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Tihomir Viderman, Sabine Knierbein, Elina Kränzle, Sybille Frank, Nikolai Roskamm and Ed Wall (eds.), *Unsettled Urban Space*, New York and London: Routledge, 2023; 303 pp.: ISBN: 9780367258603, (hbk, pbk and ebook)

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This densely layered book examines “unsettled urban space” across Europe, Asia, the Americas and the Gulf states through three distinct analytical prisms: Routines, Temporalities and Contestations. It grew out of a series of conference at the City of Vienna Visiting Professorship for Urban Culture and Public Space between 2015 and 2017. The publication’s interpretative models remind of a 20<sup>th</sup> century lineage of trialectic conceptions of urban space. Henri Lefebvre’s juxtaposed, divergent spaces (perceived, conceived and lived space), spring to mind; he argued that these coexist in complex interdependencies between spatial practices and representations. The book’s interest in “unsettlement” recalls Edward Soja’s development of Lefebvre’s triad that highlights disorderly, unruly, constantly evolving, and unfixed interpretations of space, emphasising how these resist permanent theoretical constructions of space. The book’s editors and contributors are interested in how space is settled, unsettled, and contested, while the various interpretative models of space presented in the introductions and chapters are concatenated rather than placed in opposition to each other.

Bringing together an impressive group of scholars and their cultural knowledges, *Unsettled Urban Space* is a profoundly cross-cultural and contemporary book. The book is organised around manifestations of time in urban space. Firstly, the editors chose to link recurring patterns of urban routines and practices to social aspects of urbanisation. Secondly, they juxtapose the disruptive accelerations, breaks, pauses and chronopolitics of capitalist development against the rhythms of urban life and the resistance of urban dwellers, choosing to bind this aspect to culture. The final manifestation of time is political, coalescing around urban transformations and contested futures. In all of this, mid-20<sup>th</sup> century Marxist interpretation of urban space can be felt. Lefebvre’s “right to the city” and Rhythmanalysis are cited (once), but the authors significantly extend those models. The editors carefully delineate their spatio-temporal trialectics of unsettlement. These trialectics prove fertile ground capable of accommodating distinct interpretations in each of the chapters, and at times “unruly empirical findings” that challenge interpretative models.

The first section of the book examines urban routines in three central public spaces of Hanoi (by female hip hop performers), in Thessaloniki (teenagers and young people), in Hamburg (refugees), in Vienna (national holiday celebrations on Heldenplatz), in Berlin (tourists), and in Silicon Valley (homeless people). This impressive geographical reach is matched by methodological diversity. With one exception, the chapter contributors highlight the experiences of marginal or transient groups and individuals that uphold their urban routines against more established regimes and within transformative scenarios. This includes routines of self-empowerment used by female hip hop performers, adolescents unsettling and reassembling “publicness”, refugees and “concerned citizens” contesting urban planning and urban futures, tourists triggering displacement of residents and small businesses, and working homeless and vehicle homeless people resisting displacement. The exception to this pattern is the chapter on Heldenplatz, which frames contested collective memories and historical narratives through a public space rather than a social group. Some of the case studies (e.g. Hamburg) elaborate theoretical frameworks to levels of complexity that threaten

to almost overpower empirical findings, but I found the diversity of methodological approaches across chapters to be stimulating as well as challenging my own methodological preferences and prejudices.

The middle part of the book shifts to urban temporalities; its nuanced theoretical spectrum is bookended by Bergson's long *durée* and Lefebvre's theory of moments. This part takes the reader on another global tour, this time across Dubai, London, Chicago, Birmingham and Texas, before returning to Vienna. Reflecting such diversity of place, "temporality" is understood variously through the permanently temporary legal residency status of expatriates and labour workers in Dubai, through contrasting timescales of developer urbanism and urban maintenance that conspire to produce control and alienation in Paddington Waterside, through cyclical rhythms of capitalism intersecting with temporal narrative of gentrification in Cabrini Green, through the continuous presence and influence of Birmingham library over the course of the industrial revolution, and through a particularly thought-provoking study over time of the unsettlement of Afro-Americans and Indigenous nations in Texas, and practices of solidarity amongst freedmen communities that unsettled dominant order. The chapter on "Aging in Cities" draws on interviews with residents of housing projects in Vienna to extract larger lessons for planners to respond to diverse experiences of aging.

The final part of the book, on Urban Contestations highlights politics and conflict, a theme that comes as a compelling conclusion to the previous sections framed around society and culture. Its chapters visit urban spaces in Buenos Aires, Vienna, New York City, The Hague, as well, in variations from those place-based studies, examine homelessness across Hamburg and Milan and groups that are "othered", anchored by a study of Hampstead Ladies Pond in London. Across all chapters, urban space is in crisis, and becomes a site of political contestation. In the chapter on a grassroots feminist movement in Argentina, marker on the timeline of conflict point towards a better future, while the discourse on radical democracy in Vienna's urban planning casts a sceptical glance on foundations in an era of post-foundational theory. Such scepticism about urban planning continues in the study of New York City's artist-led People's Cultural Plan, which values "unsettling" of cultural policy, as opposed to the orchestration of unity in another planning document, CreateNYC. The final chapters focus on controversies in three cities: Urban conflict: dispute, controversy and crisis unfold along the fault lines of neighbourhood identity and socioeconomic inequalities in Ypenburg; homeless shelters in Hamburg and Milan are described spaces of day-to-day survival as well as of stigmatisation and exclusion and understood as particularly nuanced and instructive expression of wider dynamics of urban contestation and societal transformation. The final study of Hampstead Ladies Pond in London as a gendered space and a space of agonistic pluralism shut down by enactment of law, but nevertheless raising sensitivity towards others who are different, provides a cautiously hopeful conclusion to this section.

I learned much from the book and by juxtaposing its theoretical models and empirical case studies. To me, one of the book's strengths lie in offering two alternative ways of reading: lexical on the one hand, and "oblique" on the other. The book can function as a lexicon of case studies. In such an episodic reading, each of the 22 entries tests a thesis on unsettled urban space against a place, socio-cultural constituency, and set of spatial practices. On the other hand, an unruly, oblique reading of the book cutting diagonally through its layers of theoretical frames, and across neat classification, exposes crossings and interlockings between routines, temporality, and contestation. I found that reading one chapter through the theoretical apparatus of another chapter or an introduction to another part of the book produced stimulating juxtapositions. Through its original,

time-based interpretative frames, *Unsettled Urban Spaces* unlocks new insight into enduring systemic inequalities and paths for action against marginalization, exclusion, and segregation.

#### References

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