Reviews

Planning for Crime Prevention: A TransAtlantic Perspective

by Richard H. Schneider and Ted Kitchen

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Reviewed by Julak Lee

Planning for Crime Prevention: A TransAtlantic Perspective is an ambitious undertaking, with challenging questions. It sets out to widen the debate on crime prevention by analysing the relationship between the built environment and crime in a comparative way. The book is essentially about the study of defensible space and of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) in the USA and the UK, two of the world's leading societies experimenting with place-based crime prevention. This comparative perspective provides a comprehensive introduction to this multi-disciplinary field, and makes the book undoubtedly one of the most rigorous and searching studies of its kind.

The authors have two primary objectives in this book. They encourage architects, planners and other professionals to consider more rigorously the relationship between crime prevention and the built environment. The second objective is to push work in this field toward more evidence-driven approaches. To this end, the authors offer a ten-chapter work organised into three main sections, entitled: 'context and key ideas', 'policy and practice', and 'comparisons and key issues'.

The first section examines the context for major ideas and practice in place-based crime prevention. It introduces the relationship between crime, the fear of crime, and the built environment as major issues affecting the quality of life, and discusses recent crime trends and some of the issues surrounding them in the two countries. The second section looks in more detail at policy and practice in the USA and the UK, with a series of informative case studies. The final section provides some formal comparisons between the positions in the USA and the UK, and draws some ideas and lessons for the future.

The great strength of this book stems from its comparative structure and the cooperation of US and British academic authors. Since most of the major ideas in the place-based crime prevention field come from either the USA or the UK, a transatlantic comparison is of significant importance. Without understanding both the similarities and the differences of the contextual elements important to their success in the respective societies, there is a risk that the full potential of place-based crime prevention will not be achieved.

The book is readable, with a well-organised structure making reference to specific issues straightforward. However, some are of only marginal utility to the concerned professional because they do not keep a tight enough rein over the principal subject. For instance, the authors trace the roots of place-based crime prevention back into the distant past, and elaborate on the evolution of

defensive design. The lack of distinction between prehistoric defensive design against war and modern applications of place-based crime prevention strategies in chapter 3 is a little disappointing.

In summary, this book provides a sound overview of place-based crime prevention and should be of significant interest and use to practitioners, academics, students and policy-makers alike. It deserves to be widely read.

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