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Wesley-Smith & Goss/Remaking Area Studies

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Introduction

Remaking Area Studies

Jon Goss and Terence Wesley-Smith

It is widely acknowledged that area studies, the dominant academic institution in the United States for research and teaching on America's overseas "others," is in the thralls of a fiscal and epistemological crisis. The prevailing mood of anxiety and uncertainty dates from the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989. At stake is the perceived relevance of area studies knowledge in a new, more intense phase of globalization characterized by diffuse challenges to the dominance of American economic and political power and the apparent erosion of the conceptual and spatial boundaries with which area studies constructed its objects and defended its institutional identity.

As an effective collaborator in an American-led process of globalization, area studies could be seen as a victim of its own success. Yet it is now quite apparent that the triumphant mood surrounding the end of the Cold War and what Roland Robertson calls "the compression of the world" was premature (Robertson 1992, 8). Whatever the new era brings, it does not signal the end of history, famously defined by Francis Fukuyama as "the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government" (Fukuyama 1992). Alternative ways of knowing and living in the world continue to be vigorously asserted despite—or even because of—globalization's universalizing demands. Nor does the borderless world favored by the corporate champions of globalization seem likely to eventuate anytime soon. As Arjun Appadurai points out, while this new world is characterized by the increasing mobility of objects, it nevertheless remains one "of structures, organizations, and other stable social forms" (Appadurai 2001, 5). The central object in the architecture of area studies, the sovereign territorial state, has not withered away despite the increased speed and volume of flows of capital, technology, information, and labor and the emergence of new regional and global instruments

of economic and political organization. Even if conservative commentator Charles Krauthammer (1990/91) is correct to claim we are living through a “unipolar moment” in the history of the international system, it remains a system of nation-states. And it is a world where American power is increasingly challenged by the rising influence of other states, particularly in the dynamic Asia Pacific region, including China and India (Little 2000, 53–56).

Certainly, globalization draws attention to, and perhaps intensifies, geographical and sociocultural heterogeneity within states and regions, challenging conventional conceptions of “areas” upon which the area studies project has been based. Nevertheless, this is still an era when understanding the world requires understanding the specificity of the local, broadly defined as the dynamic interaction of culture and place, within the context of global change. This volume presents some critical theoretical insights regarding the role of area studies as an organized intellectual project in an era of globalization, and it explores the implications of these ideas for everyday curriculum development and teaching practices. It does so with particular reference to issues and practices in area studies programs focused on Asia and the Pacific. The book also provides some points of comparison for American area studies by examining the development of equivalent programs in Japan, as well as making space for Pacific Islands Studies, an often overlooked segment of the Asia Pacific field of scholarship.

There are numerous works tracing the development of area studies and analyzing its current crisis (see e.g., Szanton 2004a; Miyoshi and Harootunian 2002; Ludden 2000; Dirlik 1998; Lewis and Wigen 1997; Heginbotham 1994). *Remaking Area Studies* is one of the few that also suggests some practical applications of these ideas for area studies teachers and students. The contributors share a commitment to the critical importance of locality in a world increasingly seen as “flat” (Friedman 2005), as well as a deep-seated unease about the way area studies knowledge continues to be produced and disseminated in the American academy. In this introduction, we make the case for more empowering forms of area studies, and contributors elsewhere in the volume explore how these ideas might be translated into effective student-centered learning practices through the establishment of interactive regional learning communities.

Origins

The institutional history of area studies is related directly to the international interests of the United States, which expanded rapidly in the decades after World War II. University-based language and area studies programs emerged

in response to the perceived need for useful knowledge about the non-Western places and people Americans increasingly encountered as military analysts, policy makers, business leaders, and private citizens (Hall 1947). The intensifying global confrontation with the Soviet Union gave this type of knowledge considerable strategic significance and provided the primary rationale for the deployment of extensive resources by government agencies and private foundations (Szanton 2004b). Bruce Cumings notes the “often astonishing levels of collaboration between the universities, the foundations, and the intelligence arms of the American state” in the development and operation of area studies programs in the postwar decades (Cumings 2002, 262).

Area studies programs were often heavily dependent upon support from private foundations and government agencies, giving the field an opportunistic bent compared to many other parts of the academy. More important, direct ties to centers of economic and political power helped determine the objects of study, the type of knowledge to be generated, and even the methods of inquiry to be employed, leading to a dominance of the field of study by realist political science and development economics.

