

Book Reviews

Hopkins, Lewis D.

Urban Development: The Logic of Making Plans

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In *Urban Development: The Logic of Making Plans*, Lewis Hopkins explores the logic of how urban plans are made, how they work, and how they relate to urban development activities.

Hopkins' work is based on his long academic and professional experience in the discipline as well as his meticulous observation of the planning process in his home of Champaign County, Illinois. Hopkins' exposure to how planning is done in the developing world – Nepal in particular – consolidates this book.

Hopkins presents plan and plan-making – a topic seldom examined systematically and in such detail – in a simple, easy to understand manner. This examination of the basics of planning goes a long way towards clarifying some of the myths and facts around plans and how plans are developed.

The book has ten chapters. It starts by explaining what planning is and how it works. It then questions whether planning actually does work, if it is even important to make plans, and who is involved in making plans. Hopkins untangles the complex systems of rights related to land and regulations, and explains how these systems affect plan-making. Towards the end of the book, Hopkins explains the role of peoples' participation in plan-making and concludes that, despite its usefulness, participation is not a "magic solution" for better planning, let alone a cost-effective alternative to traditional planning. The last two chapters examine plan-making in further depth by prescribing who should make plans and under what circumstances plans should be made.

There are several interesting and important ideas that one can take away from the book. The first is that plan-making is more complex than many imagine it to be. Second, the general belief that plans are a substitute for decision-making processes is incorrect. Plans are tools that can only help people make decisions, and, depending on the situation, may have only limited application. For instance, plans alone cannot overcome the difficulties of 'social cognition' (individuals as a source of the interests of the group) or the 'aggregation of preference' (the collected preferences of individuals) that societies face. We should know when planning works and when another approach is more appropriate. Third, plan-making is not an activity exclusive to the public-sector. Fourth, plans are not regulations, but they are important to the creation of regulations. Fifth, the

logic of making plans (i.e. knowing when to use plans and knowing how to make plans) is fundamental to the profession of planning.

The book is dense but very well-structured and easy to follow for committed readers. I have a slight problem with the title of the book, though. The title is a bit misleading: while the book is about the logic of making plans, it is not about urban development, per se. Urban development is a broader term and encompasses much more than just plan-making, such as real estate issues, economic feasibility of developments, environmental impact, and so on. Overall, however, this is a good read for both planning scholars and practitioners.

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