

Book review

THE INTERCULTURAL CITY PLANNING FOR DIVERSITY ADVANTAGE

P. Wood and C. Landry. Earthscan, 2007.
ISBN 978 18440 7436 5 £24.95, 384pp.

Phil Wood and Charles Landry's book explores the relationship between human diversity and city planning, and essentially argues that a more heterogeneous nation is better equipped than a homogeneous one to weather the storms of globalization and change (p. 11). Therefore it affirms that the attitude towards diversity in urban environments must stop being defensive and start being valued as an advantage, a belief that interculturalism in our public life is not only a better alternative but something that is desirable, attainable, sustainable and will actually add value to our urban communities and economies (p. 216).

Wood and Landry outline the setting of today's world's increasingly plural condition and analyse its relation to urban change, describing some of the advantages, costs, forms and scales of cultural exchange in these spaces of difference, drawing hypotheses based on the value of cross-cultural relationships. The study recognises that the creative challenge is to move from multicultural city fragmented differences to the co-created intercultural city that makes the most of its diversity (p. 14).

The intercultural city concept is founded on Western secular humanist philosophy and proposes a set of civic values, rules of engagement and behaviours with cultural awareness. Following the introduction, the authors provide a broad review of the literature focusing on five strands: cosmopolitan cities, diversity impact in business strategies, diversity and innovation, social psychology studies, and, to finish, the recognition that there are positive public policies on diversity internationally and at a national and local level (i.e. the UK model of multiculturalism). Interculturalism is presented as a fresh alternative in contrast to multiculturalism which is becoming a hindrance to creating a more dynamic and interdependent society (p. 62).

Wood and Landry reserve special attention to the study of modern zones of encounter (chapter 5) as the opportunity arenas to generate and nurture community relations. This chapter describes and presents possible topologies of interactions and its practical applicability for local agencies. The final sections of the book explore the themes of cultural literacy,

consultation and engagement, education, local leadership, governance and citizenship through a proposed intercultural lens. Additionally they define indicators of openness and interculturalism along with suggested gathering methods at a federal and city level. In the end the study proposes that in order to release the benefits of cultural diversity cities need to become intercultural under a set of five principles (i.e. leadership, city-making, city-management, citizenship, bridging and mixing) and delineates a basis for policy implementation proposing ten steps to an intercultural city policy (p. 321–324).

The authors describe a wide range of positions in the contemporary debate yet miss the reference to several critical thinkers that may have been of value to this discussion (i.e. Sharon Zukin, Arjun Appadurai, Gilles Deleuze, Pierre Bourdieu and some British culturalists such as Richard Hoggart and his work on cultural literacy). Nevertheless the book provides an extensive review of the existing literature and achieves an excellent balance between practice and empirical evidence. The data presented support the argument and the information available on personal experiences is highly significant.

The book builds upon research that Comedia undertook for a previous study entitled *Cultural Diversity in Britain: A Toolkit for Cross-cultural Co-operation*¹ and therefore evidence is drawn mainly from the UK case; however there is also reference made to case studies in Europe, the USA and Australasia. An added concern is the study's scope: the authors should have generated a more in-depth debate on how we can invest in Europe's diverse societies by promoting integration. To be precise this study would have benefited from a detailed comparative analysis among European policies and contexts, since Europe is the UK's neighbour reality. For example Sweden and Portugal had the best migrant's integration policies in 2007 (Migrant Integration Policy Index, EU)² and there is also an interesting study developed by the European Institute for Comparative Cultural Research (ERICarts Institute) called *Sharing Diversity: National Approaches to Intercultural Dialogue in Europe*.³ In short the authors could have identified a set of inter-related indicators to capture the multi-dimensional nature of the diversity phenomena in Europe and developed a strong analytical framework to assist their interpretation.

To conclude, the book overall identifies, interprets and creates suggestions towards a possible implementation of the

intercultural concept into the reality of practice, providing a better understanding on how different socio-cultural forms could converge in urban contexts. Its main purpose is to provide guidance to private practice and policy-making, and critical researchers can benefit from different practical approaches and experiences.

Wood and Landry attempt a coherent narrative for diversity and how it can answer the problems of our age (p. 23). In a democratic world only we, place-makers and public, can create the change and this reading is a good start to raise awareness so we start focusing on what we share rather than what divides us (p. 4). This book is an important addition to the existing

literature and a valuable resource for all the professionals in the built environment.

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REFERENCES

1. P. WOOD, C. LANDRY and J. BLOOMFIELD. *Cultural Diversity in Britain: A Toolkit for Cross-cultural Co-operation*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation, York, UK, 2006.
2. See <http://www.integrationindex.eu> (accessed 15/07/2008).
3. See <http://www.interculturaldialogue.eu> (accessed 15/07/2008).