

BOOK REVIEWS

Mariusz CZEPCZYŃSKI, *Cultural Landscapes of Post-socialist Cities: Representation of Power and Needs*, Ashgate, Aldershot 2008, 209 pp.

For both inhabitants and visitors, the spatial changes in cities in Central Europe and the other former communist countries have not passed unnoticed, and now, about two decades after the collapse of state socialism, Mariusz Czepczyński's book is a timely contribution taking a much needed overarching view, with plenty of empirical examples and details enriching the presentation, on the post-Second World War development of the cultural landscapes in Central European cities.

The main purpose of Czepczyński's study is to present the transformation of the post-socialist urban landscapes and to provide a structuring of the 'practices and procedures of landscape transformations in Central Europe' – a region including Poland, the eastern part of Germany, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria. Empirically the study is based on field trips in the region in 2005, 2006 and 2007 involving observations, photographic documentation, interviews, and conversations, as well as a broad range of material such as written accounts, web pages, leaflets etc. In cases of Romania and Hungary the author relies on translated material.

Apart from six chapters and an introduction, the book includes 26 'boxes', interspersed in the main text, each devoted to a particular city, district, building or another characteristic urban phenomenon. The study is illustrated with one map of Central Europe, and 44 black-and-white photographs, mainly of buildings, but also of urban scenery, monuments or works of art. At the end of the book are a 17-page long reference list, and an index.

The book is logically structured, beginning with an introduction that outlines the study and discusses some methodological points. Chapters 1 and 2 are theoretically oriented stressing the landscape relations of form, function and meaning. In the first chapter the discussion is concerned with landscape research approaches and methodology in the overall development of both the 'old' and the 'new' cultural geography as a scientific discipline, and in the second the focus is on landscape as a representational system, dealing also with power, history, heritage and memory.

In the empirical chapters of the book we get to follow the development of the cultural landscapes of cities in Central Europe from just after the Second World War until today. The focus of the analyses is on the physical structures, their form and function, and aspects of their iconographic qualities and meanings. In chapter 3 are discussed the peculiarities of the socialist city, and in chapter 4 – the processes of 'post-communist

landscape cleansing'. Chapter 5 deals with cities after socialism and the kind of urban cultural landscape features that were created and mark the space in what is sometimes called the New Europe, a deregulated space with consumption as one of its lead principles. This chapter also makes some important points regarding ethnic minorities (i.e. Romanians) and others who lost out in these processes – 'the old, the sick, the less entrepreneurial and the passive' – and related landscapes of the excluded. In chapter 6, Czepczyński summarises the findings; the following quotation is illustrative for the current state of the landscapes in the region. He writes that the landscapes are 'not socialist any more, but still not truly liberated from the old traumatic and totalitarian burdens, represented to a great extent through the situation of regional societies, sandwiched in between things they want to remember, and things they would be happy to forget'.

However, although the book should be seen as a whole I would like to draw attention to the analysis and interpretation in chapter 4, in which this 'sandwich' position is analysed in more detail. Here Czepczyński uses anthropologist Victor Turner's concept of liminality to understand what happened with the socialist cultural urban landscape when socialist society was no more. Czepczyński argues that the years following the breakdown of the socialist regimes, the mimetic meanings attached to socialist landscape referents were 'separated and eliminated' – as illustrated by statues and monuments being torn down or moved to peripheral locations, socialist icons and symbols being taken away from the urban scene, and even some houses loaded with socialist meaning being demolished. Moreover, many of the meaning of the ordinary landscape referents of everyday life were also allowed to slip into oblivion and thus their once symbolic force was forgotten. However, some of the socialist referents became objects for discussion as their mimetic meaning became contested and unclear, and Czepczyński argues that this includes a 'transition of intention' of the meanings of the buildings, statues etc.

A concrete example of this described by Czepczyński is the Soviet Union's 'gift' of the Palace of Culture and Science to the Polish nation, a Stalin-type 'wedding-cake-like' skyscraper placed in the centre of Warsaw. For decades this building was a symbol of Soviet oppression in Poland that, it was argued, should be torn down when the chance to do so had come. However, others argued differently and since 2007 the Palace has instead been protected and is listed as belonging to the national historic (Polish) heritage. The building has received a new meaning and has thus also reached the last of the *rites de passage* of socialist constructions, that of re-incorporation into society with a new status. According to Czepczyński, the process of re-incorporation of central Europe's socialist urban landscape have just begun, as new generations will give new meaning to what is left of the landscape referents from the socialist times, and include them in new representational systems.

The book is impressive in scope and objective and although most of it is well written, the text would have benefited if the publisher had given it a last proof reading (especially of the introduction), and checking of some of the references (which are not in the reference list). Another point for discussion is that the research process could have had a more prominent role in the text, thus telling the readers more about how the empirical research was actually carried out, including the fieldwork experiences that underlie the analyses. Nevertheless, in spite of these comments, the book's wide scope, theoretical

perspective and convincing empirical detail makes it a landmark in the study of Central European cultural urban landscapes.

To conclude, Czepczyński's work is a valuable and much needed contribution to this area of study. The book is definitely a must have for all research libraries that have an interest in urban spatial change, and its empirical and analytical qualities will be useful for researchers interested in the form, function and meaning of Central European cities and urban phenomena.

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Jiri KERN, Jan MALINOVSKÝ and Jan SUCHÁČEK (eds), *Learning Regions in Theory and Practice*, Technical University of Ostrava, Ostrava 2007, 227 pp.

Learning regions constitute the most modern and at the same time rather vague conception that strives for the explanation of economic development in space. [...] At the same time, conceptualization of learning regions remains at the negligible level, which is one of their cardinal weaknesses.

