

Forging African Communities: Mobility, Integration, and Belonging by Oliver Bakewell and Loren B. Landau (Eds.)

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[See table of contents](#)

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other's actions and reactions. In chapter 3, she explains how ever-changing political shifts in the United States, Central America, and Mexico have shaped the migration journey. These include push-pull factors such as poverty in El Salvador vs. economic opportunity in the United States. These factors have encouraged migration from 1979 to the present day, despite the steady increase in danger for migrants as U.S. and Mexican politics have become less friendly towards migration from the south.

Act 2, which encompasses chapters 4 and 5, discusses the performance of "survival plays" on the migration trail. Utilizing the survival plays, or survival strategies, of her informants, Bridgen demonstrates how migrants attempt to improvise aspects of their identity such as nationality, race, class, and gender; and what larger effects these strategies have on the social and political scenes in which they are performed. Bridgen had her informants draw maps so she could better understand "the construction of the social imagination of the route" (149). Through this exercise she teases apart ideas about the transit political economy and how migration has changed local cultures and the legal economy. She ends by discussing how helpful visualizations of the migration route can be for researchers who desire a way to understand, and thereby advocate for, vulnerable populations.

In act 3, the climax and conclusion, Bridgen describes the tragedy of migration for the many migrants who are caught between their homes, the transit route, and their destination. These "permanent wanderers" offer a cautionary tale to politicians and the proponents of neo-liberalism about the real

risks, to both the imagined boundaries of the nation-state and to the lives of transnational migrants, posed by current migration policies. She argues that the "sovereign stagecraft of policymakers" can no longer ignore the humanity of migrants, as people and cultures continue to move across transnational spaces in defiance of the borders that nation-states so forcefully continue to uphold.

Bridgen's fascinating account of the improvisations that are formed by and help form the migration route through Mexico sheds light on the motivations behind migration, the increasing dangers of the migration journey in North America, and the role the United States has played in the political turmoil in Central America that pushes many migrants to face the journey north. Likewise, she explains how the "blind eye" approach to immigration practices that Mexican officials take denies human rights protections to migrants travelling within their borders who face violence at the hands of drug cartels, the Mexican police, and immigration enforcement. This ethnography would be an excellent addition to anthropological courses on Latin America, cultural anthropology, and migration studies, and would be a superb resource for shifting the sights of international relations towards a more grounded understanding of the socio-political factors of migration that shape and are shaped by globalization, global politics, and neo-liberalism today.

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Forging African Communities: Mobility, Integration and Belonging



Edited by Oliver Bakewell and Loren B. Landau
London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, 321 pp.

Through human mobility, identities and communities are forged. This is the central message of *Forging African Communities*, and the editors use the metaphor of the "forge" deliberately, playing with the word's double meaning. First, to forge is to build or create, "transform[ing] ... existing material into new, potentially unrecognizable forms that nonetheless build on past histories" (3). This sense highlights the emergence of new possibilities, while also acknowledging the continued importance of what came before. But to forge is also to fake, falsify, and misrepresent—actions

that, the editors argue, are "often central to migrants' experiences and strategies" (4). Both senses of the metaphor imply agency: as they move across multiple sites and scales, people actively make and remake communities and themselves.

This edited volume presents pieces from scholars across a variety of disciplines—including development studies, demography, sociology, and anthropology—that illustrate community building and self-making through mobility in African contexts. Africa, the editors suggest in their introduction, holds particular relevance for this kind of exploration

because the fragility of states and formal institutions on the continent means that people are especially likely to move and integrate in informal ways that are poorly understood and often overlooked. This premise aligns with the book's focus on looking beyond official policies to examine empirically how migrants actually join communities, and how members of host communities participate in this process.

