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**MILOSLAV BAHNA,
MARTINA SEKULOVÁ:****Cross-border Care. Lessons
from central Europe***Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, 149 p.*

This book touches a topic of high relevance both for analysing past trends of labour migration in the context of health care demands in ageing societies as well as for a solid knowledge base that can help to meet future challenges. Recent demographic, economic, and public health developments underline the importance of (home) care for the elderly as well as the lack of qualified care workers all over Europe.

The book is organised in seven chapters with their own conclusions and references. This allows the reader to choose between reading the whole book in a row or to select a chapter of special interest at a point of time and read other chapters when of interest. The respective chapters follow the structure of a journal article, which again encourages reading the book chapter-wise.

Chapter 1 “The introduction”, provides a short journey through the book and what the reader can expect in the following chapters.

Chapter 2 “Slovak Care Workers in Austria: An Overview” empirically describes cross-border commuting between Austria and Slovakia, being fostered by the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989 and the possibility of travelling visa-free. In line with other authors (Bachinger, 2010; Hammer, Österle, 2001), wage differences and unemployment levels are given as a probable explanation for labour

migration features of care workers from Slovakia to Austria.

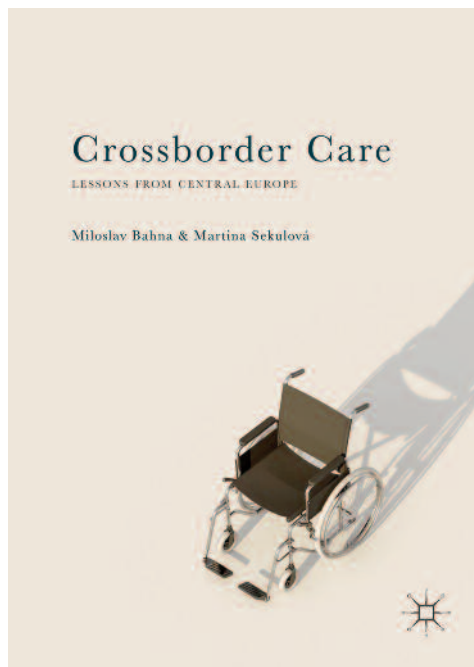
The chapter further provides data on cross-border care coming to Austria from its neighbouring countries, setting different trends and numbers in a policy context. This policy context is analysed on various layers – opening borders, changes in Austrian legal frameworks concerning the financing and provision of care, the enlargement of the EU, and also the dynamics of public debates are addressed.

In doing so, it provides a goldmine of information concerning these issues and can be highly recommended as literature for people who want to get a quick but comprehensive view.

Data sources used are described in detail and enable the reader to evaluate the validity and reliability of the presented results. The chapter also provides a thorough description of the surveys on which the core part of the book bases its results on, differentiating between quantitative surveys in 2011 and 2016 and qualitative interviews with care workers in 2011 and 2017.

Especially for readers interested in survey methodology, this is a piece to enjoy.

Chapter 3 “Care Workers as Economic Migrants”, though, shows little consideration of existing work on migration of health care workers, gender and migration done by globally operating organisations like WHO and IOM (WHO, 2017; IOM, 2006, 2018). This has an impact on what follows. The chapter is a bit repetitive touching on factors to explain the large amount of Slovak carers commuting to Austria and works with a very technical



language. At some point, the reader may lose track and get confused ... “what is this all about? Am I too uneducated to follow?” With long statistical and technical explanations in the result section the text loses clarity and does not pin point the essential findings; results are hidden in the long rambling technical parts of the text. This is a pity especially as these findings are highly relevant.

A mix of statistical analysis with quotes from qualitative interviews helps not to lose track... but, alas!.. the way is lost.. too many trees to classify the woods.

Chapter 4 “Does the Family Suffer” starts with a heading on “female migration, care regimes, and care drain”. Addressing these issues would have profited by connecting to discussions on intergenerational family solidarity and the gender roles and normative structures – but this does not happen. The literature given is limited and the analysis therefore shows weaknesses also in conclusions derived. It would have been sufficient if the authors had introduced their specific questions and how they will answer them – instead the authors seem to have opened a box where the filling is not totally familiar to

them. Relevant studies available in a global context of children left behind get no mentioning.

In the paragraphs presenting data, the authors present three elements at a time: technical aspects around the survey and its methodology, results, and the evaluation of hypotheses and assumptions. While all this is very rich in all aspects, it is difficult to read.

Chapter 5 “Cross-border Care in the Long Term: Intersections of Age, Gender, and Circularity”. Some basic assumption raised in the intro seem problematic; e.g. that the global context has a focus on long term migration from global south to global north (p. 90) and does not sufficiently respond to the dynamics of temporary migration. While this may have a point, it still could be acknowledged that e.g. the Philippines differentiate between long term and temporary migration even at the level of governmental institutions to support (care) workers either in diaspora or in their challenge to manage temporary migration.

