

BOOK REVIEW

Jennifer Cole and Christian Groes, eds. *Affective Circuits: African Migrations to Europe and the Pursuit of Social Regeneration*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016. 354 pp. Maps. Illustration. References. Index. \$35.00 Paper. ISBN: 978-0-226-40515-5.

African immigration to Europe has received significant negative public attention in the press of late. *Affective Circuits: African Migrations to Europe and the Pursuit of Social Regeneration*, an edited volume of eleven ethnographic accounts of African migration to Europe, seeks to contextualize and humanize this marginalized population through detailed ethnographic case studies of various African migratory groups to a selection of European countries. Case studies range from marriage strategies among Senegalese male migrants in France, where supporting families in Senegal frequently means marrying a French woman (Helene Neveu Kringelbach) to Cameroonian mothers' understanding of German parent-child legal relationships which integrates them into German society, and the difficulties of maintaining certain traditional birth practices far from their kin in Cameroon (Pamela Feldman-Savelsberg).

While public attention has focused on the negative representations of African migration to Europe, scholarly discussions, alternatively, have paid little attention to the effects of migration on intimate relationships and family life. In this volume, editors Jennifer Cole and Christian Groes examine these intimate relationships of African migration to Europe. The introduction develops the concept of affective circuits as the foundational theoretical construct of the volume, which refers to "...the social formations that emerge from the sending, withholding, and receiving of goods, ideas, bodies, and emotions..." (2). The case studies throughout this volume focus on the social processes that shape these circuits and their role in families, social networks, and broader social and cultural formations.

One particularly impressive feature of this edited collection is its internal coherence, which is rare in a compilation of scholarly articles around a single topic. But in each and every entry, the theoretical construct of affective circuits is integrated into each text. For example, in Cati Coe's article about Ghanaian practices of child circulation from Ghana that are integrated into their transnational migration practices in Europe, she writes that children's circulation into new households—oftentimes foster

care—creates new affective circuits, new ties of belonging and attachment, including attachments to new national identities (28). The fact that European law, writes Coe, recognizes Western definitions of family and not African ones is a major factor in the short-circuiting of affective flows between African migrants and the children in their extended families. In a very different case study, Henrick Vigh describes a transnational criminal flow of cocaine migration from Guinea-Bissau to Portugal. The emergence of this relatively novel type of transnational criminal trade in West Africa directly affects intimate relations and social obligations: the cocaine connection gives hope of positive emplacement within affective circuits (224).

Another area of coherence masterfully achieved in this volume is the internal referencing of other articles in the same volume, which I feel adds significant value to the text as a whole. Pamela Key, for instance, in her article about the role of technology in the maintenance and transformation of affective circuits among Gambians in the United Kingdom, writes, “Feldman-Savelsberg (in this volume) illustrates that Cameroonian migrant mothers in Berlin create belonging and affirm local and transnational ties through children, similarly to her case study of Gambian parents in Britain establishing connections and continuities with kin through their children, thereby enabling the possibility for their return to the Gambia” (90). Another example can be found in Julie Kleinman’s article titled “From little brother to big somebody: coming of age at the Gare du Nord,” in which she writes that a particular informant “felt himself constrained by the demands of the wider Malian community that had established itself in France (see also Sargent and Larchanche, this volume)” (247). The consistent self-referencing of various texts by the authors in this volume adds to an incredible amount of internal coherence, leaving the reader to feel as if one is reading a monograph of case studies (something akin to Paul Farmer’s *Pathologies of Power*), as opposed to an edited volume.

One article that was particularly interesting was Leslie Fesmyer’s piece concerning how Kenyan Pentecostals in Britain use their faith to reconfigure affective circuits at home, or “reconfiguring relatedness,” by incorporating Pentecostal ideas and discourses that stress material support for their nuclear family in London to the detriment of their extended families in Kenya, while simultaneously trying not to jeopardize their own moral standing or cut off their kinship ties (127). While this article did exhibit both forms of coherence well, I thought it could have engaged the prior article, Carolyn Sargent and Stephanie Larchanche’s piece about transnational health-care circuits between immigrants in France and kin in West Africa. In particular, Sargent and Larchanche begin their article by claiming that sorcery affects transnational migration as much as it does people domestically (101), which I have found in my own research to significantly affect Ghanaian Presbyterian migrants in North America. Very little was discussed about the spiritual backlash by kin in Africa (i.e., sorcery) to the reconfiguring of material resources away from them in the process of transnational migration. I would have loved to learn more about this in Fesmyer’s context.

In conclusion, *Affective Circuits* is an outstanding scholarly compilation of case studies concerning themselves with linking international law and remittances to emotions and kin, while focusing both on shifting flows and periodical short circuits. It is a must read for anyone interested in African Studies generally, or African migration studies more specifically.

Adam Mohr

University of Pennsylvania

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

adammoehr@sas.upenn.edu

doi:10.1017/asr.2018.92

For more reading on this subject, see:

- Dedieu, Jean-Philippe. 2018. "The Rise of the Migration-Development Nexus in Francophone Sub-Saharan Africa, 1960–2010." *African Studies Review* 61 (1): 83–108. doi:10.1017/asr.2017.95.
- Kringelbach, H el ene Neveu. 2016. "'Marrying Out' for Love: Women's Narratives of Polygyny and Alternative Marriage Choices in Contemporary Senegal." *African Studies Review* 59 (1): 155–74. doi:10.1017/asr.2016.7.
- Whitaker, Beth Elise. 2017. "Migration within Africa and Beyond." *African Studies Review* 60 (2): 209–220. doi:10.1017/asr.2017.49.