

Reviews/Comptes rendus

National-Level Planning in Democratic Countries: An International Comparison of City and Regional Policy-Making. 2001, pp. 288, xiv. Edited by Rachelle Alterman. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, *Town Planning Review*, Special Study No. 4. ISBN 0-85323-845-6.

National-level planning is usually not viewed as the mainstream concern of planners engaged in land development, and the present international compendium of reviews on national planning approaches fills precisely this important gap. The main contribution of this book, throughout a sample of countries of the free world, is its juxtaposition of national planning issues with traditional land-use policy topics at the level of the city and the sub-national region. This edited book is the result of an Israeli project attempting to set a comprehensive framework to integrated national policy that addresses land use, infrastructure, social and economic issues, as well as hydrology, agriculture and the environment.

Surely the question of pitfalls and fallouts of comprehensive planning since the 1950s was on the mind of several of the authors (Jerold Kayden, U.S.A., or Malcolm Grant, U.K., for example). But undeniably a different attempt than the conventional notion of comprehensive planning was at stake here. As the editor, Rachelle Alterman, explains, the book was born of a very specific task at the Israel Institute of Technology. Addressing long-range policy dilemmas following mass immigration into Israel from the former Soviet Union, the desire was to seek novel "modes of national level planning as carried out in other democratic countries [...] with advanced economies." It is somewhat unfortunate, therefore, that the book's title was chosen as, *National-Level Planning in Democratic Countries*, since neither of the two largest democracies, India with a population exceeding one billion, or Canada with a total area of close to 10 million km², have been included. Given the scope of the project, it is understandable why India would have been excluded, but a Canadian case study relating land-use planning with immigration would have been elucidating.

Alterman, an alumna of the University of Manitoba planning program, has undoubtedly succeeded in calling to the attention of planners several key issues of comparative, international nature. The book is organised through an introductory overview chapter, followed by ten chapters on national planning, each of the latter written by planning experts in their respective countries. The authors were asked to focus on several common problems so as to facilitate mutual comparison in policies and approaches to spatial planning. In essence, five major questions were put to the authors to respond to: Is there a national spatial plan (or a substitute to such)? What are the institutions in charge of spatial planning at the national level?

What are, or are there, national-level procedures or policies in place for land development? What is the legal status of spatial plans and policies? What modes of implementation are used, if any, at the national level?

Several of the answers emerging from the ten chapters of this book are rather engaging. Perhaps the most important of these is the issue of lateral relationships between local and national agencies that touch on the land development and planning processes. As an international comparative issue, this concern remains unexplored in land-use planning literature. The book shows that most of the large countries reviewed here (USA, Sweden, UK, Germany) do not possess a national land-use strategy or policy, whereas most of the smaller countries reviewed (Denmark, Holland, Israel) possess a binding national land-use guideline. Exceptions to the rule seem to be Ireland, with no national plan, Japan with five National Development Plans since 1945, and France, with a continually evolving national legislation, *directive territoriale d'aménagement*, as a binding land-use policy guideline. Hand in hand with national attitudes to strategic land-use planning goes also the degree of state institutionalisation, where U.S.A. and Sweden lead those of the ten countries who have no centralised national land-use planning agency, *versus* Holland and Israel whose national land-use policies are strongly founded in a central institution. Here, Ireland is something of an exception by not possessing a national plan or a comprehensive land-use policy.

A comparison of very small countries with counties, states, or prefectures of very large countries might have been more advisable. In such a case, of course, there could be no place for "national-level" comparison. But herein lies the one major problem I see with this, otherwise excellent compendium. The commendable attempt to bring together many international perspectives on large-scale planning has to address first and foremost the problem of scale. Both at the spatial, economic or demographic levels it is difficult to argue for comparison between tiny Denmark or Israel, with such colossuses as Japan or the United States. But in an overall perspective, more than just providing specific answers to the questions raised here, this book's significance rests primarily in the direction it has charted for further inquiry into land-use planning as a global issue.

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Demography, Democracy, and Development: Pacific Rim Experiences. 2002. Edited by R.E. Bedeski and J.A. Schofield. Canadian Western Geographical Series 38, ISBN 0-919838-28-6.

