

Remaking the Global Economy. Edited by Jamie Peck and Henry Wai-chung Yeung. London: Sage Publications, 2003. xviii and 256 pp., diags., notes, and index. (ISBN 0 76 19 4898 pbk).

Reviewed by Trevor J. Barnes, Department of Geography, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia.

When I first saw this book's cover taken from Layla Curtis's World Political Wall Map (2001, [www.laylacurtis.com](http://www.laylacurtis.com)), I thought, "Why choose that?" It looked like something that hung on the easel at my English junior school in the early 1960s. On closer inspection, however, it is something quite different. With surgeon-like dexterity, albeit in her case wielding a Stanley knife, Curtis creates map collages, cutting countries loose from their original locations, pasting them into new ones. The fit is so good that from afar the World Political Wall Map appears as it should. But on scrutiny Cape Cod turns out to be South Korea, Texas is Myanmar, and the heartlands of the mid-West are actually Inner Mongolia. Miss Elvins, my schoolteacher, would be in deep shock.

The point of Curtis's geographical re-imaginings, however, is to destabilise our ingrained presumptions about nationhood, location, and the configuration of the world. Ostensibly solid geographical facts turn out not to be so solid, not to be learnt by rote at junior school, but plastic and re-arrangeable, pointing to other possible worlds.

Peter Dicken, the British economic geographer, and for whom Remaking the Global Economy is written in celebration and tribute, has done his own fair share of geographical re-imagining, pointing to other possible academic worlds. In his most well-known book, Global Shift (first published in 1986, now in its fourth edition), Dicken tries to re-imagine what economic geography would look like if it took seriously the whole world, rather than focussing as the discipline did for so long on only tiny bits of it. While perhaps not as radical as cartographically inserting China where the United States used to be, and certainly not requiring fine motor skills with an exacto knife, Dicken's project in its own way is just as transformative, calling for an equally deft touch. Working through Dicken's project of understanding the global economy *geographically* is the tie that binds the essays collected in this volume

The two opening pieces by the editors – the Preface and a formal introductory chapter – are lively and affectionate, conveying the significance of the achievements of a fundamentally modest man, Peter Dicken. Missing, though, and ironic given Dicken's repeated emphasis in his own work on the power of place, is an understanding of how place influenced Dicken. Dicken (p. 41) is fond of quoting Marc Chagall who said for every painter, "a certain essence, a certain aroma of his native land will remain in his work." We never find out the "essence" and "aroma" of the place that shapes Dicken.

The remainder of the book is divided into three sections: global flows, global knowledge, and global rules. Peter Dicken himself authors the first essay, "'Placing' firms." In scrupulously clear prose, and backed by well-judged empirical data, Dicken presents a forceful exposition of one of his best known ideas: all firms, even the most modern, the largest, the most multinational, are deeply and continually shaped by the place in which they originate. There is no escaping geography; place goes all the way down, or in the case of the corporate hierarchy, all the way up to the top. As a thesis it provides a powerful disciplinary justification, and an intellectual agenda. Reading Dicken's essay, you understand why this tribute volume was organised.

Of the other three essays in this section, Erica Schoenberger's "The globalization of environmental management" is the most engaging. The chapter is concerned with understanding

large-scale corporate involvement in the recent sweeping privatisation of urban and industrial infrastructure and the management of environmental inputs and wastes. Like Dicken, Schoenberger knows how to tell compelling corporate stories. In her case, it is of the French firm Vivendi that in 2000 garnered close to 20 billion euros from its water and waste management investments alone. Unlike Dicken, however, Schoenberger also adroitly draws upon supplementary, macro-scale concepts couched in terms of the larger capitalist economy, particularly, David Harvey's "spatial fix," and Jamie Peck's "institutional fix," to explain the broader scene of which Vivendi is only one player. Implicitly, it raises the issue of why Dicken himself eschews these kinds of political economic explanations. It is another topic that might have been usefully raised in the introduction.

Part two on global knowledge begins with two very fine essays, one by Meric Gertler, the other by Ash Amin. Gertler's "Spatial life of things" is an update on his own research agenda launched a decade ago about the importance of regional culture for high tech manufacturing. On the surface, regional culture seems anachronistic; something best left to historical and old style American cultural geographers. But as Gertler incisively shows, regional culture remains vital for understanding this sector on the leading edge of modernity. Driven by tacit knowledge – knowledge you know, but cannot codify – high tech is necessarily embedded in the unarticulated regional culture and institutions that make such knowledge possible. Take them away, and nothing is left. In this sense, high tech "things" always enjoy a "spatial life;" that is, are tethered to particular places, and rooted in regional ways of life.

