

Planning Asian cities: risks and resilience edited by *Stephen Hamnett* and *Dean Forbes*, Routledge, London, UK, 2011, 330 pp. ISBN 978-0-415-56335-2.

Comprising twelve chapters by various authors on eleven major cities in Pacific Asia, this book adopts the theme 'risks and resilience' as a unifying rubric for the collective endeavour. Unfortunately, not all the authors heed the editors' recommendation to make it a cohesive project. *Planning Asian cities* seems a too ambitious topic for a simple book, though additional sub-themes (the aspiration to become world cities and metropolitan governance) are identified in the introductory chapter. The challenge therefore is to make the eleven cities selected as case studies – places that are culturally, socially and economically diverse – bind together. However, I doubt whether the notion of Asian cities means anything that is academically useful. The more-focused conceptions of Japanese cities, Thai cities, or Vietnamese cities, for instance, are less ambiguous than the broad term 'Asian cities'. Yet despite my own doubts about this term, I still consider this book a worthwhile contribution to the existing literature in English about cities in Asia. It is readable for those who are conversant with English and this matter should not be downplayed as language is a great barrier to people in Asia understanding one another. As Asia's 'business language', English is a useful lingua franca for communication between people across Asia. Inevitably, however, meaningful and unique local messages could be lost during translation into English, and this may well be the case with some chapters in *Planning Asian cities*.

Most chapters are descriptive rather than analytical. Some are undoubtedly of scholarly value. As an example, the study of citizen-initiated *machizukuri* (community development) projects in Tokyo by André Sorensen touches upon matters of local autonomy and citizen participation. Whilst Japan is well known as a conformist and egalitarian society, *machizukuri* implies competition, and possibly confrontation between the local community and authorities at higher levels. Is conformist Japan a superficial perception by outsiders? Stereotypes prevail when there are deep cultural and linguistic gaps.

As the prime city in Taiwan, one of the four Asian tigers, Taipei has gone through tremendous political upheavals in its contemporary history. In 1895 it was ceded to Japan, and subsequently endured 50 years of colonization. Then in the late-1940s it was taken over by the Kuomintang who

were defeated in mainland China and took refuge in Taiwan. The tension between *benshengren* (local residents whose ancestors migrated to Taiwan many generations ago) and *waishengren* (recent migrants who followed the Kuomintang to Taiwan) is an omnipresent issue in the management of Taiwan society. The authors of the chapter on Taipei (Liling Huang and Reginald Yin-Wang Kwok) rightly connect that city's future development to its relationship with mainland China, globalization, and national identity. Critical issues are made clear, but solutions are not provided. The trajectory of Taipei thus remains uncertain.

Post-Batavia Jakarta as a historical city of South-East Asia has been shaped by those who ruled over it (Soekarno, Soeharto and Ali Sadikin, to cite three) rather than by rules (in the sense of urban planning) as the authors Wilmar Salim and Tommy Firman declare. However, its citizens should not be forgotten as a collective force on the shaping of the city, for they have spontaneously built large amounts of informal housing. Notably, it is clearly shown that Jakarta is facing grave problems of population pressure (caused by continuous immigration), choking traffic congestion (partly due to poor public transportation), and frequent flooding. These problems pose massive challenges.

Hong Kong has been undergoing major economic restructuring since the 1970s. This has accelerated since 1997 when the city ended its colonial relationship with Britain and became a Special Administrative Region of China. Manufacturing in recent decades in Hong Kong has been declining drastically – from 47 per cent of total employment in 1971 to a mere 4.7 per cent in 2008. Meanwhile the financial sector has been growing rapidly, comprising 18 per cent of total employment in 2008. The puzzle, however, shown in *Planning Asian cities* is that this supposedly favourable economic upgrading has caused much pain to Hong Kong people. Traditionally, Hong Kong and its hinterland of the Pearl River Delta (PRD) have a relationship categorized as 'front shop, back factories'. Hong Kong is thus the 'dragon head' of South China specializing in services, whilst the PRD specializes in manufacturing. The author, Anthony Yeh, claims that Hong Kong's restructuring pains are now being caused by the gradual detachment of the dragon head from its body. Accordingly, one might ask why the PRD does not use more of Hong Kong's established services rather than developing its own. Why is it

Guangzhou, not Hong Kong, that *really* serves the PRD?

