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Book Reviews

The Boston Renaissance: Race, Space, and Economic Change in an American Metropolis

BARRY BLUESTONE and MARY HUFF STEVENSON, 2000

New York: Russell Sage Foundation
424 pp.; US\$45.00 hardback
ISBN 0 87154 125 4

Detroit Divided

REYNOLDS FARLEY, SHELDON DANZIGER and HARRY J. HOLZER, 2000

New York: Russell Sage Foundation
320 pp.; US\$34.95 hardback
ISBN 0 87154 243 9

The Atlanta Paradox

DAVID L. SJOQUIST (Ed.), 2000

New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2000
300 pp.; US\$34.95 hardback
ISBN 0 87154 808 9

These three books summarise the results of the Multicity Study of Urban Inequality funded by the Ford Foundation and the Russell Sage Foundation. Teams composed of eminent scholars located in Atlanta, Boston and Detroit prepared these studies of the operation of the labour market within each of the metropolitan areas. The inequalities in labour market outcomes by race, ethnicity and gender are the central issues for all three books. Spatial differences or inequalities, especially those between cities and their suburbs, are addressed in the context of racial and ethnic differences.

For any serious scholar of US urban labour markets, these three books are a 'must read'. Each study does a nice job of reviewing the history of the metropolitan area's labour market, defining the characteristics that make their labour market unique and discussing the implications of the unique history and characteristics for labour market outcomes by race, gender and ethnicity.

Detroit, both historically and currently the most industrialised US metropolitan area, has experienced slow growth in the past 30 years and is also the most racially segregated metropolitan area in the US (hence, 'Detroit Divided'). In contrast, Atlanta has experienced rapid population and employment growth across all production sectors during the same period, but has also experienced increasing poverty rates among its African-American central-city residents (hence, 'The Atlanta Paradox'). Boston has experienced economic growth in income arising from the successful shift from mills to knowledge-based industries. At the same time, Boston has also experienced substantial growth in the representation of minority groups, including African-Americans, Asians and Hispanics (hence, 'The Boston Renaissance').

The studies use different approaches and address different questions on the theme of racial, gender, ethnic and spatial differences. The differences in questions and methodology often reflect unique situations in the metropolitan area studied. There are very few comparisons made with, or acknowledgements of, findings from other studies in the project. It appears that the only coordination or commonality for the three studies occurred with respect to data collection. The three studies use data derived from two special surveys conducted in their metropolitan areas that included common sets of questions. For the first survey, a racially stratified random sample of approximately 1500 residents of each metropolitan area was surveyed concerning their demographic characteristics, their attitudes about neighbourhoods, race and integration, their social networks, and their labour market experiences. The Multicity Study of Urban Inequality Employer Survey includes a sample of about 800 employers in each metropolitan area, who were asked about general company characteristics, hiring needs and employment practices, including

hiring for new jobs and for jobs vacant from turnover. Half the sample was drawn from telephone directories and half was drawn from the employers of the respondents to the first (household) survey. A follow-up in-depth telephone interview was conducted for "several hundred" firms from the employer survey in each metropolitan area and, for a total of 174 firms, the follow-up was a face-to-face interview. The questions in the follow-up surveys focused on jobs that do not require a college degree.

The data collected for these studies provide a wealth of new information on these metro areas and on urban labour market processes. The data collected on individual attitudes about neighbourhoods, race and integration are discussed in each book and, in particular, yield important new evidence. The Atlanta and Detroit books, for example, examined in detail the ratings that whites and blacks gave to the relative intelligence of whites and blacks as a group as evidence of stereotyping. Residents of both racial groups in Atlanta and Detroit were more likely to see no difference by race as their education increased and their age decreased. (There were also studies of the relative rankings of each racial group with respect to their desires to be self-supporting and the ease of getting along with one another. Because respondents may have been responding on the basis of real evidence of true racial differences in employment or of racial conflicts, I found these survey answers less convincing as evidence of stereotyping.) For both metro areas, there were also analyses of the willingness of blacks and whites to live in neighbourhoods of various racial compositions. For both metro areas and race groups, the willingness to reside in integrated neighbourhoods was greatest for the young and the most educated. For Detroit, the authors were able to compare the results from this recent survey with a similar survey performed in 1976. They find an increased willingness among whites, regardless of their characteristics, to reside in integrated neighbourhoods. Blacks were less willing, however, to enter all-white neighbourhoods than they were in 1976. While the overall results from these same questions are reported in the Boston study, there is no detail on the variation in responses with respect to the characteristics of respondents.

I was most captivated by the Detroit book. Both stylistically and substantively, it is the strongest of these three fine studies. One reason is that the study had access to data that were collected in earlier periods on the same topics. Another reason

is that Detroit is the more enigmatic metropolitan area to study. In many ways, Detroit is every US metropolitan area's worst nightmare. The Detroit metropolitan area, highly specialised in the motor vehicle manufacturing industry which has experienced employment decline, has grown in terms of population and employment, but at rates far below the US average. The nightmare aspect of the Detroit story, however, is the extensive inequality or divisions within the metropolitan area. The city has lost a staggering 85 per cent of its white population in 40 years (1950–90). Blacks (in 1990) are only 5 per cent of the suburban population, but 76 per cent of the city population. The median family income for city residents is less than half that of suburban residents; the median family income for blacks is less than half the median for whites.

While most large US cities are losing jobs and population (at least relatively if not absolutely) to their suburbs, most have a larger share of metropolitan jobs than of population, so that jobs per capita are higher in the city. This is not the case for Detroit. The city of Detroit now has 26 per cent of the metropolitan area population, but only 21 per cent of the jobs, which means that jobs are more prevalent per capita in the suburbs.

Farley, Danziger and Holzer (FDH) argue that—because in Detroit there is not efficient, low-cost transport and blacks face restrictions on areas where they can live—where jobs are located determines who gets them. They argue persuasively that current differences in wages and salaries between blacks and whites, and between suburban and city residents, are rooted in Detroit's history. The important components of that history include: the metropolitan area's specialisation in auto manufacture, which led to rapid growth in relatively high-wage jobs for low-skill workers early in the 20th century; the switch from European immigrants to migrants from the US South to provide labour starting in World War I, which led to a rapid increase in the proportion of black residents; and, increasing racial conflict from 1941 to 1973 as the growth in black residents meant that the racial composition of neighbourhoods had to change. The authors argue that two particularly divisive mayoral elections in 1969 (won by a white candidate with a law-and-order platform) and 1973 (won by a black mayor who attacked police abuse of blacks) followed by a Supreme Court decision mandating busing for city schools, accelerated the departure of whites from the city that began after World War II.

FDH illustrate their conceptual and data analyses with many reports of events (in sidebars) that contribute to their readers' understanding and interest. Their descriptions of racial conflicts in automotive plants during World War II, of racially divisive religious movements, including Father Coughlin and the Black Muslims, and of delays in the racial integration of professional sports (the Detroit Tigers) are examples of the numerous vignettes that illustrate their analyses. These stories, as well as the skilful presentation and analyses of data from the Multicity Study of Urban Inequality surveys, the US Census and other Detroit area surveys, provide convincing evidence of the real restrictions on access to housing and jobs for black residents of Detroit.

