



**Book review of “Germany in Transit: Nation and Migration, 1955-2005”. 588 pages, University of California Press, 2007, by Deniz Göktürk, David Gramling and Anton Kaes (eds.)**

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Though migration is an age-old feature of human activity, driven by various circumstances, its current place in the midst of global dynamics and the phenomenon of globalization is becoming increasingly critical. International immigration and its regulation have been largely shaped by the policies in the receiving countries, often determining preferences for nationality cohorts and work skills to satisfy their labor and human capital requirements. When immigration has been necessitated by political strife, host countries have displayed immense magnanimity as well. However, the growing realization of resource limitations and the strange quirks of cultural pluralism are in turn creating waves of dissonance. Literature and the media are now replete with an in depth look into the immigration debate in various nations of the world in trying to seek new directions and satisfactory solutions.

‘Germany in Transit’ is a timely collection of documents detailing Germany’s journey into its current multiethnic demographic status – from the arrival of its first guest workers in the mid-1950s to its current immigration reforms. Compiled by three academic scholars affiliated with the German Department at the University of California, Berkeley this rich collage of about 200 texts and documents is the outcome of an interdisciplinary Multicultural Germany Project. This book is seemingly the first sourcebook chronicling the transformation of a country that has fought shy of calling itself a country of immigrants and faced turbulent times with defining boundaries for citizenship.

The book begins with a lucid introduction to the history of immigration in Germany since the seventeenth century to its most recent immigration legislation of 2005 that has initiated naturalization for legal residents with work permits. Amidst a pervading sense of reluctance to acknowledge itself as an immigration country, the reality of its being a geographical crossing point and the country’s need for immigrants at various times for unskilled labor, military assistance, post-war reconstruction, information technology personnel betrays that sense. Interesting in the history, is the evidence of Germans themselves being migrants in the constant German invasions of eastern border states and trading of treaties. What is also evident is the consistent acknowledgment and drive to strengthen the roots of ‘ethnic Germans’ against the urge to keep non-Germans only as long as they were needed. The history concludes with the challenges of current reality that Germany has to face as a key player in global economy, in terms of outsourcing, information technology, fluidity of borders and where every fifth individual in Germany today is an immigrant.

Following the introduction, the book is divided into eleven thematic chapters. Each chapter begins with its own summary of the compilation of documents it covers. These documents

include a variety of genres namely newspaper editorials, political manifestoes, legal statutes to interviews, song lyrics and autobiographical essays, which are original texts in English translation. Chronologically arranged within each chapter these texts were meant to provide 'an analytical grid' for an incisive look into the 'divergent but overlapping immigration history'. The texts in the final chapter, the epilogue, according to the authors, address 'the friction between global and national forces before and after German reunification'. To further guide the reader and present a consolidated overview is a timeline of the milestones in the history of immigration titled 'Chronology' (p. 497-512). A glossary of important German immigration terms, a bibliography and filmography complete the thoroughness of the scholarly efforts.

The first chapter on 'Working Guests' is an eye-opener to the ambivalence that shrouded active labor recruitment from countries like Italy, Spain, Portuguese, Turkey and South Asia. Permanent civic membership for these immigrants was elusive and transnational migration a deliberate feature. The downside of this is discussed in the light of xenophobic repercussions and the lessons for the United States in launching a guest worker program with Latin America. The second chapter highlights the mutual influence of immigration policies between the two German states, pre and post the Berlin Wall, especially in the aftermath of the exodus from East to West Germany and the Korean War. The horrors of postunification experienced by immigrants from Vietnam, Cuba, Mozambique, China speaks of the wave of xenophobia in the midst of an economic downturn. The subsequent chapters titled "Is the boat full" and "What is German" address polar topics of anti-immigration sentiments and racist violence and the ambiguous initiatives towards citizenship/dual citizenship with specific focus on women immigrants as well.

Religion as a binding force in the attempt to build harmony in communities is the topic of another chapter looking at Judaism, Islam and Christianity and the accommodations made especially for immigrant Jews and for Muslims especially from Turkey. Germany's benevolent stand towards asylum seekers from Iran, Eastern Europe, Vietnam, Sri Lanka juxtaposed with an ongoing movement to restrict entry and hasten exit of other immigrants is elaborated in Chapters 6-8. The not so successful attempts by the left to usher in an openness to diversity through workshops and cultural immersion experiences, paralleled with deliberate initiatives to promote German language skills towards acculturation is also discussed. The chapter on "Living in Two Worlds?" presents the touching realities of the social life of immigrants as children, teenagers, individuals contemplating and negotiating marriage, women, prisoners and undocumented workers detailed through case studies, reports, dialogues, interviews and statutes. There is an exclusive on migrant literature and its content. Seen to have a satirical focus on the guest worker program, some excerpts from diverse literature is presented. Finally, preceding the epilogue is another exclusive chapter on "Turkish Germany" which few avid followers of the global immigration debate would be unfamiliar with. Giving a glimpse into the role of transnational pop culture that emerged in the 1990s' succeeding a distinct phase of attempts at cultural diffusion, this chapter depicts a mix of ethnic experiences both positive and not so positive through the 'montage' method again.

Thus, this creative piece of work is an excellent portrayal of Germany's indispensability with immigrants not only for its labor force but also to counter its declining birth rate. As rightly said, this book is 'indispensable reading' for those with interests in cultural diversity and a comparative study of the immigration experiences of nations around the world. It does offer, in the words of the publisher, "an archive for the comparative study of modern Germany

against the backdrop of European integration, transnational migration and the fall of the Berlin Wall". It holds promise as an invaluable resource for educators, researchers, policy analysts, in multiple disciplines apart from social work, sociology, political science and international relations. In the current climate of distribution of labor globally, demand and supply dynamics and cultural sensitivities that invariably figure, this is a cutting edge issue that has been given a remarkable analytical focus.

Though a very unique method has been used in the collection, classification and organization of the content and themes, down to earth and real, giving the onus to the reader to make his/her interpretations, the restart of the chronology of events when a new chapter begins, to address the theme gets confusing. The reader is forced to refocus and reframe in the back and forth of the chronology that is revisited, but in a different context through the various chapters. This tends to then make demands on the reader to establish a timeline mentally to put events in context as each chapter unfolds. The chronology section that follows the epilogue, however, compensates for this deviation and puts things in perspective in a consolidated way. Possibly a chronological division of the chapters, using the timeline, tracing the immigration history, various events and cultural processes within those time epochs, could have facilitated the reading experience.

The editors have, through their academic backgrounds of expertise crafted a significant piece of work relevant to the immigration debate today and this will be a precious resource for future writers on immigrations issues in other countries as well. This book urges one to look for what other countries' immigration histories have been, draw comparisons, learn and move towards mutually beneficial solutions.

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