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The Geopolitics of Real Estate: Reconfiguring Property, Capital and Rights, by Dallas Rogers, London, Rowman & Littlefield International, 2016, 206 pp., £24.95 (paperback)

The foundational assertion of Dallas Rogers's *The Geopolitics of Real Estate* is that understanding contemporary crises in land and real estate requires an extended timeline that gets at the "deeper historical realities that sit beneath" these apparently-contained moments (Rogers 2017: 2). Rogers actualizes this assertion with an analysis that draws variously on indigenous ways of knowing and narrating relationships to land, the feudal order and its decline at the hand of the enclosure movement in Britain and the communist revolution in China, and a range of settler-colonial projects and practices of land-claiming in Australia and the United States. Though winding its way toward the contemporary proliferation of digital platforms facilitating real estate investment today, the book underlines that the globalization of real estate is in fact not a new phenomenon, but an enduring feature of settler societies. Throughout, the geopolitical is employed in a dual context, both as the politics of space and in terms of real estate as a matter of global political-economic importance, historically and in the present day. Rogers identifies the ideological underpinnings of private property and ownership that drive land transformation, and create the spaces within which cities and regions evolve.

Wide-ranging and theoretically (if not always empirically) rich, for scholars concerned with the historical underpinnings of the present day, *The Geopolitics of Real Estate* is particularly notable for its attention to the *techniques* and *technologies* that mediate real estate. Any historicized account of contemporary real estate in settler societies must of course contend with mortgages as a technology by which land is claimed and made commensurate with money. Here Rogers uses *The Grapes of Wrath*, John Steinbeck's 1939 novel about the Great Depression, to draw connections between that crisis of liquidity of landed property and the later crisis of liquidity that emerged in the US and other real estate markets in 2007-8. Rogers, through Steinbeck, emphasizes how the wave of foreclosures that took place during the Great Depression exposed a turning point when notions of property ownership based on improving the land were superseded by ownership based on rational legal documents—namely mortgages. In turn, the agreements laid out in these documents make banks capable of laying claim to land and casting people from their homes. Rogers shows how rational, legal documents like mortgages, grazing licenses, surveying tools, and other technologies of land claiming (including the need for paper to manage and maintain information) thus at once shore up security of tenure and facilitate dispossession. Crucially, this focus on technologies is always linked with the techniques of real estate and a concern for bodies and mentalities, thereby avoiding a techno-determinism that neglects agency and subjectivity. Thus even Chapter 7, which deals with "the digital commodification of real estate" (Rogers 2017: 137), attends to the dependence of platforms mediating global real estate investment, on the embodiment of intercultural skills and digital capacities by "real estate cyborgs", *and* to how such platforms may come to reframe subjectivities in relation to "land, real estate, home, citizenship, and property (Rogers 2017: 137).

Rogers' framing of real estate around technologies and techniques articulates how scholars can more critically recognize the history of property law as a foundational determinant of the conditions under which, for instance, planning decisions made today and into the future rest on the writing of land into property. Rogers examines this through 1) the history of Australian settler-colonialism, turning the continent into property through law imported from Britain, and

2) the contemporary era of Asian, and in particular Chinese, investment in property in Australia and elsewhere. The colonial coding of land into property by claiming, surveying, and re-naming becomes the analog past to the digitization of property in the present. Property law in turn determines how space is organized in material ways, how frontier towns were organized and evolved into cities. The normalization of private property was necessary for the evolution of free trade and free markets, forming the rationale of the capitalist expansion into the US and Australia. We would have liked more concrete, empirical examples of the patterns of dwelling this real estate logic created. Does the composition of private property share commonalities across these nations? Was the experience of The Grapes of Wrath mirrored in Australia? Nonetheless, by critiquing the logic of real estate and private property more generally, Rogers offers a means of making 'visible' what is taken for granted in the contemporary landscape, recognizing that this geography is often arbitrarily composed and obscures the dispossession of previous inhabitants.

We want to conclude by drawing out a key absence that also points to a way forward for Rogers and others concerned with these matters. For a work in which the formation of 20th century home-owning mentalities is a key concern, it was surprising that consumer credit scores, credit bureaus like Experian, and the wider regime of credit scoring were not addressed. In the terms of the book, consumer credit scores write access to private property and the rewards it entails into the bodies of potential borrowers. Following Marion Fourcade and Kieran Healy (2013), contemporary scoring technologies not only govern inclusion or exclusion into credit and thus to a property-owning democracy, they structure life chances and cumulative patterns of (dis)advantage through differentiated access to credit. Considering the tight interweaving of consumer credit scores, the bodies of borrowers, and the coherence of real estate mentalities in the post-Keynesian era, some discussion of these issues would have enriched the book. That said, Rogers' contribution is a welcome addition to the field of planning scholarship with its orientation to the spatial politics and the geopolitics of real estate, to the techniques and technologies that carve land into property, capital, and rights.

Works Cited

Fourcade, Marion, and Kieran Healy. (2013) "Classification situations: Life-chances in the neoliberal era." *Accounting, Organizations and Society* 38, no. 8: 559-572.

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