

own Local Agenda 21 strategy for sustainability. But in a world of global resource flows, international pollution and complex global economic trading systems, the definition of what sustainable cities might look like remains elusive. In this book they are identified as “cities where socio-economic interests are brought together in harmony (co-evolution) with environmental and energy concerns in order to ensure continuity in change” (p. 4). This definition neatly coincides with the authors’ primary focus in the book on environment–energy relations in cities and the management of these relationships in order to contribute to sustainability at the global level. It is, nonetheless, a rather narrow definition of a sustainable city, not doing justice to the rather more broadly constituted arguments provided in the first two chapters. Essentially this is a book about domestic and industrial energy use, with some mention of transport issues, and very little elaboration on the social and land-use planning dimensions of energy policy. In that sense, despite some excellent early context setting, this book is less about sustainable development, more about urban energy policy advances, as seen from a largely management and technical development perspective.

The book presents the results of a European Commission CITIES study on urban energy, involving case studies from one city in each of the 12 member states. The first two chapters provide a review of the sustainability debate and both its global and urban implications, whilst emphasising the centrality of energy issues. The next three chapters are again context setting, looking primarily at different impact assessment methods with plenty of lists of attributes and systems diagrams. As much of the discussion does not relate to the work which follows, this aspect of the book might usefully have been shortened considerably. Alternatively, the 12 case-study chapters are essentially descriptive of one or more elements of good practice deemed to be present in each of the 12 cities. Quite how the cities and the good practice ingredients were chosen remains unclear, and indeed there seems to have been some scraping of the barrel to justify the work of some cities. But it is difficult to be sure: the chapters are tantalisingly short, from just over a page in one case, to a maximum of three pages. Snippets of information look interesting, but they are rarely pursued in sufficient detail, so in effect they indicate where good practice might be present, but not how it might be taken up elsewhere.

The final three chapters provide an overview and elaboration of some of the issues raised earlier in the book. These contain useful comparative data, some further elaboration of the case studies, plus some useful pointers for improving policy towards urban energy usage.

Overall, this is not an easy book to read as an analytical narrative. It does, however, provide a useful source book for information in this field, to be dipped into as required. Perhaps its most interesting aspect is its emphasis on the institutional impediments to gearing energy policy towards an improved contribution to sustainability. Local-level decentralisation to municipalities appears to be almost a pre-condition for introducing policies tailored to local contexts, with monolithic regional or national energy supply companies remaining largely incapable or insensitive to introducing small-scale, energy-efficient, localised alternatives to traditional large-scale arrangements.

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Urban Leviathan: Mexico City in the Twentieth Century

DIANE E. DAVIS, 1994

Philadelphia: Temple University Press

391 pp., \$24.95 paperback

ISBN 1 56639 151 2

Mexico City is one of the largest urban agglomerations on the planet, a metropolis that has rocketed into prominence in the last few decades. It may well be among the most important laboratories for urbanist scholars at the close of the 20th century. Two overlapping phenomena must be contended with in the valley of Mexico: the formation of a mega-scale metropolis of some 20m inhabitants spread over hundreds of square miles; and the increasing connectivity of the metropolitan region’s economy and structure with global forces. During the debates leading up to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) signed in 1993 between the US, Mexico and Canada, some critics of the agreement focused attention on what were argued to be unstable policies of environmental control in Mexico. Many pointed to the apocalyptic prognostications of ecologists regarding air pollution and the declining quality of life in Mexico City.

Diane E. Davis’s *Urban Leviathan* is therefore

an extremely timely publication. The author has achieved a formidable task: tracing the evolution of urban administration in Mexico City from the period following the Mexican revolution up to the Salinas administration of the late 1980s. Davis reasonably argues in the opening chapter that most Mexicanists assume bureaucrats and political forces at the national level to be the driving force explaining urban decision-making. Local and regional actors tend to be discounted, the assumption being that Mexico's highly centralised political system overshadows local and regional power coalitions. The result is that much of the research on Mexico is so biased toward national processes, that few good local studies of power and politics have emerged. Mexico City, in particular, has yet to receive the kind of research Davis has in mind. One reason for this not mentioned by the author is that the kind of data required to do this sort of urban political research are not easily obtained. It takes an extremely persistent and meticulous search of archival and institutional data sources to trace the relations of power in a major city over the course of nearly an entire century. Davis shows in this book that she was more than up to the task.

