

Shaun Moores, **Media, Place & Mobility**, New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, 128 pp., \$24.95 (paperback).

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In **Media, Place & Mobility**, Shaun Moores (2012) seeks to explain how people develop feelings of “at-homeness” in an increasingly mobile world and the role that media play in this process. This book is an ambitious attempt to critically synthesize diverse literatures on media, place, and mobility. Moores draws on many theoretical traditions from the disciplines of sociology, geography, philosophy, and anthropology, as well as on empirical examples to support his arguments. Ultimately, he advocates convincingly for a nonmedia centric approach, one that contextualizes media experiences in the broader social, technological, and political landscape.



Chapter 1 begins with a thorough critique of Joshua Meyrowitz’s (1984) *No Sense of Place*, itself an integrative model of media and place. Meyrowitz addresses the changing social arrangements brought about by electronic media. Social interactions no longer depend on physical copresence; communication technology allows people to interact and experience intimacy across time and space, leaving us uncertain about how our social roles connect to physical spaces. For Meyrowitz, this uncertainty leads to a sense of “placelessness.” Moores rejects the idea of placelessness, preferring Paddy Scannell’s (1996) concept of “doubling of place.” Media environments create social spaces that become places through habitual use and that allow people to be in more than one place at a time. Through examples that include cell phone use, Internet “cafés,” and public broadcasting events (like a disaster), Moores argues that the doubling of place provides new ways of being social and gives new meaning to the phenomenological experience of being there.

After establishing that social environments have changed, Moores addresses “placemaking.” He argues that habitual and mundane use of a setting or technology gives it meaning. His position differs from the idea that meaning is developed through cognitive processes or through symbolic representation. He uses the example of walking in the city as evidence that our sense of place develops through precognitive understandings and embodiment. For instance, a pedestrian cultivates bodily knowledge about a city’s design through repeatedly using its streets. This embodiment of the city’s design gives a meaning to the place that is unique to the experience of the pedestrian and may have no relationship to the intended (or planned) use of the city or the symbolic representation of the place. Thus, the meaning of a place is not determined by its structure but rather by its use. By focusing on embodiment and precognitive understanding, Moores further challenges the concept of placelessness and technological determinism.

In Chapter 3, he connects the concepts of placemaking, embodiment, and habituation with mobility, notably by engaging with John Urry's (1990) forms of mobility. As people become physically and virtually mobile, they experience discomfort at the lack of familiarity with physical surroundings. Sense of place emerges gradually as people become more familiar with physical surroundings, but shared media experiences, especially those that are interactive, create feelings of familiarity and embodied comfort as they are visited repeatedly by people across physical locations. The book concludes with an endorsement of a nonmedia centric form of media studies that builds on David Morley's (2009) Marxist materialist approach. Moores notes that a Marxist understanding of ideology, representation, and semiotics is valuable but argues that his phenomenological approach better explains the sensuous and lived experiences people have with communication media.

The strengths of *Media, Place & Mobility* lie in Moores' ability to make such a wide range of theoretical perspectives accessible and to show their usefulness in understanding media, place, and mobility. Specifically, it succeeds in refuting the idea that globalization, mobility, and communication technology lead to placelessness by establishing that place encompasses more than a physical location. Habitual practices create places by creating emotional attachments to environments, whether physical locations or media environments. This insight is particularly valuable in understanding how people continue to create a sense of place despite the disruptive and chaotic experience of mobility. Rather than focus on the loss of familiar understandings of place, Moores establishes an imperative to reevaluate place as it is actually experienced. He advocates for a contextual, nonmedia centric approach that would accomplish this goal.

One weakness, albeit minor, of the book lies in the unfolding writing style that Moores uses. The reader is taken on a long journey through complex ideas to arrive at a key point in the end. At some points, this presentation method leaves the reader a bit lost and wondering where it is going, undoubtedly because of the breadth and depth of the concepts covered. The book might have benefited from an organization that presents the main theses first and then subsequently develops the argument. Moores does periodically provide short summaries throughout the book that detail the arguments thus far, the significance of the ideas he gives consideration to, and the next direction the book will take. The summaries provide helpful navigation through the book but can become repetitive. *Media, Place, & Mobility* will be a useful book for advanced students looking to understand the changing structures of communication and interaction. The author's exhaustive citations and detailed reviews of key works may be daunting to undergraduates but would be a valuable guide for those who are familiar with the concepts but who may not have read all the source material.

References

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