

On the other hand, the approach presented in the book could be seen as an ambiguous one. First, the book provides an extensive critique of classical moral philosophy and the only solution they come up with is a combination of different elements of classical moral theories of Kantians, Neo-Kantians and Rawlsians. Second, the solution of problems occurring within the interpersonal framework which is based on principle of plurality of moral values could be criticized for its simplicity. Third, arguing for wrongness of universality *per se*, the authors insist on liberal-pluralism as universal moral value for the modern society which could be seen as contradictory to their original motive which was to overcome Kantian universalism. Moreover, some practical examples and less abstract way of speculation could have made the book more accessible for broader range of readers.

Summing up, the book is a challenging theoretical speculation on liberal-pluralism with the main emphasis on value claims, plurality, public and private morality. It also suggests the possibility of applications for political philosophy where certain implementations of the theory in practice are considered. The book is worth reading for senior students in ethics, philosophy, political philosophy or normative political theory; for people less advanced in the topic it could be hard to read and too abstract to get the main points. Overall, the book is well-written and a prepared reader can easily follow the main ideas. Despite the missing explanatory elements, people interested in moral philosophy, political theory and ethics will find the book very interesting, stimulating and useful reading.

Larbi Touaf and Soumia Boutkhil (eds.), *The World as a Global Agora: Critical Perspectives on Public Space* (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008).

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Public spaces have for centuries played an important role in the formation and development of societies, both as a physical space for gathering and debating, as well as a symbolic notion representing the core values of democracy. Such places have developed in a way that reflects the beliefs, public values, as well as the culture and a sense of community for the inhabitants of many areas. Public spaces remain a crucial concept in many developed and developing societies, as well as a vital component of the more traditional communities around the world. Nevertheless, as our ever more globalizing and liberalizing planet continues on its path of economic commercialization, privatization and subtle fragmentation, public spaces begin taking on new appearances. As public spaces form and deform under the influence of the present day media and information technology, they seem to morph into a

new concept, slowly losing their initial shape and purpose, while nonetheless remaining a fundamental principle of participatory democracy and an essential component of public life, regardless of what shape they take. Modern developing and traditional societies all tend to continue valuing the symbolic significance of public space, as it is grounded in the "collective socio-political consciousness as the basis for a general sense of civic action." (pp. xi). This is the common denominator for the essays on architecture, sociology, gender, and literary criticisms that place themselves around the debates about the concept of public space presented in *The World as a Global Agora: Critical Perspectives on Public Space*. The essays presented in the book originate from a two-day conference on public space, held at the Faculty of Letters at Mohammed I University in Oujda, Morocco in 2007, in itself a significant event as it was being held in a country with no historic precedents of such institutions.

The book is divided into five parts - Configurations of Public Space, Socio-Cultural Transitions, Being Other in Public Space, Re/inventing Public Space, and Moroccan Women in/and the Public Space. Composed of twenty-one chapters by academics specializing in the fields of linguistics, literature, cultural studies, urban regeneration, urban design, urban growth, architecture, and environmental management, from universities in the United States of America, United Kingdom, Canada, Portugal, Germany, Italy, Turkey, and Morocco, it also includes an introduction by one of the editors, Larbi Touaf. The multicultural and professional patchwork of the authors leads to an interesting and varied collection of perspectives. It is not a conventional academic collection of works, as the pieces vary both in style and approach to the issues they discuss. Some chapters provide analysis of literary pieces, such as chapter eleven and all of Part Four, which is dedicated to the importance of literature in public spaces, as literary discussions, in essence, largely contributed to the creation of public spaces. Other chapters provide personal accounts of the authors, in the form of a short personal memoir rather than an academic account, as is the case with chapter eight, or for example an individual case research presented in chapter four. The collection also contains a summary of preliminary results of a conducted research project in chapter nine, while many chapters focus on the analysis of social implications linked with public spaces. Although it is occasionally hard to clearly see the connection between some of the discussed issues to the broader topic of public spaces, as it is not directly stated and in some chapters not even mentioned, they do nonetheless discuss important changes in societies, cultures and politics taking place across the globe. Almost every chapter attempts to open a debate on elements that reframe the vision of the world or public spaces, providing interesting and insightful analysis, case studies, or projects.

The different approaches present in the book contribute to a well-rounded and diverse piece that provides the reader with an interdisciplinary perspective on the

notions of public spaces. The variety of topics offers the reader an array of viewpoints, all attempting to be centered on the main idea of the importance of public space in today's societies. The book aims at civil society as a whole, and anyone and everyone interested in the topic of public spaces. Most of the chapters are an easy read for an audience lacking knowledge on the topic, moreover, presenting enough material useful for someone working within or studying the field, making it an informative read for academics, policy makers, public sector workers, and students. Thus, the book attempts to deliver a multidisciplinary approach; some readers might see it as definite advantage, while others might find some chapters unnecessary or inconveniently academic.

Although an attempt at a truly global coverage can be witnessed in the compilation, it seems to be largely focused on Morocco, perhaps due to the location of the conference that inspired the creation of the book. Even though the importance of the European approach to public space was mentioned, it was never fully discussed as extensively as other individual cases of other countries were; as the supranational influence of the European Union is increasing, a further analysis seems an appropriate addition to the book. Furthermore, Asia remained a completely uncovered continent, just as the post-Soviet space and Central Europe.

Although the basic information on the various aspects, debates, and issues pertaining to public spaces is well presented, and often based on field research of the authors, the occasional grammatical errors make certain aspects more challenging to understand than need be, while typographical faults and minor mistakes in titles seem unnecessarily bothersome and challenge the credibility of the publisher. Moreover, the use of Wikipedia as a reference source in chapter two, even for basic facts, seriously discredits the chapter for future academic use and referencing. The citations for this source were incorrect¹ as well, causing one to question the credibility of the remaining references within the chapter.

Overall, *The World as a Global Agora* provides a rich insight through the deep and varied approaches and viewpoints of its contributors. The book's chapters provide perspectives from architectural, environmental, literary, sociological and gender studies perspectives on the important issue of public spaces, bringing attention to an assortment of matters associated with it. It offers interesting and new ways of looking at the notion, providing a valuable addition to the academic study of the topic in the fields that it attempts to cover. In general, it is a compilation of the most diverse pieces, approaches and topics, in one way or another related to the broad notion of public spaces.

¹ For actual references to Wikipedia within the text see p. 18, "Finnish Parliament Annex Building" and p. 20, "Scottish Parliament Building". However, the only Wikipedia reference presented in the works cited was one referring to the Bundestag, which was not used in the text.