

**Du Local au Global: Les Initiatives pour le Développement Économique en Europe et en Amérique,**  
C. DEMAZIÈRE (Ed), L'Harmattan, Paris (1996).  
382 pp. FF190 (pbk). ISBN 2 7384 3819 9.

This book presents together the different papers from a congress held in Lille in March 1994. It gives an extensive account of different aspects of local initiatives for economic development in Europe and in America. The two main characteristics of local initiatives are to bring flexibility and creativity, and to be limited from a spatial point of view. Local economic development is therefore far from uniform across countries and especially between Europe and North America. Beyond that diversity, it is nevertheless possible to find common features between experiences as well as between the conceptual frameworks that try to explain them. This is the main thesis of the book.

The first part of the book deals with local economic policies in Western Europe and in the US from 1980 to the 21st century. It deals essentially with comparative institutional aspects of local development. The first one, written by Mouleart and Demazière, is a confrontation of theories with local experiences in different European countries. The second, written by Benfer, shows how local policies vary according to the national context in Germany and in the US. Corolleur and Pecqueur have a more strategic and theoretical approach, showing how local initiatives should target the building of local specificities in order to reduce the mobility of firms.

The second part is dedicated to the planning development of large cities. Three different contributions show how co-ordination between actors and institutions is difficult in cities. Most processes involve very different actors and most take place outside the influence of local authorities. Furthermore, in Bilbao, Charleroi and London – the three case studies presented here – local authorities have to face at the same time the absence of institutional co-ordination, social polarization, technological changes and restructuring of the physical environment in order to follow or facilitate the transition to a service economy. The third part deals with the internationalization of local strategies. Chapman describes the role of the EU in local economic development. The two subsequent contributions focus on border regions.

## Book Reviews

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The fourth part is dedicated to community development in America and the fifth to local economic development and social exclusion. In these chapters, various contributions illustrate how local communities resist or react to specific pressures induced by economic restructuring, by the development of new activities or by the absence of social policies. In this sense these experiences focus on social policy experiences as responses to economic change. A more innovative approach is the US micro loans programme presented by Servon.

As one can see, this book covers a very large spectrum of experiences and theories. I would certainly not recommend it for anyone interested in finding a systematic coverage of the field. The general impression is rather a patchwork switching from community development in Québec to border region institutional frameworks in the EU. In this perspective, the general introduction by Demazière is remarkable in the sense that it manages to provide evidence of some convergences between all these experiences. In my opinion, the interest of the book lies in some individual contributions which present rather unusual aspects of local development. I found personal interest in the contributions of Corolleur and Pecqueur, Van Doren, Begg and Whyatt, Archer and Servon. In the conclusion, Wilson underlines different emerging problems that regional scientists now have to deal with, among them, the renewed importance of the informal sector. The latter is not only the result of the behaviour of firms which avoid labour regulations. It may also contribute to the creation of new forms of production and consumption. Another emerging problem is 'post modern analysis' in the sense that qualitative research focusing on particular cases is crucial today in order to improve established theories.

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