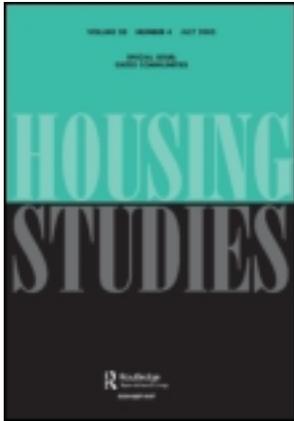


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On: 19 June 2013, At: 02:28

Publisher: Routledge

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## Housing Studies

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/chos20>

### Rethinking the Meaning of Place: Conceiving Place in Architecture- Urbanism

Tilo Einert <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Mackintosh School of Architecture, Glasgow School of Art  
Glasgow, Scotland

Published online: 13 Dec 2010.

To cite this article: Tilo Einert (2011): Rethinking the Meaning of Place: Conceiving Place in Architecture-Urbanism, *Housing Studies*, 26:1, 177-178

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02673037.2011.530487>

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## BOOK REVIEWS

### **Rethinking the Meaning of Place: Conceiving Place in Architecture-Urbanism**

Lineu Castello

*Farnham, Ashgate, 2010, 276 pp., £60.00 (hbk)*

ISBN 9780754678144

The focus of Lineu Castello's book is an attempt to reinvestigate the meaning of 'place' in the present time. With a growing provision of diverse types of 'new' places such as shopping malls, theme parks and conservation areas in 21st century cities, the author is in disagreement with the critics who censure these places as artificial and unauthentic. Throughout the chapters the author wants to raise some reasonable doubt about this widespread belief through an evaluation of several places to demonstrate their value and contribution to urbanity. In Castello's words, the content of this book is 'an invitation to reconsider what our current society perceives as "place"'.

To steadily build up an understanding of Castello's position and his goals towards a revision of the concept of 'place', the first chapter deals with the introduction to all the types of places this study is concerned with. It discusses the author's perception of the genesis and typology of these places and also introduces the issue of designing them. Castello continues to establish an understanding in the second chapter where he undertakes an extensive interdisciplinary review of the topical research that has influenced his thinking. Drawing upon the work of Fainstein, Tuan and Relph as well as Zukin and Hannigan, Mangani and Casey, the author laterally investigates the fields of spatial studies and many other disciplines that connect with human, social and economic factors. Following on from this, Castello introduces his strategy for investigating places through his own research of several localities within his hometown of Porto Alegre/Brazil, developing a layering process that reveals interrelations with the theory discussed previously and evidence of the perceptible constitution of these places.

His efforts result in a model of the correlation of place-making and place-marketing under the instrument of cloning places, supported by a detailed investigation of the relationships and thresholds that lie in-between the subjects. Castello picks up on iconography and the influence of 'star' architects on successful place-marketing, and expands his research to examples across the globe. The author's ambition in chapter four was to go one step further. He rounds up his rethinking of 'place' by speculating on the consequences for society, with 'cloning' being a method for transferring urbanity into places in cities. In particular, he discusses how the joint action of place-making and place-marketing affects spatial and behavioural changes and their variations, crystallising his focus on plurality, aura and memory. Castello introduces places in Rio Grande do Sul cities and uses the examples to relate back to previous case studies with the ambition of demonstrating that cloned places in theory can become places of urbanity. The book

ISSN 0267-3037 Print/1466-1810 Online/11/010177-7

finishes with a short conclusion based on looking at existential reflections regarding applied theory and on professional concerns relating to the field of practice.

Castello looks at the importance of place through history, technical revolution and a disconnecting society, stressing the role of place for enabling communication, linking up experiences and their reoccurrence. Stating that behind the identification of space is the appreciation of place, Castello focuses on places that are attractors and places that provide certain strong stimuli. To implement these new places into an existing urban organism, the author uses the term 'cloning' as concept and action. Castello manages to give a general understanding of the topic through the introduction of excerpts of definitions, again and again revisiting them at later stages in this book partnered by case studies of particular places. He establishes analytical parameters, i.e. consumption, aura and memory, and 'cloning' allows him to copy and transfer these existing qualities and relationships from one place to another, accepting plurality as being part of our modern societies. An interesting feature of this study is it being written by an academic and architect-urbanist. Frequently Castello portrays himself as a member of society. He distances himself from being a researcher and transforms himself into the role of the user. He constructs a theoretical framework for understanding 'place' and then raises a second opinion on his findings from the perspective of a person experiencing life in the new places he studies.

Although having an architecture-urbanism connotation, this book enables everyone interested in place-making to gain an insight into various definitions of 'place', their complex relationships and contemporary application. Lineu Castello's work offers a scientific and experiential approach towards the meaning of 'place', underlining the need for a holistic evaluation informing future urban interventions. This lies in accordance with the fact that recent activities in urban place-making (i.e. Renaissance Towns, Enquiry by Design etc.) suggest an increasing interest and awareness in the 'shared space' of collaboration between authorities, designers, consultants and communities. Comparable with Cedric Price's belief in the element of 'calculated uncertainty' in architectural design and urban planning, Castello deploys evaluation to predict an outcome, and shows throughout that process the implications and challenges that lie in between all of the disciplines involved. His work leads to a better understanding of the anatomy of the 'places' of today's dynamic cities and the lives of their people.

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*Mackintosh School of Architecture, Glasgow School of Art  
Glasgow, Scotland*

DOI: 10.1080/02673037.2011.530487

### **After Council Housing**

Hal Pawson & David Mullins

*Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, 346 pp., £24.99*

ISBN 9781403935151

During the last 20 years more than one-third of Britain's council homes have been transferred from public management and ownership to social landlords in the third sector.