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**BOOK REVIEWS**

**Jörg KNIELING and Frank OTHENGRAFEN (eds), *Planning Cultures in Europe: Decoding Cultural Phenomena in Urban and Regional Planning*, Ashgate, Farnham 2009, 328 pp.**

When I started to prepare the review of Knieling and Othengrafen (2009), to better understand the specificities of *European Spatial Research and Policy*, I referred to a previous review I prepared for this journal, of *Industrial Restructuring*, by Lidia Greco. I was astonished to read the first sentence of that review, which I cite below and which is as good a starting point for this review as the sentences I had planned to write. 'Interest in culture as a variable in explaining particular places has increased in recent years in geography and the spatial sciences' (Benneworth, *ESRaP* 2004/11, p. 187).

This is as true today as when I wrote this, but despite this increasing interest, the big problem with spatial research into culture is a tendency to treat it in one of three ways. The first is to regard culture as totalising, completely shaping what actors in a cultural territory achieve, the so-called 'ecological fallacy'. The second is to regard culture as functional, something to have arisen out of and explicable in terms of past events, often producing unsatisfactory and overly economic explanations. The third is to treat it as a residual variable, explaining all the other things that cannot be more rationally explained, such as uneven entrepreneurship rates as a consequence of 'risk averse cultures'.

The challenge is to avoid these three traps, and in the case of planning, to be much more specific about culture's relationship to the built environment and. Knieling and Othengrafen are therefore to be lauded in trying to build these links by highlighting the dual face of planning, something with both physical and cultural dimensions. Planning's physical dimension exists in terms of the planning artefacts which emerge and shape the built environment. Culturally the norms and practices of planning are connected to broader political and social movements, thereby shaping culture. The problem with this model is that 'planning' is pulled from both directions by a variety of forces at different scales in ways that change over time.

When Gallestrup maps these pressures in the opening chapter, this both highlights the scale of the challenge in developing a cohesive model, but also raises a worry that any model necessarily lacks specificity to better interpret particular concrete case studies. In their concluding chapter, the authors attempt to pull together the empirical contributions into an overarching model, but again, the model becomes more of a list of factors at a number of dimensions, rather than providing any sense of what dictates the dynamics between those different levels. In that regard, the book fails to really provide a grand

unifying theory of culture and space with predictive as well as *post hoc* value in providing explanations of particular concrete situations.

That should not detract from the fact that the book's elements are helpful in starting to explore this theme of the relationship of culture and the built environment more systematically. If Gallestrup's model is too complex and encompasses too many dimensions, the reasoning presented in his chapter at least begins to specify how we might begin to think about these relationships. The chapter could have been strengthened by identifying key nexuses of relationships within the model, and the repertoires of frequently occurring influences between different levels of the model. To some extent, this is what Waterhout, Morais Mourato and Böhme do in their chapter concerning Europeanisation, as they trace how the elite 'idea' of Europeanisation has changed planning practice with backwash effects for local planning cultures. Somewhere within this maelstrom of ideas is undoubtedly a systematic model for the treatment of culture, and whilst the book does not achieve that model, it is illuminating to read contributors' efforts to grasp the elusive idea.

There are nine empirical chapters in the book that are the grist to the editors' model-making mill. Whilst they are too variable along all kinds of dimensions to be directly comparable, they are all nevertheless very interesting, unearthing all kinds of interesting interpretations of how culture has shaped planning. It is useful to think of the planning of Italian cities as a struggle between progressive planners, arrogant architects and patronising politicians. Each is concerned with different urban domains, *viz.* the equity of the modern city, the aesthetics of the ancient city, and the governance of the lived city. The dynamics of different Italian cities play out differently depending on the endowment and agency of each of these groups and domains. It is not so explained in the chapter, but it emerges in its reading, and fits as a heuristic if not analytically Gallestrups' or grander theories of culture and planning.