This quotation from editors' preface to the book reveals the very foundation and general idea of this publication – as a set of contributions on highly differentiated subjects, representing a wide range of problems – starting with theoretical aspects of learning as a process and relation between learning and innovation, through presentation of regional policies based upon the concept of learning regions, to the description of case studies on increasing competitiveness in high technologies sector. This makes the discussed volume a kind of review of manifold attempts to conceptualise learning regions' or to track up some of its practical implementations, rather than a monograph leading us to full comprehension of presented problems, giving unequivocal answers to all questions. The diversity of subjects connected with learning regions is also reflected by selection of authors, represented by scholars of technical, economic and humanistic faculties of Czech, Slovak, Dutch and Polish universities and other experts.

What is the learning process itself, how is knowledge transferred, how it contributes to innovations – and what is, in final effect, the learning region? These are some of the questions which are passing through this publication, and authors of particular chapters contribute in turns to give us answers – we may compare it to the building game, where each added block gives a more complete structure. It is not finished, though, even in the final chapter. One of the main difficulties is the fact that – as the editing team (Kern, Malinovský, Sucháček) points out in their opening article (chapter 1) –

[...] despite its popularity, the paradigm of learning regions remained poorly conceptualized and poorly tested in empirical studies. A poor conceptualization is also true for the development of learning regions over time. [...]. From theoretical point of view, there exist a couple of generally accepted principles but what we are still missing is bigger, consistent and solid theory.

Another problem is heterogeneous character of innovations, dependent on different socioeconomic levels of particular countries or regions, which influences variations in interpretation of the 'learning regions' notion.

These differences between countries of western democracies and transitional countries of central and eastern Europe are visible in presented articles, where scientists from the Netherlands are focusing on practice rather than on theory:

- treating the learning regions concept as a tool for policies aiming at increasing the competitiveness in particular sectors of the economy (chapter 2 – case study on national policy on new firm formation in biotechnology in the Netherlands – the Action Plan Life Sciences; Geenhuizen, Nijkamp), or

- striving for identification of barriers in policy-making for the knowledge-based economy and needs of small high-technology firms which should be addressed in knowledge policies (chapter 5 – case study in the Netherlands – small high-technology start-ups; Oerlemans, Meeus, Boekema), or

- discussing the methods of calculating the impact of a university on the regional economy (chapter 9 – case study of the University of Groningen; Pellenburg).

The last subject mentioned above – investigation on linkage between the region, its development, and education as a key factor influencing the labour market – makes a research issue also in Slovakia (chapter 8; Hudec, Kol'vekova). University is considered here as a tool in regional development by improving the stock of human capital within the region, building new alliances and partnerships among local authorities, universities, government and non-profit institutions and the private sector – negotiating in consolidation of efforts towards turning the area into a high-tech region.

The idea of learning regions is strongly connected with regional striving towards greater attractiveness and competitiveness. Knowledge and innovations are regarded as main sources of economic efficiency of towns and regions – in this light human capital and its ability to learn and to produce innovations has the most strategic importance. Since the early 1990s regions and cities have started to act as business actors who build urban vitality and competitiveness through innovations. Such trends as networking, clustering and embeddedness have manifested themselves to be crucial in local and regional development. Theory F2F (face-to-face) presented in chapter 3 by Lumir Kulhanek is one of the conceptions related to learning regions, which describes the sequence: agglomeration – proximity – interaction – interactive learning – innovations – competitiveness – agglomeration, creating an accelerating and broadening spiral.

Andrzej Klasik and Florian Kuźnik are debating in chapter 4 on building a learning region as a challenge for the regional development policy, presenting a case study of building a regional innovation system of the Slaskie Voivodeship. As the theoretical basis for their considerations they make an assumption that 'the region is a learning area because of the functioning and development of research and educational systems' and that the process of learning in region takes place at an individual, organisational and inter-organisational level. As another important element the authors point out environment, not only in regional, but also in global context, which means that region has the capability to adapt in active ways to the civilisation and cultural changes in modern world, and to participate in them effectively.

The implementation of learning regions concept into practice is legible in regional development documents, as we can see in chapter 10 by Zdenek Fischer – analysing the Development Program of Moravian-Silesian Region. Lifelong education is one of the most important tools to achieve the goals of priority field ‘Successful People’ (Education and Employment).

The learning region approach as the useful tool in explaining the origins of IT Clusters development in Małopolska and Upper Silesia is introduced in chapter 6 by Grzegorz Micek, who is also trying to identify the forms of knowledge dissemination within IT sector. It is important to note that knowledge is a short-term resource, and various actors of regional development must keep pace with accelerating changes in global economy. Contemporary economy is a knowledge-based economy, which is directly related to the development of information and communication technologies (ICT). Innovation requires multiplication of interactions between actors and growth of human capital and trust in inter-firm relationships and process of interactive learning.

Another approach to the concept of learning regions is presented in chapter 7 by Vladimir Vavrecka, representing the entrepreneurship circles of Ostrava, who proposes the learning region idea as a foundation of a new economic base of post-industrial Moravian-Silesian Region. He suggests that a new direction of economic development of the area should be supporting the education and entrepreneurship institutions shift from industrial to ‘new economy’-oriented branches with a high growth potential. Regarding particular qualities of the environment and industrial heritage of the region, tourism is proposed as a main vehicle of future regional development – considering European Travel Commission (ETC) guidelines defined in its document *Megatrends of Tourism in Europe to the Year 2005 and Beyond*.

The closing chapter by the editing team of authors (Kern, Malinovský, Sucháček) makes a kind of loop and comes back to the starting point, leading to the conclusion that neo-endogenous concepts are strictly applicable in western economies, but often not appropriate for transitional countries, which represent a different way of socioeconomic development, and whose future regional development should be addressed by non-copied, well-tailored approaches.

