

elaborate the approach set out in the previous part. He makes some interesting and important points regarding the role of journals as mechanisms of surveillance, about the arbitrary nature of citation indices and what they include and exclude, and last but not least the point that 'the journal simply is not the primary medium of communication in the social sciences' (p. 145). These are points of considerable significance in an increasingly harsh intellectual climate dominated by an audit culture and attempts to assess and measure the value and volume of research outputs. He also makes some interesting observations about the significance of alliances and networks in propagating particular views of a discipline or particular perspectives within it; hence whom you know may be as, or even more, important than what you know in jockeying for position in the academy (but then I suspect most of us already suspected that was the case anyway). Indeed, from my point of view the most interesting material in this particular work was to be found in this third section. Curry seeks to use these case studies to buttress his central claim that 'to understand the written work in geography, as elsewhere, it is necessary to see the work in the world' (p. 12). This is certainly an important point, though now not a particularly novel one.

Ray Hudson
University of Durham

Curry, M.R. 1998: *Digital places: living with geographic information technologies*. London: Routledge. xvi + 192 pp. £17.99 paper. ISBN: 0 415 13015 8.

Digital places brings together a number of essays written by Michael Curry that were published between 1994 and 1997. The book is, however, more than a collection of separate essays. Divided into three sections ('The world according to geographic information systems', 'Geographic information systems in practice' and 'Living with geographic information systems'), Curry examines the academic, societal and individual implications of GIS. A number of substantive issues are addressed, including conceptions of language and space within GIS, the representation of geographic phenomena, the use of space, geographical practice, privacy and confidentiality, intellectual

property rights, ownership and regulation, and ethical considerations. Its central aim is to encourage the users and developers of GIS to consider the ways in which GIS fits into a broader picture (socially, culturally, politically and ethically), how GIS intersects (in nontechnical ways) with other geographical technologies such as global positioning systems, remote surveillance systems and automated cartography, and how GIS is limited and limiting in its presentation and analysis of the world. As such, Curry adopts a critical approach, informed by social constructivism, to undertake a study *of*, rather than *with*, geographical technology.

The success (note not importance) of this project is partial. In one, key respect the book was a total success. It is quite a while since I've read a book from cover to cover. The ideas and arguments presented were of interest and raised a number of issues that stimulated thought. My copy is full of underlinings and notes in the margin. Where the book slightly floundered was that a great many of my notes were questions. If Curry's objective was to provide a broad assessment and a blueprint for future research then the book achieved this aim admirably. If, however, as I suspect, the objective was to provide a sustained critique then the book did not quite fulfil its expectations. Many of the chapters were curtailed and arguments were not fleshed out fully. There is an excellent chapter on privacy and ideally all the chapters should have followed suit. The early chapters in particular seemed partially complete and left me frustrated.

By far the weakest chapter was the Conclusion. I spent much of the book wondering where it was going and the answer was largely nowhere. A number of important issues were raised, but what to do in the light of these issues was never really articulated. It seemed enough that the reader was aware of how space was conceptualized in a GIS or the implications of the way the GIS industry operated. I suspect that many readers with backgrounds in using and designing GIS will shrug their shoulders and say 'so what? That's the way of the world'. In other words, there are no practical politics or solutions for addressing the issues raised, no real suggestions as to how GIS should be used or how the industry should or might change. This in turn led me to question as to whom the book was aimed at. My impression was that although intended to be read by

everyone interested in GIS, it is actually directed at academics and students who study the sociology of technology, particularly those interested in geographic technology. In this light, it would be interesting to see how the book has been received by GIS users and developers.

In addition, on agreeing to review this book, I had assumed from the title that the text would concern a range of geographic technologies including the Internet, virtual reality and surveillance systems. On the whole, however, the scope was limited to GIS. I found this framework a little restricted. The boundaries of GIS are distinctly blurred. For example, online GIS are being developed. An online GIS seems on initial thought to be something qualitatively different from one restricted to one machine, especially if it can be used and built distributively. Many of the issues raised apply to other geographic technologies and comparisons and links could have usefully been made.

Despite some shortcomings, the book is, in my opinion, an important contribution in that it moves beyond detailing how to use GIS or examining the technical details and practical uses GIS, to discuss a range of wider issues. The book provides a useful blueprint and a platform from which others can start to examine from an informed position what is an important issue, especially with the continued rapid development of geographical technologies.

Rob Kitchin
National University of Ireland, Maynooth

Dixon, C. and Drakakis-Smith, D., editors, 1997: *Uneven development in south east Asia*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing. xvii + 255 pp. £39.95 cloth. ISBN: 1 85972 555 4.

Southeast Asia has undergone a period of extremely rapid uneven, and volatile, economic development in the past few decades. Current economic gyrations have generated renewed interest in this region by scholars, planners, investors and international development agencies. Unfortunately, acceleration of economic growth, fiscal stability and expansion of manufactured exports have not occurred in all countries. The uneven nature of the development process, in a region some

developers and planners believe to be the new model for third-world development, was pointedly discussed by a panel of specialists in a session of the European Association for South East Asian Studies (EUROSEA) conference held in Leiden in July 1995. Conference discussions led to the amalgamation of ten specialists' points of view, on different aspects of this unevenness at both the regional and national levels, into a concise, nine-chapter volume.

In Chapter 1, Chris Dixon and David Drakakis-Smith provide an excellent analysis of contemporary and historic perspectives on uneven development within southeast Asia. In Chapter 2, Johannes Dragsback Schmidt examines the paradox of the region with respect to its sociology (class structure) and its anthropology. The author successfully argues the need to study the sociological and political-economic perspective of NICs. Anne Booth in Chapter 3 examines poverty in southeast Asia and methods to measure poverty accurately. Inclusion of a map would have contributed to the understanding of the region's geography of poverty. Gillian Davidson and David Drakakis-Smith explore the extent to which Singapore's wealth has been distributed throughout society and of the impact 'meritocracy' has upon ethnic wealth disparities in Chapter 4. The important aspects of this chapter could be summarized in three to five pages and the case that poverty in Singapore is unequally different from poverty elsewhere in the world is not made. Does the increased presence of women in the export sector labourforce lead to gender equality or does it reinforce the traditional position of women in the Philippines? Cathy McIlwaine outlines her point of view clearly at the beginning of Chapter 5: many researchers may question her approach and findings. In Chapter 6, Jill Eyre examines ethnic development in Malaysia. She discusses thoroughly 'small firm' sector problems, the impact of catering to large corporations, employee poaching and lack of political decision-maker's appreciation of the potential of the small firm sector. Laos, a poor country within a newly emerging industrialized region, is analysed socioeconomically by Jonathan Rigg in Chapter 7. He stresses that economic reforms in Laos benefit specific ethnic and cultural groups: the minorities and the upland areas are not benefiting from government economic reforms. Curt Nester does an excellent job in exploring the spatial