

Book Reviews

Masco, Joseph. 2020. *The Future of Fallout, and Other Episodes in Radioactive World-Making*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. 440 pp. Pb.: US\$29.95. ISBN: 9781478011149.

In the epilogue to *The Future of Fallout*, readers learn that the book's author, anthropologist Joseph Masco, had initially travelled to New Mexico in the 1990s with the anticipation of writing a book about the end to a multigenerational conflict and the reorientation of scientific expertise towards peaceful ends. Instead, what he encountered was an 'expert community readying both politically and conceptually for a future of unknown but still proliferating existential dangers' (p. 366). This open-ended notion of the future organised around the perception of imminent threat is one that the book grounds as historically emergent within the post-Second World War moment following 1945. Examining the institutions, infrastructures and investments (both libidinal and financial) through which American nuclear nationalism became a socio-historical force, Masco uses the notion of fallout to foreground the unintended side effects and legacies of the atomic bomb, both materially and conceptually. In doing so, he highlights how disparate temporalities and conceptualisations of danger, operating at a planetary scale while also being differentially distributed, emerge in the wake of America's nuclear testing regime and continued investment into the production of nuclear weapon defences (pp. 357–358).

Mid-twentieth-century aboveground nuclear detonations in the name of national defence inaugurated, as Masco argues in Chapter 1, an 'age of fallout'. The figure of fallout, which only acquired a nominative form after the Second World War (p. 20), invites attention to the unintended, often negative, outcomes of an event that is 'understood retrospectively but lived in the future anterior' (p. 19). Within this chapter, such outcomes include (1) shifts in responsibility to individuals, rather than security infrastructures, who must be alert for these dangers, (2) scientific studies conducted in the 1950s, in which radioactive signatures enabled scientists to track ecological flows, helping to foment 'a new kind of planetary vision' (p. 28) and (3) new modalities of industrial toxicity whose danger is cumulative but often unseen, registered only after a temporal lag (p. 22). Thus, the problem Masco identifies lies more in the perception of these effects, rather than in their documentation: 'This lag between the environmental event and the recognition of its long-lasting effects is a major psychosocial achievement of the industrial age where, in the name of commerce or security, consequences are loaded into an uncertain future and thus expelled from the realm of political discourse' (p. 33).



This critical aim of the book targets precisely this expulsion, excavating and analysing documentary and popular film (section III), ex-Soviet spy narratives (Ch. 25) and declassified photographic archives (Ch. 9), to probe how the threat of imminent danger through nuclear attack has become so normalised within American culture that historical incidents and facts contradicting this social imaginary no longer appear to have any impact. What does it take, Masco asks rhetorically, to begin to conceptualise an end to the projections of catastrophic war, which have become so sedimented within the logics of US national security that the prospect of peace no longer seems possible (p. 195)?

One potential avenue of alternative thinking he identifies lies in the proliferation of multiple, partial and possibly frictional ‘planetary optics’ in the twenty-first century. If, however, the critical theory of fallout enables the (visual) contemplation of ‘industrial effects as a cumulative form of planetary engineering’ (p. 18), one question I had was how such ‘slow violence’ might be recognised while also challenging ‘the privileging of the visible’ (Nixon 2013: 15). In Chapter 14, for instance, Masco examines the vibrational force of the bomb, as that which has transformed matter into energy, yet has also energised social movements that have amplified into potent political forces, such as in the ‘Give Peace a Dance’ project. As such, his analysis gestures to how modes of collective action and social protest oriented against destructive planetary engineering also emerge through multimodal relationalities, ones that move beyond the realm of the merely visual.

A far-reaching work of an astute and meticulous scholar, the book demonstrates how acts, logics and perceptions supporting ‘security’ – also forms of fallout – have achieved the opposite, eroding democratic processes and producing states of insecurity for differently situated communities (Ch. 3); they also enact an inversion in the relationship between security and the health of populations (Ch. 8). Yet just as nuclear fallout extends beyond the nation-state, this important contribution to the anthropology of (in)security and nuclear politics also goes beyond strictly disciplinary concerns with its call for post-national forms of governance. As such, its critical import extends to all those interested in interrogating how warlike commitments have become infrastructurally embedded in the USA and have inaugurated planetary-scale dangers, opening up the possibility to think and act otherwise.

Reference

Nixon, R. 2013. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

CYNTHIA BROWNE

Ruhr University (Germany)/Harvard University (USA)

Mack, Jennifer and Michael Herzfeld (eds.) 2020. *Life Among Urban Planners: Practice, Professionalism, and Expertise in the Making of the City*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press. 296 pp. Hb.: US\$69.95. ISBN: 9780812252286.

Life Among Urban Planners is an engaging volume that presents ethnographically grounded case studies that approach planners as social actors embedded in specific historical and socio-political contexts. Consequently, it posits planning itself as a socio-cultural process that involves planners as well as other actors, like those who are affected by and contest these plans. Divided into three parts and eleven chapters, this volume also contributes to the discussion on how anthropology and planners relate to each other, not only in ethnographic encounters but also how both disciplines engage with the present and can learn from each other. In her introduction, Jennifer Mack summarises this key argument, emphasising how planning is ‘a set of critical cultural acts that are both controversial and, in many ways, contested’ (p. 2). The book’s comparative analysis thus contributes to knowledge on planning as both a global and local process, about ‘how “expertise” is now remodeled, revised, and reinvented as it travels through cities across the world’ (p. 11).