This is a welcome book to scholars and policy makers of the South or the old Third World. Demography, democracy, and development are probably the three most essential themes that need to be addressed by both the North and the South in the 21st century. Contemporary demographic trends including massive international migrations generating anti-immigration policies, political issues involving imposition of democracy and global problems of development especially increasing poverty amidst globalisation and technological advancements mean that this book could not have come at a more opportune time.

The book consists of a collection of papers presented at a symposium held in April 2000 at National Sun Yat-sen University in Kaohsiung, Taiwan. It covers the Asian geographic realm, more specifically East and Southeast Asia; however, the lessons contained therein are for all poor countries of the South. The end of the Cold War, the break up of the Soviet Union, the rise of the newly industrialising economies (NIEs) in Asia and Asian Tigers are events that have rendered obsolete the concept of Third World. How did these Asian Tigers and the NIEs succeed in ridding themselves of the derogatory label, Third World, and thus making the concept inapplicable? Why are other Third World countries in Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa caught in the so-called lost decades of the 1980s? Can the rapid development in the Pacific Rim and underdevelopment in Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa be explained in terms of demography and democracy? These are some of the pertinent questions that are, to a certain extent, addressed in this volume.

After an introduction by Bedeski and Schofield summarising major themes and findings of the papers, the remaining 13 chapters of the book are then organised into two parts. Most of the chapters in Part I, which covers the theme of demography, are devoted to immigration especially Chinese immigrants in Canada and their changing family structure. The chapter by David Lai provides a survey of changing Canadian immigration policies and their effects on trends, patterns and composition of Chinese immigration. The analysis begins with the passing of the Chinese Immigration Act of 1923 by Canada and therefore neglects to acknowledge the significant contribution of Chinese immigrants in railway development that played a pivotal role in the settlement and development of the Canadian West. The chapter by Yuen Woon describes "the appalling, oppressive and in-human" working conditions that female migrants endure in South China. These are gross human rights abuses that can be allowed only in a totalitarian society and should have been condemned in a book of this title.

Dan Koenig's chapter discusses problems of aging population and highlights the negative consequences of population control policies such as China's one-child policy. The chapter by Robert Bedeski demonstrates the dilemma of neo-Malthusians; they fail to adduce consistent empirical evidence to affirm the Malthusian theory and also to acknowledge that human population is a resource. The claim is made (p. 54) that "China is no longer a poor and struggling economy But it is overpopulated." No explanation is provided as to why China is

overpopulated. What is the threshold population size for defining overpopulation? Which of the following East Asian countries is overpopulated: China with a population density of 353.6 persons per sq mile or South Korea, which has 1,287.1 or Taiwan with 1,804.2? The typical unproven neo-Malthusian view is expressed (p. 50) as “it is very problematic to support” a world population “(around six billion)”. It is problematic because 82 % of total income is owned by the richest 20 % of global population (United Nations 1998). It is not enough to consider “support” of global population, it is more important to examine “control of global resources”. Who, and how many people, must control the resources of the world? Consider the problem of spatial inequalities and land ownership in former colonised countries in some Third World regions. In Guatemala, for example, 2 % of the population own 63 % of the most productive land (Dodds 2000:65).

Part II consists of a variety of topics under the theme of democracy and development. The chapter by Peter Lin compares the development experience of East Asia to that of Latin America. Contrary to the anti-people view of Bedeski (p. 54) that China has “a redundant 100 million or so persons”, Lin points out (p. 122) that the East Asian economic success has “been based, not on abundance of natural resources, but on human resources.” The dominant role of China in the East Asian realm is documented in the chapters by Gerard Chow, Jou-juo Chu and Marion Wang. From these chapters, we learn more about the geopolitical importance of the Asia-Pacific region and the special contribution of the US to the economic development of the Asian NIEs. Wang informs us (p.178) “Nearly all US aid was provided on a grant basis, which made it possible for the ROC to begin its export-led growth in the 1960s without a backlog of debt.” This evidence contrasts sharply with the development experience of other Third World countries in Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa most of which are debt-ridden.

