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BOOK REVIEWS

MANUFACTURING CULTURE: THE INSTITUTIONAL GEOGRAPHY OF INDUSTRIAL PRACTICE
By Meric Gertler, Oxford/NYC: Oxford University Press. 2004. 201 pp. \$95.00
(hardcover).
ISBN: 0-19-823382.

Over the last two decades, Professor Gertler and other scholars working in and around economic geography have fleshed out fairly intricate, theoretically heterodox frameworks of regional political economy. Gertler's compactly written *Manufacturing Culture: The Institutional Geography of Industrial Practice* highlights his contributions, which examine the role of institutions in shaping regional economic development and how the composition and working of these institutions varies by national and regional context.

The book contains seven chapters. The first chapter introduces the larger conceptual backdrop against which the following six chapters unfold. I was mildly disappointed that the chapters recast material previously published as six articles, but this practice is nothing new in the social sciences. However, the preface was actually one of the more lucid I have read recently, and along with the introductory chapter it helps binds together what threatened to be disconnected chapters. Through the course of the chapters, Gertler reveals his interest in the relationship between industrial culture, learning and innovation, national competitiveness, and regional prosperity. A central methodological premise that runs throughout the empirical chapters is that case studies, and especially longitudinal case studies, provide an important means of understanding this relationship.

Chapter 1 provides a nicely nuanced critique of the literature about the role of institutions at various scales in shaping local, regional, and national economic development. While Gertler's interest emerges from the literature on national industrial crises popular in the 1980s, he transitions into a discussion of culture generally and institutions in particular that shape places' and firms' development trajectories. He makes a distinction between institutions that operate at the societal level, the attitudes and values that are shared by members of that society but experienced at the individual level, and economic behavior expressed as firms' industrial practices (Gertler 2004:7). The distinction between these three tends to hold up throughout the rest of the chapters although could be made more explicit at times to add additional continuity. Chapter 1 also trots out summaries of each of the following chapters before incorporating a review of the literature from various camps associated with the (un)importance of proximity in enhancing firm-level and regional competitive advantage, succinctly problematizing the notion of proximity. He ends with three clear policy implications: "best practice" is a problematic notion; it is important to have domestic producers of advanced machinery if firms in that country use those machines; and piecemeal approaches to enhancing individual firms' competitiveness will be less effective if they do not take place within a series of more tightly articulated interventions (at the regional or national scale) which alter the ways labor markets are regulated and investments are financed.

Chapters 1 and 2 are an extended literature review for the empirical analysis in Chapters 3 and 4, and pose two research questions: why are investment returns in new technologies frequently less than expected; and why are some firms more successful than others in adopting new technologies?

Chapter 3 explores the relationship between spatial context and interaction between machinery producers and users. Gertler relies primarily on survey and interview data collected at Ontario manufacturing firms using advanced machinery. He documents and theorizes problems arising from subtle yet deep cultural differences between North American manufacturing firms and overseas machine producers.

Chapter 4 relies on survey data and interviews with machine producers in southwest Germany to describe the regional industrial system in which many German machine producers are habituated. He finds that their deeply ingrained assumptions contrast sharply with those of North American machine users, leading to the problems discussed in Chapter 3.

Chapter 5 provides an alternative explanation for Germany's slow growth following German reunification, arguing that the lack of growth has less to do with high domestic production costs and more to do with the fact that it is lodged in the decline of Germany's mechanical engineering sector, which produces most of Germany's advanced machinery. In turn, Gertler links this decline to an expansion of non-European customers who in turn operate under different assumptions about how these machines should be used.

In Chapter 6, Gertler sifts and sorts debates about tacit knowledge, codifiable knowledge, and their alleged geographies before reinterpreting the data in Chapters 3, 4, and 5 through a conceptual framework building on the works of Karl and Michael Polanyi.

Chapter 7 critiques claims that national industrial systems are converging in a world of falling transportation and communication barriers, and roots this critique in the realization that learning is the heart of the competitive dynamic (although one might argue that a more generalized urge to accumulate underpins this particular motivation to learn). Chapters 6 and 7 provide rich conceptual frameworks but provide no testable hypotheses, and I wonder if any of these highly theorized processes can be tested. While I think it is possible to study these processes, perhaps using ethnographic techniques, some suggestions on how to proceed here would contribute additional value added to the debate.

