

Book Reviews

Care, Community and Citizenship: Research and Practice in a Changing Policy Context

Susan Balloch and Michael Hill (Eds), 2007

Bristol: Policy Press

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Scott noted in 1994 that

Under a fully established citizenship the vagaries of the market and of individual circumstances, such as disability, ill health, unemployment and old age do not prevent people from enjoying what is believed to be appropriate for a citizen (Scott, 1994, p. 130).

Critical debates about the roles and responsibilities of citizens, communities and states in relation to community care are essential if strategies to deliver what Scott sees as a necessary system of citizenship are to be achieved. Balloch and Hill's *Care, Community and Citizenship* contributes to this debate in a highly effective manner. It provides an important contribution to unravelling the conceptual and practical complexities of locally based responses to the needs of vulnerable people. Michael Hill's argument at the beginning of the book for a recognition of caring relationships as well as caring services is coupled with a call for the "nurturing of networks of care" (p. 18) and provides a useful reminder that welfare is not simply a top-down commodity but also a potentially important aspect of democratic society. Combined with Marion Barnes' later argument that care has been devalued by both policy-makers and movements such as the disability rights movement to the detriment of action to support more vulnerable citizens

and essential interdependencies within communities, a powerful case is made for a new community-sensitive approach to personal relationships and interdependence in care. An approach that Barnes says can promote "individualised support, community regeneration and civil renewal" (p. 72).

However, this is no highly abstract text. There is a strong attempt to show the national and international policy developments that affect the direction and sustainability of locally based informal care. International examples from the positive tendencies of increasing demands for more integrated services, more initiatives to foster civic engagement in social care and greater awareness of the relationships between local needs and local demands are placed alongside the more negative face of Sweden's declining recognition of the responsibility of the public sector for the care of older people and their citizenship, the problematic of supporting the environment of informal care in Japan at a time of increasing financial stringency and the restrictions that health and income inequalities place on deprived communities to sustain civic engagement in care in the UK. They serve to highlight the different models and resourcing of care that exist and are emerging. The comparative element serves, moreover, to show the contribution of values as well as economic growth to the type of care and responsibilities for it that exist within a society. In this respect, the book provides a valuable addition to the discussion of care and welfare regimes that we have seen from writers such as Pfau Effinger (2005). This book adds more, however, insofar as two consistent themes are that providing resources recognising non-professional contributions to care and enabling those who

concentrated in parts of Britain only—but the text accompanying them addresses neither the first nor the second of these points. Perhaps not surprisingly, therefore, it is very unlikely that politicians will seek to address the problems displayed until somebody tells them why and then what they can do about them—always assuming that they want to. Strong arguments can be made that, as long as more people are not falling into the ‘core poor’, it is not important that more are becoming ‘exclusive wealthy’ or even just ‘asset wealthy’, because in the end everybody could benefit from the latter. (Didn’t Pareto make a major contribution on this?)

At the end of his Presidential Address, Schumpeter further surprised his audience by concluding that it did not matter that the questions they posed and the answers they sought were ideologically driven. History will take care of such biases and all errors will eventually be corrected. With intellectual freedom, one scholar’s ideologies will be balanced out by another’s; indeed, without the former that latter response may not be generated and science would not move forward. Scholars are motivated by their ideological visions, which means that

We acquire new material for our scientific endeavours and something to formulate, to defend, to attack. Our stock of facts and tools grows and rejuvenates itself in the process. And so—though we proceed slowly because of our ideologies, we might not proceed at all without them (Schumpeter, 1949, p.359).

The maps in *PWB* perform just that function; produced as part of a programme designed to demonstrate the growth of spatial inequalities (Schumpeter, p. 349, calls our ideologies “not simply lies; they are truthful statements about what a man thinks he sees”), they challenge us to develop theories that will both account for such changing geographies and, hopefully, inform policy-making designed at least to modify the worst aspects of those processes.

Therein lies the major challenge for geographers and other spatially inclined social scientists. It is a relatively straightforward task to portray spatial inequalities. If we want to reduce them,

we have the much harder task of showing that geography is not only involved in their production but also can realistically be deployed in their removal. Dorling’s mappings perform the straightforward task, but do not even begin to essay the explanation on which policy can be based.

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Vientiane: Transformations of a Lao Landscape

Marc Askew, William S. Logan and Colin Long, 2007
 2007
 London: Routledge
 265 pp. £75.00 hardback
 ISBN 978 0 415 33141 8 hardback

This is a wonderful book. The authors have provided us with a richly documented, imminently readable, historical account of the urban centre of Vientiane, located along the Mekong River on the Khorat plateau. For many reasons, this book should become a mainstay among writings of scholars of mainland south-east Asian society and history. Yet it deserves the attention of scholars beyond that relatively small tribe, for reasons I will focus on in this review.

The authors take what they describe as a ‘textual’ approach to the landscape. Fortunately, they are not signalling some sort of fanciful

post-modernism, but rather a careful, well-grounded historical analysis, which speaks to broad issues of urbanism while remaining close to the specificities of the site about which they are writing. The book is a sometimes subtle, yet clear and well documented story of Vientiane's historical transitions through multiple modes of urbanism.

The book is organised around a traditional, straightforward chronological history. Following the opening introductory chapter, the subsequent six chapters move through the ancient, early historical and pre-colonial or 'early modern' periods (chapters 2 and 3), the French colonial period (chapter 4); the American-dominated Cold War period (chapter 5); the communist Prathet Lao period (chapter 6) and concludes with the present era of 'globalisation' (chapter 7).