It is presumed in the intro that the existing body of literature does not respond sufficiently to specific aspects. But at a closer look, this assumption may have its cause in the insufficient acknowledgement of the available literature, especially in a global context (Yeoh, Lam, 2007; Knodel, Saengtienchai, 2007; Rakotonarivo, 2010; Kaur, 2010; Mazzucato, Schans, 2011; Graham, Jordan, 2011; Wickramage, Siriwardhana, Peiris, 2015; Fellmeth, Rose-Clarke, Zhao, Busret, Zheng, Massaza et al, 2018).

The chapter further on raises very interesting intersectional questions such as age and gender in care migration, life projects and care taking, access to social rights and care giving, policy dynamics both on a national and on a cross-border perspective. The qualitative material illustrates the impact that migration has on the life of women as well as on their families. Based on qualitative material, this chapter provides interesting results without mingling them with methodological/technical descriptions and side notes. This comes as a relief – but raises suspicion at the same time – did the authors take qualitative methods less seriously? In any case, this chapter provides an interesting read for researchers

from the field of intergenerational family solidarity and an invitation to do secondary analysis with the rich data provided here – a goldmine of information again and a recommended read.

Chapter 6 “Leaving Care Work: Career Prospects in a Secondary Labour Market” then addresses the career paths of care workers after they leave care work, which indeed is seldom addressed by literature. Again it provides a mix of quantitative and qualitative results, which is interesting, and again mixes methodological issues with results, which is confusing.

Chapter 7 “Conclusion: Labour Migration After All?” closes the scenery by summarising the research attempts taken, results gained, and providing an outlook to possible scenarios of cross-border care.

To summarise, the theoretical narrative is characterised by oscillating between considerations on what kind of research is most prominent and what this means for the respective topics and discourses and the research gaps that emerge from these discourses. In the chapters presenting results of the conducted surveys, the results and methodology are alternatively described and considered throughout the text. Although this provides information on technique and content at the same time, it makes the text somewhat hard to digest for the reader. The authors are very self-reflecting both on methodologies used, statistical analyses chosen, and theoretical framework developed. This is honourable scientific consideration, but makes it hard for a reader who is solely interested in results – trusting that the scientists who provide these results did not cheat on him/her. The literature used is limited and the book may have profited from a more global perspective on the phenomena described.

It is not an easy to read book, yet worth the efforts. All questions asked are certainly most likely to remain relevant for the decades to come.

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Wickramage, K., Siriwardhana C., Peiris, S. (2015). *Promoting the health of left-behind children of Asian labour migrants: evidence for policy and action. IOM Issue in Brief No.14.*

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MONIKA VRZGULOVÁ,
LUBICA VOĽANSKÁ,
PETER SALNER:

Rozprávanie a mlčanie. Medzigene-
račná komunikácia v rodine

[Talking and Silence. Inter-Genera-
tional Communication in Family]

*Institute of Ethnology SAS, VEDA, Brati-
slava 2017, 136 p.*

Three authors, three chapters. Each of them about inter-generational communication in families, yet each time in a different manner. Is it a gain or a loss? It is not easy to consider the added value of the publication that cannot follow up on partial analytical studies and the topic of which can be interpreted and understood very broadly. Inter-generational communication touches several scientific fields, psychology, pedagogy, sociology and ethnology, which makes it hard to target collective research from the same perspective, even if there were only three researchers. The number of potential research questions is too wide and the risk that the researchers simply miss the same track is highly realistic.

Even though all three chapters are in some way about families and inter-generational communication, the authors seem to have resigned from the effort to find a research question that would interlink all three chapters. The conclusion, an obvious part of expert monographs, is completely absent in this book, and the introduction provides only general information about the need to pay attention to inter-generational communication. The forms of communication in families have changed over the past few years, which relates to new technologies, the authors explain. This approach is indeed understandable with respect to unexplored topics, such as inter-generational communication in Slovak ethnology; nevertheless, I would expect something more from such experienced authors. The authors followed up on their previous individual research when drafting the book: Lubica Voľanská on her research on ageing and old-age in Chapter 1, Monika Vrzgulová on her research on families “with a Jewish origin” in Chapter 2, and Peter Salner used the rich sources collected during long years of his research on the Holocaust and the Jewish community in Bratislava.

On the other hand, it should be noted that it is very hard to conduct inter-generational research in families, which is also suggested by the authors themselves (L. Voľanská and M. Vrzgulová). Family is exclusively a private territory into which we are not willing to let others (which would probably be confirmed by any researcher working with families), and it takes some time to establish a relationship (the time demands and the need for multiple meetings of the researcher with the family are mainly described in the chapter by M. Vrzgulová). Family as such is also very difficult to grasp in terms of research, since family relationships and, hence, their forms, constantly change form (Sobotková, 2017). Other researchers point out that it will probably be necessary to abandon the traditional three-generational research model which no longer corresponds to reality – nowadays, it is rather only two generations living together, and only two generations have a closer relationship as the basis for inter-generational research (Wagener, 2012: 81).