Overall, this book has three strengths. First, it provides a cross-national comparative analysis of three national-cum-regional industrial cultures: Canada's southern Ontario; the U.S. Midwest and southern manufacturing regions; and southwestern Germany. As such, it provides a model for how to conduct similar cross-national studies. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 provide excellent examples of mixed methods research in economic geography and a clear model for other scholars of economic development to emulate and innovate upon. Second, it demonstrates how to use longitudinal qualitative case studies embedded within a largesse of data collected from numerous contexts as part of a larger research project. Third, it provides a clearly theorized regional political economy account of how institutions operate and shape path-dependent development. This discussion provides a clear starting point for

the next round of investigation into the role of national and regional institutions in shaping national, regional, and local competitive dynamics.

Likewise, the collection contains three weaknesses. The biggest is that the literature reviews tend to reflect the times in which they were written: some chapters do not incorporate literature from later than 1995. Optimally, the research would have been updated to deal with any changes in the literature. Second, an even more transparent methodology would allow other researchers to extend data collection and ask the same research questions in different national or regional contexts, thereby making further cross-national comparisons possible. Finally, the book could use a concluding chapter. Optimally, this would weave together the book's threads, instead leaving us with a three-and-a-half-page conclusion tacked onto Chapter Seven.

In summary, each chapter stands on its own, in part reflecting the fact that most of the chapters were previously published as articles—although this is a criticism, it is a criticism that should be leveled more widely throughout economic geography and not just at Professor Gertler. Still, this book is worth owning and would be useful for teaching graduates and advanced undergraduates because of its clear examples that in turn are linked back to a very coherent and detailed conceptual framework.

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VISITING GRANDCHILDREN. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE MARITIMES

By Donald J. Savoie, Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 2006. xiii + 415 pp. \$35.00 (paper). ISBN 0-8020-9382-0.

Donald Savoie is one of Canada's most prolific writers on regional development policy. Donald Savoie holds the Canada Research Chair in Public Administration and Governance at the University of Moncton (New Brunswick, Canada). He has had a long and distinguished career in public service as a high-ranking civil servant in the Canadian government and continues to act as an adviser to provincial premiers and federal prime ministers. Donald Savoie is also a passionate Maritimer, deeply concerned with the future of his region within Canada. Savoie seeks to explain why his region, the three Maritime Provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island, have historically been left behind, compared to the rest of Canada. The three provinces have traditionally been, and continue to be, among Canada's poorest (as measured by income per capita), plagued by continuing out-migration of its young to the rest of the nation. The title of the book stems from a 2004 speech by Stephen Harper, then leader of the opposition and now Canada's prime minister, in which he expressed the hoped to "see the day when the region is not a place where you visit your grandparents, but instead . . . the place where you visit your grandchildren."

That day has not arrived. The Maritimes continue to lag behind the rest of the nation, although their relative position has improved over the last four decades. Why have the Maritimes lagged behind? Savoie's answer is unequivocal. As befits an author whose training and experience lie in political science and public administration, Savoie sees the roots of the problem in politics. It's all about who has power and who wields it. This is the book's recurring storyline. Savoie, like many Maritimers, feels that the region was dealt a raw deal at the time of Confederation (1867). Lacking a U.S.-style senate (in which each state/province has the same weight) to compensate for their small population, the Maritimes found themselves in a minority position in the new nation. "National" policies naturally tended to favour the larger "central" provinces of Ontario and Quebec. Tariffs and transportation policy in the early days of Confederation were so devised as to consolidate and strengthen Canada's industrial heartland, concentrated along the Quebec City–Windsor corridor. Faced with the behemoth to the south, Ottawa's objective was (and still is, Savoie argues) to reinforce Canada's national economy. In this game, the Maritimes are necessarily losers. This is the basic message of Chapter 2 entitled "History Matters," which follows the introduction.

