

BOOK REVIEW SECTION

Herb, G.H., Moorti, S. and Fuentes-George, K.: Middlebury Atlas of Globalization. Stuttgart, PONS Langenscheidt, 2024. 147 p.

A world atlas often creates the illusion that it merely shows where things are. Yet every map is the product of a series of choices: what is placed at the centre and what is pushed towards the margins, which boundaries are made visible, which categories are used, and ultimately what kind of world is brought into view. Critical cartography has long challenged the apparent neutrality of this process, drawing attention to the authority, selectivity and rhetoric embedded in cartographic representation (HARLEY, J.B. 1989). One of the strengths of the *Middlebury Atlas of Globalization* is that it makes this problem explicit.

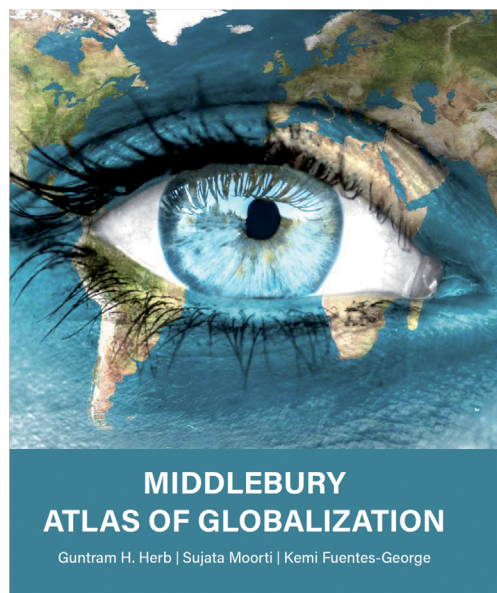
A particularly effective example appears in the *Maps and World Views* section of *Global Ideascapes*, where a Washington-centred world map is accompanied by an explanatory panel titled *The World from Washington, D.C.* The effect is striking. The surface of the Earth is reorganised in relation to Washington, while the familiar positions of the continents become strangely unfamiliar. The same planet is shown, but from an explicitly US-centred spatial perspective. The map therefore demonstrates considerably more than a technical feature of projection. It makes visible the extent to which a map of ‘the world’ depends

on the position from which that world is viewed. The accompanying text broadens the argument further: projection, scale, centring, naming and classification all shape what becomes visible, while cartographic representation itself carries a powerful aura of scientific authority. Here, the map functions as both representation and argument.

This question is central to an atlas of globalisation. The spatial logic of globalisation sits uneasily with the traditional atlas. Conventional political maps render territories and boundaries as fixed, relatively stable spatial units, whereas globalisation is commonly theorised through flows, networks, mobility, interdependence and rescaling. STEGER, M.B. (2003), for example, emphasises the multidimensional processes through which worldwide interdependencies and exchanges expand and intensify. Yet territory and place remain central to these processes. In CASTELLS’s terminology, the growing importance of the space of flows does not abolish the space of places (CASTELLS, M. 1996), while SWYNGEDOUW, E. (2004), and MURRAY, W.E. (2006) draw attention to the simultaneous processes of de-territorialisation, territorialisation and rescaling. An atlas of globalisation therefore faces an unusually demanding task: it must somehow represent territories and relations, places and flows, territorial distinctions and shifting scales at the same time.

Many of the thematic maps and double-page spreads in the *Middlebury Atlas of Globalization* rise impressively to this challenge. They juxtapose relations, flows, inequalities and perspectives whose combination alters how each is read. Paired maps are especially effective in allowing the same global process to be viewed from different angles. At its best, the atlas finds inventive ways of making visible precisely those connections and shifts of scale with which conventional atlases struggle. Elsewhere, inherited classifications and bounded territorial categories reassert themselves. The atlas’s own cartographic reflexivity therefore establishes a demanding standard against which its individual maps can also be read.

The volume’s remarkable thematic breadth is partly explained by the complementary backgrounds of its three authors. Guntram H. HERB’s work in political geography engages with nationalism, territory, borders, identity and scale, including in the co-edited volume *Scaling Identities: Nationalism and*



Territoriality, which treats territory and scale as dynamic processes rather than fixed spatial containers (HERB, G.H. and KAPLAN, D.H. 2018). Sujata MOORTI brings gender, sexuality, media, diaspora and transnational cultural circulation into the picture, while Kemi FUENTES-GEORGE works on global environmental politics, environmental justice and international governance. Together these perspectives help explain why political-territorial processes sit so naturally beside cultural, bodily and environmental dimensions of globalisation.

