

Beate Ratter (2018). *Geography of small islands: Outposts of globalisation*. Cham, Switzerland. Springer. 224pp, ISBN: 978-3-319-63867-6. Hbk US\$179.99; pbk and e-book US\$24.95.

Given their self-evident geographies and the inevitable administrative totalities that they suggest, islands (and archipelagos) feature prominently amongst small states and territories. *Geography of small islands: Outposts of globalisation* is an important and timely contribution to island studies scholarship. It is a definitive and all-inclusive volume offering a detailed account of the spatiality of islands, a key concept at the heart of the interdisciplinary field of island studies, in the context of globalization. At the same time, after undertaking such a comprehensive presentation, in the concluding chapter Ratter further calls for a *Gestaltwechsel*, that is a transformation or a paradigm shift, or as the author herself puts it "a change of perspective in the epistemology of islands" (p. 208).

The aim of this text, as stated by the author, is to "present an extensive epistemology of island studies" (p. ix). The text, grounded in the author's geographic pedagogy, looks in detail at the spatiality of islands through layers of intersecting discourses: physical geography, geopolitical significances, cultural-historical projection, economic spaces and vulnerable places. This text analyses the relativity and relationality of space and place, which is the key to unlocking understanding islands across these discourses. The usage of case studies and examples from across the globe widens the understanding of the reader while drawing out the sub-title of the book. These discourses are examined individually in each of the seven chapters.

Chapter One is an introductory chapter which begins with an etymological review of the word 'island' and then analyses in turn the spatial categories of isolation, distance/remoteness, size/smallness, insularity/islandness, and networking/connectedness. Chapter Two draws upon the environmental and earth sciences to explain the various physical-geological genesis processes of island making. Chapter Three discusses the cultural history of islands, most importantly from Western and Eastern perspectives, illustrating historical island *topos* or the stereotypical attributes of islands throughout history. This chapter also introduces the reader to the discipline of island studies or nissology with a section reviewing its development and challenges. Indeed, Ratter asks "is studying islands a question of the research topic, the scientific perspective or a discipline by itself?" (p. 84). Chapter Four focuses on the spatial aspects of geopolitics affecting and influencing small islands, with a particular focus on the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and its' impact on the maritime dimension. The use of case studies – in particular the overlapping jurisdictional claims in the South China/West Philippine Sea, accompanied by a large, coloured map – provides a rich insight into the complexities of such matters. The author uses Chapter Five to explore the socio-spatial and globalised aspects of island economies, again making use of sectoral case studies such as the historical Caribbean sugar trade and the more recent emergent of tourism and offshore financing sectors. Chapter Six looks at island vulnerability and resilience as the authors (this chapter is co-authored with Jan Petzold), again turn towards the environmental sciences to consider climate change and sustainable development in a small island context, while advocating in the chapter conclusion for recommended actions to increase island resilience. This chapter also contains a textbox which reveals the Integrated Island Database (IIDAB), a comparative open-source resource housed online by the University of Hamburg Centre of Excellence on climate research, a welcome addition to the tools available to island studies scholars. Chapter Seven wraps up the book, summarizing the analysis of the previous chapters while issuing the call for a *gestaltwechsel*, as noted above.

The textbook complements other recent publications, such as Stephen Royle's *Islands: Nature and culture* (2014), Jim Randall's *An introduction to island studies* (2021) and Baldacchino's edited *Routledge international handbook of island studies* (2018), itself predated by the first edition *A world of islands* (2007). Building on from *A world of islands*, these texts (and others), represent a wave of contributions which are building the formal literature and foundational knowledge of the discipline for aspiring students and scholars.

The value of *Geography of small islands* lies in its highly structured and orderly layout, making it very easy for the reader to build from the initial concepts around the spatial characteristics of what constitutes an island, through the environmental sciences of the physical-geological processes which create islands, onto the cultural, political and economic characteristics, moving then back to environmental sciences from a climatic perspective and then closing with a detailed conclusion and a look towards the future. Guided by Ratter's expertise and organisation, *Geography of small islands* manages to provide a wide breadth of knowledge in only two hundred and twenty-four pages. Special mention is also merited for the wide use of detailed figures and maps, many in full colour as well as the strong use of tables and textboxes which together greatly enrich this text. It makes good use of case studies, but the author also makes a point to caution that her utilization of exemplar case studies while possibly valid for several islands will not hold true for "all islands of the world" (p. x).

A few things might have been improved. While Chapter 4 centered on geopolitics of small islands, this is predominately viewed through the maritime disputes and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The development of the historical context of this progress could have introduced and drawn out some of the defining works which led to the development of the archipelagic state regime being recognized under Part Four: Archipelagic states of the convention. In particular, Eversen's 1958 paper 'Certain legal aspects concerning the delimitation of the territorial waters of archipelagos' which called upon geographic aspects in advancing how the territorial integrity of archipelagic islands and the water between them should be treated. Curiously, Ratter also omits in both the introductory chapter and chapter four any mention of UNCLOS' Part Eight: Regime of Islands (Article 121) which provides the legal allowance for what constitutes an island and the prerequisite for granting an economic exclusive zone or continental shelf (namely the sustenance of human habitat). Further, this book might be enhanced with a discussion on the emerging discourse and study of subnational island jurisdictions concerning matters of autonomy and exercise of jurisdiction.

But these are minor points. Ultimately, this book achieves its purpose of presenting an extensive epistemology of island studies. I recommend this book to scholars and students of island studies, scholars of other related disciplines, and those outside of the academy who take an interest in trying to better understand islands on their own terms. The text is also available in both softcover and e-book formats, at more affordable price points.

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