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BOOK REVIEWS

Ilda Lourenço-Lindell 2002: *Walking the Tight Rope: Informal Livelihoods and Social Networks in a West African City*. Stockholm: Stockholm Studies in Human Geography 9, Almqvist and Wiksell International.

In the wake of economic restructuring, considerable attention has focused on how the informalization of popular livelihoods has affected economic opportunities and social welfare among the poor. While some have argued that state withdrawal has unleashed forces of popular agency, entrepreneurship and democratization, others emphasize tendencies toward increased poverty, lawlessness and social chaos. In *Walking the Tight Rope*, Ilda Lourenço-Lindell argues that informalization cannot be understood simply as the antithesis of state regulation, but must be studied as an interplay of varied and often contradictory regulatory processes shaped by local historical and political conditions. According to the author, assumptions that informal economic arrangements are based on single-stranded logics of social solidarity or opportunism have obscured the complex regulatory processes at work in the urban informal economy. Based on a detailed case study of a slum neighbourhood in Guinea Bissau, Lourenço-Lindell sets out to break the black box of informalization with a view to exposing the multifaceted processes that shape informal livelihoods and social support networks among the urban poor in contemporary Africa.

This book breaks new ground in a number of ways. First, it focuses attention on the historical specificity and variable logics of informal livelihood and social support networks. The author shows how informal livelihood systems have been shaped over time by a complex interplay of indigenous social and economic institutions, long-distance trading networks, colonial systems of indirect rule, and contemporary economic pressures of liberalization and predatory state institutions. The result is a complex picture of continuity and change at variance with conventional notions of spontaneous solidarity or culturally bound path-dependence. Secondly, this book highlights the multifaceted character of informal livelihood networks, involving relations of solidarity as well as opportunism, autonomy as well as subordination. Lourenço-Lindell traces a wide range of informal networks and associations operating among poor urban dwellers, including cooperative labour groups, religious associations, trading networks and kinship-based support systems. These are shown to be based on relations of exploitation as well as assistance, leading to complex processes of popular resilience, marginalization and differentiation.

The third, and most striking, contribution of this book is its analysis of the changing character of social relations *within* networks. Chapters 6 and 7 on network diversification and kin-based assistance networks offer rare insights into the dynamics of popular livelihood networks. Based on detailed case studies, the author examines how economic pressure and local power relations shape the ability of actors to diversify networks and to enforce claims within them. Far from constituting a social safety net for the poor, the author shows how the stresses of economic liberalization have warped and eroded networks as well as creating them. The variable ability of the poor to form and maintain networks is portrayed as a delicate balancing act, in which weaker social groups such as women, the aged and the very poor experience growing vulnerability rather than resilient forms of support. Finally, this political economy approach to livelihood networks challenges the prevailing trend of African exceptionalism common in current analyses of

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informalization. The dynamic of informalization is seen as a product of historical, institutional and social relationships, rather than of cultural peculiarities.

Insightful and innovative as this book is, it is very much a diamond in the rough. It is clearly the product of a doctoral thesis, in the Scandanavian tradition of immediate publication, and lacks the lean, punchy presentation of works that have benefited from more extensive editing after the fact. The theoretical discussion is longer and less focused than one would like. The historical sections are sometimes rather schematic and suffer from a lack of archival material, while the analysis generally reveals curious residues of old lefty categories and stereotyped notions of the organizational limitations of ethnicity and patronage networks. There are also important silences in the book. Despite attention to the role of ethnicity, religion, gender and generation in shaping livelihood networks, the role of class is never mentioned, despite considerable evidence in the case studies that class background is a critical factor in the ability of the heterogeneous members of the 'new poor' to maintain and diversify networks. A final concern relates to a curious misalignment between the analysis and the conclusions. While the bulk of the evidence demonstrates the increasing vulnerability of popular livelihood networks in the face of liberalization, the conclusions betray an unsubstantiated confidence in the power of solidarity and popular agency. In spite of its flaws, however, this book remains a highly original and valuable contribution to our understanding of the inner dynamics of informal livelihoods and social support networks among the urban poor.

Kate Meagher, University of Oxford

Nana K. Poku 2005: *AIDS in Africa: How the Poor are Dying*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Having spread to every corner of the planet, AIDS has become one of the worst epidemics in human history. In 2006, an estimated 39.5 million people were living with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, and the epidemic killed approximately 2.9 million. Sub-Saharan Africa contains about one tenth of the world's population, yet it is home to almost two thirds (64% or 24.7 million in 2006) of the people living with HIV, and annually buries roughly 74% (1.9 million) of all the people dying of AIDS.