The book also moves beyond the conventional world atlas as a genre. With its interpretive texts and spreads organised around problems rather than geographical inventories, it often resembles a critical global studies textbook in atlas form. Maps and text form an integrated analytical apparatus, with arguments frequently emerging from their juxtaposition. The printed format matters, as facing pages let maps, indicators and commentary be viewed simultaneously. The companion website, *Mapping Globalization* (Middlebury College n.d.), supplements the volume with additional materials and classroom resources, while offering only a limited view of the atlas itself.

This volume belongs to a broader tradition of thematic atlases that represent the world through transnational relations and interdependencies rather than as a mosaic of states. It has affinities with DURAND, M.-F. *et al.*'s (2013) *Atlas de la mondialisation*, while SOLARZ's *The Global North-South Atlas* offers a different point of comparison. SOLARZ organises his atlas around the metageographical question of whether the inherited Global North–Global South divide remains meaningful (BARTA, G. 2020; SOLARZ, M.W. 2020). The *Middlebury Atlas of Globalization*, by contrast, places a much wider range of processes alongside one another to make the multidimensionality of globalisation visible.

Structurally, the volume moves from questions of representation and historical context towards thematic and regional perspectives. *Global Geography* and *Global History* provide the cartographic and historical framing, followed by the three thematic chapters: *Global Powerscapes – Politics and Economy*, *Global Ideascapes – Culture and Society* and *Global Bodyscapes – People and Experience*. The volume concludes with *Global Regions*, a series of continent-scale regional maps.

The distinctive labels *Powerscapes*, *Ideascapes* and *Bodyscapes* succinctly express the volume's relational and multidimensional understanding of globalisation. The terminology clearly resonates with APPADURAI's influential vocabulary of global 'scapes', devised to conceptualise overlapping and disjunctive transnational flows that resist simple territorial ordering (APPADURAI, A. 1996). In the Middlebury volume, the -scape suffix likewise evokes global spaces shaped by configurations of power, circulating ideas, cul-

tural patterns and embodied experience, rather than separate, neatly bounded domains. The terminology is therefore apt for an atlas concerned with the tension between relatively fixed territorial orders and relationships that cross and continually rework them.

The *Global Powerscapes* chapter works particularly well when it shows political and economic processes as relational rather than merely distributed across states. In *Climate Management*, total and per capita carbon footprints are combined with commitments under the Paris Agreement, while *Digital Connections* shows that the apparently deterritorialised digital world depends upon material infrastructures, cables, unequal access and spatially concentrated networks.

The *Global Ideascapes* chapter broadens the range of phenomena one might expect an atlas of globalisation to map. Gender, political power, beauty ideals, food cultures and film industries all become cartographically visible. The polycentric geography of film is a telling case: Bollywood and Nollywood make it difficult to sustain a model in which cultural globalisation radiates from a Western centre towards the rest of the world.

The *Global Bodyscapes* chapter makes perhaps the book's most conceptually inventive move by recasting globalisation as an embodied condition. It brings under a common heading subjects conventionally dispersed across population geography, migration studies, health geography, gender studies, development geography and environmental geography. Population change, migration, pandemics, inequality, hunger, pollution, women's bodies and water stress become manifestations of a common question: how are global relationships and inequalities experienced through human bodies and everyday conditions of life? The pairing of the *Water Stress* and *Virtual Water* maps demonstrates the value of this approach. Water scarcity initially appears to be a local environmental condition, yet virtual-water trade reveals how far the geography of water use can diverge from that of consumption. A local ecological condition is thereby recast as a global political-economic relation.

Such pairings of maps constitute one of the atlas's most original cartographic devices. Their meaning often lies less in either map taken separately than in the friction between the two. The juxtaposition of *Freedom Rating* and *Prison Population* maps, for example, poses a provocative question about what 'freedom' means in a society where deprivation of liberty is exceptionally widespread, without claiming a straightforward causal relationship between the two indicators. Paired maps can thus range from explanatory comparison to deliberate association, often leading towards a new question rather than supplying a ready-made answer.