The first part serves as an expanded introduction, with Michael Herzfeld’s chapter drawing on his notion of ‘professional intimacy’ and his fieldwork in Rome and Bangkok to place planners and their constituents within a ‘shared frame’ (p. 20). Margaret Crawford provides a broad historical account of the professionalisation of planning, especially how it became embedded within local governance and engaged with publics. This theme is echoed in several chapters, especially in Andrew Newman’s account of planning in Paris’s parks, which reproduces the relationship between the French state and its citizens but is also subverted and reshaped by users.

The cases presented in the second part engage with locally specific planning practices that nevertheless shared a commitment to modernist, universal and rational designs. In the development of the Siem Reap township outside the Angkor archaeological park, Adèle Esposito Andujar shows how ‘zoning’ norms were subject to contradictory pressures of conservation and urban development across two phases of foreign-sponsored planning in Cambodia. Similarly, Federico Pérez develops the notion of ‘bureaucratic liminality’ (p. 103) to examine how Bogotá’s urban planners negotiated the modification of a plan after contentious electoral and judicial interventions. Both Gabriella Körling and Jennifer Mack’s chapters, respectively on Niamey and Stockholm, look at how residents engaged with planners in ways that subverted expertise while also exercised their rights. For instance, Niamey’s ‘*tombola* neighbourhoods’ (lottery neighbourhoods) are marked by parallel processes of state-initiated formal development and bottom-up informal planning that utilise planning norms like zoning. In Stockholm’s Södertälje neighbourhood, we see how Syriac immigrants stylised

their homes by participating in planning in ways that disrupted the modernist, rational logics of planners and the Swedish welfare state.

The chapters in the third part explore tensions between universal aspirations of planning and contingencies of the local. Bruce O'Neill and Kevin Lewis O'Neill examine how planners re-framed the proposition to expand St Louis's light rail metro transit system under the rubric of 'regional responsibility' to counter the discourse of individual rights. Trevor Goldsmith's account of the reconstruction of Trinitat Nova, a working-class neighbourhood in Barcelona, shows how the notion of 'quality' – that is, improving 'the conditions of life' (p. 188) – was central in negotiations between the neighbourhood's *vecinos* (residents) and *técnicos* (planners). Writing as an applied anthropologist involved in participatory planning efforts to redevelop Praga, the historical neighbourhood in Warsaw, Monika Sznal critically observes how the nature and use of participatory approaches under neoliberal planning fall short of their aims and stigmatise residents. Mark Graham and Lisa Nordin trace how the development and transformation of Stockholm's Hammerby Sjöstad neighbourhood into SymbioCity was achieved through planning, where universal claims co-existed with the historical and cultural specificity of Sweden.

What can planners and anthropologists learn from each other? James Holston addresses this question in the afterword, arguing that both disciplines 'are, fundamentally, investigations of the present' (p. 235), where anthropologists need to 'learn the language of planners' and planners need to 'include the ethnographic present in planning' (p. 237).

This volume is an important contribution to the ethnographic study of urban planning. However, one wishes that the contributors reflected more on the nuances of power and privilege, especially with regard to researcher positionality, that shape fieldwork encounters between planners and anthropologists. This minor limitation aside, *Life Among Urban Planners* is an innovative and instructive text, with concepts and insights that will be useful to researchers working on issues that include interactions between users and experts (e.g., infrastructure), as well as within the broader field of development studies, for instance, with actors like NGOs, donors, consultancies and so forth.

PROSHANT CHAKRABORTY

University of Gothenburg (Sweden)

Soula Audrey, Yount-André Chelsie, Lepiller Olivier and Nicolas Bricas (eds.) 2020. *Eating in the City: Socio-anthropological Perspectives from Africa, Latin America and Asia*. Versailles: Quæ. 158 pp. Pb.: 25 €. ISBN: 9782759232819.

The book, *Eating in the City*, raises a set of crucial questions related to food practices in an urban setting. The authors focus on urban eaters, the way they orga-

nise food and the sense they give to it. How do eaters use urban spaces? How do eaters deal with different food norms and social regulations in the city? Furthermore, how do city dwellers adapt their food practices and habits? How do foodscapes and urban spaces interlock in different social contexts? These questions, which structure the book, were highlighted during a colloquium of authors that took place in 2017. The book, which contains three parts, addresses the confrontation of urban food settings with normative injunctions, links between urban landscapes and food, and finally, culinary innovations in the city. Each chapter consists of a case study about eaters in a particular city. This offers a variety of situations and contexts enriching the book's contribution. This perspective provides readers with immersive insight into the representations and daily lives of urban eaters in diverse situations, punctuated not only by urban dynamics of food transition but also by identity negotiation, growing agency and economic or political changes.

More specifically, the first part highlights various norms which urban eaters are faced with. In the mixed contexts described, we can see how not only gender issues, nutritional or sanitary criteria but also heritage processes influence food choice and practices of city dwellers. The second part of the book is about changes triggered by the urban landscapes on food and vice versa. From the evolution of urban restaurants in Brazzaville to the growing consumption of industrial sweetened drinks in China, through the analysis of the impact of rural-urban migration on food in Malaysia and the study of *warung makan* establishments in Jakarta, this part of the book deconstructs common dualism between public and domestic space, between the outside and the inside, underlining the porous nature of social and spatial-temporal boundaries. Given the permanent transformation of urban food environments, the last chapters insist on food innovation and tactics set up by city dwellers, especially in a context of poverty. City food is reinvented throughout the daily lives of its dwellers, who are drivers of change by their taste and culinary practices.