This is, in fact, an expansion of the author's 1986 PhD thesis on the politics of the METRO (subway) system in Mexico City. In the introductory chapter of the present volume, Davis posits transport development as a key policy issue around which one can view the changing relations between local and national political forces in the governance of Mexico City. The present book is organised more generally around eight major chapters that look at Mexico City governance chronologically. Following the introduction (Chapter 1), Chapter 2 begins with the period 1910–29, tracing the evolution of urban government in the early post-revolutionary years. Chapter 3 evaluates the “move toward corporatism” in the important period of 1929–43, contrasting President Lazaro Cardenas's push for national and rural policy reforms as opposed to the needs of the middle class, service workers and downtown Mexico City residents. Chapter 4 covers the period 1944–58, documenting how the national thrust toward urbanisation-led industrialisation impacted Mexico City. Most interesting in this chapter is the section on Mexico City Mayor Uruchurtu, who, in the early 1950's, the author reports, supported the middle-class and downtown residents rather than large developers. Chapter 5 reviews conflicts within the leading national pol-

itical party, the PRI, over transport development in downtown Mexico City from 1958–66. Chapter 6 traces the developments of the period 1966–73, while Chapter 7 looks at the period of fiscal crisis, 1973–82. Chapter 8 focuses on the period of democratic reform, 1982–88, leading up to the Salinas administration, which shifted emphasis from the interests of lower-income residents in Mexico City, to large-scale development projects, luxury housing, gentrification and tourism development.

Each of these chapters is well documented and meticulous in analysing the sociology of power in Mexico City for the different time-periods. Davis writes with clarity and insight, and her narrative is an original and valuable contribution to the history of power and decision-making in this very important Meso-American metropolis.

The main problem I have with this volume is that expectations are raised in the introductory chapter, but not delivered in the remainder of the book. Specifically, on page xi of the preface, Davis states that her book is a study of “political conflict and urban development”, and that the research is “an analysis of the state and classes on the one hand, and through a focus on territory and space, particularly the built environment, on the other”. The reference to the important notions of “urban development” and “built environment” led me to believe that the overall development of Mexico City as a physical place—a sprawling giant that came of age in the late 20th century—would be a major focus of the book. Because Davis theoretically grounds her work (as stated in the introductory chapter) in the connection between politics and urban space, the book demands a comprehensive description and analysis of the built environment. Any book seeking to analyse the governance of modern Mexico City is necessarily driven by the built environment, since clearly the major strain on local administrators has been to confront the urban region's gargantuan size, and the resulting problems of housing, land use, the circulation of people and goods, and quality of life.

I was therefore disappointed to find that while the narrative of political history was absolutely first-rate, the analysis of built-environment issues was much more sketchy. Of some 325 pages of text, only about 35 pages substantively address Mexico City's urban development and its built environment, and most of that material is limited to the politics of the subway. I would argue that there are at least six major built environment

issues embedded in an analysis of Mexico City's development in the 20th century. They include: urban physical structure (sprawl); socio-spatial inequality; transport; housing; quality of life/environment; and land use/downtown redevelopment. Davis makes significant inroads on only the question of transport. Most of the other elements are either mentioned in a few paragraphs or not at all. Significantly, several of the key built-environment issues are addressed in detail in a recent publication—Peter Ward's *Mexico City* (1990), and this book is notably absent in the author's bibliography.

Also disappointing is that when the built environment *is* brought into the discussion, the author is unable to convey to the reader a sense of Mexico City as a *place*, filled with unique buildings, neighbourhoods and land-use arrangements. Absent from the narrative is any description of the unique built landscape that is so striking in Mexico City. There is very little mention of the enormous efforts of the post-revolutionary modernist planners and functionalist architects so essential to the urban development story. Other than the subway, there is no significant discussion in the book of any of the massive development projects that transformed Mexico City in the 20th century: the building of University City (UNAM), the great public housing projects at Tlatelolco, the massive highway infrastructure (*perifericos*); the new suburb at Ciudad Satellite; the recent regional shopping malls. Also, hardly mentioned are the irregular settlements and squatter-housing neighbourhoods that dominate the peripheral zones of the city.

There were many places in the book where a more detailed description and analysis of the built environment would have enriched the text and, I am guessing, enhanced its marketability. For example, when the author introduces the trolley bus in Chapter 2, we are never told where it ran in the city, who the users were, or where they lived. In Chapter 4 (pp. 117–119), mention is made of public housing, but neither the location, nor types of housing are discussed. Where is the connection between politics and urban space? Similarly, in Chapter 7, the politics of the METRO unfold, but the narrative is virtually aspatial. Where were the new growth areas, which zones were and were not by the METRO?

The two maps and assorted black and white photographs in the book might have added some substance to the analysis of the built environment; but, in fact, the illustrations are not significantly

linked to the text. The opening map (p. xiv) shows delegation boundaries within the Mexico City region. Why? These are never really mentioned in the text, and certainly not in the first chapter. Equally, on pages 148–149, a map of downtown Mexico City is offered. It is not entirely clear why that particular map, at that scale and with that information, was chosen. It is not specifically mentioned in the text, and there are many streets and other facilities shown that are not necessarily linked to any specific textual discussion. Although many of the black and white photographs depict interesting images of scenes from Mexico City at different periods of the 20th century, their presentation seems arbitrary, leaving them more as 'window dressing', largely divorced from the narrative.

