

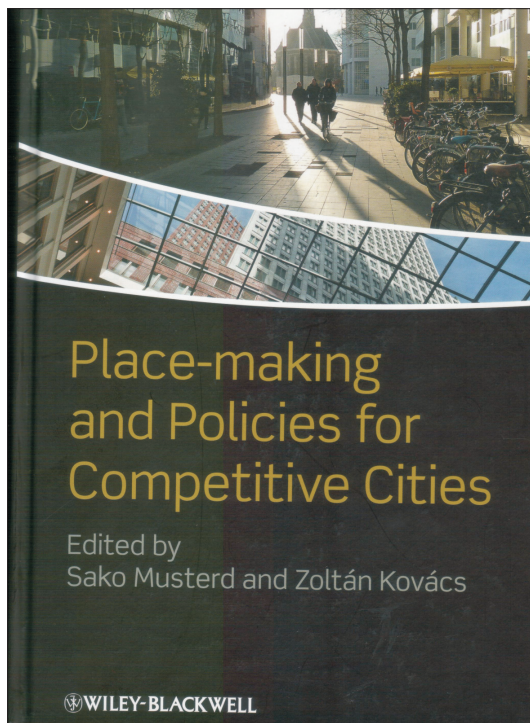
Sako Musterd and Zoltán Kovács: Place-making and Policies for Competitive Cities. Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell, 2013. 340 p.

Creativity, competition of cities, path-dependent development, networks, policy: they are my arbitrarily chosen keywords for the book which shall attract the attention of many. Its main value is making people think about policy-related issues and it encourages us to consider what could possibly go wrong in the city we live in or, on the contrary, what events favour the emergence of a creative milieu.

The book departs from a critical attitude towards Richard FLORIDA's celebrated 3T model in which *Talent*, *Technology* and *Tolerance* are defined as critical factors for urban development. Based on US metropolitan regions, FLORIDA argues that companies settle their high-value-added activities in vibrant, stimulating locations where creative employees feel inspired. Put it differently, jobs go to places creative people like in this way of conceptualization. However, as MUSTERD and KOVÁCS point out in their introduction correctly, the 3T model suffers from major theoretical shortcomings and European policy-makers should not follow that guidance without special precaution because European urban development differs from the US path. For example, European employees are less mobile than US employees; the previous pathways of urban development in Europe are more important. The creative class reasoning seems to be very elitist in nature and it assumes an automatic spill-over effect from that highly-educated group of people to the whole society, which might differ across countries. Last but most importantly, according to many critics towards the 3t model, economic and industrial structure (and not only human workforce) might remain the primary determinant of urban development.

Therefore, there is no universal receipt working in all places; it is not enough to copy policy initiatives from elsewhere. We can learn that tailoring policies is needed in order to address local challenges; the authors also provide us with some crutches for that.

The work upon the book is built was carried out in the frame of ACRE project (Accommodating Creative Knowledge) collecting cases from 13 European metropolitan regions: Amsterdam, Barcelona, Budapest, Birmingham, Dublin, Helsinki, Leipzig, Milan, Munich, Poznań, Riga, Sofia, Toulouse. The research focused on the question of what factors attract or retain creative and talented employees in the city. It is a central question for policy makers but I have to note that it fails to provide a holistic view on human capital development. For instance, it remains unclear whether a city should invest in freshly designed buildings or it should develop the education instead. Main findings of



the research were published in a previous volume (MUSTERD, S. and MURIE, A.: Making competitive cities. Oxford, Blackwell, 2010), whereas the present book gives an overview of policy implications organized along three keywords: *Path*, *Place* and *People*.

Contributions within the *Path* chapter concentrate on special circumstances determining city policies. A strong argument is made claiming that the past development of cities strongly influences what officials can do in present initiatives. A very interesting section elaborates on the post-socialist challenges for urban development. The authors premise these locations differ from the Western European ones in many regards. For example, capital cities usually have a stronger dominance in the city structure than in Western Europe; therefore capitals might be targeted relatively stronger in these countries, which might have a direct effect on local living conditions and creative class attraction. Also, the section suggests that strong local debates rise frequently whether to support new private projects or the state-controlled cultural sector currently suffering from budget cuts. I would give a further argument to the section: we observe growing social and regional inequalities in these countries and FLORIDA'S ideas are really elitist here because there might be very limited spill-over effects from internationally mobile and competitive creative to other locals. For instance, while the centre of Budapest attracts more and more foreigners and creative projects are mushrooming, the outskirts of the city lag behind with an increasing gap. In my opinion, researchers should pay an extra attention to the aforementioned issues.

The *Place* chapter addresses place-making, marketing and branding as key tasks of local policymakers and municipalities simply because the reputation of a city is crucial in order to attract talented people. I believe that in spite of the fierce intercity competition, the role of the above mentioned factors is still unclear. Therefore, a well-framed and policy mix should synthesise local housing, social environment, and economic development in a way in which a city brand is created as well. Related sections offer a helpful summary.

The last chapter called *People* contains excellent contributions from the broad area of network studies. Transnational networks are mainly discussed from the viewpoint of immigrants: "Are they embedded into local environment or not?" The integration might depend on the cultural and institutional constraints of the city population and it should be supported by knowledge-based policy. I found that the section on university-industry networks provided the most substantial overview. It contains an outstanding typology of personal connections between university employees and other local actors (Figure on page 274). The last section provides a nice reflection on previous propositions from the viewpoint of professional and social networks complementing each other and providing different spaces of learning and innovation in a city. From the network chapter, one can get the impression that policymakers should pay an extra attention to the support of (new) platforms and the creation of infrastructure. The networks of creatives will probably establish a vibrant atmosphere on that basis.

Three types of people will certainly benefit from reading the book. Researchers conducting qualitative work in planning studies will surely find areas in the volume they can relate themselves to. People working in quantitative fields will most probably find the book thought provoking and they can easily get the feeling that it is worth focusing on knowledge-based urban development. Nevertheless, the book is a must for urban planners too. Although creatives always find the way to survive, create and express themselves, major policy failures can ruin and a right policy mix can speed up the shaping process of a creative milieu. The major takeaway is that policies should not be automatically/simply adopted from somewhere else, but they should be always tailored to special circumstances.

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