



### BOOK REVIEW

**Viorela Ducu and Áron Telegdi-Csetri (Eds.), *Managing Difference in Eastern-European Transnational Families*, Peter Lang, 2016**

**By: Romana Emilia Cramarencu, Babes Bolyai University, Faculty of European Studies**

The book *Managing Difference in Eastern-European Transnational Families*, co-edited by **Viorela Ducu** and **Áron Telegdi-Csetri** gathers 10, mainly qualitative, studies tackling the complex process of trans-nationalization of the societies inscribed in Eastern-European space. We highly appreciate the innovative concepts introduced, to mention a few - transnational difference, fatherhood dividends, hegemonic mothering, double vulnerability – as well as the balanced approach on sensitive issues, the authors performing professionalism as well as genuine interest in the migration experiences shared by the interviewees.

The volume is structured in 3 parts, from the analysis of the transnational families in a gendered perspective - section 1 – to a special focus on couples within the context of migration - section 2 – and insights on the challenges of transnationalism towards childhood – section 3.

The co-editors designed an introductory part addressing the issue of cosmopolitan research that challenges the well-known instruments employed in social sciences, in a continuous search for legitimizing new forms of social lives for people on the move.

The first part of the volume starts with problematizing the concepts of cross-border paternity and paternal care, in an attempt to compensate for the fact that fathering practices of migrant men are insufficiently documented. The study *Partitioned Paternity: Models of Cross-border Fathering in Ukrainian Transnational Families*, by Alissa Tolstokorova, analyses the phenomenon of *paternity at distance*, implying the manifestation of fatherhood dividends! The author identified three types of migrant fathers: the highly responsible ones, *pay check fathers*, the less responsible ones, *re-emerging fathers*, and the irresponsible ones, *waning fathers*,

without ignoring the complexity of human relations manifestation: fatherhood and masculinity are experienced and practiced in more diverse ways, beyond the stereotypes we adopt.

The study *How Family and Emotional Ties Are Used as Coercive Instruments by the Exploiters on the Romanian Feminine Migration. The Study Case of Italy*, by Rafaela Hilario Pascoal, Adina Nicoleta and Erica Schwartz focuses on the abusive practices of women exploited through labour trafficking, by revealing that sometimes care services are connected to domestic servitude and labour exploitation through human trafficking. The flourishing of criminal networks created by victims' co-nationals and Italian employers exploit dramatically the motherhood vulnerability, as a tool to maintain women in a degrading status. One of the most discouraging findings refers to the children of the children left behind (more in depth analyses on the topic can be retrieved in the last section of the book) who perpetuate the absent motherhood role.

The next study, *The Issue of Emancipation in the Case of Romanian Migrant Women*, by Anca Raluca Aștilean, is focused on migrant women and the challenges they face in the destination countries as well as back home. The demand for caregivers originated from Romania opened up a new market highly dominated by women facing battles like integrating in the host society as well as overcoming gender bias in the labour market. The long migration journey definitely impacts a woman's life, challenging her status and attitudes towards her role in the family, in search for professional and personal fulfilment.

The last study in the section, *Gendered Work-Family Balance in Migration: Albanian Migrants in Greece*, by Armela Xhaho and Erka Çaro, brings the novelty of conceptualizing the hegemonic mother, by bringing the work-balance topic in a gendered approach. The authors acknowledge the differentiation in understanding what a good parent is: a good mother is defined by providing daily care for her children and performing a job, while a good father is the main breadwinner who might be absent from the children's life. Nevertheless, migrant mothers experience more conflict and stress while finding work-life balance compared to migrant fathers.

Section 2 is opened by a complex study carried out in Poland and Norway – Par Migration Navigator - *Egalitarian Capital Gained in Norway or Brought from Poland? Experiences of Migration and Gender Equality among Polish Couples in Norway*, by Magdalena Żadkowska and Tomasz Szlendak. The authors analyse how the egalitarian capital is gained by Polish couples, concluding that there are more gendered coherent couples in Poland than in

Norway and there are more egalitarian coherent couples in Norway than in Poland. Living abroad meant for Polish couples an easier transition to egalitarian practices, to the Nordic model, equally regarding gender labour and family practices.

The next study, *Global Migration and Intermarriage in Chinese-Hungarian Context*, by Nóra Kovác, is built around the life events narrated by a middle aged Hungarian woman married to a Chinese wholesale tradesman, revealing the complexity of mixed marriages experiences. The main finding of the qualitative research is that the reduced number of inter-ethnic partnerships between Chinese entrepreneurs living in Hungary and Hungarians is due to the fact that most wives cannot and refuse to reach up to the expectations of a traditional Chinese family.

Romanian partners are facing similar difficulties in terms of family's acceptance in bi-national couples, as the study *Bi-national Couples with a Romanian Partner in the European Context* carried out by Viorela Ducu and Iulia Hossu reveals. These couples struggle with identity challenges in matters like children raising, educational choices, religion's relevance and traditions preserved in the family life, etc. As a life strategy, many bi-national couples choose to live in a third country and to use a third language as a potential search for neutrality!

The last section of the book brings to attention the sensitive issue of childhood affected by parental emigration in the study *Yesterday's Children, Today's Youth: The Experiences of Children Left Behind by Romanian Migrant Parents*, by Georgiana-Cristina Rentea and Laura-Elena Rotărescu. The children left behind need to discover adaptive behaviours in the absence of one or both parents, the proper adjustment to evolving family roles and relations, to individual life plans. We find remarkable the children's generosity and maturity in perceiving their parents decision to migrate as a genuine sacrifice to better financially support them, but we cannot ignore the children's sacrifice in the process. Still, the absences to key moments in the children's life as well as assuming the adult's role in the family represent the main stressful challenges that ask for coping mechanisms.

The volume ends by analyzing the inter-country adoption mechanism - *Intercountry Adoption: a Human Rights Perspective*, by Bojan Perovic. The author pleads for this form of adoption as a genuine opportunity for orphans to grow up in a family. Still, bad practices made out by abusing this institution may reduce the public awareness and the state cannot withdraw from taking the responsibility for mediating fair adoption procedures.

We express our appreciation to the editors of the book for the remarkable effort to gather valuable contributions that brought in depth insights on the complexity of trans nationality and migration and difference negotiation practices that can be found in the Eastern European area. Scholars in anthropology, sociology, as well political sciences and migration studies will find the book valuable for methodology and conceptual framework.

Finally, many thanks for granting the opportunity to review the book, like a bridge in time, 10 years after the beautiful experience of Genoa summer school in migration!