Population Displacement in Lithuania in the Twentieth Century. Experiences, Identities and Legacies, edited by Tomas Balkelis and Violeta Davoliūtė (*On the Boundary of Two Worlds. Identity, Freedom, and Moral Imagination in the Baltics* 43), Leiden, Boston: Brill Rodopi, 2016. 263 p. ISBN 978-90-04-31409-2

The rise of transnational history in the early decades of the 21st century has given migration studies a new legitimacy among ‘ordinary’ historians. Transborder movement, population displacement and ethnic cleansing open up a wide field of research agendas ‘beyond the nation’. Humans have been migrating all the time (not only in 1944 and 2015), but there are moments when the masses flee or are forcibly moved. Interest in this phenomenon in an east European context was hitherto motivated primarily by national stories of repression and trauma. As the editors point out in their introduction, ‘nation-states are prone to adopt selective episodes of forced dislocations to create martyrological narratives of nation-building which are used to claim a privileged status of victimhood’ (p. 4). One of the lessons we can learn from the nine essays in this collection is that apparently (forced) migration itself contributes to community building. In that sense, however, also this book focuses on the national part of the story. The authors emphasise more strongly the issue of the preservation of the old, instead of analysing the multitude of strategies for adapting to the new conditions in exile.

In fact, it is a virtue of the approach chosen by the editors not to dwell too much on definitions of displacement. The essays are therefore free to deal with various forms of migration. They offer a surprisingly broad panorama of people from Lithuania in motion. The period covered by the authors encompasses the time from the First World War roughly to the 1960s. The contributions discuss the fates of those moving within state borders, like the refugees and evacuees who were directed into other regions of the Russian Empire after 1915, or the new Lithuanian settlers in the Klaipėda and Vilnius regions. Especially in the latter case, migrants fulfilled a patriotic mission to ‘Lithuanianise’ newly acquired parts of the state hitherto populated by non-Lithuanians. Among the people who had to cross state borders during the migration process discussed in this volume, we find Lithuanians returning from Russia in the early 1920s, repatriated Poles from Vilnius, and Lithuanian refugees in the USA.

The focus of most of the authors is clearly on the first term in the triad in the subtitle: experiences. As the editors say in their preface, they

wanted to ‘write a history of dislocated people by giving them a voice’ (p. 2), thus naturally neglecting the experiences of people who did not write diaries, letters or memoirs, or left oral or written testimonies. Occasionally, disclosing individual cases leads to a discussion of identity questions, and the introduction of memoirs is followed by debates on the legacy issue. However, giving a voice to individuals is not the only aim of the editors. Methodologically, they hope to ‘uncover the “entangled” dimension of the history of population displacement that neither the “case study” nor the “comparative approach” is capable of disclosing’ (p. 8). As a matter of fact, the articles presented in the volume represent case studies of various quality, hardly ever really trying to compare different forms of displacement from or on or into Lithuanian territory. It is indeed hardly conceivable how to reach this much-desired dimension of entangled histories in the classic genre of a collected edition of case studies.¹

In the first block of neatly connected articles, an Italian, a German and a Lithuanian scholar (in itself, a transnational setting) write about population displacement during the First World War and its aftermath. Andrea Griffante and Tomas Balkelis discuss the various forms of relief activities during the Great War, in Ober Ost and Russia respectively, when hundreds of thousands of people were evacuated from the theatre of war. What happened to those refugees when they came home after the end of the war and after the establishment of the independent Lithuanian state is discussed by Klaus Richter, who focusses on the border regions of the newly founded nation-state. From his account, it appears that the promise of ‘making the nation’ (Griffante) or ‘forging a moral community’ (Balkelis), so vividly experienced due to refugee aid based on ethnic solidarity under German occupation and in Russian exile, was challenged right from the start. The expropriation of population groups that were deemed to be harmful, citizenship policies and the categorisation of minorities created uncertainty. The territorialisation of the Lithuanian state made it difficult for the populations of the new border areas to adapt to the new situation and to survive, for example, without the prewar trade networks. Indeed, in this section the possibility for disclosing the entangled dimension of migration processes might have been the greatest, if all three articles were somehow brought together in order to offer a kind of parallel reading experience. The traditional way of having the articles printed consecutively (without making continuous references to each other) retains the impression that here are just (just?) three case studies on closely related topics. Maybe online publishing possibilities in the future will create just this entangled experience for an interested readership.

¹ See the review of this volume by Vytautas Petronis, in: *Forschungen zur baltischen Geschichte* 13 (2018), pp. 221–224.