The basic building blocks of area studies were sovereign states. This was hardly surprising, since area studies was born into a decolonizing world increasingly composed of these political entities (Ludden 2000, 11). Decolonization represented a profound shift from an antagonistic world of colonial empires structured by ideas of civilization, superiority, and race to a formally symmetrical world of nation-states informed instead by notions of universal human rights, freedoms, and needs—as well as novel ideas about economic and political development. As John Kelly and Martha Kaplan argue, this remarkable transition was engineered to reflect a new vision of world order promoted by the United States, the principal architect of a range of influential multilateral institutions, including the United Nations. The new vision emphasized untrammelled access to overseas resources and “free” trade rather than imperial acquisition of territory, and economic aid rather than pre-emptive military action. This was to be a peaceful world based on the normalization of the nation-state—“the natural choice of every people modern and free, past, present, and future”—its precepts and protocols continually reinforced through international pressures of one sort or another (Kelly and Kaplan 2001, 20).

It is difficult to overstate the importance of this fundamental characteristic of the field of inquiry. This was an academic enterprise that took as its basic unit of analysis territories that were often the relatively recent product of European imperialism and contained within their boundaries a bewildering variety of social, economic, and cultural forms. Wedded to Euro-American

conceptions of the nation-state and progress and to the comparative approach in which “Western civilization” was the normative case, area studies projected the differences within sovereign states and areas they constituted onto the boundaries between them. This state-centered approach often reinforced a static view of culture and geography and the interrelationship between the two. The areas to be studied tended to be viewed “as relatively immobile aggregates of traits, with more or less durable historical boundaries and with a unity composed of more or less enduring properties” (Appadurai 2001, 7). Area studies posited the other as somehow beyond—or more usually “behind” in the developmental sense—the political-economic and sociocultural structures of modernity, effectively denying the coexistence of multiple complex modernities, including forms alternative or resistant to the Euro-American project (Dirlik 1997, 12; Mirsepassi, Basu, and Weaver 2003, 12; Harootunian 2002, 164).

From the beginning, area studies was an integral part of a modernist project that sought to remake the world in the image of the West, and, as David Ludden points out, it assumed “the power of national states to define territories of culture and history” (Ludden 2000, 1). The type of knowledge considered useful, at least by the funding agencies, was not the kind produced in research on the classical languages and literatures of Asia, the Middle East, or Africa, which was already part of the university establishment in the form of Oriental Studies. Rather, knowledge was to be generated and applied toward an understanding of the processes of modern social change, particularly state building and economic development. Ultimately, all this was viewed through the lens of American economic, political, and strategic interests in particular parts of the world.

“Area” was the essential and sometimes the only organizing concept in this branch of the American academy. What this meant in practice was some sort of assemblage of disparate discipline-based interests. Although the situation varied from program to program and over time, core faculty members typically included the dominant economists and political scientists, supported by historians and anthropologists and sometimes joined by other specialists in literature or the performing arts. Although this arrangement provided institutionalized space for sometimes useful cross-disciplinary conversations, it is clear that the more ambitious goal of creating new, interdisciplinary forms of scholarship was not realized to any great extent (Hall 1947). Most practitioners continued to apply discipline-based approaches and methods in their studies of particular areas, and integration, where it occurred at all, happened only after the research work was done, when individual essays or reports were brought together in multidisciplinary collections.

By the end of the 1980s and after more than forty years of scholarly production, it was clear that area studies had played a major role in raising awareness among Americans about other parts of the world. Some area studies scholars, for example Benedict Anderson, James C. Scott, and Clifford Geertz, also had a significant theoretical influence in the social sciences and humanities. Yet there was no substantial body of theory identified with area studies (rather than with the disciplines that made up its component parts), no distinctive approach to inquiry, and no particular methodology that practitioners could call their own.¹

Signs of Crisis

The dramatic shifts in the global political landscape of the late 1980s revealed the intellectual and economic vulnerability of the area studies establishment. The end of the Cold War simultaneously reduced the strategic significance of national and regional boundaries and facilitated the rise of a new discourse of globalization. As David Ludden (2000, 12) points out, what changed in the 1990s was not so much the fact of globalization, although the velocity and intensity of global economic, social, and cultural transactions were clearly accelerating. More important was the emergence of a neoliberal ideology that recognized globalization as a central historical process, necessitating the development of new economic and political institutions as well as new forms of knowledge about the world. With an academic rationale closely tied to the fate of sovereign states and apparently outmoded conceptions of political and economic development, area studies as an institution was increasingly hard-pressed to respond to demands for knowledge informed by transnational or even postnational concerns.

