

# Antipode

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**Harald Bauder**, *Immigration Dialectic: Imagining Community, Economy, and Nation*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011. ISBN 9781442641617 (cloth); ISBN 9781442610767 (paper); ISBN 9781442661158 (e-book)

**Harald Bauder (ed)**, *Immigration and Settlement: Challenges, Experiences, and Opportunities*, Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2012. ISBN 9781551304052 (paper)

*Immigration Dialectic: Imagining Community, Economy, and Nation* by Harald Bauder (2011) applies a dialectical framework to media reports on immigration reform in Canada and Germany to explore the relationship between immigration and national identity. A closely following collection edited by Bauder (2012), *Immigration and Settlement: Challenges, Experiences, and Opportunities*, seeks to present “a productive dialectical engagement between various aspects, perspectives, and scales of migration and settlement” (2012: 3). The key assumption underpinning both works is that immigration is a multifaceted phenomenon, full of complex twists and turns involving actors from the state, media, and civil society, to name just a few. Its most fundamental complexity is well articulated in the edited collection: migrants “present unprecedented opportunities to the communities in which they settle...[yet] continue to generate political tensions, suffer from labour exploitation, be excluded from equal opportunities, and be seen as a threat to society” (2012: 1). The question arises, then, of whether or not these contradictions and complexities are amenable to a singular theoretical approach, a trend dominant in immigration scholarship. Bauder persuasively argues that the dialectic - being an analytic of the complex, the contradictory, and the forever incomplete - helps us better understand the nature of migration and settlement in our world.

The first part of *Immigration Dialectic* draws on Hegel's notion of dialectics and its later critical materialist versions (offered by Feuerbach, and then Marx and Engels) to develop an account of the relationship between immigration and national identity. Parts two and three apply this conceptual framework to case studies of media reports on immigration reform in Canada

(1996-2004) and Germany (2000-2005). The significant similarities between Canada and Germany in terms of the policy and popular debates on immigration provide a ripe opportunity for this kind of comparative work. Bauder shows that the category of immigrant (or refugee or migrant worker) is crucial in the formation of national identity in both contexts, and that this relationship is dialectical. While dialectical accounts of national identity formation have been present in critical race scholarship on settler colonial and multicultural nationalism (see Coleman 2006; Thobani 2007), *Immigration Dialectic* offers a thorough investigation of this process grounded in empirics drawn from the media which, according to Bauder, is one of the most important sites for this kind of study. The media is “inherently dialectical” (2011: 36) as it characteristically juxtaposes oppositional positions, and is a site for interaction between linguistic and material practices, and between the subject and substance (in this instance, the relation between national subjects and the abstract concepts through which they come to identify themselves as such). Accordingly, each chapter within parts two and three explores a different aspect of the immigration debates - ‘danger’, ‘humanitarianism’, ‘economic benefit to the host nation’, *etc.* - and establishes the unstable, forever-in-flux nature of national identity formation. *Immigration Dialectic* forwards another important thesis, that the process of nation building unfolds differently for settler and ethnic nations. In Germany, for instance, the dialectic between self and other does not reach the discursive stage as it does in Canada. Bauder calls it a “truncated dialectics” (2011: 197). However, following a dialectical logic, he does not claim this difference to be absolute or “unproblematic” (2011: 201). The book concludes with a discussion of possible critical interventions in the nation-immigration dialectic. Here, Bauder makes a conscious effort to distance himself from the idealism of Hegel. Referring to Henri Lefebvre, David Harvey, Günter Grass and Pierre Bourdieu, among others, he affirms that philosophy does and can influence the material, and that intellectuals have a responsibility to “insert the possible into the dialectic” (2011: 209), *i.e.* imagine what is possible and anticipate critical practice.

An awareness of the profound complexities of immigration and settlement seems key to Bauder’s adoption of the dialectic as a major conceptual tool in his recent works (see also Bauder 2011a). In many ways, *Immigration Dialectic* shifts the scholarly lens at a time when immigration and settlement research remains largely confined within a nation-state paradigm in which integration is assumed to be a rather straightforward process, that is, the more immigrants can approximate and/or navigate existing standards, the better are their chances of integration.

Bauder puts a question mark on this methodological nationalism. He complexifies the relationship between immigration and national identity by demonstrating the latter as contingent upon the various discursive constructions of immigrants. Bauder also provides meticulous details of his research design. Discourse analysis as a research method is not replicable, and therefore it's considered good practice to provide as much details as possible. This openness, according to Wetherall *et al.* (2001), has an ethical dimension; it's a practice noticeable in Bauder's previous works, such as *Labour Movement* (Bauder 2006), as well.