All through the book, the contributors purposefully do not touch on nutritional analyses of food and eating practices. Indeed, the central research question addressed by the book is not 'how to feed cities?', but rather 'how do people eat in cities?' and 'how do cities influence food practices?' From this perspective, the book contributes to a better understanding of various situations, from the point of view of eaters, sometimes stigmatised by their age, gender or socio-economic background.

All the studies are presented from a socio-anthropological approach, using observations and interviews as methodology. This methodological approach sheds light on the way people experience changes in their food habits, making it possible to study food in all its forms: ingredients, tastes, table manners, the symbolism of certain dishes, the pleasure of eating, as well as links between food, environment and identity. However, readers may ponder: are there discrepancies, tensions or misunderstandings in the relationship between consumers and

food providers? How do eaters perceive their relationships with providers in the food space they attend? Or similarly: within a family, how do children deal with food choices imposed by adults around them? These unsolved questions deserve extensive development that could complete the interesting descriptions presented by the authors.

Nevertheless, one of the great contributions of *Eating in the City* concerns the distancing of theories in terms of westernisation of food practices in a global urban context. Indeed, the conclusion of the book allows readers to note the importance of local social factors that play a major role in changing urban food practices. Moreover, the authors are scholars studying food in their own cities in Africa, Latin America and Asia, providing a voice to Global South researchers about the Global South. Hence, this type of initiative is encouraging in its attempt to decolonise knowledge and proves its relevance in this book, as the researchers add interesting nuances to the theories of westernisation of urban food by describing complex processes of food changes rather than fixed food models.

ALICE CLAREBOUT AND MELANIE VIVIER
University of Liège (Belgium)

Pauli, Julia. 2019. *The Decline of Marriage in Namibia. Kinship and Social Class in a Rural Community*. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag. 296pp. Pb.: 44.99 €. Print-ISBN: 978-3-8376-4303-9, PDF-ISBN: 978-3-83944303-3 [open access].

As part of a research programme on aridity in Africa, Julia Pauli focused on demography and culture in north-western Namibia and her husband, Michael Schnegg, on economic and social security. Most of the fieldwork was in 2003–2004, with shorter visits in 2005 and 2006. They stayed in Fransfontein, where a rare perennial source of water allowed permanent settlement of a mission station as early as 1891. Subsequently, much of this part of Namibia was alienated for ranches of white farmers, many of them from South Africa, which ruled the country after the First World War.

The area of Fransfontein became a reserve supplying labour for the surrounding commercial farms. In line with its Bantustan policy, South Africa established homelands after 1970. Fransfontein became part of Damaraland with its own separate administration and budget. New employment opportunities were created and several boarding schools were established. It is not clear from Pauli's account how the political elite headed by a 'king' was selected nor how a new 'professional class' achieved its qualifications. In any case, when Namibia gained independence in 1992, these people were able to consolidate their position. Although most people in Fransfontein identify themselves as Damara, ethnicity is only relevant in some specific contexts. It is no bar to establishing kinship relations.

A major research effort was a complete census of all people living in the central settlement (637 people, 137 households), in the surrounding hamlets where livestock is kept (538 people, 161 households) and on some of the neighbouring commercial farms (82 people, 29 households). A team of thirteen locally recruited interviewers was employed. Apart from questions concerning households, all people of fifteen years and older were also asked to answer a set of personal questions, including marital, conjugal, reproductive and birth histories.

Women usually have their first pregnancy before they are married. Some couples cohabit permanently, but often men and women have children as a result of consecutive temporary attachments. Although most people would like to be married, only few can afford the expensive wedding celebrations. Household composition is highly variable and about half is female headed. Only 28% of the households can count on regular employment, with almost half of them in low-paid occupations. Income from livestock is often supplemented with remittances of migrants and modest old-age state pensions. Kin groups are ego-centred with a strong maternal bias. They play an important role in wedding procedures and also in post-funeral meetings to discuss inheritance.

To investigate changes in marriage practices in relation to social stratification, the population was divided into birth cohorts of ten consecutive years covering 132 weddings. The generation of 1915–1944 celebrated simple weddings and most often got married. From the 1970s onwards, the rituals became more complex and expensive, with separate engagement celebrations, formal receptions, and special clothing for brides and the escort of bridesmaids and groomsmen. These changes were initiated by ‘big men’, people who occupied the few prestigious jobs in the newly established Damara homeland and used weddings as a way to mark their common elite status. After independence, new jobs became available in an expanding economy, resulting in the growth of a mainly urban middle class. However, when its members live and work in rural areas like Fransfontein, Pauli prefers to merge them with the elite of apartheid times. Together they constitute 17% of all extant marriages. Yet twice as many marriages have been concluded by people who would like to belong to this class but lack a permanent or sufficiently high income. These are called ‘struggle marriages’, reflecting the positive connotations of the ‘struggle’ for political freedom of the past.