The changing inter-generational relation-

ships are also reflected in the generational representation of the participants' families in the chapters written by L. Voľanská and M. Vrzgulová. It seems they were not always able to get three generations of family to cooperate, which means that the conclusions of the authors are based on the research of three or two family generations and their narrations, whereas the generation of people in their twenties is quite absent. The research sample is very limited in these two chapters (four families in Chapter 1, three families in Chapter 2). This, certainly, does not lower the quality of the research; one should, however, be careful when making generalisations. For the purposes of this book, P. Salner did not conduct new research and his conclusions are based on new reading of already known testimonies.

The research sample of the authors (L. Voľanská and M. Vrzgulová) confirms another fact known from their previous research – that it is predominantly women who speak about family, and that it is women who are engaged in similar research as participants (e.g. Green, 2013). The sample of L. Voľanská comprised seven females and four males, while the sample of M. Vrzgulová five females and three males. This fact is not reflected in the book consciously, yet it can have a far-reaching effect on the research results. The memories of men and women are shaped through their historical experience, which is inevitably reflected in the different qualities of memory (e.g. Leydesdorff, Passerini, Thompson, 2009). This fact is unwittingly highlighted by L. Voľanská as she notes that predominantly women talked about care of the older members of family and that it was women who actually cared for their parents or grandparents. In this regard, we can observe correspondence with gender-oriented research (e.g. Švaříčková Slabáková, 2018). It remains a question, though; to what extent the topic of care of the oldest members of the family would be reflected in family talks with the prevalence of men.

The benefits of this book can thus be seen rather in the individual chapters than in the publication as a whole. The chapter by L. Voľanská with a very good theoretical basis *Close Ones? Distant Ones? Talking about Family*



and Relationships between Generations focuses on several moments based on issues related to inter-generational communication, old age and ageing. Given the complicated nature of inter-generational research, I consider it somewhat a limiting factor that the author did not give more details on the selection of the four families involved in the research. What was the reason for not including other generations of other families when talking about conflict relationships? Were these other generations contacted? In the apparently functional families that participated in the research, as the author proves, the oldest members of family work as examples for the younger generations, providing guidance on, by words of one of the participants, how to age with charm. The topic for family communication is usually care of the older ones and awareness of the ethical duty to care for them. Another topic observed by L. Voľanská is the leaving of adult children from their homes and the reactions of their parents. In line with current sociological research (e.g. Mozný, 2006), the author emphasises the individuality and autonomy of the different family members – we no longer subordinate ourselves to family and its habits; it is individuals that take priority. She also reflects

on how distance affects the forms of relationship between generations.

It is agreeable that the author seems to be aware of the certain unilateral character of the research results which cover only “exemplary”, i.e. functional families. In this regard, she reflects on how uneasy is to capture the problematic aspects of inter-generational communication, the feelings of isolation, etc. She notes that there is still normative pressure to preserve the illusion of good relationships in family. Let us add that this pressure is again gender-based. It was women who were assigned the role of guards of the home fires, and responsibility for a well-functioning of family rested on their shoulders (Lenderová, Kopáčková, Burešová, Maur, 2009). Within the oldest generations of women, as the author suggests, one can still observe subconscious efforts to talk about their families favourably. Another very interesting result that we could consider an important gender attribute of mutual family relationships is the fact that the generations of mothers and grandmothers are getting closer to each other, unlike the relationships in the period when both women had different roles in families, i.e. the roles of the daughter and that of the mother.

Even though the author deals very thoroughly with how to set an optimal methodology for analysing the narrations (inspired by the theoretical works of G. Rosenthal), her own research methodology (which could be so interesting!) remains concealed from the reader. The reader can just guess that the author used (semi-)structured interviews but would not learn about the topics of the interviews and about the specific questions asked.

More consistent in terms of methodology is the chapter by M. Vrzgulová entitled *Talks between Them and about Themselves*, presenting a rather different topic. It aims to analyse how the stories of the oldest members of family were reproduced by the younger members. She was inspired by the well-known, attractive research by H. Welzer on communicative transmission of stories on Nazism and the Holocaust in German families. She also sought to analyse the relation to the “great narrative of the country” or, more specifically, “the basic narrative of the nation”. H. Welzer and his

colleagues use the latter term also in their other publications not mentioned in the book (Welzer 2007, 2011). This chapter works with the term family memory which the author sees as constantly reconstructed according to the current family needs.

It is, however, a question whether the minimalist sample of three families – two of “Jewish origin” and one “non-Jewish” – produced the desired results (the author carried out the research with six families, three Jewish and three non-Jewish ones, having selected three of them families for the purposes of this chapter for unknown reasons). The reader cannot help feeling that the generations of children and grandchildren would have thought about the story of their parent/grandparent in a similar way, even without holding the introductory joint meeting where the oldest family member told his/her story. All family members knew very well the stories of the oldest ones from their family and in the subsequent separate interviews they rather reacted to what they knew from their ancestors’ past than what they had heard during the joint meeting. It is not clear whether it was the researcher’s intention to avoid common inter-generational thinking about the narrative (as was the case of H. Welzer’s research), or whether it simply happened that way. One reason could also be the fact of the descendants’ identification with the narratives of their ancestors, i.e. the absence of confusions or controversies in the given narratives.