The first manifestations of the crisis in area studies were economic. Federal funding for area studies had been in decline since before the end of the Cold War, but the trend dramatically accelerated with the rise of fiscal conservatism in the 1990s (see Koppel 1995), and private funding agencies, including the Social Science Research Council and the Mellon, MacArthur, and Ford foundations, began to adjust to the new “global” environment and rethink their long-standing commitment to the field. This turn of events also revived old academic rivalries in which some argued that scholars based in the traditional disciplines were just as well-placed to throw light on local phenomena as those in area studies departments, while others advocated universal approaches to inquiry, such as those based on rational choice theory, that simply denied the need for any specialized area-based knowledge in the new world order. In response to the new interest in globalization, some colleges

and universities established global or international studies programs that competed with area studies for funding, students, and scholarly credibility.

Area studies also faced new intellectual challenges. The 1980s and 1990s witnessed experimentation and rethinking in the social sciences and humanities that left few parts of the academy untouched. Increasingly influenced by the works of Michel Foucault, Edward Said, and others, scholars began to raise new questions about connections between knowledge and power and to examine the epistemological foundations of the modernist project itself. Postcolonialism and postmodernism gained ground and new “critical” interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary institutional sites were created, including women’s studies, ethnic studies, and postcolonial studies. Particularly significant was the intellectual consolidation of cultural studies, which began to steal some of area studies’ thunder by tackling critical issues associated with the globalization of America’s others, such as diaspora, transnationalism, and the hybridization of popular culture. These fields repudiated essentialized notions of identity in favor of mobility and border crossing (Dirlik 1997, 6), thus destabilizing, if not dissolving, the cultural and geographic boundaries upon which area studies depends. Furthermore, these were academic programs that, unlike area studies, quickly developed literatures that were critical, deeply reflexive, and genuinely interdisciplinary. It is instructive to note that *Orientalism*, Edward Said’s seminal work, had its major impact outside of the area studies establishment, despite its direct implications for that intellectual enterprise (Harootunian 2002, 151–153).

Area studies responded to its fiscal crisis by diversifying its sources of funding. H. D. Harootunian and Masao Miyoshi (2002), for example, note a dramatic rise in Japanese, Korean, and Taiwanese support for Asian Studies programs in the United States. Boosted also by an increase in federal funding after the terrorist attacks of 2001, especially for “less commonly taught languages,” such as those of the Middle East, the overall quantity of resources flowing to area studies programs has thus been maintained or, in some cases, increased. However, this has required that the area studies establishment be willing to follow the cash, continuing a tendency whereby external agendas modify or override internal rationales framed in academic or conceptual terms. Indeed, of paramount concern is the continuing absence of any coherent conceptual basis for this academic endeavor. As Ludden puts it, “There is no theory of area studies or area-specific knowledge; there is only a set of institutional, personal, and fragmented disciplinary, market, and professional interests that converge primarily on funding” (Ludden 2000, 17). Similarly, Harootunian and Miyoshi challenge us to “explain why funding is more important than thinking through the reason for funding.” For them, the

result is an “unexamined compulsion to continue and repeat” an outmoded set of practices in teaching and research (Harootunian and Miyoshi 2002, 5–7). Without a stronger sense of the intellectual underpinnings of the enterprise, not least its distinctive epistemological claims, how can area studies practitioners justify and defend their existing role in the academy, let alone plan the further development of the field?

(Re)thinking Area Studies

Despite its numerous shortcomings, the essential mission of the area studies enterprise—the systematic production of knowledge about other places and peoples—is as relevant today as ever. Indeed, if anything its significance increases as globalization entangles all human populations in new and increasingly complex ways. These entanglements within global flows of capital, people, and ideas are site- and situation-specific and, to be fully understood, require the understanding of cultural and historical contexts that area studies has always been well-equipped to produce. However, there are several significant obstacles to be overcome before area studies can hope to re-establish its relevance to the academy and other constituencies.