This study relies in an exemplary way on exhaustive counting of all people and their characteristics in one circumscribed area and reveals very clearly some underlying patterns. However, it has to assume that all answers to the same standard questions are equally reliable, which is often impossible to establish. It also only deals with people who are present in an area at one point in time. Their past experiences may refer to very different circumstances than existed in Fransfontein in the past. The scope of its inductive generalisations is limited and they do not fit easily the ambitious theoretical framework of Bourdieu that Pauli adopts. She also discusses at length various meta-narratives about marriage but fails to consider the limitations of its polyvalent meaning. Reflection on her own experi-

ence and evaluation of other contemporary German marriages might have been helpful in this respect.

JAN DE WOLF

Utrecht University (The Netherlands)

Açıksöz, Salih Can. 2019. *Sacrificial Limbs: Masculinity, Disability, and Political Violence in Turkey*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press. 272 pp. Hb.: US\$29.95. ISBN: 9780520305304.

The signature research method of our discipline, ethnography, seems particularly suited to study ‘sensitive’ topics like war, political violence, genocide, militarism and far-right movements. The long time we spend in the field and the deep and meaningful relationships we develop with our interlocutors allow us to see the complexity of the worlds of perpetrators and victims of violence. But can we still understand the suffering of the people whose politics are offensive to our world-views if they are simultaneously threatening us or the people sharing our political stance? In *Sacrificial Limbs*, an ethnography of the disabled veterans and martyrs’ families in Turkey, Salih Can Açıksöz asks and answers this question by inhabiting a ‘grey zone’ and by writing critically, tragically and beautifully from within it.

For Açıksöz, grey zone is not a metaphor; neither was it for Primo Levi, a Holocaust survivor, intellectual and writer, who coined the term to refer to ‘zones of ambiguities that radiate(d) out from regimes based on terror and obsequiousness’ (Levi 1988:58 cited in Açıksöz 2019: 187). Although Açıksöz dates his entrance into the grey zone to the beginning of his fieldwork with two associations of disabled veterans and martyrs’ families, his life as a young man eligible for mandatory conscription for every able-bodied cisgender heterosexual man in a country at war with its Kurdish citizens informs *how* he enters and inhabits the grey zone. In order to analyse how every aspect of life is organised around the violence of mandatory conscription, Açıksöz inhabits the grey zone with his body and theorises his able-bodied and middle-class embodied difference from the lower-class veterans’ disabled bodies, wounded not only in combat but also by the humiliation, abjection, disgust and shame caused by living in a deeply ableist society.

Açıksöz’s writing reflects his intent listening, close attention and genuine gratitude for his ethnographic debts. His acknowledging the whole year it took for his interlocutors to trust him enough to invite him to a picnic where they all took off their prostheses in front of him, and to ‘confess’ how badly they wanted to do so during their initial interview but felt too awkward to ask, is just one example. His gradual acceptance into his interlocutors’ worlds allowed him to understand the affective bonds between them better: how disabled veterans are reinitiated into masculinity in the military hospitals where they are treated

through male bonding practices akin to a second adolescence; how laughter produced by gallows jokes about each other's disabilities made only in each other's presence becomes the main unifying affect among disabled veterans; and how martyrs' families' mourning, commiserating and healing by sharing each other's pain in the veterans and martyrs' associations clashes with the disabled veterans' healing laughter and creates tensions in an otherwise united front.

The embodied and affective labour he puts in to be between his world and their worlds situates Açıksöz in a unique position from which he theorises the sacrificial crisis of Turkey. The symptom of this crisis is an obsession with 'the indivisible unity of the Turkish state with its territory and nation', a phrase repeated incessantly in law and political rhetoric to define the sovereignty of the Turkish state as always at risk or already compromised by any pronouncement of alterity in its body politic. Examining the bodies of two public figures scapegoated for challenging sovereignty, the public intellectual and the imprisoned guerrilla leader Abdullah Öcalan, in relation to the body of the disabled veteran, *Sacrificial Limbs* highlights how this opposition mobilises ultranationalist affect. This affect peaks during the prosthetic protests in which disabled veterans take off their prosthetic limbs in public, displaying their severed limbs and seeking 'to induce shock and revulsion in an ableist public audience' (Açıksöz 2019: 160). The gruesome dismemberment of the disabled veteran's body, Açıksöz argues, spectacularly signals the risk of partition of the national body politic. *Sacrificial Limbs* thus shows not only how the Turkish state solves its sacrificial crises 'through the ritualized repetition of sacrificial violence' (Açıksöz 2019: 12) but also 'how individuals' bodies become launching pads for the internal constitution of sovereign state power through violence' (Açıksöz 2019: 8).

As an anthropologist working with Kurdish people threatened and hurt by conscripted soldiers, *Sacrificial Limbs* taught me that the grey zone is not a hero's journey. It reminded me to follow the lead of my interlocutors, who continuously strive for an uncomfortable (or rather disturbing) openness to the suffering of veterans and martyrs' families, an openness which is never reciprocated, which sovereign violence repeatedly and ritualistically shuts down.

DENİZ DURUIZ

Northwestern University (USA)

Astrid Oberborbeck Andersen, Anne Line Dalsgård, Mette Lind Kusk, Maria Nielsen, Cecilie Rubow and Mikkel Rytter (eds.) 2020. *Anthropology Inside Out. Fieldworkers Taking Notes*. Canon Pyon: Sean Kingston Publishing. 224 pp. Ebook (Open Access) ISBN: 978-1-912385-23-2.