It remains a question, though, whether it is possible at all to imitate the methodologically inspiring research by Harald Welzer and his colleagues in other contexts and on a different historical background. This is complemented by the spreading awareness of the effects of memory in more informed participants who feel that similar research is not so much about the content of the narrative but more about the reactions to the narrative. In this context, Renée Wagener spoke about disillusion with her own research on inter-generational remembering in Luxembourg families, inspired by the books of H. Welzer as well (Wagener, 2012).

What I also consider very important is the emphasis placed in this chapter on the relationship between inter-generational stories and the

official narrative about the past. The author managed to prove that the official historical narrative can strengthen family memory, i.e. provide support in talking about the past or, vice versa, leave it in an uncertain vacuum. The oldest generations of the first two “Jewish” families formulated their stories with self-confidence and independence, embedding them in the current public discourses on the Holocaust. It was not the case of the third family in which the author focused on the story with a former commander of a Hlinka Guards unit as the main hero. It was more an explanation and defence of the actions of an ancestor with apparent uncertainty about how to grasp the story – because, as the author argues, there is no manual or model of how to tell a life story. It was also interesting to read the author’s final remark: the younger members of family speak about themselves and about their own identity through the stories of their ancestors. In terms of gender, I consider the topic of “female” vs. “male” stories about the Holocaust noteworthy, though not elaborated to a larger extent. As the analysis suggests, the women’s stories in the two families began receiving attention once the potential of “male narratives” became exhausted.

The third and the last chapter by Peter Salner entitled *Be silent? Talk? Forms of Inter-Generational Transmission of Experience on the Holocaust in Jewish Families* introduces in a way the topic dealt with by M. Vrzgulová in her chapter. It is about the various forms of communication on the Jewish past in contemporary families based on the multi-layered source base that was used in the author’s past research, including e-mail correspondence. Unlike the previous chapters, it is not an analytical study; it is rather summarising and to a certain extent generalising. The author chose a systematic approach, from information on the transfer of information on the Holocaust in the public space within the Slovak Republic through remembering the Holocaust within the Jewish community up to individual families and about transmission of the memories concerning the Holocaust.

He conveniently calls the efforts to overcome discontinuity in the transmission of Holocaust memories, caused by the Commu-

nist regime (including the post-war atmosphere which failed to bring up the Holocaust issue on the agenda even in Western Europe) “the filling in of the gap”. Based on his earlier research he notes that both sides are responsible for the silence on the Holocaust: both the survivors and their potential audience. On one hand, it was the unwillingness to talk about horrible experiences; on the other hand, it was the unwillingness to listen to the emotionally disturbing testimonies. The need to protect the next generations against traumatic experiences also played a role. What I also consider interesting is the author’s remark that the fall of the Communist regime did not bring change to some families, as they remained silent about the Holocaust. On the other hand, the younger generations of some families are still willing to know the places related to the lives of their ancestors.

P. Salner also deals with what made the authors of the memories write them down and to whom they dedicated these memories. He concludes that it is both a commitment towards those who survived the Holocaust and an appeal on the younger generation to not forget.

It is indeed a pity that the authors did not attempt to find links between their individual research topics. E. Voľanská included in her analysed sample apparently functional families, i.e. families whose members (among other things) communicate and are in contact. I think that the concept of functional family could be a very good argumentation background for exploring the transmission of information on the past of Jewish families, which was the topic of P. Salner’s chapter. This concept would enable specification, i.e. to find out in what kind of families and for what reason these families remain silent, and in what kind of families and based on what “the gap was filled in”. I find some links between the chapters of E. Voľanská and M. Vrzgulová regarding the positive image of the ancestors transmitted to the next generations. In the chapters of E. Voľanská and M. Vrzgulová, the grandparents serve as moral examples with natural authority (however, under the condition that the family narrative of the past finds support in the official narrative and that good family relations are preserved).

In functional families grandparents also seem to be accepted as competent narrators of the family history. The relations between generations thus have a major impact on the way the family remembers and what the common memories mean for the given family, which is a motif that could have been discussed more coherently at the level of the entire book, not only in the individual chapters.

However, if the authors conceived the book as the beginning of a path towards other similar research, the book has served its purpose. We wish together with them that the slightly opened doors are further opened with more and more researchers who will interlink, systematise and problematise the results of the partial research.

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ADAM WIESNER:

Jediná jistota je změna.

Autoetnografie na transgender téma
[The Only Certainty is Change.]

Autoethnography with Transgender Topics]

Bratislava: Institute of Ethnology SAS,
VEDA, 2017, 215 p.

