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BOOK REVIEW

LAND RITES AND WRONGS: THE MANAGEMENT, REGULATION AND USE OF LAND IN CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES

Elliot J. Feldman and Michael A. Goldberg, eds.
Cambridge: Lincoln Institute of Land Policy. 1987. Pp. xiii, 326.

Land Rites and Wrongs is one of the very best books I have read in the past 15 years!

Books to which seven authors contribute often are a set of discrete essays more-or-less related to the central theme. This book is different in that the chapters are well integrated, fitting logically together and supplementing each other while still presenting individual points of view. This is a result of the unique collaboration among the authors over a period of four years, subjecting their ideas and chapters to each other for critical review and comment in regular seminars.

The goal of this interactive process was not simply to write a homogenized treatise (which it is not), but rather to gain mutual stimulation and sobering constraints from shared views and insights. The result has been a major success both for the collaborative process and for the specific application of a "comparative" method of analysis.

Land Rites and Wrongs is divided into an Introduction and five parts: I. Comparing Public and Private in Canada and the United States; II. Planning and Controlling Cities; III. Using and Abusing Undeveloped Land: Beyond the Fringe; IV. Making Change: Give and Take; and V. Conclusions. Each part, except the Introduction and the Conclusion, contains two chapters.

Comparative research that goes beyond structural description is rare. This work succeeds both at the descriptive and at the analytical levels. It seeks to explain the factors that result in distinctive outcomes as well as parallels in the two countries. Similarities as well as differences are dealt with.

To be manageable, research of the type here undertaken must necessarily use case studies and case examples implicitly held out as microcosms of the general situation in each of the two countries. The authors are effective in explaining, justifying, and qualifying the lessons from the cases, and seem to avoid over-generalizations.

From this reviewer's point of view, the weakest chapter is that by Gordon L. Clark (Ch. 8) titled "Adjudicating Jurisdictional Disputes in Chicago and Toronto: Legal Formalism and Urban Structure." It is the

subtitle which best characterizes this chapter. It is perhaps significant that the Preface explains that Clark's essay was not subject to a group seminar session, although it had been reviewed by a special Canadian Study Group meeting at Harvard in 1983. It seems clear that Clark's chapter fits into the book less well than do the other chapters.

It is difficult to choose the "best" chapters because the rest are all excellent, giving the reader a feeling that the authors know their subjects well. Clearly the utility of the information in these chapters is heightened and clarified by the comparative approach. I was particularly taken by Chapter Five by Feldman, "On the Fringe: Controlling Urban Sprawl in Canada and the United States," and by Chapter Six by Christopher K. Leman, "A Forest of Institutions: Patterns of Choice on North American Timberlands." Leman's review of forest policies and practices in the two countries is perhaps the most comprehensive of all the chapters, relying less on case studies, and seeking instead to examine what is happening in all parts of both countries and with respect to various types of holdings (that is, public, private, corporate, and small owner).

Comparative studies can, as this book well illustrates, add knowledge and understanding of both governmental systems. The information which this work presents is too complex to be summarized in a short review. However, two factors which emerge as particularly significant in accounting for some of the differences between Canadian and American policies and practices are: one, the more ready acceptance of government intervention in land use problems together with effective planning; and two, the extent to which citizen participation and interest group involvement in land and environmental decisions is less important. Both of these differences may partly be explained by the fact that Canadian government is parliamentary and as a result political parties are more responsible and more effectively linked to both legislative and executive functions on the one hand and to party membership on the other.

The chapters not mentioned above are: 2) The Concepts of Public and Private and Their Applicability to North American Lands, by Christopher K. Leman; 3) Evaluating Urban Land Use Development, by Michael A. Goldberg; 4) Saving the Center City, by Frank C. Colcord, Jr.; 7) Siting Toxic Waste Disposal Facilities: Best and Worst Cases in North America, by Mario Ristatore; 9) The "Giving Issue": A View of Land, Property Rights, and Industrial Development in Maine and Nova Scotia, by John Brigham; and 10) General Lessons from Diverse Cases, by the Editors.

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