

The study of migration governance requires a global and interdisciplinary framework of analysis. The editors of the “Handbook of the Governance and Politics of Migration” bring together multifaceted perspectives to further understanding on how migration is governed and politicized today. This anthology is edited by Emma Carmel, an Associate Professors in the Department of Social and Policy Sciences at the University of Bath, UK, Katharina Lenner, Assistant Professor at the same department, and Regine Paul who is an Associate Professor of Comparative Policy Studies at the University of Bergen, Norway. The book is divided into six sections comprising “Conceptualising the Politics and Governance of Migration”, “The Politics of Categorising Migration”, “Institutions and Regimes of Migration Governance”, “Spaces of Migration Governance”, “Processes and Practices of Migration Governance”, and “Contesting Migration Governance”.

The handbook situates migration governance within three dualisms: “conceptual framing and material expression”, “global scope and relational practice”, and “structured form and dynamic changeability” (Carmel et al. 2021: 3). With migration and mobility becoming increasingly complex phenomena, the handbook provides readers with a rich perspective on migration governance on a global scale. Migration movements today become increasingly screwed and the number of sending countries increasing and the number of receiving countries decreasing, which can, if looked at through the lens of the receiving country, can lead to the impression that there is a significant increase in migrants (Czaika & de Haas, 2022). By bringing in different perspectives and local contexts, the editors accomplish to provide a more nuances perspective on migration governance.

One of the key contributions of this handbook is a critical reflection on how terms used to describe migrants are conceptualized and by whom. Boas and Wiegel criticise the use of the term “climate refugees” in migration research, arguing that this term reinforces fearsome ideas of an incoming flood of refugees (Boas and Wiegel, 2021). Similarly, Blakewell argues for a reconceptualization of the boundaries between forced and voluntary migration (Blakewell, 2021), emphasizing that those categories are not clear cut and Vicky Squire discusses how ‘illegality’ is a produced condition “which emerges in contextually specific ways across various regions and states” (Squire, 2021: 144).

The self-reflexivity of the researchers must be positively emphasized. This is especially of a field such migration studies where the area of research is in constant flux. For example, in their chapters, Boas and Wiegel reflect on their own use of the term ‘climate migrant’ in previous work (Boas and Wiegel, 2021). This can pose an encouraging example for early career researchers, who are likely to read handbooks to familiarize themselves with the terminology. Incorporating such self-critical reflections thorough the handbook can encourage self-reflection and openness to changing terms and methodologies.

A limitation of this publication is that the editors claim repeatedly that they aim to “diversify research perspectives and empirical applications beyond ‘Northern’ academia, as well as research settings” (Carmel et al, 2021: 9). However, the editors and most authors are based at Western institutions. This is acknowledged in the introduction where the editors state “all our contributors take this as a central task, acknowledging the situatedness of their critique, in, mostly, the ‘global North’, and in particular social science disciplines” (Carmel et al, 2021: 9). This handbook, which aims to provide a global scope on migration governance, would be strengthened by actively including more voices from institutions outside of ‘Northern’ academia instead of merely acknowledging that this is important, but most contributors are situated in the ‘global North’. Perspectives from other institutions are not addressed in sufficient detail in this publication which could be a potential avenue for future publications to explore for the contributors.

Overall, this handbook is an interesting and well-structured read for those wanting to become acquainted with the field of migration theory. Both experienced researchers and students at the beginning of their journey in the field of migration studies and adjacent disciplines can benefit from this publication. The chapters of this book provide insightful reading material for introduction courses about migration governance or migration more general.

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