My favourite chapter is Fischer's contribution on Germanness in planning cultures. On one level, I was shocked to see that the canonical Walter Christaller had been involved in applying his spatial geographical theories to wartime plans for occupied Poland. But perhaps more interesting was the story about the incorporation of idealised forms of housing into political parties' programmes, and then the subsequent realisation and shaping of that type of housing through implementation of the political manifestos. The housing stock – apartments versus houses – acquired over time a politically imbued meaning which stemmed both from its political idealism but also the pragmatism involved in its delivery, and its incorporation within particular political struggles and electoral contexts. With hindsight it is possible to conflate the idea, the ideology and the implementation of housing projects, but Fischer's point is that these elements built up over time in place-specific trajectories. These trajectories acquired, through political parties and the mass media, broader cultural resonances which were internalised and subconsciously shaped national planning norms.

If the opening section of this review seems overly critical, let me stress that I thoroughly enjoyed reading the various contributions, it was just that they did not quite hang together in a rigorous and systematic way. Dühr teases out marvellously the way that the maps that define spatial planning have very different and context dependent meanings in Germany, England and the Netherlands. Tykkynnen traces how the collapse of centralised planning in the Soviet Union has given rise to a subaltern and defeatist culture

amongst planners in St. Petersburg. Prehl and Tuçultan situate an *ersatz* urban prestige project in Istanbul within an urban cultural landscape evolving over centuries and decades, and seeking to functionally and symbolically open up Turkey to the European Union.

These various empirical contributions have the effect of lifting one at a time the veils shrouding the grand theory of planning cultures, and revealing tiny fragments for the delectation of the readership. But then as each chapter ends, the model is once more shrouded in ambiguity and complexity, leaving the reader with a feeling for the direction of travel without being able to precisely define how the built environment and cultural formations are inter-related. Nevertheless, the book is a welcome contribution to a long-standing, difficult and seldom-satisfying discussion about the relationships between people, planning and places. Readers should be prepared to commit the time to digesting its many messages and assembling them into a more coherent and at least intuitive understanding if not model of why places look different, and what the role of planning is in underscoring those differences.

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**Christine MILLIGAN, *There's No Place Like Home: Place and Care in an Ageing Society*, Ashgate, Aldershot 2009, 176 pp.**

Christine Milligan, a geographer working in a division of health in the United Kingdom, tries to contribute to new geographical analysis of care for frail older people. She addresses the issue from a health geographical perspective and has been driven to do so from her personal encounter – ‘the experience of care during the periods of both my mother and father-in-law’s illness that drew my attention to the apparent disorder and disparities in the system’ (p. xi). This personal drive caused a highly passionate and also highly professional output. As Milligan rightfully claims, the care situation can be best described as ‘disorganized and chaotic’ and therefore creating distress, confusion and humiliation for all involved; both the elderly, the family as well as the care-givers. Milligan, in her introduction, underlines the importance of this kind of research, the need to improve care and places of care. The importance of people and places in the construction and delivery of care to frail older people is illustrated by a wide array of stimulating examples and empirical data in this interesting contribution.

In the background is the debate on ageing all around the world and the implications for the future need for care of senior citizens. The book by Milligan addresses key concerns about the nature and site of care and care-giving. The importance of this issue cannot be denied. Both societies and individuals strive to improve their *well-being* – the quality of life, happiness, and their ability to influence these outcomes by continuous processes of change and improvement. In this field, Milligan delivers a theoretically informed research on emotional intersections between people and places in various spatial and social contexts. In Europe, the group of persons aged 65 years or more is currently the fastest growing segment of the population. Seniors constitute the fastest growing population group in many countries worldwide. This is an issue that affects all generations and has far-reaching consequences for the social, cultural, economic and political make-up of countries. The ratio between care-givers (formal or informal) and care-askers is changing at a very fast rate. An increased number of elderly people are expected to live longer and try to stay independent in their own home. With increasing age, in general, functional capacity declines and elderly people display heterogeneous and complex health problems, especially in terms of functional limitations. So staying at ‘home’ is not always an option. However, ‘Care for older people is laden with territoriality. As such, it can be seen as a spatial expression of how human action is bound up not just with the power relationships of care, but also with tensions, conflict, emotions and change’ (p. 147). People use ‘home’ as a safety place for possessions, memories and emotions and people generally have positive feelings inside or in the vicinity of their own house. This secure feeling can be beneficial for the wellness and well-being of seniors and elderly that are in need of care. Furthermore, governments want to stimulate long-independent living arrangements; people need to stay in their own houses as long as possible. This might be cheaper for the state budget, but the ‘costs’ for those giving care ranging from shopping and the managing of finances to personal care and medication – are very high. The assumption that individuals, mostly members of the elder persons’ families, are willing and able to take such responsibilities is one that Milligan contests. She argues that through these assumptions, the house is changed into a preferred site of care, which increases complexities of the relationships between formal care and informal care within the ‘home’ – which can be the private setting, but also public or private institutional setting as well as the street, neighbourhood or the whole community.

