This book is the outcome of an innovative effort in joining hands to provide literature on urban and regional planning cutting across country and language barriers. The book aims at promoting better integration, cross fertilisation and criticism of research work and case studies conducted at different Schools of Planning in the world. This is an initiative of the Global Planning Education Association Network (GPEAN) comprising nine member associations (see box). Based upon regional competition, each association has contributed its prize-winning papers to this compilation. Stiftel and Watson have further edited these papers with advice from an international editorial board, and have also written the Introduction (Ch.1) that highlights the details of this noble initiative. This book presents lucid literature on three international issues – (a) relationship between planning and economy, (b) environment and conservation, and (c) nature of the planning process and decision making.

The first issue is addressed through the example of the impact of market forces on the pattern of mixed land uses in Canada (author Grant; Ch.2), benefits of the Olympic Stadiums
on Sydney, Australia (Searle: Ch.3), and shaping of urban spaces in Buenos Aires (Lombardo et. al.: Ch.4). The conclusions of various papers in the context of the relationship between planning and economy are that the pattern of mixed land uses is affected by factors such as 'cultural beliefs, means of production, transport technology, shelter technology, and level of affluence' (p-31). The experience of mixed land uses in Canada is discouraging as such 'districts are becoming more segregated by class, and affordability has not improved' (p-30). In case of Olympic Stadiums the huge investment was made in the hope that it will generate wider economic benefits to the city and attract further investment. In the post-Olympic period, the desired results could not be achieved. The government had to prepare a master plan for 'major urban development' at the Olympic Park. This also did not give positive results. This case indicates the rapidity of planning to economic development, the need for partnerships with a private sector to achieve outcomes, and the uncertain competitive environment. All this means that the planning process under the market forces is 'more reactive, more short-term and more unpredictable in its consequences' (p-55). The Buenos Aires study concludes that market forces, acting on the urban land market, create heterogeneous space of distinct zones – the high and low land value zones inhabited by rich and relatively poorer people. The urban land market flourishes in the high value zone while 'the relatively poorer zones ... remain the responsibility of the government' (p-83).

Addressing the issue of environment and conservation, Dolman and others advocate a whole landscape, 'looking beyond the farm' approach, with participation of all interested groups, for amenity, biodiversity conservation and other environmental benefits in rural development programmes. The authors argue that the 'time is right to take one or two land management initiatives and convert them to excitingly managed whole landscape, based on principles of sustainability and biodiversity enhancement' (Ch.5, p-121). On the same issue, Zhang discusses the study of Shanghai and concludes that rapid socio-economic changes in the past two decades have resulted in large-scale urban regeneration that has threatened the traditional and vernacular-built environment and 'the balance between urban regeneration and conservation has become a hard task for local planning authorities' (Ch.6, p-151). Taking the environmental issue further, Acselrad (Ch.7) studies the ecological-economic zoning in Brazilian Amazon Region and concludes that political influence is 'not restricted to the moment of final decision, but, rather runs through the entire process' (p-156). 'Planning in this case forms a mechanism through which power can be exercised, and its effectiveness in protecting environment and livelihoods has been-minimal' (p-10).

On the issue of the nature of the planning process and decision making, the book presents remaining six papers that deal with challenges in participatory planning (Umemoto: Ch.8), resolution of complex and emotional issues of ethnic identity and group-based claims by planners (Rollens: Ch.9) and neo-pragmatic approach to collaborative planning in areas characterised by historical conflicts among diverse stakeholders (Jamal et. al. Ch.10). The co-editor of this book, Watson examines the usefulness of normative planning theories dealing with communication, just-city approach, and multiculturalism in the context of Sub-Saharan Africa (Ch.11) and concludes that these theories do not hold in this very different context of poor economy, widespread poverty, inequitable distribution of wealth, and inefficient governance. The paper by Sandercock is very interesting as it advocates that story telling could be an effective tool in planning and concludes that goals of planning can be achieved through story telling as stories can be used 'in policy, in process, in pedagogy, in critique, as a foundation and as a catalyst for change' (Ch.12 p-299). The sixth paper on the issue of the planning process and decision making by Mantysalo, discusses the dilemmas in the Critical Planning Theory or the communicative and collaborative approach and concludes that if 'a theory of participatory planning ought to face the question of legitimacy, power, openness, quality of argumentation and possibilities for critique, creativity and social learning as challenges to planning methodology, then Critical Planning Theory should be considered inadequate' (Ch.13, p-338).

This book presents the contemporary concerns in urban and regional planning as experienced by different countries and regions of the world. An overview of the titles of papers and the countries / regions they represent clearly indicates that United States, Canada and Europe show a concern about decision making processes, multi-cultural and multi-stakeholder societies as a result of large scale global migration to these regions. In Asia and Africa the concern is urban poverty, slow economic growth, and on top of it a rapid urban growth and change that is a challenge to manage without affecting the local heritage and environmental resources. This is the first compilation of GPEAN and it is hoped that the initiative will continue undisturbed.

This book provides literature on global spatio-economic development concerns in diverse regional settings and has a global appeal.

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SDR
12.3 MAY-JUN 2005 43