

Reviews/Comptes rendus

L'urbain. Un enjeu environnemental. 2004, 223 pages. Michel Boisvert (dir.). Québec : Presses de l'Université du Québec. ISBN : 2-7605-1314-9. 39,00\$ (en ligne : 35,10\$).

Pour un chercheur et politologue intéressé par le champ des études urbaines, le titre de ce livre – *L'urbain. Un enjeu environnemental* -- apparaissait prometteur. La question environnementale est de plus en plus débattue dans l'étude des phénomènes sociaux et politiques et elle devient presque incontournable dans notre compréhension des enjeux qui travaillent les agglomérations urbaines contemporaines. Le titre retenu donnait à penser que ce collectif se voulait une contribution, ou peut être une synthèse, de ces débats.

Le regard porté sur la double question de l'environnement et de l'urbain est beaucoup plus pointu, c'est-à-dire à travers la lentille des professionnels de l'aménagement du territoire (urbanistes, planificateurs et aménagistes). Cela veut dire que l'accent est largement mis sur l'analyse et la critique des outils et des approches que mobilisent ces professionnels afin de mieux intégrer l'impératif environnemental à la ville. Ce grand objectif qui est celui de réfléchir sur les outils de la pratique des professionnels de l'urbain transparaît notamment au niveau des thématiques retenues pour les trois grandes sections constituant le livre : une première section est consacrée à l'évaluation des risques environnementaux, une seconde aux études d'impacts environnementaux et une troisième à l'aménagement régional et les paysages urbains.

Ce regard porté par et pour les praticiens ne manque évidemment pas d'intérêt pour les études urbaines, notamment parce qu'elle permet de mettre en lumière les préoccupations qui anime ces champs de pratique. De surcroît, les auteurs de ce livre abordent un certain nombre de questions qui rejoignent des préoccupations chères aux chercheurs des sciences sociales. Ces questions – par exemple le développement durable, la participation des citoyens dans les décisions concernant la ville, la préservation des forêts urbaines (Sénécal et Saint-Laurent) -- sont en quelque sorte des questions que je qualifierais « de société » parce qu'elle déborde les cadres des débats strictement internes au niveau de l'opérationnalisation de la pratique professionnelle.

Cependant les points de vue exprimés le sont souvent dans un langage passablement différent de celui auquel je suis habitué. Un langage souvent plus technique, bien que pas dénué de préoccupations politiques ou éthiques (Guay) parce que propre au monde des urbanistes ou encore des aménagistes. Pour cette raison, la lecture de ce livre m'a parfois été assez difficile. Si certains textes de cet

ouvrage ont tout de suite capté mon intérêt justement parce qu'ils faisaient admirablement ces liens entre les préoccupations opérationnelles de la pratique professionnelle et les enjeux plus lourdes « de société ». C'est assurément le cas du texte de Marie-Josée Fortin sur la question paysagère même si de façon un peu curieuse il ne porte pas sur l'urbain mais plutôt sur le régional. D'autres me sont apparus beaucoup plus hermétiques montrant ainsi la difficulté inhérente d'établir le nécessaire dialogue entre la pratique et la recherche plus fondamentale.

En somme, l'intérêt de ce livre pour moi a été de découvrir avec tous les difficultés que cela a pu m'occasionner le monde des professionnels du territoire urbain. La lecture permet de voir comment celui-ci est fortement interpellé et probablement secoué par la question environnementale. Comme ce fut le cas ailleurs, la montée des problématiques environnementales a lourdement contribué à semer le doute au niveau des certitudes de la pratique professionnelle. Plusieurs des textes que l'on retrouve dans ce collectif (mais pas tous) ont le mérite de laisser entrevoir ce doute et de proposer en filigrane une réflexion très actuelle sur les conditions d'une pratique aménagiste moins sûre d'elle et plus ouverte sur la pluralité des points de vue sur la ville. En délaissant quelque peu la position de l'expert qu'ont souvent occupé les professionnels du territoire, ces textes nous montrent encore une fois, comme le font valoir avec raison certains écologistes, que la réconciliation entre l'environnement et le développement (soit-il urbain) souhaité par le discours du développement durable ne va pas sans entraîner une réflexion et des choix d'ordre politiques plutôt que de nature purement et uniquement technique.

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Clusters Old and New: The Transition to a Knowledge Economy in Canada's Regions. 2003, 238 pages. David A. Wolfe (editor). Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's Press. ISBN: 0-88911-959-7 (paper: \$24.95); 0-8811-961-9 (cloth: \$65.00).

This volume covers a topic of considerable interest to regional scientists. In recent decades, many economic development authorities and business communities in Canada and elsewhere have occupied themselves with the idea that they might create the next "Silicon Valley". (Miller and Côté (1987) provide a classic example of this thinking). "Silicon Prairie", "Silicon Valley North", "Telecom Corridor" and other regional clusters represent attempts to duplicate the success of the San Francisco Bay Area. The clustering of even a few knowledge economy firms in a region inevitably draws local comparisons to better-known counterparts elsewhere, with the hope that someday the region might also have the status of San Jose or Boston. However, the important question that regional scientists need to address is whether or not such a knowledge economy strategy can work for communities in Canada. This book contributes to the discussion by examining regional industrial clusters and their place in the development of the Canadian economy. The book is based on the work of the Innovation Systems Research Network (ISRN), a research group focused on innovation activity in metropolitan and non-metropolitan regions of the country. In the words of the editor, the aim of the project reflected in the book is to "determine how the formation and growth of industry clusters contribute to economic development and long-run prosperity within a set of regions across Canada" (page ix). On the whole, this volume represents an important contribution toward this goal.