FDH also provide skilful graphical presentations of their data. For example, one graphic shows the percentage change in jobs within the metro area by salary level and gender between 1980 and 1990. FDH show that there have been increases in jobs paying under \$15 or over \$25 an hour, while the number of middle-paying jobs have decreased in metropolitan Detroit. Another graphic, which shows the percentage of metropolitan jobs by characteristic (such as education, wage, occupation) in the City of Detroit relative to the overall percentage of jobs in the city, provides a clear indication of how city and suburban employment differ.

FDH provide some of the more innovative analyses of the Multicity Study of Urban Inequality Employer Survey among these books. They show the power of these unique data in helping us to understand why black metropolitan residents are more likely, relative to whites, to work in the city. For example, FDH demonstrate that, controlling for their residential location, blacks are more likely than whites to apply for jobs in both the city and the suburbs. They find that the skill levels of the most recently hired worker for firms in the city and in the suburbs are comparable, but that blacks were less likely to be hired for the suburban jobs.

Sjoquist's book on Atlanta includes a series of chapters written by several scholars from the Atlanta area. In addition to the special surveys conducted for the study, the book uses data from the Current Population Survey of the US Census and the between-census racial counts prepared by the Atlanta Regional Commission.

The racial and spatial landscape of Atlanta resembles Detroit, but its economic circumstances are less desperate. Similar to the patterns for

Detroit, the city of Atlanta lost almost half of its white population between 1970 and 1990, leaving the city with a population that was two-thirds black in 1990. Blacks are more suburbanised in the Atlanta metro, however, than in Detroit. Blacks accounted for 7 per cent of Atlanta suburban residents in 1970, but had tripled their representation to 21 per cent by 1990. Job growth was also much greater in the Atlanta metro area than in Detroit. The Atlanta metro region almost doubled the number of jobs between 1970 and 1996. These new jobs were disproportionately in the suburbs. While the city of Atlanta accounted for 23 per cent of the metro region's population and 40.3 per cent of its jobs in 1970, the city included only 15 per cent and 24.8 per cent of metropolitan population and jobs in 1996. Because the city of Atlanta includes more of the region's jobs than residents, there are relatively more employment opportunities in the city of Atlanta than in Detroit.

In spite of the growth in employment and the greater suburbanisation of blacks in Atlanta, poverty rates increased among black residents of the city of Atlanta. In 1990, whites residing in the central city (where 6.7 per cent of metro Atlanta's whites reside versus 34 per cent of blacks) had the highest average income among white metro residents. Blacks residing in the suburbs had the highest average income among black metro residents, with the southern suburbs (where 27.9 per cent of whites and 40.7 per cent of blacks reside) showing the highest average black household income and the lowest average white household income. Sjoquist's Atlanta paradox is that black poverty rates in the city increased from 33.2 per cent to 35 per cent, while poverty rates decreased for suburban blacks and for whites regardless of metro location.

The edited chapters included in the Atlanta study provide some evidence on the 'Atlanta paradox', but are not sufficiently structured to address it directly or to explain the paradox conclusively. One chapter shows that black male annual earnings declined relative to those of white men "because of both changes in personal characteristics and changes in the market returns to these characteristics" (p. 152). The personal characteristic that changed most for black men relative to white men is the marriage rate. I am not convinced that marital status is a cause of annual earnings, however, as opposed to an effect of earnings differences or correlated with some other underlying cause that affects both earnings and marriage. The authors do not address these issues.

Several chapters analyse questions relevant to understanding the effects of suburban versus city locations on job outcomes for whites and blacks. Analysing data from the employer survey prepared for the Multicity Study of Urban Inequality, Sjoquist teams with Keith Ihlandfeldt and concludes that city poverty rates have grown for black residents due to their limited access to job growth in the suburbs. Interestingly, they find that neither race, nor education, nor employment status affected the accuracy of worker knowledge about the locations of job growth in the Atlanta region. They show that, other things being equal, blacks are less likely to receive suburban jobs (as in Detroit) and that 34 per cent of this racial difference is correlated with the greater distances of suburban firms from black residences; 21 per cent was correlated with the proximity of the firms to public transportation; and 18 per cent was correlated with the race of customers. Sjoquist and Ihlandfeldt attribute the latter factor to racial discrimination, but it could also be another measure of distance or physical proximity to black neighbourhoods.

In sum, the Atlanta study argues that blacks in the city experienced increased poverty because they were less likely to have access to the new job openings in the suburbs. Like Detroit, the absence of public transport made suburban jobs harder to access for central-city residents. Blacks moved to suburban locations and to suburban jobs, however, at greater rates than in Detroit. I was left wondering whether the selective migration of black city residents to the Atlanta suburbs and the in-migration of blacks to the city from outside the Atlanta metro area changed the characteristics of the black residents of the city. The change in the characteristics, both observed and unobserved, of the black central-city population in each time-period may account for the rising poverty rates. My concerns are not addressed in the book.

Bluestone and Stevenson document Boston's renaissance or revolution in three dimensions: demography, industry and spatial structure. Only 4.7 per cent of the residents of the Boston metro area were members of minority groups as recently as 1970. By 1990, the proportion had grown to 14.5 per cent. Half of the minority population is black with Asians and Hispanics accounting for most of the other half. Population growth rates were highest for Asians and Hispanics. Between 1950 and 1990, the Boston metro area went from 21 per cent of its workforce in non-durable manufacturing to only 5 per cent so employed. Growth

in service employment, particularly in professional services such as health and education, created new jobs to replace those lost in the manufacture of textiles and other non-durable goods.

As Atlanta and Detroit, the city of Boston lost population to its suburbs, declining from 25.1 per cent of metro population in 1950 to 14.8 per cent in 1990. Also, like the other two study cities, racial and ethnic minorities were concentrated in the central city. In the city of Boston, the proportion of residents who were members of racial or ethnic minorities increased from 18.1 per cent to 40.8 per cent of residents.

The first four excellent chapters of the Boston study tell the fascinating story of the evolution of the economic and social characteristics of the Boston metro area. The remaining chapters are more pedestrian, presenting data from the two surveys conducted by the Multicity Study of Urban Inequality. Unlike the Detroit and Atlanta studies, these chapters add no other data from the census or other sources to provide a longer history or substantiating and expanding the results of the Boston surveys. Much of the discussion is based on a comparison of averages or arithmetic means for populations. Additional statistical analyses that controlled for the variety of ways that the comparison populations differed from one another would have helped me to understand better how Boston compared to Detroit and Atlanta.

There is a very interesting finding contained in these chapters reporting the results of the surveys. The finding that the reasons for the lagging economic progress of blacks relative to others in the presence of the Boston's growth arises from decreasing hours worked per year, not from lower labour force participation and employment or relative declines in wage rates, is new and intriguing. Bluestone and Stevenson found that Hispanic and black men with low education participated in the labour force at the same rate as their white counterparts, but that they had lower wages. The largest difference contributing to lower annual earnings for black men was fewer annual work hours, resulting both from shorter job duration and from fewer work hours on a job. Unlike Atlanta and Detroit, where the location of jobs made employment difficult for black residents of the central city, in Boston the fewer hours worked over the year, rather than employment itself, account for lower earnings of less-educated black men.

