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Sinopsis

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City planning initiatives and redesign of urban structures often become mired in debate and delay. Despite the fact that cities are considered to be dynamic and flexible spaces_never finished but always under construction_it is very difficult to change existing urban structures; they become fixed, obdurate, securely anchored in their own histories as well as in the histories of their surroundings.

In *Unbuilding Cities*, Anique Hommels looks at the tension between the malleability of urban space and its obduracy, focusing on sites and structures that have been subjected to "unbuilding"_redesign or reconfiguration. She brings the concepts of science and technology studies (STS) to bear on the study of cities. Viewing the city as a large sociotechnological artifact, she demonstrates the usefulness of STS tools that were developed to analyze other technological artifacts and explores in detail the role of obduracy in sociotechnical change. Her analysis distinguishes three concepts of obduracy: interactionist, in which actors with diverging views are constrained by fixed ways of thinking and interacting; relational, in which change is difficult because of technology's embeddedness in sociotechnical networks; and enduring, in which persistent traditions influence the development of technology over time.<?p>

Hommels examines the tensions between obduracy and change in three urban redesign projects in the Netherlands: a renovated city center that fell into drabness and disrepair; a highway system that runs through a densely populated urban area; and a high-rise housing project, designed according to modernist precepts and built for middle-class families, that became a haven for unemployment and crime. *Unbuilding Cities* contributes to a productive fusion of STS and urban studies.

.About the Author

Anique Hommels is Assistant Professor in the Department of Technology and Society Studies, Faculty of Arts and Culture, University of Maastricht, Netherlands.

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Reviews

"This book provides some interesting models of thinking for the professionals of the built environment.... A useful contribution to those involved in negotiations about urban change, including presentational aspects." , Judith Ryser, Urban Design

Endorsements

"Anique Hommels provides a fascinating analysis of three efforts to alter the face and shape of Dutch cities that draws on insights from STS and urban studies. She opens up some of the many black boxes which characterize cities and demonstrates how cities are not only built but also re- and unbuilt. It is to be hoped that others will take up the many leads that Hommels offers for thinking about and analyzing the exciting spaces and places in which many of us live and work."
_Sally Wyatt, University of Amsterdam

"Tracing the sheer obduracy of the physical fabric of cities, Unbuilding Cities opens up urban planning, and urban creative destruction, to the powerful gaze of STS research for the first time. The result is an original and insightful account of the ways in which cities can be creatively 'unbuilt' which will be key reading for architects, planners, and STS researchers."
Stephen Graham, Professor of Human Geography, University of Durham

"Hommels provides a new framework for exploring the dynamic tensions between the malleability and fixity of the contemporary city. In particular, she provides a rich empirical and conceptual understanding of the strategies for unbuilding cities that gives symmetrical treatment to the technological and social issues involved in these dynamics."
Simon Marvin, Director, Centre for Sustainable Urban and Regional Futures, University of Salford, Manchester

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