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As Borders Bend: Transnational Spaces on the Pacific Rim. By Xiangming Chen. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005. Pp. xxii+331. \$89.00 (cloth); \$34.95 (paper).

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As Borders Bend is an important book about regionalism in Asia, which concentrates on subnational units and takes an explicit comparative approach. It covers seven transborder subregions, with most detail centered on those at the southeastern (with Hong Kong and Taiwan), northeastern (two, one around the Bohai/Yellow Sea, and the other around the Tumen river), and southwestern corners of China (near the Mekong River, including much of northern Southeast Asia). With the other three subregions in southern and eastern Southeast Asia and the northeastern ones ranging across Korea, Japan, and the Russian Far East, this ambitious volume seeks to reconceptualize the transformation of most of Asia over the past two decades. Xiangming Chen optimistically argues that borders are changing from barriers into bridges, while recognizing as temporary some rebordering amidst widespread debordering. His approach sees controls falling from below, despite some moves from above to reassert them.

Comparisons cover the seven subregions within Asia and also variations between the opening of borders in this continent and in Europe and North America. Proposing an integrated framework, Chen looks at each subregion in terms of economic, political, sociocultural, and spatial dimensions. He generally sees the positive effects of global-local economic links, finding benefits from decentralization and a rise of local autonomy that reactivate cross-border social capital, following many decades of the Cold War and other restrictions. Chen especially values the role of Chinese ethnic identity, kinship ties, and linguistic similarity in forging social networks. In the two northeastern subregions he focuses more on the Korean diaspora, finding its effects positive but more limited because of less extensive and strong ethnic identity and ties and more powerful political and security concerns. Above all, we learn about the rise of China through transborder regions, where provincial governments play a role, but the main forces are social networks rather than state power. In contrast to formal regional integration led by interstate agreements and based on rules in Europe and North America, Chen points to largely informal arrangements in Asia driven by market activities and only supplemented by state action. He makes the case for paying close attention to social factors in explaining the extraordinary pace of economic integration that has been occurring in much of Asia.

The breadth and systematic nature of this book will make it attractive for many social scientists who, in teaching or research, want to cover globalization, social capital, spatial reorganization, and regionalism in Asia. It offers useful material on social factors behind economic devel-

opment. There are, however, some disappointing aspects of the book. First, the social coverage falls short in treating criminalization of borders and linkages between the state and groups authorized to seize the cross-border opportunities that arise. This matters especially for the Tumen and Mekong River subregions. With more research (English sources and Chinese sources stressing positive developments do not fill in large gaps in knowledge) and additional analytical categories, Chen could have probed beyond brief references to some problems into genuine exploration into the linkages between politics and social capital in the most problematic subregions and others, too. Second, the social factors listed deserve more explanation and comparison. The best coverage is for the Greater Southeast China subregion, but it is not clear that in other subregions politics and social capital should not be treated differently. Third, the role of the state deserves more analysis. Are social networks operating in lieu of state power or as an extension of that power? Does the fact that China's leaders are determined to raise comprehensive national power rapidly matter? How do rivalries between states operate in the various subregions? Have they killed prospects for the Tumen subregion? Are Japan and China competing to shape the Mekong River subregion along different axes? The author's optimism might have been tempered if such questions were addressed. There should be more politics in this book, and more international relations, which would provide material for enhancing its sociological contribution.

Even those wishing for more depth will likely appreciate much in this book. For many doubtful about globalization, this is an eye-opening portrayal of how it can be turned to great advantage. Others interested in how China's influence is spreading will find comparisons of the seven areas richly informative. Moreover, some may appreciate the significance of how regionalism is taking shape in Asia despite the rising force of nationalism in many countries. The comparative analysis will be welcome, too, for its mix of social science interests, especially highlighting spatial integration as a theme with wide implications. Increasingly, we should anticipate courses that compare Asian patterns of social and spatial organization with those in the countries earlier deemed to be the centers of globalization. While Chen may be too sanguine in regarding rebordering by states troubled by the effects of open borders as a temporary deviation from the main currents of transformation in Asia, he has provided many of the tools for studying the changing role of borders and of Chinese networks that cross those borders.