Changing Senses of Place
Navigating Global Challenges

Global challenges ranging from climate change and ecological regime shifts to refugee crises and post-national territorial claims are rapidly moving ecosystem thresholds and altering the social fabric of societies worldwide. This book addresses the vital question of how to navigate the contested forces of stability and change in a world shaped by multiple interconnected global challenges. It proposes that senses of place is a vital concept for supporting individual and social processes for navigating these contested forces and encourages scholars to rethink how to theorise and conceptualise changes in senses of place in the face of global challenges. It also makes the case that our concepts of sense of place need to be revisited, given that our experiences of place are changing. This book is essential reading for those seeking a new understanding of the multiple and shifting experiences of place.

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Changing Senses of Place

Navigating Global Challenges

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This book is dedicated to the late Professor Gregory G. Brown, who touched the lives of the senses of place community in so many special ways. For details of his legacy, see: https://participatorymapping.org/greg-brown-archive/tribute/
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Foreword

The study of sense of place has featured prominently in social science enquiry for 50 years. First pioneered by Yi-fu Tuan and Edward Relph in the 1970s, humanistic geography highlighted people’s attachment to particular places, especially when faced with dramatic transformations associated with urbanisation and new technologies. Subsequent enquiries have increased our understanding of the meaning of place to individuals, and how this evolves over time and is challenged by lifestyles further transformed by globalisation. The scope of these studies has embraced disciplines as diverse as planning, architecture and psychology, among others, reflecting a myriad of human experiences associated with place and with evolving and competing senses of belonging. Hence, this book situates multiple senses of place and manyfold challenges associated with belonging and identity against the backdrop of globalising tendencies and the complexities of contemporary life.

The studies in this book acknowledge advances in conceptualising senses of place and highlight fruitful avenues for future enquiry. Individual chapters critique how senses of place are being navigated, against a daunting list of global challenges: climate change, global culture, changing patterns of migration and mobility, the transition towards renewable energy, ongoing territorial conflicts, the rise of global cities, the quickening pace of technological change and the challenges posed to design and planning. Yet, throughout the impress of globalising forces, individuals strive to attach meaning to places, investing emotions and seeking identities that, in turn, researchers seek to understand and analyse. Various aspects of this analysis are captured herein, from consideration of the practices through which people interact with and physically transform places to ways in which people contest the subjective meanings and ownership of places.

Many of the 25 individual chapters challenge the once-popular view that place attachment is essentially static, arguing instead that as places are transformed in response to global challenges, so senses of place may mirror the place dynamic. The notion that individuals are ‘rooted’ in place is challenged not only by the rapidity of change in the character of places themselves, but also by dramatic shifts in the circumstances of many individuals. Some chapters emphasise the increasing ‘placelessness’ that can occur through dislocation associated with migration and changing mobilities.

Christopher M. Raymond and his colleagues have assembled a collection of essays that represent state-of-the-art thinking on senses of place. Collectively, the essays
demonstrate that places present multiple ‘faces’ to their inhabitants and that, chameleon-like, they acquire new characteristics as they are buffeted by a complex mixture of global and local forces. The authors employ various theories to help understand these senses of place, addressing the complexities associated with dynamic materialities, representations and performative practices.

While individual places may retain unique local facets, these are increasingly overlain by the impress of globalisation in its many forms. Indeed, competing forces strive to shape the nature of places and often bring about sudden changes that alter individuals’ relationships with a particular place. Individuals in any locale encounter only certain aspects of the global and the local: contrast the experience of a homeless person with that of a rich entrepreneur. Nevertheless, those aspects inform their lives and shape their sense of place.

*Changing Senses of Place* is a tour de force, provoking the reader to think more deeply about how we view place and the challenges faced by globalisation in its many forms. The volume provides vital guidance on how we might navigate an increasingly uncertain and precarious future.

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Preface

The final versions of most of the chapters that appear in this book were written in the spring of 2020 while many, if not all, of the authors were shuttered inside their homes, practising social distancing to mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic. This extraordinary new reality clearly served to put a fine point on the theme of this book: navigating changing senses of place in the face of global challenges. It emphasises a core concept of the book – that our sense of ontological security should not be taken for granted, and it largely depends on how we navigate senses of place at multiple scales. We all now have a much more intimate understanding of what this means for people we know and love. Home has become a very central but sometimes problematic actor in our struggle for ontological security. Being confined to home also demonstrates how much our senses of place are also (im)mobilised. We miss out on many activities that connect us to one another. The gathering places we have relied on are deemed toxic. We cannot travel to visit or hug our children, grandchildren or elderly parents. We miss out on celebrating key life events – birthdays, graduations, recitals, weddings, honeymoons and even funerals. At best, we seek to replace some of these rituals and celebrations by using the tools of social media. It is no longer an academic abstraction to think about how having a secure home, neighbourhood or country contributes to a sense of security and well-being; how having effective government, competent leadership and a strong public sector contributes to the well-being of all. We see from our living rooms how this global challenge is experienced so differently depending on where we were born, our postcode or country code; our economic, employment or immigration status; or the strengths or inequities within our healthcare and employment systems. It redefines essential workers within our food systems, healthcare systems and distribution systems. We, the privileged authors and editors, mostly stayed home and continued to do our work and receive our pay cheques, although we cannot say that our work was essential, at least not in any immediate way. Yet we hope in some measure that the contents of this book can help policymakers to make the most of the lessons that come from facing an existential global challenge that has reimagined how we occupy space, mobilise our lives and activate our senses of solidarity.
Acknowledgements

The editors would like to thank the many authors for their dedication and commitment to the writing and refining of their chapters, as well as the generous and timely support offered by Cambridge University Press, in particular Aleksandra Serocka, during the multiple phases of the development of this book.

The compilation of this book resulted in many late-night (or early-morning) discussions and deliberations among the editors, which in some instances took us away from our private lives. We therefore would like to thank the love, commitment and tolerance of our friends and families.

In particular, Christopher Raymond would like to acknowledge his father, John Raymond, for the many engaging discussions on relationality and ‘reality’, which provided a fertile starting ground for some of the ideas presented in this work.

The editors hope this volume will be both an inspiration and a cornerstone text for new and established scholars on senses of place, encouraging a paradigm shift in how we conceptualise, assess and navigate the plurality of ‘senses’ in the face of global challenges.