

BOOK REVIEWS

Gidon ESHEL, *Spatiotemporal Data Analysis*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2012, 312 pp.

As stated by the author in the introduction, ‘data analysis is essential for scientific progress’. No matter what background you have: medicine, ecology, computer science, geophysics, psychology etc. – to start data analysis, it is necessary to know mathematical foundations and quantitative tools. *Spatiotemporal Data Analysis* by Gidon Eshel is a comprehensive guide to analyzing multidimensional data sets. The book is clearly divided in two sections: foundations and methods of data analysis. The first part (chapters 1–5) provides introduction to the subject. It organizes knowledge of linear algebra and data analysis tools, i.e.: properties, assumptions and basic operations on vector spaces and matrixes, as well as eigenanalysis and singular value decomposition (SVD). The second part (chapters 6–13) covers a wide range of econometric methods available for simultaneously analyzing more than one data set. This section deals primarily with regression models and their properties. As emphasized in the preface, ‘latter chapters are best appreciated by a reader for whom this book is not the first encounter with linear algebra’.

One of the primary strengths of the book is its plain language and clear presentation of the subject. Each chapter begins with a narrative preface, which smoothly introduces the topic. Most of the described theoretical issues are supported by examples from everyday life, which enable the reader to imagine complex econometric problems in an accessible way. For instance, the author compares the covered material to colours. He illustrates linear algebra as some kind of ideal world, where everything is indisputable: either black or white, and contrasts it with the world of practical data analysis, where one can find a lot of greyness, i.e.: unambiguity, simplification and subjectivity. This imperfection of data and limitations of modeling can be dissolved by means of statistics, which ‘somehow fill in the gap’, according to the author.

The last chapter of the publication consists of practical exercises and sample exams, corresponding to the presented material, which suggests that it is a textbook for students. However, the book – thanks to its accessible language and narrative character – seems to be rather a guide for experts from many different fields, not only mathematicians, who use data analysis in their work.

One cannot discuss with theory of algebra or econometrics included in the publication, but we can assess the way it is presented. In this case the clear presentation supported by interesting examples makes it valuable for those interested in data analysis.

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Alexander OTGAAR, Jeroen KLIJS, Leo van den BERG (eds.), *Towards Healthy Cities: Comparing Conditions for Change*, EURICUR Series, Ashgate, Farnham 2011, 128 pp.

The book *Towards Healthy Cities: Comparing Conditions for Change* evaluates the progress of the WHO's Healthy City program (launched in 1988) in five cities across Europe and Canada. Health is a complex subject and the authors have used an integrated framework to evaluate healthcare programs under the Healthy Cities project across these five case-studies. The book is written from a 'developed world' perspective and the issues discussed are quite varied but contrast the experiences of the cities in much of the 'developing world' where urban populations are much larger, inequalities are deeper and healthcare systems are inadequate and inaccessible to the urban poor including distress migrants from rural areas. The nature of health issues is also different in the two worlds. For example, the case study of Helsinki in the book reveals that lifestyle issues such as those of 'couch potatoes' (p. 28) were a concern in the city. In the developing world however infectious diseases such as tuberculosis and AIDS are major killers. Although the case studies are limited to the 'developed world', the book will serve as a useful guide for planners and policy makers all over the world and is a valuable contribution to the field of urban planning and health.

The major theme explored in the book is the inequality in the access to healthcare. The five case studies are those of Helsinki, Liverpool, London, Udine and Vancouver. In the introductory chapter the authors explain the integrated framework that they have used for the analysis of healthcare across these different cities, such as that of 3C's i.e. Citizen Empowerment, Corporate Responsibility and Coordinated Improvement of urban health conditions. Chapter two deals with Helsinki in Finland, which has been a largely egalitarian society but where inequality and social segregation is on the rise (p. 21). The authors explain how the IT companies formed a Forum Virium to address six areas such as traffic services, healthcare, learning, retail trade, multi-channel distribution and digital home. A living lab was also set up to introduce new healthy living concepts to the population.

Chapter three deals with Liverpool, which the authors explain is the 'most deprived' city in the United Kingdom. It describes the innovative interventions that were made to make the city healthier, such as strengthening public-private partnerships on health, having big debates on health, and optimising the use of hospital space. The case study of London in chapter four details the 'Well London' program that was operational from the year 2007 to 2012 (p. 65). It focused on improving healthcare in 20 small areas in the city

through nutrition, exercise and mental well-being. This reflects a progressive and broader view of healthcare that promotes long-term healthy lifestyles rather than patchy healthcare interventions that can be emulated in the 'developing' world.

The case study of Udine in chapter five highlights how in the year 2009 the government of Udine identified 3 categories of people/aspects for interventions: the elderly; the young and adolescent and the environment. Interventions targeted at children included promoting healthy snacking habits among them and encourage them to walk to school by facilitating walking clubs.