The thesis that the Maritimes were ill-served by the Confederation and that they were (and still are) a victim of politics is by no means new. This is a recurrent theme in the great Canadian regional policy debate. The Maritimes are not alone. Every Canadian region has its list of historical grievances in which Ottawa is almost always the villain. Regional griping is quintessentially Canadian. Perhaps this is what makes our nation both so lovable and so difficult for outsiders to grasp. We adore debating the faults of our constitution and our regional relationships. Savoie's book is truly Canadian in this respect. How could it be otherwise in such a geographically absurd nation with two languages and six time zones? We Quebecers have developed Ottawa-bashing into a national art form. Blaming the East (or Central Canada as it is also called) is a must for any westerner worth his salt. There are even recent noises that oil-rich Alberta is thinking of seceding. Northern Ontarians see themselves, with some justice, as the forgotten stepchildren of Canada's richest province. And even Ontario seems to have gotten into the act recently with its premier complaining that it is getting a bad fiscal deal from Ottawa. Something must be right in a nation where everybody seems to think they are getting a raw deal.

Savoie puts the Maritime case very convincingly. His recurrent argument, however, almost always comes back to politics. Chapter 3 is called "Theories Matters Less," in which he easily dismisses what might be called more academic explanations founded in economic geography, regional economics, and location theory. This is not his cup of tea, and he has no compunctions about saying so. This is not a book about regional economics. Thus, the book does not seek provide an analysis of the Maritime economy, its industrial structure and economic geography. For the author, these are seemingly secondary matters. What matters for Savoie in the end are power relationships and public policy. Chapters 4 and 5 are, respectively, called "Trying This" and "Trying That," providing a detailed history of federal regional development programmes from the 1960s through the early 1980s. The author's main message is nicely summed up in the titles of two later chapters: "Regional

Economic Development Was All About Politics, Pragmatism, and National Unity” (Chapter 7); “The Problem: Big Dogs Eat First” (Chapter 10). The reader will have guessed that the Maritimes are the small dogs, stuck in the same pen with the Big Digs.

The chief strength of the book lies in the descriptions of the application and the daily politics of Canadian regional development policies from the first timid steps in the 1960s to the present day. Savoie is an insider and it shows. He knows what he is writing about. This is not an altogether happy tale. Four chapters (4 to 7) are dedicated to telling it. Savoie goes through the entire alphabet soup of programmes and departments (ARDA, FRED, DREE, DREI. . .) that the federal government has at various times initiated and later abandoned. Non-Canadians can be forgiven for getting lost in this bureaucratic maze.¹ Indeed, it is unlikely that anybody but a Canadian with a specific interest in public administration and regional policy will really appreciate these chapters. These policy chapters do, however, provide a useful lesson, which goes well beyond the purely Canadian case. It is almost impossible in a parliamentary type democracy to long sustain a policy that openly favours a specific region (i.e., the Maritimes). Politics will simply not allow it. As MPs represent constituencies, whose interests they defend, political compromise and give-and-take require that each constituency has its turn at the trough. In Canada, as elsewhere, this has been the undoing, in the end, of many regionally directed development programmes.

Savoie does a superb job of portraying the inner workings of the Ottawa bureaucracy, although the reader might be forgiven for suspecting that he has somewhat overstated his case. The picture he paints of Ottawa’s imperial, British-inspired, civil service and its aristocratic disdain for the natives (read: Maritimers and other provincials) makes the British Raj in India look almost benevolent. The wily schemes of Ottawa bureaucrats to derail colleagues who have “gone native” (yes, Savoie uses the term) make Sir Humphreys of “Yes Minister” (a popular BBC series) fame seem like a rank amateur. But then perhaps this is the way the game is played. Savoie should know. Even paranoiacs have enemies, as someone once said.

Perhaps most surprising is Savoie’s concluding chapter. Although the title is openly political (“The Solution: Where Can Little Dogs Eat?”), the solutions he offers would warm the heart of any neoclassical economist. He basically argues in favour of more flexible wage rates and labour markets. If the Maritimes are to be competitive, given their location disadvantage in North America, they must offer a compensating cost advantage. Were they an independent nation, they could devalue their currency, but this is not an option. Ergo, wages must be allowed to fall or at least become more responsive to market conditions if the Maritime economy is to create sufficient jobs in the future. Savoie correspondingly argues in favour of regionally modulated wages for federal civil servants and for changes in the current unemployment insurance programme, introducing greater incentives to work. From a strictly economic perspective, it is difficult to find fault with this line of reasoning. But are such prescriptions politically feasible? Elections have been lost for less. But, that a politically savvy observer like Savoie should propose this path may mean that times have changed.

