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The World is Not Simple: Connectivity, Complicity, Complexity

Nikhilesh Dholakia
University of Rhode Island

Deniz Atik
University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

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Keywords

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The World is Not Simple: Connectivity, Complicity, Complexity

Introduction

In matters of theoretical and practical explorations, parsimony is praiseworthy and precious. Well-established researchers strive for parsimony in their methods and explanations. Neophyte researchers are warned to avoid unnecessary elaboration – they are told that verbosity and superfluous technical fireworks will not improve the quality or acceptability of their research. Simple, to-the-point, focused methods and interpretations are usually the best.

Our intention in this issue of MGDR is not to toss out these established pearls of epistemic wisdom. Rather, we want to point to settings and situations where complexity is often unavoidable; and has to be tackled head on. This is especially so in terms of a world that keeps globalizing and transforming in novel ways.

Items in this MGDR Issue

The first contribution of this issue is an article by Karnani and McKague (2019) on how to reduce poverty through productive employment. More specifically, the authors examine the business process outsourcing (BPO) sector that enable employment opportunities as it did in the case of the rapid growth in call centers in India and elsewhere, with jobs provided to millions of workers who otherwise had almost no job prospects. Such BPO work was urban – call centers were concentrated in big cities like Bangalore (Bengaluru) and Manila. The authors extend their analysis of BPO to non-urban settings, focusing on three large ‘impact sourcing’ organizations in the world whose mission is to create digital jobs for the poor, and they argue that to accomplish this mission, it is necessary to develop business models that focus on economic profitability. Karnani and McKague offers strategies of success through achievement of greater economies of scale, focusing on activities and geography, reducing marketing costs, establishing no frills facilities, and forming alliances.

Going further in this issue of MGDR, in the first book review of this issue, Sarkar (2019) examines the book titled “Connectography: Mapping the Future of Global Civilization” by Parag Khanna (2016) who emphasizes the importance of “connectivity” for everyone in the world, not only for the selected few. “Connectivity bridges the gap between supply and demand through commitment in creating infrastructure so as to

produce benefits collectively in ways of creating jobs, and making developments in poverty, health, education, and other objectives (Sarkar 2019, p.1).” The review author, Sarkar, delivers an in-depth overview of each part of the book. This detailed book review would be especially appealing for MGDR readers who are interested in the dynamics of global supply chains.

In the second book review, Ecke (2019) delves into a book by the prominent economist Jeffrey Sachs (2018), titled “A New Foreign Policy: Beyond American Exceptionalism.” Sachs “addresses the multi-faceted nexus between US militarism and exceptionalism, and how it drives policies domestically and around the world (Ecke 2019, p.1).” By exceptionalism, the author refers to a cultural tendency and policy alignment that elevate the U.S. interests above those of other nations. In his review, Ecke focuses especially on two issues discussed in the book, the implications of regional integration and foreign aid. He brings out stunning details from the book such as the U.S. priorities that are oriented towards militarism more than the betterment of the vulnerable around the world. In closing the review, he offers the hope that change may occur if global political priorities realign in favorable ways.

In the third book review, Zareian (2019) reviews the book “The Complexity Turn”, where Professor Arch Woodside, along with some coauthors, leads the discourse and assembles a small group of related chapters (where the coauthors contribute) that examine aspects of complexity theory. With complexity theory, the book invites researchers in social sciences to exceed simplicity, recognizing “how multiple outcomes or causal relationships occur not through one linear relationship that is indicative of best fit, but an indefinite number of routes between variables that could be variously configured (Zareian 2019, p.2).” More specifically, the book encourages the use of asymmetrical testing over symmetrical testing. Zareian praises the book for guiding researchers on how to tackle with the complexities of social and business processes with fewer assumptions.

Finally, this issue also has an exciting media review by David Boje who discusses *The Avengers* movie series in relation to global heating crisis and water shortages. Boje (2019) makes an interesting analogy between Thanos, the evil character in *The Avengers: Infinity War*, and today’s mega-corporations; he says, “Thanos randomly selects whom to wipe out, via genocide. In contrast, ‘big water businesses’ steal water from the poorest 50% of humanity in order to profit by selling freshwater at premium prices to the super-rich 1% of the world population (p.2).” Please read Boje’s review for an even more thrilling analogy between the six

Infinity Stones that Thanos must collect to increase his power and the versions of such 'magical stones' of the big water corporations – in Boje's interpretation – to increase their power over natural resources that are, in essence, for all humanity. In his concluding remarks, Boje also makes insightful propositions on how to create a better future for all.

Concluding Remarks

Returning to the title of our editorial, the world is not simple, and we are connected more than ever. To illustrate, we now call a French airline company in the U.S. to get updates on our flight from Houston to Istanbul transit through Paris, a person in the call center in India politely answers all our inquires. In this connected world, the customer resides in the U.S., the company is managed from France, the destination is in Turkey, and the customer-service is provided in India. Such an instance was unimaginable even some decades ago. Karnani and McKague (2019) show how nowadays these calls centers provide job opportunities to millions who are in need. When we purchase a simple product, more and more its ingredients or parts are made in various locations throughout the world. Similarly, Sarkar's (2019) book review reveals how complex and critical global connectivity is. Ecke (2019) and Boje (2019), on the other hand, illustrate that such compounded level of connectivity does not come without complicities, whether in the case of the Sachs book review by Ecke, U.S. prioritizing its interests above those of other nations; or, as in the extended interpretation of *The Avengers* review by Boje, mega water corporations stealing from the poor. Finally, under such circumstances ruled by global connectivity, complicity, and complexity, the third book review by Zareian (2019) is a pressing call for social scientists to overcome any simplistic assumptions proposed by overused research techniques if we are to understand in better ways the global social happenings, inequalities, opportunities, and complexities. At MGDR, we are committed to continue such broad and deep explorations.

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