

Tony Champion & Craeme Hugo (Eds), 2004, *New Forms of Urbanization, beyond the urban-rural dichotomy*. Ashgate, Aldershot (ISBN 0 7546 3588 0), 411 pages + index

Leo van den Berg, Jan van der Meer, Peter Pol, 2003, *Social Challenges and Organising Capacity in Cities*, Ashgate, Aldershot (ISBN 0 7546 3455 X), 411 pages + index

The incredible variety of urban characteristics and spatial dynamics make cities a most interesting subject for research in a wide range of disciplines. Many books have therefore been published about cities and urban developments. The books of Champion & Hugo and of Van den Berg et al. are interesting examples of two fundamentally different approaches. The collection of papers in Champion & Hugo more or less present traditional descriptive analysis of urban development in various parts of the world, whereby the book of Van den Berg and colleagues focuses on a single angle of incidence, i.e. the 'organising capacity' of cities. This is defined as 'the entire process from the identification of certain needs, through development of strategies and policy, to implementation of the policy and monitoring the results.' (p. 7).

The collection of papers in Champion & Hugo have been written by members of a working group of the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population (IUSSP). It includes some of the leading researchers in the field of urbanization. Important chapters are, among others, a description of (sub)urbanization processes in the US (by Frey), in Latin America (by Lattes, Rodriguez and Villa), in Asia (by Jones), in Sub-Saharan Africa (by Bocquier), in Mexico (by Garza), in Delhi (by Dupont), in Brazil (by Pinto da Gunha) and in China (by Yu Zhu). I was pleased by the interesting overview of Tony Champion; and the more conceptual chapters of Denise Pumain and of Larry Bourne and Jim Simmons. Altogether this book presents stimulating thoughts, especially on the urban-rural continuum.

A more local perspective on cities is presented in the Van den Berg book, which has all characteristics of a well written consultancy report, i.e. a lack of references of academic literature; mainly self-references, and superficiality of case descriptions and analyses. It compares the situation of eight cities in five different European countries. In line with modern organisational and planning theories the city is more or less seen here as a living organism, operating in a complex network structure. Despite this network structure with different actors and interests, the authors assume that cities set goals and implements policies. The problem of conflicting interests, for example, is not well dealt with. Very interesting is the focus on social revitalisation policies, where three different contexts are distinguished, viz. the spatial-economic context, the administrative context, and the social-cultural context including problems resulting from the voluminous immigration flows from other countries.

Both books contain useful material for urban researchers and I can certainly recommend purchase by their libraries. The book of Champion & Hugo is also of value for the student market.

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