With the exception of the chapter by Peter Lin in which good governance is mentioned as an important ingredient in successful economic development, the subject of democracy is not discussed elsewhere although it is a major theme and appears in the title of the book. It would have been instructive for example, to provide an analysis of the impact of brutal slaughter of human beings in Tiananmen Square in 1989 to protect a totalitarian regime. One major element of change in the political geography of the world economy is the rising profile of China and, Wang points out (p. 184) that China is emerging as a potential leading economic power in the world. But this is being achieved in an anti-democratic atmosphere. This raises the question that the book ignores to address, that is, to what extent has totalitarianism contributed to economic success in China?

There are a few omissions and typos that are common to most books. For example, on page 29 Table 7.3 is written instead of Table 3.7 and on page 94, Table 7.2 is rendered as Table 2. He and Chen (1997-8) and Fan and Huang (1998) are mentioned on pages 30 and 31 respectively, but are not included in the references. On page 109 we read “ The 1960s saw a rapid increase in the youth population ” but on page 111 “Later, as the baby boom gave way to a renewed baby bust in the 1960s”. In spite of these minor errors, the book provides leads for research by Third World scholars.

References

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Planning Canadian Regions. 2001, xiv, pp. 473. Gerald Hodge and Ira Robinson. Vancouver: UBC Press, ISBN 0-7748-0850-0

This volume represents an immense undertaking, a labour of commitment, and a reflection of an entire lifetime of research and professional practice by two of Canada's most prominent planners. The authors trace the origins and history of regional planning from its roots in the utopian and regionalism movements of over a century ago to its current state as a pragmatic form of territorial housekeeping. I would have added another chapter on the recent decline of regional planning on the mantle of economic efficiency, local self-interest and political expediency.

The main body of this thick text is divided in eleven chapters grouped in four parts. The first part is focused on the intellectual and practical foundations of regional planning; part two is concerned with planning in rural and non-metropolitan regions; part three with planning (and governance) in urban-based regions; followed by a concluding section on the need for and future shape of regional planning. The content is detailed, the approach methodical but readable, and the coverage is extremely broad. Regional planning is defined here to encompass not only the urban and rural dimensions but resource and conservation planning and regional economic development. Examples are carefully drawn from across these domains and from different regions of the country.

By far the longest and most impressive chapters are those on planning in metropolitan areas (Chapter 8) and city-regions (Chapter 9); the shortest and certainly the weakest chapter is that on regional economic development (Chapter 5). This apparent imbalance is not unexpected given the traditional (i.e. British) view of regional planning and the background experience of the authors. But it also raises the question of whether top-down regional economic development initiatives for lagging regions, driven as they are by macro-economic conditions and concerns over depopulation and regional income inequalities, should count as regional planning. Or are such programs better viewed as regional policy, as components of equalization agreements, or more accurately perhaps as regional politics.

There have been few similar overviews of regional planning in Canada precisely because the concept of regional planning is so elastic and the definition of the region so fuzzy, and because of the scale and complexity of the task. In some instances, the appropriate spatial definition of the region is relatively clear, such as in watershed-based conservation planning, or in the use of commuter-sheds as the basis for metropolitan planning. In other instances, such as regional economic development, or in the field of social policy, the most suitable regions are far from obvious. To add further complexity, planning in its conventional sense is primarily a provincial/territorial responsibility in Canada, which means there are thirteen more-or-less different systems, and a very large number of urban and sub-provincial systems. There is no Canadian planning system as such, although as Hodge and Robinson document, there are common principles, themes and practices.

What of the future of regional planning? The authors, not surprisingly, remain firmly committed to the field and optimistic, but they are anything but naive. They recognize the constraints, but also the challenges and opportunities. They even

offer an outline of a new paradigm shift that moves regional planning towards more strategic, integrated, diverse, consensus-based, facilitating and transparent practices. Their concluding touchstone, to extend the conventional logo, is to “think globally, act locally, but plan regionally”.

My principal criticisms of the volume are two-fold. The text is often dull and repetitive, and at times reads like a combination planning manual and a standard policy document. Second, it is relatively short on context – how Canada, its economy, population and institutions were changing – and on critical analyses of the realities that both underscore and overwhelm planning practice – namely politics, financial imperatives and the prominence of private over collective interests. Why is the logic of regional planning so strong and its rationale so obvious yet the reality is so weak and ineffectual? The authors offer some clues but not as many as I might have wished for or expected.