These three books provide new information and

insights on labour market racial, ethnic and spatial inequality in three different large US metropolitan areas. In Detroit, we see the effects of extreme racial divisions and spatial barriers in a slow growth economy. In Atlanta, we still see low income and poverty concentrated among blacks residing in a city that is losing population and employment rapidly within an otherwise high-growth metro economy with substantial suburbanisation opportunities for black residents. In Boston, we see racial differences in income and opportunity that take the form of differences in job quality more than in employment itself. Racial differences persist and spatial differences are apparent (albeit at different levels) for all three of these metropolitan economies that vary in industrial composition, in history and in economic health. These three books have not provided the final answers as to why these differences persist, but they have collected data that warrant further analysis and have pointed us in new directions.

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Suburban Nation: The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream

ANDRES DUANY, ELIZABETH PLATER-ZYBERK and JEFF SPECK, 2000

New York: North Point Press (Farrar, Straus and Giroux)

290 pp.; \$30.00 hardback

ISBN 0 86547 557 1

Although *Suburban Nation* has become widely read and often is cited by scholars as a definitive statement of 'new urbanism' planning principles, the authors do not have researchers and academicians in mind as their primary audience. Instead, the book's introduction opens with comments addressed to those suburbanites who find, to their dismay and anger, that tranquil streets surrounding them, scenic undeveloped land nearby, small and non-crowded schools and many of the other things they moved to the suburbs to enjoy are disappearing rapidly because of too much 'bad growth' (i.e. endless housing sub-divisions, ugly shopping centres, overcrowded and unsafe roads). The book closes with a call to people living in city and suburban neighbourhoods to become 'armchair urbanists' committed to improving 'the public realm' and enhancing community life by demanding improved physical design of the built

environment, higher-density living, multifunctional land use, more diverse neighbourhoods and a reduction in reliance upon automobiles. Between these, the authors provide a lively (sometimes humorous) attack on the alleged evils of post-World War II suburban experience in the US, an account of why the situation developed so poorly and strong advocacy for proposals which they claim will solve most of the problems they previously cited.

Taken on its own terms, this book is a *tour de force*, a wonderful marshalling of the critiques of suburbia that have re-emerged in the past 10 years under the banner of 'new urbanism' coupled with some critical analyses selectively borrowed from work done under the 'new political economy' rubric of the past 20 years. The authors are well positioned to write this type of book since they direct one of the leading architectural and design companies engaged in planning new communities and restructuring existing areas in accordance with 'new urbanism' principles (Seaside, Florida, and Kentlands, Maryland, are their best-known projects). In that capacity, they have years of practical experience in analysing the flaws in suburban land lay-out, surveying and confronting the preferences and habits of suburban residents and home-builders, and battling with local politicians and zoning ordinances over what is best for both suburban and urban America. That background in architecture and the development industry, however, may contribute to a blind spot in their analysis with respect to class, racial and gender dynamics, as these matters are given less attention in this book than many social scientists think they deserve.

A cynical reading of *Suburban Nation* might assert that the authors are a vital part of the 'growth machine's' current form or strategy and that they are just arguing the case for the kind of development that is most profitable to their own corporation. After reading this book, I am persuaded that the authors' tie-ins to 'growth machines' vary by locality and are not necessarily smooth and unproblematic. Moreover, they are sincere in believing that their approach to community-building will cure much of what ails US society and their missionary zeal in arguing on behalf of 'new urbanism' development is grounded in a genuine faith that one can promote social justice and make money at the same time. I am not, however, convinced that the 'new urbanism' development they advocate can actually deliver all the benefits that they claim for it.

The core of the authors' argument is based on a dramatic and drastic simplification about US neighbourhoods. Duany, Plater-Zyberk and Speck contend that they take, essentially, two forms—'traditional neighbourhoods' and 'suburban sprawl'. Traditional neighbourhoods (which the authors prefer and use as the model for 'new urbanism' planning) are found in older cities and towns of Europe (and other continents too) and feature residential, commercial, recreational and civic functional uses in close proximity, multi-storey buildings, an intermixture of different types and prices of housing stock, narrow and relatively short streets that frequently intersect, a satisfying aesthetic appearance and vibrant street life. They contend that this type of neighbourhood was the dominant type in the US until World War II, and that it provided more viable civic institutions, more rewarding public settings and a safer, healthier, less isolated and less environmentally damaging way of life than the suburban sprawl that dominates post-World War II growth in the US. Places like Alexandria, Virginia; Princeton, New Jersey, Georgetown in Washington, DC; and Greenwich Village in New York City are mentioned as representing 'traditional neighbourhoods' that are still wonderful places in which to live. Clearly, the authors' intellectual 'patron saints' in urban studies are Jane Jacobs and William H. Whyte and they are briefly acknowledged.

Duany, Plater-Zyberk and Speck describe 'suburban sprawl' as the antithesis of the traditional neighbourhood, lacking its design features and therefore also lacking its alleged warm social relations. The familiar litany of negative characteristics that some social scientists have attributed to suburbs since the 1950s is presented: soulless, lacking in communal life, unsatisfying, boring, homogeneous or, in their words

cookie-cutter houses, wide, treeless, sidewalk-free roads, mindlessly curving cul-de-sacs, a streetscape of garage doors—a beige vinyl parody of *Leave It to Beaver* ... , worse yet, a pretentious slew of McMansions, complete with the obligatory gatehouse ... devoid of places worth caring about (p. x).

The authors attribute many contemporary ills to suburban sprawl: overdependence on automobiles, 'road rage', loss of farmland, the high divorce rate, increasing obesity, teenage suicide and a rash of shootings in suburban high schools, and even the higher cost of postage stamps. They also

allude to current urban social science research suggesting that suburban growth can create a racially and economically polarised society, draining the vitality out of inner cities, leaving them devoid of a middle class and with an oversupply of poverty-stricken residents. To their credit, the authors discuss the government policies that promoted post-World War II suburbanisation and argue that it was not a 'natural' or 'inevitable' outcome; but they do not analyse or delve deeply into the reasons why government policy took the form it did.

Perhaps the most interesting parts of the book are the sections where Duany, Plater-Zyberk and Speck show some of the less-obvious flaws in suburban design and encourage citizens, planners and developers to rediscover what it is about 'traditional neighbourhoods' that makes them frequently work so well. They provide descriptions, anecdotes, diagrams and pictures (many of which would be more effective if they were larger) that show good ways to mix high- and moderate-cost housing on the same block, and to create more attractive streets that encourage more walking and safer driving. Regional planning is also advocated and given a thought-provoking discussion in a chapter entitled "The city and the region". Their focus is not entirely on suburbs, and a chapter on "The inner city" and the final chapter, "What is to be done", take strong stands on issues of community design, policy and management. They call for, among other things, an end to all federal subsidies for automobile travel, equitable regional distribution of affordable housing, incentives that make it easier to produce 'new urbanism' development in the inner city (for example, endorsing centralised management of downtown 'Main Street' areas and supporting Wilson and Kelling's 'broken windows' ideas on enforcing civic order), and they hope that other states will copy 'smart growth' policies adopted by Maryland's state government. Readers who share the authors' enthusiasm for 'new urbanism' planning and development will find the Appendices quite useful; one is a checklist of items that make for a well-done 'traditional' neighbourhood and the other reproduces the charter of the Congress for the New Urbanism.

