
Book Review

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Building Prosperous Knowledge Cities: Policies, Plans and Metrics
by: Tan Yigitcanlar, Kostas Metaxiotis and
Francisco Javier Carrillo (Eds.)
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A knowledge city can be defined as “a region that bases its ability to create wealth on its capacity to generate and leverage its knowledge capabilities through knowledge-based extended networks formed by enterprises and people” [Chatzkel, (2004), p.62]. Further, Carrillo (2004, p.34) suggests that the identification and development of a diverse capital system that typify knowledge cities development by a range of actors “supports a balanced and sustainable approach”. With the global trends of population growth, ageing and urbanisation looming large on the demographic horizon (Hajkowicz and Moody, 2010), the mandate of the urban planner is increasingly to respond with strategies and approaches from the sustainable development domain.

However, will our ‘point in time’ conceptions of reality and understanding really serve us well as we move into a future of increasing complexity and risk? Further, are we missing some of the important human, social and governance support mechanisms that underpin participative democracy implicit in efforts towards quadruple bottom line sustainability? Yigitcanlar, Metaxiotis and Carrillo (Eds.), in their preface certainly argue for the increasing relevance of knowledge-based cities in economic, social and cultural development, and in particular, the “primacy of intangible assets” (p.21) in the evolution of knowledge cities.

The book is structured into three parts with a number of themed supporting chapters from academics and experts from the rapidly growing global knowledge-based urban development community. Part I explores Policies for building prosperous knowledge cities, Part II explores Plans and Part III explores Metrics.

Part I – Policies for building prosperous knowledge cities

Chapter 1 – themed ‘Innovating: creativity, innovation and the role of cities in the globalising knowledge economy’, examines cities as the new economic engines and cradles of creativity and innovation using the creative class approach. Chapter 2 – Creating: the creative class-based knowledge city models of Denmark, analyses the application of creative class-based approaches to Danish cities. Chapter 3 – Organising:

spontaneously developed urban technology precincts, looks at the potential for such precincts and their spatial and organisation characteristics in a case study example. Chapter 4 – Globalising: what makes Australian information technology industries go global, investigates research on company attributes associated with differing levels of export success and factors of disadvantage for the Australian IT industry. Chapter 5 – Attracting: the coffeeless urban café and the attraction of urban space, looks at how public space adjacent to key transport infrastructure can contribute to innovation and economic efficiency through two case study examples. Chapter 6 – Researching: investigates research into the key factors for the success of knowledge cities in Germany, examined the strategic and operational measures that cities used to raise their profile as a science city. Chapter 7 – Participating: knowledge citizens’ competencies and knowledge city transformation, identifies the set of competencies that allow citizens to leverage their knowledge and that of their city.

Part II – Plans for building prosperous knowledge cities

Chapter 8 – Piloting: knowledge-based development policy and practice in building a vibrant ecosystem, proposes a view of cities as open networked innovation centres and identifies a series of key attributes of innovative ecosystems. Chapter 9 – Formulating: an integrated strategy for the development of knowledge cities, looks at the complexity of building integrated knowledge city strategies and presents the method, KnowCis 2.0, as an alternative. Chapter 10 – Designing: combining design and high-tech industries in the knowledge city of Eindhoven, addresses the main assumptions of the business-oriented, people-oriented and the comprehensive perspectives of urban knowledge-based development using Eindhoven as a case study. Chapter 11 – Clustering: concentration of the knowledge-based economy in Sydney, puts forward an empirical contribution to understanding the concentration of the knowledge-based economy in central Sydney using the location quotient. Chapter 12 – Connecting: community supported university for knowledge city transformation, looks at the role of community supported universities in social capital development and transformation. Chapter 13 – Promoting: programmes for and challenges of the knowledge-based small business, highlight a number of barriers that require consideration for small to medium enterprises and knowledge-based businesses in knowledge-based cities. Chapter 14 – Enterprising: academics, knowledge capital and towards PASCAL universities, looks at the emerging redefinition of universities and their role in community co-creation and empowerment. Chapter 15 – Transforming: turning knowledge cities into a knowledge region, examines the experience of turning an old industrial region in Germany into a knowledge region.

Part III – Metrics for building prosperous knowledge cities

Chapter 16 – Commuting: the geography of Melbourne’s knowledge economy, uses ABS statistics to investigate the geographic distributions and preferences of the creative class in Melbourne. Chapter 17 – Measuring: knowledge-based development metrics, evolution and perspectives, provides a review on progress made in understanding and designing scientifically sound and practically viable knowledge-based development composite indicator systems. Chapter 18 – Comparing: knowledge-based urban development of Vancouver, Melbourne, Manchester and Boston, compares the extent of

knowledge-based development in four cities using an urban knowledge-based development framework. Chapter 19 – Benchmarking: knowledge-based development metrics through the MAKCi exercise, puts forward the generic capitals system (GCS) taxonomy as a methodological tool to identify quantitative measurement tools from qualitative factor inputs.

In the conclusion, Joris van Wezemael suggests that in striving for prosperous knowledge cities, three things will be necessary: a deeper enquiry into the characteristics of knowledge and self-organisation; the interaction between networks and feedback loops characteristic of self-organising systems will have social learning opportunities in their own right; and place diversity will have increasing importance in terms of possibilities and outputs for the knowledge cities of the future.

Perhaps it is timely to evaluate the success of our efforts as planners towards sustainability thus far, and consider if, as Einstein insightfully suggested, “we cannot solve problems by using the same level of thinking we used when we created them” (<http://thinkexist.com>). Certainly, Yigitcanlar, Metaxiotis and Carillo and their fellow authors from around the globe, have provided thought provoking material to contribute to the sustainable urban development discourse.

This book would be of interest to academics and students in the regional and urban planning or disciplines and national/state public policy professionals. As this book is principally concerned with contributing to the theoretical and conceptual foundations of knowledge cities and their development, this book may be of particular benefit to postgraduate students or those undertaking undergraduate research or dissertations. As a planner, I look forward to insights from the knowledge-based urban development community on how to apply these concepts in planning schemes and at smaller spatial (but perhaps networked) scales.

References

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