Nevertheless, this volume is a classic. It will serve as the standard reference source for students of planning for years to come. The authors are to be congratulated.

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Too Small to See, Too Big to Ignore: Child Health and Well-being in British Columbia. 2002. M.V. Hayes and L.T. Foster. Canadian Western Geographical Series Volume 35. Western Geographical Press, Department of Geography, University of Victoria, BC, Canada.

This collection of essays takes a multi-disciplinary perspective on the issues raised by child poverty and inequalities in health well-being among children, particularly in the Canadian Province of British Columbia. The emphasis is particularly on evidence of the relationships between aspects of socio-economic disadvantage and children's well-being, and on policies and interventions that may help to alleviate child poverty and disadvantage in terms of health and well-being. Diverse topics are covered, including children's rights, sudden infant death syndrome, children in care of social services, factors that are important for well-being in the very early years and in adolescence. The Epilogue argues that this publication coincides with a period when government fiscal and legal support for children and families on low incomes are being eroded in British Columbia, and the title of this book reflects its clear intention to contribute to the policy debate. Throughout, it emphasises the huge significance of child poverty for health, and the tendency for this to be given relatively low priority in political arenas because children (especially of poor families) do not have a powerful political voice.

This book will be of interest and concern for a range of child health and welfare professionals and it seems to be primarily written to present evidence that is most relevant from this professional perspective. There is a good deal of emphasis on questions of the priorities for policy and practice in child protection and child welfare services, and plenty of discussion of 'what works' in terms of useful evidence and guidelines for good practice. The focus is primarily on conditions in British Columbia, but some of the general principles and issues discussed will have wider national or international relevance and some comparisons are made between British Columbia and other parts of the world, especially in a chapter by Cook on international debates over the rights of children.

This book can also be considered in relation to geographical research which seeks to describe and explain the experiences children and the nature of childhood (e.g. Matthews 1992). Such research often highlights the differences between experiences of young people as compared with adults. From this point of view, for example, the chapter by Tonkin and Murphy, reporting results from a survey of adolescent health-related behaviour is interesting for the insights it provides into the lifestyles and perceptions of young people.

From the standpoint of Geography and Regional Science, the interest of this book lies especially in the parts of the discussion that relate to the significance of the social and physical environment for children's health and wellbeing, and how their environment interacts with their individual characteristics. Although this is not very explicitly stated in the book, such an emphasis is consistent with much of the recent discussion in health geography that has explored the relationship between the social and physical landscape and health inequality (e.g. Curtis 2004), and which argues that the social and physical attributes of places are important for life chances and health differences as well as the individual differences in risk

factors (e.g. Kearns 1993). For example, the chapter by Cook discusses the idea of an *ecology* of children's well-being, which conceptualises the child within a hierarchy of social networks ranging from the immediate social environment of family and peers, through local neighbourhood conditions, to the context in the wider society. Issues of children's wellbeing and protection of the most vulnerable children are viewed within a broader social framework of processes of social exclusion and unequal wealth, which can exacerbate the effects of disadvantage. Also, the 'buffering' effects of the social context are discussed, as these may help to protect vulnerable children from the risks to health and welfare that they face due to poverty and deprivation. Guralnick's chapter on early intervention emphasises the family context and the significance of potential stressors which impact on the parenting role of the family. Resource supports, social supports and information and services are contextual factors which impact on these family level processes. Michalski's chapter analyses the relationship between family stress, healthy family functioning and attachment to labour markets, which again illustrates the importance of the interrelationships between families and wider socio-economic structures. Taking a dynamic perspective on these contextual factors, the chapter by Foster and Wright examines trends over time in the numbers of children in care in relation to socio-economic trends and changes to income assistance. Some of the chapters also review in detail the importance of particular policies and professional practices that could also be considered as illustrations of how health and social service systems impact on individual child health and well-being.

The chapters are comprehensively referenced and overall this will provide a very useful source for geographers and regional scientists interested in the geography of childhood and of child health and well-being.

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