I believe that the authors are right in disagreeing with urban theorists who claim that our communities' physical forms have *no* social consequences (they cite Nathan Glazer as taking that position), but I think they go too far in the other direction. Many neighbourhoods that have

the 'traditional' design features with which Duany, Plater-Zyberk and Speck are so enamored are, nevertheless, dangerous and lacking in the positive civic and social relationships the authors hope to promote. Important economic, political and social factors are left out of their analysis. The authors cite evidence that supports their views, and ignore that which does not. But that appears to be the norm for writers using the advocacy mode. If one wants a clear statement of 'new urbanism' principles and wants to understand how planners and designers in that school of thought look at urban and suburban community life, then this is certainly an essential book to read.

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**Institutional Constraints and Policy Choice:
 An Exploration of Local Governance**

JAMES C. CLINGERMAYER and RICHARD C. FEIOCK,
 2001

Albany, NY: State University of New York Press
 151 pp.; US\$17.95 paperback
 ISBN 0 7914 4914 9

In the tradition of the work of Robert Lineberry and Edmund Fowler a generation ago, James Clingermayer and Richard Feiock in *Institutional Constraints and Policy Choice* examine how a variety of institutional constraints affect a broad range of municipal policy choices. The examination consists of several different studies, all conducted by the authors, on the linkages between various combinations of the two types of variable.

One of the book's unique contributions is to broaden the definition of institutional constraints beyond what has previously been studied. Thus, those constraints here include familiar dimensions, such as form of government (mayor-council versus council-manager) and form of council election (at-large versus district), but also extend to such new local-level dimensions as council professionalism and leadership turnover. Clingermayer and Feiock also look beyond the local level to possible state and federal constraints, such as state legal constraints on annexation and federal tax policies.

This broadening of the concept sometimes strains the meaning of the term 'institutional con-

straint.' In particular, council professionalism and leadership turnover might be characterised as dynamic behavioural tendencies of municipal governments rather than as immutable institutional constraints. This is not a major complaint, however, since those variables merit study regardless of the generic label they are given.

The municipal policy choices of interest here are mostly familiar, having been the subjects of extensive prior research by others. What is new is for so many different policy areas to be examined at one time. Clingermayer and Feiock examine zoning decisions, citizen contacting of city councils, privatisation of municipal services, municipal borrowing and municipal annexations.

The authors show a good understanding of the dynamics of each of these disparate policy areas. Each chapter begins with a comprehensive literature survey that culminates in theorising about the likely determinants of the particular policy. To assess those determinants empirically, the authors draw primarily from mail surveys they conducted during the 1980s and 1990s of several types of municipal official, sometimes employing national samples, other times using targeted samples specific to particular metropolitan areas. In addition, some other analyses in the book utilise census and other national data-sets.

Where the survey data are used, the measures of both institutional constraints and policy choices are based on respondents' perceptions—a fact which could prompt questions about the accuracy of the data. Perceptions are notoriously prone to distortion, to the extent that we would prefer more objective measures where possible. To be fair, objective measures of many variables would have been difficult or impossible to obtain but, for other variables, documentary sources (for example, International City-County Management Association *Municipal Yearbooks*) might have provided more reliable measures, which could then have been added to the survey data-sets.

The authors assess the relationships between the two types of variable using a variety of multivariate analytical techniques. They are careful, too, to utilise measures of other factors (such as population characteristics) that might also influence the various municipal policy choices. The analyses appear to have been carefully planned and executed.

The results generally confirm the authors' governing hypothesis—that is, institutional constraints do affect municipal policy choices. For a few examples:

- Greater council professionalism and ward systems of election appear to stimulate more contacting of city council members, presumably because full-time, ward-based council members encourage such contacting in order to build electoral support.
- Higher administrative turnover reduces the likelihood of privatisation, presumably because higher turnover increases the transaction costs for potential contractors. However, higher mayoral turnover increases the likelihood of privatisation (for reasons that are not entirely clear).
- State requirements that an area to be annexed approve the annexation by referendum decrease the likelihood of annexations, presumably by adding a substantial barrier to annexation.
- By reducing the favourable treatment of municipal revenue bonds, the Federal Tax Reform Act of 1986 reduced revenue bond borrowing by municipalities.

The results disappoint in several respects, however. First, the ability to explain different policy choices varies dramatically between the different analyses—from as low as 10 per cent to as high as 90 per cent. Yet, the authors make little of this variability, appearing to be satisfied to have shown that particular institutional constraints probably are influential.

Secondly, the findings frequently come with many *caveats* where the authors qualify their conclusions with comments on the limitations of the analyses (for example, missing variables, alternative explanations that could not be ruled out). To be sure, researchers should not be faulted for being candid about the limitations of their research, but here those limitations often seem so serious that the question arises, do these analyses really tell us much?

Taken as a whole, the book is also weakened by the lack of an overarching theme that might link the different chapters and build from one chapter to the next. There is, of course, the common thread of institutional constraints as influencing policy choices, but each chapter only presents a different variation on this theme, instead of building on earlier chapters. For that reason, the principal value of the book lies in how it extends prior research on the influence of institutional constraints on municipal policy choices. Here, the book is important reading for scholars who would examine some manifestation of this relationship. There is also value, as the authors argue at length in the book's conclusion, in how the analyses are structured to assess the contin-

gent nature of relationships, a distinction often overlooked in earlier research.

On the other hand, the book is an unlikely choice as a text for either undergraduate or graduate courses. The book is too much of a data analysis exercise and the conclusions come with too many qualifications to hold the interest of most students. As well, it is not clear how much students could take from this book beyond the conclusion that institutional constraints matter.

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Globalisation and Urban Change: Capital, Culture and Pacific Rim Mega-projects

KRIS OLDS, 2001

Oxford: Oxford University Press

311 pp.; £45.00 hardback

ISBN 0 19 823361 2

Kris Olds has produced a book based on his PhD thesis that is a model of rigorous research and honest theoretical probing. The topic, urban mega-projects (UMPs), in particular in Pacific Place in Vancouver and the new financial district in Shanghai, will be of great interest to many scholars and practitioners not only in the field of urban studies but much more widely.

What are UMPs? Olds identifies six central characteristics: they are developed with changing capital sources; they are modelled on each other; they are developed and planned by architects, financiers, engineers and planners with experience of UMPs around the world; these agents have both explicit and implicit internationalisation strategies in mind; they are marketed to overseas firms and the rich for lease or purchase; and they are designed to symbolise a global urban 'utopia' for the 21st century (p. 6).

Olds settles on the social constructionist approach, suggested by Appadurai's five scapes and Castells' space of flows. His two key critical ideas are that globalisation needs to be rescued from the abstract idea of flows and that the specific role of the city requires attention. This leads him to problematise two processes: flows of capital and development expertise; and flows of images and development expertise. Given this ontology, he sensibly chooses the concept of 'transnational cultures' for his network of élites, in preference to other current concepts such as cosmopolitans,

transnational capitalist class, global cultures, third cultures and globalised business élites. The reason he gives for this choice, in a rather gnomic footnote, is that these élites

are not necessarily capitalists and they straddle a variety of worlds/cultures/communities during the course of both work and leisure (p. 11).