In nine chapters Milligan addresses several issues of care and ageing from different perspectives. From conceptualisation of the variables, through exploring the meaning of ‘home’ in caring, through the impact of innovations and changing policy attitudes towards care, towards a reconfiguration of the landscape of care. Milligan adds to a greater understanding of how the interplay between local practices and social policies for care with care provision and the larger structural forces of care giving work within and across space works. The book can be a source of inspiration for a wide range of researchers – for those involved in demography, health care, geography, economics or even real estate. It has inspired me and a few of my colleagues to pay more attention to issues such as old age and place attachment, but also changing demand for care functions in an ageing society, both in teaching and in research.

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**Joseph HERRIGES and Catherine L. KLING, *Revealed Preference Approaches to Environmental Valuation*, Vol. I–II, Ashgate, Aldershot 2008, 1173 pp.**

We are discussing an impressive two-volume hard cover collection of articles on *Revealed Preference Approaches to Environmental Valuation*; a work with a handbook status. Now, most academics have a great love for books. Being academics ourselves, we would have been extremely proud if we had been the editors of such an impressive work, and to see it on bookshelves next to the Webster's dictionary and the Times Atlas of the World. But since we are academics, we are also trained to be critical; so we will be. What merit do these volumes reveal in terms of state-of-the-art-knowledge? And what knowledge do these volumes transfer to their reading and studying audiences?

The first volume starts with a quote from Marshall: 'We may now turn to consider how far the price which is actually paid for a thing represents the benefit that arises from its possession. This is a wide subject on which economic science has very little to say, but that little is of some importance'. Marshall wrote this in 1890 and wrote about things people can possess. However, the topic of the volumes at hand is valuing things you usually cannot possess: environmental goods. Marshall would probably have argued that economic science has even less to say about such matters. Looking at the sheer size of the volumes, Marshall would have been terribly wrong by now. The volumes count 76 articles totalling over 1000 pages and this collection is 'far from exhaustive' according to the editors. So there is plenty to say about the subject.

The editors want to give a state-of-the-art overview of current issues, not 'classical' papers, although some of the papers range back to the 1970s. And none of the contributions is from later than 2006. This is a first but important weakness. It claims to be state-of-the-art, but actually seems more a refreshment of the topic from the 1980s, 1990s and the early 2000s. The second weakness is that the more than generous majority of the contributing authors come from the United States of America – which is understandable, since this is where the editors are based – however, one gets the feeling the volumes are more about the US state-of-the-art in this field than an international state-of-the-art. We kept wondering why hardly any European researcher has been involved. We know they are out there...

Judged by the number of articles in the volumes, the current field is dominated by valuation methods either using demand for recreation or Hedonic pricing methods. 40 of the 76 articles are on recreational demand and 28 are on Hedonic models. Interestingly, only 5 articles are dealing with averting behaviour and only 3 articles – which is less than four percent of the two volumes – is on combining stated and revealed preferences. Economic science more than a hundred years after Marshall certainly has a lot to say. But, Marshall would ask, is it all really that important? Reading through the two volumes we cannot overcome a feeling of disappointment. This feeling is perhaps best illustrated by a quotation from the editors' own paper in the first volume 'The main purpose for the decomposition [of the modified Hanemann use non-use distinctions] is to aid our understanding of the inherent limitations on the empirical welfare measures that can be extracted from revealed preference data' (Herriges *et al.* p. 57 in the volume). This is an important message either implicit or explicit in many of the gathered papers: it is

limitations all-over. So, in the end we study our two volumes hard to learn what? To learn about the many limitations economics has in discovering something empirically important.

Personally, we would rather the editors had followed the hope in their hearts more, and do much more on what they say is 'crossing the line a little': mixing stated and revealed preferences. We quite agree with the editors that 'this is an exciting area of research with large amounts of untapped potential' (p. xv). Surely, worldwide in this inherently multidisciplinary field, they could then have found more valuable contributions than the papers offered now.

