

### **Book review: Markus Keck: Navigating Real Markets - The Economic Resilience of Food Wholesale Traders in Dhaka, Bangladesh; Stuttgart: Franz Steiner 2016, ISBN 978-3-515-11379-3**

Schiller, Daniel

Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version

Rezension / review

#### **Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:**

Schiller, D. (2017). Book review: Markus Keck: Navigating Real Markets - The Economic Resilience of Food Wholesale Traders in Dhaka, Bangladesh; Stuttgart: Franz Steiner 2016, ISBN 978-3-515-11379-3. *International Quarterly for Asian Studies (IQAS)*, 48(3-4), 292-293. <https://doi.org/10.11588/iqas.2017.3-4.8648>

#### **Nutzungsbedingungen:**

Dieser Text wird unter einer CC BY-NC-ND Lizenz (Namensnennung-Nicht-kommerziell-Keine Bearbeitung) zur Verfügung gestellt. Nähere Auskünfte zu den CC-Lizenzen finden Sie hier:

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/deed.de>

#### **Terms of use:**

This document is made available under a CC BY-NC-ND Licence (Attribution-Non Commercial-NoDerivatives). For more information see:

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0>

Benazir Bhutto was famously killed in Rawalpindi and not in Karachi). Otherwise this publication is an excellent account and analysis of violence in the megacity Karachi, thought-provoking and recommended reading for all trying to understand violence in a large Asian city.

*Wolfgang-Peter Zingel*

MARKUS KECK, *Navigating Real Markets. The Economic Resilience of Food Wholesale Traders in Dhaka, Bangladesh*. (Megacities and Global Change, 19). Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2016. 240 pages, €49.00. ISBN 978-3-515-11379-3

The book and PhD thesis *Navigating Real Markets* by Markus Keck is a highly insightful study of Dhaka's food system with a special focus on wholesale traders. The work is based on a modern understanding of markets and institutions and on a sophisticated conceptual framework for studying the resilience of food systems from a spatial perspective. Keck aims at moving beyond the view of megacities as places of human misery and hardship. By focusing on the actors within Dhaka's food system, he wants to understand nothing less than what is at the heart of the robustness and resilience of this megaurban food system against the backdrop of the adverse impact of the institutional environment in which it is embedded.

The book offers three major contributions to the existing literature. First, it adds valuable evidence to a modern geography of food systems from the perspective of a megacity in the Global South. The analysis puts people and the dialectics of structure and agency at the foreground. Second, it advances the sociology of markets by recalling institutional embeddedness in the original sense of Polanyi and by expanding the concept through the dimensions of place and informality. Third, the resilience framework is applied to the economic sphere of markets and the resilience of market actors. The limited resilience of wholesalers in Dhaka is well connected to institutional failures.

The book is organised into seven chapters. The introduction is followed by a conceptual chapter that discusses and integrates the theoretical foundation for the empirical analysis. The debates are combined in a conceptual framework for a sociological approach to studying the geography of markets. The third chapter introduces the methodology of the remaining chapters. The analysis is based on careful between-method triangulation that combines quantitative and qualitative methods. The complementary use of a wide variety of methods is highly appropriate for the topic. The methods applied com-

prise, amongst others, GIS techniques, (panel) surveys, observations, interviews and participatory methods.

The three main parts of the book are chapters four to six. In chapter four the food system of Dhaka is presented, with a special focus on rice and fish. Despite its predominantly descriptive nature, it is a critical part of the book because it not only provides the reader with essential background information, but also presents unique facts on productivity, spatial organisation and food security based on own data.

Chapter five dives into the food wholesale market in Dhaka. In this chapter, the reader is at first provided with information on the development of food wholesale markets in Dhaka from a historical perspective. The main part of this chapter consists of an in-depth value chain analysis for rice and fish with a particular focus on traders and stores at the markets. Power relations and value capture along the value chain are carefully carved out.

Chapter six examines the resilience of the food wholesale traders in Dhaka. Conceptually, this is the most ambitious chapter of the book. It adds empirical arguments to the core conceptual concern of understanding markets from a social perspective as practices, networks and arenas. Methodologically, the chapter combines statistical analysis with results from interviews, participatory methods and social networks depicted by Venn diagrams. The final chapter concludes by summarising and discussing the main findings and contributions of the study.

The book is very well written, both brisk and accurate at the same time. In the introduction, Markus Keck immediately catches the attention of the reader by sharing his own initial impressions of Dhaka and providing a personal account of the relevance of his topic. Throughout the book, the argumentation benefits from highly illustrative figures, coloured maps at different scales, and 60 photographs. The book is not only insightful for scholars from human geography, development studies and economics, but also for practitioners in the field of social and economic development and anyone with an interest in area studies of South Asia.

*Daniel Schiller*