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BOOK REVIEW

Routledge companion to professional awareness and diversity in planning education, by Stephen Kofi Diko, Leah Marie Hollstein, and Danilo Palazzo (eds.), London, Routledge, 2023

This book will likely be of interest to planning educators. The editors have done a good job of assembling contributions from authors in a wide variety of geographic and educational contexts, which means that the book will be useful to planners both in and outside the U.S. It is organized into three sections: diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts in planning education; engaging children and youth in planning; and planning education awareness. The introduction, written by the editors, gives an overview of the three sections, although different sections of the book may be of interest to different readers. Their Conclusion chapter includes a call to action that summarizes some of the major themes of the book.

The first section of the book highlights the tensions and contradictions around the very idea of what diversity should look like in planning practice and education. Some of the American authors (such as in Chapter 2 by García et al.) have very specific ideas of what diversity should look like among the student body and faculty of planning programs. They point to statistics that expose the gap between the racial makeup of planning professionals versus the general U.S. population; the profession is much whiter than the country. In this view, the critical mission of planning diversity efforts is to build a cohort of planners who will reflect the people living in large U.S. cities. To that end, they call for more stringent data collection and reporting requirements as part of the PAB accreditation process, in part to ensure that programs cannot use international students of color to pad their diversity numbers. However, the programs who already teach the most students of color, those housed in historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and urban public universities, are those most likely to be already under-resourced and to find such reporting requirements onerous. Chapter 1, written by Lowe and Sen, who are faculty at two different HBCUs, says as much, expressing hope that such programs might in fact be exempt from some of the current PAB data collection requirements, rather than adding additional ones.

The authors who write from countries other than the U.S. have quite a different perspective on diversity, which is much more focused on exposure to ideas and people from different parts of the world. For example, in Chapter 5, Bonfantini and Pacchi describe how one planning program in Italy switched the instructional language to English in order to attract more international students. A program in Iran, described in Chapter 6 by Pahlavan and Maroufi, runs intensive fieldwork offsites for students from (mostly) other Middle Eastern countries, imparting an ethic of care for vernacular architecture and urban form that counters the "developmentalism" prevailing in many of their home countries. It seems there should be room for both types of commitment to diversity in planning education: racial and ethnic diversity that reflects the local and regional context in which planners work as well as exposure to international or global perspectives and contexts.

The chapters in the second section of the book describe a variety of programs and curricula around the world that seek to engage children and youth in planning. This section of the book will be of great interest to any organization or university department considering setting up such a program. The authors of these chapters consistently argue that these programs were successful (sometimes after some trial and error) in increasing students' interest in and knowledge of planning and environmental sustainability. Circling back to the first half of the book, several of the programs specifically targeted low income and minority children and teens in an attempt to spread awareness of and create a sense of agency around planning in communities where there had been little. The challenges associated with these programs, however, are also fairly consistent. They need a champion or consistent institutional infrastructure to last more than a few years. The Y-PLAN program at UC Berkeley, described in Chapter 10 by McKoy and Hernandez Garcia, now more than 20 years old, seems to have lasted the longest and the University of South Florida (Tampa, Florida) programs described in Chapter 17 by Linkous et al. have been running now for over 8 years, but

these are the exceptions among programs profiled here. They take a great deal of time to administer. They need good partners, such as a school district or community organization, who will help planners connect to the young participants. The largest concern, though, is around the impact of these resource-intensive programs. One of the goals of some, though not all, of the programs is to increase enrollments in local planning undergraduate and graduate programs, see Chapter 9 by Hollstein et al. In none of the examples in this book did the authors show any resulting enrollment increase. All the programs aim to increase students' sense of efficacy, but in most of the examples it is unclear whether the student recommendations ever had an impact on the built environment. The risk of engaging students in planning exercises without impact is similar to that of adults: they can become discouraged or jaded about their ability to actually effect change.

It seems that the most successful programs would engage young people in decisions that would affect them directly, with a short implementation time horizon, and have pre-arranged agreements with adult decision-makers to actually use the student feedback in a discernable way. In Chapter 13, K. Meghan Wieters describes a planning process in Austin, Texas, in the 1990s that engaged junior high school students in redesigning a commercial corridor that they walked down to get to school. Although she doesn't mention how their feedback was used, this is the kind of process that would be ripe for showing students concrete and relatively immediate impacts of their participation. Programs like those at the University of South Florida seem to be successful because they focus more on providing exposure to professional planners as mentors as well as creating bounded, impactful projects such as a neighborhood beautification project.

The chapters in the third section of the book discuss efforts to raise awareness of the planning profession and efforts to increase enrollments in planning educational programs. The perspectives look very different in the Global North, where many planning programs are experiencing declining enrollments, and the Global South, where planning education is not widely available or recognized as prestigious, but where demand for professional planners is rapidly increasing, as the authors of chapters on planning education respectively in Nigeria (Chapter 23, by Osiyi and Onyebueke), Namibia (Chapter 24, by Yanksen), and India (Chapter 25, by Adhvaryu and Joshi) explain. Nonetheless, the authors in this section recommend a relatively consistent set of approaches to increasing awareness and enrollments. Planners need to do a better job of emphasizing what makes the planning space unique, focusing on planning ethics (a truly unique aspect of planning, separate from architecture and engineering), and providing students with a diverse and context-specific understanding of how planning looks and works differently in different places. Planning educators need to work hard on community engagement and outreach to create awareness of their programs among planning-adjacent professionals and local elementary and high school students, who often find out about planning too late to choose it as an undergraduate major. Finally, planning educators should consider overhauling the curricula of undergraduate programs, which are an important way to diversify the profession as well as a pipeline to graduate programs, to remove barriers to entry, streamline requirements, and create multiple general education entry points to introduce students to the field through interesting courses, as Basmajian and Owusu describe in Chapter 20, on Iowa State's approach.

In summary, this book shows that there are no easy answers to marketing planning as a profession: making it possible and desirable for people with a wide variety of backgrounds to get an education in planning; engaging all types of people, including children and youth, in planning processes; and making planning education responsive to local contexts. All these take effort, relationship-building, self-evaluation, institutional change, and, of course, resources. There are quite a few success stories in this book, however, that can serve as roadmaps for educators looking to increase the reach and impact of their programs and the quality of education for their students.

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