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**Vera CHOUINARD, Edward HALL and Robert WILTON (eds), *Towards Enabling Geographies: 'Disabled' Bodies and Minds in Society and Space*, Ashgate, Surrey, UK 2010, 269 pp.**

'To all those struggling for a more enabling society'. This book's dedication reflects the editors' cognizance of the persisting geographies of disability, and their hope for enabling spaces, be they social, emotional or physical. The editors are respected scholars of Disability Geography (DG), their work is characterised by pushing into new realms of inquiry and thought that are highly relevant and compelling, addressing today's complex and diverse issues including increasing incidence of chronic illnesses, new forms of 'normalist' hegemony, and rapidly evolving technologies. Therefore, any work put forward by them is likely to garner interest, and this book does not disappoint, given the high quality of the author contributions and the diverse understandings of disability brought together in one volume.

*Towards Enabling Geographies* is a compilation of fourteen highly readable chapters, where chapter 1 by the editors serves as a multipurpose tool, wielded adeptly by the editors. They first dissect the traditions in DG scholarship, then finely suture together the four main themes of the book in a chapter overview, and finally apply a lens to the field to identify what else requires to be addressed. The history of DG scholarship is traced from the 1970s, identifying studies dealing with incidence and distribution of disabling conditions, access and mobility concerns, and mental health and health care issues, mostly performed in the positivistic medical geography tradition. These predated the 'first wave' of critical studies that gained momentum in the early 1990s. This 'first wave' coincided with the increasing acceptance of the 'social model' of disability, thus these studies were more concerned with examining 'structural and institutional productions' of disability than previous works. However, 'first wave' scholarship was also critical of the non-corporeality of the social model, and began to incorporate greater elements of embodied experiences of 'disability' and 'impairment' into DG, setting the stage for the next wave of DG scholarship.

The essence of the current volume is captured well in the opening paragraph of the preface, which also enumerates the four major (overlapping) themes running through this book:

This edited collection represents a ‘second wave’ of geographical studies of disability. [...] geography’s interest in disability has broadened and deepened [since the ‘first wave’ to include]: other bodies of difference [...], the bodily experiences of people with impairments [...], the increasing role of technology [...], and [...] engage[ment] in policy debates...

However, this description also brings up critical questions about what might constitute ‘disability’, ‘geographical studies of disability’, and by extension, ‘enabling geographies’, a descriptor featured in the book title. The book is evaluated below in the light of these questions.

The definition of ‘disability’ has always been a problematic venture, as reflected in the discussion on pages 1–6 of the introductory chapter. However, as the preface makes clear, this book opts for a wide definition of ‘disability’, drawing into the purview of DG those identities who might or might not be ‘impaired’ but still experience the marginalization and disadvantages typically associated with ‘disability’. Within this first theme of ‘other bodies of difference’ are included chapters on contested and often abstrusely defined ‘impairments’ and ‘disabilities’ such as fibromyalgia and other chronic illnesses, intellectual impairments/learning difficulties and autism spectrum disorders. Also included in this theme are chapters highlighting how bodies differing from the ‘accepted, desirable norm’, such as fat/obese bodies, little people, D/deaf and hard of hearing, and aging bodies can also experience ‘disability’ due to the similarity of their encounters regarding negative social attitudes and ableist environments.

As an extension of this theme, I believe that the inclusive nature of ‘disability’ used here can transform the current ‘theories in/theories of’<sup>1</sup> state of theoretical DG to ‘Disability Geography as meta-theory’ by providing a broad framework for conceptualizing disability, disablement and the contextual constituents of place that determine ‘disability’. For example, various marginalized identities based on caste, sexuality, and gender could also constitute ‘bodies of difference’ depending upon differing cultures and societal contexts. It is not so much which categories can fall into ‘disability’ but rather what it is about them and the experiences of those categorised within them that constitutes a disability in a particular socio-cultural context. Just as ‘privilege’ and ‘hegemony’ have become powerful explanatory frameworks that conceptualize that which is prioritized and valorised, ‘DG as meta-theory’ can provide a strong basis for conceptualising experiences where the common denominator is the disadvantaged nature of ‘othered’ entities to the point of disablement, as understood in place-specific contexts.

