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Extrastatecraft: The Power Of Infrastructure Space



Synopsis

Extrastatecraft is the operating system of the modern world: the skyline of Dubai, the subterranean pipes and cables sustaining urban life, free-trade zones, the standardized dimensions of credit cards, and hyper-consumerist shopping malls. It is all this and more. Infrastructure sets the invisible rules that govern the spaces of our everyday lives, making the city the key site of power and resistance in the twenty-first century. Keller Easterling reveals the nexus of emerging governmental and corporate forces buried within the concrete and fiber-optics of our modern habitat.

Extrastatecraft will change how we think about cities and, perhaps, how we live in them.

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Customer Reviews

Extrastatecraft turns out to be a survey of the state of supranational infrastructures. Things like free trade zones, international broadband, and telecommunications in general have been harmonized, homogenized and replicated all over the world, beyond the reach of governing power structures to modify them. Your bank or credit card fits any ATM or card reader anywhere. Suburban communities in Tibet look just like the ones in Alabama. Your computer connection is the same worldwide. Add to that, worldwide standards for quality, production and management from supranational agencies like the ISO. There are huge implications for individuality and culture, but Easterling doesn't examine them. It's far more about the history of laying cables to and in Kenya than the disappearance of idiosyncrasies and anomalies. The stated objective is the relation of these infrastructures to spatial considerations: the instant city of the free trade zone, for example.

But there is no deep examination. It's almost all superficial description. There are the predictable and tiresome quotes of Foucault that no academic work can avoid, it seems. There are footnotes galore. But apart from the initial concept (which is fascinating), there is very little new. Instead, Easterling concludes with how to attack the structures. The answer is "never head on. Find what Easterling calls dispositions, that the rest of us would call vulnerabilities. These are points of entry that appear to be malleable. There are numerous tactics to morph them, from rumor to sarcasm and out and out lies. The chapters all stand alone, and indeed, most of them were previously published separately. The overall effect is less than the sum of the parts. David Wineberg

Similar to her earlier publication, "Enduring Innocence: Global Architecture and Its Political Masquerades", Prof. Easterling's new book "Extrastatecraft: The Power of Infrastructure Space" is an odyssey of global urbanism and international politics. The book is divided into five sections, "zone", "disposition", "broadband", "stories", "quality", and "extrastatecraft". Each section is a brick and mortar that constitutes the story of extrastatecraft architecture. I was particularly drawn into the "disposition", "stories", and "extrastatecraft" section. Because here I was able to see the characteristics of mobile telephony (multinational global networks) urbanism, its historical and theoretical development, and invisible geography of global power and money. If a reader is a follower of contemporary architecture and up-to-date urbanism, and is knowledgeable on the issues of theory and history of its development, one will appreciate more what Prof. Easterling has achieved. She is an awesome writer too.

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