In his scientific and research work, Adam Wiesner deals with gender non-conformity, trans activism and with a post-modern approach to ethnography. He studied the forms of local trans activism in Spain, Slovakia and in the Czech Republic. As he notes in the monograph, he has been engaged in the LGBTQ movement for several years and identifies himself as a trans activist and gender non-conformist. These identities – scientist / trans activist / gender non-conformist – are also reflected in his work, written with a post-modern, experimental style.

Research on transgender played a key role in the reconceptualisation of the terms sex, gender and sexuality in the discourse of social sciences and medicine in the 20th century and disputed the hetero-normative gender system built on binary oppositions that currently prevails in many societies (Meyerowitz, 2002). This research also reveals the adverse or even violent impacts of this system on people's

lives. Nevertheless, this topic is still marginal in social sciences and forms part of mainly feminist studies and queer studies. This trend is present in Slovakia as well. The topic is dealt with predominantly by non-profit organisations which work with transgender issues. In the academic field, it is mainly psychiatry, medicine and sexology. Within the medical discourse, transgender is considered only a psychiatric diagnosis.¹ This monograph deals with the impacts of this restrictive medical perception of transgender on the lives of trans people.

The main topic of the monograph *Jediná jistota je zmena* [The Only Certainty Is Change] is local trans activism in Slovakia, explored by means of an analysis that was conducted by two organisations active within the LGBTQ movement in Slovakia and the autoethnography of the author's transition process.² I consider his decision to describe his intimate personal experience, which can be viewed as controversial in society, as a demonstration of his great courage.

The monograph consists of eight chapters and most of the text deals with the author's ethical and methodological reflections (Chapters 2 to 5) mainly on the construction of anthropological knowledge and ethical dilemmas, marginally mentioning engaged research as well. The interpretation of the activities of two organisations (Chapter 6) and the autoethnography (Chapter 7) are marginal rather from the point of view of their extent and depth of analysis. In terms of contents, the book reflects more on the author's scientific interests in expanding knowledge on the ethics and methodology of anthropological and ethnological research.



The author's reflection on the construction of anthropological knowledge forms an important part of the work. The author thus elaborates on the message of the crisis of representations in social sciences which began in the 1980s. In line with this post-modern paradigm, Wiesner also wrote a monograph on trans activism in Slovakia. Post-modernism is manifested not only in the extensive reflective parts of the book, but also in its multi-genre character. Part of the work is written in the form of essayist ethnography, and the final chapter is an autoethnography. This is not the end of the experimental approach to the processing of the research outputs. There are parts in which the author

- 1 In 2018, the World Health Organisation removed transsexuality from the list of mental disorders, this being a positive message for the trans community. This step by the international organisation may lead to reducing the social stigma faced by trans people. However, it will take some time until this decision is manifested in the lives of trans people, especially when we consider that the medical practice is a cultural practice and that the lives of trans people are also affected by cultural stereotypes resulting from the dominant hetero-normative gender system.
- 2 The process of expressing one's own gender identity. This can include a social part (coming out, change of gender when speaking about oneself, change of dressing, etc.), medical part (use of hormones, surgery, etc.), or legal part (change of data in documents). Within the transition process, some people use hormones and undergo some surgery. Another common term is the "change of sex" (Transfúzia, Slovník pojmov. Available online at: <http://www.transfuzia.org/kniznica-archiv/slovník>)

presents his criticism of his key research partner regarding some of his statements published in the book. He reacts to this criticism, thus creating an impression of a discussion between him and his research partner.

In the publication, the author gives preference mainly to himself, to his view of the explored reality, revealing his dilemmas from the field and explaining the reasons for choosing the given interpretation framework. As he notes, he chose the path of an ethnographic essay with the aim of presenting a realistic story that seeks to be objective and authentic. His approach to writing the monograph is furthermore based on the personality of the researcher who plays a key role in the interpretation of the data. He relies on the assumption that if the personality of the author is off the field, it would not be authentic.

The author's dominant perspective and his reflections related to the research gave me the impression of his constant need to defend himself and explain his approach, describe his own views of what he studies and in what way, confronting his perspective with other opinions and research only to a minimum extent. In his approach, he does not tackle the concept of objectivity and does not specify how his reflections contribute to the objectivity of knowledge. After reading the book, I had the feeling that the book was about Adam Wiesner and his view of trans gender and his experience from the field and with transition. I do not question the significance and importance of reflecting on the position of researcher in data interpretation; I just consider the limits of such an approach. I believe that too much reflection can hinder us from learning about the social reality. Our interpretations will always be subjective to a certain degree, but this is the reason why we have the scientific community and discussions that help us eliminate the subjective perspective.

After authenticity, ethics is the second important theme of his methodological approach. Entering into, and getting acquainted with the field is always a big challenge and is accompanied with many ethical dilemmas. The field in which the author worked was, as he noted, a conflict environment. By choosing

engaged research based mainly on participant observation, he became involved in power and conflict relationships within the researched organisations. After his initial experience in the field, he created the model *Reflective approach to the choice of the key topic*, which serves for evaluating the potential practical impacts of the choice of the method of data collection in the field in which the data was to be collected. He set up this model based on the concept of ethical competence by Kathleen and Billie Dewalt (Dewalt, Dewalt, 2002) and on the reflection on the risk of using participant observation as the main data collection method.