This choice gives him a good deal of trouble as the narrative unfolds, as I shall try to show below.

The two 'transnational cultures' are the élite Chinese property tycoons who developed the Pacific Place project in Vancouver from the late 1980s to the mid 1990s, and the élite professional architects who were involved with the Lujiazui Central Finance District in Pudong, Shanghai, in the early 1990s. Already the term seems a little awkward.

It is by no means a weakness in the book that its origins in an obviously very well supervised PhD are signalled in four specific research questions. These are: What are the key factors leading these transnational cultures to extend their reach into Vancouver and Shanghai when they did? How did the transnational cultures extend their reach and control to formulate and activate global flows in these UMPs? What is the role of the state in each project? What role does the global city play in transnational cultures? And, to his great credit, he returns to these questions specifically in the final chapter (pp. 242–245).

Chapter 2 provides a useful classificatory infrastructure for the dynamic idea of urban mega-projects. Olds shows how a changing spatial order is nested in scale at five levels:

- (1) UMPs, usually situated within
- (2) world/global cities, are
- (3) a component of extended metro regions, these are often part of
- (4) transborder regions (for example, growth triangles) and/or
- (5) international 'development corridors' (p. 29).

For those who like lists, Table 2.2 on 14 Selected PacRim Cities with UMPs is useful (though the multifunction polis in Adelaide, for all its fine qualities, hardly qualified as a UMP when I carried out a series of interviews there in 1995—indeed its rationale seems to be entirely contrary to the UMP spirit).

Chapter 3, 'The social construction of global flows' is the most theoretically significant chapter and it is at its best when it attacks the popular but often superficially articulated idea of the space of

flows. Olds identifies six main traps of the global space of flows argument of Castells and others. They are fundamentally abstracted, decontextualised and dehumanised; the content of flows is homogenised and distanced from their authors; non-material flows, such as information, expertise and images, are rarely examined as the focus has been too narrowly economic; little attention has been given to how flows are mobilised; ditto on global cities and their cross-border networks; and there is a serious lack of historical, social and geographical specificity. Olds concludes this excellent critique by saying that

This book is one small contribution towards deepening and socialising the analysis of the global space of flows, by linking the flows to the actors who formulate them, and by interrogating the internal ever-shifting nature of the space of flows (p. 42).

This raises two issues. Why does he chose to focus on transnational cultures and what, specifically, is the advantage of Appadurai's formulation over that of Castells?

Chapters 4 and 5 (pp. 57–240) consist of a very detailed and in many places insightful presentation of the field work findings on the two mega-projects. Under the rubric 'Consumptionscape in Vancouver' he describes how Li Ka-shing, an extremely famous and highly regarded Chinese billionaire based in Hong Kong, who already had substantial family and financial connections in Vancouver, inspired the development of Pacific Place (the evocative advert for the residential sales is reproduced on p. 5). Olds locates this specific project firmly in the context of three key changes in the Canada–China relationship: increased immigration from Asia (the Canadian government entrepreneur and investor classification schemes for rich immigrants offered citizenship to those with between C\$150 000 and C\$500 000 to invest); the development of a "Pacific Rim outlook and sensibility among key institutions" (p. 75) leading to increased institutional thickness between Vancouver and Asia-Pacific (see Box 4.1, pp. 93–95); and the restructuring of Vancouver's central city.

Bearing in mind his choice of 'transnational culture' as his fundamental organising concept, his discussion of the role of Stanley Kwok, Lee's key man in Vancouver, is revealing. Olds writes

The mesh between global and local is dependent upon cultural hybrids like Kwok who use their expert knowledge to interpret local condi-

tions and negotiate difference ... He is one of the true transnational 'cosmopolitans', a person who is able to manage meaning strategically in ever-shifting and diverse circumstances (p. 129).

However, on my reading of the case, Kwok is an excellent example of a member of the transnational capitalist class, moving easily and profitably between its corporate, political, technical and consumerist factions. As an architect (a globalising professional), with deep local political connections, and with long experience of working with TNCs, it was not primarily transnational culture that worked for Kwok. As he is quoted as saying: "I just happen to be an architect who understands money" (p. 128) and, we may add, the needs of large-scale transnational urban mega-projects. However, and this is certainly the central flaw of the book, it does not make a great deal of difference, as the narrative drives the analysis rather than vice versa.

The rubric of Chapter 5 is 'Global finanscape in Shanghai' and, again, a measure of conceptual confusion creeps in. Despite the title of the chapter, it is mostly about the members of what Olds terms the global intelligence corps (GIC), defined as

the very small number of élite architectural and planning firms that aspire for prestigious commissions in cities around the world. These firms tend to be synonymous with high-profile charismatic men (p. 142)

such as Le Corbusier, Gropius, Mies (given as historical exemplars, in my view unconvincingly precisely because of recent transformations in finance). The contemporary members of the GIC here are Piano, Rogers, Foster, Koolhaas and Nouvel (represented by a remarkably silly quote on p. 143, although the picture on p. 214 suggests that we might be better advised to take it quite seriously!).

This chapter on Shanghai, nevertheless, is excellent, particularly on capital flows and the rise of stock markets. Olds suggests that an important factor in explaining the character of Shanghai development is that

the Chinese state feels the need to develop the symbolic space that they feel producer services firms should be housed in, thereby symbolising China's modernity (p. 170).

This is supported by the *ad hoc* process of land reform that encourages foreign investment and the

decentralisation of power over land use to various agencies in the city. The Shanghai government slogan: "Revitalising Shanghai; Developing Pudong; Serving the Country; and Marching to the World" (quoted on p. 191), Olds shows, revisits the project of Sun Yatsen in 1921 for the Great Port of Pudong to be a tool in China's national reconstruction!

The competition for the development of the financial district was organised by IAURIF, the French para-public urban planning institution. Ten signature architects were invited to apply and Rogers (from the UK), Fuksas (from Italy), Ito (from Japan) and Perrault (from France) were selected as foreign experts working with a local team from Shanghai. The lack of expertise on China of these four foreign firms was deemed irrelevant because they were believed to be able to offer solutions to problems facing all modern cities. (An interesting comment on architecture and the developmental state in China and Brazil on pp. 223–224 is one of several underdeveloped sub-themes of great potential in the book.) However, Olds chooses to spend rather too many pages on a hatchet job on contrasting the 'decontextualised' plan of Richard Rogers, with his rhetoric on politics, economics and culture. Olds cites his Reith Lectures to demonstrate Rogers' capacity for disconnection between brilliant plans and their implementation, the cause of his failure in Shanghai, which sounds to me like 'business as usual' under conditions of capitalist globalisation. (I cannot judge at this point how fair this critique of Rogers is, but hope to be able to do so soon when my own research on the globalisation of architecture is under way, a project very much stimulated by Olds' book.)

He concludes with 'Some final thoughts', comparing the 'jet-set quick-dip experts' like Rogers and some academics, very unfavourably with the Li Ka-shing family research process, grounded in intimate local knowledge of Vancouver. Academics should do more of this, Olds argues, and no doubt with Li Ka-shing's support, most of us would be happy to do so.