In his new book Nana Poku attempts to explain this discrepancy and sketches the likely long-term effects on a continent where most human development indicators have been regressing over the past two decades. In doing so, he lays emphasis on the structural trends and power relations which, he argues, provide the underlying thrust for the AIDS epidemics in sub-Saharan Africa. (Poku refers throughout to 'Africa', but he does not discuss the much smaller and very different epidemics in North Africa.) As such, the book is a valuable addition to an already voluminous literature on AIDS, much of which focuses on the epidemiological and behavioral dimensions of the epidemics.

Recent years, however, have seen increasing interest in the developmental dynamics of HIV and AIDS, including the ways in which vulnerability to HIV infection is economically, socially and culturally reproduced, as well as the long-term societal impact of AIDS in badly affected settings. Poku's book attempts to move those explorations forward. His starting point is a question that has puzzled many observers of the epidemic. Why is it that the AIDS epidemics are so inordinately concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa?

Poku skewers what he regards as a subtext of much AIDS programming in Africa — the notion that a distinctly 'African' sexuality lies at the heart of the epidemic. Age of sexual debut and frequency of sex in sub-Saharan African countries hardly differs from that in European countries, as he shows. Drawing on primary and secondary data, he shows that the AIDS crisis is 'complex, multifaceted and influenced by many medical, social, economic and cultural factors' (p. 52). These include different HIV subtypes (of possibly varying virulence), the presence of other sexually transmitted infections (which have been shown to heighten the risk of HIV infection), male circumcision (which

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dramatically reduces the likelihood of infection for males), physiological vulnerabilities in young women, and more.

But sub-Saharan Africa's burden of disease, including AIDS, he argues, is rooted tellingly in the region's deepened impoverishment, weakened state-structures and services, and ailing economies — all exacerbated by economic structural adjustment and marginalization in the process of globalization. AIDS therefore becomes a marker of the parlous terms on which sub-Saharan Africa is linked into the global economy. 'Any disease,' he writes, 'must be placed in the context of Africa's underdevelopment' (p. 8). Additionally, the epidemics are interlaced with the power relations — especially gender inequalities — that shape social behaviours. Poku makes a strong case that sub-Saharan Africa became particularly vulnerable to scourges such as AIDS against the backdrop of socio-economic decline that dates back to the early 1970s and which precipitated a breakdown in social services (especially education and healthcare), slashed employment security, dismantled state capacities and caused declines in food production (with 'potentially serious consequences for nutrition' [p. 39], which might render persons more vulnerable to HIV). In various respects, these are all markers for poverty, although Poku is careful not to assert a simplistic correlation between poverty and AIDS. Indeed, while a fairly comprehensive picture is emerging of the array of factors that can combine to generate epidemics as serious as those found in southern and East Africa, AIDS researchers and analysts have not yet been able to convincingly weight or rank those factors in specific settings. While multifaceted deprivation might underpin marital patterns, nutritional deficiencies, patterns of sexual partnering (such as concurrent partnerships) or the terms on which sex occurs (with or without condoms, for example), it might also be that a singular risk factor such as the prevalence of circumcision among men outweighs many of those other risk factors in any one setting. Understanding the relative weight of such driving factors is vital for an effective response to an epidemic.

Underlying factors and trends are profoundly important also for understanding — and countering — the impact of AIDS. In settings with very high HIV prevalence, the cumulative effects of the epidemics are likely to be disastrous. Not only does it herald 'a widening and deepening of poverty' (p. 111), but the 'epidemic puts at risk education, health and other development achievement of recent decades' and could compound 'the hollowing out of state structures' (p. 191). The severity of the epidemics in many African countries (especially in southern Africa, home to all eight countries globally with HIV prevalence of 15% or higher) means that this 'downward spiral' (p. 9) probably will be prolonged and intensified, unless effective counter-measures are taken.

Averting such outcomes, the book argues, requires meeting four imperatives. Needed firstly is a common understanding of the nature of the epidemic, especially its links with underlying societal frailties and inequalities. Secondly, responses at all levels must be coordinated more harmoniously. Thirdly, the responses must be financially sustainable in the long-term. And, fourthly, the key to reversing the epidemic lies in learning from and boosting community-based responses.

