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Extrastatecraft: The Power Of Infrastructure Space



Synopsis

Extrastatecraft is the operating system of the modern world: the skyline of Dubai, the subterranean pipes and cables sustaining urban life, free-trade zones, the standardized dimensions of credit cards, and hyper-consumerist shopping malls. It is all this and more. Infrastructure sets the invisible rules that govern the spaces of our everyday lives, making the city the key site of power and resistance in the twenty-first century. Keller Easterling reveals the nexus of emerging governmental and corporate forces buried within the concrete and fiber-optics of our modern habitat. Extrastatecraft will change how we think about cities—and, perhaps, how we live in them.

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Customer Reviews

“Extrastatecraft is an essential text for anyone with a stake in the built environment, architect and citizen alike, in articulating the forces that shape our nation-states, and cataloguing in a precise and readable style the strategies of an otherwise unaccountable global order.”
—Jack Self, Architectural Review
“I have long admired Keller Easterling’s talent for extracting a space, a shape, a marking, from mixes of elements rarely brought together—whether materially or conceptually. In Extrastatecraft she does it at a grand scale, cutting across fields of meaning and of practice. A must read.”
—Saskia Sassen, author of Expulsions: Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy
“An extraordinary guidebook to the politics of infrastructure in the contemporary world,

Extrastatecraft is a pivotal and beautifully written excavation of the hidden geographies of globalisation. Free trade zones, optic fibre networks, credit cards, mobile phones, economic and financial rules all emerge as charged elements within an often invisible geography that could not be more important. Extrastatecraft works to politicise and expose the prosaic and taken-for-granted hardware of our world.

• Stephen Graham, author of *Cities Under Siege* “A breathtaking journey along the material and immaterial infrastructures that continuously shape contemporary global space. Information flows of financial, legal or military nature congeal into wide arrays of strange spatial products, extraterritorial zones and building nodes. From within the logic of these pervasive systems, Easterling poses the most urgent political challenge facing spatial activists today, and shows how the search for justice must retool to outsmart the immanent violence of Extrastatecraft.”

• Eyal Weizman (author of *Hollow Land*) and Ines Weizman “Extrastatecraft establishes Keller Easterling’s growing reputation as the savviest student of postnational spatial and infrastructural forms. Bringing together architecture, coding, digitalization and logistics, she exposes the nervous system of the new logics of domination through information and proposes a cunning counter-politics of humor, discommunication and disguise. A must read for all varieties of critical students of space and sovereignty in this emerging century.”

• Arjun Appadurai, author of *The Future as Cultural Fact* “A provocative study of infrastructure, the operating system governing everyday life.”

• Jay Owens, *Icon*

Keller Easterling is an award-winning writer, architect and Professor at the Yale School of Architecture. She is the author of *Organization Space and Enduring Innocence*, which was named *Architect’s Best Book of 2005*. Easterling is also the author of two essay-length books: an ebook, *The Action Is the Form: Victor Hugo’s TED Talk* and a forthcoming book *Subtraction*. Her writing and design work will be included in the 2014 Venice Biennale. Easterling lectures widely in the US and abroad and contributes to, among others, *Domus*, *Artforum*, *Grey Room*, *E-Flux*, *Cabinet* and *Volume*.

Extrastatecraft turns out to be a survey of the state of supranational infrastructures. Things like free trade zones, international broadband, and telecommunications in general have been harmonized, homogenized and replicated all over the world, beyond the reach of governing power structures to modify them. Your bank or credit card fits any ATM or card reader anywhere. Suburban

communities in Tibet look just like the ones in Alabama. Your computer connection is the same worldwide. Add to that, worldwide standards for quality, production and management from supranational agencies like the ISO. There are huge implications for individuality and culture, but Easterling doesn't examine them. It's far more about the history of laying cables to and in Kenya than the disappearance of idiosyncrasies and anomalies. The stated objective is the relation of these infrastructures to spatial considerations: the instant city of the free trade zone, for example. But there is no deep examination. It's almost all superficial description. There are the predictable and tiresome quotes of Foucault that no academic work can avoid, it seems. There are footnotes galore. But apart from the initial concept (which is fascinating), there is very little new. Instead, Easterling concludes with how to attack the structures. The answer is to never head on. Find what Easterling calls dispositions, that the rest of us would call vulnerabilities. These are points of entry that appear to be malleable. There are numerous tactics to morph them, from rumor to sarcasm and out and out lies. The chapters all stand alone, and indeed, most of them were previously published separately. The overall effect is less than the sum of the parts. David Wineberg

