

BOOK REVIEW

Anastasia Panori (2024), *Digitally Disrupted Space: Proximity and New Development Opportunities for Regions and Cities*, Elsevier, ISBN: 978-0-443-14150-8

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The book *Digitally Disrupted Space: Proximity and New Development Opportunities for Regions and Cities*, authored by Anastasia Panori, addresses the connections between digital transformation and the redefinition of spatial dynamics, the shaping of societal relations, the changes in economic productivity and the reconfiguration of organizational structures in urban and regional spaces. Panori offers a mixed perspective, rather theoretical, but also providing some empirical examples.

Right from the introduction, the author aims to find the answer to three main questions: “How does the integration of the new digital technologies affect our understanding and application of traditional spatial concepts?”, “In what ways does digital space influence the spatial dynamics that shape contemporary societies and economies?” and “How is digital space connected to productivity, sustainability, and inclusion?”, questions which the author comprehensively and meticulously deals with throughout Part I, Part II and Part III.

The work has the qualities of a textbook or a toolkit and the writing style is accessible to the general public. The information is presented in a logical, critical, well-structured and easy-to-follow flow. The chapters follow a similar structure. The first part defines the concept(s), followed by the relation with the concept of digital space. Depending on which part the chapter belongs to, it ends with challenges or opportunities of the digital space (Part I), transition pathways (Part II), or policy framework (Part III).

The work is structured in three parts, comprising a total of 9 chapters. Part I, “Space disruptions in a digitalizing world”, starts with Chapter 1, “Definitions of space and grand challenges”, which introduces the concept of space, describing the forms and characteristics of space, from absolute and spatial to more up-to-date approaches, such as *digital space*. The chapter further addresses the major challenges of the 21st century, namely population growth, uneven development and climate change in relation to space. The last part of the chapter focuses on digital space as a

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mitigating factor for the grand challenges where the author puts forth other concepts, such as smart cities, digital platforms for productivity and net-zero technologies.

Chapter 2, “Space dynamics: The role of digital disruptions”, explores the space dynamics, starting with the driving forces which shape the modern socio-economic space. The first subchapter delves in the explanation of centripetal forces (agglomeration economies), network creation (organizational structures), and ends with the flow formation (mobility patterns). It further presents a digital platform – ONLINES3 and a platform ecosystem – POP-MACHINA, which aim to encourage collaborative intelligence and ‘spaceless’ networks. It further advances the topic of digital nomads, respectively, remote working prior and post COVID-19 pandemic, as a preparatory step to underpin the digital space.

“Space connectors: From physical to digital” is the title of Chapter 3 and provides a dynamic perspective on how space is shaped, highlighting the various types of externalities that arise in this context, with a particular focus on the impact of technological progress. More precisely, the chapter focuses on externalities, digital change, digital connectors for different externalities (geographical, organizational, institutional, social and cognitive). The chapter ends with examples of digital connectors, such as digital twins, platform cooperatives and Everything-as-a-Service models.

Part I ends with Chapter 4, “Space routines: Digital elements as key building blocks”, which attempts to reinforce the connections between externalities and digital space elements by exploring routines and their link with productivity and innovation.

Part II of the book, entitled “Digital space reshaping transition processes”, focuses on the role that digital spaces play in reshaping transition processes. Thus, Chapter 5, ‘Digital space under a multilevel perspective’, seeks to bring together the elements mentioned in Part I (e.g. connectors, dynamics, routines) and integrate them in a multi-level approach to the technological transitions with a special emphasis on digital space. The chapter begins with an explanation of the elements taken into account in creating a multi-level approach and concludes with an explanation of how the digital space permeates the transition pathways.

Chapter 6, “Digital space in the forefront of twin transition”, deepens the concept of twin transition. The chapter starts by defining the concept, it continues with an exposition of the twin transition empowerment in digital space by technologies, skills and awareness, and social innovations. It then ends with the description of the sectors of twin transition (smart districts, smart transport systems and smart energy system).

Part III, entitled “Digital space challenges and opportunities for regional development”, anchors digital space in regional development issues exposing challenges and opportunities, dealing with three major concepts: productivity, resilience, and inclusion. Chapter 7, “Productivity”, examines the extent to which digital space impacts productivity, focusing on three pillars: working conditions,

technologies' adoption, and business and organizational models. At the end, a policy framework for the 4.0 Industry strategy is outlined. The author supports the information presented with results from empirical studies.

In Chapter 8, "Resilience", the relationship between digital space and resilience is explored with a focus on climate change, the COVID shock, and the energy crisis caused by the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. A subchapter is devoted to two relatively recent concepts in the scientific literature, i.e. *cyber-physical system* (CPS) and *human-machine network* (HMN) and their connections to resilience. The chapter also concludes with a policy framework, this time dealing with Green Deal.

Last but not least, Chapter 9, "Inclusion", explores how the digital space shapes territorial cohesion, with a strong focus on inclusion. The chapter brings together topics such as digital space and territorial cohesion with a focus on the 4 pillars of European territorial cohesion: connectivity, skills, business integration, and governance. Similar to the two previous chapters, it concludes with a policy framework, this time dealing with the EU Cohesion Policy and the Digital Decade.

A strong point is that the author provides strong argumentation, extensive bibliographical sources, examples of platforms where appropriate and, in Part III in particular, the information is supported with evidence from empirical studies. The author does not only deal with the newest and most relevant terms in the digital space and digital economy field, but rather connects with terms that co-exist in the territory, such as human and social capital.

The book can be used as a toolkit by students, academic staff, stakeholders, and national authorities; moreover, policymakers can easily use it as basis for policy development since it explains precisely, concretely, in a comprehensible way and underpins with evidence numerous concepts in the digital space area. Last but not least, the topics covered in the book are closely related to contemporary challenges, current EU policies and present a strong link with regional development.