This book can be a useful source of knowledge for students and professionals dealing with regional and local development, providing theoretical material and interesting examples of practices, being also a starting point for reflection on the future role of learning and innovations as vehicles of contemporary economy.

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Christiana STRINGER and Richard LE HERON (eds), *Agri-food Commodity Chains and Globalizing Networks*, Ashgate, Aldershot 2008, 244 pp.

The recent peak in world food commodity prices was a forceful reminder to many consumers of the global reach, and global dependency, of our food supply systems. *Agri-Food Commodity Chains and Globalising Networks* covers within one volume the

numerous factors encapsulated within the contents of our dinner plates; economic, environmental, social, political, cultural, to name but a few. Food, purely as a traded commodity, is part of the realm of economics, but food is perhaps unique as a commodity in the cultural loading it carries; as Holloway (2002, p. 71) puts it, food is 'noisy'. Each time we consume a meal we are also, to use an often-repeated phrase, 'eating the world'; the food commodities in our local shop are a microcosm of both global space and global history. Furthermore, food and food supply are intimately linked to the state of the economy, the presence of political and press freedom, and the degree of international stability, as economists such as Amartya Sen have frequently pointed out (Ponting, 1970, p. 254).

Agri-Food Commodity Chains and Globalising Networks moves from the global down to the local; it is usefully arranged in four sections of four or five chapters each. The book opens with a detailed analysis of the South African squid industry and the ramifications of change in this sector for all parties from European consumers to the local fishing community itself. This is not simply a dry discussion of the economics or changing technology involved in this sector, although both these topics are fully covered here, but there is also a large amount of information on the social implications of global change in this line of work. The potentially divisive role of upgrading or value added in the South African squid fishing industry is explored, enhancing income for some but excluding other producers from the market altogether.

This full discussion is also replicated in chapters 3 and 4 relating to tea and other agricultural production in India and Sri Lanka. Section 2 of *Agri-Food Commodity Chains and Globalising Networks* deals with the political and environmental role of food production and supply chains. Food has acquired considerable regulatory significance for many reasons, for example environmental, consumer safety, quality, sustainable transport, brand protection, international trade balances, trade and the policies of economic blocs such as Mercosur and the EU. Using examples of a tea product from South America and a range of foods, dairy products, kiwis, wine, and fish, from New Zealand, these political and environmental issues are fully explored.

Section 3 takes the reader to an area of increasing significance in food retailing and branding; its localness, the place of origin of food and place branding. Trust and provenance are key themes here, trust in brand attributes that can be physically anchored, trust in the sustainable management of the land from which the food comes, the provenance of wine from French vineyards that has implications for tourism and the economy of small rural towns and villages. Topics covered here range from social capital and regional economic autonomy to sustainable farming and soil erosion, illustrating the wide range of disciplines upon which food supply chains and farming impinge. The final section focuses upon New Zealand, evocatively called 'the last bus stop on the planet'; despite its remoteness, even this (two-) island country has intimate global connections, as illustrated by the dairy tariff map in chapter 15 and the 'worked up grass' quote in chapter 18. Those with an interest in local British history will find resonance with the Suttons Seeds poster reproduced in this chapter, a reminder of how the economy of a once sleepy Berkshire market town was intimately linked with an island nation on the other side of the planet (but is now moulded by a different sort of globalisation).

Agri-Food Commodity Chains and Globalising Networks effectively spans the world of food production, both in terms of geography and in terms of the breadth of subjects covered here. Academics and postgraduates from a wide range of disciplines will find this book a useful reader, from agriculturalists and botanists to economists, geographers, sociologists, and political studies. Although the focus of this book is on food production rather than consumption, marketers will also find it useful, as there is considerable coverage of the attributes of food that, beyond nutrition alone, make it appealing to customers. Ethicists and those concerned at poverty reduction in the Global South should also have this volume on their shelves. This book is dense in ideas and coverage, and will also make a useful textbook for final year undergraduates contemplating further research in food and agriculture related topics, and is an essential addition to any university library.

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Jørgen Ole BÆRENHOLDT and Brynhild GRANÅS, *Mobility and Place: Enacting Northern European Peripheries*, Ashgate, Aldershot 2008, 255 pp.

Human mobility has long been at the centre of the spatial disciplines and social sciences in general. Yet the increase in global interconnectedness prompted a renewed interest in forms of (non)-human mobility and its effects on places. The continuous movement of people, objects, and ideas between distant locales was sometimes interpreted as contributing to the 'flattening' of places, namely their becoming increasingly similar. While mobility was an active force, an agent of global transformation, place was a passive landscape unto which globally induced changes were inscribed. More recent accounts within geography and mobility studies challenged this binary opposition, focusing instead on the social construction of both place and mobility and the complementary relations between them. Mobility, it has often been argued, differentiates between places and, in fact, accentuates their symbolic and material dissimilarities.

The current edited volume inserts itself into the heart of this paradigmatic debate by offering a critical approach to both place and mobility. Rather than seeing them as opposing poles, authors in this collection emphasise instead social practices that bind them together, focusing as such 'on interactions, multiplicity and constant processes of construction and negotiation' (p. 2). Drawing on Doreen Massey's social relational

approach, place is defined as unique moments of social relations and experiences, a conjunction of practices – some of which are embedded locally while others ‘are based on far larger scales and connect the place to other places’ (p. 17). Thrown together in particular times and spaces, these relations between the here and there, the near and far are mediated through mobile networks and technologies, which (re)-configure places socio-culturally, both symbolically and materially.

