
Reference

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Scenescapes: How Qualities of Place Shape Social Life, by **Daniel Aaron Silver** and **Terry Nichols Clark**. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016. 441 pp. \$37.50 paper. ISBN: 9780226356990.

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Daniel Aaron Silver and Terry Nichols Clark embark on an ambitious project in their guide to the study of scenes in *Scenescapes: How Qualities of Place Shape Social Life*. Cities have been reimaged as part of a renaissance of economic growth in terms of their allure in a global marketplace of urban imaginaries. The authors explain how scenes and consumption in scenes shape economic development, residency flows, and politics. With an analysis of cities from all over the world, down to their ZIP code data, Silver and Clark give urban planners and cultural analysts myriad tools for reflecting on how place informs us about where to live and work and how to best organize our communities.

Their goal is multifold; one overarching ambition is to “show how access to scenes empowers people to improve their lives” (p. 135). Three factors—the rise of arts and culture, the rediscovery of the urbane, and the rise of a new political culture—give rise to scene effects in contemporary cities. The urbane—“what kind of place enables me to pursue a life deemed worthy, interesting, beautiful, and authentic”—illustrates how cultural branding and place identity become crucial (Harvey 1989).

Another goal is to move from the literature on the concept of a “scene” to a general theory and practical methodology to study the relationship between certain amenities and lived meaning in place. They aim to bridge the gap between qualitative studies of authenticity in place with the quantitative tools of inferential statistics and the covariance of factors such as self-expression, glamour, charisma, and proximity effects or age.

The social attributes particular to a scene are composed of specific, emplaced tenets of value. In the post-industrial landscape of cities, cultural categories, such as “scenes,” take on a more prominent role in demarcating inclusion, group membership, and the identity politics of power. Consumption and lifestyle are overtaking production and identity essentialisms in many people’s lives, and this can be complementary to traditional macro-social dynamics. Scenes, and their dimensions of aesthetic styles of living, represent the character of enclaves that attract residents and fuel power in new political formations in cities. In referring to the phenomenon of the big sort, social clustering has led to these new social formations, and as such, they must be studied with a new lens.

Theoretically, the authors suggest that David Ricardo and Alfred Marshall have something to offer concerning the value of land itself in a society that has shifted from production relationships toward the valorization of place. They suggest that Marx, through positing a dialectical relationship between labor and capital, covers over the lasting persistence of the living agency of soil and place in the categorization of value. Contemporary Marxist geographer David Harvey supports their contention that land value plays an independent role in valorizing place.

The philosophical basis for the book is the aesthetic disposition of place. This dimension is brought forth through the use of Kantian notions of categories of judgment and Gestalt theory. The idea that the object world of places informs one’s dispositions (“affordances”) is an important contribution to theory on the cultural effect of place. The authors could have gone a step further to include Actor Network Theory and the aesthetic potential of things on action, but the way they assert that a situated gestural economy of action varies along the lines of aesthetic scenes is a strong one.

It is in this way that they conceptualize their idea of a *New Chicago School* that is both ecological and place based but based on amenities and aesthetics. The broad brush with which they paint scenes is a useful one; for instance, they don’t relegate

scenes to the hipster subcultures that give them an air of bohemian pretension. They cover the “Ruppie” scene (retired urban professional consumer) as well as traditionalist ethnic enclaves.

They use a model that builds a picture of how we got here, with dimensions of the “company man” culture, loss of place due to job flexibility, and the rise of the consumption identity. I would have liked more of a critique of the purposeful displacement of precarious workers through city and development policy through the 1980s and 1990s, as unions were weakened and the artisanal economy flowered. However, this Durkheimian toolkit of the economic and political effects of social formations as measured along the valence of a matrix of aesthetic characteristics of scenes offers strong predictive potential.

Methodologically, the authors create 15 measures of classification for the performance of culture. They use BIZZIP (Business Industrial Patterns) and YP (Yellow Pages) data and a world team of analysts to compile amenity data coded for typified patterns of action germane to establishments that correspond to a spirit of place. Performance scores add to the exactness of their assessments by serving as a multiplier evaluating the intensity of each amenity in scenes—to determine, for instance, to what degree is a scene is, say, transgressive. In Telegraph Hill, Berkeley, tattoo salons get a high score of 5. When multiplying this by how many other transgressive establishments there are, we are left with a high performance score for transgression there. The operationalizing of ideal types of identities that sit in for signifying practices within or around built amenities is a logically difficult leap, but Silver and Clark are thorough in recognizing the limitations of their assessments. The use of these concepts, ranging from charisma to glamour, self-expression to transgression, makes for excellent measures to calculate Pearson correlations with other scene (or economic) effects, such as concentration of patents and proximity to other communities.

