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EXTRASTATECRAFT

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Keller Easterling’s 2014 book reveals the invisible yet powerful role infrastructure space plays in shaping the political, economic, cultural, and thus spatial (territorial and urban) rules that govern contemporary civilization. She posits that within infrastructure space, a new form of architectural agency may lay, one that leverages the contemporary position of architecture as information (13).

Easterling links the deployment of infrastructure space to the rise of the top echelon of global power players, who take advantage of “prevailing political ideologies” to “lubricate their movement through the world,” enacting an international choreography of objects and content whose circulation remains secret but whose consequences are concrete (15). She describes the feedback loops of materials, labor and public relations that reveal the roots even the most ‘innocent’ companies have in the “’3D’ jobs (dirty, dangerous, and demeaning)” (54).

Highlighting “active forms” as a variety of specific tactics that can influence the “disposition” of various forces in the extrastatecraft network, Easterling outlines a series of typologies from multipliers, switches, wiring/topologies, and governors, which augment the impact of a traditional design from the singular to the systematic. She assembles a confrontational toolbox of an “alternative activist repertoire” that “exploits the cultural stories as well as the organizational attributes that inflect disposition” (214). Ranging from historic vernacular forms such as gossip, gift-giving (Trojan horse) to the managementese-catering, exaggerated compliance and doubling, to the dada-esque distraction/irrationality, finally to the tactics of hacking and linguistic aesthetic athletics.

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Keller Easterling, Extrastatecraft: The Power of Infrastructure Space, (London: Verso, 2014).