BOOK REVIEWS

Paul STOUTEN, *Changing Contexts in Urban Regeneration. 30 Years of Modernisation in Rotterdam*, Techne Press, Amsterdam 2010, 247 pp.

It would be impossible to understand the 19th and 20th century socio-economic development of Western Europe without cities. However, for several decades following industrial revolution western societies became fascinated with anti-urban trends, to call only the most famous utopias of Ebenezer Howard, Frank Lloyd Wright and LeCorbusier. Soon they realised, though, that urban decline means also socio-economic decline, and in the course of post-war welfare state strategy the first urban renewal initiatives were undertaken. But the late 20th century processes such as globalisation, deindustrialisation and informatisation have rapidly changed the context in which cities are embedded, so that urban policies had to adapt to these new circumstances. The book of Paul Stouten shows how the process of urban renewal (or later: urban regeneration) evolved in the period since 1970s.

The book comprises nine chapters, which can be divided into two parts. The first four chapters discuss the theoretical, historical and political context of urban regeneration. Among them, especially interesting from a policy-oriented point of view is the third chapter, which presents the evolution of urban policies in the Netherlands. The other four chapters describe urban regeneration in the city of Rotterdam, and in particular in the core city district of Oude Noorden. In the last summarising chapter the question is addressed, how urban regeneration policies can be shaped in the context of sustainability.

Urban development is the not well-known face of Rotterdam, the famous harbour city. Rotterdam forms together with Amsterdam, The Hague and Utrecht the agglomeration of Randstad, one of the largest urban agglomerations of Europe. Among the cities of Randstad, Rotterdam is characterised by high unemployment rate and also high share of ethnic minorities. The history of urban renewal in Rotterdam dates back to the 1970s, and, according to Stouten's words 'Rotterdam's approach to urban renewal became an example for other cities in the Netherlands and elsewhere in Europe' (p. 223). Powerful protests against decline and demolition of old districts can be seen as one of the reasons underlying participatory urban renewal policies.

How can the title *Changing Contexts…* be understood? Stouten makes a distinction between two different periods of urban policy in the Netherlands. In the first period (from the 1970s to 1993) preference was given to the public sector, for example special rights were introduced to facilitate the purchase of dwellings by the municipality. In the

following years the approach has become more market-oriented, what at least in part can be traced back to the general trend towards liberalisation of public services. Another difference is the fact, that in the course of time the focus shifted from neighbourhood-scale interventions based mainly on physical improvements, to integrated urban and regional scale strategies, which include also strong socio-economic aspects. For that reasons, the first approach is called urban renewal, and the latter – following the definition of Roberts (2000) – urban regeneration.

There are many controversies about the results of urban renewal driven by the public sector. As the author states 'politicians and social scientists have tended to ignore the positive results achieved by urban renewal' (p. 223). He admits that 'seen from a sustainability point of view, "building for the neighbourhood" strategies (the kind of Dutch urban renewal policy – A. R.) cannot, in hindsight, be classified in all its aspects as sustainable development' (p. 224). In particular, some socio-economic problems, such as unemployment and dependency on social transfers, have not been solved by urban renewal. Indeed, such problems cannot be solved merely by small-scale urban renewal actions, because their reasons are structural. Also, in the course of time new problems occurred, for example related to the integration of ethnic minorities. Not disregarding all these issues, Stouten arguments that urban renewal led to significant improvements in housing and living conditions in many deprived neighbourhoods.

The author seems to be sceptical towards the trend of far-reaching liberalisation, and suggests that the goals and instruments of urban policy should be redefined. Stouten sees the broad concept of sustainability, including environmental, social and economic dimensions, as a useful framework, although, as he remarks, this concept is often understood in a narrow sense. It is an interesting observation of the author, and I would add to this from my own perspective that the term 'sustainability' became a 'trendy' word and tends to be used inadequately, in situations which do not exactly meet, or even contradict the original idea. On the other hand, some scepticism arose about the question, how and when sustainability in general, and urban sustainability in particular can be achieved. To shatter these doubts, the author provides a set of criteria of urban sustainability, which are based on the literature, and applies some of these criteria, mostly the social ones, to the evaluation of urban regeneration in Oude Norden area (chapter 8). The results of this evaluation are generally positive, though some critical statements are made, and policy recommendations are given.