As the reader will have guessed by now, Savoie's book provides ample material for thought for students of regional development policy in Canada.

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NOTE

1. This was also an inexhaustible source of office humour. An example: The French equivalent for the now defunct DRIE (Department of Regional Industrial Expansion) was MEIR (*Ministère d'expansion industrielle et régionale*). In my shop, some lovingly referred to the department as "Golda."

THE TRANSPORTATION EXPERIENCE: POLICY, PLANNING, AND DEPLOYMENT

By William L. Garrison and David M. Levinson, New York: Oxford University Press. 2006. 457 pp. \$45.00 (hard or soft cover). ISBN 0-19-517251-5.

The Transportation Experience first took shape as an organizing theme and series of notes used in courses taught by William Garrison, Professor Emeritus of Civil and Environmental Engineering, at the University of California, Berkeley. David Levinson's early involvement included graduate coursework with Garrison at UC Berkeley. He is now an Associate Professor with the Department of Civil Engineering at the University of Minnesota. Together, Garrison and Levinson have undertaken a work of monumental scope, drafting complex connections across modes, documenting the qualities of *mature systems*, and suggesting approaches to improving current conditions. In an era marked by demand management, the occasional mega-project, and rapid technological change, *The Transportation Experience* invites the reader to pause and look into the past, with a view toward "learning to do better." This is no small task, with the authors arguing that the inertia of *mature systems* and organizations restrict the emergence of new pathways to an enhanced transport future.

Garrison and Levinson examine the transportation experience in six parts: (I) Overview: Looking Around; (II) Life Cycle of the Railroads: Looking Back for Lessons from the Railroad Experience; (III) The Modal Experiences: Looking Back and Looking Around; (IV) Complementary Experiences: Perspectives on Inputs and Outputs; (V) The Creating Experiences; and (VI) Conclusion. Each part of the book begins with a useful and brief summary of its contents. The preface is also of interest, with Garrison making an appeal for academic innovation, suggesting that the interdisciplinary quality of transport merits the creation of a separate discipline.

The Transportation Experience begins with unique views on policy, planning, deployment, and management. The authors then discuss the origins, cycles of development, and key policy issues associated with the various modes of transport. The railroad experience is emphasized, with a view to using its emergence and maturation as a model for

discussing and understanding the rise and current state of other modes. Each chapter typically closes with a re-tracing of modal histories and thoughtful discussion of future prospects. In the second half of the book (Parts IV–VI), attention is given to complementary experiences (e.g., communication), transport innovation, and informed speculation. Perhaps the authors' most striking comments concern the potential manifestation of a transport "future" markedly similar to the "present." The authors cite the overwhelming presence of *legacy systems*, lack of imagination, and the absence of "an overall environment that values innovation and rewards the required risks," as key constraints on our capacity to do better.

Throughout the book, profiles (e.g., Stephenson, McAdam, Moses, Jacobs); case studies (e.g., Stockton and Darlington, Alameda Corridor); and a vast collection of empirical data are used to draw our attention to key inventors, innovators, scholars, processes, and events that have shaped transportation since the early to mid-nineteenth century.¹ Emphasis is placed on the *experience* in the U.S., with occasional discussion of systems and issues in other developed and "less developed" (Chapter 27) nations. Geographical focus aside, the knowledgeable reader should have little trouble finding "local" examples mirroring the book's dominant themes (e.g., learning to do better, what was once old is new again, system rationalization, dysfunction); concepts (e.g., iron triangles, magic bullets, disjoint incrementalism); and policy issues (e.g., transit-as-panacea, transport, energy use, and climate change).

