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Louis Albrechts, Jeremy Alden, Artur da Rosa Pires (Eds), *The Changing Institutional Landscape of Planning*, Ashgate Aldershot 2001, 275 pp.

Tim Marshall, John Glasson, Peter Headicar (Eds), *Contemporary Issues in Regional Planning*, Ashgate, Aldershot. 2002, 264 pp.

The British/US publisher Ashgate has started a few years ago the series “Urban and Regional Planning and Development” with many interesting titles for planners, geographers and other academics interested spatial problems and policies. The two books here reviewed are part of it. Both are edited volumes with - as usual - a broad variety of contributions, but they differ clearly with respect to the background of the contributors. The ‘*institutional landscape*’ is the result of a collaborative project of academic members of the Association of European Planning Schools. They have performed a critical analysis of new planning ideas emerging in planning practice of several European countries. The origin of the ‘*regional planning*’ volume is a series of research seminars in the United Kingdom with a mixed ‘practice-academic’ input.

The *institutional landscape* starts with a rather brief introduction of the editors explaining the central theme, viz. the assumed mismatch between new planning approaches, the traditional planning rules and procedures, the institutions involved and the ‘planning culture’.

Unfortunately, this assumption is hardly clarified, but the editors return strong in the final chapter with a synthesis of the various contributions resulting in a discussion of the main driving forces of institutional change. Chapters two and three by Tewdner-Jones and Faludi respectively, are most interesting reflections on the changing planning landscape in Europe. In chapter four Alden discusses in a very informative contribution the national planning framework for the UK, also in relation to developments in other EU countries. Next, the planning developments in Flanders are elaborated by Albrechts in chapter five. He argues that the Structure Plan Flanders served as catalyst and initiator of change. Chapter six returns to the UK, where Murdoch and Norton clarify the ‘regional renaissance’ in this country. A most interesting region in Europe is the German Ruhr area with a population of 5.2 million distributed over 53 communities. Kunzmann elaborates in chapter seven that many location decisions in this region are based on ‘local power games and election periods’ and that a coherent regional vision is lacking. Very interesting is his plea for state intervention. Another surprise for me was chapter eight of Balducci about comprehensive planning in Italy. He asserts that traditional comprehensive planning is declining in favour of informal approaches, whereas Italian friends for many years taught me that in Italy projects always have been the result of ‘informal approaches’. Balducci’s reasoning, however, is very interesting for its intellectual richness. In chapter nine Da Rosa Pires presents the planning system in Portugal, which has a strong emphasis on local governance. Very interesting in this contribution is the importance culture to arrive – or gridlock – new developments. Chapters ten (by Holt-Jensen) and eleven (by Boland) illustrate by means of case-studies that bottom-up participatory planning is not always easy but morally very justified.

The advantage of *institutional landscape* for non-UK readers is that it contains much of the general information of *regional planning* but – of course – lacks the details provided by the many practitioner-contributors in *regional planning*. This last book includes fifteen chapters, which are all devoted to the British situation. It is started by a clear introduction of Marshall who clarifies the revival of regional planning in the UK. In addition, Cochrane discusses actual ‘region building’. Next, Alden explains the regional planning framework, to a large extent similar to his contribution in the other book, whereas Lloyd continues with the regional agenda in Scotland. Baker gives a critical reflection of the government offices involved in UK

regional planning, while Stott discusses the complex relationship between regional and local authorities. Four chapters (by Headicar, Marvin, Howes and Roberts) are devoted to special themes such as transportation and sustainable development. In addition, four cases are elaborated of different regional planning exercises, which show a considerable variation of approach. The last chapter by Glasson provides a synthesis and 'some interim' conclusions. *Regional planning* did not impress me very much, which is mainly caused by the fact that it mainly represents opinions rather than analytical outcomes. Opinions can be interesting, but my impression is that for a number of chapters more depth could have been created if experiences from other countries with a tradition in regional planning would have been included.

Both books will have a different audience: the *institutional landscape* is especially appealing for an international audience of planning academics, whereas *regional planning* is primarily of interest for British policy-oriented academics and practitioners and perhaps a few academics elsewhere who want to obtain a closer insight into British planning developments.

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