'Appendix A: Notes on methodology', discusses problems of multilocal field work very insightfully (with welcome asides on family life and the research process). Appendix B gives the 'List of Resource Persons and Institutions', so that researchers who wish to replicate this study and/or its methods will be able to do so. Despite my criticisms of his conceptual choices, I am happy to conclude that Kris Olds has written a

memorable book on a topic of great and increasing importance. It deserves to find many enthusiastic readers, preferably in a paperback edition.

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Urban Planning in a Changing World: The 20th Century Experience

ROBERT FREESTONE (Ed.), 2000

London: E & FN Spon
 284 pp.; £45.00 hardback
 ISBN 0 419 24650 9

The 20th century has been the century of urban planning. Since a significant proportion of humanity on every continent finds itself living in better circumstances at the end of the 20th century than at the beginning, one may argue that this is a result of planning. But history also teaches that planning has not always and everywhere been successful. A vast amount of literature on planning history has been produced in the past 25 years which reveals that planning practice has often been a process of trial and error. *Urban Planning in a Changing World* paints an interesting picture of the shifts in urban design concepts and political ideas about urban development throughout the 20th century. It is based on a selection of papers that were originally presented at a planning history conference in Sidney in 1998.

The structure of the book is as follows: Robert Freestone opens with an interesting overview of the concerns of planning history and an introduction to the various chapters. In chapter 2, Peter Hall gives a chronological account of 20th-century planning. It will be familiar to many readers because it resembles his nice book *Cities of Tomorrow*. Next, Stephen Ward analyses the international diffusion of planning. He presents and elaborates a typology of diffusion, based on the key notions of 'diffusion by borrowing' and 'diffusion by imposition'. In chapter 4, Dennis Hardy provides an interesting overview of the struggle between idealism and pragmatism, or the aim to create perfect cities in an imperfect world. He calls these 'quasi utopias'. Examples are presented which indicate that utopianism continued to exercise an influence on town planning in the 20th century.

Chapter 5, written by Jon Lang, focuses on

20th-century design paradigms, such as empiricism and rationalism. Empiricists tend to look at the present and the past for inspiration, whereas rationalist designers invent futures based on assumptions and proposals for new technologies and new social orders. Lang presents examples and critical reflections before finally making a plea for old paradigms to be reworked in order to generate and evaluate new ones.

At the beginning of the 20th century, North American architects and urban designers were inspired by European urbanism and they started the 'city beautiful' movement. In chapter 6, Gilbert Stelter reconstructs this old idea of re-establishing beauty and a sense of order in cities: the city as a work of art. He concludes that the accomplishments of the 'city beautiful' movement were considerable, especially in the US where it was associated with urban political reform and civic activities.

Neighbourhood planning has always been a key activity of town planning. In chapter 7, Dirk Schubert examines various neighbourhood theories, from 'garden cities' to 'gated communities'. He concludes that there is hardly any international consensus about the neighbourhood concept. Many empirical studies have demystified the neighbourhood myth. For instance, it progressively became apparent that human behaviour, social integration and political consensus could not, or could only marginally, be induced, steered, changed or affected by spatial concepts. Nevertheless, urban planning has always been and will always be focused on 'social betterment'. Raphaël Fischler, who recognises a shift from the prescriptive notion 'standard of living' to the more post-modern notion 'quality of life', elaborates this issue in chapter 8. Both notions exemplify a wish to represent human reality in objective terms and to rationalise collective decision-making. Fischler concludes that the 20th-century planning experience is a continued attempt to improve the lot of the citizen by means of standards-based policies and, according to him, it is also a story of responsiveness to the demands of capitalism.

Next, Robert Bruegmann examines the reasons behind what he calls 'a concerted attack on urban sprawl'—that is, unplanned low-density development at the periphery of larger cities. In a delightful and provocative chapter, he asserts that the ideas of the 'anti-sprawl crusade' were never clearly defined, are biased by class attitudes and have been extrapolated from insufficient and out-of-date data. According to Bruegmann, anti-

sprawl efforts will almost certainly not stop the development of the new multicentred and highly dispersed urban settlements that are appearing throughout the world.

In chapter 12, Maurits van Rooijen discusses the provision of open space, especially parks, in town planning. He concludes that the 'green city' concept of the late 20th century is not just a physical reality, but also a way of living and a manner of thinking.

The last three chapters do not so much deal with planning history as with contemporary planning issues. In chapter 13, Susan Thompson discovers that the city is a complex phenomenon and explores "planning's overwhelming failure to grapple with the reality of spatial and social expressions of difference and diversity". She was, however, unable to convince me. In chapter 14, Allen Scott attempts to explain the emerging system of global city regions. He concludes that notwithstanding the triumph of Anglo-American neo-liberal capitalism as a model for the rest of the world, there are many reasons for supposing that this framework of economic and political organisation may well reach exhaustion in the not too distant future as it runs up against its own intrinsic outer limits. In the final chapter, Brendan Gleeson and Nicholas Low also worry about the consequences of neo-liberalism and globalisation. They wonder: Is planning history? The last sentence of this chapter provides their answer: "Planning is undeniable history—the political challenge is to make it our future".

Reading for the umpteenth time about the garden city movement or the never-implemented ideas of Le Corbusier is for me a reason not to become too involved in planning history. However, *Urban Planning in a Changing World* is also a well-edited book that I certainly would recommend to everybody who cares about urban planning. There is something in it for everyone, even gossips. Did you know, for instance, that Haussmann, famous for remodelling Paris in the 19th century, tried to acquire the plans and studies of Cerdà, maker of the 1859 plan for Barcelona? Indeed, this book is both entertaining and stimulating. Of course, as is often the case with edited volumes, not all the chapters are equally strong. Several times, I got an awkward feeling that the word 'planning' was being incorrectly used, such as planning being equated with architectural design. Furthermore, some chapters are very journalistic—i.e. they describe in very broad terms 'what happened' rather than analytically explain-

ing 'how it happened'. For instance, legal and institutional factors are seldom discussed or even mentioned. In these stories, planners are often presented as the cause of everything, whereas in reality policy-making includes many more actors and stakeholders. However, this also proves that there are enough interesting avenues left for future exploration by planning historians.

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Women and the City: Visibility and Voice in Urban Space

JANE DARKE, SUE LEDWITH and ROBERTA WOODS (Eds), 2000

Basingstoke: Palgrave
216 pp.; £42.50 hardback
ISBN 0 333 77485 X

Women and the City is an edited collection that grew out of a conference held at Oxford in 1997, in the formative days of the New Labour government. According to Helena Kennedy, who opened the conference and wrote the foreword to the book, "the Oxford conference hummed with confidence and the belief that change was possible" (p. ix). The participants took their cue from the euphoria surrounding the sweeping away of the tired and hostile Conservative administration, and "a question hung in the air as to whether women's voices would be heard in the corridors of power" (p. ix). Sadly, the excitement, the buzz and the hum of the conference do not come across in this collection. Rather, the individual contributions feel dated and steeped in second-wave feminism. Perhaps the former is not surprising, given that I read the book after the re-election of the Labour government in 2001. The latter derives more from the reliance on a style of academic scholarship more common in the 1970s and 1980s. Then, authors had to work hard to expose the discrimination and disadvantage experienced by women in a bid for gender differences to be taken seriously as a form of structured social inequality.