The book is divided into three sections. The first, "Agents of Integration: Decentering Policy and the State," questions the policy- and state-centric assumptions evident in much of the literature on migrant "integration." Instead, the chapters in this section focus on migrants' perspectives and explore how official policies may sometimes lead to unintended results. In chapter 2, Hovil examines the situation of Burundian refugees in Tanzania, where a seemingly generous offer of citizenship from the Tanzanian government introduced new forms of precarity, since it was contingent on relocating away from their areas of settlement and thus threatened to disrupt social ties. This example shows how formal membership, such as citizenship, does not necessarily facilitate belonging. Chapter 3, by Tati, focuses on West African migrant fishing communities in Pointe-Noire, Congo, where official migration policies are virtually non-existent but where migrants and local actors formed alliances against an encroaching oil company. Chapter 4, by Berriane, explores the case of sub-Saharan African male migrants in transit to Europe through the Moroccan city of Fes. The Moroccan government's policies toward migrants are repressive and criminalizing, and in any case, most migrants have little desire to stay in Morocco. Nevertheless, migrants manage to establish temporary places on neighbourhood streets, engaging in economic activities that do not yield much money but allow them to form social ties with other sub-Saharan Africans and with some locals. In chapter 5, Bakewell returns to questions of membership with the case of Angolan refugees in rural Zambia. While the Zambian government has pursued a policy of refugee repatriation, Zambian border villages have nevertheless become spaces of inclusion and belonging for refugees, with the support of the local population.

The chapters in the second section, "Negotiating Scales and Spaces of Belonging," set aside questions of state and policy to focus more specifically on how migrants join and create new communities. In chapter 6, Konkonde explores how migrant Pentecostal church leaders in South Africa use strategies of "tactical creolization," drawing on doctrines and ritual practices familiar to migrants while also adapting them in ways that attract new South African members. But while these strategies create unified congregations, they have not led migrants to form significant social connections with South Africans outside of church settings. Chapter 7, by Mangezvo, examines how Nigerian male migrant traders

in Zimbabwe cope with an insecure environment by forming short-lived but meaningful social connections with one another in churches, markets, and neighbourhood streets. Ngoie's chapter 8 shows how Nigerian and Chinese communities in Lubumbashi at once seek to make connections with local Congolese people in economic "contact zones" while also maintaining a degree of social separation. In chapter 9, Binaisa discusses the experiences of Ugandan migrants returning to Kampala from the United Kingdom. Having endured one form of racism in the United Kingdom, returned migrants find their efforts to belong in Uganda unexpectedly complicated by ethnic and class differences. Together, the chapters in this section show how belonging is not absolute but rather relative, partial, and context-dependent.

The third section, "Emergent Socialities and Subjectivities," considers new forms of social life produced through mobility. Chapter 10, by Gordon, presents a quantitative analysis of data from South Africa, suggesting that social fragility and insecurity shape the behaviour of host community members towards migrants. In chapter 11, Cazarin shows how Nigerian and Congolese Pentecostal pastors in Spain and South Africa help create "imagined communities" through narratives that combine Pentecostal values with African cultural nostalgia, instilling trust and hope in contexts of xenophobic hostility. In chapter 12, Landau and Freemantle focus on migrant and host populations in Nairobi and Johannesburg, arguing that the multiculturalism that emerges is characterized not by "conviviality," but rather by precarious coexistence generated through the convergence of material interests.

Finally, in an afterword, Cohen reflects that while several of the book's chapters emphasize the exclusionary policies of states and the inclusive practices of communities, they also show how these roles may be reversed; in some cases, the most problematic social relations and xenophobic attitudes may be found in local communities.

Overall, *Forging African Communities* provides an impressive range of perspectives from the contributing authors, who not only represent multiple disciplines but also are in many cases based at African universities. Some readers may be disappointed that so few of the chapters engage analytically with the thought-provoking metaphor of the forge. Still, taken collectively, these diverse pieces effectively show that while the social relationships built through migration must not be romanticized, fraught as they often are with mistrust and insecurity, exploring how people actively create and recreate communities and selves is crucial to understanding contemporary mobility.

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