

Book Review

BECOMING PLACES

Urbanism/Architecture/ Identity/Power

Kim Dovey

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This book presents a comprehensive research about the concept of place with an approach of compounding theory and practice. The essays clarifying the ideas and theories about places in states of becoming support various case studies, often undertaken with co-authors. Theoretical ground is substantially based on the *assemblage theory* of Deleuze and the *habitus* of Bourdieu. According to the author, place distinguishes from space, as it connects sociality to spatiality in everyday life. The narratives of the book conceive place in a notion of becoming-in-the-world rather than a static, fixed and closed place referring the Heideggerian ontology of being-in-the-world. This context roots in Deleuzian philosophy of becoming, of how identities are formed and changed. Assemblage theory is regarded as an attempt to avoid all forms of reductionism and essentialism. In Deleuzian philosophy the conceptual oppositions; smooth/striated, network/hierarchy, rhizome/tree are described as twofold concepts that come in pairs. Dovey uses Bourdieu's conception of habitus to explain the perceived stability of place as opposed to the concept of the place-of-becoming in Deleuzian philosophy. Habitus is defined as a form of ideology that is not cognitively understood but rather internalized and embodied. Thus, it is seen as a useful theory to comprehend how identities are stabilized. These two key conceptual frameworks of place are found useful to an understanding of the ways that places mediate practices of power. The following sentence emphasizes the crucial role of these toolkits: "Both assemblage and habitus are immanent to everyday life rather than transcendent abstractions." And the last theory based chapter, 'Limits of Critical Architecture' surveys the operation area of critical architecture practices. On the other hand, the cases composing the second part of the book have a broad range in scale and place type: from the room to the nation, from squatter settlements to courtrooms and from Western to South-east Asian cities. Different methods, including interviewing, observing, mapping and analysing are used in this empirical research on place.

Fifth chapter 'Slippery Characters' (co-authored with Ian Woodcock and Stephen Wood) is an investigation of the ways in which place identity is experienced, understood and created in two new and two old Australian suburbs. Camberwell is an upmarket suburb, where a prevailing order is defended against new developments and new people are required to conform. The second old suburb Fitzroy is a largely 19th century inner-city district, the character of which is defined in terms of physical and social mix that is defended against conformity. Beacon Cove is an inner-city project developed in 1990s on a former industrial site with the desired identity derived from a global mix of Garden City, New Urbanist and gated-

communities model. Caroline Springs, on the urban fringe is a low-density car-based suburb. Four case studies based on the interviews with residents describe character as a fell of neighbourhood and a key term for urban development with its slippages between the physical and social attributes of places.

The next chapter 'Becoming Prosperous' (co-authored with Wiryo Raharjo) includes a comprehensive survey of informal urbanism. Later on, a particular case study analysing such settlement in Yogyakarta, Indonesia is presented. Authors consider informal settlements as black holes owing to be largely invisible and unstudied in morphological terms. However, it was declared that one in every six people lives in squatter, slum or informal housing globally. Informal urbanism is described with links to economy and politics. It is told that informal sector is based on informal economies and when the formal system can not meet demand for shelter, the informal system fills the gap. And quotes about the responses of the state to urban informality show that the reactions range from upgrading and increasing the supply of urban housing to neglect and demolishing/evicting. In the context of visibility and morphology, informal settlement as a complex socio-physical assemblage is evaluated as a mostly rhizomatic order of accretion rather than hierarchical control.

Design approach of Rem Koolhaas, who seeks to challenge practices of social reproduction as they are embedded in architectural ideology and spatial programme, institutes the core of the chapter 'Urbanizing Architecture'. Koolhaas's architecture is praised for being resistant to the imperative to become a diagram of social and institutional structure. It is also seen as a suggestion that encourages social encounters and that allows a multiplicity of choices. Spatial syntax analysis is filtered through a Deleuzian framework of assemblage theory as an adapted method to open up questions such as "what kinds of agency are enabled or constrained by the particular building genotype?" and "how does architecture frame the social gaze through structured realms of visibility?" Author also accentuates interior designs of Koolhaas; like exteriors they are creating more open and smooth networks of public space rather than closed and striated private spaces. Spatial analyses of three completed projects by Koolhaas/OMA (in different building types: school, house and library) presented in this chapter are premised on the issues stated earlier.