Most essays are concerned with the impact of various forms of mobility on construction of places in Northern Europe’s social and geographical peripheries. An introductory chapter which sets the theoretical agenda of the collection is followed by eighteen chapters clustered into three sections – *Placing Mobility*, *Connections and Encounters*, and *Mobilizing Place*. The first section offers a mix of conceptual essays and case studies which illustrate the practice-based approach to place and people’s sense of place. Social practices (networking, tourism, travelling) and the multiple ways by which they imbue peripheral places with new cultural meanings that transcend traditional dichotomies are examined. In chapter 3, for example, Mazzullo and Ignold analyse place-making practices among Sámi people in Finnish Lapland, showing how place is enacted through the continuous movement between different points in living space. For this nomadic group places do not simply exist as fixed points, but occur through back and forth movement along specific routes, which entwines them with the land. The authors conclude that for Sámi, ‘The path, not the place, is the primary condition of being, or rather of becoming’ (p. 34).

The second section contains five chapters which explore the impact of networked lives on various groups’ sense and construction of place. In a theoretical opening essay (chapter 8) Larsen and Urry sketch the profile of contemporary networked societies. Conceptualising network capital, namely ‘access to communication technologies, transport meeting places and the social and technical skills of networking’ (p. 93, italics in text), they deploy a practice-based theoretical framework that focuses on the networked nature of contemporary social life. Subsequent chapters follow through, examining a range of networking practices across distance (mobile phones, Internet) through which mobile populations stabilise and localise their own places. From the influence young African refugees’ cross-border networks have on their everyday lives and sense of place in-betweenness (chapter 9) to transnational patterns of marriage among Norwegian men and women (chapter 11), these essays exemplify the immense impact of networked life on the construction of local places.

The concluding section includes seven essays which tie together the two concepts by focusing on the politics of place enactment in Northern peripheries. Tourism (chapter 13), transport of iron and ore (chapter 15), trade fairs and the cultural industry (chapter 14), and mega events (chapter 18), including Olympic projects (chapter 19) are analyzed in light of what Amin (2004) termed the politics of propinquity and connectivity. Kraft’s essay (chapter 18), for example, engages with the literature on civic rituals and illustrates how a local concert in Tromsø, the regional center of Northern Norway has exposed a peripheral place to the world for one night, rendering it a unique, local place while simultaneously linking it to global, pan-human principles and values. Mega events, it is argued, ought to be understood as creative rituals that (re)-make place through a combination of ‘global relevance with local uniqueness’ (p. 229).

The volume makes a useful contribution to the growing literature on mobility and place. Despite noticeable theoretical redundancies (e.g., Doreen Massey's social relational approach to place is elaborated in several chapters) and the lack of a concluding section to pull together some key themes emerging from the various essays, it remains a well-balanced collection of theoretically grounded case studies. The convincing problematisation of both key concepts and the fresh outlook it offers on the uniqueness of peripheral places in an interconnected world make the book a valuable read for social and cultural geographers and others interested in the complex relations between place and mobility.

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Zbigniew STRZELECKI (ed.), *Regional and Local Economy*, PWN, Warsaw 2008.

The book *Regional and Local Economy* edited by Zbigniew Strzelecki is a well-structured handbook showing both the theoretical and the practical aspects of regional and local development. Its fundamental quality lies in a complex and interdisciplinary presentation of discussed issues, as it looks at the regional and local development from many various angles – taking into consideration the legal, spatial and financial perspectives as well as planning and marketing aspects. Furthermore, all the issues are being discussed in the context of current integration with the European Union. Due to the book's structure, which is rightly divided into three topical areas, the reader is able to easily gain knowledge in the field of regional and local economy.

The first part contains information related to theoretical rudiments of local and regional government. It also talks about legal and administrative aspects in connection to the local and regional economy functioning and competitiveness, as well as regional policy.

It is quite logical that after the theoretical basics are explained, the second part moves towards the aspects of the planning process – starting with topics such as programming, strategic planning and spatial planning, and concluding with the practical side of these issues.

The book's third part is devoted to topics in management at local and regional level. This part contains information on the basics of the management process, financial aspects of local and regional self-government, as well as marketing approach to management of the area concerned. The last subchapter deals with the European cooperation – international and cross-border – in the context of EU.

The introductory chapter 1 – *Theoretical Rudiments of Local and Regional Development*, constitutes a rich source of references to a range of factors influencing the regional and local development. Discussing the chosen issues the author presents some concepts and definitions in a detailed way. However, he frequently mentions well-known problems which perhaps do not need to be so deeply explained, and focuses on current

tendencies and ideas related to the subject matter in question. Considering the references to the newest tendencies in the field of understanding and forming the regional and local development rudiments, the reader is inspired to further expand the knowledge and to take notice of the multitude of available development conditionings. Amongst such issues are those of network economy, social capital and club goods. Concluding his deliberations the author points out the crucial role of cooperation – of social participation and partnership of all sectors, acting as a remedy for infirmities presented by markets and public power.

Chapter 4, entitled *Regional Policy*, plays a crucial role in this book, as without it the analysis of regional and local development conditionings would be impossible. Undoubtedly, the main merit of this chapter is discussion of a set of theories related to the issue of regional development, as well as concepts and definitions fundamental for the subject matter. A practical depiction of regional policy is equally important – the author presents the way in which the European Union and Poland implement the regional policy. And this is how it was possible to collate the theoretical concepts of the region development with choices of certain solutions being made in reality.

Chapter 5 – *Programming the Regional and Local Development*, which organises the issues in the field of prognostication, planning and programming, has great theoretical value. The essence of the basic concepts is being explained by way of a consistent and logical reasoning. Particularly interesting is the fragment in which the author compares the properties of market as a process regulator and of policy as an intervention mechanism; where the programming process needs to be an inherent part of a policy in order to enable the policy to fulfil its anticipatory function. The author also introduces the reader to the programming functions, highlighting the importance of this issue, both from the substantive as well as the methodological point of view. The presented arguments concern not only the theoretical aspects, but also the programming methodology, which is very important for increasing the usability of programmes being established. This section of chapter 5 undoubtedly is the biggest advantage. It talks in broad outline about the structure of development programming for territorial units, the diagnosis of certain areas for the purpose of programming, the structure of intervention objectives and areas, as well as the issues in programme implementation, often underappreciated in practice. And, just as in many other sections of this book, the author refers here to the context of the European integration.