f yeah

Review of Easterling's "Extrastatecraft" by Paul F. Ross Easterling waits until page 209 in a 252 page book to define "extrastatecraft" as saying "Designing an interplay of spatial variables that values and maximizes the countervailing and counterbalancing desires of different parties is the business of artful, entrepreneurial spatial practitioners who can exploit the _____

_____ Easterling, Keller "Extrastatecraft: The power of infrastructure space" 2016, Verso, London UK _____

_____ currency of new habits in infrastructure space. It is fairer and clearer to say her book analyzes "infrastructure," defined as Easterling defines it and not as we ordinarily understand its meaning, as a set of hidden rules that structure the spaces and practices all around us. A member of the architectural faculty at Yale University, Keller Easterling addresses, chapter by chapter, the non-government "influences" on thought and practice that shape our current and

developing world. She addresses these influences under chapter headings titled "zone", "disposition", "broadband", "stories", "quality", and "extrastatecraft" that have been world practice since Hong Kong disposition, expectations about what malls, suburbs, cities, and the like should be, broadband, the effect of the arrival of broadband with Kenya as a primary example, stories, several key ideas affecting thought and practices for a long time, quality, the influence of Deming's notions of "quality control" have had on practices. She sees these influences as bringing at least as much difficulty and unwanted outcomes to human societies as they bring good, generally casting these influences in the role of "bad guys".

Easterling then turns to methods for challenging these influences and, under the chapter heading "extrastatecraft" lists gossip, rumor, hoax, pandas (sweet gifts that disarm the agent of influence), exaggerated compliance doubling (describing a "double" in order to expose the absurdities), comedy, remotes (effecting changes in influence from a distance), distraction, meaninglessness, irrationality, hackers, entrepreneurs, inadmissible evidence (presenting evidence to create non-consensus), English (applying spin to the cue ball as in billiards), knowing how. Easterling often cites ideas from the aerie, rather than the clear, writings of sociology and philosophy. Her expressions are nearly always ethereal, lengthy, use infrequently used words, and are academic in the worst sense of those habits. While there is both reality and potential grist in her notion that influences that are not imposed by law (government) do guide and constrain practices of many kinds, the influences and their potential good get lost in the haze of foggy expressions and what to do about them. The directions corrective efforts should take are unclear. She is a concerned philosopher viewing non-governmental influences in life today.

Bellevue, Washington 5 February 2017
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Similar to her earlier publication, "Enduring Innocence: Global Architecture and Its Political Masquerades", Prof. Easterling's new book "Extrastatecraft: The Power of Infrastructure Space" is an odyssey of global urbanism and international politics. The book is divided into five sections, "zone", "disposition", "broadband", "stories", "quality", and "extrastatecraft". Each section is a brick and mortar that constitutes the story of extrastatecraft architecture. I was particularly drawn into the "disposition", "stories", and "extrastatecraft" section. Because here I was able to see the characteristics of mobile telephony (multinational global networks), urbanism, its historical and theoretical development, and invisible geography of global power and money. If a reader is a

follower of contemporary architecture and up-to-date urbanism, and is knowledgeable on the issues of theory and history of its development, one will appreciate more what Prof. Easterling has achieved. She is an awesome writer too.

This book is arguably the most pointless I have ever read. It could be used as a prime example of everything wrong with academic writing. All of the information contained herein will, once deciphered from the hieroglyphical metaphors, come as no surprise to anyone who is able to do the work of decoding Easterling's messages. Conversely, the people who could actually benefit from the practical advice will be either unable or unwilling to take the time to do the decoding. All this renders the book, again, completely pointless.

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