The second section discusses the often shifting population politics in the Klaipėda region. Vasilijus Safronovas shows how important the question of loyalty was for the powers who were in charge of the region during the 20th century. How should Lithuania deal with Protestant Lithuanians in the region? What was the fate of Germans who after the end of the Second World War still lived there? As is well known, many left for Germany in the late 1950s. According to Safronovas, this wave of emigration should not be seen as repatriation, since the term neither indicates the attitude of the Soviet administration (who saw them just as Soviet citizens defecting to Germany), nor corresponds to the emotions of the majority of migrants who lost a homeland rather than returned to it. Those who stayed in the USSR, and later chose the strategy of internal emigration in their own homeland, as is demonstrated by Ruth Leiserowitz (who, in contrast with Safronovas, uses the term 'repatriation' apparently as a reflection of the point of view of her protagonists, who remained in the Lithuanian SSR). Under the new circumstances, without having the chance to emigrate any more, most kept silent about their past, and tried to avoid any conflict with the authorities. Thus, in a volume on displacement, we even find those who over the course of several decades simply stayed put.

The largest section, with five articles, is devoted to population displacement during the Second World War and its aftermath. Theodore R. Weeks describes population shifts in the city of Vilnius from 1939, through various stages, including the Holocaust, until the implementation of an active Lithuanisation strategy during the postwar Sovietisation. Weeks' concise assessment of the changing demographics of the reestablished Lithuanian capital is complemented by two texts on particular ethnic groups: Vitalija Stravinskiene's contribution on the repatriation of Jews from Vilnius and its area immediately after the war, and Violeta Davoliūtė's story of the Jewish deportees from Lithuania in 1941. Even if numerically these events are not comparable (160,000 Poles were forced to leave the Lithuanian SSR for Poland after the war, whereas in 1941, 1,700 Jews were deported to the interior of the USSR), both left a deep trace in the individual lives of those who were affected by them. Eventually, many Poles lost their homeland (even if their affection for Lithuania might have been different to that of ethnic Lithuanians), and many Jews were actually 'saved' from the Holocaust.

Finally, two articles discuss various strategies of adaptation to new conditions, not strategies of individual survival, but of preserving and performing Lithuanianness. In an interesting juxtaposition, Arunas Streikūš focuses on three places where Lithuanian traditions faced completely different settings: 1) Siberian exile, where Soviet administrators often took no measures to prevent Lithuanians even from performing Church rituals; 2) Vilnius, where Lithuanian newcomers were confronted with a rich religious heritage that did not differ so much from what they had left, and

which could be appropriated by an own historical narrative; 3) Klaipėda, in sharp contrast to the other two settings, where new settlers faced a completely foreign Lutheran environment in which the Soviet regime did not allow for strong Catholic traditions to be established. In the end, the Lutheran heritage in the region suffered not only from the Soviet administration but also from neglect by Lithuanian migrants. Daiva Dapkutė deals with the preservation of Lithuanian traditions and culture in exile in the West. It is a very broad topic that definitely needs more attention, not least because in all three Baltic States research so far focuses on this very issue of keeping native customs alive in a foreign environment. However, this kind of spiritual survival is only one aspect of the story of refugees who, as a rule, needed other forms of adaptation to their host countries in order to survive and to eventually prosper materially.

To sum up, the editors have brought together different stories of displacement in various historical settings. Of course, it is easy to find other aspects of migration that did not gain any attention here, such as non-Lithuanian refugees from Bolshevik Russia, the accelerated urbanisation process in postwar Lithuania, or the experiences of Russian-speaking migrants from other Soviet republics (even if their numerical share was not quite as large as in the Latvian and Estonian SSRs). There are some flaws in the formal setting of the bibliographical data in the footnotes and the bibliographies, and the reader would have appreciated cross-references to other articles in the volume. But overall, the volume essentially shows how displacement practices contributed to the reshaping of the ‘multi-ethnic society of the early century [...] into the largely mono-ethnic one that forms the core of the nation-state today’, as Balkelis and Davoliūte write in the introduction (p. 7). Thus, they demonstrate that “‘displacement’ may be conceived as a valuable analytical tool that helps us to understand how a society and a modern state can be reconfigured by the forced movement of its people.’ This focus on the (national) state, however, cannot be the tool to really tell the ‘entangled’ stories of the displaced population(s) whose experiences are said to be at the centre of the volume, even if the combination of contributions indeed sheds light on ‘how transnational forces have shaped a particular territory and population’ (p. 8). With all due respect to the editors, to a great extent, this analytical work is left to the reader. This, of course is not meant as a critique of the volume and its ‘Lithuanian’ approach, but rather as a call for a broader research agenda. And yet, this book is a very good example of state-of-the-art research that should be followed by Estonian and Latvian stories of displacement.

Karsten Brüggemann

Tallinn University, School of Humanities, Institute of History,
Art History and Archaeology