Chapter six deals with the city of Vancouver, which has a large migrant population. The authors explain that it is one of the best performing cities in terms of health indicators. However, downtown eastside had a public health emergency in the 1980s when prostitution entered the scene (p. 92) and HIV/AIDS was on the rise especially among drug users. The strategy used by Vancouver administration to overcome the crisis was cooperation among the three levels of government i.e. the state, province and the city. The three levels of government signed an agreement in the late 1990s to revitalize downtown eastside. The program included a multi-pronged strategy which would involve community development, a homeless action plan, build opportunities with business and enrich the supply of cultural facilities. The authors conclude by saying that Vancouver adopted an effective approach to empower its citizens, ensure corporate responsibility, and effectively coordinate the efforts (p. 104).

In the concluding chapter the authors re-iterate their conceptual framework and how it helped them to analyze cities that are varied in their characteristics such as population size and other socio-economic characteristics. While London, Vancouver and Liverpool are metropolitan areas, Helsinki and Udine have smaller proportions of migrant populations. They also varied in socio-economic profiles, traditions to cooperate and autonomy. This is the reason the authors argue that these cities adopted diverse strategies under the healthy cities framework. The documentation of these varied strategies is what makes the book a useful guide-book for governments, policy makers and health professionals across the world. The book would however have benefited from a discussion of Healthy City practices in the 'developing' world. Asian and African countries joined the WHO Healthy Cities program in 1994; case studies from countries like Egypt, Tanzania, Bangladesh and Pakistan would have helped bring perspective from the Majority World.

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Colin MCFARLANE, *Learning the City: Knowledge and Translocal Assemblage*, Wiley–Blackwell, London 2011, 232 pp.

For most European planners, urbanists and professionals dealing with local development, the process of learning is strongly connected with the notion of region – learning regions, regional policy, clusters, innovations. For McFarlane learning is the gate to postmodern city. Postmodern or rather poststructural attitude is manifested in another notion used by

the author – *assemblage*. As he explains in the *Introduction* ‘it connotes the processual, generative and practice-based nature of urban learning, as well as its unequal, contested and potentially transformative character’ (p. 1). Thus the key concept of the book is ‘urban learning assemblage’ which is developed by conceptualization of learning and its translocal character.

The city is seen by the author in its everyday existence. The notion of everyday practice was introduced to Anglo-Saxon academic oeuvre by French philosopher Michel de Certeau (*The practice of Everyday Life*, English edition 1984). Certeau distinguished between producers (institutions of power and their strategies) and consumers (individuals with their tactics). City created with strategies is a compatible total unit whose image we can find on the maps. Individuals never see the whole. They have their particular views and shortcuts. Ordinary dwellers of the city by using their tactics fight for their specific way of life and place of life. They creatively resist power strategies.

For McFarlane the actors are average city dwellers as well as planners and decision makers. Interpretation of the city is also done using the concept and practice of policy mobility. It seems that to some extent Certeau’s ‘practice’ is substituted by ‘learning’ – on-going process of creation and negotiation. While Certeau pays attention to all aspects of living in the city, McFarlane focuses more on dwelling. For him ‘assembling the everyday’ can be seen with ‘incremental urbanism and tactical learning’. As he notices ‘learning the city emerges not through a formal, linear cognitive process, but through experiential immersion in urban space-time’. There is also certain tension between actors depicted by McFarlane.

Learning the City consists of six chapters. In the first one the author discussed the notion of urban learning assemblage. As mentioned above, it is the key concept and definitely needs examination. It provides the basis for the rest of the essay. McFarlane sees learning as a three-dimensional process which combines *translation*, *coordination* and *dwelling*. Such attitude evokes Heidegger’s *Building Dwelling Thinking*. *Assemblage* is presented as a spatial grammar of learning – resultant of distinctive combination of knowledge, power and resource. In the second chapter he examines everyday life through two concepts: incremental urbanism and tactical learning. The third part is dedicated to the politics of urban learning. The author uses the example of Slum/Shack Dwellers International to ‘demonstrate the importance of translation and coordination’ (p. 10). It is interesting to read this part in the context of Harvey’s *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution* – the book was published a year after *Learning the City*. Also the fourth chapter might be read having *Rebel Cities* in mind. McFarlane looks here for common urban forums and wonders what circumstances may encourage people (various actors of everyday city life, from marginalized poor dwellers to state, researchers and activists) to participate in such forums. He concludes that it depends on the quality of the forum itself and openness of authorities. In chapter five the author addresses the question of ideology and tries to solve the problem of urban policy mobilities and its presentism. Finally, in the last chapter the author constitutes *critical geography of urban learning*.

McFarlane brilliantly quotes literature, people and places. We have a review from Le Corbusier to Lefebvre and Massey, we visit places from Mumbai to Los Angeles. It is

a beautiful example of geography done in and out of academia. *Learning the City* proves that combination of vast fieldwork and solid theoretical reflection may succeed.

The book should be called an erudite lecture on geography. It is not easy to say what geography – urban, social, human or maybe geography of learning as the author concludes. *Learning the City* needs real attention and prior *knowledge assemblage* from the reader. In return it offers mature consideration of the city and learning process.

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