As is often the case with any scholarly work of this scope, exclusions are inevitable. With this in mind, *The Transportation Experience* stresses transport supply, and travel demand in the aggregate, giving less attention to microscopic behavioral response to policy and supply-side adjustments. Exceptions include discussions surrounding the value of time (Chapter 22), where attention is given briefly to induced demand, and the varied impacts of information and communication technologies (ICT). In Chapter 19, where focus turns toward energy and the environment, emphasis is placed on the interface between technology, energy, and the environment. Popular views and policy tools targeting fleet characteristics, auto-use, and sustainability are also discussed. Observations concerning relationships between urban form, transport, energy, and the environment (e.g., Anderson, Kanaroglou, and Miller 1996), viewed as the prescription for sustainability by many advocates of "smart growth," are surprisingly absent. Nevertheless, the authors draw attention to critical issues (e.g., growing congestion and productivity decreases) that are likely to remain long after the "tail-pipe" has been fixed.

The chapter on forecasting examines the Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS) and the Urban Transportation Planning System (UTPS), and the widely held view that these frameworks/models are not well matched to the "way cities are." I was surprised to see the discussion end at UTPS, particular in view of more recent attempts to develop city or metrocentric, policy-sensitive alternatives (e.g., Miller et al. 2004; Vovsha, Bradley, and Bowman 2005). While the authors' insights to the deficiencies of UTPS are undeniably accurate, the chapter appears incomplete, particularly given renewed interest in large-scale urban modeling. For example, the "old" state-Bureau of

Public Roads (BPR) model of the 1950s has arguably been given “new life” under the Travel Model Improvement Program (TMIP). Funded by several federal agencies including the BPR’s successor, the U.S. Federal Highway Administration, TMIP has played a supportive role in state planning activities and *post-UTPS* modeling work since the early to mid-1990s. Evidence of similar research can be found in Canada, Europe, South America, and elsewhere (e.g., Miller et al. 2004). In the end, the reader is left to sort out how these recent activities fit within and shape the contemporary *transportation experience*.

In the final analysis, *The Transportation Experience: Policy, Planning, and Deployment* is an exceptional text, crafted by two scholars who have made important and varied contributions to the study and practice of transportation. Garrison in particular is widely recognized for his role in shaping the study of transportation across disciplines (Black 2003). This book captures and demands the full attention of the reader as the authors develop complex themes related to the evolution of today’s *mature transportation systems*. *The Transportation Experience* is essential reading for students and professional scholars with interests in transportation and planning. Transport professionals and policy analysts will also benefit from the authors’ timely and refreshingly sober examination of contemporary policy issues.

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NOTE

1. It is perhaps timely to mention the recent death of Jane Jacobs (April 2006 in Toronto, Canada). Beyond the authors’ reference to her political activism related to the Lower Manhattan Expressway, Jane Jacobs was involved in a similar dispute in the early 1970s, resulting in cancellation of the Spadina Expressway in Toronto, Canada.

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SPRAWL: A COMPACT HISTORY

By Robert Bruegmann, Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 2005. 306 pp. \$27.50 (hardcover). ISBN 0-226-07690-3.

“Most American anti-sprawl reformers today believe that sprawl is a recent and peculiarly American phenomenon caused by specific technological innovations like the automobile and by government policies like single-use zoning or the mortgage interest deduction on the federal income tax. It is important for them to believe this because if sprawl turned out to be a long-standing feature of urban development worldwide, it would suggest that stopping it involves something much more fundamental than correcting some poor American land-use policies” (17). From this point of departure, *Sprawl: A Compact History* goes on to argue, sometimes convincingly, that much of the academic research, conventional wisdom, and value judgments relating to sprawl—a low-density, spatially expansive pattern of human settlement—are misguided, if not altogether incorrect. While the book is effective in establishing a historical precedent for sprawl and suggesting that it is not appropriate for policy makers to rely on “static” conceptualizations of urban form, it is far less so in actually defending what has come to be the dominant mode of land use in the U.S. and elsewhere. In fact, parts of *Sprawl* are written in such a polarizing way that many readers’ reactions will hinge on how they personally feel about sprawl and its various discontents.

The book begins with a promising introduction that provides terrific verbal imagery of sprawl, a ubiquitous mode of land use, punctuated by a somewhat acerbic overview of the controversy surrounding it. In broad strokes, the segment documents that, although sprawl is pervasive worldwide, it is a slippery concept that has not been well defined or rigorously evaluated. Moreover, many of its most vehement opponents—in both academic and applied realms, but especially in the U.S.—base their rhetoric on personal preference, not objective research. “At the very least,” the chapter concludes, “our highly dispersed urban regions deserve some respectful attention before we jump to the conclusion that they are terrible places that need to be totally transformed” (13).

