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Administration, vol. 63, no. 3 (2015), pp. 93–96
doi: 10.1515/admin-2015-0023

Leading the Inclusive City: Place-Based Innovation for a Bounded Planet

Robin Hambleton (Bristol: Policy Press; 2015; ISBN: 978-1-447304-96-8; 413pp; £24.99)

In the last several decades, the rapid growth in the world's urban population has been unprecedented, and shows no sign of slowing down. In his latest book, *Leading the Inclusive City: Place-Based Innovation for a Bounded Planet*, Robin Hambleton aims to envision what he calls the 'inclusive city'. Essentially, he intends to provide a general blueprint of the kind of city that is ready to cater for the world's ever-increasing urban population. With the world becoming increasingly interconnected, the topic of globalisation has received much attention from academia in recent years. However, Hambleton believes another process – that of urbanisation – is equally as crucial. With the UN predicting that the world's urban population will grow by 1 billion between 2011 and 2025, it is difficult to disagree. This book aims to identify the challenges that cities are likely to face, as well as suggesting a form of governance that can adequately meet the needs of the world's expanding urban population.

The book is divided into four sections: trends and challenges, governance concepts, examples of strong local leadership in action and drawing insights from lessons learned. Scattered throughout are 'innovation stories'. These are short accounts of how innovative local leadership has improved the lives of residents due to bold action that defied normal practice. Indeed, these innovation stories are intended to 'advance understanding of the role of place-based leadership' (p. 29), and ultimately act as a source of inspiration for local leaders. In this way, Hambleton is employing what he calls 'engaged scholarship'. This consists of strengthening the links between academe and practice, so that research can be directly utilised by local leaders and converted into public policy.

His emphasis on the importance of leadership is one that resonates throughout the book. For Hambleton, a major shift in power from 'place-less' actors, such as multinational corporations, to 'place-based' leaders, such as local politicians and community activists, is necessary to achieve the inclusive city. This ties with his argument that the importance of place has been greatly overlooked by activists and scholars alike. While much research relating to public policy has been carried out with a national perspective, few studies have focused on the importance of place. In particular, Hambleton cites the issue of departmentalism, something which he considers to be an inevitable flaw in the way central governments rule. In essence, this leads to politicians constructing their policies around functional domains, such as education and social care. Thus, departmentalism detaches politicians from those they represent, restricting them from being able to comprehend 'the overall impact of public policy on particular places' (p. 79). This, he argues, can be remedied by devolving power to the local level, which is far more in touch with residents.

While his research regarding the strengths of place-based leadership is extremely thorough, his analysis of the negative aspects of autonomous urban government is somewhat disappointing. For example, in discussing how to transcend parochialism, he provides little more than superficial opposition. Indeed, he fails to address the considerable obstacle of parochialism other than to suggest that 'place-based leaders should be guided by "instincts of appropriateness" and what is understood to be right and fair' (p. 131). That said, this is perhaps the only criticism in what is otherwise a well-written, extensively researched book. While he fails to adequately address some of the more negative elements of autonomous local leadership, this is not the case regarding his analysis of other aspects of the inclusive city. As a critic of the privatisation of public spaces, Hambleton is strongly opposed to the development of gated communities. He addresses this issue competently, arguing how gated communities can lead to segregation and distrust, the antithesis of the inclusive city.

While Hambleton accepts that his vision of the inclusive city is a utopian one, he is not blind to the challenges posed by the modern city. The inevitable clashes of opinion between interest groups is not something that will disappear because of a greater decentralisation of power. However, through wise civic leadership that promotes a culture of listening, these exchanges can be shaped into constructive dialogue that can lead to innovative policies designed with the entire

community in mind. Hambleton builds on this point, arguing that greater decentralisation can empower informal leaders, thus allowing all residents to have sufficient representation in the way their locality is run.

Innovation is critical to Hambleton's vision of urban governance. He contends that the dominant culture within public service organisations is to reward conservative behaviour, with most bureaucrats doing little more than making small adjustments from the way things were previously done. In stable times, such a method would be sufficient. However, he is quick to point out that we are not living in stable times. On the contrary, the world is 'experiencing an unprecedented and accelerating rate of change' (p. 140). To deal with this, Hambleton believes that a culture of innovation should become ingrained into the way local authorities conduct their day-to-day business.

Hambleton presents a well-developed argument regarding how to establish such a culture. He once again stresses the importance of strong leadership, which he considers fundamental to achieving effective public service innovation. This is something that is generally ignored by the literature in the area. In achieving innovative approaches to public policy, local political leaders are vital to 'shaping the emotions and behaviour of public servants and the wider community' (p. 165). Hambleton stresses that such leadership is multilevel, not just 'at the top'. This means that innovation-stimulating leadership can just as likely come from grassroots movements as from a position of formal authority, such as a directly elected mayor.

Hambleton refers to this method of governance as 'New Civic Leadership' (NCL). He considers this a far superior system than new public management (NPM), which is the dominant philosophy of many public sectors across the world. NPM imports private sector management practices and ideas, viewing citizens as customers that are the end-users of services. On the other hand, NCL places citizens at the heart of local governance, playing an important role in the formulation of policy, through to delivery. The guiding principles of NPM, such as market-oriented ideals of competition, are contradictory to the values of the inclusive city. Indeed, for Hambleton's inclusive city to be realised, NPM must be abandoned.

In any city in the twenty-first century, the ethnic composition has been affected by migration and immigration. The result is that cities are far more diverse now than in the past. While this is frequently portrayed negatively, particularly the social problems stemming from

cultural tensions, Hambleton considers diversity as an important contributor to the innovative capacity of a city. Although migrants are often viewed as 'helpless victims of global and political forces', Hambleton argues that many are 'relatively adventurous individuals willing to take on new challenges' (p. 262). Rather than fighting the inevitable rise in diversity, Hambleton seeks to embrace it, incorporating it as a vital contributor to a city's progress.

That said, there is no doubt that cultural tensions can have disastrous consequences for the residents of any city. Hambleton believes that this can be combatted most effectively at the local level. Cities, in particular, have the potential to achieve integration and reduce the distrust between certain sections of society. The way in which Hamamatsu, a Japanese industrial city, has dealt with its influx of immigrants is cited as an example of how autonomous local government can further the ideals of the inclusive city. Under the mayorship of Yasuyuki Kitawaki, the city adopted the 'Hamamatsu Declaration', which made a strong commitment to fostering intercultural understanding. Although Japanese national law forbids immigrants from having political rights, Hamamatsu has been creative, setting up a 'Foreign Residents Council', which gathers inputs from immigrants regarding the governance of the city. Hamamatsu is demonstrative of Hambleton's overall argument: the inclusive city can be more readily achieved through empowered local government.

Ultimately, this book comprehensively addresses, and provides solutions to, the issue of urbanisation. While Hambleton's failure to focus on the negative aspects of decentralising power to local authorities does, to some extent, detract from the strength of his analysis, to discredit this book on that alone would be an injustice. Hambleton presents a compelling argument that touches on all aspects of urban governance. His vision is so well presented, and so passionately delivered, that it is hard to disagree with it. As the issue of urbanisation is becoming more and more prevalent, it will not be long before other academics give it the attention it deserves. This book will serve as a point of reference for them, and anyone else interested in urban governance, for a long time to come.

Eoin Quill
University College Cork