Such perspectives and counsel are not novel. Anthony Barnett and Alan Whiteside's *AIDS in the 21st Century* (2002), the AIDS writings of Alex de Waal, and Poku and Whiteside's *The political-economy of AIDS* (2004) have traversed similar ground in the recent past. It is now convention also within the UN to emphasize the epidemic's perilous developmental impact, and the social, economic and cultural factors that seem to drive it, notably gender inequalities.

Yet the AIDS literature has tended not to highlight the fact that the epidemic is not uniform in its effects. Correctly, Poku advises caution when assessing the impact on households, for example, 'because other factors are at work at the same time' (p. 86) — hinting that the effects tend to be layered upon existing contours of inequality and relative deprivation. Households lacking relatively secure incomes, affordable services and serviceable social networks absorb a comparatively greater share of the impact — a matter Poku acknowledges but could have explored in more detail.

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But his claim that 'societies as a whole are becoming poorer as a result of AIDS' (p. 112) is questionable — precisely because the impact and costs are not distributed evenly across societies, nor do they necessarily spill far across the boundaries of poor households and communities. The burden of care, for example, is absorbed largely by the unpaid labour of women and girls, while putative workplace-related costs often are externalized with the use of HIV screening of workers, retrenchment of ill employees, restrictive or absent medical scheme membership, and the like. The impact of AIDS is not automatically and evenly transmitted from the micro- to the macro-level.

This is one of the reasons why the effects on national economic output have proved so elusive and why some of the more apocalyptic predictions of societal implosion and state collapse have not materialized. But there is no comfort in the fact that the cumulative, multi-generational effects have not (yet) proved to be calamitous to the degrees anticipated in some of the literature. A disproportionate and ruinous share of the impact of AIDS is being borne by already impoverished individuals, households and communities, and especially those whose marginal status prevents them from deflecting and redistributing those costs beyond the confines of their lives.

Hein Marais, writer and journalist, Johannesburg

John Friedmann 2005: *China's Urban Transition*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

China's urban transition is among the most significant international developments of the last five decades. It is important in part for its scale (involving hundreds of millions of people) and in part for its tight connection to the broader transformation of this country into a major player in the global system. John Friedmann's purpose is to provide an overview of the most distinctive features of this process. He succeeds in this short volume for two types of audiences. First, those who want an introduction to the Chinese case (students, the general public, scholars who may want to refer to the Chinese example in a comparative context) will find a succinct and accurate portrait here. Friedmann is an acute observer, and his experience in comparative research in other parts of the world is reflected in his telling of the Chinese story. Second, those who are prepared to undertake a more serious study of Chinese urbanization will find a selective and well-informed literature review, citing many capable contemporary scholars.

The first chapter spans the many centuries that culminated in the socialist revolution and establishment of strict controls on rural-urban migration in the 1950s. China was a rural country at that time, with cities that had long played secondary roles as administrative and military centers and, in the 19th Century, as treaty ports through which Western powers sought to exert influence and exact resources. The Chinese economy could barely support cities, and, as noted in Chapter 2, the new regime considered the concentration of the urban economy in coastal cities to be a military liability. The current regional policy — to promote rapid growth of international trade and secondary and tertiary sectors by concentrating investment in cities like Shanghai and Shenzhen — was implemented only after Mao's death. Chapter 3 addresses an often neglected component of urban growth in the current period, the urbanization of the countryside. Much investment in export-oriented manufacturing in the 1980s was located in small towns in coastal provinces. Consequently, a substantial share of migration took the form of relatively short-distance movements from villages to towns, often resulting in a reclassification of towns as cities. Chapter 4 turns to the better-known component of growth, large-scale migration to major cities. Because the

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household registration system remained in effect (conferring a very different legal status on people whose official registration was urban from that conferred on those with rural *hukou*), the usual class and nativity cleavages associated with migration have been overlaid with divisions based on citizenship rights.