This edited volume is a truly vibrant addition to the emerging field of research on reflexive methodology practices in anthropology. The authors featured give a

new twist to uncovering the messy business of 'doing' anthropology, by analysing how fieldworkers 'collect, produce and absorb' their field notes (pg. 2).

The authors take a traditional Scandinavian perspective, which encompasses the belief in long-term fieldwork, combined with French theory and American cultural critique. The research reported in the chapters are the fruit of three events held in Denmark, including two workshops held between 2015 and 2016, examining field notes as a genre (or several genres) and the art of fieldwork and ethnographic notebooks, and finally an exhibition at the University of Copenhagen. The results refreshingly dissect established 'classical' field-note practices, and the 'commandments' (pg. 4), as the editors refer to them, to lay the discipline out for inspection. They collectively answer uncomfortable questions concerning genre, ownership, participation, data management, ethics, quality, validity, security, access and dissemination.

Like its title, the book provides multi-faceted responses to the problems posed. 'Inside out' refers to inverting something, and the authors do just this by reversing the linear process of conducting fieldwork, analysing the results and then packaging them into a neat publication. Rather, the authors reveal the 'backstage', namely the raw process of taking field notes by viewing the notes as 'analytical works in themselves, including those that seem to lead nowhere' (pg. 2).

The case studies presented are experimental and include a discussion of what is not present as much as what is. The first three chapters explore how field notes and analysis could be more inclusive. Fritsch, Hedegaard and Rubow report on their ultra-short-large scale fieldwork of the Utopia project, where one hundred fieldworkers (students and professors) went into the field for one day. This collective writing experiment consisted of sharing different things, including, podcasts, digital soundtracks and blogs. The experiment serves as a 'critical mirror' (pg. 13) for individual fieldwork practices and the teaching of anthropology. The authors present also the pitfalls concerning data management with open access platforms, while at the same time showing how these experiments can add to the playful nature of field-note taking.

In a similar vein, Ahl in her interesting chapter uses the format of an exhibition to demystify the practices of taking field notes and to discern the 'proto-language' of anthropological practice. She shows how displaying the 'noting practices' of others can enable ethnographers to learn the tool and craft by becoming 'linguistically aware of their own noting-practices' (pg. 57).

The next four chapters focus on how field notes are 'tricky' (pg. 84) and can 'disturb' (pg. 4) the status quo, and the anthropologists who write them. They show how field notes can come back to haunt those who take them. The authors tackle the issue of disengagement and explore liminality (Schutt), warning that field notes are no longer the prerogative of ethnographers. They highlight how sometimes anthropologists are even forbidden from writing them during the interactions. This leads to many problems concerning ethics, validity and even

security, as there is the danger that these notes could be used as ‘evidence’ (pg. 110), putting both the anthropologists and their subjects at risk.

Kjærgaard Thorsen’s research in Cairo shows the delicate nature of her note taking, in which she is careful to keep out dates and locations. She presents her encounters to explore moments of ‘trust and mistrust’ (pg. 141). She eloquently shows how the ensuing paranoia of her interlocutors ‘seeps’ into her, making her uneasy (pg. 145). She highlights an important issue that faces many ethnographers, namely the different ways of interpreting the same encounters and incidents when revisiting field notes.

Lastly the final four chapters examine how field-notes’ forms are performed and felt. The authors here explore how field notes come in other forms, including photos, drawings, paintings and artefacts brought back from the field. They explore genre, questioning what constitutes an academic text, as Taussig enacts a full inversion, using the appendix to portray the text. In this section, the authors address the ‘sensorial, intuitive and aesthetic aspects’ (pg. 7) of writing, opening up the floor to multiple interlocutors to contribute to the analysis.

In conclusion, we can state that this edited volume is, in a word, inclusive. The collection invites *us*, namely students, ‘established’ and ‘unestablished’ academics, and curious observers into the ‘ethnographic laboratory’ to reflect on the art of taking field notes as a practice. The editors have cleverly assembled an inspiring and innovative collection. Their overall message is clear. They invite fieldworkers to not play it safe, but rather urge them to continue to explore ‘imagined’ possibilities of what field notes ‘could be’.

KAREN LATRICIA HOUGH

CENTRIC, Centre of Excellence in Terrorism, Resilience, Intelligence and Organised Crime Research, Sheffield Hallam University (UK)

Montgomery, David W. (ed.) 2018. *Everyday Life in the Balkans*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press. 442 pp. Pb.: US\$42.00. ISBN: 9780253038173.

In *Everyday Life in the Balkans*, editor David W. Montgomery brings together authors from various disciplines to explore ways in which people who call this region home come to experience and navigate the ‘everyday-ness’ (p. 4) in multiplicity of its manifestations. The book is made up of thirty-five rather short chapters covering aspects of everyday life that range from *kafene*, kinship, migration, femininity/masculinity, *komshuluk* and many more. The cornucopia of everyday life is organised in six, relatively broad and loose, sections: (historical) context, homes, livelihoods, politics, religion and art, each of them prefaced with a one-page reflection on the underlying topic. In terms of geography, the Balkans, as defined here, span across all territories of former Yugoslavia and continue, in shape of a young moon, through Albania, Greece, Bulgaria and Romania.

