

**REVIEW TO: SEBAUX, GWÉNOLA (ED.) (2019):
PROCESSUS DE TRANSMISSION DANS LES FAMILLES
DE MIGRANTS OU ISSUES DE L'IMMIGRATION:
REGARDS CROISÉS. VILLENEUVE D'ASCQ:
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Liliana Azevedo

The book *Processus de transmission dans les familles de migrants ou issues de l'immigration: Regards croisés* is the result of an international symposium held at the *Université Catholique de l'Ouest (UCO)* in Angers, France, in 2015. It brings together a wide range of contributions around the concept of "transmission" in the context of migration to and within Europe from different disciplines, methodological perspectives, national contexts, and temporalities. The main interest of this volume is undoubtedly its diversity and multi-faceted approach. It combines field-work as well as archival and statistical research. It examines both voluntary and forced migration. It takes a multigenerational view and encompasses individual, family, and institutional levels. It includes transmission mechanisms of both origin cultures and receiving societies.

In the introduction, Gwénola Sebaux, the editor and migration researcher concentrating on German and Eastern Europe societies, relies on the dictionary to define transmission: It comes from the Latin *tradere* and means to pass to someone else, to hand over, notably from generation to generation. Sebaux emphasizes the dynamic nature of transmission processes and their duration – two aspects that will be illustrated throughout the chapters. Drawing on a variety of spatial and temporal settings, the authors discuss the purposes and mechanisms, the possibilities and impossibilities of transmission within families with

a migration background, highlighting its limits but also its creative potential. In sum, the book raises the question of continuity and discontinuity, both at the individual and collective level, and points to the issue of social change.

Indeed, by examining both past and contemporary migration movements, the purpose of this volume is to address the transformations that immigration brings about in societies. In other words, what is happening in Europe in terms of post-migration? The editor's intention is to bring some insights to what has been called *Europe's migration crisis* and to engage in the ongoing societal, political, and media debate. Accordingly, this volume intends to shed light on transmission mechanisms in a post-migration context and in particular on the processes at work in European societies in the first decades of the 21st century. Clues are provided by the 14 chapters organized in six parts: (I) The cultural fact through the prism of migration; (II) mobilities and transmissions; (III) issues of transmission in the family space; (IV) religious transmission and identification; (V) transmissions and linguistic identifications; and (VI) political issues of transmission.

Although the interest of migration studies in family transmissions is quite recent, the growing body of literature in this field of research has already produced a large number of studies on the intergenerational transmission of cultural, religious, and political values and also on the

transmission of language (see special issue organized by Bertaux & Delcroix, 2009). The themes used to organize the chapters are therefore traditional ones. However, as you read on, you may wonder why the chapters have been arranged in this way. Indeed, the organization of the texts into six parts seems sometimes a bit artificial. As a matter of fact, in the conclusion of the book, the editor outlines other relevant lines of thought, such as the tension between the private and the public realm, the role of women, and the importance of language that I personally find more appropriate to arrange the diverse contributions. I will therefore present the book in a partially different order than the table of contents shows and focus on those aspects of the book that I consider particularly insightful for understanding the current and future challenges of migration in Europe and around the world.

The book contains several examples of how transmission mechanisms operate between the poles of the private and the public sphere. Opposition, synergies, and overlap between different agents of socialization are made visible throughout the book. Chapters 4, 9, and 10 highlight the influence of public structures, whether associations or state-related. Chapter 4 shows the role of Bulgarian migrants' associations in Greece and Germany in transmitting cultural identity. Chapter 9 analyses three French Catholic popular education movements and their role as cultural and religious transmitters among young people with migrant backgrounds since 1960. Chapter 10 underlines the importance of cultural associations and their religious and secular celebrations in the transmission of collective memory and in the arrangement of endogenous marriages among French of Indian Tamil origin. The tension between different agents of socialization is related to the question of the reception of the transmission efforts by the descendants who often have to cope with conflicting perspectives and values. The results of these dynamics are processes of hybridization of customs and possibly conflicting identity compositions, as it is shown in chapters 3 and 7, which examine the case of Cameroonians and Algerians households in France. Transmission mechanisms may then be disrupted in the migratory context, leading to transformations within the family.

