



Spaces of Capital: Towards a Critical Geography

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David Harvey is the most influential geographer of our era, possessing a reputation that extends across the social sciences and humanities. *Spaces of Capital*, a collection of seminal articles and new essays spanning three decades, demonstrates why his work has had-and continues to have-such a major impact. The book gathers together some of Harvey's best work on two of his central concerns: the relationship between geographical thought and political power as well as the capitalist production of space. In addition, he chips away at geography's pretenses of "scientific" neutrality and grounds spatial theory in social justice. Harvey also reflects on the work and careers of little-noticed or misrepresented figures in geography's intellectual history-Kant, Von Th?nen, Humboldt, Lattimore, Hegel, Heidegger, Darwin, Malthus, Foucault and many others.

Spaces of Capital: Towards a Critical Geography Details

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Aslihan says

The most important contribution of this book is the approach towards critical geography and the way geography as a discipline evolved out of its mainstream history towards a more critical analytical use in understanding contemporary transformations in human kind's relationship to nature. The weakness in my opinion was the heavy reliance on the English-speaking world and relative neglect for the rest. This is true not only for theoretical references as well as for the cases under focus. Still, its analytical impact is by no means to be underestimated.

Khitkhite Buri says

I barely know much about urban studies, and despite a lingering interest I stay away from it because of a brand of political approach I see in the grad students here – and I'm not sure if Harvey's part of the same coterie. Massey isn't really.

There is a reason why I continue to return to Harvey despite his seemingly simplistic approach and absolutist statements ('I am a scientist.' 'these anti-aristotelians ...' etc). Harvey lays out the basis for his approach at every step, which might be a strange utilitarian approach to theory – method and use-value face first, but it also attests to his consistent emphasis on relevance. He's derivative in the way a good teacher is, and I give him brownie points for that.

But there's that variety of mediating with theory, use what you have with justice, make the most of the shit wrt global politics applied to political convictions and political organisation. I guess I'm uncomfortable with Harvey, despite him being thoroughly helpful ... I probably should return when I have a less instinctive unease and more criticality

Humphrey says

Pros and cons. Pros: accessible and clear introduction to Harvey that covers a range of different modes of application (case study, theoretical discussion, self-reflexive analysis of the field) and puts several of his major ideas into play (capitalist geographies, militant particularism). Cons: a bit too introductory, too survey-y -- most readers who want a crack at this, for whatever reason, will probably wish they'd just gone straight for one of Harvey's other volumes.

Colin says

a collection of essays that will cover some early/provisional formulations of very familiar territory for any reader of harvey. inessential. (also: printed on very distractingly shiny paper. why??)

Siria says

Spaces of Capital is a collection of essays by David Harvey, a geographer whose work has embraced elements of sociology, history, and economics, amongst other fields. Harvey is Marxist, and seeks both to use Marxist methodologies to give the field of geography a more critical, coherent framework, and to inject a greater sense of space/geographical difference into orthodox Marxist thought. I'm a historian, not a geographer, and not someone with a great background in theory, so I was very pleased by the quality of Harvey's prose—it's lucid and clear, and while there are some quite complex ideas presented, on the whole it's done without jargon. In fact, I think it could probably be held up as an exemplar, proof that it's possible to write theory or other critical works without doing as Mr Darcy does—"studying too much for words of four syllables."

Harvey clearly doesn't set out to curry favours with either his fellow geographers or with the broader academic community with his book. I absolutely agreed with him that scholars need to develop a greater sense of awareness of the ethical ramifications of their work, of their own ideological assumptions/convictions which underlie their work, and that the classist/racist/sexist/etc. concepts which still underpin textbooks need to be removed. I also found interesting his emphasis on Marxist methodologies of history—dialectics, processes, relationships—rather than Marxist... I suppose tropes is the word I'm looking for. I find it a much more productive mode of inquiry than structural analyses. That said, while Harvey is most interested in Marxist modes of history, he still views class as being the driving force of historical process. It's one that I find pretty Eurocentric, and unwilling to address women's history, or gender issues—either as a means of understanding societal change/structure or as a key element of capitalism.

My notes had a lot of smiley faces in the margins as I began this book; as I progressed through it, they became a lot more sceptical and/or sad faces. (And in one case, angry—referring to 'Orientals'? Seriously? Is it 1925 and I didn't notice?) Still, probably worth reading if this is an area of interest of yours.

Andrew says

David Harvey doesn't have an easy task. As one of the few geographers who is watched by the whole cultural-studies set, he has to build a bridge between geographic writing and more general, interdisciplinary writing. The essays collected in "Spaces of Capital" are a pretty good attempt, though. His magisterial "The Condition of Postmodernity" is the primary text of Harvey's read by the world outside the geography department, and this makes a good accompanying volume, containing more specifically geographic writings.

Wendy Plotkin says

Harvey is a master at articulating social processes. I may not buy his Marxist explanation, but his book helps me to theorize.
