

Buchbesprechung (Dirk Hoerder): Bridget Anderson, *Us and Them? The Dangerous Politics of Immigration Control*, Oxford University Press: Oxford 2013. 209 pages. £ 55,-

The critical assessment of British attitudes to immigration in the introduction raises issues about modern liberal states in general and questions this construct in ways political scientists should have done for long. The author sets out to “disrupt” the cosy or smug views modern states propagate about themselves; in the first two chapters, she also broadens the historical perspective. Anderson discusses in- and exclusions from a first major labor shortage after the mid-14th-century plagues and explains the development of internal groups that did not meet standards set by those with the power to define. The migrant as the outside Other has its inside equivalent and, perhaps, predecessor in the failed citizen.

Immigrants and temporary migrants cross international borders – this is where admission and counting take place: the result should be sound data, the laws should be neutral, the liberal state inclusive. Alas, the data are misleading and the laws treat persons differently – all this even before public opinion or discourse intervene, both of which may be partisan or racist. The data, the laws and public opinion are the sources used in this study – all three should be coherent and rational. Anderson shows, through empirical analysis, that the liberal state is irrational and contradictory, and knowingly so. The politics of immigration control are destroying the foundational tenets the liberal state claims to be resting on.

Once migrants have crossed the international border, they face internal ones that are assumed not to exist under the postulate of equality. These internal borders divide societies into “us” and “them,” are more difficult to cross for migrants than international borders and are purposefully created by those responsible for the politics of immigration control. Modern states see themselves as communities, often called nations, with shared values. These, like legal cate-

gories, are viewed as stable. However, laws, practices, discourses, policies and politicking continuously produce status and, by labeling the migrant and the internal “failed” member as one who adheres to different or alien values, politicians, bureaucrats and citizens establish and reinforce their own status as superior to that of the Other. “The community of value is populated by ‘good citizens’, law-abiding and hard-working members of stable and respectable families” (p. 3). This “Good Citizen” is the liberal sovereign self, rational and independent, autonomous yet belonging, respectful of property. Almost self-evidently, such a paradisaic state of being stands in need of protection from “The Migrant”, who does not share its values. The Migrant is gendered: as a labor migrant he is male and produces value (as opposed to not sharing values); as a victim – constructed by policies of control and the media – she is female. Anderson provides a meticulous textual analysis of policy and press.

In a significant expansion of earlier sociological analyses, Anderson shows how the construction of the internal failed member of the community has a long history. Through the Ordinance of Labourers, 1349, the English government increased control over the working population massively during the post-plague shortage of laboring men and women: it prohibited wages higher than the pre-plague ones as “excessive,” curbed workers’ mobility and increased compulsory service. Internal borders between employers and the employed were thus deliberately rigidified and women, having less access to land and thus material support, were particularly hard hit. Only half a century later, vagrancy laws forced people with little or no land to sell their labor locally. Next, the giving of alms to “valiant” (i.e. able-bodied) beggars was prohibited – this was the origin both of the 17th-century workhouses for the poor and of the late 20th-century trope of the welfare cheater. In these centuries, structural changes, enclosure and loss of the commons forced people into vagrancy – but these causes were hardly ever discussed. Instead, the emphasis of public policy (= policing) was shifted from

mere control over the mobility of the underclasses to the labeling of those forced into mobility as disorderly and criminal. Vagrants were a challenge to the social order – the order and values of those in possession of the means of production, of wealth in general and, importantly, of the power to define. Those with the power to define create the Others by expelling them from the land (or jobs) and have administrators to put their interest-driven postulates into practice.

Towards the end of the 19th century, Anderson might have added, the community of (economic) value (not values) took a new turn and invented an “Empire Settlement Scheme” under which bureaucrats could encourage the emigration or even deportation of orphans, as well as of children of parents deemed unfit for child-care, unmarried women and soldiers partially disabled in the colonial wars – all these were seen as a burden on the community and thus could not be “Good Citizens.” This “community” of Good Citizens and inhabitants, however, was constantly shifting: borders expanded through the military incorporation of Ireland, Wales and Scotland, though the conquest of colonies afar as well as through changing economic structures. The “Good Citizen” thus needed to be redefined continuously – no stability of community here. Since neither a community of interest nor one of values existed in practice – as any historico-sociological analysis shows –, the drawing of borders excluding the “failed citizen” or those “not useful” served the purpose. The framing of discourse by spokespersons and gatekeepers was and is translated into practice by the institutional discourses of bureaucracies. Such discourses may change as long as the enemy, the Other as a threat to “our” values, is held constant. While, for a mercantile and colonizing polity, mobility was a prerequisite, and while the admission of the Huguenots was hyped as an example of British openness, the coming of pogrom-fleeing Eastern European Jews rendered the projections negative. Half a century later, Cold War refugees from the (illiberal) communist countries were depicted positively, as affirming the western liberal state.

