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Book Review

Placemaking: Production of Built Environment in Two Cultures by David Stea and Mete Turan. 1993, 382 pages. Available from: Avebury, Ashgate Publishing Limited, Gower House, Croft Road, Aldershot, Hants GU11 3HR England; or Ashgate Publishing Company, Old Post Road, Brookfield, Vermont 05036, USA.

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How do "ordinary" people make their environments, produce particular building forms, and transform them over time? How is "placemaking" related to culture and culture change? Why do people build the way they do? Why do they live the way they do? How do scholars and researchers explain these "placemaking" ways?

David Stea and Mete Turan address these questions through a rather ambitious project in which they discuss the evolution of settlements, from food-producing sedentarization to cities, along with the evolution of complexity in social relations. The term they have coined, and named the book after, "placemaking," is "the conception and realization of built environment." It refers to "the production of vernacular architecture and settlement." Since "places" are socially produced, as Stea and Turan maintain, the placemaking process involves social relations, which include production relations. Being simultaneously an economic, political and cultural activity, placemaking is embedded in a particular "mode of production," whether it is (a) "primitive communist"/"kin-ordered"; (b) "feudal"/"tributary"; or (c) "capitalist." In this comprehensive and evolutionary study, although the authors employ a "dialectical/ ecological" framework and a "Marxist" meta-narrative, theirs is a "flexible interpretation of basic Marxist concepts," as Anthony King notes in the Foreword. Thus, the "Marxist" authors they cite throughout the book (Braudel, Polanyi, Childe, Godelier, Wallerstein, Wolf, Castells and Harvey, to name a few, in addition to Marx and Engels themselves) provide a wide range of interpretations.

Among numerous examples of distinct social and physical formations, Turan and Stea focus particularly on two geographic regions: Anatolia (including the Neolithic settlement of Qatalhuÿuk, and the carved dwellings of early Christian Cappadocia from the Fourth century AD) and the South Western United States

(prehistoric settlements, particularly Anasazi villages, from 100 BC through 1300 AD). In fact, the present study originated from the physical similarities the authors had perceived between Cappadocia and the Pajarita Plateau of the “four corners” area where Utah, Colorado, Arizona and New Mexico meet. Early Christian refugees and the Anasazi, albeit eight centuries and half-a-globe apart, had settled in similar environments in terms of climate and geological formations, and had presented further similarities in the human adaptations by carving and building their “villages” or “cities” in visibly similar fashions. In addition to these two cases, the authors include other settlements and structures in both regions ranging from 8000 BC in Anatolia to post-conquest times in the United States.

Following a brief introduction which presents a critical overview, the book is organized into eight chapters constituting three segments, and includes two sets of appendices. The authors describe the contents in a nut-shell: “the first segment sets the stage for the comparative study and unfolds conceptually; the second describes the two areas being compared and unfolds historically; while the third, primarily interpretive, at first unfolds analytically and then attempts to provide a new synthesis, or ‘reconstruction’”(24). In the first two chapters, Turan and Stea introduce a “basic philosophical and theoretical framework.” In chapters three through five, they describe the evolution of nomadism, sedentarization, and “urbanization” in the two regions. Finally in the analytical/synthetical last segment, they elaborate fourteen dialectically opposite pairs of concepts upon which they base “the conceptualization of dwelling as place.” These pairs represent either “form” or “content,” and are grouped under three categories: (1) global concepts (ideological and natural environments; shelter and property); (2) fundamental relations in domestic architecture (subject/object relationships; living and working relations; use value and exchange value; commodified and noncommodified environments); and (3) social and physical dimensions (cultural and environmental conditions; participation and non-participation in placemaking; stratified and unstratified organization; hierarchically ordered space; ownership and non-ownership; inclusive and exclusive spaces; individual/family identity and social identity; public/private values). The authors discuss these concepts within the context of evolving modes of production, focusing primarily on primitive communism and transition to feudalism, and attempting to integrate a wide range of concepts dealing with “nature, ideology, shelter, property, and territoriality.”

The book is based on “field work” and analysis of first-hand observations in Anatolia and South Western United States. Nevertheless, Stea and Turan support their historical narrative and arguments with their analysis of secondary data. They derive archaeological evidence from a lengthy bibliography including sources from diverse disciplines in the English, Spanish and Turkish languages.

The major strengths of this volume stem from the authors’ interdisciplinary and ecological approach as well as their comparative perspectives over both time and space. Contrary to the widespread tendency towards disciplinary

compartmentalization and isolation, Turan and Stea bring together in *Placemaking* arguments and information from a number of disciplines, including not only architecture and planning but also anthropology, archaeology, political science and psychology. The book is "an attempt at prototheory," in its authors' words, with the intention of understanding how "traditional societies" produce built environment. They take pains to note that by 'traditional' they mean pre-transitional (during the transition from any one mode of production to the next), rather than an over-arching concept meaning 'pre-modern' in an ahistorical umbrella of modernization paradigm. Thus, the authors present a decidedly historical and theoretical narrative, at a time which can be characterized as not only overspecialized but also particularly atheoretical and ahistorical.

Quaintly, the very features that constitute the strengths of the book may be considered as weaknesses by some, especially those environmental students who hold positivist/'scienticist' views and favor quantitative methods. As Stea and Turan propose a general theory rather than offering low-order propositions and testable hypotheses, the study is too broad to permit 'falsification'. Given the scale and coverage of the project, and the holistic approach taken, it is pointless to single out one minute portion of the whole that is manageable enough to criticize. One flaw of the study, again as a consequence of its scale, is the inescapable omission of certain relevant material which definitely would have been included in a single-disciplinary study, thus not making use of the already existing literature. Numerous studies under the Cultural Materialist research strategy, for example, would have helped contextualize the present study, and clarify its contribution to anthropological literature.

Nevertheless, readers from a range of disciplines and area studies would benefit from this intellectually stimulating volume. Contrary to what may be expected from a "jam-packed" description and comprehensive theorization, *Placemaking* is not only easy-reading but also very pleasantly absorbing.