Book Review

Zurawski, N. 2014. *Raum – Weltbild – Kontrolle. Raumvorstellungen als Grundlagegesellschaftlicher Ordnung und ihrer Überwachung*. Opladen: Budrich UniPress.
241 pages. Paperback ISBN: 978-3-86388-054-5

Francisco Klauser

Neuchâtel University, Switzerland.
Francisco.klauser@unine.ch

Nils Zurawski's re-edited Habilitation thesis, *Raum – Weltbild – Kontrolle*, published in German by Budrich UniPress, offers a compelling engagement with surveillance as both the product and producer of specific sociospatial imaginaries. The book's take on surveillance is remarkable in that it unites two equally essential key arguments. First, the book presses the point that surveillance must be approached as both a technique and function of differing cognitive orderings of reality. Second, as Zurawski shows, the role of space must be placed centrally if we are to understand these cognitive orderings of reality in their interacting relation with surveillance.

By way of illustration of these claims, consider the two main fields of surveillance investigated by Zurawski: mapping and video surveillance. With regard to the former field, Zurawski explores not only the surveillant disposition of mapping, but also discusses the multiple analogies and crossovers between mapping and surveillance as intertwined, space-related techniques of world ordering. As Zurawski stresses, "simply put, mapping can be understood as a form of surveillance—and vice versa. The meaning of mapping for and as surveillance, in the sense of orientation across unknown and un-disciplined space, is the key for understanding the somewhat unusual equation of phenomena that are so different" (Zurawski 2014: 101, my translation). Taking up and deepening a thread pursued for some time by authors such as Jeremy Crampton (2003) and James Pickles (1995) for example, Zurawski thus shows in convincing fashion how both mapping and surveillance work as windows on reality, and indeed on territory, which convey particular rationalities of power that are intrinsically bound up with space.

With regard to the field of video surveillance in its turn, Zurawski explores in rich empirical detail how camera systems, in their functioning, internal organisation and implications, reflect specific understandings and orderings of space (in terms of perceived risk zones, sociopolitical discourses about places of fear or zones of commercial appeal, etc.). Yet equally, Zurawski also shows how video surveillance shapes specific imaginaries and orderings of space in selecting, symbolically charging and thus unevenly territorialising particular (urban) zones.

Thus in sum, drawing upon the examples of mapping and video surveillance, Zurawski pleads for an approach centred on the spatialised representations that not only mediate the exercise of surveillance but also in turn result from specific practices and discourses of surveillance. This argumentation is convincing, if necessarily programmatic in tone, scale and ambition.

Klauser, F. 2014. Review of Zurawski's *Raum – Weltbild – Kontrolle. Raumvorstellungen als Grundlagegesellschaftlicher Ordnung und ihrer Überwachung*. *Surveillance & Society* 12(4): 604-605.

<http://www.surveillance-and-society.org> | ISSN: 1477-7487

© The author(s), 2014 | Licensed to the Surveillance Studies Network under a [Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial No Derivatives license](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

Reaching beyond the specific problematic of surveillance, for academic disciplines such as geography, urban studies and sociology for example, the book is of particularly high appeal whenever Zurawski reflects on, and demonstrates, how exactly the origin and “agency” of sociospatial imaginaries can be grasped conceptually and empirically (especially through cognitive mapping methods). Zurawski indeed also aims to take the focus on surveillance as an entry point to think more widely about how to approach and to depict sociospatial imaginaries in their genealogies, internal logics and implications more generally.

For Surveillance Studies more specifically, the book both opens up an important empirical field of investigation that deserves further exploration in future research, but also, and perhaps even more importantly, offers much-needed conceptual depth and extension to the community's key debates. It seems to me that in recent years, relatively little attempt has been made to move beyond the field's now quite well-established conceptual focus on authors such as Foucault, Deleuze, Latour and Giddens, to mention but the most prominent ones. To this catalogue of conceptual reflection, *Raum – Weltbild – Kontrolle* adds a series of novel analytical tools that draw in particular on differing strands of world view theory—from Kearney to Berger and Luckmann. Of course, Zurawski's extensive discussion of the concept of space is also of particular interest in this respect. Hereby, it is particularly enjoyable to notice the mixture of German and Anglophone references, which inform Zurawski's discussion and which testify to the author's ambition to draw together differing conceptual approaches and to cross-fertilise differing language traditions in the field.

Now, if the book's conceptual discussions are much needed and stimulating, they also appear at times too expansive and detailed. Theoretical chapters are discussed at great length, which provides a solid and detailed but also at times a somewhat unpurposed background to the book's analytical chapters. We see here both the advantages and disadvantages of a published Habilitation thesis. My main reservation with the book thus arises from its style of writing and structure. For example, the concept of surveillance is introduced properly but on page 114, which means a linear reading of the book is somewhat challenging. Also, in my view, theoretical and empirical chapters could have been interwoven more neatly, so as to show more easily how exactly the operationalised concepts work, and how in turn the empirical materials further develop the chosen conceptual approaches. If the structure of Zurawski's argumentation responds to the specific needs of a Habilitation, it could have been re-edited more fully to allow an easier reading and maybe also wider impact of the book.

That said, the book is most certainly worth the effort for any researcher interested in thinking about surveillance and space. It is to be hoped that Zurawski's ambitious endeavour will also have the impact it deserves on Anglophone debates on the subject. With this in mind, I very much hope to see some more of the book's claims and reflections developed in English over the next few years!

References

- Crampton, J. 2003. Cartographic rationality and the politics of geosurveillance and security. *Cartography and GIS* 30(2): 131–144.
- Pickles, J., ed. 1995. *Ground truth: The social implications of geographic information systems*. New York: Guilford Press.