

Matthias Middell (ed.): *The Routledge Handbook of Transregional Studies*, Abingdon: Routledge 2018, 407 p.

Reviewed by
George Lawson, London

This fascinating volume provides a showcase for “transregional studies”, an undertaking that combines global history with area studies, geography and sociology. It builds on a number of trends across the humanities and social sciences, particularly critiques of Eurocentrism and methodological nationalism, in order to highlight the importance of cultural encounters and spatial interactions to a range of issue-areas, from migration to music, and from development to diplomacy. The book highlights the spatial dimensions of these boundary-crossing interactions. If global history is concerned with the entanglements of peoples, institutions and ideas, and if area studies explores the character of particular geographies, transregional studies highlights the ways in which cross-boundary entanglements are central to how geographical formations of various kinds are generated and contested.

The book is a major undertaking, consisting of 70 chapters by scholars representing diverse traditions and issue-areas. It is divided into ten parts, each of which has an introductory commentary that sets the scene for the chapters that follow. Individual chapters are relatively short; I suspect most readers will dip in-and-out rather than read the volume cover-to-cover. Tak-

en as a whole, the volume demonstrates that regions should not be understood as stable, separate containers, but as the product of “mobilities of all kinds” (p. 11): “people, goods, currencies and capital, cultural patterns and ideas, viruses, or winds and waters” (p. 3). Not only do these diverse mobilities connect apparently distinct places, they also “produce new spatial constellations” (p. 58), from the idea of the Atlantic as a spatial complex to the notion of global religions and world literatures.

This is an immensely thought-provoking volume, which contains a great many insights. One example is the point, made by Geert Castryck (p. 92), that “the spatial imagination itself becomes an arena of global spatial action”. One does not have to think too hard or too long to see how powerful such imaginaries can be, from late 19th and early 20th century dreams of an Anglosphere that could unite the (white) English speaking peoples, to today’s Brexiteers, who combine a “little England” mentality with imperial nostalgia – a Global Britain 2.0 that will revive British power beyond the confines of rigid geographical alignments, such as that represented by the European Union (EU).

That assessment notwithstanding, one question I have is whether transregional studies is meant to serve as an umbrella for an assortment of approaches and issue-areas, or whether it is intended to be a new paradigm that can unify these approaches and issue-areas. If the former, then the volume works well. If the latter, it is not clear what serves as the intellectual, conceptual and analytical cores of such a project. There is nothing offered in this volume, for example, to match the scale of ambition represented by World Sys-

tems Theory, whose advocates see it as a means of unifying the social sciences. The view of transregional studies offered in this volume is more flexible, perhaps necessarily so. After all, the spatial complexes represented in the volume vary greatly, from historical empires to today's special economic zones. The spatial logics of these 'regions' are quite different. Empires, for example, were complex networks of trading posts, garrisons and settlements. The British imperial web included direct-rule colonies (e.g. India after 1857), settlement colonies (e.g. Australia), protectorates (e.g. Brunei), condominiums (e.g. Sudan), bases (e.g. Gibraltar), treaty ports (e.g. Shanghai), and spheres of influence (e.g. Argentina). This does not look much like the spatial logic of Shenzhen or Cayman Enterprise City, let alone that of universities, entrepreneurs and truth commissions, all of which are the subject of chapters in the book.

It would also have been interesting to see a little more comparison between these diverse spatial complexes. For example, imperial spaces are trans-scalar assemblages. So too are the 'complex intersections of territoriality and supraterritoriality' (p. 312) represented by internet governance, a topic that is expertly examined in the volume by Jan Aart Scholte. Yet these two types of trans-scalar assemblages are forged through quite different spatial imaginaries and practices. They also present quite different challenges. For one thing, technology is hyper-mobile, making it difficult to regulate and tax. It hops and skips between geographies, leaving a "polycentric" footprint (p. 317), one that is part of a complex architecture that reaches beyond that conjured by empires. Do the two relate? If so,

how? Not only would such comparisons have made for a rich intellectual exercise, they would have also given the volume a little more coherence. As things stand, the tremendous diversity of the book is both its greatest strength and, I think, its only drawback.

