

Book Reviews

Edited by AMY GLASMEIER

Dialogues in Urban & Regional Planning. BRUCE STIFTEL and VANESSA WATSON (Eds), Routledge, London (2005). xv + 355 pp. No price given (hbk). ISBN 0 415 34693 2.

Published in association with the Global Planning Education Association Network (GPEAN), this compilation of award-winning papers is intended to represent the very best of urban planning scholarship from around the world. The resultant *Dialogues in Urban & Regional Planning* meets its objective in impressive fashion. As something of a sceptic when it comes to ‘best of’ anthologies, it would not have overly surprised me to find a group of disparate papers simply pulled together and reproduced in book format. In reviewing this book, however, I had quite the contrary experience and was quickly and pleasantly converted by both the quality of the papers and the thoughtfulness with which they were collected. Editors Bruce Stiftel and Vanessa Watson have performed an admirable feat not only in contributing to the assemblage of these papers, but also in explicating the process leading up to their selection.

In the book’s first chapter, Stiftel and Watson detail the relatively recent founding of planning school associations around the world and the subsequent coalescence of more than 350 schools of planning on six continents through the formation of GPEAN. Seminal selections from eight of the nine associations that comprise GPEAN constitute the book’s 12 remaining chapters. Based on the content of the individual chapters, Stiftel and Watson outline three central themes in their introduction: the relationship between planning and the economy (Chapters 2–4); concerns pertaining to the environment and conservation (Chapters 5–7); and the nature of planning processes and decision-making (Chapters 8–11). The final two chapters contextualize planning theory through the issues of communication and consensus building. As there are no subsections in the book, discussion of the three themes is limited to the introductory chapter.

The theme of planning and the economy begins with the book’s second chapter. It pays particular attention to the mixed-use efforts associated with New Urbanism and notes a disconnection between the discouraging results of mixed-use in nine Canadian cities and its continued advocacy by Canadian planners. Chapter 3 details the hard times experienced by Sydney’s Olympic stadiums since the 2000 Olympic Games in Australia and serves as a caveat to all uncritically boosterist cities seeking a fleeting taste of global celebrity. The shaping of urban space within Buenos Aires in Brazil, examined in Chapter 4, provides valuable insights for other megacities in the developing world facing similar issues of land use, economics and population growth.

Contributing to the book’s second theme of the environment and conservation, Chapter 5 addresses farmed landscapes through a study of 31 neighbouring farms in west Oxfordshire, England. Using three-dimensional visualizations for key regions within the study area, the study demonstrates the utility of global information systems (GIS) and visualization tools for landscape analysis and generates a ‘collective sense of stewardship’ among the farm owners (p. 121). Chapter 6 examines urban regeneration and conservation in Shanghai, China, and finds, among other deficiencies, a lack of any coherent planning strategy and an insufficiency of planning tools. The application of ecological–economic zoning in the Brazilian Amazon in response to disastrous projects funded by multilateral organizations is discussed in Chapter 7.

The third theme of communication and consensus begins in Chapter 8 with an analysis of the epistemological challenges that increasing cultural diversity brings to participatory planning. Through a case study of the Hawaiian homestead community of Papakōlea, the challenges of planning in communities with non-Western cultural identities and the associated need for community-led planning processes are highlighted. Chapter 9 examines urban planning and inter-group conflict through an investigation of various planning intervention strategies in Belfast in Northern Ireland, Jerusalem in Israel, and Johannesburg in South Africa. Chapter 10 details use and development conflicts resulting from increasing international tourism to Banff National Park, Canada, and advocates a neopragmatic approach in which labels are replaced with dialogue in order to reduce contention and enable collaborative planning. In Chapter 11, three well-known theories of normative planning are analysed for applicability to the increasing inequality exhibited in cities of Sub-Saharan Africa.

One admittedly minor concern relates to the final two chapters of the book. Chapter 12 highlights the importance of storytelling, particularly in the case of multicultural planning; while Chapter 13 takes a critical stance towards Critical Planning Theory and details the need for auxiliary theoretical sources. Unlike the case study research that structures the rest of the book, these chapters are inherently theoretical and fall outside the scope of any of the three themes identified by the Editors. As a result, the flow of the book becomes somewhat disjointed. Another relatively benign issue is that due to the independent selection process, chapter lengths are fairly disparate and range from 22 to 38 pages in length. Additionally, while the black-and-white reproduction of the graphics is no real detriment, the use of colour would certainly have been more aesthetically appealing, particularly for the three-dimensional landscapes displayed in Chapter 5.

