

such “gatherings of globalizing elites” (p. 61) as the Summit of the Americas.

*Globalization and Society* is an extremely welcome and long-needed addition to the literature on globalization. Its chapters cover a diversity of topics and offer great insight into global differentiation. Most of this volume, however, takes as a given that economic globalization is the primary causal variable for change. While the topics covered are comprehensive in scope, providing opportunities for critique, analysis, and even protest of globalization, they do little to call into question its top-down formation, both discursively and geographically. The top-down nature of the volume is neither deliberate nor easy to challenge, since it reflects precisely the ways in which we—scholars and laypeople alike—tend to approach globalization. When we begin our studies from the vantage point of global structures influencing particular localities and from theoretical frameworks into which case studies can be fit, we have already ceded the grounding of globalization to elites acting in the name of elite formations. As this structural framework is built, and located in what world systems theory would call the metropolitan core, where is the rest of the world? What possibilities are we foreclosing by working through the prism of the global?

Despite the dearth of case studies in the volume that cover places and subjects outside of North America, Europe, and Australia, the volume as a whole contains first-rate articles, and I would be pleased to include it in courses on comparative-historical sociology, globalization, political economy or area studies. I am advocating neither barefoot empiricism nor an exclusive focus on the local. I find the thesis of this book and the detail provided by its authors’ case studies extremely useful for taking on prevalent notions of globalization as a process that leads to greater and greater uniformity across state and regional boundaries. What if, however, we were to take globalization itself as a thesis subject to critique—not in the conventional sense of hypothesizing on its novelty, but calling into question its foundational nature? Is this continued insistence on our parts upon the primacy and causal valence of economic globalization that is troubling—since it is precisely that insistence that has granted globalization such agentic power. It

is, in fact, as if globalization were acting rather than government policies, corporations, development agencies and, of course, workers, protesters, organizers and scholars. The ascription of such agency to globalization on the one hand, and the economy on the other, reintroduces the very notion of convergence that the authors’ work is so effective at problematizing. In so doing, it also leaves little room for conceiving of spaces outside of Europe and North America as being central to both challenging and reproducing the globalization thesis in both its manifestations—as convergence and differentiation.

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*As Borders Bend: Transnational Spaces on the Pacific Rim*, by **Xiangming Chen**. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005. 333 pp. \$34.95 paper. ISBN: 0-7425-0094-2.

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The relatively autochthonous development of China since its 1949 Revolution and its rapprochement with the West, e.g., China’s permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council and membership in the World Trade Organization, have altered the course of China’s trajectory on the world stage. Using a comparative political economy approach, Xiangming Chen in *As Borders Bend: Transnational Spaces on the Pacific Rim* presents a richly informed work built on historical research, statistical data, and personal interviews that charts the pathways of China’s ascendancy and the emergence of a China-centric Asia-Pacific region.

Exploring concretely the socio-historical conjunctures of China’s development within the past twenty years, Chen undertakes the formidable task of studying seven transborder subregions: 1) the Greater Southeast China Subregion (GSCS) includes parts of China’s Guangdong and Fujian provinces, Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan; 2) the Bohai/Yellow Sea Subregion (BYSS) includes China’s Liaoning and Shandong provinces, the west coast of South Korea, and Japan’s Kyushu region; 3) the Greater Tumen Subregion (GTS) includes Russia’s Far East Khasan region, North Korea’s Free Trade

Zone, and China's Jilin province; 4) the Greater Mekong Subregion connected to China's Yunnan province includes parts of Myanmar (Burma), Lao People's Democratic Republic, Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam; 5) the Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-GT); 6) the Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore Growth Triangle (IMS-GT); and 7) the Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA). Examined individually and comparatively, these subregions are spatially, socially, economically, ethnically, linguistically, culturally, and historically linked to China. Complementing this analysis, Chen presents an excellent discussion of the European Union and the United States-Mexico transborder subregions. As Chen points out, the global-local linkages of these transborder subregions extend beyond their cores and into their peripheries. The permeability of these boundaries facilitates the movement of capital, technology, information, and people between countries.

Chen uses four powerful analytical lenses to analyze the development taking place in these subregions. The economic lens is used to examine the global-local comparative advantage of transborder subregions. The political lens focuses on the de-centering of the state in transborder subregions at the institutional and spatial levels. Chen advances the thesis that transborder subregions with local autonomy and market-state-led development policies (e.g., the GSCS subregion) experience rapid economic development and greater global-local integration. However, where local autonomy is limited and interstate-led development policies are pursued (e.g., the GTS subregion), development and global-local integration lag behind. It should be noted, however, that while the state may grant relative autonomy to some regions, it can withdraw some of this local autonomy, as Chen rightly points out, when it comes to issues of national security and the spread of epidemics (e.g., SARS).

Through the social capital lens, Chen analyzes the significant role that the Chinese diaspora has played in the formation of transborder subregions. Chen, however, makes an important distinction. Although the present form of social capital is important, its present manifestation is the result of its articulation with globalization in the current conjuncture

and not simply the result of the socio-historical legacies of the Chinese presence throughout Asia.

Finally, the spatial lens takes into account topographical features, geographical proximity, and cross-border infrastructures and transportation links within subregions. Here Chen makes an interesting observation: the proximity of transborder subregions does not necessarily translate into economic growth and integration. For example, although the geographical distance between Taiwan and mainland China is less than 300 km., the political distance is difficult to bridge.

Though Chen is aware that bending borders may produce new spaces of contestation, the use of additional analytical lenses could have shed more light on the violation of human, labor, and political rights: labor conditions for women, men, and children and wage disparities, the lack of representative democratic forms of government and civil liberties, and ecological degradation. In addition, the sustainability of the development process is contingent on accessibility to natural resources, e.g., water and petroleum. How will such demand by China and the subregions of Asia (and India) impact the development process in developed and developing countries? It should be acknowledged that the sustained development of transborder subregions is conditional on how they confront and cope with these very important social and global exigencies.

*As Borders Bend: Transnational Spaces in the Pacific Rim* is a clear elaboration and analysis of the emerging trends of a China-centric Asia-Pacific region and China's current global positioning. Chen's work is a major contribution to the fields of international political economy and transborder development studies. It will be appreciated by advanced graduate students interested in development and development specialists. In an age of globalization, where complexity, uncertainty, and hybridity abound, Xiangming Chen has done a remarkable job in charting the trajectories of borders bending.