A long history of complicity with the national security project is among the most intractable of the many issues affecting area studies today. Policy linkages provided the primary rationale for the institutionalization of area studies in the first place, and practitioners continue to face issues of scholarly ethics or integrity as a result. Recent military forays into Afghanistan and Iraq have clearly increased the demand for all kinds of experts in these areas, and the Bush administration’s “war on terror” boosted government funding for foreign language and area studies training. Of course, the issue of academic independence is not as clear-cut as it might appear. As Bruce Cumings points out, academic luminaries such as Paul Baran, Herbert Marcuse, and Paul Sweezy worked in the Office of Strategic Services during World War II. For Cumings, such service by scholars can be justified by the level of threat faced by the society at the time, but ideally it should be conducted outside the academy. Under less extreme circumstances, Cumings sees “nothing particularly wrong with scholars offering their views on policy questions, so long as the practice is not openly or subtly coerced by funding agencies and does not require security clearance.” (Cumings 2002, 263–264; 289–290).

If area studies programs have always had direct ties to foreign policy and security establishments, they have also been closely associated with the generation and dissemination of alternative, often dissenting, perspectives on America’s overseas adventures (Szanton 2004b). *The Bulletin of Concerned*

Asian Scholars (now *Critical Asian Studies*), for example, was launched in 1969 to voice opposition to the “brutal aggression of the United States in Vietnam.” Its founders argued, “Those in the field of Asian studies bear responsibility for the consequences of their research and the political posture of their profession,” which they described as a “complicity of silence” (BCAS 1969). These arguments have obvious relevance for contemporary applications of United States military power in conflict situations in the Middle East and elsewhere.

There is an equally important need for alternative perspectives to the U.S.-centric discourse of globalization (see Goss and Yue 2005; Gibson-Graham 2005). Undoubtedly, certain economic, political, and cultural concepts and practices have increasingly universal application, but even “McDonaldization” and “Disneyization” are contradictory hybridizing processes, and they hardly herald a New World Order, the End of History, or the flattening of the earth, as various teleological accounts would have it.

Area Studies Inside-Out

Perhaps the most pressing need is for area studies practitioners to use their particular skills and resources to confront the pervasive realities of globalization in new and interesting ways. One attractive alternative requires moving the focus away from state-centered projects of modernization and development, and engaging with what Appadurai calls “grassroots globalization” or “globalization from below” (Appadurai 2001, 16–20). This represents a profound shift in current practices with several different dimensions. First, it requires modification of the present institutional architecture of area studies, which privileges relations between world regions and global centers of political and economic power and encourages a static, bounded view of areas and identities, consistent with “a Cold War-based geography of fear and competition” (Appadurai 2001, 8). At the very least this involves an increased awareness on the part of area studies practitioners of the constructed and contingent nature of the “areas” that frame their work, and a willingness to cross received conceptual and institutional, as well as geographical, boundaries where necessary and appropriate.

A second shift involves the content of area studies research and teaching. The area studies agenda is often dominated by issues and problems that reflect the economic or security concerns of external actors and agencies, particularly those of state and corporate elites. There is certainly a place for such top-down and outside-in approaches and perspectives. But it is also appropriate to de-center area studies to apprehend the “grassroots” reality of

the majority of ordinary people in other societies, particularly the everyday basis of their ways of life. One way of doing that is through an engagement with the local production, dissemination, and consumption of music, film, dance, and other forms of popular culture. Another is through engagement with the local initiatives organized around natural resources and productive activities, both rooted in local cultural ecologies and linked with the global political and cultural economies. Such an approach promises encounters with sites of resistance and human creativity that often belie the inevitability that characterizes much globalization discourse.