The book of Paul Stouten not only gives an interesting overview of urban regeneration processes in Rotterdam, but also sets these processes in a broader theoretical and political context, and provides arguments for the thesis, that we still need to look for new ways to strenghten the role of cities, but the experience of the past should not be disregarded. A more flexible and integrated approach to urban regeneration is necessary, which includes 'typical' urban renewal measures, but is not restricted to them. For that reason, the book is recommendable for scholars, students and practitioners interested in urban regeneration and urban sustainability, also, or even especially, in the countries which do not have yet much experience in this field, for example in post-socialist states of Central and Eastern Europe.

REFERENCE

ROBERTS, P. (2000), 'The Evolution, Definition and Purpose of Urban Regeneration', [in:] ROBERTS, P. and SYKES, H. (eds), *Urban Regeneration: A Handbook*, London–Thousand Oaks–New Delhi: Sage, pp. 9–37.

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Louise JOHNSON, *Cultural Capitals: Revaluing the Arts, Remaking Urban Spaces*, Ashgate, Aldershot 2009, 282 pp.

Inspired by the consultancy work of Charles Landry and Richard Florida, a growing number of city authorities around the world has invested in culture and creativity, varying from arts and festivals to music and design. Notably old industrial cities looking for a new economic future have been seduced by this creative city philosophy. Public investments in the city's creative and culture industries are viewed as a useful method to attract tourists, generate jobs and improve the overall image. By way of example, think of the cities of Lille (France), Newcastle (UK) and Essen (Germany). These former smoke stack cities are now well-known for their new combinations of industrial heritage and modern culture. But how sustainable are such local cultural investments really? And which role can they play in the regeneration of cities that often cope with a multitude of problems? These are the questions that Louise Johnson deals with in her well-written and profound monograph. The author goes beyond the consultancy rethoric and tries to unpack how culture and creativity can contribute to urban regeneration.

Obviously, it is not easy to analyse culture and creativity in an urban context. To be sure, this field of study is fascinating, but it suffers from a lack of conceptual clarity. Therefore, Johnson needs the first three chapters of the book to sketch her approach. As a starting point for the analysis she introduces the term 'cultural capital', that is 'a city which has recently and consciously made the arts (and often Cultural Industries) central to its society, economy, urban form and place identity' (p. 6). To evaluate the value of the arts for urban regeneration, Johnson decides to employ a broad notion of 'sustainability', referring to the ideal of economic development with ecological preservation, social equity and political engagement. In the author's framework on the sustainability of cultural capitals (chapter 2) insights from cultural economics, cultural tourism, sociology and cultural geography are integrated and subsequently connected to Pierre Bourdieu's rather complicated formulation of 'cultural capital'. After this theoretical background, Johnson describes in chapter 3 why Cultural Capitals have emerged at particular locations and times. Here, several structural trends are discussed, like the shift from manufacturing to services, the emergence of information technology and the cultural industries and the recent growth of post-modernity, the symbolic economy and urban entrepreneurialism. Why this chapter follows after Johnson's analytical framework is not quite clear, but at the same time it offers a smooth transition from theory to practice.

The empirical part of the book consists of four chapters, each discussing a detailed case study of one single Cultural Capital. The first two case descriptions are on Glasgow (chapter 4) and Bilbao (chapter 5). Unlike these 'usual suspects' in the creative city literature, the other two cases, discussing Singapore (chapter 6) and Geelong (chapter 7), will be less familiar for most readers. Starting with Glasgow, Johnson vividly describes the successful bid of the Scottish city to become European City of Culture (1990) by making use of its local cultural capital. She shows how cultural tourism and marketing around local hero Makintosh fostered the development of Glasgow's design industry. Like Glasgow, Bilbao has been an industrial city with social polarisation and urban decay. Here, however, the local government chose for an exogenous revitalisation strategy: global architect Gehry was hired to build the Guggenheim Museum, which was followed by the erection of other 'starchitecture' that should contribute to the brand of Bilbao as a 'Post-modern City of Spectacle'. In Singapore, the revaluation of the arts must been seen in the context of the nation's post-colonial history and modernisation strategy. For instance, the building of the local Esplanade-Theaters alongside the reconstruction of ethnic heritage enclaves (e.g. Chinatown) were not just meant to attract more tourists – the investments should also enhance Singapore's attractiveness as a location for multinational corporations. The last case study deals with Geelong, a regional city in Australia, located in the vicinity of Melbourne. This is the most interesting case in the book, since it demonstrates how the construction of major international infrastructures for the arts (e.g. galleries, performance spaces and waterfront development) still can be combined with the need to drawing the local's art community in.