The book provides an insightful case study of urbanism, configured around a place that has been discursively, politically and economically marginalised through successive eras and in the context of the multiple political regimes: Khmer, Thai, French, American, Soviet, Vietnamese and in the current context of both regional and global political economies. At the same time, it has been—through successive eras of rise and fall, including its nearly utter erasure in the mid 19th century—a focal site of urbanism among Lao-speaking people who have occupied the Khorat plateau for something over 1000 years.

Because of Vientiane's particular political history, the historical narrative of this single location provides a rich comparative study of different cultural constructions of urbanism. The book places Vientiane in the context of pre-colonial south-east Asian '*mandala*' urbanism. For urban studies in general, with a heavy focus on contemporary, highly industrialised societies, the second and third chapters provide an important comparative, differently configured, sense of urbanism, operating within a feudal political economy (in this case a distinctive Thai-Lao South-east Asian form of feudalism). This cultural and political-economic complex of *mandala* urbanism is well documented in south-east Asian studies

and by no means a new idea in this text. Yet the authors provide a very richly detailed account of how that sociocultural complex played out in the case of the Khorat plateau—which has always been marginal to other south-east Asian locales, such as Angkor Wat, the central site of the Khmer Empire, or the Chao Phraya river valley, where the Thai urban centres of current-day Bangkok and its predecessor Ayutthaya are located.

As a historical Lao centre, Vientiane suffered an unusually nasty fate in 1828, when Siam's forces sacked the capital and relocated the population to sites elsewhere on the Khorat plateau. The town was thus virtually deserted in the 1860s when French expeditions first encountered it. From chapter 4, the book recounts the re-emergence of Vientiane over more than a century, substantially influenced by shifting world powers, yet always at the margins of those powers' primary interests. For the French, Vientiane and Laos more generally were of importance as a borderland between their Indochinese colonies and independent Siam. Within French Indochina, Laos was considered remote from France's primary interests in Vietnam and Cambodia. Similarly, while Americans, Vietnamese and Soviets all took some interest in Vientiane and Laos (chapters 5 and 6) as a domino in the hottest zone of the Cold War, they remained at the margins of the main theatre of engagement.

In these chapters, the authors describe how urban processes play out under such conditions of marginality. From the resurrection of Vientiane in the late 19th century to the brief period of Japanese control in 1945, Vientiane was a French colonial outpost, with the Lao royal centre situated to the north in Luang Prabang. Much of modern Vientiane owes its character and layout to this French colonial period. While Laos was nominally independent throughout the period from the late 1940s to the capture of the city by the communist Prathet Lao in 1975, the French and subsequently the Americans remained the overwhelming force shaping its urban development.

From 1975, Vientiane shifted once again to being primarily a Lao urban centre, although broader regional and global processes continue to shape the city. From 1975 to the late 1980s and early 1990s, these were Vietnamese and Soviet influences, although the authors note that Vientiane shows relative little evidence of Soviet-style architecture and urban planning. From the 1990s, forces shaping Vientiane have shifted to include substantial influence from Thailand, south-east Asia more generally within the framework of the Association of south-east Asian Nations and Asian Development Bank inspired 'Greater Mekong Subregion' and the broader trends of contemporary globalisation.

As this review should make clear, one of the authors' main points is that (with the partial exception of the Lan Xang period) Vientiane and its history have been constructed largely through processes of marginalisation, as much or more than processes of centrality commonly associated and assumed for urban sites. The detail and clarity this book brings to the account make it well worth consideration by anyone who is interested in theories of urbanism and urbanisation. As a superb account of a small, out-of-the-way city in a small, out-of-the-way nation, one hopes that this book will not be destined to marginality and obscurity by the very processes it critiques.

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Raum, Überwachung, Kontrolle: Vom staatlichen Zugriff auf städtische Bevölkerung

Bernd Belina, 2006

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In recent decades, new narratives and strategies of space control have entered the thinking and practices of policing: crime hot spots, dangerous places, banning orders, open street CCTV,

place-specific police powers to stop-and-search and computerised crime mapping are some examples. This trend is accompanied by the downscaling of policing competencies and the responsabilisation of local actors through the creation of crime reduction partnerships, public safety round tables, urban wardens and the revitalisation of municipal police forces.

It is this spatial turn in policing that the German geographer Bernd Belina critically examines from a Marxist perspective in his book *Raum, Überwachung, Kontrolle: Vom staatlichen Zugriff auf städtische Bevölkerung* [Space, surveillance, control: governing urban populations]. What are the meanings of *space* and *scale* for contemporary crime control and criminal justice policies? Do they really matter in these contexts, and if so, how? These are the key questions approached by the author.

His answer is, briefly spoken, that space and scale do matter, but not as abstract factors that determine the social and urban fabric or explain their shape and change. Instead, both space and scale are strategically utilised in spatial and scalar practices in order to regulate and maintain the social order and mode of capitalist production and manage its inherent crises. The concept of governing through crime through space and scale is the key to Belina's book. Against the 'democracy at work' thesis that criminal justice policies are responding to the electorates' demands, Belina argues in the tradition of critical criminology that they actually create and frame fear and discourses on crime. The specific function of space in these discourses and policies then is to justify a pre-emptive risk-based logic of crime control that is expanding state control beyond individual acts or criminalised groups towards selected territories being labelled as 'criminal' or 'dangerous'.

Thus, Belina argues "against space" (p. 25) and its respective turns and fetishisms. Instead, drawing on Henry Lefèbvre and radical geographers such as David Harvey and Neil Smith, he suggests that space (as well as scale) is meaningless without the context of social processes and practices. The author works with a dualism