
Vullnetari, Julie and Russell King. 2011. *Remittances, Gender and Development. Albania's Society and Economy in Transition*. London: I. B. Tauris. xiv + 232 pp. Pb.: £56.50. ISBN: 9781848854871.

This book is certainly a path-breaking study from various perspectives. First, it offers a clear and valuable analysis of several highly significant aspects of the socio-economic transformation process that Albania has faced during the post-communist years. Second, it provides a valuable theoretical approach, by 'gendering remittances' and by looking at the migration and migrant's life through gender lenses. Third, it provides a list of useful recommendations, which primarily are addressed mainly to various policy-makers in Albania, but which could positively influence the implementation of effective means and measures also in other similar cases.

The book contains an introduction and seven chapters. Its authors have also included a series of illustrations as well as two maps. The introduction contains a general overview of the story behind the preparation of this book, a description of the methodology of the research and the sites where research was conducted, as well as the authors' concern about several ethical issues related to the research on remittances and the gender, privacy and confidentiality of respondents.

The second chapter offers a theoretical discussion of the four key concepts used by authors: gender, migration, remittances and development. The authors devalue as simplistic the approach that sees women as better remitters than men and call instead for a more cautious and in-depth analysis that takes in consideration the influence of gender in the ways social structures are built, and social links are established.

The third chapter contains an overview of the migration process in Albania since 1990. It provides a chronology of the events, rich data that include the numbers of migrants and the level of the remittances per year, as well revealing several shortfalls of the up-to-date migration studies in and outside Albania.

The fourth chapter includes an in-depth analysis of various types of transnational households of migrants originating from southern Albania who work and live in Greece. The authors continue this micro-scale analysis in the following chapter by focusing especially on the relationship between remittances and gender.

In the sixth chapter, the authors extend the range of their analysis by including development as the fourth component. They pay attention to salient elements of social life, such as social development, non-monetary transfers, socio-political and technological remittances, which influence and are influenced by the link between the micro- and macro-scales.

In the seventh chapter, the authors expand the range of their analysis, by focusing on the relationship between gender, remittances and development on local, regional, national, but also on international levels. They pay attention to the effects the remittances have on economic development in Albania, and also provide an analysis from the perspective of stakeholders in Greece.

The shift towards recommendations becomes more evident in the final chapter, which contains a set of important conclusions. The authors present several final remarks on

the basis of their findings, revise the sustainability of some key theoretical assumptions, and, finally, draw recommendations relevant for policy makers both in and outside Albania.

Many scholars have emphasised that Albanian society is one of the most patriarchal societies in Europe and as such is facing a rapid and multidimensional process of modernisation, which has affected with both massive urbanisation as well as re-traditionalisation efforts. Vullnetari and King go far beyond the limits of this assumption and in this respect their study bears a significant relevance. More than any other study on post-communist Albania, this book brings a human perspective on how people have or are coping with the effects of the social change in their lives. Migration from their underdeveloped country was and in many cases is still seen by many Albanians as a mean towards improving people's lives. Indeed, it has been so for many Albanian migrants and their families; the statistical data Vullnetari and King provide leaves no doubt about that.

Migration has radically affected social relations in Albania and remittances are one of the best tools to study this change and the effects it has on people's lives. In their study, Vullnetari and King provide a thorough analysis that reveals how migration through remittances has affected development, and thus also the gender relations. However, they deserve particular praise for their efforts to escape any determinism, and for their approach, which is firmly based on data from the field. This has allowed them to present the variety of the ways Albanian are coping with social change during the post-communist period.

Of equal relevance is the theoretical contribution this book brings in the field of migration studies. Vullnetari and King shift the focus of analysis from, so to speak, biologically determined approaches, condensed in the question 'Are women better remitters than men?', to a more sociologically and anthropologically oriented approach, i.e. towards gender roles and relations. The methodology the authors propose and have successfully applied in their research takes in consideration the effects of gender roles on the household, the kinship context, and the cross-generation relations in order to expand the spectrum of analysis in order to include local, regional and national development. This book shows without any doubt that only an interdisciplinary approach and multi-layered research will allow to fully grasp the complexity and diversity of social relations in a migration-dominated society like the Albanian one. As such, this book will be highly valuable not only to those who specialise in Albania, but also to sociologists, anthropologists and political scientists and scholars specialising in migration studies.

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