

urban form of capital cities with the nature of political order will continue. Few, however, would demur from the view that Sonne has, at the very least, succeeded in producing a book which is both beautiful and impressive. A short review can do no more than convey a flavour of this richness.

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Dialogues in Urban and Regional Planning

Bruce Stiftel and Vanessa Watson (eds), London: Routledge, 2004
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In the academic planning profession there is a penchant for edited collections that explore perhaps three key issues: particular theoretical strands; empirical investigations within particular cities, regions or countries; or policy areas of particular current relevance. *Dialogues in Urban and Regional Planning*, edited by Bruce Stiftel from Florida State University and Vanessa Watson from the University of Cape Town, provides an example of a recent collection that attempts coverage of all three of these issues. It is a valiant attempt that deserves praise, but perhaps throws up questions about the intended market for the book, which the editors claim, is targeted at all those with an interest in urban and regional planning. In reality, it appears to have perhaps two valued uses: first, as a state-of-the-art book for academics engaged in transnational planning agendas and, secondly, as a student reference book, where particular chapters link to specific taught courses.

The book itself comprises twelve main chapters and an introduction that attempts to pull the various strands of the book together and give some coherence to the multitude of topics covered. These range from ecological studies of the Amazon Basin, the impact of Olympic stadium building in Sydney and the unpacking of key dilemmas in critical planning theory. In one sense the range of topics is part of the rationale behind the book which aims to draw on 'local concerns but also reflect ... international issues'. The book attempts to create synergies between distinct, and all too often, disparate planning traditions in different continents with the aim of opening up 'shared understanding' and possible avenues of comparative research. As such, this book is published in association with the Global Planning Education Association and the nine planning school associations that it represents from Africa, the USA, Canada, Europe, Latin America, Brazil, Australia and New Zealand, Asia and French language-speaking schools.

The first chapter, written by the editors, is the key to understanding the historical context in which this book, and the overall project of 'global planning education' is situated. The first part of this chapter provides a timeline of the last twenty years, over which, the Planning Schools Movement has developed in order to

build a *discipline* of urban and regional planning that could sustain a rigorous level in growth of ideas, that could hold its own in university assessments of performance, and that could

foster innovation in professional practice based on realistic, empirically-grounded but theoretically informed scholarship (p. 2).

The introduction continues by exploring what are described as 'Global Themes', highlighting 'emerging commonalities' between the regional contributors. The themes that it addresses are: the relationship between planning and economy; the links between environment and conservation: and, planning processes and decision-making. Each of these themes has three chapters within the overall volume. There is a further attempt to pull these themes together through two final chapters that explore more theoretical concepts within the academic planning discipline, with the aim of generating 'mutual understanding' and 'problem solving' through multiple modes of communicative action and related power structures.

This book, and its future editions, is very clearly one aspect of a sustained attempt to build a global planning movement that can develop transnational synergy and create arenas of comparative and compatible learning. As such, the biannual *Dialogues* book, it is further noted, is 'a small but significant step toward remediation of global isolation in planning scholarship' (p. 9) enabling linkages to be made between different sites and contexts of planning action and process.

Although the themes of this particular edition are somewhat broad, and perhaps necessarily general, this book certainly provides a valuable resource for planning educators. That said, in future editions, could not a biannual 'themed edition' focusing on issues such as spatial plan making, urban and regional governance, politics and planning, environmental and sustainable planning, or planning theory be of greater benefit to academe and students alike?

It is also important that the Global Planning Education Association Network does not negate to join in cross-disciplinary ventures. Certainly those working in the UK at present are coming under increasing pressure to develop connections to other built environment professions engaged with similar aims of sustainable city and region building. At a global level a stronger voice for planning within academia must not be gained at the expense of building professional silos that limit the opportunities for the richness of interdisciplinary contact. Planning is about creating the future of our urban and regional spaces and places through the development of negotiated visions of required action. This essentially creative, yet technical process is one that constantly requires a rethinking of planners' frames of reference in accordance with both changing socio-economic and political contexts, but also references to 'what works' elsewhere. Increasingly, planning authorities at all spatial scales are searching for 'lessons to learn' from global experiences. This book certainly adds to this learning process and would be a valued edition to academic libraries.

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