Journal of Transport Geography 37 (2014) 127–128

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Journal of Transport Geography

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/jtrangeo

Book review

The Economy of Green Cities, Richard Simpson, Monika Zimmermann (Eds.). Springer, Dordrecht (2013). £90.00 (hardback) £72 (eBook), ISBN: 978-94-007-1968-2

This book presents a volume of 38 chapters addressing different aspects of an important topic: green urban economy. A central theme in the debate surrounding the green urban economy is how to achieve long-term global sustainability through advancing economic development in cities using strategies that are both friendly to the environment and beneficial to society as a whole. The world faces an enormous challenge in sustainable development in the 21st century. How to meet that challenge will largely depend on the degree of success in the area of advancing green urban economies in different parts of the world, particularly in cities. A reader who is interested in the debate about these issues will find the materials covered by the 38 chapters, contributed by 63 authors, very informative.

The book is organized into five parts. Part I only consists of one chapter contributed by the two editors of the book. This chapter provides a big picture of green urban economy in a global context, discusses various aspects that are central to the debate, and introduces the themes covered by the chapters in the remaining four parts of the book. In the rest of the book from Part II through Part V, the first chapter in each part provides an overview of the topics covered by the chapters in that part. I find these overview chapters very useful in helping a reader navigate through the different topics covered by different chapters in the book.

Part II consists of ten chapters that are particularly interesting to readers who desire to have a better understanding of the different perspectives on guiding principles, opportunities, and challenges related to green urban economies. Readers will benefit from the materials in the introductory chapter and gain a better understanding of the relationships between different sectors in cities and green urban economies by reading the next nine chapters. For instance, readers will get a comprehensive coverage of the issues related to green urban economy from the materials in Chapter 8 in this part of the book. The topics discussed in this chapter are drawn from materials covered in more detail in the Cities Chapter of the Green Economy Report, *Towards a Green Economy: Pathways to Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication* published by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) in 2011. Chapter 8 argues that it is necessary for cities to make a transition to a green economy, outlines the economic, social and environmental benefits associated with greening cities, and discusses how specific sectors in a city may be greened to achieve a greener urban economy. In addition, it discusses how different institutions, regulatory authorities, various stakeholders, and citizens can collaborate to create enabling conditions to help cities make the transition to a green urban economy.

The last two chapters in Part II of the book are informative to readers who are interested in how progress and practices in greening a city can be measured. Chapter 9 in this part of the book presents *The Green Cities Practices Matrix* that can be used to measure the performance of green city practices. This chapter presents several award winning cities in Europe to illustrate the usefulness of this matrix. For emerging economies, the Urban Sustainability Index developed to measure performance of city development practices in China discussed in Chapter 10 in this part of the book will be useful to policy makers, researchers, and practitioners who are interested in effective tools for measuring the performance of development strategies and practices in rapidly urbanizing areas.

Readers will gain additional insights about the roles of different stakeholders and actors in advancing a green urban economy from the seven chapters in Part III. Examples of these stakeholder and actors include citizens, the public sector at all levels, and the private sector. A clear message from these chapters is that it is important for stakeholders and actors to develop a shared vision and work collaboratively towards a common goal of developing programs that help advance the green urban economy agenda in any city. Among these seven chapters in this part of the book, the seven enablers discussed in the second chapter help a reader understand how different forces may be brought together to accelerate green urban growth. The survey of renewable energy programs in 33 cities in developing countries, presented in the third chapter in this part, demonstrates the importance of collaboration between the public sector and the private sector. Other chapters clearly suggest that it is crucial for governments at different levels to work together towards a common goal, and it is important to engage all stakeholders when developing and implementing a strategy related to green urban economy.

The 13 chapters in Part IV of the book offer valuable information about the usefulness and effectiveness of different strategies and approaches that aim to lower carbon emissions in urban areas based on examples from different parts of the world. After the introductory chapter, this part begins with a description of a case study of the Leeds city region in the UK. This case study shows the benefits and challenges of decarbonizing an urban area in a developed country. The next chapter argues that the growth of green urban economic activities, among other things related to urban development strategies, deserves to be a top priority if efforts in transitioning toward a green urban economy are to become successful.

In other chapters in this part, a rich set of more specific examples are offered to illustrate a wide spectrum of strategies and practices. These chapters include a discussion of low carbon enterprise zones as an economic development strategy for transitioning to a green city economy in Portland, Oregon, green housing to achieve economic and environmental sustainability of housing in several developing countries, and the concept of Ecomobility that attempts to increase the efficiency of city transportation systems through the integration of different modes of transportation. In addition, other chapters report different approaches to assessing

http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jtrangeo.2014.03.003

the cost of ground water degradation in an urbanizing desert area in Egypt, the use of constructed wetland to treat grey water in India, and practices of organic waste recycling through decentralized composting in Indonesia and Sri Lanka. Furthermore, a success story of preserving biodiversity through conservation practices that are tailored to the local culture in Kanazawa City in Japan and an assessment of the annual loss of carbon credits in Ghana due to deforestation of the second largest city in that country in the next two chapters. The final chapter in Part IV discusses the potential of the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) for financing a green urban economy. The CDM was designed to issue credits to projects and activities in developing countries that lead to measurable and verifiable emission reductions.

The chapters in Part V present six case studies at the city level from different parts of the world. Three of these six case studies share experiences in the development and implementation of city-wide strategies: the City of Hannover in Germany; Auckland in New Zealand; and Flanders in Belgium. The next two case studies illustrate specific practices for the procurement of green products in Western Canada and the promotion of green buildings in Raleigh in the United States. The last case study from Kyoto in Japan is uniquely interesting because it shows the cultural, social, and political aspects of promoting and developing a green urban economy and demonstrates how to get citizens to be more actively involved in the endeavor of greening an urban economy.

Among these six excellent case studies, I was particularly pleased to read that the City of Hannover in Germany, with a population of over half a million people, demonstrated that positive synergies could be created among activities related to environmental protection, economic development, and job growth. The city combined the traditionally separate environmental and economic departments into a single administrative unit in 2005. After making this change, the city not only managed to weather the worst recession since the great depression but also was able to grow the economy and create new employment opportunities while protecting the environment. This success story was truly a show case demonstrating that a balance between economic development and environmental protection can be achieved at the city level.

Overall, this is a very timely reference book for anyone who is interested in understanding different aspects of green urban economy. The editors did a fine job in producing an excellent volume. With the development of green urban economy and additional research on the topic in the next few decades, I envision that this volume will be updated with theoretical advances in the field as well as more examples of proven strategies and practices from both developed and developing countries.

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