Toward this end, Part I of the book, “Sprawl Across the Centuries,” pursues the issue through a series of six chapters that set out to: provide a definition of sprawl (Chapter 1); explain its evolution prior to (Chapter 2), between (Chapter 3), and after (Chapter 4) the two World Wars; describe its contemporary form (Chapter 5); and identify its causes (Chapter 6). As the discussion moves forward, it grows steadily more shrill in its criticism of the “anti-sprawl” movement and the criticisms that it has leveled; whether by design or not, the final chapter spends more time assailing several of the alleged causes of sprawl than offering up compelling alternative explanations. At the end of this section, the reader is left feeling unsatisfied by the asymmetrical quality of scholarship contained by its beginning (very high) and end (not so high). Continuing along this route, Part II of the book, “The Diagnosis: Three Campaigns Against Sprawl,” is by far the weakest section of the book. The four chapters here describe early arguments against sprawl (Chapter 7), plus anti-sprawl movements in Britain prior to the wars (Chapter 8) and in the U.S. between the

1950s and 1970s (Chapter 9) and since the 1970s (Chapter 10). Throughout, the discussion is a rather tedious indictment of “highbrow” ideals and “social elites” that mainly focuses on trying to debunk the reasoning behind the various anti-sprawl movements. The problem here is that the chapters produce no new information or analysis—they are largely based on arguments derived from, or at least tangential to, Gordon and Richardson’s (1997) *JAPA* article, “Are Compact Cities a Desirable Planning Goal?”—and, therefore, do little to refresh what is an important but increasingly stagnant policy discussion. Much of the writing in this segment is either poorly or selectively sourced, although it is not clear which. Part III of the book, “The Prescription: Remedies for Sprawl,” is a more interesting analysis of centralized planning frameworks that begins in the early 1900s (Chapter 11) before moving on to an array of post-World War II policy responses, including in Soviet Moscow (Chapter 12), then, finally, to Portland, Oregon’s growth management framework (Chapter 13). Here again, though, the often-condescending tone of the discussion detracts from the otherwise important message that the motivations for and design, implementation, and evaluation of land use policies need to be carefully considered. Key points, such as the need for policy makers to avoid taking a “simple and static view of the proper shape of the city” and the inherent flaws of many “top-down” planning frameworks get lost in the black-and-white stereotyping of “anti-sprawl reformers” as high-minded elites.

Finally, the last segment of the book, “Some Conclusions,” closes by revisiting some of the difficulties associated with sprawl. It is true that many of the U.S.’ most sprawling cities—particularly Las Vegas, Los Angeles, and Phoenix—are also among its densest. It is also true that, for a number of reasons, people are returning to central cities nationwide and that many suburbs are growing denser. These and other paradoxes make sprawl one of the most compelling and vexing issues faced by urban researchers and policy makers, but little attention is given to how they line up with the book’s thesis that low-density, spatially expansive settlement patterns are what most people want.

Overall, despite the criticisms leveled in the paragraphs above, I found this book worthwhile. *Sprawl* is best when the author approaches the topic from his fields of study, architecture and art history. Knowing that history shows that, for a variety of reasons, cities have consistently transitioned toward lower densities is of no small consequence to those wishing to play a part in influencing the spatial pattern of present and future human settlements. Likewise, understanding urbanization as an evolving process that cannot necessarily be gauged via the lens of personal memory is helpful. So, too, is *Sprawl*’s painstaking process of defining what can only be described as an elusive and difficult concept. These are all significant contributions, and the author deserves credit for them. On the other hand, *Sprawl* quickly loses traction when the focus of discussion shifts to areas (especially public policy) that fall outside of the historical purview; this may be a matter of one book trying to accomplish the extremely difficult task of dealing with sprawl comprehensively. The policy discussion is problematic because, to cite one example, it conflates a number of interrelated concepts, including “growth control,” “growth management,” the “new urbanism,” “smart growth,” and others. As the book’s temporal segmentation of the land use reform movement illustrates, different ideas were advanced at different times

based on different levels of understanding of different land use problems—but a fundamental oversight is that these differences led to different goals, objectives, and strategies, not just a generic backlash against sprawl and the middle class households that live in it. This aspect of the subject is far more nuanced than the author lets on. In the end, my biggest disappointment with *Sprawl* is in the way it engages in the very same polemical oversimplifications that it condemns the “anti-sprawl” movement for engaging in. Nonetheless, despite these limitations, I hope that people will read and cite this important book—just as long as they also recognize that it is by no means “above the fray.”