The final two topical chapters turn to questions that are fundamentally political, and they seem to take contradictory positions. Do social transformations and economic expansion on the scale found in China — modernization, from one theoretical perspective — require or stimulate political democratization? Can a developmentalist state function in the long run with limited public participation? In his analysis of personal autonomy (Chapter 5) Friedmann points to a growing segment of the population who are now able to buy cars, high-standard apartments, and even second homes in the suburbs and who begin to constitute a consumer society. Television and other media reach more broadly across social classes and reach even into the countryside. These social changes support new identities and offer people new choices. Whether they contribute to the creation of civil society, or whether personal and family lifestyle choice can be a long-term substitute for political expression, is another matter. Friedmann frankly acknowledges that China remains a party state unlimited by law. Suggesting that this may be a stable alternative, he emphasizes the distinction between 'Western' and 'Chinese' notions of individual and collective rights and responsibilities. He takes seriously the emergence of 'non-governmental organizations' that are organized and monitored by the state, anticipating that these may become more autonomous in the future. He cites Dorothy Solinger's critique of the lack of citizenship rights for rural-urban migrants, but he questions whether rights of political participation are at issue in their situation and seems inclined to accept the government line.

In the next chapter, which is devoted to urban governance, he reaches the opposite conclusion, calling for 'more accountability, more democracy, more transparency' in urban planning. He notes that municipal government has gained autonomy and responsibility in the reform era and that the district level of government within cities is now a principal actor in economic development. In fact, because they are increasingly dependent on revenues from land deals to support local services (and as a source of personal enrichment), local officials now lead a Chinese version of the American growth machine. Friedmann calls for stronger technocratic urban planning, including provisions for public participation. Surprisingly, he notes public demonstrations in Hong Kong as evidence of a nascent demand for participation, without mentioning the explosive growth of local collective protests in both urban and rural zones in response to corruption and cronyism by local cadres. And apparently he believes that accountability and democratization can be implemented at the local level without legal and political changes at the national level. This is a question that deserves more explicit discussion.

While this volume analyzes urbanization in broad strokes and at a national level, it does not address important phenomena such as urban redevelopment and gentrification, housing investment and privatization, residential mobility, suburbanization and environmental regulation. It also avoids theorizing, which is surprising in light of the author's contributions to a general understanding of globalization and world cities. China, he argues in the introduction, cannot be fit neatly into the narrative of any grand theory, whether that be the narrative of modernization or globalization, urbanization or national integration — certainly not yet (because the future is so rapidly being made) and perhaps never (because China is not just another country, but a civilization that deserves to be understood on its own terms). Aversion to theorizing is common in area studies, where country experts know their own case in great detail and often are uninterested in how it informs a wider audience. Readers of this journal will be disappointed that Friedmann does not offer alternatives to the theory of Chinese exceptionalism.

John R. Logan, Brown University

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Angus Bancroft 2005: *Roma and Gypsy-Travellers in Europe. Modernity, Race, Space and Exclusion*. Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

Studies of the people who are often called 'Gypsies' traditionally tend to focus on their cultural or socio-political position in majority societies. Since the early 1990s more attention has gradually been paid to an interrogation of the historically variable ways in which relations between 'Gypsies' and majority societies are governed and constructed. This perspective has often gone together with the receptivity of what is sometimes called 'Romani studies' to interdisciplinary and comparative approaches. Angus Bancroft's *Roma and Gypsy-Travellers in Europe* takes part in this welcome development and investigates the position of the 'Gypsies' from the relatively neglected perspective of political geography. Bancroft combines a study of social and political theories of modernity with geographical insights to trace different trajectories of how outsider groups such as the 'Gypsies' have been spatially excluded throughout European history. He tries to show how legal and political measures, which often racialize and criminalize Gypsy groups, have effectively led to various exclusionary practices toward them.

Bancroft's approach is of great importance because it focuses on why and how the governance of 'outsiders' or 'foreigners' in Europe is intrinsically related to spatial practices, such as those of municipalities, national authorities or EU institutions. To analyse this relationship, Bancroft compares historically divergent political approaches toward the Gypsy-Travellers in the United Kingdom with those toward the Roma in the Czech Republic. He implicitly suggests that, wherever the 'Gypsies' live in Europe and whether they are nomadic (UK) or not (CR), we can observe comparable strategies in representing them as 'outsiders', excluding them spatially and rendering them abject.

Bancroft gives various examples of such exclusionary strategies. In the British case, for example, he analyses how a series of laws have affected Gypsy-Travellers from 1530 onward. In particular, he shows the importance of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Law of 1994 in criminalizing the lifestyles of Gypsy-Travellers. This law, which was intended to assimilate them to 'traditional housing', enabled local authorities to evict them from encampments much more easily than in the past. Bancroft argues that, even in the cases when they were not evicted, they were 'being treated as objects of a coercive law enforcement, rather than consumers of a policing service' (p. 131). As a result of this treatment, the Gypsy-Travellers were turned into what Bancroft calls 'ungovernable subjects'. Another powerful example comes from the Czech case, where the newly introduced law on Czech citizenship excluded many Czech Roma after Czechoslovakia's dissolution. Bancroft interweaves such examples to show that marginalizing strategies toward Gypsy and Romani groups have been reinforced over time in various, ever-new ways.