One of the undisputed contributions of this volume is its focus on everyday life, a topic that remains marginal in the mainstream scholarship on the region. While reading, one comes to appreciate this aspect of living, often associated with routine and uneventfulness, as a (paradoxically) rich ground for researching politics, culture and social relations. Keith Brown's chapter on sociality and context – through idioms with *burek* – demonstrates this quite convincingly. Most authors tend to privilege the accounts of common and ordinary Balkan (wo)men over those of 'elites and nations as [main] actors' (p. 1). Hence, the reader becomes familiarised with accounts of subjectivity and agency, cultural experiences and expressions, and ways of seeing the world by a variety of actors, such as religious (Catholic) women in Croatia, members of the LGBT community in Slovenia, long-term refugees in Serbia, inhabitants of Trikala (Greece), and Christian and Muslim neighbours of Rhodopes. A contribution of particular value that attests to the merit of privileging the vernacular accounts is Brković and Jansen's exploration of an inter-state border – the Drina River – through embodied memories and knowledge of those inhabiting both its sides. The authors vividly demonstrate how engaging with a topic – usually considered to be a matter of high politics – through experiences of ordinary people can be very fruitful.

Furthermore, certain chapters go beyond the different aspects of *la vie quotidienne* and use these as entry points to discuss the different angles of wider regional and global processes. Such are insightful chapters by Andrew Konitzer ('The Life and Times of Aleksandar Živojinović') and Azra Hromadžić ('The State, Family, and Private Care in a Bosnian Town'). In Konitzer's contribution, the reader meets a former employee of a state enterprise, Aleksandar, whose life in a rural part of Serbia has been greatly impacted by the profound political and economic changes in the 1980s and 1990s, a time that ushered in a steep deterioration of living standards across the region. These changes have 'remolded, or rather disfigured, individual and community alike' (p. 168). But even under pernicious structural impediments, everyday life continues to unfold and people enact their agency. In case of Aleksandar, the author shows, this meant relying on social networks and a diverse set of skills acquired through various (side) jobs. Meanwhile, Hromadžić goes beyond regional forces and investigates the ways in which the global dominance of neoliberal economic relations has played out in lives of elderly people in Bosnia-Herzegovina. She argues that the postsocialist state (premised on neoliberal reticence towards public-sector expenditure) has converged with emigration flows from the region to create new assemblages of care that leave the elderly in the hands of private care facilities which come to embody the functions of 'semi-absent state and family' (p. 118).

Even though the volume offers some great insights into everyday life in the Balkans, a number of chapters remain in the realm of the descriptive, being reduced to self-enclosed vignettes of everydayness. While windows into the lives of ordinary people are valuable, and certainly make an interesting read, those wanting a more critical and deeper engagement with the topic might experience

Tantalus' condition of unsatisfied desire. I cannot help but wonder whether a more precise definition of the main concept would have left out certain chapters from the purview. What I felt lacking most is a theoretical framework and further generalisations – both on the level of individual contributions and the volume as a whole. The editor states this absence was a deliberate choice, but without elaborating the reasons behind such a decision. Finally, the book is, as intended, 'felicitous [both] for the lay public' (p. xi) and scholars working on the region, but the latter might feel like they dipped their toes – as opposed to having dived – into the restless sea called everyday life in the Balkans.

MARIJA IVANOVIĆ

University of Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina)/University of Bologna (Italy)

Wiegink, Nikkie. 2020. *Former Guerrillas in Mozambique*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press. 280 pp. Hb.: US\$55.00. ISBN: 9780812252057.

Against the background of political revolutions, terrible wars, violent conflicts, military terrors and gruesome atrocities, ordinary life is unfolded. To put emphasis on 'war [as] one condition among other' (p. 6), *Former Guerrillas in Mozambique* by Nikkie Wiegink explores the war and post-war life trajectories of ex-combatants of the Mozambican National Resistance ('Renamo') which fought with government forces run by the Mozambican Liberation Front ('Frelimo') during the civil war between 1972 and 1992. The empirical data presented in the book were collected in 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2017 during eighteen months of ethnographic fieldwork in Maringue, a district in central Mozambique.

Variety, complexity and changeability of life trajectories are grasped by the notion of 'social navigation' (p. 29), which refers to negotiation between different social environments and relations such as war, kinship, power, rituals, state, home, reciprocity, 'waithood' (p. 168), violence, wealth. While the first part of the book delves into history of relations between Renamo and Frelimo in wartime and provides illustrative examples of life histories of ex-combatants, the other parts of the book focus on detailed analysis of five social environments managed by ex-combatants in war and post-war times. The author describes how relations with the opposite sex, sex violence, 'girlfriending' (p. 106) and marriage are managed in unstable war circumstances. The observance of traditional values such as the importance of virginity and system of *lobolo* (bride price) goes hand in hand with war innovations such as the selection of a 'wartime father' who participate in *lobolo* instead of a biological father unavailable in wartime. Kinship relations are intertwined with the issue of returning home after war. Wiegink raises the question of why ex-combatants didn't return home, analyses whether home and recipient community are places as hospitable as the reintegration programmes

point out and advocates a more complex vision of these issues. Not only kinship and neighbourhood networks but also the military network are crucial for the life trajectories of ex-combatants. On the one hand, former military networks provide support to ex-combatants after the war, but on the other hand, this creates a new dependence and inequality due to the encouragement of some and discrimination for others. Issues of loyalty, obligations and protection are tangled in these networks. According to the Mozambicans' culture, physical, psychological and material well-being are the result of relationships with spirits, including avenging spirits, who can haunt and punish former combatants for 'bad' violence. Another important moment is the purification rituals which are considered as a ritualised separation of former combatants from the war and their reintegration by washing away 'the blood of war' (p. 122). Drawing on a categorisation of Mozambican veterans, Wiegink investigates relations between ex-combatants and the state, and shows that there is no place for Renamo ex-combatants in the dominant government narrative: Renamo are depicted as aggressors responsible for the war, so they are symbolically excluded from citizenship (for example, they have problems receiving a pension).