The opinions expressed in this review are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of Housing and Urban Development or the federal government at large.

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ECONOMICS AND CONTEMPORARY LAND USE POLICY: DEVELOPMENT AND CONSERVATION AT THE RURAL-URBAN FRINGE

Edited by Robert J. Johnston and Stephen K. Swallow, Washington, DC: Resources for the Future. 2006. 309 pp. \$70.00/\$36.95 (hardcover, softcover). ISBN 1-933115-21-1.

In many ways, the volume’s subtitle, *Development and Conservation at the Rural-Urban Fringe* is a more apt description of the collection’s geographic and topical focus than the broader but also somewhat illusory principal heading. Economics and land use policy is a well-worn topic in urban areas, most directly related to the real estate subfield in the urban and business literature. Yet it is precisely the additional challenges of rural land use issues sketched in the foreword that make this geographically complementary research agenda compelling both intellectually and in terms of policy. Unintended consequences of seemingly tangential policy actions, inherent local/regional differences in regional contexts and decision-making, data constraints, and ecological factors all may be especially relevant in the rural context, which has gotten relatively less attention than its urban counterparts.

The volume is admirably structured to tackle this gap, all while recognizing the necessary limitations of such research from both academic and practical perspectives. Mainstream economists may quickly note that the perspectives all come from the agricultural and resource economics area. Yet as Emery Castle neatly summarizes in his opening chapter, the latter is really the only branch in economics that has had an ongoing (even if wavering) concern with this often-neglected input in the production function. The 2002 Northeastern Agricultural and Resource Economics Association Land Use Policy Workshop seemed to provide an ideal opportunity to demonstrate the state of knowledge in this

research area, particularly as the rapid evolutions occurring at the rural–urban fringe put increasing pressure on policymakers and the public to make decisions with long-term economic and environmental implications. The advantage of such a workshop-oriented volume is that both the forest and the trees can be considered *a priori* so as to make the parts and the whole that much more effective in print.

The keys to such a volume's success are its research caliber, clarity, and cohesiveness. The editors are to be commended for collecting such a top-notch set of contributors, each admirably sticking to their comparative advantage in the individual sections. As a result, the individual chapters are clear and concise. The volume's structure succeeds admirably at first, but gets shakier in its mission in the later chapters as the topical spectrum widens. However, the whole still emerges successfully as a guide to the possibilities of economic analysis of development and conservation at the rural–urban fringe. It is perhaps its very success that also creates a final sense of weakness, as the authors show that the idiosyncracies of particularly regional contexts and policies do not readily offer helpful generalizations.

The first section sets the stage. Often, such opening remarks can distract rather than focus, but Emery Castle's chapter on the historical, political, and intellectual contexts for considering rural land use change is wonderfully revelatory with its sweeping insights, from the role of Earl Heady's early 1950s text to Old versus New Institutionalist perspectives to the recent interest in social capital to better understand local decision-making. The second chapter provides a narrower, cautionary tale of economists' role in the policy process. Although somewhat incongruous, it is perhaps a helpfully sobering stop on the way to the whiz-bang analytics in the chapters to come.

The second section is a clean, clear display case of the where and why of land use conversion through modern mapping and data techniques. This entire subfield has been revolutionized by the advent of Geographical Information Systems (GIS), with its tremendous capacity for spatially oriented analysis. From counties and zip codes across the nation to parcels in a given region, the possibilities for dissecting land uses and their evolutions have grown by several orders of magnitude in a few short years. Chapter 3 uses this firepower to consider the probability of a parcel being converted to residential land use in a fringe Maryland county. Its simulations of policy scenarios is particularly instructive as a potential tool, while also underscoring the model's limitations in assessing dynamic shifts of external spillovers given different development paths. Chapter 4 takes on a similar question across a broader development spectrum of residential, industrial, and commercial uses, yet also introduces an (other) underlying cautionary theme with region-specific preferences evidently driving the less-than-generalizable findings.

