BOOK REVIEWS

GEOGRAPHIC INTERPRETATIONS OF THE INTERNET, By Aharon Kellerman. Dordrecht: Springer, 2016

Perhaps the only thing to grow more quickly than the internet is the literature about the internet. A veritable tsunami of books has charted the internet's diffusion over the world; it is now used by half the population's planet. Aharon Kellerman has written a series of works on this topic (e.g., Kellerman 2002, 2010, 2014). The latest in this line of thought, albeit quite a short one, is a geographic interpretation, which is welcome, because all too often the internet is viewed aspatially, as if cyberspace were some mysterious phenomenon outside of space and time. The opening chapters contain a brief introduction to the history of the internet and the digital divide.

Kellerman conceives of the internet as a "triple space," including information space (looking things up on the web), a communications space (email and related ways of getting in touch with people), and a screen space, in which the screen in front of you becomes a sort of geography. In this reading, screen space is a subset of the internet which in turn is a subset of cyberspace (the broader world of all digital interactions) which itself is yet another subset of virtual space (essentially all representations of the world). Such a view is tenable if one divorces cyberspace from the people and machines that make it possible, which I do not.

To analyze its geography, Kellerman brings to bear a series of long-standing and time-honored geographic concepts, such as distance, place, landscape, region, and proximity. In some respects these are reminiscent of the fundamentals of geography when it conceived of itself as spatial science during the heyday of positivism. Thus, websites become places, which is an interesting antidote to the widespread view of the internet solely as space, i.e., without locales; recall the old phenomenological distinction between space and place: place is space to which meaning has been added. Contrary to much received opinion, places are most certainly not dead, in the real world or in cyberspace, they have simply become virtual and digital. The internet has regions, as reflected in the geography of domain names.

The attempt to analyze distance on the internet is not altogether convincing. To be sure, there is a literature that confirms physical distance still matters greatly to online interactions; like telephone calls, most emails are sent over short distances. (Just today I emailed my office neighbor). Kellerman's reading of distance, however, involves the number of clicks it takes to jump from one website to another. To a trivial extent this is affected by distance, as revealed by pings. Since 93% of internet

searches begin with search engines, they are the centers of cyberspace; few people look beyond the first set of suggestions, which is why companies pay oodles to have their names appear first on commercial sites. More important is the time needed; time-pressed users will not wait long for web pages to load. (A discussion of the global geography of broadband would have been nice here).

A related discussion concerns mobility on the internet, where Kellerman begins to break new ground. Mobility, especially in cyberspace, involves a bundle of related attributes, such as flow (the sensation of movement, as first revealed in studies of television), speed (as in transmissions), directionality (having a destination in mind), circularity (returning to the same place, such as one's homepage), and co-presence, the "being there" with another person or a thing. Co-presence itself takes various forms, such as face-to-face in the analogue world, "being with" an individual via email, or a group via a listserv. In short, virtual co-presence is a sort of armchair journey. This array of co-presences has blurred conventional dichotomies like here/there, work/leisure, and real/virtual. For all of us, the opportunities to be digitally co-present have exploded exponentially.

At times the discussion is rather abstract and vague, and more empirical examples would help. Indeed, some of the more interesting parts are when Kellerman presents data, such as the percentage of netizens by gender or the number of people who check Google pages beyond the first one, a sort of distance-decay.

The most original and, I would argue, provocative part of the book is the discussion of screen space. Few geographers have troubled themselves to analyze this dimension of cyberspace. Here Kellerman draws on the literatures concerning spatial cognition and cognitive mapping. Screens are, in a sense, virtual landscapes, and he argues they have a center (e.g., the top of a Google list of results) and a periphery. More discussion on how different groups of users approach different screen spaces would have been welcomed. Are there gender differences? Does screen viewing vary by age, and if so how and why?

If I had to criticize this volume, I would say that it is undersocialized, i.e., it lacks sufficient engagement with the world of social relations, of power, class, struggle, and culture. I would have liked to have seen more on how the cyberspace that Kellerman discusses is intertwined with the terrestrial spaces of the world-system. Geographers have come decisively to view space as made, not given, and the internet should be seen in the same light. The geographies of information, communication, who views a screen and what they see, and how they interpret it, are all outcomes of broader dynamics that drive the growth of the internet. Kellerman offers a brief nod to several paradigms such as Marxism, humanism, and Judith Butler's notion of performativity, but he doesn't really use these in his dissection of internet geographies.

In short, this is a nice little volume that attempts to bring conventional geographic notions into the understanding of cyberspace. That at times it does not entirely succeed reflects just how difficult it is to get a handle on cyberspace. But surely the geographies of the internet involve more than just where people are, but unfold at

a variety of spatial scales, including that of the user and screen, as Kellerman makes clear. The volume would be a useful supplement to courses on the information economy and cyberspace.

REFERENCES

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(SUB)URBAN SEXSCAPES: GEOGRAPHIES AND REGULATION OF THE SEX INDUSTRY, Edited by P. J. Maginn, and C. Steinmetz, (2015), Abingdon: Routledge.

The last two decades have faced a growing scholarly writing aimed to reveal the constructions of sexuality within our living spaces, mainly (but not only) urban spaces. Most of the writing was focused on a non-heteronormative sexuality that was left almost unknown in relation to the urban and non-urban spaces before the 1990s. The editors of this book claim that: "our cities are essentially heterosexual spaces and that this is the *natural* (sic) order of things. Subsequently, this gives rise to the notion that the sexuality of and within our cities, historically and contemporaneously, is underpinned and managed by a heteronormative logic and technology" (p. 19). So, while (mainly) geographers have studied the relation between queer theory, spatial and geographical theories, very little, however, was written with regard to planning theories and practices. Moreover, some scholars define the discipline of urban planning as "a heterosexual project", promoting spaces that exclude people on the basis of sexual orientation by means of different planning tools (Frisch, 2002).

This book focuses on the spatial and regulatory contours surrounding the sex industry, and thus contributes to the limited existing writing that combines spatial knowledge from both geography and planning in order to understand the ways in which sexuality is part of our life in urban and non-urban spaces. This point is important and can be seen while checking the disciplines of the scholars that contributed to the book – law, geography, planning, sociology, public health, development