



John Urry. *Offshoring*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014. 212 S. ISBN 978-0-7456-8460-4.

Reviewed by Megan Campbell

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J. Urry: *Offshoring*

John Urry, a distinguished professor of sociology at Lancaster University, recently published a monograph, *Offshoring*, that captures the most up-to-date examples of the practice for which the book is named. The main idea of Urry's book is to bring to light the various harmful effects of offshoring on contemporary society. He also seeks to challenge the popular understanding of offshoring, the manufacturing of products in countries where labor cost is lower, by linking these practices to the concealment of income and profits of wealthy individuals and major corporations in tax havens. He expands this understanding of offshoring to include not only work, taxation, and finance, but also leisure, energy, waste, and security. He ends the book with a reflection on how "reshoring" could be achieved politically and the various technologies and trends that may offer a path to get there.

The themes in this book are similar to those in previous works by John Urry due to the all encompassing nature of the topic. The book touches on the end of organized capitalism Scott Lash / John Urry, *The End of Organized Capitalism*, Cambridge 1987. , the performance of the "global," John Urry, *Global Complexity*, Cambridge 2003. and, significantly, his work on tourism John Urry / Jonas Larsen, *The Tourist Gaze 3.0*, London 2011. and energy/environment. John Urry, *Society beyond Oil*, London 2013 The wide range of material is one of the book's strong points. Each chapter is based on a main topic such as leisure or energy, and each topic is then related to aspects of offshoring. This structure allows the reader to make connections between typical understandings of offshoring and how the practice has penetrated the funda-

mentals of our social, economic, and political lives. Many of the references, in addition to citing the most relevant literature on each topic, also include online sources.

The introduction and second chapter, "Secrets," are excellent introductions to the topic of offshoring through the lens of contemporary practices, some of which will be familiar to readers. Urry discusses the use of tax havens in political terms as a class war of the wealthy "1 percent" on the "99 percent," thereby aligning himself with the concerns raised by the "Occupy" movements. In chapter two, he enters the discussion on secrecy through Georg Simmel and the connection between economic growth and secrets held by the wealthy to conceal their earnings. In these chapters, he notes that offshoring constitutes a restructuring of global power that emerged with the end of organized capitalism in the 1970s and the development of neo-liberalism in the 1980s, but he does not expand on the political/geographical aspects of the practice. Throughout the book, he generally writes about offshoring as a dissolution of borders by/for the wealthy borderless. However, he mentions only briefly that "a borderless world develops new borders and new secrets. Borders are regularly created, policed and surveilled" (p. 8). This singular statement could have been elaborated on by connecting rebordering to the understanding of globalization processes as dialectics of de- and reterritorialization. Neil Brenner, *Beyond State Centricism? Space, Territoriality, and Geographical Scale in Globalisation Studies*, in: *Theory of Society*, 28 (1999), pp. 39-78. The subject of rebordering is unfortunately not revisited.

The next three chapters develop a vivid description of the more familiar visions of offshoring: work, taxes, and leisure. By work, Urry references offshore manufacturing and the complex international division of labor that goes into a supply chain. Here he notably mentions the potential of 3D printing to enable "reshoring," which is an argument he revisits in the conclusion. Chapter four deals with another hot topic issue of the movement of wealth and profit through tax havens and the financialization of the world economy. In chapter five he revisits the façade of tax havens as discreet locations through the lens of leisure and pleasure in particular offshore enclaves that also allow privacy to gamble and participate in illegal activities. His emphasis on the fluidity between the place as both a tax haven and the place as a leisure resort such as Dubai and Macao is particularly effective.

The next chapters on energy, waste, security, and the sea are more dynamic in terms of offering the reader new ways to see these issues in light of offshoring. Therefore, not only is waste being literally offshored in that the US and Britain ship their trash to China to be recycled, but the offshored practices of production and the resulting consumption patterns contribute to this cycle. Increasing the (non-renewable) energy supply in ever more risky but cost effective ways and poorly regulating shipping have become the norm in this production/consumption pattern. The chapter on security is less convincing in relation to offshoring with the exception of extraordinary rendition. In my view, the use of airplanes, drones, fighting "offshore," and mass surveillance are very much territorialized in that they are sponsored and performed through a national military, whether or not the personnel are physically within national borders.

This book ends with a reflection on the ubiquity of offshoring, arguments why offshoring has a negative impact on the economy and the environment, and, thankfully, brings several solutions to the table, such as the aforementioned opportunity to reshore production

through 3D printing.

The conclusion is a good starting point for addressing the main shortcomings of the book. It is written from a northern Atlantic, if not purely British perspective. This is probably positive for policy makers in Great Britain, but for a topic like offshoring, the academic reader expects a more global take on the issue. My main criticism, however, lies in the Eurocentric notion of on and offshore. In these places located offshore, whether wealthy enclaves or developing countries, what have been the negative aspects of offshoring there? How do these societies cope with the possibility of capital and production moving "back" to developed economies as presented in the conclusion? I do not in any way argue that the practice of offshoring has been beneficial to these societies, but the book does not address offshoring from this perspective or connect to other literature written from this point of view. The book is also (democratic) nation-state centric in its analysis, which seems to infer that there was once a time when the nation-state was democratic and its economy was managed based on Keynesian principles (in Britain or everywhere?) without recognizing that, if it did exist, it was a historical exception and not the rule as a territorial regime.

Offshoring is recommended for policy makers who necessarily need to consider the ramifications of these practices in order to find solutions for society and the environment. I also recommend this book for undergraduate students in the humanities and social sciences, especially for degrees in global or international studies, sociology, and political science. This book relies mainly on current events. Therefore, if one is well read on these issues, the book will not provide significantly new information, though it will provide you with new insights and a way to connect broader themes that are not typically considered offshoring but are indirectly or directly related to that logic. For that purpose, the book is worth reading.

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