The third shift is at the level of epistemology and is by far the most difficult to achieve. In the post–Cold War era, there has been much talk of internationalizing education, including its area studies dimensions. But, as Appadurai notes, this often takes the form of inviting diasporic others to join existing area studies establishments—but only on Western epistemological and ontological terms. Western ways of knowing and ideas about “progress” have become privileged to a degree that non-Western and indigenous knowledge is often portrayed as quaint or unscientific, certainly marginal and irrelevant in a modernizing and globalizing world. Postcolonial studies and indigenous studies have shown that the problem lies not only in how knowledge about other peoples and places is used, but in how that knowledge is constructed and reproduced in the first place. Imbalances of power are not just geopolitical and geoeconomic, they are embedded in the very language of modernization, development, and now globalization, from whence they have become a part of area studies itself. New forms of area studies that take ideas of internationalization and democratization seriously must find space for the other ways of knowing and living in the world that continue to shape the day-to-day lives of most inhabitants of the planet.

Moving Cultures

These were some of the ideas that informed an initiative of the University of Hawai‘i’s School of Hawaiian, Asian and Pacific Studies called *Moving Cultures: Remaking Asia-Pacific Studies*.² The initiative was funded by the Ford Foundation from 1997 to 2002 as part of a larger effort to “revitalize” area studies in light of what program officer Toby Volkman called “a dramatically changed and increasingly interconnected world.” According to Volkman, the in-depth knowledge of particular places that area studies has always produced was still needed, but it was now important to revisit the field’s “basic premises and procedures.” Among other things, this involved questioning “the notion of distinct and stable areas, with congruent cultural,

linguistic, and geographical identities,” and finding new ways to understand how local “identities and cultures are being formed and re-formed” in their interactions with powerful global forces (Volkman 1999).³

Stage I of our *Moving Cultures* project responded to Volkman’s challenge with a one-year collaborative research and instructional project focused on the Republic of Palau, a Pacific island microstate increasingly affected by flows of workers, tourists, and investment capital from Asia. The intent was to defy conventional approaches to area studies by destabilizing the spatial, cultural, and geopolitical categories often used to organize such work. The *Moving Cultures* project brought together an interdisciplinary team of specialists in various Asian and Pacific “areas” as well as politicians, community leaders, academics, and teachers from Palau who would not normally work together on a sustained basis. This was a highly unusual approach to Asia Pacific studies, and one that responded to the challenge that “moving cultures” presented to notions of the “local” in an era of globalization (Wesley-Smith 2000a).

Although the first iteration of *Moving Cultures* produced some interesting insights into Palauan experiences of globalization and generally raised awareness of area studies issues, some aspects of the project were less successful. A key objective was to find ways to correct some of the power imbalances between the agents (researchers and students) and objects of inquiry (studied communities) inherent in much area studies work by making our *Moving Cultures* activities “genuinely collaborative.” By the time Stage I was complete, however, we were just beginning to understand the enormity of this task. Although many Palauan colleagues participated in the project, the extent to which this served to “level the playing field” is by no means clear. In an important cultural and epistemological sense it was still “our” game, played out according to the dictates and conventions of Western scholarship. We were effectively engaged in “a search for balance within a discourse that is itself thoroughly unbalanced in its approach to the world, already firmly committed to a particular intellectual tradition and ontology” (Wesley-Smith 2000b, 9).

Regional Learning Communities

Responding to these dilemmas, the emphasis in Stage II of *Moving Cultures* shifted from research activities to the classroom, the principal site where the culture of area studies is reproduced. In a concerted effort to “bring area studies to the areas studied,” a team of instructors from the University of Hawai‘i established relations with six other regional colleges and universities

to explore new forms of collaborative teaching and learning about Asia and the Pacific.

What emerged from these interactions was a pedagogical model designed to address some of the imbalances of power inherent in area studies. The model advocates the use of interactive technologies to create dynamic links between places where area studies are taught and the places being studied, and so to destabilize the relationship between the subject and object of knowledge. In this model the partner educational institutions collaborate in the development of shared curriculum and adopt student-centered, dialogic forms of teaching and learning in multisited classrooms. In other words, it forms regional learning communities.⁴

Such learning communities were developed in multiple collaborations between faculty and students at the University of the South Pacific in Fiji, Canterbury and Victoria universities in New Zealand, Ateneo de Zamboanga University in Mindanao in the Philippines, the National University of Singapore, and Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University in Japan. Jointly owned courses or course modules were developed and taught simultaneously on the partner campuses using interactive technologies such as e-mail, websites, and videoconferencing to link participants at each site (see also Sharma 2005; Chang 2004).