The *Middlebury Atlas of Globalization* is most convincing when maps become analytical instruments in their own right. By bringing disparate processes into visual relation, its strongest spreads expose intersections that conventional thematic maps might leave unnoticed. However, the concluding *Global Regions* chapter occupies a different position in the book's architecture. Its brief introduction begins from the proposition that 'each of the regions has unique features' (p. 116). The result feels closer to a conventional reference-atlas coda than to a continuation of *Powerscapes*, *Ideascapes* and *Bodyscapes*. Regional cartography necessarily distinguishes territories, assigns names and reduces continent-scale complexity to manageable categories. Yet this different genre does not suspend the atlas's own principles concerning naming, classification and cartographic choice.

Ethnic maps make this tension between the unavoidable generalisation of regional cartography and the atlas's own critical attention to naming and classification apparent. The classificatory difficulty is especially acute because ethnicity rarely corresponds neatly to homogeneous, clearly bounded territories. Identities may overlap, group names may be self-designations or exonyms, and neither language, self-identification, historical presence nor present-day population offers an automatically privileged criterion. Consistent selection criteria and careful terminology are therefore essential. The map *Global Regions: Asia – Ethnic Groups* offers a revealing example of what happens when such consistency breaks down. An especially striking case concerns the north-eastern Himalayan area of India, much of which forms the state of Arunachal Pradesh and is claimed by China. Across much of this area, the map assigns the ethnonym 'Loba' to its inhabitants. The problem goes beyond that of a conventional exonym rejected by the people concerned. The region's highly diverse populations – including Adi, Nyishi, Galo, Apatani and numerous other groups – are not collectively constituted as 'Loba' either through their own forms of identification or within India's official ethnic classification. The label has no corresponding social or administrative referent in the region that would justify using it as a collective ethnonym. Its relevant institutional use derives instead from the Tibetan term *Lhoba*/*Luoba* as incorporated into Chinese state ethnic classification.

Ordinary cartographic generalisation does not adequately describe what happens here: an external category is projected onto markedly different populations without an evident basis in the social reality being mapped. The inconsistency is compounded by the fact that the territorial representation follows the Indian status of the area rather than China's territorial claim, while the ethnic terminology nevertheless adopts a category institutionalised

by the Chinese state. The atlas gives no indication of the source or classificatory reasoning behind this choice. A more defensible cartographic solution need not have required greater complexity: identifying major locally recognised populations such as the Nyishi and Adi would already have conveyed more meaningful information within comparable spatial constraints. The use of 'Loba' is difficult to reconcile with the authors' assurance that 'the maps in our text have been carefully reviewed, cross-checked with other maps, and are contextualized in scientific scholarship' (p. 11). The pattern continues elsewhere on the Asian map. The designation 'Limbu' in central Bhutan raises a comparable question, as does the selective prominence given to Newar and Lepcha in Nepal while several larger populations remain unnamed. What becomes uncertain is the principle by which groups were selected and classified, rather than merely the degree of simplification involved. These are not isolated cases, but further instances of a broader inconsistency in the way the Asian map combines and prioritises ethnic categories.

The map *Global Regions: South America – Ethnic Groups* presents a related, though somewhat different, version of this classificatory problem. It identifies the Mapuche population of southern Chile and Argentina as 'Araucanians'. Araucanian is a historical Spanish exonym, whereas Mapuche is both the established contemporary self-designation and the name used in official classifications in Chile and Argentina. More generally, the South American map mixes different levels of classification: ethnonyms, linguistic labels and language-family categories appear within the same visual system despite referring to fundamentally different kinds of entities. This inconsistency is not confined to South America or Asia. Across the regional ethnic maps, categories of different analytical status are repeatedly made cartographically equivalent. The North American map of ethnic groups, for example, places Indigenous ethnonyms alongside linguistic, racial and immigrant-population categories, while its counterpart for Australia and Oceania similarly incorporates migrant populations into an ethnic classificatory scheme.

