

OFFSHORING BY JOHN URRY



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Review

"An informative accounting of the consequences of an offshoring world and an impassioned critique of the offshored condition."

Theory, Culture & Society

"Offshoring shines a light on yet another of the shadowy realms upon which contemporary capitalist normalities rest."

Times Higher Education

"Urry writes with clarity and offers very useful examples to explain points. I would strongly recommend this book for teachers to purchase copies to be placed in their school/college/department libraries so that students can pursue the negative side of Globalisation in detail and be aware of lots of contemporary examples."

The Sociology Teacher

"Exposing capitalism's expanding economy of secrecy, John Urry reveals a terrifying picture of catastrophes waiting to happen, of global inequalities difficult to comprehend, and of human rights violations on an appalling scale. Sociology at its best, warning us of the worst. Offshoring should be required reading for all undergraduates."

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"This is one point of John Urry's thought provoking book: the outside suggested by the concept of 'offshoring' no longer exists. Therefore politics of offshoring today are simultaneously domestic and global. And like Urry so excitingly does we have to ask: how can the 'outsourced' citizen of the world be included in decisions which affect their survival?"

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About the Author

John Urry (1946-2016) was Distinguished Professor of Sociology at Lancaster University

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OFFSHORING BY JOHN URRY PDF

The concealment of income, wealth and profits in tax havens has brought the topic of offshoring into public debate, but as John Urry shows in this important new book offshoring is a much more pervasive feature of contemporary societies. These often secretive activities offshore also involve relations of work, finance, pleasure, waste, energy and security. Powerful and pervasive offshore worlds have been generated, posing huge challenges both for governments and for citizens.

This book documents the various patterns of offshoring of the economy, sociability, politics and the environment. In each case, offshoring generates new patterns of power, reduces the responsibilities of the powerful 'offshore class', and limits the conditions for democratic governance. Offshore, out of sight, over the horizon are some of the troubling processes and metaphors by which much life has been rendered opaque and dependent upon secrets and lies. By analysing these patterns and processes, Urry sheds fresh light on the hidden worlds of offshoring and exposes the dark side of globalization.

The book concludes by considering whether offshoring can be reversed and whether it is possible to bring about the systematic 'reshoring' of relations that would be good for democracy and for developing low-carbon futures. Urry portrays the coming century as being poised between even more extreme offshoring and various endeavours to bring back 'home' that which has currently escaped 'over the horizon'.

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Most helpful customer reviews

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

An excellent discussion of a major economic problem

By Robert Moore

This is an important study of one of the most pressing economic problems in the world today: offshoring everything from manufacturing to service centers to corporate headquarters. It is a system that enriches the upper hierarchy of companies, whether corporate officers or major shareholders, while removing middle class jobs in developed countries and replacing them with lower paying jobs in third world countries, while doing profound harm to the tax structure of the nations losing the corporations and jobs.

I can't recommend Urry's book strongly enough, even as I despair of any short term solution to the economic problems in the world's advanced countries. At the heart of things is an unwillingness to engage in any personal sacrifice for the sake of society at large. For instance, the most damaging myth plaguing society at the moment is that cutting taxes is a good thing and raising taxes is a bad thing. This is closely allied with the equally pernicious myth that the private sector can accomplish tasks for society as a whole more efficiently than can the public sector; i.e., that corporations - which exist to make a profit - are more efficient than governments at handling those same tasks (little evidence exists apart from ideological propaganda to support the pro-private sector assertion). With governments - especially federal and state governments in the United States - in need of additional funds, quality in life in the US and other nations continues to decline.

I do believe that at some point people will become fed up with the panoply of truly awful economic ideas that has caused sustained low economic growth, rapid growth in economic inequality, and failure of governments to provide long term economic stimulus (and despite the rhetoric, economic stimulus comes from government encouraging the private sector to engage in spending on large projects) will eventually create demand for radical changes. It isn't enough that nearly 40 years of trickle down economic theories that advocate large tax cuts for the wealthy have failed completely. It is going to require most likely an additional 20 years for the public at large to realize that the economic policies associated with the Reagan and Thatcher eras were absolutely abysmal. Meanwhile, it is important that books like Urry's be widely read and its ideas shared. The failure of the Age of Reagan isn't necessarily the fate of future generations. It just takes people recognizing it.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

A frightening eye-opener

By Steve Benner

John Urry is Distinguished Professor of Sociology at Lancaster University in North West England. Not surprisingly, therefore, his latest book, "Offshoring", is an academically rigorous and thoroughly researched summary of the sociological as well as economic effects of the comparatively recent global phenomenon of 'offshoring' -- i.e. the circumventing of regulatory or legislative restrictions on particular activities by moving those activities overseas to some other location with laxer laws or more 'relaxed' attitudes. Offshoring as a practice is not particularly new, but, as this book demonstrates, it has really flourished since the rise of financial neo-liberalism from the mid 1980s on.

