

***Translocality. The Study of Globalizing Processes from a Southern Perspective*, by Ulrike Freitag and Achim von Oppen, eds., Leiden: Brill, 2010, 452 pp.**

While modern publishing strategies have long enhanced the attraction of academic books by adding color to their content, few books offer a genuine visual attraction which corresponds meaningfully with the title and topic as well. As one ideal realization, such correspondence has been achieved in the 400-page book *Translocality*, briefly described as “World Map by al-Idrisi, 1154 A.D.” the cover illustration highlights translocality as a concept which is defined anew throughout the book. This map, unlike the (now) universal direction of geographic illustrations, places the south on the top and the north at the bottom of the sheet. Its historical significance, current shortcomings and timeless inaccuracy notwithstanding, Tabula Rogeriana serves as a model of geographic deconstruction and historical transformation, just as the book demands conceptually, as well as methodologically.

Divided into four sections, the book includes fourteen chapters which put much effort into amending area studies as was done previously. Paying more attention to historical context, focusing on non-European sites of connectivity and change, prioritizing pluralism and “multiperspectivity” (p. 18), avoiding Euro-centrism and ‘global’ absolutism, drawing upon non-elite actors and

actions on varying scales, and vehemently distinguishing — yet connecting and re-defining — local, global and translocal (which should not be necessarily taken as synonymous with global), the book succeeds in offering a new thematic field as well as a less biased line of doing research in local-global studies.

Part one, *Marginal Mobilities*, includes four chapters and discusses forms of mobility and (dis)order along borders and among spaces. Chapter one focuses on marginal female migrants in the Wodaabe communities in West Africa as a case to counter the male-dominated discourse of mobility in the post-modern era. With much emphasis on female agency, mobility, and autonomy in a society influenced by Islam, this chapter concludes — on a more general level — that female actors can be as independent of the power of the place, as inherently mobile in the face of borders and fixities, and — with their mobility — as socially and economically influential, as men could. Chapter two continues on similar tracks about Chinese female migrants to Europe (specifically France), and its conclusion is that these female actors of translocality — mobile, autonomous, forming ‘gendered’ globalization patterns, and from different backgrounds — are yet to be considered marginal. The third chapter dives back into history and narrates personal stories of a number of Jordanian and Syrian soldiers who fought for foreign armies and on translocal battlefields during WWI and WWII. Chapter four contains the results of a study on translocal communities, i.e., mining camps in Burkina Faso. Such heterotopian spaces, as the writer sees them, are translocal sites in which seemingly unrelated, stigmatized individuals gather and give new meanings to non-urban, yet urbanizing spaces.

*Spaces on the Move* includes three chapters; chapter five studies WWII British propaganda in the Swahili military press as attempts to *localize* the non-African

sites of war as part of a coherent imperial space, ultimately to justify the East African soldiers' deployment to distant battlefields. Following the book cover's message, this chapter examines how far visual and textual spatial arguments serve power politics on the move. Chapter six entails a discussion on the dynamicity of regions as spaces which constantly define their center, boundaries, as well as the relevant, yet distant points outside their borders, as is the case with Kabylia, Algeria. Following this dotted "history of movement" (p. 163), chapter seven relocates to central Africa during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century where complex real and fictitious kinship idioms in time and space among the nobility bewildered the colonial Portuguese.

*Locality and Beyond* is the focus of part three. Chapters eight to eleven make a journey from autochthony, through heritage, religion and fashion, to African towns and township. Belonging is chapter eight's keyword; belonging and thus excluding the constantly changeable 'outsiders,' interestingly not from the insiders' space, but from open access to global resources. The following chapter focuses on the extra-legal, human-agency-driven production of *heritage* as "almost any sort of intergenerational exchange or relationship" (p. 230) in the context of local identity formation processes in Lithuania. Chapter ten evaluates how and to what extent the Islamic world system(s) pose multiple challenges to assumptions such as globality's capitalistic roots and homogeneity by examining the question of headgear and fashion among Indian Muslims. Chapter eleven rescales by examining the extent to which local heritage interacts with global resources in the urban growth of a number of South African cities.

Smoothly moving beyond locality, part four examines a major focus of translocality studies, i.e. *Alternate Globalities*. Chapter twelve's focus is on religious organization of global networks and adoption of alternate globalities in South Asia, concluding that diverse Muslim globalities are not void of economic

interests and that Muslim networking has reached a complex and ever-stretching translocal status — distinct, yet parallel to that of the West. Chapter thirteen takes up the issue of female agency and of translocal knowledge production in three Muslim societies in the face of local-global tensions. Eventually, the final chapter in this volume moves westward by focusing on the unique and formative (media and ethnic) space that Turks occupy in Germany. Such space, the chapter reveals, is a conglomerate of migration and foreignness, citizenship and belonging.

The general conclusion that may be drawn from this inspiring edited volume is that — although researchers from the areas researched do not appear on the list of its contributors — *Translocality's* writers have taken a constructive step away from eurocentrism and globalization. Its well-structured chapters, with their informative and extensive footnotes, offer a wide range of topics and tools, flexible and interdisciplinary. Last but not least, the constant urge of the volume to take translocality both as a concept and a research methodology should be taken as its major contribution. Translocality dexterously offers both an abstract as well as a practical research model to follow in furthering our understanding of under-researched 'translocales' of the world. It is an invitation to understand locality — beyond Appadurai's "context-driven" and "context-generative" dichotomy<sup>1)</sup> — as changing; changing itself as well as its context.

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1) Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at large: Cultural dimensions of globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 186.