The continental comparison of ethnic maps reveals a deeper asymmetry. North America is represented as a contemporary social space shaped by migration, mixture and historical change, even though dated terms such as 'Eskimos' and 'Nootka' remain problematic. Europe is more static: by explicitly excluding foreigners, refugees and labour migrants, the map produces a museum-like ethnonational landscape in which contemporary mobility largely disappears. Africa, in turn, is assigned a distinct social temporality. It appears principally as a dense ethnolinguistic mosaic of localised groups, while urbanisation, migration, mixed identities and contemporary social transformation disappear from view.

The resulting ethnographic present makes Africa seem almost outside historical time.

Inherited terminology sharpens this problem. The legend's category 'Pygmies (without own languages)' groups heterogeneous Central African populations under an externally constructed collective label historically associated above all with bodily stature. The parenthetical qualification is equally problematic: it suggests a lack of linguistic identity, although communities such as the Aka and Baka speak distinct, identifiable languages. On a contemporary ethnic map, this combination of inherited nomenclature and reductive linguistic classification is difficult to defend. The contradiction is heightened by the introduction to the *Global Regions* chapter itself, which explicitly reflects on the enduring legacy of colonialism in ethnic classification.

Another weakness of *Global Regions* is the absence of the short explanatory texts that work so well in the thematic chapters. Even brief notes on temporal frames, selection criteria, classification systems and sources would make the logic behind these maps more transparent.

A related imbalance appears in the *Global History* chapter. Its longue-durée perspective is in itself a major virtue: globalisation does not begin with the economic integration of recent decades but is situated within much longer histories of contact and exchange. The authors are also explicitly alert to the perspectival nature of historical representation, observing that 'the victors write the history' (p. 33). The *Ancient Links* maps open the narrative beyond Europe and acknowledge multiple centres of early connection. Once the sequence moves into the medieval and early modern periods, however, the cartographic story becomes overwhelmingly organised through European expansion, colonisation and, subsequently, the Atlantic world. The accompanying prose acknowledges non-European networks, including long-distance trade across the Indian Ocean and connections linking Africa through trans-Saharan and Red Sea routes. Yet they are not granted comparable independent cartographic presence. The imbalance lies in the difference between being mentioned and being allowed to organise the cartographic narrative. European actors increasingly become the agents through which large parts of the world enter the visual history of globalisation, while extensive commercial and migratory worlds beyond Europe and the transatlantic sphere remain far less visible as autonomous geographies of connection. This tension is especially revealing because the chapter begins by foregrounding the perspectival character of historical narratives.

Taken together, the regional maps' uneven distribution of contemporaneity and the unequal distribution of historical agency in *Global History* eventually lead back to the Washington-centred map

discussed in *The World from Washington, D.C.*, now in a less flattering sense. In its original context, this map deliberately exposes the fact that cartography always has a centre. Yet some of the regional maps appear to reproduce this problem through an implicit US-centred epistemic gaze. Thus, the atlas distributes contemporaneity unevenly. More than geometrical centring is at stake here: the visibility of social complexity and historical agency itself becomes centre-dependent. This is a revealing internal tension in a volume that elsewhere does so much to unsettle the apparent naturalness of cartographic centring and classification.

These shortcomings, concentrated primarily in *Global Regions* and, to a lesser extent, in *Global History*, do not substantially alter the very favourable overall assessment of the volume. The *Middlebury Atlas of Globalization* is an ambitious, original and intellectually engaging undertaking whose thematic core displays considerable cartographic imagination. It refuses to reduce globalisation to economics or geopolitics, bringing political, cultural, social and environmental processes into the same visual and interpretive field. This makes the atlas especially valuable in teaching. Here a map need not function as a finished answer or authoritative visual evidence but can become the starting point for inquiry. What can two juxtaposed maps reveal that neither could show independently? Which categories do readers accept as natural simply because an atlas has placed them on a map? The book's strongest pages therefore teach not only global studies but critical map literacy. Even the volume's occasional weaknesses become conspicuous partly because of its own strengths. The atlas gives readers the critical cartographic tools to question its less successful maps. No map offers a genuinely neutral vantage point; every map simultaneously reveals and orders a world. The largely excellent maps of the *Middlebury Atlas of Globalization* teach us to move the centre; its weaker ones remind us how difficult it is to leave the centre behind.

GÉZA BARTA¹

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¹ Department of Cultural Anthropology, Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE), Budapest, Hungary. E-mail: gezabarta@staff.elte.hu

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