

Прикази Reviews Comptes rendus

Jen Jack Gieseeking and William Mangold with Cindi Kats, Setha Low, and Susan Saegert (editors). 2014. *The People, Place and Space Reader*. New York – Oxon: Routledge. 446 + xxxiv pp. £46.99 paperback. ISBN978-0-415-66497-4

Space is not an aseptic dimension: it is an experience that brings together physical, ideal, and emotional elements shaping individual and communal perceptions of being in the world. This expanded understanding of space is the result of a debate that emerged in the late nineteenth century and bloomed after the Second World War. However, this understanding has not percolated into common development planning; even today, the spatial dimension is often overlooked by researchers and professionals designing and implementing development initiatives. The definition of space remains limited to an ensemble of geographical coordinates that locate a particular place in a map of the world. In so doing, the key human experience that is built on sensorial perception, affective and intellectual interpretations, and public and private, individual and collective narratives of interaction with space are left out. *The People, Place and Space Reader* allows the reader to appreciate the rich cultural debate that shaped the social sciences in the past century and marked the passage from modernism to post-modernism.

The idea for the book was developed from experiences in the environmental psychology program at The Graduate Center of the City University of New York.

It provides excerpted writings of scholars, designers, social thinkers, and activists whose teachings and research have explored cultural understandings of space and place. In contrast to previous collections, the book provides a cross-disciplinary approach to understanding people and their interactions with space. It encompasses works from psychology, geography, anthropology, sociology, architecture, design and urban planning, thus giving a complete presentation of the key approaches that have characterized the field of knowledge that nowadays falls under the rubric of “environmental social sciences”.

The People, Place and Space Reader can be approached in different ways. On one hand, it provides a non-representational map of the debate about space in various social science disciplines, in particular geography, psychology, sociology, and anthropology. For example, the selection of anthropological writings in the book allow the reader to follow debates of spatialization of culture, which examine the dynamics that link culture and space through objects, ideas, social norms, and conceptualizations. However, the selection mostly includes writing from the second half of the twentieth century, thus leaving out early ethnographic studies that motivate rethinking the links between space and culture. The book also discusses how the concept of space has interacted with themes such as gender, race, power, migration, and globalization, creating a tapestry marked by cross-fertilization with other disciplines and defining the ground

for an engaged anthropological approach to space analysis.

Divided in twelve thematic sections, the book is designed to lead readers beyond disciplinary boundaries and help them appreciate the complexity and transdisciplinary nature of debates in the environmental social sciences.

In the first section, “Diverse conceptions of the relationships between people, place, and space” (pp. 1–38), through the writing of, David Harvey, Rem Koolhaas, Miwon Kwon, Kurt Lewin, Seta Low and Susan Ruddick, one learns that space is not an innate, fixed dimension but is generated through people’s actions and meanings. Thus, space is not just a plain mathematical grid of simultaneous presences, but is shaped by possibilities of access and movement, affections, and continuous construction and deconstruction of tangible and intangible objects. This understanding is further investigated in Section 9, “The social production of space and time” (pp. 283–320). Here, the selected papers, by Anthony D. King, Henri Lefebvre, Katherine McKittrick, Wolfgang Schivelbusch, Neil Smith, and Virginia Woolf, point out how people construct and experience space and time. In so doing, they show space and time as socio-cultural categories rather than objective dimensions, highlighting how the use of space influences subjectivity.

Aspects of subjectivity are also explored in Section 4, “Power, subjectivity, and space” (pp. 103–144). In particular, the readings by Pierre Bourdieu, Kim Dovey, Ruth W. Gilmore,

Stephen D. N. Graham, Allan Pred, and Melissa W. Wright are drawn upon to point out the fundamental role played by policies in shaping everyday lives of individuals and communities. Once enforced, policies shape, limit, and direct individuals’ conduct of life. In so doing, policies risk perpetuating bias, and forms of racism, sexism, and classism that might have underpinned legislation.

This partial summary of the contents of the book is a first example of what the book offers to the readers. The sixty-nine papers contained in the book, represent a solid introduction for students to concepts, methodologies, and approaches in environmental social sciences. Although designed for graduate programs, the book can be easily adopted in undergraduate courses. For students, the book also represents a useful compass for selecting seminal papers for their secondary research. Interested readers can find new materials, such as reading lists, news, and short articles, selected and produced by the editors online at [HTTP://peopleplacespace.org](http://peopleplacespace.org).

Overall, the book is a useful starting point for engaging with the key debates that encompass all the social sciences. It is particularly useful for development professionals who will find many cues on rethinking the relationship between individuals and space, the role of individual and collective experiences of space and place, and the need to foster bottom-up practices in the fields of economic and social development.

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