The interactive courses explored the nature and local implications of the global flows of capital, people, and ideas that affect local communities in different ways. Modules were developed to examine three sets of related topics associated with globalization: migration and multiculturalism; tourism, representation, and identity; and globalization and popular culture. These are topics of immediate relevance to people in each of the regional sites, which as quintessential border zones exhibit all the tensions and contradictions inherent in the contemporary study of place and culture. The pedagogy is designed to give students an active role in shaping and exploring the topics in close collaboration with overseas counterparts and to elicit personal experiences and comparative perspectives.

Although one project (involving Ateneo de Zamboanga University) pursued semester-long interactions, others found that the most practical approach employed a scaled-down version of the *Moving Cultures* pedagogical model focused on specially designed modules inserted into longer courses taught independently on the collaborating campuses. Needless to say there are differences in educational and institutional cultures that make such distanced collaborations difficult to sustain over a longer term, and the four-to-five-week modules could be tailor-made to fit into regular courses that satisfied location-specific requirements without necessitating new course proposals,

special funding, and personnel actions. Inserting interactive modules into existing courses also avoided the potential problem of recruiting students for courses that are not part of the regular offerings. Finally, limiting the period of intercampus activity avoided some of the planning and management difficulties associated with regional campuses following different academic calendars.

Re-Placing Asia Pacific Studies

Most of the contributions in this volume started life as papers presented at the *Moving Cultures* capstone conference *Remaking Asia Pacific Studies: Knowledge, Power, and Pedagogy*, held in Honolulu in December 2002. The chapters are organized into three sections, intended to move the reader from theoretically informed general discussions of the development and current status of area studies, through some comparative perspectives from outside the mainstream of American area studies, to case studies of attempts to translate such critical insights into concrete teaching and learning practices. These sections are followed by some concluding comments from Ricardo Trimillos, who identifies emerging themes and “lessons learned” from the materials presented in the book. Each section is prefaced by a brief introduction, which situates the set of chapters in the context of the broader concerns of the text and identifies relevant theoretical and practical considerations.

The three chapters in the first section, “Reshaping Area Studies in an Era of Globalization,” explore some of the factors shaping the development of area studies knowledge in the United States, as well as the shifting regional geographies on which area studies programs are based. Together they highlight the need for radical change in the pedagogies and practices of area studies, without losing sight of the valuable insights that this type of scholarship can provide. Arif Dirlik identifies a number of political-economic developments shaping the crisis in area studies, with particular reference to Asia Pacific studies, before discussing alternative ways of reimagining regional geographies and issues. He notes in particular the significance of the end of the Cold War for the modernization discourse and spatial categories that emerged in the post–World War II period. Coupled with the rise of new centers of global power, this has destabilized some fundamental aspects of the area studies project and given rise to a number of alternative ways of claiming knowledge about Asia and the Pacific. Dirlik discusses the distinctive characteristics of these overlapping trends—identified as civilization studies, oceanic studies, the “Asianization of Asian studies,” diasporic studies, and indigenous studies—before concluding that no single approach is likely to

meet all the needs of more appropriate forms of area studies while avoiding complicity with the neoliberal ideology of globalization. “If there is a crisis in our ways of studying the world, including the Asia Pacific world,” he asks, “is this crisis likely to be resolved by the substitution of a new paradigm . . . or does the solution lie in the proliferation of paradigms in a world that does not lend itself to easy spatial or temporal containment?”

Neil Smith’s contribution focuses on issues of space and scale in the production of the geographical categories informing area studies. He notes that the “whole global jigsaw puzzle” of spatial entities around which this type of knowledge has been constructed has been thrown up in the air in recent times. The challenge is to put the puzzle back together in more appropriate ways while recognizing that some of the pieces coming back down have been altered or replaced under the influence of globalization and other social forces. For Smith, the key is understanding the processes involved. He asks, “how do certain kinds of areas and borders get constructed, others eroded, still others reconstructed in the context of specific, shifting and intensified transnational flows associated with a new globalism?” Smith draws upon theoretical insights from the discipline of geography and concludes that a revitalized and reconstructed area studies will succeed “to the extent that it does indeed embrace geographical theory and, in particular, theories of the production of space and scale.”

