

# BOOK REVIEW

## AN INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH TO MIGRATION



**Mila Maeva & Magdalena Slavkova & Plamena Stoyanova & Mina Hristova (eds.) *Between the Worlds: Migrants, Margins, and Social Environment*. Vol. 3. Sofia: IEFSEM – BAS & Paradigma, 2021. 338 pp.**

The 3rd volume of *Between the Worlds* consists of a preface, followed by five chapters with eighteen articles by well-known researchers, and was prepared by editors Mila Maeva, Magdalena Slavkova, Plamena Stoyanova and Mina Hristova, who have already collaborated on cross-border topics. *Between the Worlds* is a notable academic review of migration, the adaptation tactics of ethnic groups and different aspects of their identity. The collection brings to the reader the perspective of ethnologists, cultural historians, economists, media researchers, and social scientists on the situations in which people find themselves and in which they have to act as a result of global processes. On the stages of the world's great processes, personality is also important. It is sympathetic that the authors are able to approach migrants as individuals, as a non-homogeneous mass. Major motivators such as political, economic, and social factors in the past and present come to the fore. Therefore, the focus of discussion here is the models of adaptation and integration of migrants and their groups and communities, and the microhistory.

Migration has been called one of the most powerful influences of the 20th century, whether it is migration caused by crises, economic chain migration, or rather mobility driven by lifestyle or so-called convenience migration. Also in this collection, seasonal or temporary labour migration, where either women or men travel abroad to earn extra money to improve the situation at home, comes to the fore. Mobility has certainly been under academic attention, but what makes this collection special is its interdisciplinary approach, which nevertheless has specific geographical and thematic centres. Namely, the treatment of Bulgarians and the minorities (the Romani, Russians, Ukrainians, etc.) forms the unique core of the book. The research and methodology are oriented on specific interdisciplinary studies and approaches – history, sociology, political science, health sciences, educational studies, demography, economy, cultural studies, including ethnology, ritual studies, and more.

Various methods are used in research, but one of the central ones is direct fieldwork in selected centres, interviews with key informants, and also partially web-based surveys

(e.g., Erolova, Maeva, Hristov). Various events have been partaken, and it is a positive feature that the researchers have previous experience with the ethnic groups concerned, which, as a rule, facilitates access to the inner circle and the collection of more comprehensive data. The interviews were conducted during the large waves of migration (2013–2014), and gathered data from the refugee houses. In addition to other aspects, educational conditions and teaching and schooling of refugees are under scrutiny (cf., e.g., articles by Erolova, Maeva, Hristov). The other aspect of the same phenomenon is the introduction of Bulgarian culture and language to migrants. Interviews and articles based on them highlight interesting personalities of the Bulgarian diaspora community as well as their contribution to the continuation of their own culture in the recipient country.

A school in Chicago and a centre called Little Bulgaria are the largest of the eleven Bulgarian schools in Chicago which teach Bulgarian (Winnie the Pooh Children's Centre). The soul and leader of the latter is Zhivka Bubalova, who has been able to achieve that her Chicago Bulgarian school has the same training programmes as in their motherland and their exams are also valid in Bulgaria. All this makes it easier for children to return to homeland, not to mention the good knowledge of English. This is definitely a big success story, as it is generally possible to provide primary education in some major cities (e.g., for Estonians in Helsinki, Finland), but, as a rule, education in the mother tongue is limited to Sunday schools where the role of tuition is inevitably small.

While the school in Chicago is a success story, the schools for Syrians and other refugees are not; they highlight how the established schools become empty, even if the infrastructure and the educators are exemplary. The reason is that even if a small number of students return to their homeland with their parents, most of them migrate to other countries, or from smaller centres to big cities or directly to the capital city.

Articles about the migration of medical students to Bulgaria for cheap education provide food for thought as well – different tuition and living strategies and sometimes utilitarian and even arrogant attitude towards the inhabitants of the country providing the best possible education and milieu (Maeva, Periklieva & Markov).

This is where it is appropriate to move on to exciting reference material dealing with national stereotypes. Since a seminal study by Lippmann in the United States in 1922, stereotypes and prejudices have been consistently monitored on the example of different countries and ethnic nationalities. It is evident that members of an ethnic group are different in their views and their adaptation tactics are affected, yet so are the attitudes of the inhabitants of the host country (see Åberg's views on the Finnish Romani and Russians). Regarding the Romani, Russians, and Albanians, different lifestyles and adaptation models are outlined. There are also studies on the Romani migration to the United States and the relationship between emigrants and music, which is an important feature of self-determination. Hence, time for music is always found, even besides the principal job, and there are also attempts to become a professional musician (Bloomfield, Åberg, Slavkova, Hristova).

The geographical scope of the 3rd volume of *Between the Worlds* is wide: from the northern part of Europe, for instance Finland, to Eastern, Central and Southern Europe (Spain, Bulgaria, Albania, Macedonia, Russia, Greece, Ukraine, etc.), but also the United Kingdom, Asia, the USA, and New Zealand.

Although the discussion focuses on the adaptation and integration models of migrants and their groups and micro-history, many articles deal with global problems. Hopefully, the collection will have an effect on further research trends in Europe, and will certainly be used as an academic introduction to multiple fields of anthropology and ethnology. The editors of the collection have done excellent work.

Mare Kõiva