

BOOK REVIEW

Italo Pardo and Giuliana B. Prato (eds). 2011. *Citizenship and the Legitimacy of Governance: Anthropology in the Mediterranean Region*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing.

Since its beginnings anthropology has constantly developed new methods and paradigms, responding to new historical situations or to theoretical debate. Urban anthropology as a relatively new specialism has the ambition to bring innovation to anthropology in general as well as to urban studies in particular. One of the most interesting aspects of urban anthropology is the attempt to apply the classic anthropological methods also to research in Western urban settings, thereby strikingly transcending the traditional disciplinary borders of anthropology. High expectations have accompanied one of the major recent publications in this field: *Citizenship and the Legitimacy of Governance*, edited by Italo Pardo and Giuliana B. Prato, two pioneers in the field of urban anthropology.

The collection contains ten essays on urban ethnographies from some EU member states and post-Communist and Middle Eastern countries in the Mediterranean Region. The empirically-based comparative

studies focus on the problem of the critical relationship between citizenship and governance. The volume documents in-depth case-studies from Albania, Greece, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, and Turkey. The North-African countries were excluded from these researches for methodological reasons.

At least since the 1980s we have observed that the gap between the rulers and the ruled has continuously widened. Political parties have failed to reorganize themselves and to counteract the growing disconnection between citizenship and governance. Particularly impressive are the confirmations that the analysis presented in this volume have found in the case of Italy (Pardo). The difficult relationship between politics, law and the broader society has further deteriorated and has become untenable in the context of the international financial crisis. Formal citizenship does not automatically entail other political or civic rights. In most of the countries examined in this volume a

discrepancy has emerged between the formal political rights and their actual implementation. Alex Weingrod has studied the unequal 'citizen rights' in two Israeli coastal towns (Haifa and Jaffa-Tel Aviv), analyzing the relations between Jews, Arabs and foreign workers from Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America. Weingrod illustrates why the ethno-national rhetoric does not work in Israel's 'mixed cities'. A similar situation of interethnic relations with unequal rights is investigated by Mateja Sedmak in the Mediterranean part of Slovenia. Whereas the small autochthonous Italian minority enjoys a legally acknowledged minority status, the immigrants from former Yugoslavia have no specific political and civil rights.

Margarida Fernandes and Teresa Morte have documented how Portuguese media contribute to foster racial tensions, reinforcing the negative image of the black population. To conform to the European Community policies the Portuguese government has legislated on immigrants and 'ethnic minorities', but the legal norms on non-discrimination have not been effectively implemented. The State is perceived as ineffective both by the autochthonous population and by immigrants.

In times of surprising changes in citizenship urban authorities and cityplanners need to develop a new understanding of public space, argues Fernando Monge, illustrating how Barcelona succeeded in promoting its image but failed to respond to new emerging social identities. While Barcelona's port can be read as a global phenomenon, it is deeply rooted in a 'local, social and cultural situation'.

Nebi Bardhoshi has dedicated his article to systems of 'regulation' in postSocialist settings. Land occupancy in the informal zones of Albania's great cities is interpreted as a completely new reality which has no point of reference in previous systems. As has been highlighted by other contributors of this volume, essentializing interpretations of cultures must be overcome, but it would be a mistake to consider the culture of informality as a complete new phenomenon. Giuliana B. Prato, which has undertaken a long-term research on regime change and legal reforms in Albania, is more cautious when she writes about 'new applications of people's appeal to reciprocal help and family obligations', arguing that the traditional system of reciprocity seems to be moving towards a system of 'exchange of favours', thus indicating a development that necessarily starts from a point in the past.

The connection between the international pressure on nation-states and the crisis of legitimacy, studied by Prato in Albania, runs across the case-studies of Manos Spyridakis (Greece), Kayhan Delibaş (Turkey), and Marcello Mollica (Lebanon)

The aspiration of this book is to supply extensive ethnographic material for an analysis that should help towards ‘an informed knowledge of how people actually respond to macro policies’. In their introduction Italo Pardo and Giuliana B. Prato announce a forthcoming publication that will address the methodological and theoretical issues of urban anthropology.

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