One of the book's values is the focus on practical aspects of managing local and regional development. Chapter 8 entitled *Developmental Projects in Accordance with the EU Standards in Regional and Local Economy – The Application*, is a valuable contribution. And even though in many studies it is possible to find information on available financial resources for funding development at local and regional level, very few sources explain the methodology of applying for financial aid from the EU. As the author rightly notices the detailed solutions in this field are constantly changing, but even a general presentation of fundamental procedures and techniques used in project development in accordance with the EU cohesion policy would certainly have a high cognitive value.

Another significant issue in local and regional development financing is the one to which chapter 10 – *Regional and Local Self-government Finances*, is devoted. It contains all the crucial information relating to this matter. Showing the structure of

income and expenses of territorial self-government units enables the reader to get the picture of how self-government units finance their tasks and what kinds of projects are eligible for such financing. The author also gives an assessment of the above-mentioned structure, highlighting the positive tendencies and pointing out the disturbing ones.

As the experiences from many countries show, positive effects may be achieved through cooperation and partnership. Taking those synergic effects into consideration the European Union included territorial cooperation in the set of its cohesion policy 2007–2013 objectives. In addition to numerous references to that topic throughout the book, a part of chapter 12 – *European International and Cross-border Cooperation in Regional and Local Economy*, is devoted to this subject.

It was assumed that this book might serve as a handbook for the faculties where *Regional and Local Economy* is one of the subjects taught. It can be easily claimed that this book can also be used as an additional information source for various subjects, such as ‘regional policy’, ‘regional development programming’ or ‘local and regional development management’.

The main objective for the authors was to provide readers with knowledge relating to the most important contemporary issues in the field of regional and local economy, as seen from both the theoretical and practical angle. And they in very deed succeeded. This handbook certainly does not ignore any of the issues connected to the above-mentioned subject matter. What is more, it even frequently goes beyond the limits of fundamental and most important concepts, enabling readers to expand their cognisance of local and regional management. And additionally, many of the problems depicted in this book serve as an inspiration for further studies of the book’s main topic.

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Walter L. SCHÖNWANDT, *Planning in Crisis? Theoretical Orientations for Architecture and Planning*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2008, 167 pp.

I remember interviewing a planner once, he sighed and told me it was such mess with planning these days as you need to consider so many different groups of people and so many aspects at the same time. Well of course I thought, being a researcher in urban planning, isn’t that what planning is suppose to be?

This increasing distance between planning theory and practice is what Walter L. Schönwandt, active at the University of Stuttgart, Germany, targets in his book *Planning in Crisis? Theoretical Orientations for Architecture and Planning*. As academic planning theories grow stronger and become more complex, he argues, many planning practitioners refuse to recognise that theory can provide a positive solution to concrete difficulties in planning projects.

This discrepancy between planning theory and practice is a serious and too often neglected issue that continuously reinforces itself as its respective supporters continue to develop their own language and talk past each other.

The main focus of the book is that of constructs; constructs *in* planning and constructs *of* planning. The term is defined as including concepts, propositions, contexts and theories. From this starting point the book is divided into two major parts.

The first part focuses on constructs as a means of describing planning. This section is dominated by a presentation of the content, development and core critique of seven dominant planning theories, from the rational model, advocacy and (neo)Marxist planning models through equity planning and the model of social learning and communicative action and finally to the radical and liberalistic model of planning. Schönwandt then presents a 'third generation' of planning theory which he suggests will do justice to as many of the complexities in the planning process as possible including the spatial, social, political, ecological and economic aspects of a planning task.

The second part of the book is theoretically influenced by philosopher Mario Bunge and focuses on the *semiotic triangle* which is brought forward as a conceptual tool in planning. The triangle consists of the interplay between language/signs, constructs and things/events. The author argues that we need to question what we think we know about the world in order to be able to plan successfully. What *are* for example regions, pedestrian zones and slums? They are not material objects but human thoughts, constructs, and need to be dealt with as such. The main message, hence, is to argue the importance of relationships between language, constructs and objects. As a practical guide for planners a number of questions are listed in the end in order to facilitate understanding of planning processes, such as what the core of a planning problem is and which key concepts that are used to describe it?

Schönwandt has taken on an extensive assignment in writing this book. His ambition, to present new theoretical orientations for architecture and planning, is major. Does he succeed? Well, it is obviously a mission impossible, but it is an impressive endeavour and a liberating approach to not ignore or simplify complexity in planning. *Planning in Crisis* is an important and useful book in many ways, both for students and practitioners. The presentation of different planning theories and their main critique will be particularly useful for students.

But it is also necessary to note that some of the comments made by Schönwandt fall back into what could be labelled 'common sense'. Of course it is necessary to ask a number of central questions in order to fully grasp the complexity of a planning process or problem! Having said this, it is also necessary to bring forward that no such thing as 'common sense' exists or can be expected to exist independently. Important and taken for granted aspects need to be pointed out and highlighted in order for them to become recognised. Pointing out what may seem obvious is sometimes also more difficult than pointing out what is seen as complex, and the distinction between these two concepts is not as apparent as it may seem. I do not intend to claim that Schönwandt's analysis is simple, for it is not, but rather that what is actually achieved here is the necessary analytical emphasis on basic aspects that are rarely dealt with in practical planning.