One of the merits of the book is to show the heterogeneity of migrant families and to contribute to deconstructing ideas that tend to enclose the migrant-other in static and patriarchal family structures. Hence, chapters 5, 6, and 8 challenge hegemonic representations of migrant women (as passive individuals) prevalent in receiving countries and show that women are key actors in the processes of intergenerational transmission. Chapter 5 shows the prominent role of women in maintaining ethnic cohesion and identity in Tatar families that fled from Crimea to Romania in the 19th century. Chapter 6 analyses the experience of single mothers of Turkish origin in Germany and their capacity for action. Finally, chapter 8 examines family reconfigurations of Chilean exiles in France, as migrants' own conceptions of gender roles often change when moving to another country.

Migrants often face language issues. Language plays a key role in social and economic integration but also in accessing cultural codes. Chapter 11 focuses on recent migrants and asylum seekers from Southern Caucasus in France for whom daily life language transmission (through songs, storytelling) and long-distance communication with the family left behind are ways of coping with their precarious situation. In contrast, chapter 12 shows that recent Italian migrants in Germany are keen to learn the local language as a factor of integration.

One of the most relevant findings of this collective reflection is the gradual convergence of migrants and descendants with receiving societies. This topic is addressed in chapters 2 and 14. The former adopts a historical perspective and navigates through time and space to point out mutual cultural influences between migrants and receiving countries – with several examples from around the world, from the birth of the Ottoman Empire to the present. The latter analyses the fertility behavior of the population with a migrant background in Germany and shows that it converges with national patterns over time. This cultural bridging is emphasized on the cover of the book with the image of the *Bridge of Confluences* in Angers that symbolizes both the ambivalent status of migrants (in-between) and “the cultural confluences inherent in all migration” (p. 17) as highlighted by the editor. The idea that migration

fosters cultural affinities is definitely the major conclusion.

Moreover, the book is an opportunity to reflect on topics such as the diversity of the migrant condition. By putting side by side, in the same volume, different migration categories (migrants, asylum seekers, exiles), this volume raises the question of the boundaries between categories – a major theme, especially in these troubled times that Europe is facing since February 2022.

Two chapters do not fit any of the topics mentioned above, nor do they address transmission within the family. Chapter 1 is a theoretical prelude that invites the reader to consider the purpose of transmission, going back to ancient Greek thought. And chapter 13 analyses integration policies of the German state, drawing on the migration of young people from Southern Europe following the 2008 crisis, and stresses the need to go beyond mere economic insertion. It is in this context that the issue of transmission becomes important.

To sum up, this book highlights that nothing is immutable or fixed in time and that transmission is not one-way only. Indeed, traditions, customs, and memories are reinvented through transmission and evolve according to the spatial and

socioeconomic contexts in which migrants are embedded – but also according to biographical events.

In conclusion, this is a timely book on a relevant topic. The reader will find a good overview of the reciprocal impact between migration and family and a rich insight into the complex articulations between migration and transmission. The book can therefore be recommended to anyone interested in migration and intergenerational issues, not only to social scientist and social workers. However, it is regrettable that the wide range of topics and approaches prevents a more detailed analysis, which would be valuable. Thus, what makes the strength of the book is also its weakness. In addition, it can also be a good starting point for a (very topical) discussion on migrant/refugee categories and types of migration (family, labor, political, etc.), which offers definitely an extra value.

REFERENCE

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Liliana Azevedo is a PhD candidate in Sociology at Iscte – University Institute of Lisbon and an associated doctoral student of the nccr - on the move (National Center of Competence in Research –The Migration-Mobility Nexus), in Switzerland. She is currently working on Portuguese migrants in Switzerland at retirement age. Her main research interests are return migration; ageing and mobility; gender and migration; transnational families; migration, home-making and materiality; life course and biographical approaches.

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