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Book review

Globalization in Practice by Thrift N., Tickell A., Woolgar S. and Rupp W H. (Eds). 2014. Oxford: University Press £65.00 (hardback) £24.99 (paperback) ISBN 978-0-19-921262-0

Globalization in Practice consists of a number of short chapters (51 in total), written by a number of well-known and respected academics with various backgrounds. The surprisingly large number of chapters are organised into seven sections: travel, tourism and mobility; infrastructure and transport; finance and business; media, consumption and leisure; health and nature; order and control and classifications. The individual chapters are extremely wide-ranging, with subject matter, such as mobile phones, cargo ship containers, LIBOR (the London inter-bank offered rate), the game of rounders, human rights and bananas. The combination might actually appear a little 'bananas' but it genuinely works, at least for me anyway. However, some people seeking more of a quick reference or detailed traditional academic textbook might find the range of this collection frustrating. The reader may find themselves immersed in subject matter that they would not ordinarily encounter (or might even deliberately avoid). I appreciated the variety of subject matter and the opportunity to be introduced to new topics. The breadth of subject matter in this book is both a strength and a weakness; exploring new areas is welcomed and should be encouraged but there is likely to be times when the reader will find themselves less interested or less engaged with certain chapters.

While the reader may not be enthralled by all the chapters included in this book, the variety and brevity allow them to pick and choose the ones most relevant to them. In fact, in the introductory chapter, the editors encourage the reader to depart from the traditional front-to-back linear way of reading and to find their own path through the chapters. Initially sceptical of this (especially as the chapters have been grouped together neatly), I decided to heed the advice and must concede that it allows for a unique reading experience — readers will navigate their way through the book seeking out the chapters of most relevance to their particular interests or agenda.

The language used in this book is accessible and not unnecessarily complicated something which is particularly crucial and appreciated in the chapters furthest from the reader's knowledge comfort zone. Chapters do vary in style with some being drier than others; however, this is to be expected as it reflects the diversity of both the topics covered and the authors. Some chapters make assumptions regarding the reader's familiarity with the issues discussed, which is unrealistic given the diversity of topics and the reader not having consistent levels of expertise across all chapters.

Discussions of globalization currently tend to focus on the macro level, whereas this book brings the concept to life with examples of globalization through the micro level of physical objects or practices. This reflects increasing interest in the 'little things' that guide or impose outcomes that, until recently, have been overlooked when understanding globalization. The 'little things' have been thought of as less significant when pitted against 'the bigger picture' of processes. The book highlights how globalization occurs through "unlikely and ordinary" things and complements the recent turn which has seen objects rediscovered and acknowledged as important in their own right. For example, my mid-morning snack (a banana) is a result of "interconnecting systems of global transportation, migration, communication, politics and regulation" and is therefore, much more than 'just' a piece of fruit. The example of the banana is probably one of the more obvious cases of globalization in practice but there are plenty of others that are more subtle. Such chapters as the one on walking may lead the reader to question the experience as an example of globalization in practice. I admit that I had not considered the act of walking to be overtly linked to globalization but, on contemplation, the association with mobility makes it an obvious contender and the account given by the chapter's author explains the advancement of the meaning of differing gaits throughout different cultures. Initial doubt or scepticism provokes thought and motivates the reader to scrutinise the illustration with a view to challenging the interpretation, which may lead to enhanced comprehension and enlightenment.

The book provides thought-provoking snapshots of globalization in practice; however, some shorter chapters may leave the reader wanting more information. This can be slightly frustrating but it could provide the motivation and impetus to seek further information and stimulate interest in areas previously unconsidered. Globalization in Practice is suitable for students and academics or researchers, both early career and those who are more established, as it introduces the notion of globalization practices in an engaging and approachable manner. Importantly, it is also written in a way that encourages more reflexive thought. Overall, this book in its entirety may not appeal to all; however, I would challenge any reader to not find large chunks of the book, interesting, relevant and engaging, depending on their area of expertise.

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