

negotiations between state, market and civil society help to further entrench the powerful status quo, and how citizens respond. They thus offer specific insights into what neoliberal processes, influenced by specific regional patterns of continuity and change, look and feel like in these cities. The authors do a laudable job of avoiding the clichés with which critiques of neoliberalism in the MENA are often couched. Some of these still remain: for example, there continues to be a fetishization of public space as a placeholder for liberating practices, despite the lived reality of public space holding dubious possibilities for young people in the region, especially young women. And some of the chapters announce the end of the relevance of a certain concept without being fully able to back up such claims. Nonetheless, the chapters, well written and carefully edited, are worth reading individually by experts on specific cities and countries. Moreover, when read as a whole, the volume is a powerful assessment of the field of MENA urban studies today. For this reason, it will be a welcome resource for researchers and policymakers, and its contents will be worthwhile additions to syllabi in MENA area studies, urban studies, political science, anthropology and sociology classrooms alike.

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Scott McQuire 2017: *Geomedia: Networked Cities and the Future of Public Space*. Cambridge: Polity

In this agile book, Scott McQuire explores the new articulations of public space produced through digital media. In particular, the author introduces the concept of geomedia to describe a specific condition of our age whereby public space is networked and produces different kinds of social encounters. The geomedia condition is presented as the result of four trajectories: ubiquity, which refers to the transformation of social practices made placeless by digital media, with contents and connection always available; the enhanced role of location and the possibility of immediate feedback from many to many, which is also a key element of business strategies; real timing, which inverts the relation between mediation and the event and questions the primacy of the representational; and finally the media convergence and integration of devices, which leads to the redefinition of economic and institutional settings. The geomedia condition, the author remarks, alters the rhythms and materiality of social encounters. It enables appropriation as well as exploitation, emancipation from place as well as placemaking, rhetorics of freedom as well as logics of control. The very ambivalence of public space as transformed by geomedia is taken by McQuire to be a critical site of political experimentation. These aspects are analysed in the book, both theoretically and with empirical case studies which offer illuminating insights illustrating the potential and risks of networked life in cities.

The theoretical section unfolds the idea of public space through its development in social science. Drawing on the works of Simmel, Arendt, Lefebvre, Jacobs, Sassen, Sennett and Stiegler among others, McQuire conceptualizes public space as not given but collectively performed. Here, digital technologies reconfigure the way of speaking and acting, foregrounding the role of affectivity over pure rational debate in the formation of the public sphere. The chapter reclaims the importance of the street as a space for encounters, contesting the functionalist paradigm of urban planning that considers the street merely a place for rapid transit. Stressing the importance of street life in the networked public space, the author reflects on the capacity of geomedia to enable serendipity, to connect with multiple others and, on the other side, to predict and commodify social encounters or convert urban serendipity into an extractive marketplace. It is a crisis open to manifold outcomes, where the tensions between technocratic solutionism and vendor-driven development on the one hand, and citizen

engagement and empowerment on the other, are considered comparable to the urban crisis of the 1970s, when the redevelopment of older inner-city industrial spaces enacted cycles of gentrification and new patterns of urban stratification.

The empirical section is divided into three chapters that describe the performativity of geomedia in public places. In the chapter 'Googling the City', McQuire investigates how Google Street View affects public places. Compared to the pioneering endeavours of urban image archives, such as that of nineteenth-century French photographer Charles Melville, Street View acts as an 'operational archive' (p. 67) in which inert and finished sets of data (such as photographs) become increasingly open to ongoing addition and manipulation. Whereas Melville represented an early transition from image to seriality and data, Street View takes this process to the extreme, converting space into data, creating a transnational 'vision machine' which orders the world by enabling specific modalities of navigation, extracting economic value from data gathering and acquisition. The chapter describes how cities become searchable using a proprietary global platform that subsumes public space across national jurisdictions and makes it profitable. The second chapter presents a case of digital art as a way to perform public space and produce new kinds of social encounters. Drawing on the situationist tradition of urban drifts connected with Lefebvre's and Eco's ideas of the city as *oeuvre* and the 'open-ended' character of works, McQuire accounts for artistic practices experimenting with new modes of sociability and new fields of possibility that depend on the way they are performed by users. In particular, the section describes an ensemble of works by Lozano-Hemmer, the Blast Theory collective and Christian Nold as examples of how artistic intervention can enable new practices of participation by providing temporary spaces for socio-technical encounters in contemporary cities. The third chapter analyses the reconfiguration of public space through the use of what the author calls 'second generation screens' (p. 127) as public communication infrastructure. It starts by describing related urban media events stemming from the author's direct experiences in a project connecting squares in Seoul and Melbourne. The author's main point is that such screens no longer act as a replacement for an event but constitute a 'node in the enactment of a distributed event', a place in which the possibilities and tensions generated by social encounters—engagement, participatory culture, affectivity—can be addressed.

The book accounts for the emergence of a socio-technical milieu that is shaped by geomedia, describing different ways of 'becoming public' in networked cities at different scales. It remarks on how public space is a terrain where categories of old and new media converge and short-circuit, redefining citizenship. In this sense, the book addresses an audience familiar with media studies, urban planning and social theory. These are disciplines that McQuire crosses between with confidence to account for a transition which is still ongoing and the outcomes of which hang in the balance. Moreover, every case is substantiated by a genealogical angle, useful in helping to situate geomedia and the urban in a broader historical perspective. Perhaps more attention could have been paid to the management processes that revolve around the smart city agenda and constitute a rich interzone between global platforms and everyday life. If we think, for example, of city dashboards measuring environment and mobility data in real time, these could also be considered forms of geomedia which create urban encounters between management and everyday dimensions, and so contribute to multifarious actualizations of smart city development processes. They would represent yet another setting for social encounters that adds to those so brilliantly described in the book, where the new orders that we are going to inhabit and new forms of living together are enacted and possibly appropriated.

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