It is important to note that Bauder does not offer dialectic as a problem-free method. *Immigration Dialectic*, particularly, devotes substantial space to critiques of Hegel's idealism. Bauder also pre-empted his likely critics by declaring up front that he uses only those elements of dialectic that are relevant for his argument. However, his rationale for using the method - that German critical theory is not as widely used as its European and Anglo-American counterparts, and, more particularly, that dialectic has fallen out of favour in Western scholarship - sounds inadequate: there's a contested intellectual history of dialectic, and its anti-colonial and later post-structural critiques, to be considered (see, for example, *Environment and Planning A* 2008). Another major issue that remains unresolved for me is Bauder's finding in *Immigration Dialectic* that the need for skilled labour is not as much debated as the relative merits of *laissez faire* and regulatory immigration. I remain curious about the meaning he makes of this lack of debate. More so, in the Canadian context where the recent changes to the immigration policies in Canada demonstrate a simultaneous incorporation and expulsion of immigrants; on the one hand they are welcomed on the basis of their skills, and on the other those skills are being defined along Euro-American standards.

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*Immigration and Settlement* is quite an organically related work in the sense that it aims to move beyond "existing conceptualizations of immigration and settlement as a 'two-way' exchange between newcomers and a 'host' society, and acknowledges the complexity of relations that characterize international migration and settlement", which, in turn, requires that "international migration and settlement...be understood dialectically" (2012: 2-3). It captures other productive sites beyond the media where the nation-immigration dialectic continues to unfold. It also

explores a wide range of themes (citizenship, labour, housing, cultural and religious practices, identity, neighbourhood and residential practices, opportunities that migration brings for the host countries, *etc.*) through a variety of voices (university scholars, activists, and policy makers) and disciplinary perspectives (geography, social work, public policy, sociology, education, and the emerging field of immigration and settlement studies). While *Immigration Dialectic* is focused on the nation-state, the anthology has scalar variations; most notably it explores the urban through case studies of Toronto, New York, and Milan.

Throughout, Bauder appears to be making an effort to encase the chapters in *Immigration and Settlement* into a dialectical framework. Thus, we see the complex and contradictory relationship between democratic rights and territorial borders (Harris' chapter), how diversity discourse builds and thrives on racist, colonial tropes (Almeida), and how both migrant agency and internalization of an inferior worker status relates in complex ways to the experience of marginalization in the labour market (Shan). We also see how urban space both facilitates activism on the part of immigrants and their exploitation by the forces of global capital (Benz; Sundar). At the same time, however, we see how city governments may play a role in ensuring the rights of temporary migrant workers (Tungohan).

Organizationally, there is one central theme linking the chapters within each section, which is explored from various angles. The section on labour is a rich example of how this is done. It explores different positions within the broad category of immigrant labour - domestic workers, temporary migrant farm workers, and highly skilled workers. Their specific marginalizations through processes of racialization, flexibilization, lack of citizenship and labour rights, *etc.*, their internalization of a secondary status in the labour market, and, at the same time, their resistance and agency generating from these very experiences of marginalization are all explored. In terms of how issues are approached, a good balance is achieved between purely theoretical exercises (Harris), empirically driven ones (Mukhina, Gilkinson and Sauve), and those that combine theoretical insights with empirical evidence (Austin and Bauder).

Generally speaking, the anthology - read along side *Immigration Dialectic* - clarifies how nationalism is not simply an abstract concept but, rather, is *practised* at various sub-national, local and neighbourhood scales, and through means other than immigration policies. In other words, the thematic selection and organization of the anthology further forefronts the complex relationship between immigration/immigrants and nation/nationals that Bauder explores in a

more focused manner in *Immigration Dialectic*. However, some issues I have are as follow: The contributors' use of the category 'immigrant' does not always reflect the complexity with which immigration is treated in the editorial introduction. Neither is 'settlement' adequately unpacked in relation to indigenous land claims/rights, which is an ongoing struggle in many traditional immigrant-receiving countries, including Canada which the majority of chapters focus on. Some contributions failed to be even remotely dialectical in their engagements with their respective topics. For example, Gate-Gasse loses an opportunity to explore the emerging immigration category of Canadian Experience Class (CEC) as contributing to the dialectical process of national identity formation by exploring CEC as a mere policy issue having no bearing on Canadian nationalism. In short, the marriage of theoretical framework, content, and research design that we see in *Immigration Dialectic* eludes *Immigration and Settlement*. On a final note, however, I believe that these two books offer examples of fresh critical perspectives at a time when immigration scholarship remains largely confined within a positivist paradigm and maintains a solution-focused lens on immigration (this is at least true for Canada where these books were first published and launched). Bauder's insistence on the political potential of philosophy and critical scholarship in general is based on linkages he makes between the discursive and the material, and critical meaning-making and practice. However, such linkages do not yet inform immigrant settlement scholarship in a meaningful way. The books' greatest contribution, I think, is in challenging this pattern of scholarship and drawing attention to more integrated ways of thinking about immigration and settlement. Incorporating this understanding in immigration and settlement scholarship will ensure that these issues are not reduced to mere policy problems awaiting neat solutions.

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