

GLOBALISING WORLDS AND NEW ECONOMIC CONFIGURATIONS, edited by Christine Tamásy and Mike Taylor. Farnham, England and Burlington, USA: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008.

This book is made up of 24 chapters that have direct and indirect linkages to topics and aspects of globalisation that reflect on different geographical contexts. The collection of papers is derived from the 2006 meeting in Auckland N.Z. of the Commission on the Dynamics of Economic Spaces, an active and productive group of scholars working within the International Geographical Union. This meeting brought together scholars from different disciplines, but particularly economic geography, involved in discussions regarding geographical perspectives of major issues of globalization.

Looking through the prism of economic geography the book is aiming to improve our understanding of responses at different spatial levels to a variety of challenges and opportunities in a globalized world. With this purpose the editors' strategy is to provide effective and provocative illustrations of writings on strengths as well as on weaknesses and limitations regarding the theory of globalization, or what it may be termed. The book revolves around seven parts of distinctive geographical issues of globalization processes: cross-border business relations; international investment flows; production chains; the dynamics and configurations of enterprise clusters; the dynamics of human capital resources; business vulnerability; and the final part which explores a number of issues concerning New Zealand's economy within the global economy.

The introductory guidance sets out to put the following chapters in context and facilitate their critical reading. The introductory chapter provides a synoptic review of theoretical issues and the context of what are regarded as "new economic configurations" through reviewing the different papers that make up this collection. The introduction, as well as other chapters in the book, put forward an agenda for future research on the geographical dimensions of globalization, and on its spatio-economical outcomes at different geographical levels. When tying up the book with all its chapters we may acknowledge the claim that the theoretical underpinnings of the recent flood of globalization studies is often less than totally clear, and a critical view of its related issues is a demanding task that this book has taken one step forward to clarify it by debating and re-evaluating theoretical and empirical issues concerning this notion.

The first of the three chapters that deal with cross-border business interactions explores the impact of trade regulations, forms of inter-firm contacts and relative power of firms within the web of their business linkages, within the industrial space and its configuration in latecomer countries into the international trade. Some of these ideas and their spatial outcomes appear further down in the book when links between entrepreneurs are investigated in the case of developed market economies in Norway, Germany and the USA. The following three chapters explore a major

issue in the globalization debate: the impact of international investment flows on international, national and regional scales. The prime conclusion is that there are as many different patterns as case studies presented, yet most probably these are branches of activities related and very much dependent on local response when the smaller spatial unit is under scrutiny.

The automobile industry and the globalizing networks within which it is embedded is the heart of the cluster of papers dealing with production chains. Three of the chapters look on the spatial effect of introducing new production lines into Poland and the fourth on the de-territorialising automotive production from Korea, all of which discuss the economic gain and losses faced by different regions. The fourth part explores cluster developments in a globalising competitive world from three perspectives: cluster identification, reconfiguration of production and the emergence of new innovative capacity. The current (volatile) capitalist economic environment appears as a major player in these papers and issues of agglomeration, proximity, competition and competitiveness, entrepreneurship, innovation, regional development and regional policies are debated among others. The fifth part draws together four chapters on labour, knowledge and entrepreneurship all of which are major items of the paradigm of how human capital resources are affected by the globalization steamroller. Part six deals with issues of globalization associated with business vulnerability drawing on case studies on the aviation industry in Malaysia, football clubs in Norway (a case study that deserves a book on its own) and the of transportation infrastructure in a commodity chain in the USA. The last part encompasses four cases representing the new economic configurations as seen in the antipode of New Zealand. This part explores the local context, economic conditions, institutional role and the local adjustments needed to survive in a globalized world. Trying to put all this rich harvest into one sentence, I might say that it makes a concrete attempt to put forward a theoretically informed assessment of the major spatial issues concerning globalization. The book provides an assessment across a variety of domains in which this notion has been used while showing and criticizing, at the same time, its added value to the literature on the evolving new and changing old economic configurations.

I might sound somewhat orthodox by stating that the book, as it becomes common in many recent books concerning economic geography, neglects a deeper discussion on rural economies under the globalization process. Even if scholars may argue that the major transformation in economic configurations, particularly in developed economies, are largely related to the urban-industrial space, transformations in the rural space as a result of globalization are not absent. Rural space is a multifunctional space and the share of people employed in agriculture is declining and taken over by other sectors of the economy which are affected by the rolling on globalization. When it comes to economic configurations a deep and wide discussion can be beneficial for the rural space, a discussion which should be not perceived as a mere extension of the urban biased current debate.

The globalization concept has caused persistent headaches for many scholars active in the field. That concept has been elevated to an almost sacred status with the power it enables those using it to explain much of the current dynamics in the capitalist space. I will argue that there is a clear need to rethink the explanatory role of the concept in explaining spatial transformations, and to allow more conceptual flexibility in the debate about its role in analysis and in practice. The over sale of the concept is a major item of discussion throughout a number of chapters, and its role in developing and diffusing innovations and knowledge stands at the core of others.

Altogether, scholars and students of economic geography, particularly on issues of globalization and its resultant “economic configurations”, will appreciate this book. It is a well-knit package of papers dealing with an important current development process in the local and global capitalist economic space. The editors have done a good job in putting together a cluster of papers into one scholarly basket, thus providing those interested in the subject an in-depth view of the definitions, notions, concepts, phenomena, underlying processes and issues central to the current debates on globalization and its spatial products. It enables the readers to identify and reflect on the factors, relations and spatial products that together constitute the core of the current debate.

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