Dovey explains that the architectural instruments of state, such as palaces, houses of parliament and courthouses, are stages for the practices of power to legitimate authority. The chapter 'Open Court' is an examination of the relations between power and place through a critique of courthouses. The courthouse is described as a strictly striated space in where there are various divisions and hierarchies between things, persons and practices. Yet, within the discourse of 'new architectures of justice', a deliberate intent to design contemporary courthouses with judicial ideas of physical access, visibility, transparency, legibility, equality and so forth is emphasized. This approach is approved as it dissolves the spatial assemblages of symbols and rituals. The spatial analyses of three Melbourne courthouses which the author goes over in this chapter depend on a fieldwork that includes

interviews with project architects and leading clients, and access to all parts of each building.

The chapter entitled 'Safety Becomes Danger' (co-authored with John Fitzgerald) is a quest to represent the ways in which marginal spaces of the city are used for marginal activities and the formation of marginalized identities. An urban district in Melbourne which was strongly identified with drug sale and use for a time is examined by overlaying spatial analyses including layered mapping of pedestrian access networks, public/private ownership, functional mix and streetlife volume with the maps of trading and injecting locations. Also the patterns of heroin and narratives of spatial experience outlined in this chapter are derived from interviews with heroin users. It is pointed out that the best way to understand such places and practices is to utilize the terms of shifting identities, nomadic and rhizomatic practices in the context of a Deleuzian epistemology. In this sense, the main interest of this research is to explore the socio spatial pairs of exposure (co-presence)-seclusion, danger-safety, public-private and their intersections through the practices of everyday urban life.

The changing meanings and the uses of place in both nationalist politics and everyday life are discussed in the chapter 'New Orders' (co-authored with Eka Permanasari) by evaluating Merdeka Square and its national monument Monas in Jakarta. As it is defined the square and the monument are designed as an assemblage that concentrates the spirit and power of the new nation by Indonesian President Sukarno. The shift in the role and imagery of public space is attributed to the regime change from Sukarno to Suharto in sense of nationalist politics. By using the terms of rhizomatic practices of everyday life, authors confesses that *the imaginary nation* of Merdeka is contradicted and interrupted by *the real practices* of poverty and disorder during the tenure of Suharto. The tension between imagined nation and everyday life is reiterated with enclosure of the square with gates and guards to keep away prohibited users -beggars, illegal vendors, prostitutes, homeless etc. - after the overthrow of Suharto. That is also conceived as an ideological turn to the democracy of Sukarno.

The last chapter entitled 'Urban Slippage' (co-authored with Kasama Polakit) is an account of understanding the use and meaning of an inner-city neighbourhood of Bangkok: Ban Panthom through the theoretical lens of smooth/striated conceptual opposition of Deleuze. It is highlighted that in the Thai context, new ideas, forms and spatial practices tend to form layers and juxtapositions rather than displacement. Similarly the identity of Ban Panthom is defined by its slippages, by the fluidity of forms, desires, practices and meanings with a very broad range of building types and functions. This instability is explained with both local and global flows of time and space; with shifting meanings of secular and sacred, private and public, legal and illegal, temporary and permanent. And the tacit local rules of everyday life are regarded as the key part in the control and use of public space.

This book intended to broaden the reader's horizon about the conception of 'place' by moving on from the views of place as closed, finished and stabilized. Within the central theme of the book, smooth space of becoming as opposed to striated space is linked to rhizomatic modes of practices in everyday life. Power which is accepted inextricably intertwined with place is underlined in the general discourse of the book. Embodied living places are

introduced through various case studies. And as Dovey confesses: “These places are lived and embodied; they are structured, ordered, transformed, infiltrated and negotiated; they are symbolized, packaged and marketed.”

Aslı Çekmiş