

REVIEW

Retirement Migration and Precarity in Later Life

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Retirement Migration and Precarity in Later Life sets out to ‘understand the motivations and experiences of international retirement migrants from Europe and North America, and to examine the role of precarity in later life in shaping this trend’ (p. 2).

This book examines the forces that shape international migration in retirement, namely, economic, social and health-related insecurity and unequal global power dynamics. It presents a critique to dominant narratives of leisure-driven retirement migration, through the lens of the authors’ study with retirement migrants from three high-income ‘home countries’: Switzerland, the UK and the USA.

Using semi-structured interviews with 79 participants, the authors explore migrants’ decisions to retire to three ‘host countries’ – Spain, Costa Rica and Mexico – that are ‘well-known for retirement migration’ (p. 119) and have ‘lower costs of living’ (p. 118).

The book is structured into eight chapters. The authors’ study is at the centre, with Chapters 4–7 examining different dimensions of retirement migrants’ experience. These are bracketed by an overview of the academic and policy context in Chapters 1–3 and a synthesis of findings and new directions in Chapter 8.

Chapter 1, ‘Introduction’, places this book in the context of increasing international migration trends, while arguing that scholars of retirement migration have not yet fully engaged with questions of precarity. This chapter defines forms of precarity and provides an overview of the book.

Chapter 2, ‘Retirement migration’, surveys the relevant academic literature. Together with well-established drivers of migration, including lifestyle factors, the authors examine emerging literature on the role of global power inequalities and the effect of economic precarity. This chapter ends with an overview of the authors’ study and its context.

Chapter 3, ‘Precarity and the welfare state in home and host countries’, provides further necessary context in the form of a detailed comparison of pension and health-care

policies in all three home countries, and how these have been shaped over time by processes of neo-liberalisation. It also briefly describes migrants' access to social security and health care in their host countries.

The authors present the findings of their study across the next four chapters, which are organised thematically, interweaving interviewees' personal accounts with the broader narrative. Chapter 4, 'Escaping economic precarity', examines how retirement migration is linked to financial challenges arising from insecure working lives or unexpected life circumstances, as well as macro-economic events such as the 2007–8 financial crash and Brexit. It draws attention to an under-recognised group of older adults, who have been pushed into precarious early retirement following ill-health or workplace exclusion. Chapter 5, 'Escaping ageism', explores migrants' experiences of age-related social exclusion in their home countries, which tend to be replaced by feelings of safety, being valued and being able to contribute in their host countries, although these are complicated by ambivalent feelings towards other older migrants.

In Chapter 6, 'Relying on global privileges', the authors examine the role of global power dynamics in enabling retirement migration. They explore how migrants conceive of their relationship to the local community, reflecting that this is not typically shaped by awareness of structural inequalities in status or power.

Chapter 7, 'Health and assistance precarity in later life', analyses one further dimension of precarity, to do with insecure access to health and/or social care. Host countries' marketing of affordable, high-quality care and migrants' own perceptions of a more caring culture are both examined. Chapter 8, 'Retirement migration, precarity and age', concludes by framing migration as a response to policy contexts in the Global North that create precarious retirement conditions for older adults, but one that can be sustained only through reliance on unequal and unjust global power dynamics.

Overall, this book's examination of the impact of global power dynamics on retirement migration, while important, was perhaps the weakest element. The study was perhaps not originally designed to explore these inequalities; certainly, the authors' choice to explore migration to Spain through the same post-colonial lens as to Mexico and Costa Rica was unusual and would have benefited from greater justification. Age, gender and nationality were the only demographics reported for study participants. The authors did not discuss participants' ethnicity, prior immigration history or citizenship status and, in doing so, did not engage with the impact of the same unequal global power dynamics in shaping who is able to emigrate from countries of the Global North.

Despite this concern, the analysis of precarity and its impact on retirement migration is clear and well-evidenced throughout; in this, the book fulfils its central aim. The authors highlight facets of economic, social and health-related exclusion within home countries, which some older adults negotiate by using retirement migration as a survival strategy. The book makes a particularly valuable contribution by extending our understanding of precarity beyond the economic: integrating the authors' past work to highlight ageism as a process of social exclusion, which some older adults try to mitigate through migration and within retirement migrant communities.

This book is written in a clear and engaging style and should be accessible to a wide audience with a general interest in this area. It has particular relevance for policy

makers as it demonstrates that much of the economic, social and health-related insecurity driving migration is shaped by policy choices. Overall, it makes an original and important contribution to our understanding of the nature and drivers of retirement migration from the Global North, facilitated by unequal power dynamics and shaped by diverse forms of precarity.

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