The range of this display case is widened in Chapters 5 and 6, which evaluate two quite different forms of land use metrics. Not only do these sections highlight the potential analytical breadth of such inquiries, but also the related importance of having the core policy and/or research question guide the methodology. Rather than a build/no build binary decision, Chapter 5 explores the density of land use activity as well as its evolution, which may be of particular concern to those evaluating rural ecosystem impacts.

Chapter 6 assesses whether there is a critical farm size that is too small to be viable. The lack of clear results may be more indicative of the mid-Atlantic states setting than the viability of the question.

Given this review of the outcomes of land use decisions, Section III then considers the valuation and incentives involved in such decision-making. Although understandable given data investments and limitations, the return of mid-Atlantic Maryland as a focal example in Chapter 7 is somewhat disconcerting, made more vexing by the fact that the region is apparently not an ideal context for the types of questions being asked. Nevertheless, the chapter does proffer the tantalizing prospect of conservation “paying its own way” through the property value (and thus tax) spillovers to nearby properties benefiting from the additional open space. As admitted from the outset, Chapter 8 is an odd theory chapter in a volume of empirical analysis, yet does offer a too-brief glimpse at the potential for such theoretical tools to understand the incentives of landowners facing different property tax regimes. Finally, Chapter 9 provides a valuable examination of survey versus market responses to land use and conservation valuation. Particularly given the data difficulties inherent in providing market-based analyses for every idiosyncratic land use policy decision, the fact that survey results fall broadly in line with the revealed preferences through hedonic pricing models should be encouraging to those seeking community input on such decisions.

The cohesiveness of the volume begins to fray in the fourth section, mostly because its scope becomes too ambitious to simply be such a collection’s subsection. The introduction notes that the section “emphasizes the critical link between rural amenities and the policy process—a link often ignored by economic researchers” (9). Such a broadly defined arena is bound to have innumerable such linkages, making it unsurprising that some are not fully explored. Yet the four constituent chapters bravely touch upon a somewhat scattered mix of possible considerations, each compelling on their own but lacking a coherent tie. Chapter 10 explores the increasing focus on the multifunctional attributes of agricultural land beyond purely commodity production, a topic far more appreciated and explored in Europe than in the U.S. Chapter 11 uses a public choice perspective to evaluate state-by-state preferences through the revealed choices made by voters and their legislators. Chapter 12 is another cautionary tale of potential potholes along the policy roadway, demonstrating that there can be a substantial disconnect between the public’s stated values on land use and the eventual policies that are supported and implemented.

Perhaps the most intriguing analytical chapter is the final one, providing an exciting example of meshing biophysical and economic data to the decision-making benefit of both. The foreword promised more of such perspectives, but this chapter seems to be the only repository for this volume’s consideration of these hybrid analyses. The intersection between economics and ecology is the most challenging and unique feature of land use in rural areas, and would seem a particularly ripe research fruit for a broad spectrum of constituents. Having worked in a cross-disciplinary series of ecological-economic modeling projects, I can testify to both the difficulties of fusing two very different research cultures as well as to the vast potential for such synergies’ success. In that sense, it is

gratifying to at least see the perspective getting attention, however brief, in a high-profile volume such as this one.

In sum, the collection is ambitious, carefully crafted, strong in its individual parts, and fairly convincing as a whole. Yet because it is so good at what it does in each niche, the volume also sows its own seeds for skepticism. In almost all the empirical studies, context seems to matter more than most potential policy-oriented generalizations. Place matters, each place is different, and land use issues may vary more by situation than any coordinated research agenda can address. Helpfully, this fact suggests that good policy really does require good analysis, not just of broad national trends, but of region-specific situations and scenarios. Data are critical. Yet as the foreword astutely notes, “spatially explicit data are still unevenly provided and costly to obtain. They tend to be available in areas that view themselves as already in crisis, but not in those that are earlier in their evolutionary process,” which is precisely the time when policy can have the most impact with the least cost. In that spirit, this volume should hopefully provide a useful advance warning to rural–urban fringe areas that foresee land use evolutions in their future—as most such areas inevitably will.

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