

Christiane Timmerman et al., *Moroccan Migration in Belgium. More than 50 Years of Settlement* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2017). 386 p. ISBN 9789462701168.

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In the introduction to *Moroccan Migration in Belgium*, the editors state that the book is ‘an attempt to offer an overview of the various studies that have appeared ... and which have played a central role in offering insights, vocabularies and imaginaries in order to account for, and acknowledge [the irreversible fact of the] multicultural society’ (p. 9). In this respect, the edited volume definitely delivers upon its promises. For those readers with a broad interest in the history of Moroccan migration and, even more so, in the current circumstances of the descendants of Moroccan migrants in Belgium, the book offers an ample introduction to the available research, in the widest possible variety of disciplines. Sociological approaches dominate, but the contributors come from a wide spectrum of social sciences: political science, psychology, communication studies, history, demography, cultural studies, sociolinguistics, anthropology et cetera.

The topics of the contributions in this book range from historical overviews to analyses of religious practices. After having read the whole book, one really gets a feel for the questions that occupy the minds of our academics, and that often overlap with the issues that are at the center of the public debate surrounding (Moroccan) migration. Those who are only interested in a historical perspective, however, must be warned: the majority (11 out of 17) of the contributions are not concerned with history, but focus solely on the present or (very) recent past. Unlike what the subtitle might suggest, this book is not a collection of historical studies.

Also the title of the book is slightly misleading: almost none of the contributions pertain to research that covers the whole of Belgium. Most of the research focuses on the region of Flanders, and all contributors except one are affiliated to Flemish or Dutch universities. This in itself poses no problem, but it would have been better to reflect this selectivity in the title. More problematic is that the editors try to explain it away by stating that there is a ‘greater deal of attention’ paid to migration in Flemish universities. Leaving aside a quantitative comparison of researchers and publications, I find it hard to accept this statement. Several French-speaking universities in Belgium are in fact highly active in the field of migration research, and have been so for much longer than their Flemish counterparts. Also, I found it curious that the introduction of the work makes no mention of two similar initiatives that have been realized in Francophone Belgium at an earlier date: the 2004 publication *Quarante ans de présence marocaine en Belgique*, edited by Nouria Ouali, and the 2015 follow-up *L’Immigration marocaine en Belgique*, edited by Ahmed Medhoune et al.

The individual contributions to the volume are somewhat harder to discuss as a whole, as they are of an uneven quality. Some chapters are outstanding, both in content and language; others lack a flow, are less interesting and sometimes written in poor English. The introduction, unfortunately, needs to be placed in the latter category – it does not add much to the book as a whole. Better to cut straight to the ‘three introductions’ of part one and, for historians, especially to the chapter by Ettourki et al., which provides a helpful guide to the available source material (albeit at bit biased towards the collection of the authors’ own institution KADOC). Also the chapter by Fadil provides a thorough introduction to the theme of religion, which will be further developed in part five of the book.

Part two, focusing on labour market participation and family formation (under the somewhat misleading title ‘Movement and Settlement’) stands as a reflection of the book as a whole, with more and less interesting chapters. Martens’ contribution on labour, albeit mostly a summary of his previous work, reads well, but his graphs are hard to interpret. The chapter by Dupont et al., dealing with partner migration, also repeats research that has been published elsewhere, and contains some oversimplified statements (e.g. the explanation of the 1974 migration stop as a mechanism ‘to cope with the economic strain following the oil crisis of 1973’ – whereas research has shown this was a decision based on politics, not economics). However, its substance is interesting. Wood et al., discussing household division of labour and family formation practices, seemed to me the most innovative and well-written chapter in part two.

The chapters in part three of the volume, focused on Politics and Policy, seemed more even in quality. They provide an interesting discussion of the social imaginations underlying integration processes, differing patterns of self-organization, and the changing attitudes of the Moroccan state towards its citizens abroad.

Part four, dealing with Identity and Ethnicity, is again more mixed. I found the contribution on language use in schools particularly interesting, especially in its engagement with the public debate surrounding this issue, which is very strong in Flanders. The articles on ‘Same sex sexualities’ and ‘Fluctuating Identifications’ struck me as lesser contributions. In the latter, the crudely defined concepts of ‘Islamic identity’ and ‘Moroccan identity’ surprised me (even though they are qualified in the discussion of the research results), especially after having read the previous chapter on ‘Becoming Berber, which carefully qualifies such categorizations.

In general, I did notice a lack of cross-referencing within this volume, making it seem as if the authors were not aware of each-others’ work. It certainly would have added value to the book if authors with overlapping research interests would have connected to each-others’ contributions. This again becomes clear in the chapter on Islamic knowledge in part five, dealing with Religion and Devotion. The other chapters of this part, discussing the role of Jinn in healing practices, attitudes to-

wards death, and Sunnis becoming Shia, are better written, even though the first one is somewhat descriptive.

Despite its flaws, *Moroccan Migration in Belgium* is definitely a good reference work for those interested in guest worker migration and especially in the fortunes of the generations that have settled in Western European countries such as Belgium. Especially for Belgian migration scholars, it is a good collection to have in one's library. Even though the quality of the chapters is uneven, and their focus is mostly on the situation in Flanders, they all provide a useful starting point to dive deeper into the state-of-the-art of this burgeoning field.

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Sebastian Bischoff, Christoph Jahr, Tatjana Mrowka and Jens Thiel (Hrsg.), *Belgium is a Beautiful City? Resultate und Perspektiven der Historischen Belgienforschung* (Münster: Waxmann, 2018). 246 p. ISBN 9783830937777.

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Met de titel van deze bundel wordt gerefereerd naar een uitspraak in juni 2016 van toenmalig Amerikaans presidentskandidaat Donald Trump. Die uitspraak werd wereldwijd op hoon en spot onthaald maar ze is, aldus de samenstellers, illustratief voor het gebrek aan zowel belangstelling voor als kennis van het land. In de Verenigde Staten wordt België vaak clichématig omschreven (het land van bier en chocolade, aldus Trumps voorganger Barack Obama). Sinds de islamistische aanslagen van 22 maart 2016 in Brussel, geldt het al eens kwalijker als *een failed state* en, volgens de *Berliner Tagesspiegel*, zelfs als een koninkrijk voor islamisten. Het zijn deze *Belgien-Klischees* die de samenstellers willen overstijgen in deze negentien bijdragen tellende bundel. Hiervoor doen ze beroep op een aantal Belgische historici zoals Geneviève Warland, Ine Van Linthout en Sophie De Schaepdrijver die met haar artikel over België in het oorlogsjaar 1916 tekent voor de enige niet-Duitstalige bijdrage. Samen met de andere auteurs, voornamelijk Duitse historici en literatuurwetenschappers, maken ze deel uit van het in 2012 in Berlijn opgerichte *Arbeitskreis Historische Belgienforschung* (AHB). Dat netwerk omvat behalve historici ook leden uit andere disciplines van de geesteswetenschappen, bibliotheekmedewerkers en kunstenaars. De bijdragen die in deze bundel werden opgenomen, weerspiegelen de werkzaamheden van de derde en vierde ontmoeting van de *Arbeitskreis*.

*Belgienforschung* moet ruim geïnterpreteerd worden. Met bijdragen zoals die van Ramon Voges over de in Mechelen geboren zestiende-eeuwse cartograaf Franz