In the last chapter Johnson searches for the common thread in the four case studies. She optimistically concludes: 'This book documents a geography of hope… While not all examples provide stories of triumph, in general Cultural Capitals have been associated with re-valuing the creative arts and sustainable regeneration' (p. 235). At the same time, Johnson recognises that the economic effects of creative city strategies are mostly larger than the social and physical effects. In Glasgow's neighbourhoods, for example, there are still social disadvantages and high levels of poverty, which puts the sustainability of the city's global Cultural Capital agenda in a questionable perspective. Apparently, to succeed city authorities must try to find a connection between the high hopes of global culture and the local facts of life. In other words: the city's 'global pipelines' must be linked with the 'local buzz'. This is a useful policy lesson, which makes it even more sad to say that there are some inaccuracies in the book. For example, the back flap refers to a non-existing fifth case study from the US, while the book's overview in the introductory chapter is not correct. And why do the pictures of the four case study cities still show the date at which the author has taken them? More generally, there is a lot of repetition and overlap in the book: similar preludes, arguments and conclusions are presented again and again. This does not alter the fact that the overall quality of the book is high. Especially the case studies on Glasgow, Bilbao, Singapore and Geelong provide a lot of inspiration for researchers and practitioners who are interested in creative cities. As such, Johnson's book is a valuable contribution to the growing literature in this field and certainly deserves a wide read.

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Branislav BLEHA (ed.), *Population Development at the Turn of the Century: Continuity or a New Era?* **Geografika, Bratislava 2009, 336 pp.**

Study of population development problems is considerably broad in scope. This monograph endeavours to take a possibly broadest view of this issue in the specific context of Slovakia.

The results of the analyses indicate that the intensive quantitative changes such as decrease of total fertility rate, dynamics of mortality rates decrease, etc., are just outer signs of deep qualitative changes within Slovak society. These changes are reflected in all demographic processes and structures. The situation of the population is changing, and so are the attitudes towards reproduction. The authors presume that demographic changes have influenced and will continue to influence other processes in society and *vice versa*. Such presumptions increase the importance of demographical research and point to the necessity of joint research in the field of social sciences. The classic approaches needed for complex evaluation of such changes will not be sufficient. Demography, population geography and populations studies represent and will represent an elementary basis for population development research.

The main aim of this book is to familiarize the readers with characteristics of demographic development in Slovakia since the great political change in 1989. The collection of 15 contributions analyses the broad area of demographic development and structure as well as various closely related topics. They are grouped into four chapters. Chapter one introduces the topic of demographic reproduction and family behaviour, dealt with in four papers. Chapter two (4 papers) is focused on demographical structures in space and time. Chapter three (5 papers) provides interesting material on various consequences of demographic development, such as application of a model of demographic potential, international labour migration, processes of urbanization and suburbanization and the regional structure of the Slovak Republic. The final chapter (two contributions) is concentrated on population policy and further population development in Slovakia.

It is not easy to give an answer to the question in the title of the monograph. There is no doubt that demographic development at the end of the ,socialist‘ period deviated from the ,expected‘ trajectory. This proves the universality of demographic development. The changes after 1989 were wholly natural, or represented ,return‘ to the natural development. Convergence of the characteristics and intensity of some of the processes with western European trends after 1989 proves that opinion. Post-socialist changes mark a new era in demographic development of Slovakia. They can be partly considered as the continuity of development that would have taken place if there had not been a 40-year period of socialism. If the population of Slovakia had during the last five decades developed in western European circumstances, there would be no evident differences between Slovakia and western European populations in respect of reproduction. On the other hand, some specific characteristics such as a high level of declared religiosity or ethnic diversity would remain preserved.

Which scenario will follow? There is general agreement that population development in Europe will converge. Such prediction is supported by some figures and a number of demographic theories. Nevertheless, structural peculiarities of the population of Slovakia, which are described in this monograph, seem to suggest that the convergence will be rather slow and partial, although the subpopulations of Slovakia might reach a high

degree of uniformity. Such processes should be reflected in the spatial dimension, which represents the basis for regional forecasts. It can be expected that population implosion is inevitable, even in the circumstances of Slovakia and its population.

In sum, this book is an interesting addition to the very important area of population development, structure and various related topics reflected in a central European country in the context of major political changes.

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Ann BERGENE, Sylvi ENDRESEN and Hege KNUTSEN (eds), *Missing Links in Labour Geography*, Ashgate, Aldershot 2010, 246 pp.