One critique of the scene approach—that particular actors are not adequately represented by aggregate patterns of action—threatens the reliability of the authors’

findings but is nevertheless thoroughly addressed. Here, and throughout the book, they do an excellent job of engaging with their interlocutors. Cultural measures will always beg for a closer look into how variables stand in for meaningfully understood collective action. A bohemian scene that is transgressive might be characterized by the number of tattoo parlors and punk rock bars. Food cart pods might be characterized as self-expressive, or perhaps transgressive when they are disorganized and punk, and eventually some other formal aesthetic of a commodified scene. Some amenities represent “high interest buzz” that raises the price of inclusion and threatens authenticity of place. Silver and Clark refer to Sharon Zukin and others to speak about the declining authenticity of place where amenities are used as building blocks for gentrification and tourism. Nevertheless, they do not advocate a one-size-fits-all model; their project boasts a grand stockpile of data, but they also understand that each year new data come forward; and their ideas about aesthetics of certain amenities are open to interpretative reframing.

However, all of this complexity still follows the authors’ agenda. The issue of scenes and their effect on local geographies is also unsettled by the molecular, sub-atomic speed of meme culture, digital cultural life, and the crisis of reading sociological moments. The work then reads as a guide to meaning-making in the cultural sphere and its effects in social formations in the city. This book serves as the exhaustive core text for understanding how and why scenes are born and come to bear on the culture of cities today. The more generalized models they build form a map of the possible outcomes of scenes on cities, including their politics, and vice versa.

Silver and Clark endeavor to do as much as they can with what the census data gives us, and they are up front about the limitations of this aspect of the project. They also decide that the scene is the independent variable and the population the dependent variable. This is a nod to the original Chicago School, and it has a sound logic. At times scenes are so mutable they barely hold their shape. This can provide a future challenge, but it

also argues for the expansion of the work and an acknowledgement that, still, the built environment lends some continuity to lived experience.

In addressing these issues as part of the greater project of the interaction between qualitative studies of scenes, the particle-based interaction within scenes, and the more fixed patterns of a cultural sociology of emplaced values, the authors have accomplished a breathtaking enterprise. The power, especially for future economic growth and the direction of cities, can be modeled, predicted, and argued for through this database and its concomitant analytical tools.

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House Full: Indian Cinema and the Active Audience, by **Lakshmi Srinivas**. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016. 315 pp. \$37.50 paper. ISBN: 9780226361567.

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Audience studies, with its roots in the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, and developed by late-twentieth-century scholars such as Stuart Hall, David Morley, Charlotte Brunson, Paul Willis, and Dick Hebdige, analyzes the relationship between media text and perceptions of the audience. Traditional understandings of this relationship have focused on the "encoding-decoding" process between encoded message and decoded meaning. However, this binary framework can be challenged for its presumptions about the passive nature of audiences, particularly in non-western settings.

In *House Full: Indian Cinema and the Active Audience*, sociologist Lakshmi Srinivas

highlights the active participation practices of Indian audiences, who consume media in ways vastly different than those western habits most understood by scholars. Srinivas focuses on the dynamic of the "active audience"—that is, the active, dynamic, spontaneous performance of movie-goers and movie-going in Bangalore, India, which exists in sharp contrast to the passive consumption and quiet audience experience that is standard in American and western European theaters.

The South Indian film industry on which this book is based, known as "Sandalwood," influences all aspects of everyday life in Bangalore—from fashion and lifestyle to gossip and politics. Srinivas aims to get at the heart of this influence—what makes it different, unique, important, and special in this part of the world. This study also gives a new meaning to active audiences through the eyes of the Indian film consumer—how they consume media not only as individuals with their own preconceived notions, but as a collective group, and how both perspectives inform this consumption experience.

Srinivas utilized classic ethnographic methods, including audience participation, audience interviews, and "impromptu" audience focus groups (with fellow movie-goers and local passersby), as well as interviews and observations with movie producers, newspaper coverage, and reviews of the films themselves. Srinivas spent an impressive amount of time "in the field"—viewing approximately 312 films and interviewing 137 respondents, providing the audience with a well-rounded data sample. In her writing, Srinivas captures the deep-seated fandom that Bangaloreans have for Sandalwood. The prose is fast-paced and somewhat disorganized, albeit like ethnography itself, and reflects the fast-paced nature of urban India. Her prose conjures up reflections of her numerous visits to India: images of loud and crowded streets, chawallas crowing, the sights and smells of public spaces, with everyone claiming to be an expert on the issues of the day.

Throughout the book, Srinivas elaborates on the "habitués" of her audience—those who have been immersed in the culture of Indian cinema since a very young age. The