



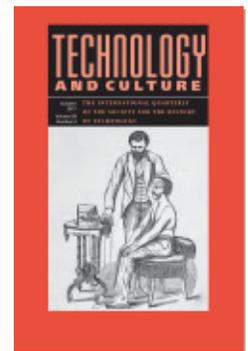
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Spatializing Politics: Essays on Power and Place ed. by
Delia Duong Ba Wendel and Fallon Samuels Aidoo (review)

Darren Purcell

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(Review)

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OCTOBER
2017
VOL. 58

messages placed there and ignores the visual communication in the door's design. Where this topic does arise in an earlier chapter, architectural treatises are appropriately referenced, but not adequately engaged (especially Sebastiano Serlio). Least satisfactory is the chapter on city gates, a topic that has been well covered in urban histories. While the process of gaining entry to a walled city is well placed here, the physical and visual aspects of city gates and their relationship to the city within is poorly represented by just a few random examples. Missing altogether is the meaning of the city gate with respect to the founding of the city itself. Jütte's observations on city gates probably could have been integrated into the other chapters along with cathedral portals, church doors, palaces, and other residences.

But this does not detract from the glimpse we are given of a secret life of the door in pre-modern Europe. Jütte wonders half-heartedly in his epilogue why doors have so much less importance in modern culture. It is true that many of the social functions described have no connection to doors anymore. But the fundamental paradox of security and anxiety remains, as does the emblematic quality, even when factory-produced, of the status of the household. And in certain times and places, such as post-Katrina New Orleans, the door once again becomes a messenger, a storyteller.

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Spatializing Politics: Essays on Power and Place.

Edited by Delia Duong Ba Wendel and Fallon Samuels Aidoo.
Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016. Pp. 432. \$24.95.

Writers embracing the spatial turn in several disciplines, including the humanities, often overlook a field engaged with the social processes behind spatial arrangements of power: geography. Fortunately, the editors avoid this myopia by bringing together authors engaged across disciplinary boundaries. Invoking geographical theorists such as Harvey, Massey, McCann, and Soja, the level of intellectual cross-pollination is refreshing.

The editors invoke the term "spatial epistemology" to frame case studies focused on the spatially contingent nature of political power. The essays shed light on varying forms of state power and of resistance efforts in order to articulate dissent over the reconstruction of space that invariably benefits the entrenched interests driving the state.

The first two sections cover the themes of contentious politics and the politics of consensus. Margo Shea's take on urban renewal and the spatial politics of governance in Northern Ireland highlights the spatial resistance after implementation of policies aimed at making a space of political resistance more governable. Kerry Chance's examination of South Africa's tran-

sit camps and the development of new slums as infrastructure highlights efforts to enhance the state's ability to govern an evicted populace. Anh-Thu Ngo provides a discussion of the reworking of Ho Chi Minh City and the contestation of those visions with art and creative energies. Fallon Aidoo's exploration of efforts to contest the reworking of spaces related to railroads that crossed class lines provides insight into how such coalitions can be forged.

Biopolitics is the organizing theme for a three-essay section, including Joy Knoblauch's consideration of community mental health centers, their architectural design, and their role in communities. Melany Park looks at North Korea's penal colonies and their practices upon the body through a narrative utilizing texts from various interviews and the stage play *Yoduk Story*. Disabled bodies and how architecture is designed to accommodate the Americans with Disabilities Act is the focus of Wanda Liebermann's chapter, which highlights how disability was defined and then incorporated into the *Architectural Graphic Standards* so that only certain bodies' accommodations are addressed.

The final section is the politics of expertise. Orly Linovski argues that there are clear issues with the development of a public space through the use of design consultants. Michael Mendez's narrative about Oakland's grassroots environmental efforts shows that they have been effective in articulating climate change issues in such a way as to transform them into tangible, knowable impacts that resonate with communities and drive actions at the city scale. Finally, H. Fernando Burga chronicles efforts to plan Miami-Dade County in the face of changing demographics, immigration trends, and refugee flows, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of the Cuban-American political dynamics at the local scale.

Two of the essays stand out for their engagement of politics at multiple scales. First is Delia Duong Ba Wendel's work on the 2004 radio program *Musekeweya*. The program created a fictional version of the challenges facing Rwandan society after the deployment of differences in economic status between the Hutus and the Tutsi nations during the 1994 genocide. The series narrates a parallel history through the use of spatial metaphors and fosters a space of reconciliation and a new spatial conception of the future.

The value of a discursive landscape is highlighted by Ryne Clos's essay on the dormant Tiscapa volcano in Managua, Nicaragua, the site of political symbolism on the landscape in two distinct eras, the Somoza and Sandinista regimes. Contrasting Rancièrian approaches to the state with Althusserian ones, Clos highlights Somoza's efforts to insure consensus in what the author terms ". . . 'his' Nicaragua . . ." versus the Sandinistas' respatialization through democratization of the Tiscapa.

The book as a whole represents a consistent engagement with various forms of spatial politics across scales, but always reminds the reader of individual-scale processes. These chapters are well-theorized case studies, as

the various theoretical underpinnings the authors leverage demonstrate their explanatory power. The collection's strength is the varying takes on space and power, providing excellent analyses for scholars and students from geography and planning to sociology and anthropology.

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OCTOBER

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2017

VOL. 58

Comment Homo devint Faber.

By François Sigaut. Paris: Biblis. 2013. Pp. 236. €10.

François Sigaut's last book, published after his death (2 November 2012), reflects the author's intellectual trajectory and rigor. Agronomist, historian, and anthropologist, he belonged to the French *technologie culturelle* (the study of techniques) tradition following Marcel Mauss, André Leroi-Gourhan, André-George Haudricourt, and Pierre Lemonnier. While this tradition is often overlooked by English-speaking academics dealing with material culture, technology, or STS, he was one of the few who consistently published in English (see <http://www.francois-sigaut.com/index.php/anglais>). Sigaut delivers here a thoughtful exploration of a series of themes present throughout his career.

Composed of three chapters, the genesis of the book is explained in the preface. The first two, originally composed in 1997, aim at taking seriously Mauss's program on "body techniques" (first published in 1935, translated only in 1979), which, as Sigaut rightly notes, was never properly followed. During their revision for this publication, the conclusion offering some general comments on the relation between actions and tools turned into the third chapter which, as Sigaut himself acknowledges, deals with issues often beyond his field of expertise. But because the analysis of tool-use opened questions sufficiently valid, he wisely chose to let the reader "separate the wheat from the chaff" (p. 9).

Academics are often reluctant to take the risk with such humility, preferring clear-cut points to explorations. In Sigaut's case, this experimentation is even more compelling because the book displays his impressive scholarship, covering several fields from philosophy to history, psychology, anthropology, cognitive science, and prehistory (cf. the five appendices). Breaching three linguistic traditions, he engages with several theoretical trends, without submitting himself to any, while presenting detailed case studies. Though the third chapter requires indeed more forbearance from the reader, the questions raised are definitely worth investigating.

The first chapter deals with the inherent technicity of human beings. While the notion of humans as *tool-making animals* exists since Benjamin Franklin (p. 13), Sigaut notices that it has never been really taken seriously. Only Ernst Kapp, Augustus Pitt Rivers, Henri Bergson, and Simone Weil