Martin Lewis echoes some of the themes in the Smith and Dirlik contributions, although employing different arguments and emphases. His work is organized around a critical examination of different metageographical schemes used to divide the world into civilizational, continental, and oceanic realms. He also examines various constructs of “Asia” and “the Pacific” before outlining the requirements for an alternate regionalization scheme to inform area studies. He argues that the discourse of competing civilizations and that of continents share common historical and intellectual roots, both grounded in ideas of immutable physical, cultural, social, and economic features. Oceans too, he suggests, are often incorrectly seen as simple, natural units of geography, self-evident points of reference for dividing up the world. Lewis argues that area studies cannot simply discard regional categories, problematic as they are. Instead, we need to use them in ways that acknowledge their complexity as well as their contingent and constructed nature, while entertaining “alternative, overlapping, noncongruent regionalization schemes, paying particular attention to dynamic border zones.”

While Dirlik, Smith, and Lewis discuss broad issues affecting contemporary American-based area studies programs, in “Perspectives from Asia and the Pacific” Lonny Carlile, Jeremy Eades, Teresia Teaiwa, and Lily Kong shift

the focus to related concerns and issues in some of the areas studied. Lonny Carlile and Jeremy Eades examine trends in area studies and internationalization in higher education in Japan, an important site for the production of knowledge about the Asia Pacific region. Carlile traces the evolution of the study of Japan's "others" from the nineteenth century on and looks at how changing geopolitical considerations and institutional reforms have shaped contemporary forms of international study. He describes the early and wholesale adoption of Western scientific modes of inquiry in higher education in Japan—initially leading researchers to view even their own culture as "other." In more recent times the status of area studies research and education has changed dramatically as Japan has been confronted with the new demands of globalization and become obliged to adopt a more independent and assertive regional posture.

Although Carlile argues that Japan is now in a position to forge models of area studies research and teaching radically different from those of the United States, Eades' analysis suggests that this is not necessarily the case. He examines the situation at Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University (APU), a new institution where area studies is not just a supplement to other programs, but "the *raison d'être* of a whole university." This represents a radical departure for Japanese higher education, and, unencumbered by existing precedents and institutional constraints, APU appears to offer enviable opportunities for innovation. However, as Eades explains, there are real constraints stemming from the fact that the initiative was designed primarily to attract students in a shrinking and competitive domestic market and to tap into an expanding flow of international students from other parts of the Asia Pacific region. Eades is well aware of the conceptual and political issue associated with the construction of regions raised by other contributors to this volume. Indeed he explores in some depth the origins of the Asia Pacific idea, as well as some of the regional issues that might feature prominently in the university's curriculum. Yet ultimately his concerns are pragmatic and administrative: "Amoeba-like regions and open-ended disciplines raise serious implications for teaching and library resources, especially in small international universities whose composition may change rapidly in response to the vicissitudes of the regional economy."

Teresia Teaiwa has also been involved in program building at Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand, a country with strong historical, cultural, geopolitical, and diasporic ties to the Pacific islands region. She notes that over the last half-century Pacific Islands Studies has produced vast quantities of material but has demonstrated no disciplinary or methodological consistency. She shares the concerns of other area studies practitioners,

including Eades, about the challenges of studying “amoeba-like” regions that expand or shrink over time and according to the nature of the inquiry. She acknowledges that as it is usually defined “the Pacific” is a construct with distinctly colonial origins, but she points out that the same might be said about any modern Pacific island nation. In the end, Teaiwa follows Tongan scholar Epeli Hau‘ofa in arguing that whatever the conceptual and practical legacies of colonialism, only Pacific islanders “can make our region real.” Teaiwa’s chapter offers a prescriptive answer to the question “What is Pacific Studies?” that emphasizes interdisciplinarity, indigenous ways of knowing, and comparative analysis before warning of the dangers of associating too closely with a potentially hegemonic Asian studies.

As a complement to the critical concerns of earlier contributors, Lily Kong of the National University of Singapore takes a pragmatic look at some of the administrative factors affecting institutional collaboration, especially those initiatives involving international partners. The most important factors in the success of such projects, she argues, are personal commitment and the development of interpersonal relations between faculty members who are willing to invest time and effort to overcome professional disincentives and institutional barriers. These are important practical issues that reappear in the chapters about learning communities later in the volume.

