BOOK REVIEW

Shaping Places: Urban Planning, Design and Development

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Place-making has become a fashionable term influencing how our cities should be regenerated. Its rapid inclusion as part of urban policy reflects a broader aspiration that in order to make cities more competitive they need to be attractive places in which to live. Hence, there is a growing appreciation of the role that urban design can play in making places which, in different ways, can be thought of as successful. Of course, this begs the question as to how we should define 'successful', but this book goes a long way in exploring not only this but also the processes linked to its achievement.

In their introduction Adams and Tiesdell set out the four main themes of the book, tackling first the thorny question of what defines a successful or unsuccessful place. Why places vary – why some are more successful than others - is explored in the next theme introducing the role of real estate markets and of development processes. Left alone, market processes may be insufficient to ensure the production of successful place-making, thus the role that governance processes play in guiding how places are produced becomes the subject of the third theme of the book. Finally, the volume turns its attention to state-market relations in land and property development, exploring the interactions between public policy and private initiative.

The discussion of how urban design can contribute to making good places builds from a number of foundational statements. Successful places, we are told, attract people and this in turn adds to the vitality of spaces – this in turn is attributable to four factors: scale, activity, safety and comfort. The list is not exhaustive and might be supplemented by other factors such as achieving aesthetic appeal. But within their four factors the authors then tease out how, for instance, safety can be enhanced through ensuring that built environments add to the feelings of safety – mixing residential premises with shops, generating a sense of busyness and such like. The problem is that how and why city users might feel safer in some environments and not others is not simply a question of design. Further, as in so much of the place-making literature there is a tendency to talk about 'people' in general, not giving sufficient attention to the diversity of people that live in and use cities. This said, the discussion on successful

places embraces its complexities in other respects. The discussion of how urban design itself contributes to enhancing the financial value of real estate development is useful. As elsewhere in the volume the authors draw on a wide literature.

In all, Adams and Tiesdell are probably right to say that *"there is now much greater consensus among both commentators and practitioners about what needs to be done to deliver the quality places of the future"* (p. 37). Even so, there are major challenges to ensuring such delivery, and much of the rest of the book is devoted to exploring the structures and processes linked to achieving the desired result. After looking at the real estate market, the creation of real estate value, the development process and governance issues, the book is divided into two further sections, 'market roles and actors' and 'policy instruments.'

Their discussion of these processes is wide-ranging, drawing on planning literature, the debates surrounding the role of planning, the role of the real estate market and the actors involved in urban place-making. The book is particularly strong on how the market operates and the role policy instruments have in trying to engineer desired outcomes. Perhaps less convincing is the role of governance and in particular the role that public participation has to play. Community or public participation becomes reduced to stakeholder involvement and resorts to the introduction of an Arnstein framework to position involvement and its possible influence in place-making processes. Yet, where urban design is essentially an appeal to the everyday usage of the city, the role that public participation has (and should have) in influencing outcomes is much more nuanced.

Within the terms of reference set for the volume Adams and Tiesdell have produced an important text. It is copiously referenced by examples and though there is something of a British bias to these, inclusion of place-making cases from elsewhere, the US and the Netherlands, for example, helps to widen the appeal of the book. The illustrations help to make the point about what constitutes good (and less good) practice, though in the case of the former, as ever, the pictures tend to be orthodox 'feel good' representations – good place making needs to embrace the seasons and wet days rather than only summer and bright days! This is a minor quibble for a book that deserves to have a place on the shelves of both academics and practitioners. Steve Tiesdell – who died prematurely during the writing of the book – would be justifiably pleased with it.

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