Also disappointing are some of the generalisations offered in the concluding section, Chapter 9. On page 295, Davis states that Mexico City is "a city lost in time", due to its "low density land usage in the city center". This observation fails to explain the geographical context of land use in Mexico City's core. As many urban scholars have noted, the evolution of land use in most Latin American inner cities has tended toward a pattern of relocation of higher-density uses away from the original downtown, along a commercial corridor leading toward a second, more modern, business district. In Mexico City, the pattern is quite clear. The commercial corridor leading away from downtown is the Paseo de la Reforma, and the 'new downtown' business districts are the *zona rosa* and Polanco. High-density office skyscrapers line the Paseo de la Reforma and the Polanco district. Furthermore, Davis's generalisation about Mexico City's downtown having much lower densities than other Latin American cities is contradicted in the Ward book previously mentioned. Ward states that densities in Mexico City are "at least double those of São Paulo and Buenos Aires and roughly similar to the very topographically constrained Caracas" (Ward, 1990, p. 40).

On page 297, Davis claims that "lower and middle classes live all over the metropolitan area, in both centre and periphery, with only the very rich spatially separated from the rest". On the contrary, there are clear social-ecological areas in Mexico City, neighbourhoods that most residents would identify as middle-class, working-class, etc. In the book *Mexico City*, very specific maps are presented showing the distribution of population by income and residential type, leading to a

map showing where different social classes reside in certain sectors and quadrants of the city.

None of these shortcomings on the side of the analysis of the built environment detract from the book's excellence in the realm of politics and urban sociology. Yet since the author makes the claim early on of the book's ties to the built environment, readers should be aware of the limitations of this side of the volume. For social scientists interested in the interplay between national politics and urban social forces, *Urban Leviathan* is required reading. For insights into the politics of transport development, one important part of the story of Mexico City's 20th-century urban development, this book is first-rate. But for those wanting the rest of the story of Mexico City's modern urban development, a book about Mexico City as a place, or about its myriad problems of built environment—physical growth, land use, housing, neighbourhood formation and environmental regulation—they will be forced to look elsewhere.

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Environment and Housing in Third World Cities

H. MAIN and S. WILLIAMS (Eds), 1994

Chichester: John Wiley and Sons

265 pp., £35.00 hardback

ISBN 0 471 94831 4

The collection of writings edited by Main and Williams is dominated by human geographers, but with occasional chapters by sociologists and architect-planners. Certain characteristics follow from the intellectual backgrounds of the contributing authors. For example, in positive vein the book has wide geographical coverage, with substantial description and commentary on environmental issues in Asia, Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa. Also, the treatment is informative and up-to-date, covering such subjects as disease, disaster-prone areas, and the often miserable ways of life among millions living in low-income areas of rapidly growing cities. As would be expected, from such topics there are wide ranging evaluations of environmental, housing and social inequalities.

The choice of authors also leads to some disad-

vantages and significant omissions, especially in the neglect of economics and political science. The book is somewhat thin on the development of international policy development, though Williams's concluding chapter has some general reference to this subject. Since the 1970s, the internationalisation of policies in the environment, urbanisation and the environment has significantly deepened, consequently raising the relevance of international political economy. The focus on city-regions and case studies tends to by-pass international issues. In addition, although most of the authors have appreciation of localised cultural and political conditions, such subjects are scarcely developed in any basic theoretical or analytical way. The style of discourse is largely narrative in tone, and seldom analytical. The disconnection from analysis has led to the omission of important technical matters such as cost-benefit analysis, methods of assessing environmental impact and the formulation of environmental indicators. Economic issues enter the discourses in most chapters, but usually by way of generalised commentary, rather than from a basis of strength in the relevant literature in economic analysis and economic policy.

The authors usually develop some views on policy issues, setting out prescriptions for avoiding future environmental disasters. Policy prescription is generally usefully based upon ideas from social ethics, but omitting social analysis. The social and economic analytical and conceptual principles for environmental studies have advanced substantially since the late 1980s. For example, such authors as Pearce and Warford (1993) and Turner and Pearce (1990) have developed the building blocks of new theory and new ways of analysing the environment. All of this is useful for explanation and interpretation of case studies, and it can make evaluation something more than general commentaries on a compendium of environmental facts.

The book will probably achieve a secure place for a time in undergraduate teaching courses, especially in geography and town planning. Students will obtain value from good information and their social idealism will be enhanced. They will learn that apparently natural disasters such as earthquakes, landslides in squatter settlements, and risks of flooding are very much of significance in their human tolls because the poor are constrained by economic and demographic factors to live in unsafe areas. Amidst the great human tragedies of the chemical explosion in

