

Book Review

Edward J. Blakely and Ted K. Bradshaw (2003). *Planning Local Economic Development: Theory and Practice*. Third Edition. Vistaar Publications, New Delhi, pp. xiii+398 including Indexes.

Planning for local development is a new concept. Particularly, it has only been recently put on the agenda only after the failure of trickle down effects. Even now it is still not a very common practice in many countries. That which is being applied is not a full-fledged local development planning. More often it is partial in character. In a pragmatic process of development, every program and action is potentially useful in contributing to the learning process and in providing the basis for improved programming and action in the future. The argument is to learn from experience and hence have reaped benefits from programs. In recent years due to the explosive growth of the poor population in the Third World Countries despite consistent rise in the aggregate incomes, trickle down has led to wide income gaps with cash choking at the top most layer and starvation at the bottom. Local economic development refers to the process in which local governments or community-based organizations engage to stimulate or maintain business activity and employment. The principal goal of local economic development is to stimulate local employment opportunities in sectors that improve the community using existing human, natural, and institutional resources.

National economic policies through out the world have been increasingly aimed at developing indigenous and locally based economic development programs. This has led to a new focus on building the economy from within and linking it to both the regional and the global economy. Local governments and community groups are as a consequence, engaged in investigating opportunities for improving the economic, wealth and employment bases for the population they serve.

The entire book consisting of fourteen chapters is painted with a broad brush. It explores the theories of local economic development and addresses the dilemmas of community's face. Emphasizing "community- determined processes", the authors investigate planning processes, analytical techniques, business and human resource development, as well as both low-cost and high technology economic development strategies. It contains case studies, illustrations, and exercises, which demonstrate how each theory can be employed in a real world setting; sample resource materials, which facilitate the development and design of program plans; new arguments for implementing local economic development initiatives; and various ideas for local business development ranging from tourism and housing to micro-enterprises, women's enterprises and community co-operatives. This book is the outcome of many years of regional and urban planning experience of the writers. It is aimed primarily at students studying to become professional practitioners of local economic development at the

regional, agency, city, or county government or neighborhood levels. It can also be a reference for professional practitioners and economic development or planning specialists as they carry out their responsibilities. Economic development specialists and planners will find the resource materials included in the text useful for their work particularly helpful in designing local projects. Additionally, it provides guidance for community-based organizations and their client groups to find viable means to develop the economic base of their communities. Policy makers at both the local government and the community level may find the book useful in exploring the role that private enterprises, unions, community groups, and other institutions can play in local economic and employment development activities. Community groups also find the illustrations and the case examples discussed throughout the text very valuable in forming networks and making contact with people in similar circumstances across the nation. It may serve as primarily material or as an adjunct to texts or other materials used in teaching economic development. Reference materials and case examples are arranged in a manner suitable for teaching. Sample resource materials are included to facilitate its use and are also intended to support analytical efforts designed to determine community economic and employment requirements, as well as to develop project or program ideas.

The central thesis of this book is that locally based economic development and employment generation is more likely to be successful if initiated at the community and local level than elsewhere. Each of the factors influencing the economy has unique manifestations and slightly causes in each local area. Solutions to community problems will not succeed if they are not targeted to specific groups and linked to the total regional economic system.

There is no dearth of literature in this field. Much of what is written about local economic development is cast in a real estate and factory-chasing guise with little relevance to those who believe in local development as a "community-determined process". The basic features of this book that distinguish it from other books on the same subject are as follows:

More frequent use has been made of illustrations, charts, graphs, and photographs, that do not only make the subject more interesting to the readers but also make the book easy to understand. The temptation to include everything available has been avoided. All along, attempt has been to include all the relevant facts, making sure that no relevant point is left untouched. Strategies, tools, methods, and viability, are defined by the text in which they are used. At the end of each chapter, summary and conclusion, and references and selected readings are given. Specific terms used are defined for the reader's convenience. The book is in every sense the book of the practice. The book is a condensed statement and reference guide that provides a coherent body of knowledge in order to frame the topics of discussion in this growing field—Local Economic Development. The book is arranged in a manner that will allow readers to select from the menu of ideas presented.

Blakely and Bradshaw are to be congratulated on bringing out this comprehensive book, which will undoubtedly prove invaluable to students and teachers of economic development, urban studies and public administration. Economic development specialists in local and municipal government as well as non-governmental organizations will also find this an essential reference. Although this book is written for U.S. audience it may be the strategy of the authors to plan their studies on planning local economic development of USA, but the writers would

have benefited if they had added some chapters on local economic development for readers in Asia, Africa, and the emerging democracies of the former Soviet Union and Central Europe.

The book certainly deserves wide reading. Anyone who reads this book, whether in urban or rural areas and whether in the United States or elsewhere, develops a new concept of how to solve local dilemmas for present and for many years to come. It is useful and thus worthy of keeping as a reference by those interested readers for planning local economic development. To the writers and publisher, congratulations and thanks.

Central Department of Economics
T.U., Kathmandu

Dr. Sohan Kumar Karna
Lecturer