



## Book Review: Indigenous modernities: negotiating architecture, urbanism, and colonialism

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begs a fresh look at the development of the social and political relationship between the US and Mexico. Ultimately, the book succeeds in that it encourages even those with a strong background in border studies to reconsider their own perceptions of the region.

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JOSHUA LONG

**Indigenous modernities: negotiating architecture, urbanism, and colonialism.**

By Jyoti Hosagrahar. New York: Routledge. 2005. 224 pp. £75 cloth, £24.99 paper. ISBN 0415323754 cloth; 0415323762 paper.

Jyoti Hosagrahar frames this examination of nineteenth- to twentieth-century Delhi with the concept of colonial modernity. Her interest is in the intersection between modernization, the reordering of space, and modernism, the experience of that space. However, she openly admits that the focus of this work is architecture and the built environment, with the emphasis of the six excellent chapters laid on the creation of space, rather than on its negotiation. Hosagrahar does, however, at times pick out those occasions on which the occupation of space has thwarted self-conscious attempts at modernisation, never better than in her detailing of the negotiation and circumvention of the Delhi Municipal Committees by-laws and the persistence of community-based urban ordering. Each chapter moves chronologically, from the Delhi of the 'Mutiny' (1857) to infrastructural work before independence (1947), whilst also charting an analytical movement from the spaces of *havelis* (mansions), to the streets, geographies of health, city expansion and urban improvement.

Following such a trajectory, Hosagrahar also provides a stunning refutation of the colonial urban historiography that depicts European enclaves as the repositories of modernity and the native quarters as calcified museums of tradition. One of the outstanding features of this work is the way that approaches to space form the driving force of the narrative. After attempts to create a post-Mutiny placatory civic space (libraries, clock towers, railways), the bargaining and defiance of political society in public space soon came to the fore, just as public hygiene projects came to rely on traditional sweepers and cleaners. In terms of economic space, the state struggled with the paradoxical demands of *laissez-faire* trade and controlled urbanism, laying out a new commercial district without the powers to control the forces unleashed. As the comparison between the health of New Delhi and the disease of Old Delhi increased in the twentieth century, the colonial government instituted spaces of improvement. Hosagrahar dwells briefly on the architectural modernism of the Delhi Improvement Trust, although she also stresses its failure to tackle the slum crisis or regulate housing prices.

In conclusion, Hosagrahar returns to the idea of colonial translations of modernity and local resistance. While these trends are made empirically obvious throughout the book, some theoretical considerations would have made the chapters cohere more clearly in line with the book's title. However, the clarity of archival analysis articulates

many of these points, and establishes this text as an important contribution to the study of East and West in the muddled and contested spaces of everyday colonial interaction.

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**For the city yet to come: changing African life in four cities.** By Abdoul Maliq Simone. Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press. x + 297 pp. \$23.95 paper. ISBN 0 8223 3445 3.

This book is about life in contemporary African cities. Its central theme is that the difficult process of making a living in such places prompts people to engage in a variety of formal and informal arrangements, involving creative improvisation as opportunities for personal or group advantage present themselves. As the author explains, this invokes 'attempts to look at how African cities become a locus for the elaboration of translocal economies unfolding and deployed within logics and practices that stand aside from the usual notions of growth and development. Far from being marginal to contemporary processes of scalar recomposition and the reimagination of political communities, African cities can be seen as a frontier for a wide range of diffuse experimentation with the reconfiguration of bodies, territories, and social arrangements necessary to recalibrate technologies of control' (p. 2). As this suggests, a central feature of the processes involved is their spatiality. There are four case studies: the *Projet de Ville* in Pikine, a suburb of Dakar in Senegal; Winterveld, a largely informal collection of settlements in South Africa; Douala in Cameroon; and Jidda in Saudi Arabia. These are followed by discussions of historical background on African urbanization and general observations on the contemporary urban scene.

The case studies provide a fascinating account of how people make out in these cities. The emphasis is on how specific actors may reach and extend themselves, or propel themselves outwards from the everyday circumstances and places to which they are accustomed, within economic, political and social structures which may be far from transparent. Two reservations have to be made. The first concerns the method adopted: despite references to structured interviews with key participants in one case study and discussions with nearly 100 people from different walks of life in another, the actual voices and personal stories of Simone's elusive informants hardly ever appear. The second concerns the absence of maps, which would have helped readers unfamiliar with the cases in question to appreciate their spatial structure, such as the relationship of Winterveld with Bophuthatswana and Pretoria in the peculiar geography of apartheid. The more general chapters draw on a wide range of examples to portray urban life in ways which challenge much conventional wisdom in geography and development studies. Overall, this book offers a wealth of empirical detail and subtle interpretations, providing much food for thought for anyone interested in the way cities are changing, not only in Africa but also in other parts of the underdeveloped world.

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