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George Ritzer and Paul Dean, *Globalization: a Basic Text*. Wiley Blackwell, 2015, 543 pp. \$51 Paperback.

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Book Review

Back in the 1980s a former university instructor of mine once proclaimed provocatively that he doesn't read books but rather uses them. Even though he didn't mean that negatively (i.e., he doesn't use them merely as door-stoppers), it sounded to me than to be an over-instrumentalized concept of the "book". For me a "book" had been than (and still is now) and object with a special aura about it.

But these were, admittedly, the last days of the Guttenberg Galaxy, just before the eruption to our life of the WWW, the internet, the e-mail, Facebook, globalization, and such likes. Books were than part of national cultures and of "print capitalism". Knowledge was literally "packed" in them, printed with black ink on white paper pages, which were pressed and glued in between two hard cardboards. To get the "knowledge" one had to literally get a copy of a book, and hold it in hands. Books were "things". They were amassed in libraries and sold in bookstores, and later on in mega-stores in city-centers and in shopping malls. Neighborhood stores crumbled; the revenge came shortly when the mega-stores could not compete anymore with world book stores such as Amazon, and closed shop one after the other. Books, now made accessible everywhere, continued to be sold, and even in rising numbers, but they also faced the new challenge of "digitization", that makes texts even cheaper and quicker to get by Kindle, Google Books and other internet sites. Libraries still exercise a rearguard struggle in face of growing budget and space constrains, and they also finally resort reluctantly to the digitization of knowledge. The way knowledge is assembled, catalogued, and retrieved has been radically changed by the new global media of the "Bill Gate/Steve JobsGalaxy".

All these thoughts ran through my mind as I received for review a package with the book *Globalization: a Basic Text* (second edition) by George Ritzer and Paul Dean. The "thing" inside the package weighted 2.3 pounds, and its size was 7.5 x 0.9 x 9.8 inches. For a minute it looked like a "transitory thing" between the galaxies of Gutenberg to the one of Gates and Jobs. It is a book which tries to capture and contain almost every and any possible knowledge we may have about globalization, in condensed, dissected and retrievable form. A very useful book indeed.

The first intended usage of it is as an under-graduate textbook. For that purpose the material is conveniently organized in 15 chapters, fitting for weekly course

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meetings, where each chapter is comprehensive and clearly divided to subtopics. It also has all sorts of apparatuses that make study easier – each chapter contains in addition to about 30 main text pages, special frames of "discussion questions" and "additional reading" list, as well as concepts that appear in the margins within small blue boxes, maps and graphic figures, concise introductions and practical summaries, and a glossary is added towards the end of the book. Another feature that may come handy to student is an appendix which is organized around different disciplinary approaches to globalization: anthropology, sociology, economics, geography, psychology, literary criticism and more. And lastly, as befitting a laptop-book (this transitory thing as I call it) the book is accompanied by a website (www.wiley.com/go/ritzer/globalization), which includes further study and instruction tools. While "using" the book I sensed how a useful tool it is indeed, even beyond instruction.

Upon receiving the book I rushed to locate through the detailed index (17 pages) where in the book are discussed the topics I had in mind about globalization and the changing book culture. I was led to chapter 5, which addresses global political structures and processes. It does indeed discuss the nation state, print capitalism and imagined communities, and moves from there to examine how nation states change their boundaries in the face of rapidly developing technology and increasing immigration flows. Emphasis is placed on the "reimaging" of the nation state in the light global flows. Regarding the international geo-political scenario, are discussed three stages: bipolarity (US-USSR); uni-polarity (ascendance of the US); and tri-polarity future (US, EU and China as the three centers of future power). Larger political structure are examined – the League of Nations, the United Nations as well as more specific organizations such as UNCTAD, UNESCO, the Group of Eight, the International Atomic Energy Agency and more. The concept of global governance is considered side by side with this of civil society.

As I was still curious about the transition from the nation-state to the cosmopolitan culture, I leaped from chapter 5 to chapter 8, which addresses global culture and cultural flows. This chapter examines the impact of cultural artifacts that flow across the globe in digitized form. Notice is given to differentials in these flows: between distinct cultures (rich/poor), or different cultural genres (pop/science) etc. The chapter maps the arena to theories of differentialism and barriers to flows (e.g. Samuel Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations"), of hybridization and integration of external and internal components (e.g. Arjun Appadurai's "Landscapes"), and of convergence among cultures (e.g. George Ritzer's "McDonaldization"). This chapter also deals with the pivotal question of religion in the global world.

As I was still contemplating whether the changes in the book culture result from the wide process of "globalization", or whether they reflect a more specific, even if huge, case of "Americanization", I found up that I had to consult chapter 3, which deals with globalization and "related processes". These related processes include imperialism, colonialism, development, Westernization, Easternization and Americanization. It is emphasized, among else, that globalization and Americanization are related but are not identical or reducible to each other. The topics that are discussed include "Americanization without America", anti-Americanism, and more.

And so I went on using the book according to questions and associations that crossed my mind. As said, the book has 15 chapters, and they cover every aspect of globalization that comes to mind. In addition to the chapters to which we referred already, there are chapters on the global economy: chapter 4 addresses neoliberal economic theory—or ideology – as well as some potential rivals, especially neo-

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Marxism; chapter 6 deals with the institutions that structure the global economy, or contest it – historically from the Breton Woods system to the World Economic Forum; and chapter 7 deals with global economic flows – how goods and services are produced, marketed and consumed; chapter 9 is dedicated to high-tech flows and structures. Other chapters deal with other global flows: the global flow of people (chapter 10); global environmental flows (chapter 11); and negative global flows (diseases, crime, terrorism, war) (Chapter 12). There are important chapters on the social impacts of globalization: growing class and rural-urban inequalities (chapter 13) and growing inequalities of race, ethnicity, gender and sexuality (chapter 14); a specially important chapter that relates to this last group is chapter 15, that addresses the reactions to globalization, the resistance to it, and the question of its future shape. It deals among else with protectionism, fair trade, alter-globalization, transnational social movements, the World Social Forum, cyber activism, "the French alterative", and more.

It was a conscious choice of the authors not to include dedicated discussions of geographical or national cases of globalization (even though the book is replete with illustrative references to such cases from India and Japan to Argentina and Brazil). The focus of the book is on the flows among and between areas, and not on the areas themselves. So there is little discussion of the North and South, the nation states of the world, regions etc., but rather on that which flows among and between them. Nevertheless, as the authors emphasize, those areas come up often in the book as they are often the beginning or end point of the flows.

One other general feature of the book – and this brings us finally to the two opening chapters of it – is that the book offers a coherent overview of globalization, base on a theoretical orientation that highlights increasing "liquidity" as the core of today's global processes; and on a conceptual apparatus – "flows", "barriers" etc.. Related key themes that run through the book are, as mentioned, that of increasing "fluidity" and related to this is the idea that that in the new condition everything on the world is "lighter", and thus easier to move, compared to a the "heavier" nature of past things. With that, the book is far from portraying a pink picture of globalization as a "fluid flow", so to speak, but it rather notices barriers, inequalities and conflicts. There are but few books that offer such a wide coverage of globalization, and with such success in organizing the "fluidity" of global reality into a concise and coherent text.



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