The second theme of ‘embodiment’ substantially answers the question of ‘geographies of disability’. Over the last few decades, human/social geography has greatly widened its scope to encompass broader understandings of ‘space’ – this book falls in this tradition. Most chapters use what may be described as perhaps one of the most elemental of scales – the human body, while also utilizing this analytical unit as a basic

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<sup>1</sup> A distinction between procedural and substantive theories proposed by Faludi (1973), which was hotly debated, but is useful here, nevertheless.

geographic space (see Herod 2010 for scale/space discussion) – i.e., the body as locus of various life experiences, characterised by boundaries, buffers, and unique characteristics/topography. Additionally, larger scales (e.g. home as physical space) and traditional geographic understandings of distance are also considered, albeit with added psycho-emotional and socio-spatial dimensions, respectively.

Regarding the question of what constitutes enabling geographies, at first the works did not seem to do the title justice, as page after page went over often-poignant accounts of marginalisation. However, on reflection, it becomes more apparent that perhaps the hope in the title is justified due to various undercurrents of resistance and empowerment visible in some accounts: claiming space through the virtual world, or the interdependence visible in the emotional lives of persons with disabilities and their immediate social networks, or the often defiant reaction to disabling labels handed down by (biomedical) institutional structures. To strengthen that case, local ‘spaces of marginality’ are much more than a ‘space of deprivation [but] also a site of radical possibility, a space of resistance’ (bell hooks, 1990, p. 342 in: Herod, 2010, p. xiii).

*Towards Enabling Geographies* is also a classic example of the whole being greater than the sum of its parts. Not only does the book present individual studies that in of themselves provide insight into a distinct worlds of ‘disability’, but it also adds to the field methodologically and theoretically. The methodology is predominantly phenomenological, ranging from autobiographical to interview based research. Each is highly robust, testifying to the power of such methods in generating rich and nuanced understandings of social phenomena. The value of the entire work is also enhanced by the fact that the contributions are implicitly or explicitly embedded in theoretical frameworks that greatly augment the appropriate contextualisation of disability.

Since DG is deeply embedded in the critical tradition, it is unsurprising that post-structuralist (including feminist) perspectives dominate these frameworks. Particularly recurrent are direct and indirect applications of Foucauldian conceptualisations regarding the nature and power of discourse in framing identity, labeling, and scrutinizing the ‘disabled/different’ body. Additionally, notions of coping, disablement/enablement, and claiming social space form important backdrops in multiple chapters. Models with a distinct spatial element are also represented in two chapters, through the utilisation of ‘social-ecology’ and ‘socio-spatial’ models. The book is also valuable in that it brings out highly topical issues related to technology, but minus the viewpoint of ‘technology as panacea for persons with disabilities’. Additionally, it makes the important point that geographers have not sufficiently engaged in policy and/or politics, which is essential to the empowerment process.

The conclusion to chapter 1 provides future directions for DG scholarship and presents some important concerns. The editors note the ‘absence of work by geographers beyond Western and urban contexts’ in much of DG scholarship, despite the fact that those often regarded as ‘minorities’ from a western perspective actually constitute the ‘Majority World’, and persons with disabilities are disproportionately represented in this part of the world (see Stone, 1999). While it is encouraging that the editors are cognizant of this paucity of DG scholarship from or regarding the Global South, it is also puzzling why despite this acknowledgement, no such work appears here – there are several scholars producing work on disability that falls either squarely in the geographical

tradition, or has a distinct geographical focus, and who do not summarily accept Western conceptualisations of disability. Works by Inge Komardjaja (2001) and Anita Ghai (2002) are examples of one representative work in each category, respectively.

Finally, some areas of further study recommended are mental health, chronic illnesses, embodiment, and geographies of care and support. Regarding the first, I would also venture to add that from a geographical point of view, mental health issues and experiences need more attention. We often speak about persons with (and even those without) mental/emotional health differences as being in a 'world of their own'. It is undeniable that perhaps the next 'frontier' in exploring space and place is the human mind – it is time we chart, map, and experience these worlds, and hopefully come away richer.

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