

Book Review

Insurgencies and Revolutions

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Insurgencies and Revolutions: Reflections on John Friedmann's Contributions to Planning Theory and Practice

Haripriya Rangan, Mee Kam NG, Libby Porter, Jacquelyn Chase

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The book 'Insurgencies and Revolutions. Reflections on John Friedmann's Contributions to Planning Theory', edited by Haripriya Rangan, Mee Kam Ng, Libby Porter and Jacquelyn Chase, is one more important recent addition to the growing library on planning history and planning theory. If in 'Encounters in Planning Thought,' that I recently reviewed for the IJEPR, we get a broad well informed perspective of how planning thought evolved in recent decades through the memories (or 'autobiographies') of 16 key planning scholars, including John Friedmann, the oldest of the group, in this book we are offered a sample of the wide influence of John Friedmann's contributions to both planning theory and planning practice, and specifically his influence on numerous contemporary planning scholars, some of whom studied or worked with him at some point in time.

This book project emerged among a group of his former graduate students, back in 2015, to honour and to celebrate his 90th anniversary on April 2016. The book is organized in five parts, each dealing with one main subject area of his long and diverse working life. Each of these parts starts with a short introduction by one of the editors. The volume includes also a preface by Leonie Sandercock, an Introduction to the volume by Haripriya Rangan, and ends with a Postscript by John Friedmann. Given the relevance and importance of Friedmann's work in the shaping of our current understanding of what planning is, a question (what is planning?) that transverse all his professional life, the book is of interest for all those working in the field of Urban and Regional Planning, and therefore in Urban e-Planning too.

The Preface by Leonie Sandercock and his own postscript highlight points on his life that may help perhaps to better understand how his intellectual career developed, in this or in that direction, and how certain ideas emerged and were put into practice. A number of key ideas came forward at different moments in his more than 60 years long career in planning. Insurgency, Good Society are two of these key notions. To make the Good Society, the ultimate goal of planning, in Friedmann's thought, requires some form of insurgency, of struggle. Also central to his contributions is the idea

that we need to look beyond the current visions since that is the only way we can find real alternatives that could then lead us to the Good City and Good Society, even if cases such as Jerusalem, examined in chapter 3, marked by complex conflicts, make it difficult to hold traditional planning practice. The need to move from a mere allocative mechanism to a creator of innovative institutions, small in scale and responsive to the communities, seen as small cells of larger social formations, was another major contribution to change the nature of planning in the 1980s onwards. Interesting to note here is the divergence with neo-marxist approaches, at that time, in what regards the kind of action that should be taken to face the unequal centre-periphery relations, class struggle versus local action in local communities, for instance.

Part 1 ('Practising hope') has five chapters and an Introduction by Libby Porter. These essays reflect the grounded nature of John Friedmann approach to planning theory, namely the theme of hope in the possibility of a Good Society. The need to employ utopian thinking, the importance of the small-scale community action, the need to obtain results in the real world, or his teaching approach that inspired the Project Based Learning, are some of the themes addressed in the following essays, in dialogue with the previous work of John Friedmann. In the first essay included in this initial section, Libby Porter ('Resistance is never wasted. Reflections on Friedmann and hope') builds on Friedmann's idea of a radical and possible hope as the basis of planning theory. In other words, 'the role of scholarship is to articulate alternative, grounded, real visions of the world that are based in careful critique of the current order' (p.14). The section includes also essays by Bishwapriya Sanyal ('Territoriality. Which way now?'), by Diane E. Davis ('The difficulties of employing utopian thinking in planning practice. Lessons from the Just Jerusalem Project'), by Shiv Someshwar ('Realizing sustainable development goals. The prescience of John Friedmann') and by Adolfo Cazorla, Ignacio de los Ríos and José Díaz-Puente ('How to prepare planners in the Bologna European education context').

In Part 2 ('Economic development and regionalism'), which has also five chapters and an Introduction by Haripriya Rangan, the chapters deal with the theme - regional development - with which John Friedmann started his career in the 1950s. As the editor of this section recalls, Friedmann's work on this theme was influential in the recognition of the importance of cities and city-regions in the economy and the importance of centre-periphery relations in the context of regional development processes. As a pragmatist, Friedmann preferred both/and instead of either/or choice, an important issue in his discussions of the role of the state and civil society in regional development, and the need for rethinking the divisions of power and responsibilities among collective actors, a reconstruction of the territorial governance system, including forms of hybrid governance. Also important is his observation, highlighted in one of the essays in this section, that development planning is essentially about learning the local circumstances, needs, expectations, and capacities, in order to design development programs that support equitable and sustainable development, or the observation that planning practice must be grounded on a value-based philosophy, which one of the essays suggests could be the bioregional narrative. The section includes essays by Robin Bloch ('City-regions, urban fields and urban frontiers: Friedmann's legacy'), Chung-Tong Wu ('Periphery, borders and regional development'), Keith Pezzoli ('The bioregionalization of survival: Sustainability science and rooted community'), Haripriya Rangan ('Are social enterprises a radical planning challenge to neoliberal development?'), and by Yuko Aoyama ('Business in the public domain: The rise of social enterprises and implications for economic development planning'). The case of social enterprises, as a means of social mobilization in the planning and development fields, discussed in two of the essays, as means for possible radical economic transformation, may also be seen as an example of the indirect influence of Friedmann's ideas on current planning thought.

