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## BUCHBESPRECHUNGEN

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**Guy M. Robinson, Doris A. Carson (eds.): Handbook on the Globalisation of Agriculture (= Handbooks on Globalisation), Cheltenham and Northampton: Edward Elgar 2015, 508 p.**

Reviewed by  
Eric Vanhaute, Ghent

This comprehensive handbook, which is part of a series of Handbooks on Globalisation, debates the numerous ways that globalisation has affected the global agri-food system. The themes range from the physical basis of agriculture, the influence of trade and policy regimes, the impact of corporations, to challenges and resistance to globalisation. Citing the editors, the chapters draw on studies from around the world and “present a state-of-the-art summary of current debates and provide a starting point for subsequent research into solutions aimed at addressing food insecurity, global hunger and uneven development.” The editor’s introduction (pp. 1-28) is followed by 22 chapters subdivided into four parts, written by an international team of about forty authors. Each chapter

closes with an extensive list of references and the book concludes with a 26-page index. In general, this handbook “seeks to elucidate the complexities of globalisation within the agri-food sector, throwing into sharp relief the key conflicts and critical outcomes” (p. 3). The editors follow a standard definition of globalisation as a process of “radical restructuring of the scope and character of the production and distribution of many goods, including food”. It signals a new and qualitatively different phase of capitalist development, speeding up and transforming patterns of connection, trade, finance and production, creating global markets for a range of products, but also increasing competition and inequalities. Therefore, it is “a complex, uneven and fragmented set of processes producing considerable geographical variation” (p. 2), reinforcing the ‘global triad’ and marginalizing large parts of Africa, Central and South America and the Caribbean.

How is this complex, antithetical process dealt with in this overview of global agriculture over the last decades? The editors have used what they call “a judicious mix of overview and case study to detail both globalisation processes and the various forms of resistance apparent to illustrate that there are definite alternatives to the homogenisation associated with globalisa-

tion. (...) As a result it provides an innovative introduction to the impacts of globalisation on world agriculture, highlighting the challenges faced by those involved in the agri-food sector, including consumers, producers, retailers and regulators (...)." (p. 3). Part 1 aims to illustrate how agriculture differs from most of the other economic activities because it relies on different physical environments, and how this relationship has created a large variety of farming systems. The chapters concentrate on the impact of human biotechnical inputs on agri-ecosystems, and on models of more sustainable forms of production (including so-called organic farming). Some authors examine the global footprint associated with the growth of food consumption (especially on crop land), and the challenges of a continued intensification of production in a more sustainable way. Part 2 examines how globalisation processes are regulated and governed by policy regimes at various levels. This includes both actions of supranational bodies such as IMF and WTO, and the impact of national trade policies. Special attention is given to the role of agricultural subsidies and the neoliberal trade reforms of the last three decades. National case studies include the United States' agricultural policy contributions to globalization, using the concept of historical food regimes, and dramatic policy changes in China. Part 3 focuses on the growing importance of transnational corporations, not only in driving world trade but also in shaping the nature of every aspect of the agri-food chain, from producing inputs, to processing, distribution and retailing. TNCs have been key drivers of globalisation; they have a worldwide approach to markets and

production that enables them to respond flexibly to new opportunities, maximizing scale economies, and sourcing both materials and labor globally. This part also deals with crucial transformations in the Global South, such as the so-called Green Revolutions (including the spread of genetically modified foods), integral to the spread of biotechnology from the West to different parts of the world. Other aspects include the rise of China, intellectual property regimes, the global division of labor and the financialization of farming. The authors stress the immense differences in farming around the world, generating increasing income inequalities, the demise of ecologically beneficial farming practices, the shedding of farm labor, the deskilling of labor, and the appropriation of physical and intellectual property rights. This, in turn, has fueled new rural and agrarian resistance movements such as Via Campesina. Part 4 addresses some of the current challenges to globalisation of the agri-food sector. Globalisation has also produced contrasting and contradictory outcomes on a local scale. This has stimulated the pursuit of alternative models to the dominant agri-industrial system, such as more ecologically sustainable production systems, alternative food networks, cooperative actions, etc. The paradox of the survival of family farming is stressed, together with attempts to redesign the food system along new lines (a 'multifunctional' and more holistic approach to agriculture including agrobiodiversity, new forms of production, the reduction of food chains, etc.).

It is clear that this handbook provides a wide and very rich overview of topics, themes, theoretical reflections and scholarly debates addressing recent transforma-

tions in global agriculture in its broadest terms. The volume excels due to a combination of wide perspectives with multiple foci. In general, the chapters are clear and concise, illustrating the wealth and depth of this research area. That makes this volume an excellent reference work and a sound point of departure for new research. Despite, or probably because of, the exhaustive ambition and the polyphonic nature of the work, the handbook offers no comprehensive analytical frame to study agriculture in the contemporary world. Many relevant concepts are mentioned, some in the introduction and others in the chapters, but none serve as guiding analytical tools (concepts such as food regimes, food security and food sovereignty, flexible accumulation, consumerism, agri-food networks etc.). Although local perspectives are prominently present, farmers and farmer movements as actors and agents in today's globalisation are largely lacking in this volume. A separate handbook on the producers of food, still the largest professional group in the world, would be a very welcome addition.

**Andreas Weiß: Asiaten in Europa. Begegnungen zwischen Asiaten und Europäern 1880–1914, Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh 2016, 314 S.**

Rezensiert von  
Katharina Middell, Leipzig

ten Promotionsschrift. Der weit ausgreifende Titel konkretisiert sich für „Europäer“ in Deutschland und Großbritannien, für „Asiaten“ in China, Indien und Japan. Es soll gezeigt werden, dass die Selbstwahrnehmung und -repräsentation Europas im Untersuchungszeitraum im Spannungsfeld von Moderne und Dekadenz – so die zentralen Begriffe – von zunehmend selbstbewusster auftretenden Asiaten beeinflusst wurde, deren auf eigenen historischen, religiösen und kulturellen Argumenten fußende Kritik an der westlichen Moderne zur Verstärkung einer in Europa um 1900 bereits angelegten Dekadenzwahrnehmung beitrug. Das in der Einleitung als thematisch zentral postulierte Gegensatzpaar „Moderne“/„Modernität“ und „Dekadenz“ wird sich, das sei vorweggenommen, nicht auf allen vom Autor untersuchten Bereichen der „Begegnungen“ wiederfinden.

Anders als die Einleitung, die den strukturellen Anforderungen an Qualifizierungsschriften hinsichtlich Theorie und Methoden, Forschungsstand, Fragestellung und Mehrwert der eigenen Arbeit entsprechen will und dabei oft umständlich geschrieben und manchmal auch unklar formuliert ist, sind die drei Kapitel („Die Vorstellungen voneinander“, „Begegnungen – sozialer Austausch und Öffentlichkeit“, „Bildungs-Debatten“) mit den empirischen Erhebungen des Autors in vielerlei Hinsicht erhellend. Die „Vorstellungen voneinander“ untersucht der Autor knapp anhand von Reisenden und geht ausführlicher auf britische und deutsche Asienrepräsentationen sowie die Beobachtungen von Indern, Japanern und Chinesen über Europa ein. Die differenzierte Betrachtung der wechselseitigen Wahrnehmung von „Asiaten“

Die Arbeit beruht auf einer 2013 an der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin verteidig-