In the third section of the book, “Asia Pacific Learning Communities,” collaborators reflect on their experiences developing and teaching interactive Web-based courses, initiatives designed specifically to address some of the conceptual and theoretical concerns about contemporary area studies raised earlier in this volume. These chapters thus represent attempts to bring the insights of what might be called the “intellectual heavyweights” in the first section to bear on the classroom-based construction and dissemination of area studies knowledge. Each collaboration involved a different variation of the *Moving Cultures* model of pedagogy and generated a wealth of experience with the conceptual, technical, political, cultural, and bureaucratic issues associated with this sort of educational innovation. It is hardly surprising that some of these interregional, cross-cultural experiments were more successful than others for both students and instructors. Taken together, the case studies provide useful lessons on the potential and practical problems of international collaborative learning intended to engage in “moving cultures.”

Finally, Ricardo Trimillos offers a concise “idiosyncratic” reflection on the materials in this volume and on the future of Asia Pacific area studies generally. Like many other authors in *Remaking Area Studies*, Trimillos grapples with the challenge of defining fundamental units of analyses, in this case the Asia Pacific region and its constituent subregional parts. He explores

this issue with particular reference to the organization and reorganization of Asian and Pacific studies at the University of Hawai'i, distinguishing between "working definitions" (employed by primary user groups), and "workable definitions" (invoked for specific purposes or occasions), and identifying some associated conceptual, political, and practical considerations. An experienced area studies administrator and teacher, Trimillos welcomes *Moving Cultures*' focused attention on issues of pedagogy and knowledge delivery, applied and practical aspects of area studies that he argues deserve more attention from specialists. Trimillos discusses some of the shared characteristics of the collaborative initiatives described in the book, particularly their emphasis on student-centered, experiential learning. But he notes that the effectiveness of these initiatives for "mastering specific knowledge or . . . raising levels of critical thinking" remains unexplored. Trimillos concludes by enumerating eight "lessons learned" from this attempt to rethink Asia Pacific Studies at the University of Hawai'i and argues that these "have a high degree of application and relevance" for programs focused on other areas of the world.

Area Studies Futures

We believe that there is much to be learned from *Moving Cultures* and other recent initiatives that confront the assumptions and practices governing the first half-century of area studies in the United States. There is much at stake as an accelerating process of globalization, itself poorly understood, continues to challenge conventional understandings of place and culture. There is no option but to continue the search for viable alternatives to an area studies establishment that has, at best, only a dimly conceived sense of its intellectual role in the academy. We continue to hope with Arjun Appadurai that while the vision of "global collaborative teaching and learning about globalization may not resolve the great antinomies of power that characterize this world . . . it might help even the playing field" (Appadurai 2001, 20).

Notes

1. Whether explicitly acknowledged or not, most area studies scholarship was informed by the ideas and assumptions of the modernization theorists, with their emphasis on stages of growth and the global diffusion of modernity, or in more critical works by dependency theory, which emphasized instead relations of power between developed centers and underdeveloped peripheries in the global system.
2. Some material related to the *Moving Cultures* project in this and other sections has been drawn from Wesley-Smith 2000a and 2000b. The School of Hawaiian,

Asian and Pacific Studies (SHAPS) is now the School of Pacific and Asian Studies (SPAS)—see Ricardo Trimillos' essay elsewhere in this volume.

3. Ford received more than two hundred applications from colleges and universities across the United States for Stage I of the *Crossing Borders* initiative (1997–1998), and thirty were funded. The following year Stage I recipients were invited to apply for Stage II funding (1999–2002), and eighteen received support. Recipients included the University of California at Berkeley, Duke University, University of Wisconsin, Yale University, and the University of Michigan. The initiative sponsored a great variety of projects, some of which, like Duke's *Oceans Connect*, explored new conceptual frameworks, while others, such as Michigan's *Grounding, Translation and Expertise*, attempted to encourage transdisciplinary and transarea collaborations within the institution. *Moving Cultures* was one of a very few to focus on area studies pedagogy.

4. This is not to suggest, of course, that these interactive learning communities address all the imbalances of power inherent in area studies scholarship. Indeed, as some contributors to this volume discuss, the project raised new questions about forms of collaboration that rely on interactive technologies and may involve issues of class, social privilege, and access to technology (see, e.g., Wesley-Smith 2003).

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