

6-1-2019

Caglar, Ayse and Nina Glick Shiller. Migrants and City-Making: Dispossession, Displacement, and Urban Regeneration. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2018.

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Recommended Citation

Ybarrola, Steven Ph.D. (2019) "Caglar, Ayse and Nina Glick Shiller. Migrants and City-Making: Dispossession, Displacement, and Urban Regeneration. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2018.," *Journal of International and Global Studies*: Vol. 10: No. 2, Article 21.

DOI: 10.62608/2158-0669.1492

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.lindenwood.edu/jigs/vol10/iss2/21>

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Caglar, Ayse and Nina Glick Shiller. *Migrants and City-Making: Dispossession, Displacement, and Urban Regeneration*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2018.

Scholars of migration, especially in the social sciences, should be quite familiar with the work of these two authors, as they have done research and published on the themes of this book since the early 2000s. Glick Schiller's work on issues of migration and ethnicity date back to her dissertation in the 1970s on Haitian identity and came to prominence with her publications in the 1990s and 2000s on such topics as diasporas, transnationalism, and cosmopolitanism. In *Migrants and City-Making: Dispossession, Displacement, and Urban Regeneration*, Caglar and Glick Schiller have taken a longitudinal ethnographic study (beginning in 2000) of migrants in three seemingly quite different cities—Mardin, Turkey, which is located near the Turkey-Syrian border; Manchester, New Hampshire, in the United States; and Halle/Saale, in what was formerly East Germany. They describe each of these cities as “disempowered” in that “these cities are...caught up in globally competitive interconnected restructuring processes but experience them within positions more structurally disadvantaged than do global centers of power” (i.e., New York, Ankara, or Berlin) (p. 13).

Caglar and Glick Schiller begin the book with a rather densely written introductory chapter that lays out the theoretical framework for the ethnographic studies that follow. For those less familiar with the work of the authors, this chapter provides a concise overview of not only their theoretical position but also an explanation of how their approach differs from other scholars in the social sciences (especially anthropology). They begin by addressing an issue that they have critiqued over the last few years (Glick Schiller & Caglar 2006),¹ which is migration scholars' tendency to focus on methodological nationalism and what the authors refer to as “the ethnic lens.”

“Methodological nationalism is an intellectual orientation that approaches the study of social and historical processes as if they were contained within the borders of individual nation-states.... [M]ethodological nationalists confine the concept of society within the boundaries of nation-states and assume that the members of these states share a common history and set of values, norms, social customs, and institutions.” (p. 3)

In countering this tendency, the authors argue that since the early work on ethnic identity by Fredrik Barth (1969),² there has developed an extensive literature within the social sciences that “details the constructed nature of ethnic identities and ethnic group boundaries and the diversity that lies within a population labeled as an ‘ethnic group’” (p. 4). Due to a focus on methodological nationalism, scholars often promulgate the error of assuming that national or ethnic groups are more or less homogeneous and create a “binary of difference” between migrants and hosts (or “natives”). As a result, methodological nationalism not only causes researchers (and society in general) to emphasize the need for migrants to integrate socioculturally since they are from “culturally and socially discrete... ‘national societies’” but also “portrays individuals as having only one country and identity” (pp. 3,4).

To counter this tendency towards methodological nationalism, the authors argue for an approach that is “multiscalar,” by which they mean one in which “socio-spatial spheres of practice...are constituted in relationship to each other and within various hierarchies of networks of power” (p. 8). These include local, regional, national, and global areas that are “mutually constituted, relational, and interpenetrating entry points for an analysis of globe-spanning interconnected processes” (p. 8). In other words, migrants are not simply members of diasporas

or even translocal/transnational communities, though these may be important sociospatial spheres, but migrants are also generally involved in multiple other areas, which makes them important participants in the process of “city-making.” A multiscalar approach recognizes that individuals, including migrants, have multiple identities and points of access to power (or lack thereof) depending on the context, or scale, within which they are interacting. Thus, instead of viewing migrants only as homogeneous or marginalized populations, the multiscalar approach taken by the authors returns agency to migrants, and as a result, sees them as important actors in the attempts at regeneration of (disempowered) cities.

Following the introduction, the authors delve into their ethnographic studies of Mardin, Manchester, and Halle/Saale, which illustrate the book’s theoretical framework. Chapter 1 gives an overview of the cities studied, looking at important ways in which these three geographically different cities share particular similarities. One key similarity among them is that all three cities are “disempowered” despite having undergone (failed) projects of urban renewal that were undertaken in the hopes of regaining their previous higher status. Another critical similarity among the cities is that due to the “welcoming narratives” that the cities developed with regard to migrants, newcomers to each of the cities have generally been able to become a part of the civic life of the cities.

