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*Spectacular Cities* is a fresh attempt to understand globalization. It is claimed to be a departure from the regular work on the globalized world viewed through airtight containers, pre-conditioned disciplinary compartmentalization, and twisting and turning the debate to fit in a size tailored by political space, economy or culture. The author claims to intertwine process and processed, causality and causation in the book. The reality is complicated and entangled in multiple layers. The book claims to reveal the way reality unfolds itself and encompasses everything (9-20). The author’s intention is to present globalization as a whole, ever-expanding process that is complex and chaotic and not to invoke pre-existing theories. Each aspect of globalization is discussed in minute parts and in their entirety, which the author carefully calls dialectical analysis. The author is rightly aware of the fact that she cannot present globalization in separate, fragmented categories such as cultural-economy, political economy, or spatiality (24-35). Her argument stands on understanding the world in its chaotic reality where the real world, society, and spaces are all related and blend dynamically.

“Spectacular landscapes” is offered as a marker of globalization. The spectacular landscapes replace certain existing cultural, economic, or political landscapes. These spectacular landscapes and their surroundings reflect a displayed aura of globalization. It is a rather difficult exercise to break it into parts like that of a clock and analyze its functions separately. The difficulty arises from the fact that these spectacles such as McDonaldization, Disneyization, or Barbieization, and globally circulated notions of beauty and cosmetics, western standards of tallness, skin lightening, and thinness are all cultural impositions. They are not separate from each other. A major part of this book is devoted to religious spectacles of the United States and their counterparts in India, including Akashardham Temple complexes in Atlanta, Houston, and Irving-Dallas as landscapes that transcend in their essence across geographical sites (150-173). The author has tried to communicate globalization as a whole without simplifying it and reducing it to a caricature of reality. It is created by imagined topographic ideas and has converted them
into grand illusionary spaces. The reality is loaded with a heterogeneity of ideas, where a singular identity loses its meaning. Globalization, rightly put as modernity by the author, is a way of life where circulation, flow, intangibility, and borderlessness can be understood in their totality. Employing a Marxian dialectical method, the book explores cultures and economies, erasing the difference between tangible and intangible; how they work in consonance with each other.

*Spectacular Cities* tries to analyze globalization through a unison of culture, economy, and materiality. Here the author could have used Judith Butler’s idea about materiality, where a certain substance acquires the status of divine while the same substance in other places remains as a material only. Using an analytical framework of the process that elevates the material to the divine would have been a fitting method, along with what Chatterjee says is a dialectical analysis. Globalization as a process particular to the sites of these spectacular grand spaces of place synthesizes “everything.” Reductionist approaches to understanding globalization cause damage by mapping the very nature of globalization. For example, the author is consciously juxtaposing Vedic boat rides, water and laser light shows, with Disneyland, and she further expands this as a process of capitalism where religious commodification is creating the spaces of consumption and accumulation. Simplification cannot explain the process of transcending boundaries. Globalization therefore contradicts anything that reduced complex reality to definitions or fragments. The spiritual ideas are too abstract to understand but to provide them a body, these temple complexes created alternative spaces. They create an aura, a kind of haze, by recreating religion through material commodities that can be purchased and felt even when one is not physically present (136-142).

Commodification of cultures, Gods going online, and religious patriarchy taking over in the late capitalist mode of production are all ramifications of globalization, which the author labels “Auto-Pilot Mode” in chapter seven. Virtual spaces are unstoppable, physical spaces are mutable, and global spaces are coherent with these two elements of fluidity and simulation. The essence of globalization and its related spaces lies in understanding them as dialectical (181-182). Each concrete component is related with the other and it is this relationality that makes it a whole, a synthesis in totality.

However, the central argument of complexity and dialectics centers on the idea of created spaces, which Foucault describes as heterotopia.¹ The author could have used the concept of heterotopia to situate this idea. The

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author mentions certain spaces as unique containers of identities and also points of flow and exchange. These spaces include ethnoscapes (fluid spaces of tourists, refugees, and migrant workers), technoscapes (invisible virtual spaces, the cybersphere), and financescapes (new topographies of financial speculation, global markets, etc.) Similarly, communication media such as satellite television and newspapers are in a continuous process of creating transnational communities or mediascapes (41). Ideas are circulated from the place of origin to spaces never imagined, so that even national and regional ideas have a global spread and purchase. Profane cities of the world, such as American-Hindutva or online Islamophobia, are glaring examples of such created spaces, which are often felt more than seen. The heterotopia is a continuous process of creating spaces. They are juxtaposed in one single space which simultaneously real, illusionary, and incompatible. Each space has a production function. Globalization is about creating spectacles, a grandeur where multiple though incompatible spaces are created to represent a world in totality. This totality can be seen as created spaces (heterotopias) versus real spaces or real versus imagined/felt spaces. This can explain the movement of ideas from one space to another, which Judith Butler explains as a recurring theme in globalization’s “mobility.” From ideas to symbols, from people to gendered roles, everything moves in a global world. Information and technology has played a masterstroke in bringing everything together within time and space. The movement is unrestricted due to technological advancement. The tangible and intangible run parallel. The complex social spaces are porous and fluid, what Castells describes as “spaces of flow,” building on his argument about the intersectionality of economy and culture.2

In summary, the book is a well-researched theoretical project, based on ethnographic study of Akshardham temple complexes across several nations. The author’s engagement with theory is carefully interwoven in the discussion of religion, landscape, and the dialectics of globalization. The work deserves attention since the author has approached globalization from a dialectical perspective. Spectacular Cities is illuminating and can be seen as an addition to cultural theorizing of globalization. The book presents a successful interdisciplinary approach to the social totality of globalization. Chatterjee’s writing carefully avoids divorcing oppositional categories: superstructure from substructure, production versus significance, space versus society, and class versus gender. The mode of inquiry is in tandem with the mode of globalization: truly chaotic and truly complex. In summary, this is a valuable

contribution to understanding the process of globalization that broadly contributes to the creation of a “society of spectacles.”