The book itself consists of eight separate contributions from researchers representing a wide range of backgrounds. This diversity in viewpoint and expertise is one of the strengths of this text. The first chapter, by Wolfe (a political scientist) and Gertler (a geographer), exemplifies the value of this approach. The chapter sets the context for the book by surveying current methodologies to analyze cluster development, drawing on work from several disciplines. The chapter also presents key themes emerging from the literature and supplies a synthesis of initial findings of the ISRN's current national study. Since cluster development is such a complex topic, this synthesis of findings provides a valuable contribution to the literature by giving a focus for future research to draw upon. The discussion of emerging cluster models ("regionally embedded and anchored" and "entrepôt") and discussion of key cluster indicators are particularly useful in this regard.

The second chapter by Warrian and Mulhern concentrates specifically on Ontario's steel industry. This study challenges some stereotypical views on the nature of clusters and the "new economy" by connecting cluster studies with steelmaking, an integral component of the "old economy". Warrian and Mulhern survey the corporate and institutional landscape of steelmaking in Ontario, highlighting the contributions that government and the universities and

colleges of the province have made to helping Algoma, Dofasco, and Stelco adopt new technologies and processes as these firms have completed their transition to the new steel economy.

Cooke's chapter is one of two in the book that deal with common issues related to clusters and not specifically with the development of a particular regional cluster. Cooke's discussion of regional science policy argues that research and development functions have declined among large firms, concurrent with the rise of specialty research firms. The chapter develops this further to link to the simultaneous globalization and regionalization of the knowledge economy, with regionalization driven by the growing role of regional governments worldwide. The author substantiates these findings with reference to a number of regional case studies from North America and Europe.

Ryan and Phillips provide a second chapter dealing with issues of considerable general relevance to clusters and innovation, albeit with extensive reference to the Saskatoon biotechnology cluster. Their chapter focuses on issues relating to the structure of clusters and intellectual property management. The chapter examines the interaction of actors within a local cluster, as well as cluster objectives, activities, and emphasis on knowledge types and the performance of the cluster. Saskatoon references reinforce the points the authors make.

The fifth chapter, by Davis and Schaefer, concentrates on the development of the information and communications technology (ICT) sector in New Brunswick. This makes for an interesting study because of the province's location in Canada's periphery and reliance on primary industry. The chapter provides a thorough profile of the ICT sector in the province, including firms, events in the development of the sector, and basic figures characterizing the province's ICT cluster.

Langford, Wood and Ross shift the focus west to trace the origins and structure of Calgary's wireless cluster. This regional cluster makes for good case study material because of the economic diversification that the growth of high technology represents for Calgary. The authors make it clear, however, that the needs of the oil and gas industry were a primary factor in driving the emergence of the wireless sector in Alberta. The chapter reviews the organizational context for the emergence of this cluster in Calgary. As with Warrion and Mulhern's earlier exposition of steel-making in Ontario, the chapter findings depict the importance of educational institutions and government in the local growth of the wireless industry. The discussion makes effective use of the regional innovation system concept to explain what has happened within this regional cluster.

Johnstone and Haddow's chapter documents the conditions facing the information technology (IT) sector in Cape Breton. This study examines the limitations implicit in the region's industrial history, describes the present situation in Cape Breton, and illustrates the growth of an IT agglomeration on the island. The authors' concluding identification of the region's strengths and weaknesses, as well as ongoing research questions, are of particular value.

The final chapter deals with one of Canada's best-known technology clusters, Ottawa. Chamberlin and de la Mothe summarize the history of develop-

ment in Ottawa's technology sector, focusing on firms (such as Nortel), government agencies (such as the federal Communications Research Centre), and dominant local educational institutions (the two local universities and Algonquin College). The chapter proceeds from the historical overview to analyze survey results from individuals with technology firms in Ottawa, concluding with a discussion of firm management within the cluster and an indication of future work aimed at cross-cluster analysis involving clusters in Calgary and southern Ontario.

Overall, this volume provides an interesting range of perspectives and ideas relating to cluster development and the role of clusters within regional economies. The various contributions should make for good reading for researchers in Canada and abroad who are interested in cluster development. The subject area is of importance both in terms of current academic research and real-world application on the part of firms, business groups, and economic development authorities. The book is probably best read as a progress report and not as a definitive statement on cluster development, but that appears to be exactly what the editor and authors have intended. My major disappointment with this text, a minor objection in comparison to the fine conceptual work represented here, is the relative lack of attention paid to graphics for effective communication. For example, I find it regrettable that the only geographic map included in the entire volume is the map of Canada on the front cover. Location is an important factor in cluster development, and it would have been useful to see that reality reflected through meaningful maps somewhere in this book. In addition, some of the charts that are included in the text make good points, but only on close inspection. However, these are relatively trivial objections compared to the overall contribution of the book. Presentation-related points aside, "Clusters Old and New" is an important and thought-provoking volume that deserves attention both among regional science academics and the broader economic development community.

Reference

- Miller, R. and Côté M. 1987. *Growing the Next Silicon Valley*. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.

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