

The Digital City: Media and the Social Production of Place, by **Germaine R. Halegoua**. New York: New York University Press, 2020. 288 pp. \$30.00 paper. ISBN: 9781479882199.

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Digital spaces continue to emerge as key contemporary landscapes for interaction, interpretation of everyday life, planning for tomorrow, remembering (and forgetting) the past, and locating and articulating one's identities. The town square and market, grocery store, and shopping mall—once dominant places of approved, mainstream social activity—city council chambers, and in some cases even picket lines are in flux as spaces for recognizable civic-ness. Grassroots and subversive communities still thrive in the physical arenas for raging dissent, but they, too, inch out through social media, social hacking, and interpretations that challenge institutionalized modes of understanding and communication in cities and countries globally. In the United States and other western nations, "the city" remains a symbol of the future, unrest, immigrant and marginalized neighborhoods, and resistance, making recent images of federal and private militia disturbing U.S. urban protests widely interpreted as a populist attack on plurality and liberalism as much as on the protesters themselves. Even the best social media campaign would have a hard time countering long-standing social ideas that "the city" should be spared tyranny.

But "the city" is changing, as Germaine R. Halegoua's *The Digital City: Media and the Social Production of Place* tells us. Or maybe it tells us that we should further see "the city" as its people and their development and evolution of how they themselves create senses of space and place within their ideological and political borders online. Perhaps this is where the city is seeing the most change. *The Digital City* positions interactions with "the digital" at the forefront of the social interactions and meaning-making of physical and virtual spaces *and places*. To be clear, Halegoua, an Associate Professor in the Department of Film and Media

Studies at the University of Kansas, correctly adopts meanings of *space* as the physical, the demarcated, with social attributes and assigned meanings, where social roles are performed to meet the geographic settings and expectations of what happens there. *Place*, on the other hand, is the ideological. Here, the physical space is viewed with potential boundaries but operates as a philosophical territory of sorts, where meanings of freedom and control, or joy and sadness, operate amid social roles and functions of and within the geography but are part of the imaginary power of the place itself. Confusingly, as there is continued debate about the definitions of space and place, there is contestation around the meanings of the geographic space itself and in the subjectivities and indoctrinated or shared meanings of place among and across collectives.

Bring in the digital. Not only have virtual, spatial environments been influenced greatly by technological developments, widespread adoption, and often the forced implementation of "the digital" into everydayness (e.g., surveillance and information systems, telecommunications and transportation, consumption and education, wearables and biotech), but, as I have co-written elsewhere, digital spaces (particularly in the case of news sites) experience "placeification," an evolution of a virtual space to a place. In the physical world, Starbucks made popular the sense of place in its still-standing "third place" principle: that beyond one's home and work. (How that has been enacted through hyper-policing of those experiencing homelessness, for instance, complicates the notions of both space and place in the context of Starbucks, anyway.)

What Halegoua brings to our understanding(s) of city spaces and places, however, builds on the seminal work within human and critical human geography in ways that not only drop the right names, but apply them through a cultural approach that develops new ways of considering the role of digital media in social and physical interactions with cityscapes. Through analysis of mobile apps, social media networks, the explosion in iPhone use, and the expansive properties and performances of users to extend themselves into the making of city spaces (and

places), Halegoua provides us with a sense of “re-placing the city,” a topography of digital, social, and physical embeddedness in one’s environment(s). This embeddedness turns place into a concept similar, perhaps, to that of making or being “home” through one’s intersections with negotiations, (re)productions, performances, and interpretations of agency and power of those within space merely than just engaging with surroundings through digital media with others, about things, and in and around other things (yes, the idea of physical thinginess is also a part of human geography and communications geography).

In her analysis of urban planners and architects in the “making” of a “place,” the role of digital infrastructure in concocting digital connections that form wayfinding and senses of belonging, ownership, connectivity, and the performative function and process of “checking in” and other actions operated through geolocation technology, Halegoua also notes the conflict of creating urban connection. For example, she highlights, for a critical reader, the challenges of “creative place-making” and digital lives in the degree to which (as with collaborative and public journalism practices) there is a professionalization and capitalistic motivation of drawing people into business districts to spend—all in the name of creating community—and in the using and abusing digital media to normalize the digital everydayness that is often not in citizens’ (or consumers’) best interest.

In the end, *The Digital City* is a welcome addition to works on media and city, communications geography, and the role of “the digital” in discussions of “the city.” Its case studies provide interesting springboards for discussion but also should be seen as examples of how digital users glorify their digitalness as it is adopted in sociological and cultural terms through scholarship and notions of rites and rights of the individual and collective to define the potential of technology to better society.

Concepts and Categories: Foundations for Sociological and Cultural Analysis, by Michael T. Hannan, Gaël Le Mens, Greta Hsu, Balázs Kovács, Giacomo Negro, László Pólos, Elizabeth Pontikes, and Amanda J. Sharkey. New York: Columbia University Press, 2019. 328 pp. \$35.00 cloth. ISBN: 9780231192729.

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The newly authored *Concepts and Categories: Foundations for Sociological and Cultural Analysis*, by Michael T. Hannan, Gaël Le Mens, Greta Hsu, Balázs Kovács, Giacomo Negro, László Pólos, Elizabeth Pontikes, and Amanda J. Sharkey offers an engaging, thorough, and accessible discussion of concepts and categories and links these to key sociological concerns and approaches. The authors provoke new insights into foundational sociological research and offer new paths forward for research. There are five key benefits to the sociological reader: (1) the focus on concepts and categories and exploration of these through semantic space; (2) the integration of psychology and sociological research as the foundation for cognition and culture; (3) useful examples throughout to illustrate key arguments; (4) the formalization of arguments with mathematical equations that build as the arguments evolve throughout the book; and (5) useful appendixes for mathematical symbols, sources, and deeper explanation.

The book is divided into these key sections: (1) Concepts in Sociological Analysis, (2) Concepts and Spaces, (3) Applying Concepts, (4) Bridges to Sociological Application, and (5) Concepts in Social Interaction. In the book’s preface, the authors define key constructs of concepts and categories and outline the underlying assumptions about how concepts and categories are linked. “Concepts are mental representations by which people classify the entities they encounter. A category is a set of objects that have been recognized as fitting the concept. How an object is categorized is the realization of a probabilistic process that depends on the set of concepts a person holds [as well as] social and