

## BOOK REVIEW

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Anna Tuckett (2018), *Rules, Paper, Status: Migrants and Precarious Bureaucracy in Contemporary Italy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press)

Anna Tuckett's book examines how migrants grapple with the contradictory immigration laws that continuously place them in and out of legal standing within the Italian state. *Rules, Paper, Status* moves away from popular imaginings of border control to examine how immigration policies work 'on the ground' for migrants who navigate bureaucratic processes to retain legal status, reunite with family members and pursue citizenship (p. 4). Tuckett uses extensive ethnographic and textual references to support her analysis of Italian law that perpetuates notions of inclusion/exclusion and il/legality. The book brings a dynamic perspective as the migrants and interlocutors consist of multinational communities, which is a departure from research on homogeneous migrant communities. The ethnography is situated around an immigration centre, which is largely supported by volunteers with migrant backgrounds, that offers free services and advice. Tuckett guides the reader through the history of the centre and expands the chapters towards examinations of (1) navigating the bureaucratic legal process, the challenges of rule bending, the social and economic niche of immigration brokers; (2) the precarious status of 1.5/second-generation migrants; (3) and how migrants envision a better future through 'on-migration' alongside disappointments of remaining within Italian borders. Through these topics, Tuckett ties together themes of precarious legal standing, social and economic exclusionary practices, and authenticity of identity for migrants within contemporary Italy.

The ethnography focuses on how migrants engage with the state over immigration policies that simultaneously maintain unstable legal standings for migrants while depending on low-wage migrant labour. Tuckett analyses how Italian law is based on perpetuating the creation of laws that maintain the validity of older laws. Thus, while migrants often perceive immigration policies as an ever-changing landscape, Tuckett argues that it is the interpretation of laws by government officials that changes based on which law is chosen to be used on any given day, region and/or official (pp. 50–51). Migrants pass through temporal and bureaucratic states of illegality that can span over months to decades due to various policies, such as self-regulated deportation, which often traps migrants within Italian borders. Social and economic



networks critically support migrants in their navigation of immigration policies, however Tuckett provides analysis of the Italian state's cyclical procedure of opening legal and economic sectors for migrant permits to facilitate the continuation of low wage, temporary labour. Through this examination, the book highlights migrants' ongoing and enduring relationship with bureaucratic processes that opens towards larger discourses of how the Italian state maintains precarious legal status for migrants in order to restrict them to low wage labour and social exclusion.

*Rules, Paper, Status* is ethnographically rich through Tuckett's incorporation of field notes along with her ability to weave in stories with scholarly text to give the reader insight to the everyday encounters of immigrant lives and those who study and write about these policies. Tuckett's interlocutors vocalise their critiques and assessment of larger immigration policy frameworks while simultaneously navigating through loopholes, rule bending and paper trails. Similarly, the author engages with academic texts to critique the overarching negative stereotype of brokers, smugglers and/or traffickers as inherently immoral and exploitative (p. 94). Tuckett argues that many of these immigration brokers are migrants themselves, or have a migrant background, and use the brokerage opportunity to refashion their social and economic status that immigration policies otherwise restrict through perpetual legal precarity and low-wage employment. Thus, Tuckett not only examines how migrants differentiate between what policies and governments say versus what they do but also points out problematic frameworks that academia place on groups without further examining the conditions that shape the emergence and maintenance of sectors such as immigration brokers.

Chapter 5 continues to engage with the legal processes of maintaining valid permits, but steps more readily into the sociocultural realm of migrant lives beyond their relationship with legal frameworks. Tuckett provides an examination of racialised bodies and how migrants conceptualise themselves as being included and excluded within Italian culture. Tuckett argues that Italy does not include ethnicity as part of the cultural make up of citizenship; rather, racialisation and 'othering' of those of migrant backgrounds perpetuates immigration policies that conceptualises Italian born/raised generations as inauthentic and maintains the requirement of legal status despite cultural immersion within Italian society (pp. 114–115). Tuckett gives room to her interlocutors to articulate how they challenge and confront embodied differences via the Italian state; while many are visually marked as migrants, they often disrupt these assumptions through Italian modes of dress,



mannerism and speech (p. 122). It would have been fruitful for the ethnography to juxtapose racialised bodies of the born and raised Italians with migrants who pass visually or culturally as Italian. The readers are introduced in earlier chapters to Eva, an Albanian friend who speaks Italian without a foreign accent and risks leaving Italy with an invalid permit, but ultimately passes through immigration without problems. Tuckett's interlocutors are keenly aware of the questionable authenticity their bodies hold with regard to imagined citizenship, yet the author missed the opportunity to develop a deeper analysis by including passing, unmarked bodies. However, the ethnography maintains a critical approach to race and embodied practices of in/authentic identity of who/what constitutes being Italian and a migrant.

*Rules, Paper, Status* offers extensive insight as to the navigation of immigration policies by contemporary migrants in Italy. Ethnographically situated, Tuckett also supports her work with academic texts grounded in the region as well farther afield researchers such as Aihwa Ong and Susan Coutin. This book would be suitable for undergraduate and postgraduate students interested in anthropology, ethnography and law due to an approachable writing style that critically engages with topics of the state, immigration policy and fluid status of identity and legality of contemporary migrants within Italy.

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