



## The challenges of diaspora migration: interdisciplinary perspectives on Israel and Germany

Yehonatan Abramson

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BOOK REVIEWS

**The challenges of diaspora migration: interdisciplinary perspectives on Israel and Germany**, by Rainer K. Silbereisen, Peter F. Titzmann, and Yossi Shavit, Burlington, Ashgate, 2014, xxi+327 pp., \$149.95 (hardback), ISBN 978-1409464242

The extent to which migrants integrate in their new society is at the centre of policy decisions and social science research. Within the vast literature on this topic, the integration of diaspora migrants back in their ancestral homeland is for the most part neglected. This is primarily because of the assumption that such integration is less problematic: diaspora migrants who return to their homeland often share ethnic or religious identity with the receiving society, maintain dreams of return, and receive privileged legal, economic, and social benefits upon arrival. This edited volume challenges that assumption.

*The Challenges of Diaspora Migration* is an outcome of the German–Israeli research consortium ‘Migration and Societal Integration’. It demonstrates the vital importance of comparative and interdisciplinary research on the topic of migrant integration. The volume brings together scholars from various disciplines, such as psychology, sociology, criminology, education, and linguistics, and focuses on the experiences of German and Jewish diaspora migrants returning to Germany and Israel after the collapse of the Soviet Union. It aims to examine acculturation processes of these diaspora migrants along various dimensions: language acquisition, sense of belonging, violent behaviour, career aspirations, and psychological well-being.

The volume consists of 16 chapters organized in four parts. The first part lays out the conceptual framework (Chapter 1) and provides the background context of ethnic return migration (Chapter 2). The second part focuses on strategies of adjustments made by diaspora migrants as a result of the move from one country to another. Chapter 3 highlights the importance of high language proficiency among children for adjustment in the new society both in terms of acquisition of identity and in terms of social preferences. Chapter 4 looks specifically at the level of language proficiency among bilingual children. One of its main conclusions is that exposure to the language of country of origin (Russia) does not impede acquisition of the language in the receiving country. Chapters 5 and 6 move beyond the skill of language acquisition to discuss the development of values and a sense of belonging to the new society. A key concept for these two chapters is the concept of acculturation. They propose that acculturation strategies – integration, assimilation, marginalization, or separation – held by migrants or minority ethnic groups are related both to the well-being of these migrants and the cultural values they hold. Both chapters also call for scholars to pay more attention to the various contexts in which migrants are

embedded. Chapter 7 and 8 offer another interesting perspective as they see the transition from one country to another as a way to break from the past. While much scholarship focuses on how migrant integration problems lead to migrant delinquency, these chapters shed light on desistance of violent behaviour among diaspora migrants. Both chapters emphasize the importance of social and institutional support for young migrants and the cultivation of a sense of control over reality.

The third part concentrates on biographical transitions (formal and informal) within the receiving country. Chapters 9 and 10 compare immigrant and native youth in Germany and Israel. Chapter 9 examines mobility aspiration and career plans and finds no significant difference between the groups. Chapter 10 tests whether immigrant youth suffer from ethnic penalty relative to native youth. It concludes that in Germany migrant disadvantage is statistically explained by socio-economic factors, while in Israel the ethnic penalty persists even after controlling for such factors. Chapters 11, 12, and 13 shift the attention to more informal transitions involving romantic relationships and living together with a romantic partner. Broadly speaking, these chapters show that these transitions have positive psychological effects on diaspora migrants similar to other groups (majority group and other ethnic minorities). Specifically, Chapter 13 links acculturation strategies to partner choices and shows that migrant groups differ in their partner-seeking behaviour. The fourth and last part of the volume provides some policy suggestions and future research recommendations. Chapter 14 situates diaspora migration in the broader context of migration studies and offers directions for future research. Chapters 15 and 16 bring together some policy implications discussed throughout the volume, such as encouragement of bilingualism, institutional support for parents and youth, and a coherent social policy designed to prevent segregation.

In addition to its interdisciplinary and empirical richness, one of the main strengths of the volume is its comparative edge. Ethnic return migration from the former Soviet Union offers a rare opportunity to compare similar migrant groups in different contexts. Indeed, most chapters offer insights about similarities and differences regarding diaspora migrant integration in Israel and Germany. In addition, many chapters also compare diaspora migrant groups to natives and to other minorities, such as Turkish migrants in Germany and Israeli-Arabs. For the politically attuned reader, a more systematic examination of the political context in the two countries would have benefited the volume. For example, attention to changes in German *Aussiedler* integration policies during the 1990s or to practices implemented by Israeli religious establishments would enrich the discussion about the integration of these migrants. Nevertheless, this does not detract from the quality of this volume. By focusing on the integration of diaspora migration, the authors demonstrate what happens when the imagined homeland becomes a host-country. They uncover the challenges of diaspora migrants and explore similarities and differences between countries and

between groups within each country. This makes this edited volume a valuable and timely contribution to migration studies and ethnic studies.

Yehonatan Abramson

*Department of Political Science, The Johns Hopkins University*

✉ yabrams1@jhu.edu

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**Diversities old and new: migration and socio-spatial patterns in New York, Singapore and Johannesburg**, edited by Steven Vertovec, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, xiv + 275 pp., £65 (hardback), ISBN 978-1137377500

Are significant patterns emerging around the world in the way urban populations react to increasing diversities produced by migration? The authors of this volume claim this is so. They put forth three socio-spatial patterns, substantiated with vivid descriptions and rigorous analyses: route-ines, rooms without walls, and corridors of dissociation (briefly explained below). The book's contents are the partial results of a large comparative study of highly diverse neighbourhoods in New York, Singapore, and Johannesburg, carried out by a multidisciplinary team led by Vertovec.

By emphasizing the encounter between old and new diversities, the authors seek to scrutinize the way in which established sociocultural configurations change with new arrivals. Each of the three sites has a history pertaining diversity, which strongly influences how new migrants are perceived and treated. Vertovec refers to the ongoing effect of migrant inflows as processes of diversification in order to capture the gradual changes of circumstances and behaviour. The venture is timely, as the United Nations estimates a doubling of the world's urban population by 2050 and because an increasing percentage of such growth will be due to migration. Encounters among strangers are set to become more frequent and widespread.

The focus on diversity is therefore fundamental, as it avoids single dimensions (such as ethnicity, migrant status, nationality, religion, age, gender, class, and human capital), in order to examine the multi-layered effects of cohabitation. An emphasis on socio-spatial patterns guides the inquiry, providing an overview of the ways in which urban dwellers inhabit and signify the built environment. This volume thus not only includes fresh insights into what is taking place in three cities, but also constitutes a significant multidisciplinary contribution to examine migration-driven urban change. The authors vividly recount forms of interaction, or lack of, with special attention paid to conflicts or frictions of different intensities.

The book is divided in three parts. The first is devoted to providing a socio-historical context of the locations where research was carried out. It includes three