 looks more specifically at how social network ties of ethnic minority migrants in Chinese cities affect their employment situation, showing that different networks are utilized by different migrants at different job-seeking stages.

Next comes an examination of the way in which rapid and highly diverse transnational migration is reconfiguring the social and spatial fabric of Singapore in terms of demography, identity, and landscape. Transformation also occurs in Koreatown in Beijing, a case that illustrates how transnational and cross-ethnic ties can be mutually beneficial, especially when there are common economic goals and flexible government structures. Staying within an urban context, chapter 6 analyses civil society organizations and the actions they have taken on behalf of transnational workers in Hamamatsu City, Japan.

The second section of the book focuses on family, gender, life-style, and culture. A multi-sited study of rural-to-urban migration in Vietnam reveals the divergence of migration narratives by migrants in migrant-receiving areas and their family members in rural communities. An analysis of cross-border marriages between Vietnamese women and Chinese men shows that there is always a gap between expectations and experience and that geographical frontiers are often not as strong as social frontiers. For male Vietnamese migrants, return visits are an integral part of their transnational experience, and these visits can alter or amplify gender relations. Through their ongoing negotiation of transnational family practices, Japanese-Pakistani mixed marriages challenge the commonplace notion of 'family'. A study of the transnational lives of Japanese retirees problematizes the (artificial) distinction between tourism and migration. This blurring is confirmed in the next chapter, which looks at Korean tourists visiting China in search of their own national, cultural, and historical connections.

The third section zooms in on the connection between ethnicity, nationality, and work. Research on an emerging Korean ethnic community in Osaka, Japan, shows how a time-sharing business scheme is a particularly

effective strategy for migrants who have only limited time to work in Japan owing to their precarious visa status. More precarity is found among African migrant traders pursuing their fortunes in Hong Kong. This stands in contrast with the case study of Singaporean professional, managerial, and entrepreneurial elites in China. However, also among transnational elites, border-crossing mobilities are not without friction. The last chapter seeks to unearth some of the hidden political and cultural logics of 'guarded globalization' that emerge in the case of the transnational migration of healthcare workers to Japan and Singapore.

The concluding chapter contains the comments made by the discussants of the various international conference panels on which this volume is based. It highlights some central themes and issues: ageing, skill, and life-style; cross-border marriages; networks and social capital; and community and city. In sum, this edited volume nicely lays bare the conceptual challenges of using migration as an umbrella term for widely diverging dynamics, trends, and meanings, even when keeping a regional focus. The attempt at being comprehensive shows the complexity of it all but may also disorientate readers who are less familiar with the topic(s) or the region. Nevertheless, this book is a worthy addition to migration research and Asian studies. It is warmly recommended to scholars, advanced graduate students, and anyone else interested in people on the move in Asia and beyond.

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SCHEELE, JUDITH. *Smugglers and saints of the Sahara: regional connectivity in the twentieth century*. xi, 270 pp., maps, illus., bibliogr. Cambridge: Univ. Press, 2012. £60.00 (cloth)

The Sahara, which has received relatively scant academic attention, has recently become the focus of a number of studies that seek to break down the artificial divide between the Maghreb and Africa south of the great desert. Demonstrating the extent to which people, goods, and religious ideas have travelled performs a valuable service in its own right. But in this rather impressive monograph, Judith Scheele warns against the temptation to treat the Sahara purely as an empty expanse to be traversed. The focus here is on relationships that unfold primarily within the Sahara – straddling the borders of Algeria, Mali, Niger, and, to a lesser extent, Mauritania. This is not a conventional borderlands