Amin's essay is along the same lines, but he adopts what he calls an "anthropological" approach to cognitive processes that produce economic innovation. Anthropological here means an approach inspired by science studies (not classical ethnography) emphasizing scientific practice, and carried out within specific networks of relations connecting both the animate and the inanimate. Cognitive processes producing innovation happen only inside the network; outside lies only neglect and obscurity. For Amin, the importance of these networks is in their geography, and conceived differently than Gertler's regions, or Dicken's places. Amin's conception is topological where proximity is less important than the strength of geographical inter-connections. Bruno Latour (1997), a key writer in science studies, says, "I can be one metre away from someone in the next telephone booth, and be nevertheless more closely connected to my mother 6000 miles away." That is, the strongest ties in a network are not necessarily the closest. For Amin this means that economic geographers should be less fixated on particular places or even regions, but more concerned with the relations among them.

The other two chapters in this section are at opposite intellectual poles. Nigel Thrift's "The might of 'might'" is scattered, sometimes opaque, often having nothing to do with any of the book's themes, but in places brilliant and insightful. The discussion of mechanical writing – bar codes, the.sig file, computer programming languages – left me breathless for more. But of course there wasn't any. Within a page (pp. 138-9) the discussion morphed into Buddhism, "club" and "den" environments, Aikido, and the Alexander Technique of bodily control. Anders Malberg's "Beyond the cluster" suffered from the opposite problem. While thorough and clear, he would have done well to take his title seriously and gone beyond the cluster, the discussion of which was too straight and narrow.

The last part of the book on global rules was also mixed. Adam Tickell and Jamie Peck's useful readable chapter, "Making global rules," promises a geography of the idea of neoliberalism, but in the end is much more of a history. They tell an important story, but lacking (and this may well be because of space constraints) was an explicit theorization of the three stage

historical schema they suggest: proto- (pre-1980), roll-back (1980s), and roll-out (1990s) neoliberalism. General questions around all stage-like schemes are germane here: what drives the development of the stages? What accounts for the exact transition points? How separate are the periods? Amy Glasmeier and Michael Conroy's "Globalization" is nicely written, but the long first part about the development of WTO and GATT is very descriptive, and the second more interesting part that begins to illustrate the systematic inequalities produced by GATT is too short. More significantly, it fails to deliver on its important first-page agenda of showing that "economic geography should rest at the core of all discussions of globalization" (p. 182). It simply has not much geography. Neil Brenner's rigorous "'Glocalization' as state spatial strategy" suffers from the opposite problem, over theorization. A Bob Jessop devotee, Brenner produces a large number of symmetrical conceptual boxes to understand changing governance structures in Europe over the last four decades. As a project it is much too large to fit within the 18 pages it is given, and consists of a skeletal, abstract structure with only the barest hint of empirical flesh. Fortunately between the Scylla of over description and the Charybdis of over theorisation is Ray Hudson's "Global production systems and European integration" that closes the book. Judiciously deploying a limited set of conceptual ideas – "asset exploiting" and "asset augmenting" investments are his two favourites – Hudson offers an absorbing, analytically keen, and full geographical account of changes in the European regional economic scene over the last ten years. Hudson is in complete command of his material, and as good as this chapter is, you feel you are only scratching the surface of his knowledge.

There is one final issue: the production quality of the book. While the outside cover is brilliant, the inside typography is dreadful. It has more typographical errors than I have ever seen, particularly, the insertion of misplaced hyp-hens (up to four or five a page and like a type setter's tic). In addition, letters are left out, capitalization occurs where there should be none, and diagrams are poorly drawn. One of the editors told me that clean, camera-ready copy was given to Sage. Given the modus operandi of international publishing, this makes me think that the editors, Peter Dicken, and us the readers, are yet once more victims of globalisation.

So, as with many collections, this book is a mixed bag. At its best, however, it makes a forceful case for a geographical understanding of globalisation. Globalisation is not seamless, homogenous, levelling geographical difference as it goes, but utterly dependent upon spatial variegation, disjuncture, and distinction. It rests on the importance of place, Peter Dicken's central claim, making the book a fitting testament.

*Key words:* Peter Dicken, globalization, neo-liberalism

*Reference*

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## **Cover Sheet**

Trevor J Barnes  
Department of Geography  
1984 West Mall  
University of British Columbia  
Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z2  
CANADA

Tel. 604.822.5204  
Fax, 604.822.6150  
E-mail, [tbarnes@geog.ubc.ca](mailto:tbarnes@geog.ubc.ca)