Within his scientific and research approach, he also speaks about the engaged approach, but without elaborating on it. The analysis and reflection on the author's own experience with certain aspects of the transition process can be viewed as an expression of engagement. One of the main objectives of trans activism in Slovakia is to eliminate negative stereotypes about trans people and the transition process. Within the Slovak and Czech environment, trans gender is still considered primarily a medical diagnosis designated as transsexualism. When describing his experience with transition, Wiesner focused on describing the diagnostic processes. He presents this topic in the form of autoethnography. This type of experimental ethnography, which affects mainly the emotional aspect, develops social knowledge by questioning the usual practice and opening new space for knowledge. Its power does not lie in providing extensive and detailed analytical conclusions and explaining social phenomena, but in opening a discussion, in placing emphasis on authenticity and in confronting conventional and power narratives (Bochner, 2002).

The author considers the extended autoethnographic adaptation of his own experience as the most fundamental aspect of his work. In terms of the book structure, this part can be found in the final chapter. The author's decision to go through the transition process was related to his scientific and research activities. As he notes, he chose to go through this process at the end of the research. His experience

reveals one of the important dimensions of anthropological and ethnological research conducted in the field – mutual influences. With our presence in the field, we influence people that we come into contact with and, vice versa, they and the environment influence us. He also points out how the boundaries between what we define as personal, political and professional are blurred in the lived reality. This approach to writing an engaged monograph, if I can call it so, also reflects the current trend of using personal stories in the activism of social movements. The sharing of personal stories is perceived as a tool of influencing social change (Pérez, Simon, 2017).

Wiesner's main research objective was to observe and subsequently compare the ways of establishing relationships in two organisations that collaborated on various activities within the LGBTQ movement in Slovakia. These two organisations have a different mission and, hence, different activities that they deal with. One of them is dedicated mainly to increasing the visibility of LGBTQ people in Slovakia and to a wider defence of their rights. The other one focuses on the rights of trans people. The analysis lacked a deeper explanation of the relationships between these two organisations and of how these relationships affected their activist work. The author marginally mentions the power imbalance within the LGBTQ movement in general and the increased significance of the homosexuality issue to the detriment of other areas that this social movement makes visible. However, he fails to illustrate this aspect of the movement through an example of the field he worked in or through any other specific features of the Slovak LGBTQ movement. In addition, there is an absence of the socio-economic environment in which these organisations are active, which gives the impression of these organisations being out of context and of the wider LGBTQ movement in Slovakia. Even though, at the beginning of the research, the author intended to grasp the field through the movements concept, he later approached the analysis by means of the organisations concept. These two concepts are not in contradiction, though; on

the contrary, the organisations concept is an important part of the study on social movements (della Porta, Diani, 2006).

His analysis of the organisations was based on business studies and the anthropology of organisations. He focused mainly on the methods of capacity building and the types and importance of leadership within the observed organisations. In his approach to the analysis of capacity buildings within the organisations, he made links between the concept of discipline and the concept of sustainability. Specifically, he based his analysis on the approach by Jim Collins, Joan Tucker, Douglas Caulkins and Andres Edwards.

At the time the author entered the field, the organisations were being formed from informal groups of active people. He thus had the opportunity to capture what types of organisation management would prove over time. The studied organisations are an example of different ways of management and decision-making. According to his words, one of the organisations was built on the culture of conflicts. Even though the team of this organisation broke up, the organisation continues to exist. He described the other organisation as more problem-free and representative, yet currently with weakened activities for capacity and financial reasons. However, he sees a potential in the way it was built, as it created a message that can be followed up on. In his interpretation he points out the fact that the activism of professional organisations is also about resources. Where organisations focus only on financial sustainability, they weaken the other aspects of sustainability, such as the development of expert capacities or the setting of the values on which their activities and projects are based. In this case, again, he showed insufficient seeking of relationships between the activities of the organisations and the environment in which they work – this could help explain certain problems that the organisations faced.

Regarding the publishing of some information about the organisations, I would choose a more careful approach. The LGBTQ movement in Slovakia is very small and one can identify very easily who is behind the state-

ments (despite the fact that the testimonies are made anonymous). The book also presents some sensitive aspects of the organisations' activities and the conduct of persons that worked in them. Even though the author notes that the persons involved in the research gave their consent to the disclosure of the information stated in the book, I think that, sometimes, the ethical responsibility of researchers does not end with the consent of the informers. In certain cases, it is appropriate to consider the impacts of the published information on the lives of people and, in this case, on the activities of the organisations – especially in the situation where the non-profit sector and, specifically, the organisations that refer to the human rights concept in their activities (including organisations within the LGBTQ movement) in Slovakia face many challenges. It is a problem not only of Slovakia; globally, it is about the diminishing of the space for a civil society (Challenges facing civil society organisations working on human rights in the EU, 2017).