The important message that Schönwandt wants to convey in this book, as I read it, is that knowledge is always socially constructed and that there is more than one point of view according to which it is possible to see the world. It is necessary to question what we take for granted, whether it is concepts or processes, and ask ourselves questions that provide us with the ability to redefine what we believe we know about the world.

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John McCARTHY, *Partnership, Collaborative Planning and Urban Regeneration*, Ashgate, Aldershot 2007, 154 pp.

When I received this book, I could not help but be excited by the current and relevant title. *Partnership, Collaborative Planning and Urban Regeneration* provides an excellent overview of literature that has been published on the topics included in the title across (broadly) the 1990s. It has collated many of the key debates in a readable format, and I would recommend the theoretical chapters to those trying to get to grips with some of the key literatures concerned. The real strength of this book is the detailed case study of Dundee through which much understanding can be drawn. It illustrates very clearly the complexities of implementing regeneration practice within a localised context; and that national policies are highly dependent on the local political environment in which they are situated. It is also an important contribution to understanding the impact of devolution of regeneration. Many other texts that explore planning and regeneration fail to recognise that Britain is not just England, and that in Scotland in particular (but increasing at an ever greater speed in Northern Ireland and Wales) there is an increasingly large differentiation between the myriad policies that impact planning and regeneration. In particular, the author explores how there has been a location specific targeting of funds in Scotland, backed-up through his empirical exploration in the book.

However, there are a number of limitations to this volume, which I would caution future readers towards. A considerable proportion of the literature cited in the text felt rather dated; as a reader experienced in the subject field, I was hoping for a more updated literature reflecting the recent developments in regeneration. In particular, given the publication date of 2007, I would have expected more reference to research from the preceding five years or so. Added to this, was a sense as I read the book of being left wanting more; specifically a stronger analysis of the work carefully set out by the author, with less descriptive sections.

Theoretically, I had little sense of how this volume adds to the already crowded field of regeneration and planning. Perhaps this was owing to an over reliance on a few key references (for example, Michael Pacione's 1997 edited volume: *Britain's Cities: Geographies of Division in Urban Britain*), which proved (at times) frustrating. This lack of analysis was particularly apparent in the conclusions chapter, which seemed to provide more of a summary rather than a sense of how this research takes forwards the debates on collaborative planning and regeneration. Unfortunately, this book also had some not inconsiderable errors in its presentation, which really detracted from the overall thesis. For example, on pages 65 and 147 entire lines were repeated, leaving me wondering about the editorial process. I fear this would be especially vexing if you had paid the full purchase price (£50.00).

I have found reviewing this book a difficult process; in contrast to the original empirical analysis of Dundee, there were some basic presentation errors and largely descriptive sections. However, this volume does make a useful contribution to reviewing the debates on the title topic, and introduces interesting empirical evidence of a Scottish case study. If there were to be a second edition of this book, I feel the excellent empirical work could be showcased far better with a reanalysis of the results, in particular, referring to more recent research on urban regeneration and a stronger sense of the

importance of this research in the devolution context. Overall, I would suggest that this book may well be a useful read to researchers seeking to gain an overview of debates around regeneration (particularly in the 1990s) and to those wanting to develop knowledge on Dundee's regeneration practices.

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Edward J. MALECKI and Bruno MORISET, *The Digital Economy; Business Organization, Production Processes, and Regional Developments*, Routledge, London and New York 2008, 274 pp.

The book explores the central contradiction of the digital economy and its geography: while new information technologies (IT) enable production and consumption to be less constrained by location, yet specific places hold a key role in the global digital economy making it 'sticky' rather than footloose. It successfully addresses and explains 'the patterns and dynamics of today's digital economic space', while using interesting case studies and illustrative materials.

The book – in addition to *Introduction* and *Epilogue* – is divided in eight chapters which independently address some of the key aspects of the literature and research on the digital economy: from its growth and development, to its specific geography and business organisation. The layout of the book is clear and helps the reader develop knowledge about the theories and frameworks before addressing more specific issues.

Chapter 2 provides an introduction to the digital economy by considering its historical and economic development. As part of this development, uneven development and distribution of IT are considered. The technological platform of digital networks is the focus of chapter 3 which looks at network infrastructure that sustain the digital and knowledge economy globally.

The core of the book, from chapter 4 is on the role of new technologies in shaping business structure and organisation in different production systems. It explores the role of technologies in outsourcing and creating new complex networks and value-chains. The following chapter explores the role of e-commerce, questioning why the taking off of business-to-consumer platform has not grown as fast as the business-to-business infrastructure. Chapter 6 addresses the topic of off-shoring of corporate services, assessing the dynamics of India as a case study and its 'exceptional' development. Telework and telecommuting and the wider changes in labour patterns and dynamics brought about by new technologies are discussed in chapter 7.

The geographical debate becomes central in the last two chapters. The first, chapter 8, examines the concentration of IT in specialised places and clusters and the spreading of a 'Silicon Valley' development model in different countries around the world. The last, chapter 9, is concerned with the 'digital divide' that still distinguishes the rural/urban development and the developed and developing countries differences.

The text manages to target a variety of audiences. For graduates and practitioners it provides a useful introduction to the dynamics of the digital economy, collecting many research perspectives as well as providing practical examples and case studies. It is structured in a flexible way, so for students it will be possible to read and use a single chapter without having read all the others.

For academics, with a ready knowledge of theories and research in the field, it provides a critical and insightful overview on the development of the subject as well as a clear and effective presentation of the issues that still need to be investigated. In particular, how some of the trends described by the book can be generalised to the global economy or remain forms of development confined to specific locations. The selection of case studies offers helpful insights into the importance of context-specific issues alongside global and technological changes in the understanding of the digital economy.