Bancroft's generalization of the outcomes of modernity's dealings with the 'Gypsies', however, also limits his otherwise powerful illustration of exclusionary practices toward them. His consideration of 'modernity' as a rather uniform concept allows him to distinguish only those marginalizing strategies toward the 'Gypsies' that have been imposed on them 'from above' by sovereign institutions. Indeed, Bancroft's extensive history of legal measures against 'Gypsies' suggests that we deal with ever-new articulations of the modernity–sovereignty nexus in which a sovereign institution decides on inclusion or exclusion on the basis of legislation. But, in actuality, is it really innovations in law-making that render the 'Gypsies' 'ungovernable' (p. 131) time and again? In this context, it is surprising that Bancroft neglects the results of a research group that analysed the management of Gypsy-Travellers' encampments (Lomax *et al.*, 2001). This group has shown that legal measures against the 'Gypsies' have not so much changed them into 'ungovernable subjects' as led to the development of various new, non-juridical regimes that govern and police them. The tolerating of 'Gypsies' on unauthorized sites, for instance, has proven to be a powerful tool that regulates the Gypsies' interactions with the surrounding local community, and this has led to some inventive compromises. Although these regulations have also re-invoked stereotypical

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discourses about ‘Gypsies’, these practices need nevertheless to be considered as alternative ways to govern minority–majority relationships. These relations are provisional and unsteady outcomes of complex processes of negotiation as well as the results of locally devised approaches to governing and self-governing.

This brings me to the role of Gypsy and Romani groups and their own strategies for challenging practices that criminalize and marginalize them. Bancroft’s inability to even indicate these strategies seems again to be related to his homogeneous concept of modernity. He suggests that policies, programmes and laws are identical to how they are carried out and that they are transferred to, rather than translated into, local circumstances. By so doing, he leaves no ‘space’ for the more heterogeneous and intrinsically ambiguous effects of modernity. This could also explain why Bancroft—though he promises the reader repeatedly to look at the Gypsies’ own perspective (pp. 3, 65, 78–79)—has almost excluded their voices from his study. Whereas he gives numerous examples of the exclusion of the Gypsies, he does not, in any substantial way, analyse the multiple ways in which Gypsy-Travellers and Roma have tried to negotiate their position in European society vis-à-vis various institutions (*cf.* Vermeersch, 2006). Bancroft’s inclination to examine the situation of the ‘Gypsies’ primarily through the bureaucratic, law-enforcement, and academic approaches toward them leads to the neglect of an analysis of the theoretical and practical implications of the existence of various Romani NGOs in Europe, the political representation of Roma and ‘Gypsies’, not least in the European Parliament, or the emergence of Romani memorial practices and Romani media (from TV and radio broadcasting, press centers, websites and journals to cinema, museums and Roma hip-hop music). If Bancroft had explored the discrepancies between the concepts and practices of modernity, the rulers and the ruled, plans and their messy attempts at enactment, he could also have shown that the exclusionary mechanisms towards the ‘Gypsies’ have frequently been contested, not least by the ‘Gypsies’ themselves. These contestations have inaugurated trajectories and spaces that — despite their uncertainty and instability — undermine the self-assurance and uniformities of European modernity.

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Lomax, D., D. Cowan, F. Donson, P. Higate and H. Third (2001) *The management of unauthorized camping: monitoring the good practice guidance*. Edinburgh College of Art, Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh.

Vermeersch, P. (2006) *The Romani movement: minority politics and ethnic mobilization in contemporary Central Europe*. New York and Oxford, Berghahn.

William S. Saunders (ed.) 2006: *Urban Planning Today*. Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press.

This short volume is a collection of papers published in the Harvard University’s *Urban Design Review*, mostly in 2005. They present different experiences of and viewpoints on the challenges of the twenty-first century city, what makes for the ‘good city’, and the role of planning and design in shaping future cities. The authors are an interesting mixture of academics and practitioners, are primarily focused on US experiences, and the papers are short and well-written. This US backcloth is not elaborated, but the collection taken as a whole gives a revealing insight into the contemporary context for planning and design in that country.