Adam Wiesner's book provides not only valuable knowledge about the activities of the organisations working within the LGBTQ movement in Slovakia, but he also reminds us that science is a creative and constant process of seeking the most appropriate representation of the studied reality. At the same time, the way the author described his experience with transition and the context (trans activism) he put his experience in can serve as a therapy for readers with a similar life story. The writing of personal stories mainly about the concealed aspects of life gives people that experience something similar the feeling that they are not all alone in this (Wood, 2009: 78).

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DUŠO MARTINČOK,
TÁŇA SEDLÁKOVÁ:

Záhrebská (O stacionári pre seniorov,
jeho susedoch a kávovare ťažkom
ako hroch)

[Záhrebská (On an Elderly Day-Care
Centre, Its Neighbours and a Coffee
Machine That Is as Heavy as
a Hippo)]

OZ Zrejme, Bratislava 2018, 101 pages.

Some preliminary figures

According to the Statistics Office of the Slovak Republic, the ageing of the Slovak population continues, reporting more elderly people than children in 2018. The year 2018 meant a breakthrough with respect to this indicator, when the proportion was 100 children to 102 elderly people.¹

¹ Slovenský štatistický úrad (Statistic Office of the Slovak Republic), available at: <https://bit.ly/2DN1w3d>.

Eurostat data² suggests that the age structure of the European population will significantly change in the next decades. Slovakia will be one of the countries with the largest impacts of population ageing on the age structure of the population. While today, the proportion of people of retirement age to people in their active age is 20 to 100, it is expected to be three times higher in 2060. Our country will thus be amongst the oldest ones within the EU.

In Slovakia, the share of the population aged 65+ will increase from the current 14 per cent to around 30 per cent in 2060, and that of people over 80 will raise to 12 per cent by 2060 (currently only 3 per cent) (Vaňo, 2015: 289).

Day-care centre

The above figures suggest that the number of elderly people who will need help will grow. The decision to care for an older relative within a home environment is not easy and it often costs a loss of job, income, spare time and social contacts. The family must be solid and solidary in order to be able to handle such care, while avoiding that it rests on the shoulders of only one of its members. The state, however, finances social services that help in providing care for older family members. Under the law, people are entitled to such kind of help that best meets their needs. If an elderly person decides to stay living at home, they must request the kind of services that would enable them to do so. One possibility is day-care centres. Elderly people stay in their natural environment and are provided with services that meet their needs. In addition, they keep natural contacts which contribute to increasing their quality of life and prevent their social isolation. They can also use advisory services as well as different kinds of therapies and rehabilitation services.

The book you are going to read about further below is about one such day-care centre. You would not find research results or different data and figures there. The book is about the



years lived and about the relationships of ordinary people at Záhrebská Street in Bratislava's Old Town. Yet is it also about something uncommon.

The book was written by two persons who were brought together by a common end. But in fact, this end was not the end of everything.

First, however, I should go several years back in time, since everything started in 2012. If the *Neighbours in the Backyard* (Susedia na dvore) community had not been created, I probably would not have written this book review.

One of the authors of the book Dušan Martinčok remembers it as follows:

One day in October, I walked down the stairs with my boyfriend to the backyard of our apartment house, holding a tray with a plum cake in one hand and a bag with several bottles of sangria in the other. We placed everything on a small table and hoped that someone came to pick something. Someone from among all those unknown people who passed by every day and with whom we were unable to get talking. They came, we got to know each other

² Eurostat, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database?node_code=proj.

³ SME daily (2015), <https://dennikn.sk/40560/zalozili-sme-komunitu-susedia-na-dvore-aj-preto-ze-som-gej/>.

*and we felt great. This is how the Neighbours in the Backyard community came to life.*³

In **Part One** of the book (The Story of the Closed Day-Care Centre Záhrebská), Dušo Martinčok writes about the day-care centre and about its closing. This chapter is complemented with the stories of people who visited this centre as clients, as well as those who worked there or were part of it as clients' relatives or because they lived together in the same backyard.

Anton Sikora

He invented a short song for each nurse. And they composed songs about him. He was the star of the day-care centre. Unlike other clients, he used to come and leave alone, without being accompanied. He considered himself to be an important part of the facility's daily routine. "You know, they need my help. Today, for example, I must trim the hedge together with Mrs. Poštolková. She holds a long wooden stick near the hedge so that I can trim it straight." When we, his neighbours from the backyard, come on Monday morning, he always greets us in the same way: "Bonjour, monsieur, ça va?" He learnt French in Cambodia, while he helped there with drinking water research projects in the 1970s. He has a lot of pictures from over there, thanks to the old-fashioned beauty of which he would triumph on Instagram. (Page 9)

Milka Bromová

The moments of joint drawing, cutting and creation of different items are Milka's most favourite memories. What she liked most were the days when they were jointly doing art therapy. She keeps some of these items at home. "I don't like drowning in the past, but a glance at these small things always moves me." (Page 16)