What is perhaps most notable, Wiegink suggests, goes beyond the simplistic binary oppositions such as war/peace, war/post-war, perpetrators/victims, soldier/civilian because these don't grasp the complexity of life trajectories. '[W]hat about the chief who held a grudge toward Frelimo and therefore collaborated with Renamo, finding himself obliged to participate in the execution of a violent system of forced labor? Or the hunter who poached animals to satisfy Renamo's demand for food and to feed his own children? And how do we categorise the militia member who defended his village?' (p. 8). Reintegration programmes also simplify returning from war and described it just as a break with the past. It doesn't take into account either the role of military networks in post-war life or the transformation of home, family and ex-combatants themselves during a war.

Without meaning to do so, the book provides an essential guide to the issues of war violence. Combatants' lives cannot be reduced just to war, as war cannot be reduced just to violence. If 'taking "someone's wife" is a crime' whereas 'recruit[ing] girls . . . to satisfy' soldiers meet with approval, then 'there [are] not military rules but rules based on cultural understandings of marriageable and prohibited women' (p. 97). But after reading the book, I'm under the impression that violence is something like a structuring force. It is not always visible, not verbalised, routine actions which make a crucial impact on the present and future lives of participants. The ways of justifying violence are different: from self-defence against an enemy to 'bad' violence made by crazy commanders or by order of the commander. This approach makes sense of violence, removes responsibility from oneself and turns illegal violence into an ordinary part of life. Male and female narratives about sexual violence are illustrative examples of this frame.

I recommend this book to diverse audiences interested in Mozambican history and policy, war-and-peace studies, reintegration programmes, violence, and gendered war narratives.

IRINA KRETSER

St Petersburg State University (Russia)

Regnier, Denis. 2020. *Slavery and Essentialism in Highland Madagascar: Ethnography, History, Cognition*. Abingdon: Routledge. 194 pp. Hb.: £85.00. ISBN: 978-1-350-10247-7.

More than a century after slavery was abolished in Madagascar, people of alleged slave descent in the Malagasy highlands are still discriminated against. ‘Unclean people’ they are being called. This social stigma is conventionally considered a leftover from a pre-colonial society that was indeed highly stratified. However, as Regnier shows, slave status used to be ritually cleansable, whereas now it’s not. How come? This is the puzzle Regnier sets out to explore among the southern Betsileo, not only through long-term ethnographic fieldwork but also with borrowings from history and cognitive science in order to understand how slave descent over time has come to be seen as a deep, dirty and innate essence.

In Chapter 1, we are introduced to the southern Betsileo and the Berosaiña who are ascribed slave descent. First, Regnier gives us a bird’s-eye view of the regional geography, oral tradition and social organisation, then what we could call an ‘ethnographer’s-eye view’ of his fieldwork. He talks about his ‘arrival story’, his getting to know key informants and his realisation that nobody wants to talk about slave descent yet everybody knows, or at least think they know, who are of slave descent. With laudable transparency, Regnier makes no secret of how opaque and delicate the subject is, even with his more than two years of fieldwork and the aid of his Malagasy wife.

Chapter 2 is methodological and explains his use of three different ‘lenses’: the conventional anthropological lens of ethnography, the wide-angle lens of history as frequently used by anthropologists especially in Madagascar and – more controversially – the long-focus lens of cognitive science. Many social and cultural anthropologists wrinkle their noses at flirtations with cognitive science but, as Regnier argues cogently with reference to Maurice Bloch, it makes good sense to learn from other disciplines if we truly wish to understand issues like categorisation, memory and essentialisation.

In Chapter 3–7, we learn about the lives of the Berosaiña. We meet a handful of very diverse Berosaiña, become versed in the struggles they face and learn about marriage rules and segregation of ancestries. Rather than telling the local history in the voice of an omniscient narrator, Regnier takes us into the field with him from one interview to another. We hear directly from informants their not

always concurrent interpretations of what happened in the past, of what is at the root of present-day discrimination.

The eighth and final chapter revolves around a field experiment designed to probe into essentialisation of slave descent. The experiment consisted of telling informants three different stories – one about adoption, one about ritual cleansing and one about blood transfusion – and then discussing ‘uncleanliness’ in the stories with them to learn about how they conceive of slave descent. In this chapter, Regnier weaves his experimental findings together with historical insights in a most elegant manner, which eventually leads to his main conclusion: When the French abolished slavery in 1896 in connection with colonisation, they inadvertently also abolished the ritual means of purifying the uncleanliness linked to slave status and thereby set in motion a process of essentialisation of slave descent. From being a relatively superficial uncleanliness in precolonial times, slave descent from the onset of colonisation and onward became increasingly regarded as a deep, unclean essence that cannot be purified and that will inevitably pass on to one’s descendants.