But the post-1989 Polish and Ukrainian workers were depicted negatively. A constantly changing community – “Us” – with the power to define, label and exclude thus constantly creates its own status by labeling “Them” as outsiders or failed / not useful inhabitants of the territory. “They” have no voice in governance and in the media.

Next, Anderson spends five chapters analyzing the British conundrum: migration management (Chapter 3) shows how the tools employed for counting migrants use incompatible definitions (p. 50) and how numbers are combined with a rhetoric of “sustainable” immigration levels; in periods of economic decline and joblessness, claims about limited resources are foregrounded. Given that the statistical categories are unclear, the resulting data can serve no rational purpose. In addition, a discursive selection mechanism was added: the categories of the “genuine refugee” and the “highly skilled migrant” were introduced – but neither was assumed to have a spouse or family. While the “best and brightest” can prove their skill, what emotional union can prove that it is not a “sham marriage”? Since female partners increasingly come from “non-white” societies, the policy de facto involved a “white nation” as its goal (shared value?) and a stable family as a requirement for immigration – with no mention of patterns of disintegration of emotional unions among the British. The “British jobs for British workers” slogan (Chapter 4), shared by Labour and Conservatives, posits that firms are “British-owned” (an islander's view of history), that immigrants reduce the dwindling resources of British working men and women even further and that, among Council housing dwellers, a culture of idleness has developed – thus the failed community member is reactivated. While jobs are being deregulated, migrant workers are overregulated. Precariousness is being increased and the demands employers may place on their workers are broadened: jobs in low-waged, insecure labor markets may still demand high motivation and commitment. Immigration policies create categories of country and labor market entrants, mould

employment relations, produce institutionalized uncertainty – but demand commitment. Immigration laws – required to be neutral like all law in liberal states – produce status and encourage the arbitrariness of bureaucrats.

The next three chapters (5–7) deal with citizenship and the values of belonging vs. the “uncivilized others”, who are treated, under the circumstances criticized by Anderson, as liable to deportation or victims to be rescued. Citizenship is presented as “good”, in accordance with a narrative of stability and undifferentiated equality, but its granting is contingent (by law) and it results neither in equal status nor in inclusion. It is and has been, as the exclusion of women has demonstrated for long, an unstable and unequal construct. Citizenship practices include the subordination of others – once again, the liberal state is sapping its own conceptual foundations. The recurring riots of young people in “immigrant neighborhoods” reveal an “assimilation” not into the good-citizen cliché but into an actual society divided by racism and discrimination. Even a new category of “probationary citizens” is being administratively created. The Home Office’s handbook for the citizenship test, *Life in the United Kingdom: A Journey to Citizenship* (2006), and the policy paper “Enforcing the Rules. A Strategy to ensure and enforce compliance with *our* immigration laws” (2007 [emphasis added]) serve as illustrations for Anderson’s analysis. Citizenship is becoming stratified or tiered – those who acquired it by birth may marry whom they want; those who have been naturalized face barriers in bringing in a partner from their community. A 2008 survey found that over half of the English (as opposed to the British) would not consider a non-white person to be English even if that person had been born in England. Those who are removed from Britain – whatever the cause – are being discursively associated with criminality and have no legal recourse. Few British citizens have a clear understanding of the rights associated with the various visa categories – nor do immigrants. The internationally recognized right to asylum is undercut by a rhetoric of “bogus applications”

and of the smuggling and trafficking of persons without papers. Deportation procedures are being privatized; those labeled “victims” are not to have any agency of their own, since this would undercut the labeling. As if all this were not enough, domestic work, a position “between a rock and a hard place“ (Chapter 8), mostly for women, is considered “exceptional” in immigration law. While the home (“My home is my castle”) is still assumed to be the key producer of nationality, it is foreign working women who keep the home in order and care for the children and the elderly, unprotected by labor laws.

This tightly argued indictment of British policies and the self-proclaimed liberal state’s illiberal “Us vs. Them” juxtaposition in law, data collection and discourse should be required reading for political scientists. It is a sociologist’s analysis, with historical depth, of a political construct that is certainly neither liberal nor democratic or republican, as postulated in the Age of Enlightenment and the Age of Revolution. It is to be hoped that this study will encourage scholars in other European states to analyze the historical and social particularities of their own countries. A Europe-wide debate on statehood and equality is urgently needed – fundamental human rights are being abolished. The politics of immigration control endanger the constitutional and legal basis of European political organization and the rights and dignity of human beings.

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