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Book Review

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In *Understanding Spatial Media*, editors Rob Kitchin, Tracey P. Lauriault, and Matthew W. Wilson assemble twenty-two chapters that put forth spatial media as a category of geographic concern. Coined by Jeremy Crampton and later taken up and refined by Sarah Elwood, Agnieszka Leszczynski, and others, spatial media in this collection includes the technologies, spatial contents, and practices that surround digital technologies that contain georeferenced data. The collection offers a number of examples, in the form of short chapters, of spatial media while highlighting, “the work that these do in mediating and conditioning everyday life and producing new spatialities and mobilities” (p. 5).

The collection brings together an impressive list of scholars with a variety of approaches to understanding spatial media. Chapters are short, concise sketches of particular issues or objects of study, often acting as distillations of longer pieces or even larger bodies of work. The book’s wide breadth and the brevity of its chapters makes it an accessible introduction to the field it attempts to define. Readers who want to understand some of the current issues and approaches to spatial media will find it a valuable compilation, while educators will find chapters useful as standalone teaching material. It is a rich collection for anyone wishing to survey the field, build reading lists, or develop new research directions on technologies and topics as diverse as digital maps, locative media, social media, smart cities, spatial data, volunteered geographic information, surveillance, privacy, legal issues, and the political economy of spatial media.

The book is broken up into three sections that cover the technologies, data, and consequences of spatial media, respectively. Part 1, titled “Spatial Media Technologies,” begins with Britta Ricker’s chapter on geographic information systems (GIS), which argues that spatial media is underpinned by the technologies of GIS, hence the lessons of critical GIS are applicable. This is in contrast to the editorial introduction that draws a harder line between GIS and spatial media, arguing that they are largely technologically and genealogically distinct. This apparent contradiction is not a weakness of the book, but rather a strength, as it does not shy away from unresolved theoretical debates and continually gives the reader the sense that there is still work to be done, both theoretically and methodologically. Indeed, many chapters end by outlining possible future directions for the field, leaving room for the reader to enter into these evolving

debates. In other chapters in the first section, Jeremy Crampton applies assemblage theory to digital mapping; Mark Graham shows how data comes to augment geographic space; Jim Thatcher introduces the complex politics of locative and sousveillant media; Jessa Lingel describes the spatial implications of social media and the ethical obligations of researchers who use that data; Shannon Mattern explicates how the urban dashboard mediates spatial knowledge of the city; and Stephen Ervin writes about current issues and debates in geodesign.

Part 2, “Spatial Data and Spatial Media” covers the production, analysis, and use of spatial data—a necessary component for a technology to be considered spatial media—with the attention paid to the theoretical and methodological implications of those processes. The section begins with Tracey P. Lauriault’s chapter on the historical, discursive, and technical issues that surround the capture, aggregation, and dissemination of open spatial data. Other chapters include Daniel Sui’s description of issues that emerge as spatial data become big data; Kitchin, Lauriault, and Gavin McArdle’s argument that data used in urban dashboards is produced within and supports particular socio-technical assemblages and political contexts; Muki Haklay’s explication of links between Volunteered Geographic Information and citizen science; Peter L. Pulsifier and Glenn Brauen’s case for the need for semantic standards to make spatial media interoperable across the web; Harvey J. Miller’s description of issues in the analysis of spatial data; and Teresa Scassa’s account of the complex legal issues that arise from the use and sharing of spatial data, especially as it travels across platforms and geographies.

While all of the chapters up to this point have explicated critical issues that surround their objects of study, Part 3, “The Consequences of Spatial Media” deals explicitly with problems surrounding spatial media. This section begins with Leighton Evans and Sung-Yeuh Perng’s overview of current issues and theories in spatial media. In the chapters that follow, Kitchin highlights the economic interests that undergird nearly all spatial media; Lauriault and Mary Francoli describe how ideas of openness, transparency, and participation are deployed within government discourses; Michael Batty describes how a new science of cities is developing through the use of spatial media in smart cities; Francisco Klauser and Sarah Widmer show how spatial media enable and facilitate surveillance; and David Murakami Wood historicizes the use of spatial media for profiling and social sorting.

The book concludes with Leszczynski’s chapter on geoprivacy, which argues that in a world of ubiquitous surveillance shared between entities, unique privacy concerns arise. Companies and governments can repurpose geospatial data not only to show where you have been, but also to make inferences about your personal characteristics, your associations, and what you might do in the future. Rounding out this broad collection, the chapter is a fitting warning of the political implications of spatial media and a call for more critical geographic scholarship to continue the work suggested in this collection.