Chapters 2 through 5 present the authors’ ethnographically informed comparative study of the three cities, each chapter focusing on different elements of their multiscalar approach. Chapter 2, focusing primarily on the German city of Halle/Saale, presents a critique of methodological nationalism by emphasizing the role that migrants play in developing businesses that serve the communities in which they are located; (though they investigate all businesses, not just ethnic businesses, the authors do refer to the businesses as “migrant businesses” and to the migrants or transplants who contribute to them as “ethnic entrepreneurs”). The authors say that such migrant businesspeople are both emplaced and displaced by the same multiscalar processes that have affected other small businesses in the city. As the authors state, “We demonstrate the utility of viewing migrant businesses as multiscalar modes of emplacement” (p. 97).

Chapter 3, drawing from the work of Simmel, focuses on sociabilities, the areas in social relationships where there are commonalities rather than differences. This chapter, informed primarily by the authors’ ethnographic work in Manchester, New Hampshire, examines the different sites of sociability among migrants and non-migrants alike. A moving and helpful example of this comes from Glick Schiller’s own experience while living and teaching in Manchester, NH. She had gone to a French-speaking Catholic church service with the intention of finding newly arrived immigrants to interview. There, she met a couple from the Congo who had to leave their children behind because they didn’t have enough money at the time to bring their entire family to the United States. Glick Schiller got involved in the process of reuniting the parents with their children, and this eventually involved hundreds of people and networks of networks. Eventually, enough money was raised and enough political pressure applied that the children were able to immigrate to the US, leaving a desperately violent context where their father had almost been killed (pp. 121-125).

Chapter 4 explores the concept of “social citizenship” by examining “born-again” Christian congregations, whose members are often dispossessed and disempowered from the perspective of the broader society and in relation to political power but who find “sociabilities, solidarity, and moral economy” (p. 149) through religious participation. The born-again congregants “claim” these disempowered cities for Jesus and respond “to various experiences of stigmatization and dispossession through acts and narratives of social citizenship, contesting

disempowerment by political authorities by affirming that ‘there is no power except for God’” (p. 149). Through these congregations, many of which are led by migrants, church members become connected to a global Christian community that is, again, multiscalar.

Chapter 5 focuses on return Syriac Christians to the Turkish city of Mardin, their “homeland.” The authors argue that there were many multiscalar factors at play that led the Turkish government to present Mardin “as a city with a peaceful multifaith heritage” (p. 30), not the least of which was the Turkish government’s desire to become part of the EU, as well as obtain EU funding for urban regeneration projects. Returning to their thesis, the author’s state, “[W]e argue that to understand the dynamics of hometown associations such as...the return of displaced Syriac Christians to Mardin,...we need to situate their emplacement in Mardin within a multiscalar social field constituted by multiple and intersecting social, political, and religious networks and institutions....” (p. 179).

The authors conclude by bringing their data to bear on the theoretical issues they raised in the book, especially the introduction. To do this, they focus on what they consider to be three key insights from the book: (1) the notion of shared temporality, referring to the “...the necessity of situating social analysis and action within a shared temporality of all of a city’s inhabitants as the city transforms within changing historical conjunctures” (p. 211); (2) the use of a multiscalar approach as method, theory, and analysis, in which “analyses of city-making processes” acknowledge that “conjunctural forces always involve multiple globe-spanning actors within intersecting social fields of power”; and (3) the understanding that efforts must go beyond urban citizenship and move towards social movements of the dispossessed and “seek the transformative change necessary for social justice and for the empowerment of the dispossessed” (p. 211). In order to do this, they say, “researchers and activists must directly address multiscalar globe-spanning relationships of power, including the changing and increasingly fraught processes of capital accumulation” (p. 211).

Migrants and City-Making is not an easy read, but for scholars and researchers of migration, it is well worth the effort. At times, the book is thick with jargon, but the ethnographic descriptions and examples are rich and expertly illustrate the theoretical and methodological points the authors are arguing. The main themes of the book are not new to either author, and the authors successfully pull the themes together into an effective and informative resource.

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Notes

¹Glick Schiller, Nina and Ayse Çağlar. “Beyond the Ethnic Lens: Locality, Globality, and Born-Again Incorporation.” In, *American Ethnologist* 33(4): 612-633, 2006.

²Barth, Fredrik. *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1969.