Katka Husárová

The day-care centre Záhrebská was created not only by its staff and the elderly people who were visiting it. An important part of the facility were the family members of its clients. Katka is the daughter of Mrs. Voleková. Their

entire family is an indispensable part of the neighbourhood near Záhrebská. Katka moved here more than thirty years ago. (Page 21)

Marián Mitaš

The day-care centre Záhrebská cannot be viewed beyond the neighbours' community that adopted it as their own. Marián and his wife Katarína visited the centre from time to time. The facility's staff was delighted, especially when they came together with their children. Marián represented the voice of his neighbours in a TV report on the threat of closing down the facility. At the end of summer, Marián usually reads from the books of Krista Bendová in the backyard near the day-care centre. The neighbours organise an event each year, remembering her as their famous neighbour. Krista used to live in a flat at Záhrebská Street, several floors above the elderly day-care centre. (Page 27)

The day-care centre Záhrebská was indeed a progressive facility for elderly people. It operated for 22 years and was part of the residential houses in Bratislava's Old Town. The centre was established by doctor and psychiatrist Eva Janíková. It was specific that the nearby houses and the day-care centre were part of the same courtyard. Thanks to this, the day-care centre's clients and people from the Neighbours in the Backyard community became friends, having established interpersonal relationships that have survived the closing down of the facility in 2017.

Katka would call in a moment. I put her on a speaker. With a tired voice she describes the municipal council's meeting: that she was given three minutes to defend the opinions of the people fighting for the day-care centre; that some councillors reminded her when she exceeded the time; that they called the day-centre's clients inmates, as if they were insane people.

"Some councillors tried to help us and showed empathy, but they were not enough. Many of them abstained from voting. It was tight."

"How many votes were missing to not approve the mayor's proposal?"

"One. It was just one vote." (Page 51)

In **Part Two** (Examples of Inter-Generational Co-Existence), Táňa Sedláková describes good examples that are still alive and bring together people of different generations. The examples from Slovakia (Loves, Rikshow must go out, Crutch), from our neighbours in the Czech Republic and Austria (Women 50, Socks from the grandma, Casa Leben im Alter), as well as more remote ones (Inter-generational house, Stuttgart) or those from the overseas, Canada (RECAA) show that no matter where we live, what is important is what kind of people are part of society. If they show interest in others, have ideas, persistence and enthusiasm, they can make great things happen. And what is the most important thing, they can have a very positive influence over others.

Part Three of the book (Stacionár Záhrebská – Stanica Záhreb / Day-Care Centre Záhrebská – Zagreb Station) is, in my opinion, a manual of how not to give up. You can find here inspiration that, if for any reason (professional, financial, or because of human reluctance) you cannot get back what you lost, you can do something else – something related, while preserving the spirit of the previous thing.

Over the years of community work in the vicinity, Dušo set up good relationships with many places and institutions within the neighbourhood, such as the centre for homeless people Domec, the library on Záhrebská Street, theatre Ticho a spol. or A4 cultural space. We decided to make Stanica Záhreb (Zagreb Station) a mobile inter-generational centre that would travel and, at the same time, would be at home at all these places. (Page 96)

Part Four (The initial 16 tips of how you can start) is a practical manual for all those who want to be active, but perhaps do not know how to begin. It is an encouragement for everyone. This chapter draws the reader's attention very sensitively to realise that any space or circumstance can be specific, thus creating a very pleasant space for one's own ideas directly in the book.

Sometimes I imagine how Slovak towns would look like if there were more places like the day-care centre and the Neighbours in the Backyards. I am thinking about how it would be at these places if their inhabitants shared more common spaces where they would agree or disagree in full tranquillity, as we can often see among the Neighbours in the Backyard, while they having a cup of coffee and a Bundt cake in the day-care centre, while screening a movie in which a neighbour used to star, or while reading from books at the book club meetings. Would the inhabitants of these places show more understanding and trust? Would they be more sensitive about the painful exclusion of the other one? (Page 68)

Pluses and minuses

What I consider a big plus of this book is its sincerity and the authenticity of the events described mainly in Part One. The book lines suggest what Dušo Martinčok felt personally in connection with the closing down of the day-care centre. What you will not find there is worry and complaints. You can, however, see righteous indignation (when the city district management put the elderly people and children against each other, as it planned to open a creche instead of the elderly day-care centre), as well as the resolution not to give up and fight and, after the lost battle (cancellation of the day-care centre), to open the space to new ideas materialised in the form of the first inter-generational festival in Slovakia called Old's Cool and the civil association Zrejme.

What is a minus is the part with 16 tips for developing inter-generational relationships. I think they could be elaborated better, or some recommendations could be offered for some interesting articles or books on this topic. On the other hand, we are often used to getting everything "on a plate", without leaving room for our own initiative or creativity.

The other minus is that the book has not been translated into English.

And a big minus for all those who were not part of this story.

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