

studies or explaining how researchers might advance this analysis it results in just another chapter defining what capitalism is; which readers already knew.

Unfortunately this volume on “key concepts” does not live up to its title. It does not provide a clear explanation of how the “key concepts” relate to historical geography and is a badly organized series of chapters that substitute catch-phrases and fashionable terms for a rigorous or systematic examination of the state of the sub-discipline.

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SMALL-TOWN AMERICA: FINDING COMMUNITY, SHAPING THE FUTURE, by Robert Wuthnow, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013

This book contributes to a burgeoning body of literature which seeks to highlight the importance of studying small cities. Dissatisfaction with urban theory dominated by study of ‘the city’ defined in terms of a small number of ‘global’ cities has led theorists to consider what is lost as a consequence of this bias. More specifically, the kinds of creative work highlighted as emblematic of the ‘new’ urban creative economy – fashion, music, new media and so on – are considered in this research to reflect the spectacular, exciting and global cities in which they are imagined and created (Florida, 2003). In other words, small cities are ignored because they are not expected to provide the necessary preconditions and environment attractive to ‘creatives’. But in the last decade there is a growing body of literature that argues the importance of studying small cities (Bell and Jayne, 2006, 2009; Garrett-Petts, 2005; Jane et al., 2010; Ofori-Amoah, 2007).

Small-Town America fills a significant gap in the sociological literature. It paints in a slow pace, the slow pace of life in a small town, a rich panorama of the lives and livelihoods of people who reside in small communities, finding that, for many people, living in a small town is an important part of self-identity. He offers a more balanced view of small-town life and culture. Drawing on more than seven hundred in-depth interviews in hundreds of towns across America and three decades of census data, Robert Wuthnow shows the fragility of community in small towns. He covers a host of topics, including the symbols and rituals of small-town life, the roles of formal and informal leaders, the social role of religious congregations, the perception of moral and economic decline, and the myriad ways residents in small towns make sense of their own lives.

More than thirty million Americans live in small, out-of-the-way places, and they remain cultural touchstones in the United States in the 21st century. Robert Wuthnow shows that there are two contradictory images of them persist. In the

nostalgic view, small towns are dominated by traditional values, warm, neighborly relationships and common purposes. In the other view, small towns are full of unhappy, intolerant people.

Though Wuthnow concentrates mostly on the internal processes, the book reflects the effects of the globalized world dynamics on the towns and the changes they're going through. In fact, 55 percent of all non-urban US towns of fewer than 25,000 residents were smaller in 2010 than they were in 1980. But in the bottom line he comes to the conclusion that, small towns are an important feature of the nature's landscape, surprisingly resilient and have a viable future.

The volume includes nine chapters plus an introduction and concluding reflections. The first chapter after the introduction offers an initial view of the people who live in small towns, emphasizing the diversity of social strata of which small communities are composed. The following next chapters take up the central question of how residents of small towns construct the meaning of their community in ways that reinforce loyalties to it and one another. Chapter 3 looks at what people mean when they say a small town offers a slower-paced life or more authentic place in which to raise children. That chapter demonstrates that residents are fully aware of the disadvantages of living in a small town, and show how residents compensate themselves and town's life. Chapter 4 explores in further detail what residents understand as the most important sources of community spirit in their towns. It defines the meaning of "community spirit" or its sources in town.

Chapter 5 moves from the consideration of the perceptions residents have of their communities to a look at the ways in which residents in small towns make sense of their own lives. Chapters 6 and 7 focus on town leaders and associations that play key roles in small communities' efforts to adapt to changing social and economic conditions. Chapter 6 examines formal and informal leaders, including local public officials and heads of voluntary organizations. It shows how residents confer respect on leaders and how leaders draw on this respect in performing their roles. Chapter 7 considers the roles played in small town religious organizations. It has more to do with the task of religious buildings along with public activities and its service as carrier of collective narratives while providing links to the wider world.

The next two chapters examine how social and political issues are framed in small towns. Chapter 8 shows how perceptions of moral decline intersect with the reality of living in towns with declining populations and diminishing job opportunities. Chapter 9 demonstrates that antipathy toward big government is common among residents. It discusses the reasons for republican popularity and concludes by considering the possibilities present in small towns for grassroots activism. Chapter 10 delves with the premier anxiety in small towns: the survival of the town for the next generations. One of the most interesting narratives that surfaces in these interviews emphasizes the need to take one's community values along, no matter when one lives, and for those who remain in a small town to keep their options open.

The final chapter pulls together the author's observations about the various factors that contribute to the residents' sense of community in small towns. He refuses to create boxes of typologies in which to categorize the complexities of small town culture, but prefers to analyze the lingual expressions used by the residents to characterize their lives: community is a component of a person's worldview and self-identity. The intuitions, emotions, personal accounts and town legends, routine sidewalk behavior, festivals, family history and neighborly relations, all converge to powerful attachment. Thus, Wuthnow argues that "scale matters, 'smallness' shapes social networks, behavior, and civic commitments."

Despite rich and detailed case study research, the empirical and theoretical focus of studies has been limited to the 'mapping' and therefore more sophisticated theoretical and empirical research is needed, not only to reify 'the small city' but also to encourage broader theorizations and comparisons, including non-western case-studies and generalizations. There is a need to continue to explore the manifold ways in which small cities are positioned and function within a worldwide system of economic competition and cooperation via cultural production, consumption and cultural policy; to research how this is related to vernacular creativity; and to investigate the contradictions of everyday life that shape and reshape understandings of places and cultures (Jayne et al, 2011).

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