



## Book Review

*Routledge Handbook of Transformative Global Studies*. S. A. Hamed Hosseini, James Goodman, Sara C. Motta, and Barry K. Gills. (eds). 2021. New York: Routledge. 582 pages, ISBN 113-8-6011-28 Hardcover (\$238.47)/Kindle (\$52.95)

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As various scholars have noted, Globalization Studies and Global Studies literature has grown exponentially since the 1980s from almost no mentions of the word “globalization” prior to its first usage in the business press into the millions of mentions by 2011 (Steger and James 2019). This trend has been accompanied by a proliferation of academic attention, in the form of books, journal articles, academic centers, disciplines, and professional associations. Some may, therefore, wonder about the utility of yet one more big book of globalization. Thus, with 38 individually authored chapters dealing with a wide range of global issues, problems, and challenges, this *Handbook of Transformative Global Studies* is impressive for its ability to be timely even in this competitive field. What sets S.A. Hosseini, James Goodman, Sara C. Motta, and Barry K. Gills’ volume apart is that it is positioned squarely within the framework of “critical” global studies. This distinction serves as a clear signpost to those seeking texts that start from the standpoint that the lifeworld is under threat and that humans can do something to address global crises and create new opportunities. Thus, it also marks out a simultaneously critical but hopeful stance. Insofar as the combined authors produce a dialogue between crisis and hope, the *Handbook* persuasively



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articulates, in the volume's editors' words, "a provisional manifesto for an agenda for transformative global studies." This agenda is denoted in five points: 1) a self-reflexive commitment to social justice and economic democracy; 2) a focus on being counter-hegemonic, anti-hegemonic, and/or decolonizing, in order to "highlight questions of power and positionality across multiple dimensions including class, race, ethnicity, sex-gender, age, species, and ecology" (Hosseini et al. 2021: 7); 3) to be "counter-Orientalist, post-Eurocentric, or otherwise critical of (neoliberal) globalism;" 4) that social relations are in flux and best understood through grounded analysis rather than "abstracted theorization or empiricism;" and, 5) that "domination and exclusion produce counter responses, which themselves seek to act on social forces, producing social transformations" and thus attention (and encouragement) must be paid to those counter responses. In all, the chapters address theory, practice, and alternatives to the current crisis defined variously in terms of climate, health, education, migration, religion, democracy, crime, security, war, and violence. For all these reasons, this edited volume should be commended.

The first section, made up of 10 chapters, focuses on theories of change and begins with a chapter from Hosseini and Gills which asks the age-old question of "what is to be done," especially in a period where being "critical" is increasingly complicated by crisis. One cannot help, after all, worrying about being too critical or overly pure when doing so might actually compound the problems we face (and the collected chapters herein indicate that things can and might get worse, though not necessarily because of critical thinking). Thus, the authors ask, "What does it mean to be 'critical' in an era of mounting acute contradictions and crises, where de-globalizing social forces are going 'global', destructive maldevelopment is outpacing constructive development, and where criticism runs out of steam as its objects of critique fast approach a historical dead-end? What new directions should, or could, a new radical transformative scholarship take?" (Hosseini and Gills 2021: 14). Most readers of this journal have been confronted with these or similar questions during the 2010s as we view the decade (and especially 2020) in comparison to previous decades and years. Still, the authors argue that "It is in fact radical change that is now the realistic; not a fantasy or illusion" (Hosseini and Gills 2021: 17). Indeed, the global pandemic of 2020 has turned what was seen as impossible a decade ago into debated ideas in the halls of government in 2021.

The second section, titled "Transformation in the Interregnum," is divided into three subsections of "socio-politics," "socio-ecology," and "socio-economics" that have between five and seven chapters each. The Socio-Politics section's seven chapters begin with an essay by Heikki Patomäki that takes seriously the work of futurologists Attali and Wagar who predict the likelihood of global war while also considering the violence causing contradictions within global capitalism formalized by Piketty which "could be overcome by collective actions and by building better common institutions" (Patomäki 2021: 152). Like others in this section, Patomäki's analysis of the political makes for trenchant and thoughtful critique. While there are moments of hope, it is the realism that this reviewer finds oddly refreshing. Overall, these authors do not relish the darkness, but they also avoid flippant optimism. The section on Socio-Ecology has five chapters, beginning with an essay by Ariell Salleh that details the gendered footprint of the global economy

along with the ways that the various international conferences on the environment have depressingly turned from discussions of a green new deal to a green new economy, with all its associated masculinist destructive force and noting that, “[t]he pursuit of competitive advantage through overproduction, free trade, and polluting intercontinental product shipments could only aggravate the entropy of natural planetary cycles” (Salleh 2021: 248). Salleh’s ecofeminist reading also points to the rise of a different transnational subaltern class that offers a guide to what she describes as “low footprint economies” (Salleh 2021: 256).

The seven chapters comprising the Socio-Economics sub-section offer critical insights into work, labor, global and monopoly capitalisms, and the commodification of public health. Deane Neubauer’s chapter on public health 4.0 summarizes how governments and industry frame the use of technology, big data, and artificial intelligence as essential for providing better health outcomes while also affording greater profits. While better health is the justification according to Neubauer, the accompanying expansion of surveillance is often left undiscussed. Thus, Neubauer’s focus on this health-related aspect of surveillance capitalism forces further questions of the commodification of privacy and what role the state might play in helping people reclaim privacy for real people instead of corporations.

The third, and final, section, titled “Alternative Futures: Beyond the Interregnum,” is comprised of nine chapters that offer examples of collective agency. While all the previous chapters also link theory and practice, this final section shows what people around the world are already doing to fuel future creative political changes through action. Put differently, if the present overdetermines the future, then these chapters show that how we choose to see the present matters for how we see the future too. While all 38 chapters tend towards a revisioning of the social contract in the Anthropocene, this section begins with an interesting essay informed by indigenous knowledge. In this initial chapter, Eija Ranta utilizes the Andean concept of *Bien Vivir*, which she translates as “living well,” to showcase a possible post-capitalist future made possible by solidarity. As she writes, “there is a need to restore solidarity with the diverse Indigenous groups that are suffering from the absence of a global politics of redistribution, and also from state co-option of their political agendas of self-determination” (Ranta 2021: 428). Further chapters explore examples of refugee justice, intersectionally related to feminism and ways to limit insecurity and precarity, subaltern politics, new forms of feminized resistance, and the future of revolution.

In all, this handbook offers 38 individually authored chapters that address a comprehensive list of issues and problems of global scale. Each chapter is quite lively and engaging. It is obvious from the numerous references to overlapping terms and specific references to the overall mission of the book that the editors should be commended for clearly articulating their vision. The book will serve as a resource to a broad audience within academia: undergrads from across the social sciences and humanities, graduate students narrowing their research agendas, scholars needing to refresh their course reading lists or their scholarly agendas and all those who are confounded by the mainstream insistence that offering minor tweaks to the existing system is sufficient to address the substantial problems of the day.

### **References**

Steger, Manfred B. and Paul James. 2019. *Globalization Matters: Theories, Histories, Issues*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.