The collection is introduced by consultant Andrew Garvin, who has substantial experience in New York. He is not afraid to engage in criticism of some of the papers he introduces, which sets the scene for the different viewpoints that emerge from the papers.

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Some acclaim the contributions of planning and of design to the project of creating future liveable and sustainable cities. Others are deeply critical of what seem the bureaucratic and unimaginative ways of city planners and their tools.

The first paper is from well-known planning academic Susan Fainstein, who comments on the revival of major projects in New York, a late-comer to such activity in recent years in the US. She contrasts critically the current approach to such projects with that led by Robert Moses a generation before. She interprets the revival as a return to a form of comprehensive planning, but is concerned about the lack of democratic participation associated with the New York projects and the over-reliance on private sector investment.

Richard Plunz and Michael Sheridan, with academic/research backgrounds, keep the focus in New York, providing a rather journalistic lament for the conditions of New York public housing. Their focus is primarily on urban design issues. Consultant John Kaliski introduces experiences from the Los Angeles area. He emphasizes how large numbers of citizens have become involved in planning processes in different situations and how this has improved the quality of the resultant urban environment. He argues that what is needed is not more urban design-led master plans, but innovation in ways to make the collaborative process work less cumbersomely.

Architectural writer Lynn Becker provides a lament for the failure of Chicago to promote good architecture, thus losing the opportunity provided by a major building boom in the city. Planning, in his view, just conserves buildings and sorts out the problem ones. It fails to attend to issues of urban quality. 'Planning consolidates and conserves; only ego, restless and voracious, creates' (p. 47), he asserts.

Academic Leonie Sandercock provides a vigorous opposing view to this in her rich and concise account of the experience in Vancouver, where a combination of enlightened politicians and skilled planning staff developed a collaborative approach with citizens and developers to shape a massive reconfiguration of the city's downtown, producing thereby what citizens recognize as a high-quality urban environment and a valuable method of participative planning. In her story, she carefully identifies the factors which have brought this about.

Consultant Hubert Murray returns the reader to the east coast, and Boston's major Central Artery project. He bemoans the agency fragmentation, loss of strategic vision and failure to set design guidance for individual plots which have led to a failure to allow this major project to contribute to enhancing overall the city's quality. He argues that the city has lost its capacity for city-wide strategic planning since the heyday of the 1960s/1970s. Matthew Kiefer identifies a continuously changing approach to the 'development exactions' demanded of private sector developers as another factor in this experience which may have created difficulties.

Jonathan Barnett, a practitioner academic, describes Omaha's recent experience, when, as in Los Angeles and Vancouver, politicians came to understand that better-quality urban environments resulted from strategic city design plans which were produced with intensive citizen involvement. Rather than just adopt design guidelines which are by now quite common, Omaha decided to produce a city design strategy, through consultation with citizens in each neighbourhood, encouraging each discussion to make a link between their 'place' and the city overall.

The final three papers move from city-specific experiences to more general issues. Jerold Kayden discusses the changing legal climate which is calling into question established interpretations of when it is constitutional to take private property for public purposes, especially in situations where such a public purpose is carried out by a private party. Peter Calthorpe emphasizes the role of planning in shaping markets, cities and daily life living conditions. He argues for a more 'regional' approach for urban complexes, and, in a variant of 'new urbanism' ideas, presents some of his own design ideas. Danish social scientist Bent Flyvbjerg presents in a condensed and somewhat polemic version his story of massive cost over-runs on mega-projects, identifying the politics which encourages such an outcome.

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Overall, this book is more interesting and enjoyable than it seemed to promise at the start. It hints at the amount of experimentation in planning approaches underway in the US in the early twenty-first century, and some of the debates going on about these experiences. It underlines that the country most associated with market-driven urban development has always had a strong planning tradition and seems now to be returning to it as citizens demand better-quality urban environments. The various cases also highlight the potential for municipal experimentation in the US, with its strong local government power, and are suggestive of the learning that goes on as municipalities explore each other's approaches and experiences.

Reading the collection is rather like being a Harvard student, listening to a series of lectures, and puzzling what to draw out of them all. What, one wonders, do all these people say to each other when they meet together? How far do these contributions reflect the range of US planning experience and debate? It is left to readers to think about these questions, but I would recommend this text for those wanting an initial feeling for what US city planners and designers are arguing about.

Patsy Healey, Newcastle University

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