The single most difficult subject to work with as an anthropologist in Madagascar might very well be slavery and its legacy called postslavery. Social stratification is covered up in a fiction of equality that relegates barriers of class to precolonial times. Yet in reality, behind the non-disclosure, the euphemisms and the law against calling somebody a ‘slave’, many Malagasy communities are highly unequal and discrimination is concealed yet consequential. Being such a sore and controversial issue, Malagasy postslavery has only become an object of research in the last few decades, and anthropologists from Graeber and Freeman to Evers and myself have all found it extremely difficult to enquire into. Therefore, Regnier’s thorough work and in particular this book is truly a boon for scholars of postslavery in Madagascar and other similar places. The only thing that I miss is perhaps more about the precolonial ritual cleansing of slave status.

All in all, Regnier’s triangulatory use of three lenses – ethnography, history and cognition – has come to fruition in an exemplary manner, and the book will be of interest for not only anthropologists of Madagascar but also scholars of discrimination, slavery and essentialisation.

ANDERS NORGE LAURIDSEN

University of Gothenburg (Sweden)

Blavascunas, Eunice. 2020. *Foresters, Borders, and Bark Beetles: The Future of Europe’s Last Primeval Forest*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press. 236 pp. Pb.: US\$24.00. ISBN: 9780253049605.

Eunice Blavascunas’ *Foresters, Borders, and Bark Beetles* is a fascinating read. Focusing on the Białowieża forest – a protected old-growth forest situated at the

border between Poland and Belarus – Blavascunas guides the reader to grasp the emergent complexity of the forest in postsocialism, its people and the anthropologist's relationships to them. The book is an ethnography and an environmental history as well, accounting for more than twenty years of research.

The plot of *Foresters, Borders, and Bark Beetles* is a classic conflict between forestry and conservation. A forest deemed primeval, hosting European bison – an endangered species symbol of the Polish nation – is subject to enduring scientific forestry practices, and intensive commercial logging constitutes a source of local livelihoods. But the book is only in part about nature and species management. The conflict is layered with other divisive lines – ethnic identities, contested scientific standards, nationalism versus Europeanism, divergent historical memories. Białowieża is not just a forest but a point of contention between Poland and the European Union, and a borderland between Poland and Belarus as well. Discourses about communism infiltrate interpretations about the 'primevalness' of the forest, or how proper forest research should be conducted. The strength of the book lies in how Blavascunas unveils subtlety and complexity. The long-term ethnographic commitment of the author allows to capture entangled empirical realities, and to reveal an evolving set of relationships that shape the forest. The core argument concerns the mobilisation of various attachments to the past in the construction of present claims and identities of people living in the forest. By excavating intricate histories, the author enables us to comprehend how plural pasts inform contemporary struggles.

In telling the many entwined histories of the forest, Blavascunas pays particular attention to people's ambiguous and shifting identities. Characters drive the book. The author provides sensitive insight into the tensions that inhabit different people. To begin with, the author is herself a character. We read about her fieldwork experiences: a night trip to the forest; foresters kissing her hand as a salute gesture. We read about Blavascunas' connections to institutions in the field, navigating a sea of conflict; about the decisions an anthropologist makes, the feelings of betrayal of one's own informants. Some of the characters are archetypal figures, such as the forester: Blavascunas shows in Chapter 2 how the trans-historical forester keeps hierarchical and patrimonial power in postsocialism, as a patron championing local causes and as a beacon of modernity. Other characters are more peculiar, misfits that transcend categories. Simona, described in Chapter 3, is a scientist with mystical inclinations who works for the forestry department. She advocates for animal rights and condemns radio telemetry as a cruel practice, criticising the work of wildlife biologists. She is the heir of pre-war aristocratic intelligentsia, a status that fuels her mythical public figure. Simona disavows communist legacies but benefits from communist-like crony practices – the proverbial acquaintance system and the calculated ledger of favours (p. 67). In contrast, wildlife biologists promote a meritocratic system, invoking universal Western science. Yet local and national media vilify them for torturing animals by radio-collaring and consider them 'careerist'. In Chapter 4, an ageing misfit bach-

el, Leszek, a 'man of the forest', reinvents himself in relation to tourism and consumerism promoting 'authentic rural traditions'. The author does not try to box these characters in but exposes their contradictions as part of a 'postsocialist social indeterminacy' (p. 67), allowing the reader to empathise with the author's own bewilderment. The non-human character of the bark beetle in Chapter 6 focuses the lens on the agency of nature. The bark beetle takes on different meanings. To conservationists, the beetle is an agent of rewilding. To foresters and locals it is a pest, a destroyer of the forest that demands extermination. Bark beetle outbreaks offer legitimacy to salvage logging operations, which in turn trigger reactions on the part of environmental activists mounting blockades and European legislators of nature protection. As a destroyer of Polish nature, the beetle is a threat to the nation, thus fuels right-wing nationalist imaginations against cosmopolitan environmentalism.

All told, this is a sophisticated monograph, a page-turner that captures the complex human and non-human lives unfolding in and around the Białowieża forest. It is an invitation to writers and anthropologists out there to cultivate an art of noticing and an art of reflection, to practise scholarship that explores historical depths, emergences and ambiguities in the age of the Anthropocene.

MONICA VASILE

Maastricht University (The Netherlands)