There is no imposed structure or order to the 15 individual chapters that make up the book. The editors do provide a concise introduction, prefaced with a rather pertinent quote from Aristophanes (393 BC) about handing over the city's business to women. The quote aside, the introduction covers predictable material. It ranges

from a plea for the real need for women's activism, both nationally and locally, if women's voices are to be heard and incorporated into policy-making to the well-established theoretical links between gender and urban space. Although the tone of the foreword and the introduction suggests that the content of the book will be British-based or, more accurately, English-based, this is not the case at all. In the chapters that follow, case-study material is drawn from cities as diverse as Oxford, Beijing and Chicago. Thematically, the book is similarly broad, although the major axis does concern the 'stuff' of women's everyday lives: crime, family-friendly workplaces, housing, health and involvement in community-based organisations. Several chapters sit rather uneasily alongside this major axis, principally Bayton on music-making and Wilson's concluding chapter on the future of women.

But what of the individual contributions? Most are pint-sized pieces and report on substantive pieces of empirical research, many of which have been written about in more detail elsewhere. For example, Campbell provides the first chapter and rehearses her well-known argument that community crime in peripheral neighbourhoods is a key context in which masculinity is made and asserted as sexual difference and dominance. Unlike many of her peers, Campbell focuses on gender relations (rather than women *per se*) and here she uses her rhetorical skills to pitch into battle women and men of different generations and aspirations.

Other authors ground their research much more directly in a policy field and provide qualitative evidence to expose the problems of service delivery for particular groups of women. A good example here is the chapter by Harper on the healthcare experiences of elderly African-American women in Southside Chicago. Many of the women she interviewed—all in poor health—headed multigenerational and poverty-stricken households well into later life and battled with a local community where “gun and drug associated violence affected even primary school children” (p. 20). The ethnographic material presented (gathered from contacts made with women in emergency rooms) is shocking in itself and a shocking indictment of the failure of primary, community and home-care systems to meet the needs of elderly and ill women who (still) have heavy caring responsibilities for other family members.

But all is not so negative. On occasion, a

chapter appears about the real difference that women's activism has made and reminds that there *is* hope for us all. One such chapter is by Darke and Rowland who document the paradoxes and contradictions inherent in the rise of women in tenant management within the Conservative-controlled borough of Kensington and Chelsea. Thus we hear about the tension between the neo-liberal and neo-conservative arms of Conservatism. The former suggests that the council would be in favour of passing control of their housing stock from local government bureaucracy to tenants, while the latter emphasises that tenants must only gain control if they “can be seen as competent and responsible” (p. 147). The authors document the development of tenant participation amongst women and outline some of the more progressive changes set into motion as a result of the transfer of power to a tenant management organisation. These changes range from the gradual mainstreaming of equal opportunities in a local council known for disdain of such policies, to the confidence and skills developed by individual women tenants. However, the belly of the patriarchal beast is never very far from view and the authors discuss the invidious ways in which gender inequalities continue to be reproduced through the daily workings of committees, where men hold the more prestigious posts, and so on.

The main aim of the authors is to show the central importance of feminism to improving the socioeconomic circumstances of women today. There is no doubt that, as a whole, the collection does succeed in documenting the disadvantage and discrimination that (still) exist. But the book feels tired and the arguments about gender relations are often overly deterministic. While I am a great fan of materialistic feminism, this book relies too heavily on the ‘women and ...’ approach to scholarship; there is little here that readers will not be able to glean from similarly styled collections put together in the 1980s.

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Brussels: A Reflexive World City

CAMILLA ELMHORN, 2001

Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International

369 pp.; no price given, paperback

ISBN 91 972674 4 9

Together with post-Wall Berlin and some central

European cities recently swallowed up by Western capitalism, Brussels is undoubtedly one of the most rapidly transforming cities in contemporary Europe. Brussels is the 'urban moment' *par excellence* of a unifying Europe. But Brussels is much more than the seat of European 'bureaucracy' as Anglo-Saxon stereotypical representations would have it. In the wake of its European mission, it has become a unique multicultural and cosmopolitan experimental ground that is virtually incomparable with any other city on the globe. It does not really fit into existing explanatory models for 'world city' development. It therefore lends itself extremely well to original world city research that might substantially advance our knowledge about those global control nodes. But Brussels does not belong to the English-speaking world and that may partly explain why the relevance of what is happening in cities like this is somehow underestimated. One of the major weaknesses of contemporary world city research is probably the derivation of general hypotheses from limited empirical observations mainly within the English-speaking urban world (New York, Los Angeles, London). The rest of the urban world is conveniently classified and categorised in 'tiers' based on formal statistics (Brussels usually shows up as 'second-tier'). This classification mania not only reifies cities to timeless and spaceless boxes that are filled with variable amounts of headquarters, inward investment, etc., but, more worryingly, it shows hardly any engagement with what is *really* going on in those 'other' world cities. Therefore, an English book on Brussels trying to do exactly that should be wholeheartedly welcomed. *Brussels: A Reflexive World City* is an invaluable addition to the scarce existing work in English on Brussels.

Camilla Elmhorn, clearly influenced by the work of Chris Kesteloot, the leading geographical scholar on Brussels, has produced a well-documented and well-researched text on socio-economic change in post-war Brussels. She relies heavily on Sassen's world city approach to make sense of the overwhelming amount of empirical data she has collected. Although Elmhorn discusses the critiques of Sassen's work in several places, I believe that she too easily dismisses some of them. In particular, Hamnett's convincing critiques of the world city approach in this journal in 1996 are unconvincingly dismissed in just a couple of paragraphs. Although the author is not entirely uncritical of the world city thesis herself, it is my impression that she has treated

Sassen's thesis kindly in order to get on with one of her main aims—that is, the application of the global city thesis to Brussels.

And that may be the weakness of much empirical work in urban economic geography in general and of this book in particular. All kinds of concepts are stripped from their theoretical and empirical limits and subsequently treated as universal and depoliticised 'hypotheses' that can be taken from the shelf as if they were different brands of marmalade. So we read, for example, that empirical evidence confirms that Brussels has evolved from a 'Fordist' to a 'post-Fordist' city in recent decades. Which city has not? Who would contest that? And, frankly, who cares? When robbed of their political sting and the political settings in which they emerged, complicated and strongly politicised concepts such as Gramsci's notion of Fordism become safe theoretical umbrellas to disguise the undertheorisation of empiricist work. In a similar way, the 'global city thesis' lends itself easily to explain away (in a depoliticised, spatially fetishist manner) the upswing of brutal forms of capitalist exploitation and inequality in places like New York and London through simply invoking scale ('world city') as an explanatory variable framework.

The application of the global city thesis is itself not unproblematic. The thesis seems to consist here of a checklist of empirical indicators that have to be confirmed in order to classify the city under scrutiny as 'in line with Sassen's thesis'. Elmhorn's conclusion from this exercise is a qualified 'yes'. I am not convinced why we should care if and to what extent Brussels fits into Sassen's overexposed ideas on New York and London. The global city thesis seems to have been forced upon Brussels as a formalistic model in order to have a conceptual framework in the first place. Since the global city thesis was not developed with Brussels in mind—let alone based on research on Brussels—Brussels sits uneasily in this Anglo-Saxon designer straight-jacket that maybe should have never been exported. Perhaps the time is ripe for alternative theorisations of global cities from a continental European perspective.

