

Adams, Vincanne. 2013. *Markets of sorrow, labors of faith. New Orleans in the wake of Katrina*. Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press. 228 pp. Pb.: €16.60. ISBN: 978-0-8223-5449-9.

Most of us still remember the news coverage about Hurricane Katrina that devastated New Orleans in late August 2005. More than the destruction wrought by the hurricane itself, what perhaps astonished media audiences around the world (including the USA) most was what happened subsequently: how spectacularly the world's richest and most powerful nation failed, at virtually every level, to help one of its major cities to recover from the disaster. Much has been said and written about this failure, which was commonly ascribed to the Bush administration in particular and to government inefficiency more generally. Yet such critiques – though justified in many ways – overlook (or even reinforce) the larger and far more disturbing dynamics that made Katrina into the catastrophe that it was. Vincanne Adams' outstanding book fills this gap with her trenchant analysis not only of what went wrong in New Orleans, but also of what is wrong with neoliberal governance and 'market fundamentalism' more generally. In this sense, as she notes, 'this book is not about Hurricane Katrina' (p. 1), but rather is a brilliant ethnographic case study illustrating 'the inefficiencies of profit' that potentially affect us all in an increasingly neoliberal capitalist world.

Based on research carried out by Adams and her team between 2007 and 2011 in New Orleans, *Markets of sorrow* traces the trail of destruction left not by the hurricane itself (which only caused minor water damage in the city), but by a pattern where the federal government outsourced its responsibilities, such as maintaining levees or providing disaster relief, to private contractors. Both aspects of the catastrophe – the floods and the failed recovery – were thus entirely man-made (chapter 2). Recounting how especially the latter aspect impacted the lives of Katrina's victims, the ethnographic narrative of the subsequent chapters

follows a well-designed arc, advancing the tragedy from sad to outrageous to hopeless, before providing ambiguous relief by focusing on the relative success of faith-based recovery programmes (chapters 6 and 7). Adams describes how the middle class was impoverished and the wealth of the rich erased (chapter 3) through the orchestrated failure of federally funded, but privately contracted, recovery projects like 'The Road Home Program' (chapter 4). Yet it was the poorest, weakest sections of society that were hit hardest by the 'regimes of dispossession' inherent in market-oriented relief work, pushing many into hopeless situations from which they could and would not recover (chapter 5), even when faith-based organisations finally did provide some effective help (chapter 6).

The strength of this book lies in the way Adams effortlessly manages to connect the tragic stories of individuals with a larger analysis of what she calls 'disaster capitalism' and an 'economy of affect'. Thus, disaster capitalism describes the process whereby private companies insert themselves as intermediaries between the government (which provides the funds) and its disaster-affected citizens, promising better and more efficient services than the governmental apparatus. However, their efficiency and accountability is limited to making profits, which requires them to be as inefficient intermediaries as possible – hence the 'inefficiency of profit'. This involves not only diverting (taxpayers') money meant for the needy, but also exploiting the free labour offered by volunteers. Both the suffering of victims and the compassion of volunteers become profitable economic resources for unscrupulous contractors like Halliburton, Blackwater or the Shaw Group. Far from being the win-win scenario portrayed by advocates of outsourcing government responsibilities to the private sector, such disaster capitalism ends up funnelling money intended for the poor upwards into a few rich, corporate hands, while instituting bureaucratic failure as a business model (p. 173). Since these arrangements are not widely known, the public interprets this failure as proof of government inefficiency, thus further legitimising the involvement of private firms.

It is difficult to imagine a more cynical arrangement than this. One hopes that Katrina is a particularly extreme case – an ideal type of disaster capitalism if you will – that does not necessarily reflect on humanitarian aid elsewhere. Still, Adams provides critical insights into the capitalist dimensions of ‘humanitarian reason’, which Didier Fassin’s (2012) book so strangely ignored, and exposes some persistent myths of neoliberalism (most of all about the ‘efficiency of the market’) and the dire consequences of market-oriented governance. At the same time, *Markets of sorrow* is a respectful homage to both the victims and the volunteers affected by ‘Katrina’, who deserve their stories – and, more importantly, the truth about what happened – to be heard. This is public anthropology at its best, not only addressing core topics of our discipline but also illuminating social, economic and political issues that concern us all.

Reference

Fassin, D. 2012. *Humanitarian reason. A moral history of the present*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

STEPHAN KLOOS

Institute for Social Anthropology, Austrian Academy of Sciences (Austria)

Anghel, Remus Gabriel. 2013. *Romanians in Western Europe. Migration, status dilemmas and transnational connections*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books. 207 pp. Hb.: US\$65. ISBN: 978-0-7391-7888.

Through the lens of two case studies, this book analyses migration from Romania to Western Europe in recent decades, from incipient forms in the 1990s to becoming one of the largest migration waves within Europe. By comparing two different migration processes from origin to destination, incorporation and transnationalism, Anghel seeks to determine why migrants with better socioeconomic status perceived they had suffered a loss in the course of migration,

whereas those with lower status perceived they had gained. The introduction offers a very good overview of the literature on Romanian migration, also browsing literature on other European circumstances. The author then presents his two case studies: German ethnics from Timișoara and their migration to Germany, and Romanian ethnics from Borșa and their irregular migration to Italy. In doing so he uses the extended case-study method, focusing intensively on a number of individual cases. Thus, the ethnography is sometimes shallow.

Given the title *Romanians in Western Europe*, I was initially sceptical and puzzled by the choice of starting with a case study based on a ‘niche’ category of migrants such as the German ethnics. One might also question the choice of bringing together these two case studies in the same analysis, as the first involves ethnic/political migration and the second economic migration. However, the validity of this choice becomes more apparent as the book progresses. First, Germany was the initial destination of Romanian migrants after 1989. A wealth of literature has shown that migration to Germany, of both German and other ethnics from Romania, was the catalyst for wider Romanian migration to Western Europe. Second, the author intends to break the image of Romanian migration restricted to Romanian (or Roma for that matter) ethnics, as if other ethnicities did not exist in the country.

The case studies highlight exquisitely how ethnicity is not a fixed category; once in Germany, many of the ethnic German migrants mentally remained very anchored in Romania. They regularly visited their former land; many of them married Romanian girls and brought them to their new home, thus ending up speaking more Romanian than when they were living there. The author shows how ethnic German migration diverges in several ways from the general assumption of transnational social fields/spaces. Another cliché of transnational migration that Anghel deconstructs is that of networks being ethnic. Once in Germany the migrants’ networks mingle, as Romanians, Hungarians and Turks live closely together.

What is interesting in the second case study, more recognisable to the general audience as