A number of chapters in this book, such as those touched on in this review, are valuable contributions. It is primarily as a collection of individual essays, rather than as a coherent volume, that *Planning Asian cities* is worth reading.

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English Garden Cities: an introduction by Mervyn Miller, English Heritage, Swindon, UK, 2010, 96 pp. ISBN 978-1-84802-051-1.

This volume, produced by English Heritage as part of its series on informed conservation, provides a thorough guide to the origins of the Garden City movement and its evolution. Produced for a general rather than an academic audience, it breaks little new ground, but its high quality photographs and graphics, both contemporary and historical, illuminate the subject and underscore the importance of protecting from overdevelopment the surviving physical remnants of this landmark tradition.

The origins of the Garden City movement are well known, not the least through Mervyn Miller's own extensive writing on the subject. Ebenezer Howard's concept for melding innovative design with a utopian vision for alleviating urban poverty sparked a movement which resulted initially in three pioneer communities in England – Letchworth, Hampstead Garden Suburb, and Welwyn Garden City – as well as a few imitations in the United States. By limiting the size of each new community to no more than 30 000 people, and surrounding the built core with a green belt, Howard hoped to provide an alternative environment to urban slums by assuring healthy living and strong community ties at an affordable price. The marriage of the best of city and country living, he believed, would provide a radically different lifestyle from which would 'spring a new hope, a new life, a new civilization'. Through working within a capitalist system, Howard expected that by limiting the return to investors, he could use excess profits both to finance community facilities and to keep rents low.

Howard's vision was more fully realized in physical development than in social reform, and it

is not surprising given the sponsorship of the book that Miller concentrates on the built environment. Much of the book traces the precedents for the Garden City in the Arts and Crafts movement, company town planning, and the development of the Garden City Association's three completed towns. Each town is fully described and its origin illustrated, and there are separate chapters on homes and factory buildings. Here, readers literally see the primary work of the great architects involved in the effort, including most formidably Howard's close associates Barry Parker and Raymond Unwin, as well as Lutyens and de Soissons, among others. The narrative sometimes declines into cataloguing buildings and associated sites, such as parks and gardens, but the illustrations, many of them of stunning beauty, bring home the quality of the workmanship. A final chapter on threats to this legacy gives the book a sense of immediacy not otherwise suggested by its coffee-table qualities. Miller describes a number of conservation tools currently employed, including designation as conservation areas and leasehold controls. Nevertheless, Miller reports that Garden Cities remain vulnerable to development, including inappropriate design for building additions as well as the introduction of incompatible new structures. Noting that the importance of Garden Cities lies in 'the integrity of the whole designed landscape', he believes that there 'is a clear danger that they will lose the precious features which make them attractive places to live and work' (p. 96).

As much as the original Garden City examples predominate, Miller's book also provides a useful history of the movement's evolution, including the incorporation of Howard's ideas in English national planning policy. As a result, variations on Howard's ideas appeared in full or in part in a number of forms throughout the twentieth century. A useful gazetteer at the end of the book lists the major Garden City sites by region. The results were mixed. Most intriguing is Wythenshawe. Produced in response to the 1919 housing act adopting Garden City standards for government-subsidized local authority housing, Wythenshawe incorporated Howard's social ideal by attempting to provide an alternative living environment for Manchester's inner city residents. Miller carefully details the ways the new community met or deviated from Barry Parker's design, concluding that it represented only partial realization of Howard's vision for a new civilization. Yet because he focuses on the physical environment at the expense of recounting social history, Miller in his Wythenshawe example, as well as elsewhere in