

UGRG Book Review Series [urban-geography.org.uk](http://urban-geography.org.uk)

*The Urban Geography Reader*. By Nicholas R. Fyfe and Judith T. Kenny. London: Routledge, 2005. 404 pages. £95.00 (Hardback), £25.99 (Paperback).

As a Ph.D student of cultural anthropology with a burgeoning interest in urban geography, I found this edited collection of articles useful, particularly as an overview of trends in urban geography since the middle of the twentieth century. Perhaps seasoned urban geographers who are intimately familiar with the developments and debates within their sub-discipline might think they have little to learn from this disciplinary overview, but I would argue otherwise. Since academics of all stripes have a tendency to be myopic, both new and advanced scholars have much to gain from this collection, which ranges from classic articles in the political economy of urban geography to studies influenced by the cultural turn of the 1980s and 1990s. Despite the disparate sources of material composing this volume's seven sections, several themes emerge: the importance of knowing the history and context of theories and methodologies of urban geography; the changing conceptualisations of 'the city'; the dual influences of political economy and post-modern/interpretive analyses; and the significance of globalization as a phenomenon, its local impacts and the technologies that often shape and propel it.

In addition to an introduction, this volume's seven sections include: 'Foundations,' 'Globalization,' 'Restructuring,' 'Politics, Governance and Inequality,' 'Difference,' 'Form and Symbolism,' and finally, 'Technologies.' Though I study cultural anthropology, I found many of the issues highlighted in the introduction and, indeed, throughout the volume, to be familiar territory. For instance, in both cultural anthropology and urban geography, a tension between political economy-derived and interpretive approaches often surfaces. This collection addresses this tension in a manner that does not oversimplify its complexity nor does it approach either uncritically; for example, critiques of David Harvey's work are referenced and the section 'Form and Symbolism' addresses the question of whether postmodernity is truly a break or simply a historical period. However, readings that attempt to incorporate aspects of both political economy and the cultural turn are not included, perhaps leaving room for this in a future volume. I also found that the sections on 'Globalization' and 'Difference' echoed many of the developments of my discipline, such as the much-discussed limitations of Saskia Sassen's theory of the dual city and the importance of highlighting the local context of cities. It was surprising that urban geographers only recently began to study cities outside the United States and Western Europe, such as Sanjoy Chakravorty's work in Calcutta. However, the editors apologise for not including enough of this work, and I believe that they reflect the historical roots and primary foci of the sub-discipline truthfully. If nothing else, this lacuna points to the need for a volume on post-socialist cities and cities outside the usual bounds of urban geography, or perhaps a volume including cities from all world areas, organised by theme rather than location.

Posted online: 21 February 2007

As I alluded to above, one of the primary strengths of *The Urban Geography Reader* is its contextualisation of the articles included. Each section includes an editor's introduction, as does each article. This should prove useful both for readers refreshing or supplementing their existing knowledge and for readers who are encountering Homer Hoyt, Neil Smith, or Gill Valentine for the first time. Furthermore, each of the sections is careful to include a variety of perspectives, and I appreciated how they organized the material in a more-or-less chronological way.

With regards to the implications of this collection for urban geographers' future theoretical and methodological paths, this volume may not offer cutting-edge techniques or conceptualisations, but what it does offer is a sense of history. Perhaps by perusing this volume, current and future urban geographers (as well as practitioners in neighbouring disciplines) will see where they have been, and will realize what possibilities lie ahead.

*Molly Hurley-Depret*  
*City University of New York*