One of the central contributions of the volume towards a better understanding of the digital economy lies in its critical understanding of the role of IT in regional development. Far from being regarded as a 'magic solution' to relieve the problems of all developing context, IT are considered a key factor only if linked with human interaction and human capital. Furthermore, the spatial distribution and patterns of the digital economy are represented as an 'archipelago' of key spaces interacting at different level and the role of satellite locations becomes key for predicting future evolutions in the this network.

Although the book has a strong geographical perspective wide discussion is devoted to companies' organisation and business models. The way new IT have changed the organization of production across all sectors and affected the complex interconnections between companies around the world is addressed, using case studies of business model of companies such as Amazon, Dell and Volvo and their dispersed value-chain.

While some attention is devoted to e-commerce, the authors could have developed the volume further to include more on the role of digital content and consumption in our knowledge society. New phenomena like social networking website, free audio-visual content fruition and the issues of security, economic value and copyright linked to this kind of digital consumption are becoming everyday more critical in the digital economy.

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Jan SUCHÁČEK, *Territorial Development Reconsidered*, VSB – Technical University of Ostrava, Ostrava, 2008, 190 pp.

The book *Territorial Development Reconsidered* written by Jan Sucháček refreshes the look at the broad issues related to regional development and currently fashionable concept of sustainable development. In seven interesting chapters the author explores this subject from various perspectives. Due to the author's specialisation the topic of the book is considered mainly from the economic point of view. It is illustrated with numerous references to the economic theories of Keynes and neo-liberals.

The first three chapters of the book can be summarised in two words: historical outline. The author presents in an accessible manner the background of the birth of historical concepts such as self-government, self-governance and national state. In the section related to medieval Europe Sucháček formulates an interesting and intriguing theory that the medieval Europe paradoxically could be called Europe of regions. Unfortunately he did not develop this theme more broadly. He also discusses the birth of nationalism and its tragic consequences.

Chapter 4 addresses broad issues of globalisation. It should be emphasised that the author takes a comprehensive approach to this problem. He is attempting to define this concept and to identify the impact of globalisation on society and the economy. This part of the book ends with considerations about individualism.

The next section focuses on the role of media in the modern world. Sucháček defines them as mediocracy – a system in which the media have the ability to shape the views and values they deem to be legitimate. The recipient accepts the message in the form of ‘information slurry’, which denies him the possibility of formulating his own judgment and outlook.

In chapter 6 the author discusses the reinstatement of broadly understood self-government. He explains the reasons for such a direction of development. He also emphasises spatial awareness of social groups and the changes that have occurred in the perception of boundaries.

The final chapter entitled *Instead of a Summary* gives the reader insight into the possible directions of territorial development.

The annex includes two charters: *European Charter of Local Self-Government* and *Charter of European Cities & Towns Towards Sustainability*. It is difficult to say why those two particular charters were considered so important and were selected by the author to be included in the book.

The author is not citing in the text the publications he used. It can therefore be assumed that formulated judgments and opinions are the result of his own researches and reflections. However, in the references he lists the publications which were used in his book. This throws a shadow on his creative workshop. Citation in the text is generally accepted procedure in scientific literature, so the author should comply with it.

Beside referring to books the author makes references to websites. It is confusing that Sucháček relies on Wikipedia. Using the free Internet encyclopaedia made by Internet users as a source of information in scientific work is risky. It should be taken into account that materials contained there might be untrue and unreliable. Because of the lack of citation the author prevents the reader from determining which part of his work is based on Wikipedia. It undermines the credibility of the whole book.

The book was released in 2008 in Ostrava by the VSB – Technical University of Ostrava. It was printed on good paper with large type. Each paragraph is separated with a blank line making the book easier to read. However, it is poorly printed. Once the reader reaches page 64 he encounters page 49 and has to jump 8 pages forward in order to continue reading. Fortunately there is a continuation of the text. The quality of the pictures is poor as well. The only map included in the text is unreadable. The original map was colourful but after printing it in black and white its use value diminished. The

publisher should be proud of providing an electronic version of this publication¹ and all of the objections made above do not apply to it.

To summarize, Sucháček's book might be worthy of note for researchers who are interested in territorial development. The theories and arguments presented in the book complement knowledge on this subject and allow a look at it from another perspective.

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Neil BRENNER and Stuart ELDEN (eds), *State, Space, World: Selected Essays / Henri Lefebvre*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 2009, VII + 331 pp.

The main target of the editors was to collect political writings of Henri Lefebvre (1901–1991), one of the most prolific French Marxist intellectuals. His long career as a philosopher has influenced the development of not only philosophy but also other disciplines like sociology, geography, political science and literary criticism. Young Lefebvre, a philosophy student in Paris, became influenced by Marxism, which was very popular among the French intellectual elite after the October revolution. He was active on columns of short-lived leftist journals during the 1920s and early 1930s, where he was able to improve his skills in provocative writing. Drawn towards communism as a practical means of introducing his visions, Lefebvre joined the French Communist Party in 1928. His political opinions were rather heterodox interpretations of Marxism, which was in opposition to Stalinism of the French Communist Party. Interpretation of early writings of Karl Marx and his intellectual ancestry derived from Hegelian philosophy, the ideas of Nietzsche and works of Schelling and Heidegger became the basis for Lefebvre's famous dialectical materialism theory, which was totally ignored by Stalinists and FCP. Lefebvre's communist writings banned during the Second World War and German occupation became bestsellers after the liberation. Post-war Lefebvre's libertarian tendencies made him more popular with the social democratic and Christian democratic leftist circles than with hard-line Stalinists in the PCF. The tightening of the Cold War made his political and philosophical views uncomfortable and he decided that sociology should be safer. French sociology was not regarded as politically sensitive but was often linked to the rapidly growing requirements of the national planning. He was also interested in geographical and historical thoughts. To the very end of his long life in 1991, Henri Lefebvre believed that non-dogmatic reading of Marx and Engels provided the best support for understanding the nature and development of society, space planning and operation of modern state.