Missing Links in Labour Geography incorporates an effective variety of case studies and novel contributions from the field's contemporaries which challenge some of the 1990s style presumptions in labour geography and, with time, will inevitable push the area of research forward. Following the editor's introductory chapter, Andrew Herod neatly identifies five significant issues that need to be 'dealt with' in labour geography. Beginning with a concise and accurate history of where labour geography *has been*, Herod compiles a list of the contemporary lacunae within the field, laying the foundations for where labour geography *should go*. The subsequent fifteen chapters grapple with these issues and introduce new and often enlightening ways of thinking about them. The first gap to which Herod draws our attention is the need to broaden labour geography's ambit to include analysis from both non-capitalist and non-industrial societies. Secondly, he encourages a deeper understanding of workers lives outside purely economic terms (see chapters 5 and 6). Thirdly, he promotes the need to move beyond the world of capital 'L' labour and develop a wider conception of working class people as geographical agents (see chapter 9). Fourthly, Herod argues that there has been 'a general ignoring of the state' and consequently labour geography needs to include a greater consideration of how the state evolves as a spatial actor (see chapters 10, 11, 12 and 13). And finally, Herod identifies the need to explore the concept of agency in a more nuanced manner (see chapters 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 13). Overall, the volume aims to use an exploration of grand theory to shed light on these issues and many of the chapters achieve this objective.

The third and fourth chapters repeat the chronology of labour geography recounted in the first two chapters which saps some of the initial momentum from the book. Nevertheless, Cumbers and Routledge (chapter 4) provide a worthy analysis of trans-national labour solidarity explored through the International Chemical, Mining, and General Workers Federation. The authors promote decentred forms of organisation and add a critical perspective to the theories and ideas of prominent scholars such as Jane Wills, Barry Carr and Alisa DiCaprio. The diversity of research within the book is demonstrated in chapters 5 and 6, though both Ryland (chapter 5) and Bergene (chapter 6) maintain that worker's identities and their perception of other workers can form barriers

to labour trans-nationalism, the two raise very different concerns. Whereas Ryland highlights the disparities between international workers and the need to develop trans-national connections, Bergene argues that the social division between union leaders and 'rank and file' members comprise some of the biggest issues facing union trans-nationalism.

The classic geographical dilemma of scale and conflicting political goals amongst organisations which function at different geographical levels is dealt with by Tufts (chapter 7) and Knutsen and Hansson (chapter 12) both of whom employ a 'healthy scepticism' towards the topic which is somewhat lacking until this point. Although Tufts' chapter is well informed by empirical examples from community action in Canada, it may have benefitted from an acknowledgement of the current economic crisis in order to place labour geography into mainstream geopolitical theory.

Indeed, it is not until we reach Andrae and Beckman's apt analysis of the increase in informal labour in the Nigerian textile industry in chapter 9, that the book addresses the economic downturn of 2007–2010. This raises perhaps a more pressing 'missing link' in labour geography; the need for unions to adapt their tactics in the face of economic recession, a theme which is somewhat underrepresented in the book. The most pertinent effort to address the 'increasingly turbulent economic environment' is Taylor and Bryson's chapter in which they analyse the manufacturing sector in the West Midlands. Pleasingly, the impacts of the economic downturn are central to their analysis rather than a supplementary addition. Following this, chapter 15 seems to take a step back in time as Beerepoot revisits the familiar topic of globalisation through a case study of labour market segmentation in the Philippians. In chapter 16 Endresen, though providing an interesting account of labour hire agencies and temporary workers in Namibia, seems to miss much of what has already been discussed in the work of authors such as Chris Benner, Jane Wills and Gosta Esping-Anderson. Although rich with empirical evidence the extent to which this chapter enhances theory on precarious employment is questionable, the result is unfortunately a below par conclusion to the volume.

In sum, the book is undoubtedly a positive addition to the field of labour geography. The geographically diverse range of case studies which include: Canada, China, England, Namibia, Nigeria, the Philippines and Vietnam, add an invaluable integrity to the theoretical discussions. The book is accessible to anyone with a basic knowledge of labour geography, and for those who are less familiar, the first two chapters provide an effective introduction. A major strength of the book is the chapters by Cumbers and Routledge, Ryland, Bergene and Tufts which succeed in the difficult task of providing new insights into the increasingly popular theme of labour trans-nationalism. In regards to the overall shape of the book, the chapters are well edited and structured and the conclusion does a good job of drawing the chapters together. One of the most noticeable weaknesses of the edition is the lack of reference to the current economic crisis and its implications for the future of labour geography. In conclusion, the book provides a suitably varied approach within the field, producing as many 'missing links' as it overcomes, creating new avenues for future research and discussion.

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