

6-1-2019

## Middel, Matthias (Ed.). *The Routledge Handbook of Transregional Studies*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2018.

Tara Mock Ph.D.  
*Bowdoin College*, [tmock@bowdoin.edu](mailto:tmock@bowdoin.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.lindenwood.edu/jigs>



Part of the [Anthropology Commons](#), [Critical and Cultural Studies Commons](#), [Environmental Studies Commons](#), and the [Sociology Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Mock, Tara Ph.D. (2019) "Middel, Matthias (Ed.). *The Routledge Handbook of Transregional Studies*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2018.," *Journal of International and Global Studies*: Vol. 10: No. 2, Article 24. DOI: 10.62608/2158-0669.1495  
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.lindenwood.edu/jigs/vol10/iss2/24>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at Digital Commons@Lindenwood University. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Journal of International and Global Studies* by an authorized editor of Digital Commons@Lindenwood University. For more information, please contact [phuffman@lindenwood.edu](mailto:phuffman@lindenwood.edu).

**Middel, Matthias (Ed.). *The Routledge Handbook of Transregional Studies*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2018.**

In *The Routledge Handbook of Transregional Studies*, part of the Routledge History Handbooks series, editor Matthias Middel and the text's other contributors propose a new way of viewing the historical and contemporary spatial connections and practices of continuity and change between and amongst individuals and communities using the region as a unit of analysis. The volume purports to escape the confines of global and area studies through a sustained focus on reconceptualizing and respatializing the highly complex systems and processes underpinning global capital accumulation. Manfred B. Steger distinguishes transregional studies from global studies as follows:

The basic unit of analysis in transregional studies (TS) is the region, whereas global studies (GS) puts worldwide interconnectivity at the centre of its conceptual framework. Similar to GS, however, TS shows a special concern for bringing previously separately studied areas into closer contact with each other by reaching out to other fields such as global history, migration studies, globally comparative urban studies, and other offshoots from the traditional social sciences and humanities reacting to the same challenge of 'studying entanglements.' (p. 612)

Focusing primarily on developments within Europe and between Europe and Asia, the authors argue for considering transregional studies as a viable compliment to the theoretical and methodological fundament of global and area studies and other traditional, established disciplines.

The Handbook brings together a coterie of principally German scholars from such diverse fields as economic geography, international law, theatre, and African Studies. In seventy-one concise chapters organized into ten sections, the hefty reference introduces the reader to a surfeit of methodological approaches, theories, and historiographies relative to issues of globalization, geographies, colonialism and post-coloniality, international organizations, religions and religious movements, and transcultural studies. The volume presents a capacious view of transregional studies, tracing its origins and utility in spaces as disparate as the Balkans, the United States, and the Pacific. The authors are keenly focused on interrogating relations between and amongst states and regions. Transregional studies, Middel contends in the Handbook's introduction, reconceptualizes globalization and its outcomes through a sustained focus on interlinking systems of interaction: ecological, social, political, economic. The interconnectedness of these systems and their effect on the natural world is an unorthodox inclusion to the text and one which serves to distinguish it positively from other scholarship on the subject. Middel et al. describe how spaces and people become transregional through a circuit of indentarian, capital, and spatial mobilities, providing historiographical overviews of the phenomenon; examine the economic, social, and cultural factors driving the movement of peoples; and discuss the impact of colonialism and post-coloniality on indigenous groups. One of the tome's strengths lies in establishing that many of the extant transregional connections between states possess deep historical roots that continue to influence their development. The chapter "Languages and Spaces" by Jurgen Erfurt's is but one contribution in which such connections are illustrated.

Despite a stated desire for 'respatialization' and the introduction of transregional perspectives in the making of globality, the text is less than fully successful in decentering Europe and demonstrating a truly global approach to transregional studies. While individual

chapters do ‘dip their toes’ outside European waters, most who do so are merely touristic, mentioning other lands and people for cursory effect without sustained focus on the very global perspectives the text purports to reveal. Despite this, assorted chapters do focus on people and spaces outside Europe, such as Philipp Robinson Possner’s case study on the great divergence of wealth between Europe and Asia and Geert Castryk’s chapter on the Indian Ocean. Yet rarer still are chapters that pay African experiences more than a passing glance. Julian Stenmanns and Marc Boeckler’s chapter on supply chains in Ghana and Laurence Marfaing’s chapter on African entrepreneurs traveling to China are two rare exceptions within the work.

Those familiar with other titles in the “Routledge Handbook” series and their continuous effort to construct bridges between the familiar and the foreign to create fresh, original perspectives will brook no disappointment upon learning that the *Routledge Handbook of Transregional Studies* continues in this vein. Aptly suited to graduate students in social science or inter-disciplines, scholars of international organizations and those whose research does not fit neatly within a single disciplinary silo, the handbook undoubtedly provides an impressive and irreplaceable synthesis of transregional studies.

Tara Mock PhD  
Bowdoin College  
[tmock@bowdoin.edu](mailto:tmock@bowdoin.edu)