Comprised of award-winning papers that have previously been published in leading planning journals from around the world, this book offers little of which to be critical. The overwhelming result is a book that is international in scope and one that fills a significant void in the planning literature by providing, in a single source, scholarly work that would be otherwise unattainable on so widespread a basis. This archetype benefits all students, scholars and practitioners of planning who heretofore have been hindered by an inaccessibility to scholarly work from globally disparate sources. Of particular value to a graduate course based around comparative planning strategies, all scholars seeking to improve their personal research prowess would benefit from the rich methodologies, strong theoretical underpinnings and global content found in *Dialogues in Urban & Regional Planning*.

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The Microeconomics of Income Distribution Dynamics in East Asia and Latin America, FRANÇOIS BOURGUIGNON, FRANCISCO H. G. FERREIRA and NORA LUSTIG (Eds), The World Bank and Oxford University Press, Washington, DC (2005). 436 pp. US\$38.00 (pbk). ISBN 0 8213 5861 8.

Poverty and income inequality within and between countries has become tragically axiomatic. The growing disparity between the world's more and less developed countries is generally considered unhealthy for the global economy and raises issues that are both practical as well as moral, and thus a topic worthy of attention. I tend to think about these issues on three levels: deductive theories, empirical research and common sense. Deductive theories of development tend to be normative and focused on economic variables; but due to their many limiting assumptions, the outcomes are not very good at reflecting the real world. Common sense tells us that policies that expand education, promote gender equality, and stimulate incentives for labour will promote growth and reduce income inequality. Empirical studies fall between these extremes. They are usually robust statistical exercises that rely on survey data; they either reveal or suggest complex underlying structures in the political economy; and they may help governments to fine-tune development strategies.

The Microeconomics of Income Distribution Dynamics in East Asia and Latin America is a collection of empirical studies that used microeconometrics to learn 'not only how total income grows within a country but also how its distribution behaves over time' (p. xiii). Its refreshing premise is that no theory of development will explain the spatial-temporal patterns of development for all countries. Indeed, 'The combination, sequence and timing of changes that are actually observed in any given country, at any given period, are always unique, always unprecedented' (p. 1). Eschewing another attempt to construct a grand theory, the authors state that their aim is instead to 'explore the incredible diversity in the distributional experience and outcomes across economies' (p. 2).

There are 17 contributors for ten chapters. Seven of the chapters cover separate research projects in Latin America

and Asia. The authors are all well-known research economists associated with prestigious institutions: The World Bank, The Inter-American Development Bank, national planning departments, and universities or institutions in Indonesia, the USA, Argentina, France, Colombia, Mexico and Brazil. Google any of their names and their body of work is readily available. The Editors are François Bourguignon (Senior Vice President and Chief Economist of The World Bank), Francisco H. G. Ferreira (Senior Economist in the Development Research Group at The World Bank) and Nora Lustig (President of the Universidad de Las Americas, Puebla, Mexico).

Their research addressed several questions: (1) why do changes in inequality differ so markedly across economies that have similar rates of growth in gross domestic product (GDP) per capita; (2) why do we observe rising inequality both in growing economies and in contracting ones; and (3) why do educational expansions sometimes lead to greater equality and sometimes to greater inequality?

To follow the technical aspects of their research, one must be able to decipher their methodology, which, as the Editors state: 'generalizes the factual simulation techniques from the single (earnings) equation model to a system of multiple (non-linear) equations that is meant to represent mechanisms of household income generation' (p. 10).

Chapter 1 introduces the research methodology, its strengths, limitations and goals, in intelligible prose. Chapter 2 is the highly technical and mathematical description of the methodology, a step-by-step explanation of the calculus associated with the decomposition techniques used in data analysis. Chapters 3–9 cover the seven separate projects, respectively: Greater Buenos Aires in Argentina; Urban Brazil; Colombia; Indonesia; Malaysia; Mexico; and Taiwan, China. Chapter 10 is a synthesis of results.

One of the conclusions drawn from a comparison of the research over these distinct geographical regions is that the counterfactual microsimulation methodology is a useful analytical tool. Another 'main conclusion' is perhaps anticipatable without the complex analysis, i.e. that each country experiences its own path relative to the dynamics of inequality and poverty, confirming that 'Grand theories about universal laws of how inequality behaves over the process of development are probably less useful than the profession once thought' (p. 399). Other observations suggest that reducing gender and education inequalities will have a salubrious impact on reducing income inequalities.

Anyone in development economics with a background in something less than advanced inferential statistics will find this book a hard read. We can take the Editors at their word when they conclude that 'the most important methodological contribution undertaken in this book is to generalize the counterfactual simulation approach to distributional change from earnings to household income distribution' (p. 11). If researchers, policy-makers and graduate students understand that statement, they will no doubt enjoy the technical aspects of the authors' work. Yet, their use of tables, tabularized summaries by country and decipherable prose synopses enable other informed readers to appreciate the gist of their work. Readers who skip over the esoterics and focus only on the vernacular descriptions of the places studied will still acquire an appreciation for the diversity and specificity of place.

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