¹ <http://ideas.repec.org/p/pram/prapa/15009.html>.

Neil Brenner, a young American professor of sociology and metropolitan studies, has a particular interest in the changing political-economic geographies of global capitalism derived from European socialist philosophy, the Frankfurt School tradition of critical social theory, neo-Marxian state theory and critical geography. The second editor, Stuart Elden, is a young professor from the UK. His main area of interest is political geography, but he has also contributed some publications about leftist philosophers, one of which is Lefebvre, and has articles in *Antipode*, which may suggest his being one of the group of critical geographers, known as strongly influenced by Marxism-Leninism. Their book underlines their ideological interest and reveals their political convictions. Their work makes available, for the first time in English, Lefebvre's key writings, which had before been little explored by the group of critical and leftist geographers. The book was published at a time of financial crisis, and may thus provide an inspiration for leftist ideologists in the discourse on new trends and ideas denouncing globalisation and neoliberal capitalism. The editors's motivation for preparing this collection of Lefebvre's writings was not only to present ideas which fascinate them, but their belief that those texts contain political inspirations and thoughts which can influence global political situation. This influence exerted by the scientific lobby is directed against present global formation of 'neoliberalising capitalism' and 'neoconservative geopolitical reaction', which was mentioned in the introduction, and should be taken into account while reading the essays. The introduction written by the editors includes several points that clarify their intentions. They intended to offer some of Lefebvre's reflections and arguments to criticise the contemporary geohistorical situation. There is no comprehensive or even partial critical evaluation of Lefebvre's works and his Marxist political background.

In geography, Lefebvre was present since the late 1960s, when his approach to urban spatiality began to be discussed in French and Anglo-American publications. His texts have been broadly read and debated on columns of ideologically engaged geographical journals. Yet, the most widely known Lefebvre's works are: *The Production of Space*, *The Urban Revolution*, *Dialectical Materialism*, *The Survival of Capitalism* and *The Critique of Everyday Life*. The book being reviewed is complementary to these analyses and contains essays on political theory, philosophy of state, spatial planning and globalisation. Those essays are grouped into parts – first *State, Society, Autogestion*; and second *Space, State Spatiality, World*, which makes them linked thematically, but disorganised chronologically. The first part shows Lefebvre's approach to state and its institutions. It contains six essays, providing a broad view of his opinions about social forces and political struggles. The first two essays, *The State and Society* and *Sources of Marxist-Leninist State Theory*, are translated lectures of Henri Lefebvre, in which he reinterprets classic Marxism and presents his own theory and views on history and Marxist political ideology. These two essays are followed by *The State in the Modern World*, which contains only an annotated table of contents and is written in sentence equivalents, which at first sight do not seem logically connected. The editors intended to show how great a project was undertaken by Lefebvre. Regrettably, they did not explain why that book or epic had never been finished. There are more essays written in such a style. The form is indeed remarkable, but leaves too much scope for deliberation and speculations. The next three chapters of the first part are more specific in their topics. They show Lefebvre's efforts to make his theory work in

political practice. Lefebvre presents his views on state spatial strategies, worldwide context of state power, spatial development in the world and political efforts reflecting his leftist turn of the mind. These chapters were intended to demonstrate Lefebvre's radical ideas and engagement in state theory formation and restructuring of states in the face of emerging spatial problems. The editors meant to emphasise in this way the geographical dimension of Lefebvre's theories. The first two of them seem to be the most important because they are broad-ranging and more focused on scientific socio-spatial theory in worldwide context than the rest of them. Chapters 9 to 15 are more detailed and each of them reveals Lefebvre's concepts of different but closely related ideas – world production, spatiality of state, so called mondialisation, state restructuring, state strategies and political transformations, all in long-term geohistorical and global perspective. These fifteen essays are followed by the editors' further reading proposals: works of Marx' and Lefebvre's followers and other essays of Henri Lefebvre. There also is some information about each essay, such as the original title and date and place of the first publication. An index of terms and names at the end of the book should be very helpful.

In view of the wide range of problems addressed in this publication, the selection of essays must have been a difficult task for the editors. Lefebvre as a philosopher often crossed the boundaries of ideologies and used arguments from many social sciences, including geography, which could cause additional problems in editing and selection. Perhaps that is why the book's construction provokes discussion. Recognition of Lefebvre's work as contribution to the field of geography is only obvious for those geographers who are politically and ideologically engaged. On the other hand, selected essays can be used by geographers who have an interest in spatial development history or state theory evolution. For the rest of geographers these essays are rather useless. Anyway, *State, Space, World* seems to have only historical significance, as documentation of Marxist theories evolution. Are Lefebvre's messages still actual? Today, we can observe objective decrease of the role of state in social and economic life. The world and visions of spatial development have changed so much during the last 20 years that Marx' and Lefebvre's theories are rather outdated, so this collection of essays has only a historical value. What is most striking is openly declared Marxist propaganda. The selected essays generally are not so much scientific as ideological. Lefebvre and the editors mostly drew on classical and modern Marxism-Leninism ideologists, which places *State, Space, World* in the category of political rather than scientific books. It is quite understandable that in the USA these ideas are much more exotic and attractive than in the former 'people's democracies', where very similar ideas were put into practice. The absence in this book of any critical comments on Lefebvre also points to its propagandist character. It was declared by the editors as an occasion for further discussion, but they have forgotten that this collection of essays was prepared for researchers. Scientific work has to be objective; otherwise it is regarded as unscientific and not meeting academic standards.

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