The next section - 'World Cities and the Good City' - with seven chapters and an Introduction by Haripriya Rangan is focused on the impacts of the changes that occurred in the 1970s and 1980s associated with the rising of neoliberal economic theories and economic globalization and the

impacts these had into the process of urbanization and regional development. As the essays included in this section show, the work of John Friedmann on the 'world city hypothesis' had an important influence in this period and beyond, in particular in helping theorizing and understanding the new and emerging forms of the 'urban' worldwide (the urban superorganism; suburbs; public space; urban entrepreneurship, and so on): Michael Leaf ('The urban, the periurban and the urban super organism'), Roger Keil ('The prospect of suburbs. Rethinking the urban field on a planet of cities'), Ute Lehrer ('Room for the Good Society? Public space, amenities and the condominium'), Saskia Sassen ('The escalating privatization of urban space meets John Friedmann's posturban landscape'), Matti Siemiatycki ('Urban entrepreneurship through transactive planning. The making of Waterfront Toronto'), Mike Douglass ('From good city to progressive city. Reclaiming the urban future in Asia'), and Hemalata C. Dandekar ('Transactive planning and the 'found space' of Mumbai Port lands').

In Part 4 ('Social learning, communities, and empowered citizenship'), with five chapters and an Introduction by Jacquelyn Chase, the book deals with issues related with the turn of John Friedmann towards a transactive model of planning associated with his rethink of planning as the preserve of experts, allowing different sorts of communities a meaningful control of transformation of their territories, as well as forms of engaged scholarship. Four of the essays included in this section deal with cases studies focused on different kinds of communities: Michael Hibbard ('Development in Indian country. Empowerment, life space and transformative planning'), Claudia B. Isaac ('Operationalizing social learning through empowerment evaluation'), Tanja Winkler ('The radical practice off teaching, learning, and doing in the informal settlement of Langrug, South Africa'), Jacqueline Chase ('Fire, ownership, citizenship and community'), and Aftab Erfan ('Meeting the Other. A personal account of my struggle with John Friedmann to enact the radical practice of dialogic inquiry and love in the new millenium').

In the fifth and last part of the book ('Chinese Urbanism'), which has four chapters and an Introduction by Mee Kam Ng, the focus is on the devotion of Friedmann to China Studies after his retirement, exploring the trajectory of China towards a new urbanization and the need to reorient development: Timothy Cheek ('Ignoring the ramparts. John Friedmann's dialogue with Chinese urbanism and Chinese studies'), Klaus R. Kunzmann ('Challenges of strategic planning in another planning culture. Learning from working in a Chinese city'), Sheng Zhong ('Social learning in creative Shanghai'), and Mee Kam Ng ('From the Xinhai Revolution to the Umbrella Movement').

The book ends with a postscript, a response to the previous essays, by John Friedmann, divided into two parts. In the first section of this postscript, Friedmann briefly recounts parts of his personal history related to planning. In the second section, responds to some of the essays and how they address key issues for the planning profession, grouped into six main topics: social values; communicative action planning; the variety of planning cultures; civil society, territory and self-empowerment; re/engaging the state; and regionalism. In his responses in this last section, John Friedmann reaffirms his main arguments: progressive planners need to search for and to articulate social values that will guide their actions; planning should become more present-oriented while moving towards a desirable future; planners need to be aware and to adapt to the existing different planning cultures; while the role of the state is crucial, he was never anti-state as he recalls, there is in his opinion room for community action planning, for strong actions from civil society pushing the state, at different regional/local scales.

In sum, the editors and the authors of these essays should be praised for this more than just homage to John Friedmann's contributions to planning, certainly one of the most important planning scholar in the field of planning theory in the 20th century, whichever the definition of planning we adopt, whose work continues to inspire later generations of scholars and practitioners in the planning field. His long life example, as we are told in this book by some of those that met or worked with him at some point in his long working career, of endless intellectual curiosity, and his optimism regarding the political and social project of 'human flourishing', that he kept experimenting through different modes of planning praxis, are certainly important legacies of his intellectual life, well reflected in his extensive bibliography. The title chosen by the editors for this book - *Insurgencies and Revolutions* -

reflect well the way planning has evolved, in part due to the work of John Friedmann, who always saw development and planning as being about democracy, and in his later works perhaps more precisely about grassroots democracy. Personal circumstances, place, and history shape always the way we think and how we see the world (of planning). That happened too with John Friedmann and will certainly continue to occur with the future generations of planners. By making this clear in the case of one of the most influential planning thinkers, the book is of interest for readers of the IJEPR and for all those working in the field of Urban e-Planning and in related professional fields, for whom his vision of planning as a mode of progressive, democratic and radical social empowerment might be, hopefully, a guiding reference in the everyday practice of Urban e-Planning.

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