The major strength of this book lies in the richness and variety of empirical data collated. The research for this book cuts across a wide range of available analytical techniques, from interviews to the use of census data. The interviews with company managers are particularly informative and interesting. Well-chosen quotes from in-

interviews reveal in detail why Brussels attracts so many international organisations and foreign headquarters. (Brussels hosts twice as many international organisations as London and, surprisingly, more European headquarters of US companies than London). Drawing on Michael Storper's notion of 'economic reflexivity', the book convincingly shows how Brussels, as a *place*, matters. Brussels has unique territorial assets that lure international companies to Belgium. Brussels as a *locality* seems to be crucial for globally operating firms. Interlocutors refer to Brussels as *the* place to lobby, gain inside information, set up international headquarters and benefit from a unique 'nomadic' labour pool that meets the demands of international organisations.

The book concludes with some appealing recommendations for world city research. It should pay more attention to less-researched world cities, focus more on the actions of local agents in those cities and provide more dynamic frameworks to explain why certain cities rise to world city status while others do not.

I can surely recommend this book to anyone who is interested in world city research, because it brings together in one volume a wide range of both primary and secondary data on a less-well-known world city. Its main contribution is probably that it demonstrates the value of in-depth research on how local power relations mould global cities and turn them into unique places in spite of their strongly transnationalised economies.

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Hong Kong as a Global Metropolis

DAVID R. MEYER, 2000

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

272 pp.; £42.50 hardback

ISBN 0 521 64344 9

Although Manuel Castells does not appear in this book's bibliography, David Meyer has produced an excellent illustration of what a shift from the world as a 'space of places' towards a 'space of flows' would look like. The volume is an intensive and well-researched examination of the 'social networks of capital' that converge on and originate from Hong Kong, and how they have made it the "global metropolis" of Asia. But the reader unfamiliar with Hong Kong will come

away with little sense of Hong Kong as a place, with nuances and complexities beyond those of constantly mutating economic networks. This contrast is graphically represented: 65 tables and charts, the majority tracing flows of trade and investment and their outcomes in economic growth and employment, are countered by only 4 maps, all of which represent Hong Kong in its regional context rather than as a place. The only photograph is a very grainy one of the skyline and harbour on the dustcover: perhaps an unintentional metaphor for the lack of focus on the details of Hong Kong's people and terrain.

The book's strengths lie in the analytical framework that Meyer has applied and in the conclusions that this produces. He focuses on the activities of "intermediaries of capital" in the context of "time-space and cost-space convergence" (p. 17). While many theorists argue that the declining resistance of space threatens to 'dis-intermediate' brokers, Myer contends that agents with powerful positions in networks, specifically those with a variety of non-redundant 'bridges' to other key networks through which trustworthy information can flow, can move up the ladder to increasingly sophisticated activities. This allows global metropolises to maintain their position within global flows while continually shedding roles that are devalued by competition and change. A key axiom is that "size alone does not confer power; instead, power comes from position in the network" (p. 230). For example, he argues that Hong Kong, rather than Tokyo, is the pre-eminent global metropolis for Asia, although Tokyo still qualifies as a global city because of its dominance in the massive Japanese economy. Within Asia, though, Tokyo is weakly integrated with Chinese social networks of capital, with the result that very few foreign corporations manage their wider Asian operations from Tokyo.

For Meyer, Hong Kong has been a global metropolis since the late 19th century. The majority of the empirical description concentrates on the period between 1842 and 1890 (pp. 52–139). The trading networks of Hong Kong and the region are meticulously analysed and the impact of political crises, technological developments and competitive strategies on networks of capital are carefully discussed within his theoretical framework. Decisions of major regional traders to locate their Asian headquarters in Hong Kong in the 1840s and 1850s 'locked in the pattern' by 1860. After that point, firms "had to participate in the social networks of capital within Hong Kong

to compete effectively in Asian trade and finance, and the branch structure of these firms ... made Hong Kong the hub of bridges to other networks of capital" (p. 119). Asia's impoverishment meant that trade required aggregations of tiny demands. This placed "a premium on low-cost intermediary business" and, since Western firms had expensive staffs and overheads, Chinese merchants managed to control most of the commodity trades by 1870 (p. 112).

The detailed coverage of this period is followed by cursory treatment of 1890–1945, an era that was far from insignificant for Hong Kong. Perhaps most notable among the events excluded is the boycott and strike of 1925 over the deaths of anti-foreign protestors in China. The port was almost completely shut down for over a year, and a large proportion of the workforce (over 100 000) not only left their jobs, but exited Hong Kong for their homes in China. The incident demonstrates not only the high degree of interest and sympathy among the Hong Kong Chinese for developments within China, but also the importance of transnational social networks other than those of capital in Hong Kong's history and the danger of focusing too intently on issues that appear relevant to the author's organising framework. Hong Kong is much more than simply a point on the globe with a particularly effective position in social networks of capital. Other social networks, including those that may organise effective opposition to intermediaries of capital in certain circumstances, also ramify through the territory.

Meyer picks up the story again with the transformation of Hong Kong from a trading centre to an industrial metropolis after 1949, particularly as a result of the closing-off of China. He ascribes its success again largely to the prior existence of trading networks, which through sub-contracting "gave small factories extraordinary access to market information and orders" (p. 166). Rising costs of labour, competition from others in the region and the opening of China to foreign trade and investment after 1978, resulted in the decline of manufacturing as those firms who transferred production across the border into China obtained a competitive advantage which forced others to follow. The decline of manufacturing brought Hong Kong's role as trading centre and regional

financial centre back into central focus. Meyer compares Hong Kong with its regional rivals (Tokyo, Singapore and Shanghai, in particular) and asserts its pre-eminence as a result of its role as the "meeting-place of the Chinese and foreign social networks of capital" so that "it offers the optimal base to scan business opportunities in China" (p. 205). While some observers believe that Hong Kong may eventually be eclipsed by Shanghai, Meyer disagrees. While Shanghai will become the regional metropolis for central and northern China, he argues that Hong Kong will continue to co-ordinate south China and compete with Shanghai for opportunities in central China, but more importantly its global links and status mean that

Mainland Chinese and foreign intermediaries ... that need access to these wider global capital markets will base their premier offices in Hong Kong, not Shanghai (p. 235).

Even within the context of the global city literature, Meyer's account of Hong Kong is narrowly focused. Hong Kong's Chief Executive, Tung Chee-hwa, recently argued that for Hong Kong to be a 'world-class city' it must not only attend to economic issues, but must also improve its cultural infrastructure and its environment in order to provide an attractive environment for the globally mobile corporations and professionals that are considered crucial to development in the 'knowledge economy' era. These issues are completely absent from this book. Similarly, Saskia Sassen's emphasis on the increasing inequality and social polarisation that she argues are inherent in global city status are nowhere reflected here. All of the things that make a city a place, and not just a space of flows, are largely wanting here, despite the fact that quality-of-life issues are increasingly a crucial part in interurban competition. Still, for the issues that attract his attention, Meyer has produced a clearly argued and well-documented account of the global networks that have animated Hong Kong since its first days, and provides a strong rationale for optimism for its continued flourishing in the 21st century.

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