I would also have liked to see a little more attention paid to my home discipline, International Relations (IR). One of the central concerns of IR is territoriality. And, in the contemporary world, something unusual is happening to territoriality. On the one hand, a range of populists are trying to "take back control", reterritorializing competences around trade, law, migration, and the like. On the other hand, the world is home to an ever-thickening space of international administration. Banking, securities, insurance, accounting, auditing, corporate governance, insolvency, creditor rights and money laundering are now subject to international standards by bodies ranging from the G20 to the Financial Stability Board. These developments are not limited to the Euro-Atlantic world; witness the institutional infrastructure supporting a range of south-south ventures, from the BRICS to the Belt and Road initiative. In this way, convergent and divergent pressures are co-present in the contemporary world. And they are fostered by spatial imaginaries and practices that are well worth examination. A British south Asian, for example, can hold both British citizenship and an EU passport (for now), listen to American music, eat Indian food, work as part of a global supply chain, and send remittances to their "home" country. These multiple spatial identities and practices are central to the functioning of contemporary world politics. They should,

I think, also be central to the agenda of transregional studies.

**Kris Bezdecny / Kevin Archer (eds.):
Handbook of Emerging 21st-Century
Cities, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar
2018, 451 p.**

Rezensiert von
Friedrich Lenger, Gießen

Die anzuzeigende Publikation erfüllt die wichtigsten Erwartungen, die man gemeinhin an ein Handbuch richtet, nicht. Weder bietet es eine Kodifizierung gesicherten Wissens, noch stellt es eine Handreichung dar, mit deren Hilfe sich der Gegenstand umfassend erschließen ließe. Ersteres erlaubt wohl der Gegenstand – Städte, meist Großstädte des 21. Jh.s – noch nicht. Aber eine systematische Orientierung hätte gleichwohl angestrebt werden können, obwohl das Adjektiv „emerging“ nicht nur im Titel sondern auch in allen fünf Abschnittsüberschriften Verwendung findet. Aber was da auftaucht oder zum Vorschein kommen soll, bleibt einigermassen nebulös. Und das obschon die Herausgeber in einem knappen einleitenden Beitrag zumindest andeuten, welche Herausforderungen von der Verlagerung der Urbanisierungsdynamik in den asiatischen und afrikanischen Raum für eine Begrifflichkeit ausgehen könnten, die in Geographie, Soziologie und Stadtplanung gleichermaßen von weit zeitlich zurückreichenden europäischen Entwicklun-

gen geprägt ist. Diesen Herausforderungen und der Aufgabe, einen Sammelband zu aktuellen städtischen Entwicklungen überzeugend zu strukturieren, wird man indessen nicht gerecht, wenn man sich damit begnügt, „working toward a more holistic conceptualization of what cities are, and can mean, as the world continues to rapidly urbanize“ (S. 5).

Dies zeigt gleich der erste Abschnitt, welcher der „emerging city theory“ gewidmet ist. Denn was die spezifisch theoretische Qualität der hier versammelten vier Aufsätze ausmacht, bleibt unklar. So diskutiert John Lauerman die Planung sportlicher Großereignisse wie der Olympischen Spiele als Werkzeug städtischer Politik, Patrick Moriarty und Damon Honnery die Schwierigkeiten bei der Schaffung ökologisch nachhaltiger Städte, während Richard Bower die CittaSlow-Bewegung vorstellt, deren Ziele aber eben nicht auf die Urbanisierungsdynamiken in Asien oder Afrika bezogen werden, sondern an je einem australischen und finnischen Beispiel illustriert werden. Und Mitherausgeberin Bezdecny beteuert, „the city will be THE site of contestation in the 21st century“ (S. 81), ohne dass der durch ihren Beitrag abgeschlossene Theorieteil viel zum Verständnis dieser vielschichtigen Konflikte oder ihres spezifisch städtischen Charakters beigetragen hätte.

In den folgenden vier Abschnitten des Handbuchs tritt dann zumindest die nichtwestliche Welt etwas stärker ins Profil. Yin-wah Chu ordnet die aktuelle Urbanisierungsplanung der chinesischen Volksrepublik in einen größeren zeitlichen Zusammenhang ein und zeigt zum einen, dass die seit den 1950er Jahren über das Meldewesen gesteuerte Verhinderung des