

Book Review

(Un)sighted Archives of Migration

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Bublitzky, C. and Siegenthaler, F. (eds.) (2023). *(Un)sighted Archives of Migration*. Oxon and New York: Routledge.

Through consolidating writings across disciplines, the editors have increased awareness regarding the availability and accessibility of (un)sighted archives. The book's central focus is the construction of unique migrant spaces which represent individual and collective subjectivities, and making these archives visible to wider society. Examples include the public exhibition of a private family archive (Bublitzky, Chapter One) and contrasting items left by different migrant groups in the same destination (Kittner, Chapter Five). This brings forth an important debate regarding ongoing global migration crises, the need to reframe discussions around migrant communities and new forms of tangible migrant histories.

The opening chapter introduces the concept of archive-as-activist art, making the archive itself an activist methodology, whilst providing a service to the wider community. The case study of Parasotous Forouhar's family history exhibition in Frankfurt (1999-present), because of her parents' assassination in 1998, presents the family histories and identities of her subjects as a form of resistance. This underscores the power of combining protest and art, 'inviting them to support the artist in collecting, selecting and sharing reports about cruelty, injustice and violence against other humans' (p. 28). Bublitzky, the author of this chapter, recognises the limitations of presenting an archive in a public manner. By opening it to the public, the work itself is no longer in the artist's control and the audience has the choice if they wish to view the archive as a piece of activism or not.

The second chapter explores In/Visible images of mobility with Senegalese migrants in Berlin and Dakar trying to embrace the digital age. Here, smartphones act as 'personal pocket archives' (p. 39) for the representation of voices. Pfiffer and Neumann argue that this transition to the digital allows migrants to tell stories of their struggles and successes. Their conclusion that the 'archive discussed here stands in stark contrast to the dominant images of migration shown in Western journalistic contexts' (p. 53) highlights the need to consider such personal archives in a research context. Their personal insight into the subject matter and fieldwork allows for the building of personal relationships, potentially leading to subjective research. However, the authors can circumvent this by being aware of the cultural intricacies and their researcher positionality.

The third chapter explores the power of utilising the skills and experiences of migrants in the creation of archives. Here, the involvement of migrants highlights a commitment towards stronger migrant representation. Removing the Western influence in the creation of an archive allows a shift in the perception of archival constructions. When considering the construction of these neo-archives, Goldhan and Ricciardo's argument that we should 'not define cultural heritage as limited to a retrospective perspective' (p. 80) but rather actively engage with it head on, is a valid point; especially when considering the need to ensure the representation of those directly

affected. However, what is not highlighted enough is the question of access and engagement of these archival materials, such as the destruction of art pieces. Further emphasis on the input from migrants regarding the chosen objects would have been useful, rather than the researcher choosing the objects themselves.

Fierz's argument in the fourth chapter, that 'triggers of memory and storytelling, can be interrogated and function as apt tools to make migratory archives, hidden memories, and narratives of migrant communities visible' (p. 87), explores the lack of voice and visual history of Turkish migrants in Switzerland. It comes at the heel of the three personal and emotionally engaging chapters and could have read better if placed more theoretically towards the front of the book. Its renders it less impactful than the previous chapters. While its concluding remark 'I have made an appeal for keeping the eyes open for visual traces of migrants' acts of remembering' does read as an impactful personal statement (p. 100), a more robust conclusion would have provided a stronger analysis of the city-as-archive concept as one example. Nevertheless, Fierz allows for consideration of spaces to allow activism and resistance to help Turkish migrants feel heard, especially when compared to the first chapter, with the concept of the archive having been reassessed by both Fierz and Bublitzky.

The final chapter, on objects of migration, concerns the distinctions 'between objects of flight and objects of migration' (p. 103). Although the second part of the article could have been expanded upon further, Kittner focuses on three areas: the archives of Turkish migrants in Switzerland, the photo collections of Senegalese migrants, and collections in the context of art and history, which reflected the questions and connections between ownership and authorship. Kittner points out how, in the present day, archives can take on an invisible function, only being made visible when certain questions require clarification and through performative practices. Archives can be constructed with potentially trivial objects, but to certain individuals, they could be prized possessions; this acts as a form of self-identification, reflecting the second chapter's personal pocket archives. This links to the central theme that runs throughout the edited collection, that the presentation of migration through photography or personal artefacts has been exhibited in a way to evoke and invoke senses of activism and identity.

In conclusion, the book is a strong interdisciplinary publication, highlighting centrally the power of archives in expressing the voices and experiences of migrants. It is especially important with regards to how academics and archives should consider migrant voices in the collection of materials, whilst emphasising the importance of having such collective historical spaces and the need for the public to engage with archives. This shows the need to continually reassess the potential of spaces to produce outputs that can benefit individuals and communities, enabling both activism and self-identity. An interesting addition could have been further consideration to the longer-term impacts of the archival constructions on the lives of migrants and how the archives themselves would engage with migrants' lives and experiences. The chapters do consider the extent to which migrants' lives may improve because of the archival constructions, but a stronger look to the future would have empowered the book further.