For most people, offshore business is most likely to be associated with the exploitation of cheap, non-unionised labour markets -- most commonly in the provision of customer service call-centres -- or in the burgeoning use of overseas tax havens. It is clear from this book, however, that corporate tax avoidance and worker exploitation are but the tip of a huge iceberg of socially unacceptable or immoral outcomes of routine undertakings of the rich and the powerful. Such undertakings are invariably at the expense of the poor and less powerful and, as the author shows, ultimately indeed, of the very planet itself.

For many, John Urry's book will be a truly eye-opening and frightening read. In it, he chronicles the entire gamut of activities that, while central to today's interconnected world, nevertheless escape crucial regulation for the common good by being undertaken in offshore localities. Such activities are usually conducted in secret, often hidden behind façades of respectability (which further prevent too much inspection from prying eyes) and invariably kept comfortably out of the sight of the masses and thus well and truly out of mind.

The list is far longer and all-encompassing and the harm greater than you might think. Most commonly reported in the media these days and at least somewhat in the public spotlight is the routine offshoring of wealth and finance. This not only deprives societies generally of vast quantities of essential tax revenues but also leaves financial speculators free to gamble on money markets and other ephemera such as derivatives, rather than invest in real assets, and in the process risks bringing about complete global economic collapse. Similarly, offshoring of labour is known to damage workers' health and wellbeing in order to keep the richer parts of the world supplied with cheap consumer goods and services, the demand for which has been largely engineered by the offshoring businesses themselves.

Less obviously open to offshoring, perhaps, but shown in this book to be no less significant in their impact are:

- leisure activities, with overseas locations often sought as vacation destinations in order to legitimise otherwise illegal pleasure-seeking activities such as gambling, drug taking or sexual exploitation of (usually) women or children.
- energy provision, with the reliance on oil and gas driving drilling operations into ever more inhospitable and risky environments, increasing the chances of irreparable damage to fragile and vital ecosystems
- waste disposal, with ever increasing quantities of toxic and hazardous material discarded by rich consumers being shipped over the horizon, out of sight and out of mind, to pollute the lands and endanger the lives of those who make a living from processing the detritus of modern consumer-based living
- transportation, with the need to transport cheaply the growing volumes of (offshored) manufactured goods, energy sources and discarded waste, filling the oceans' shipping lanes with dangerously substandard cargo

vessels registered under flags of convenience, frequently imperilling the lives of poorly paid crews and risking ecological mishap

- state security, with activities such as 'extraordinary rendition' supposedly legitimising the use of torture and other extreme means of extracting the knowledge supposedly required to separate friend from (often imaginary) 'enemy' -- often creating new, very real, enemies in the process.

The final chapters of the book demonstrate the wider harm that offshoring in general perpetuates -- widening inequalities; squandering of vital resources; irreversible environmental impact; loss of democracy; undermining of global security and the sacrificing of real freedoms for the illusory freedoms of the relentless consumer. It builds a potent argument for a reversal of the offshoring process, suggesting some potential avenues which might bring this about. (Some may regard the book as a clarion call to revolution, a declaration that it is time to topple the powerful from their positions. To read it this way though is to miss one of its central tenets: that the powerful are already beyond the reach of revolution, except on a truly global scale, as their seats of power are themselves largely offshored, making them inherently unreachable by the masses.)

The book is not without its faults: the author has a tendency towards repetition, which makes some sections a little tedious to read. I feel also that he takes the oceanic metaphor of offshoring a little too far (and I am not at all convinced of his assertion that 'salted away' is an original offshoring or sea-related expression either -- it doesn't mean 'hidden away' so much as 'preserved in case of need'.) These faults are neither major nor serious, however, and need not deter any potential reader; its message is too important to disregard.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

How can these trends be reshored?

By Amazon Customer

This is another interesting book. This has been a good summer. Here John Urry delves into some of the most timely issues associated with the rise of Capital as described in another new book Capital in the Twenty-First Century. Given that Capital is again separating the very rich from everyone else, how can a socialist oriented society properly shift the wealth from that wealthy class for itself instead of in itself and spread that wealth so society is more balanced. An interesting point here though is Urry's comment that most of the really wealthy aren't taxed anyway and it is the upper middle classes that try to find offshore havens for their wealth to avoid taxes. But this book isn't just about that aspect of offshoring since it deals with the entire range of issues resulting from international movements or mobile wealth that has especially been stimulated by international policy to protect free trade and the electronic media that enables instant banking anywhere from anyplace. So how can the various countries find all this and tax it? Hints at how that might be done come in the last chapter. This book also hints at central issues inside nations that are affected by these changes too. Place, Not Race: A New Vision of Opportunity in America also ties into this as well as the excellent book The Divide: American Injustice in the Age of the Wealth Gap.

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