

Welt-Bildner. Arno Peters, Richard Buckminster Fuller und die Medien des Globalismus, 1940-2000

By David Kuchenbuch. Vienna and Cologne: Böhlau, 2021. Pp. 623. Hardback €70.00. ISBN: 978-3412521110.

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Looking at the title, we would assume that David Kuchenbuch's book is a dual biography of two significant innovators of the second half of the twentieth century, Arno Peters (1916-2002) and Richard Buckminster Fuller (1895-1983). Peters, a German historian, became known for his synchroptic world history timeline that aimed to represent all cultures and regions on an equal scale, and for a world map projection developed as criticism of Eurocentric worldviews. Fuller, an American architect, designer, and futurist, is well-known for his foldable Dymaxion Map, his geodesic domes, and the World Peace Game, which he developed as an educational simulation. Despite the fact that Peters and Fuller never met, mostly worked on different continents, and had entirely different ideologies, sources of inspiration, and spheres of influence, they had many similarities. Both perceived themselves as pioneering intellectuals who implemented innovative visual and material aids to educate and reform the world towards a more globalized way of thinking.

Viewing *Welt-Bildner* as a dual biography is, thus, not entirely inaccurate, since the book is structured around the life stories of its protagonists and their attempts to redraw and reshape the world, literally and metaphorically. However, Kuchenbuch's true aim lies in the second part of the title, *die Medien des Globalismus* ("the media of globalism"), as he explores the history of both globalism, as an evolving and dynamic concept, and its representations in world media. Fuller and Peters, as well as their followers and critics, are merely means to discuss the relationship between these two concepts.

Accordingly, the author investigates the ideological, social, technological, and commercial aspects of changing worldviews of globalism from 1940 to 2000. The central historical hypothesis is stated in the introduction: "The imploding excess of expectations of the optimistic globalism of the 1960s," which is materialized in Fuller's work, "gave rise to the self-critical-subjectivist glocalism" (50), which manifested itself in Peters' work.

However, this linear narrative does not make the argument any less complicated or nuanced. As the author explains, meanings of words, concepts, and artifacts shift and transform in varying cultural and geographical settings. Therefore, Kuchenbuch gives as much thought to the social reception of Peters and Fuller's globalist images and ideas and the ways in which they were used as he does to their creation. In fact, Kuchenbuch tells us that Peters and Fuller's artifacts did not work as they were intended to.

Fuller, for example, envisioned a world optimized by better industries, management, and design, was not aligned with the political left, and yet found himself a hero to the American counterculture. Peters, on the other hand, who came from an anti-imperialist and communist background, found support in church missions in "third world" countries. By the end of the twentieth century, Fuller's optimistic belief in global progress and Peters' criticism of Eurocentric modernity converged and created glocal movements that stressed the idea of thinking globally, acting locally.

In order to embed Peters and Fuller's life stories in global history, Kuchenbuch develops an innovative book structure, which is perhaps his biggest achievement. After a lengthy theoretical introduction, the book follows a chronological timeline and alternates between Fuller and Peters, while shifting between historical genres – biography, social history, cultural history, intellectual history, and material history. In order to contextualize the various

chapters' timeframes, Kuchenbuch begins each chapter with two sections, entitled "vignette" and "Verortnung" (location). The former discusses exemplary artefacts or representations of global thinking, such as the British propaganda film *World of Plenty* (1943), the New York spherical monument *Unisphere* (1964), *McArthur's Universal Corrective Map of the World* (1979), or *Ökolopoly*, the 1983 board game. The latter discusses the changing cultural meanings of the "world" in each period of time, from "one world," which needs to be healed, in the mid-1940s (51), to "many worlds" in the 1990s (530). As Kuchenbuch states, "when people spoke and still speak about globality, it does not have to mean the same thing" (569).

The strength as well as the weakness of this monograph lies in its rich and often confusing structure. On the one hand, it proposes a new historical methodology that manages to deal at once with material, social, cultural, and political aspects of history, while trying to avoid the lacunas of each type of history. As a result, it should almost be viewed as an experiment in historiography. On the other hand, the structure is not very easy to navigate, to say the least, and is one of the causes of the book's length. For example, chapter 4, titled, "A Media-Historical Intermediate Step" ("Medienhistorischer Zwischenschritt") is an unexpected methodological interlude which reviews theories in media studies and critical cartography. Breaks in the general flow of Kuchenbuch's historical narrative make reading the book a challenge. In addition, the chapter and section headings are not very informative, since many are quotes from historical sources and thus cannot be understood before reading the relevant sections. As a result, the book is better read as a unified whole, from start to finish.

Despite these issues, *Welt-Bildner* is an impressive interdisciplinary monograph that will be useful to anyone interested in the history of globalism (and glocalism), the history of twentieth-century media, Peters and Fuller, and new and innovative forms of historiography.

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The Virtuous Wehrmacht: Crafting the Myth of the German Soldier on the Eastern Front, 1941-1944

By David A. Harrisville. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2021. Pp. 328. Hardback \$34.95. ISBN: 978-1501760044.

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David Harrisville challenges the existing paradigm surrounding the creation of the "clean" Wehrmacht myth. According to conventional wisdom, German politicians, generals, and veterans' associations crafted the myth after the Second World War, insisting that German soldiers had fought honorably, and conversely that Hitler, his lackeys, and the SS were solely responsible for Nazi crimes committed on the Eastern Front. According to Harrisville, however, the myth of the virtuous Wehrmacht and morally upright German soldier was created during the war by the soldiers themselves. Indeed, despite their willing participation in Hitler's racial war of annihilation, German troops fighting on the Eastern Front persuaded themselves, as well as their families and friends at home, that they had behaved chivalrously as members of an honorable military institution. Insightful and at times even brilliant, Harrisville's investigation explains how the "bad guys" fashioned a narrative that transformed them into "good guys."

Harrisville posits that Nazi ideology powerfully influenced Wehrmacht culture, and thus the army willingly implemented Hitler's racial war of annihilation against the Soviet Union,