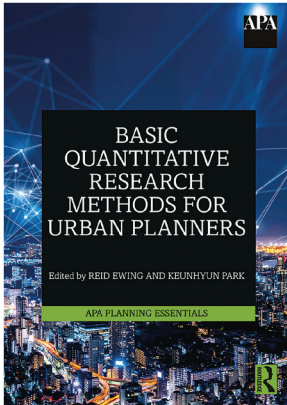


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PUTTING THE NUMBERS TO WORK

How to gain quantitative literacy and use it well. *By Harold Henderson*



Basic Quantitative Research Methods for Urban Planners

Edited by Reid Ewing (University of Utah) and Keunhyun Park (Utah State University), 2020; Routledge; 320 pp.; \$42.95 paper, \$155 cloth



THE EDITORS AND 22 contributors seek to fill a gap in planning education with this 14-chapter book, which includes “a step-by-step recipe and two planning examples” in each one. It is aimed at students, novice planners, intermediate planners wanting to learn more, practitioners who need to analyze planning data—and “anyone who consumes the research of others and needs to judge its validity and reliability.”

The statistical software packages used in the later chapters were chosen for ease of use. The introduction includes a rapid-fire list of “definitions and concepts you should know” that will repay careful study by those who don’t know them yet. A later chapter adds general concepts: data type, deductive and inductive logics, time frames, research designs (randomized experiments, quasi-experiments, natural exper-

iments, and non-experiments), and triangulation. Additional chapters on qualitative methods (case studies, survey research, observational methods, interviews, and focus groups) are promised for a later edition.

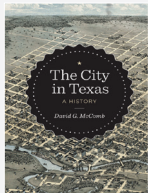
The editors wisely follow the introduction with a lengthy chapter on writing, both technical and nontechnical, with examples. This is no frill: an informative and well-executed T test, say, could be buried in an impenetrable fog of words. Most documents that planners produce should have “a clear, logical narrative line (i.e., argument); be supported by evidence; and involve layers of expertise.” Few find writing easy, but practice and feedback help.

The editors also include examples to avoid, as when a study of the causes of high bicycle usage in a university town depended on an incomplete conceptual framework. Problematic results can also happen when reliability (consistent measurement) and validity (whether a tool measures what it purports to) are not attended to. This book is not just about numbers; it’s about choice of tools and careful thinking.



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The City in Texas: A History, by David McComb for the University of Texas Press, describes how commerce and politics were the early engines of city growth, followed by post-Civil War cattle shipping, oil discovery, lumbering, and military needs. Railroads—accompanied by telegraphs and mechanical clocks that altered concepts of time—revolutionized transportation, enforced corporate organization, and dictated town location and architecture.



The Open-Ended City: David Dillon on Texas Architecture

Edited by Kathryn E. Holliday (University of Texas at Arlington), 2019; University of Texas Press; 430 pp.; \$29.95 cloth

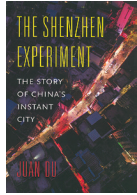
FEW READERS NEED to know about the deficiencies in Dallas’s built environment in the late 1900s and early 2000s, but they can still benefit from this collection of 68 once-current, colloquial, and sometimes eloquent columns published in the *Dallas Morning News*.

“What seemed like progressive planning in the 1960s has become regressive in the 1990s,” David Dillon wrote in 1991. “Instead of the center of civic life, downtown has become a collection of discrete worlds.” An astonishing one-third of its retail space was underground, invisible, and inaccessible.

Dillon’s 2004 account of two would-be teardowns sheds light on the city’s failures and successes in historic preservation, without pounding the table.

In 1994 Dillon attended the first exhibition game at The Ballpark in Arlington (now the Global Life Park): “Kids piled out of the bleachers to scoop up home run balls in the grassy center field backdrop. It was the kind of spontaneous event that old parks encouraged and that the cyclotrons and soup tureens built in the 1960s and 1970s nearly killed. Something to build on.”

If nothing else, the book is a poignant reminder of how the communication channel between the building professions and the rest of society has withered in recent decades.



The Shenzhen Experiment: The Story of China's Instant City

By Juan Du (University of Hong Kong), 2020; Harvard University Press; 376 pp.; \$35 cloth

THERE IS NO such thing as an instant city. Shenzhen has grown to 20 million people and surpassed Singapore and Hong Kong in finance. But its growth and development since 1979 “should not be attributed solely to the national government’s centralized economic policies.” In fact, “local negotiations and practices were just as important as—if not more than—national policies and central planning.”

The author gives close-up views of the city, including an encounter with a neighborhood “more compact and less orderly”—a night market in one of over 300 “villages in the city,” evolved from earlier settlements but are rarely spoken of by officials. “Full of unplanned population and overlooked history, these neighborhoods simply did not fit into the image of a well-planned ‘instant city.’”

Du’s aim is to correct four basic misconceptions: the city’s purpose, its time of development, its place, and its people. “Shenzhen has inherited important social networks and industrial traditions from thousands of years of immigration and emigration, political administration, agriculture and aquaculture production, transnational administration, transnational maritime trade, and changing social and political norms, as well as from centuries of reforms in education, culture, trade, and industry.”



The Greenway Imperative: Connecting Communities and Landscapes for a Sustainable Future

By Charles A. Flink (North Carolina State University), 2020; University of Florida Press; 318 pp.; \$28.95 cloth

“PEOPLE ACROSS AMERICA still think of greenways in constrained terms,” writes Charles Flink, who has laid aside his 35 years of technical writing about them in order to present the human and environmental aspects. Individual chapters feature the Carolinas, North Dakota, Arizona, Nevada, Florida, Arkansas, and Belarus, as well as the (incomplete) East Coast Greenway, and the shimmering vision of a nationwide greenway system.

The idea of a national greenway network is more than a century old. The National Trail System Act was passed in order to encourage preservation, access, travel, and enjoyment of outdoor and historic resources. The author finds additional benefits: promoting a conservation ethic, reusing recycled materials, wildlife corridors, vegetated buffers against fire and flood, diversity, and the “experience economy.”

The author is an enthusiast, referring to the East Coast Greenway as the urban equivalent of the Appalachian Trail, but he acknowledges that it is only one-third completed and in need of additional public funding to deal with “lack of available right-of-ways, river and highway crossings, and routing solutions through dense urban development;” in Georgia and Florida, no final route and alignment has been agreed upon.



5 Rules for Tomorrow's Cities: Design in an Age of Urban Migration, Demographic Change, and a Disappearing Middle Class

By Patrick M. Condon (University of British Columbia), 2019; Island Press; 219 pp.; \$35 paper, \$34.99 e-book

“DESIGNERS ARE STILL being trained as if the middle class is not vanishing,” argues the author. Having helped create “an unprecedented city form,” the city of the middle class, now design professionals face a different and perplexing task: planning for a world with few babies, many old people, many impecunious young people, and a thin crust of the wealthy, “increasingly cut off, both culturally and physically, from the rest of their fellow citizens.” Since 1970, he notes, hourly workers have become twice as productive, but still receive about the same pay.

Among other things, the author advocates less formal buildings in small block sizes and small parcels: “small-footprint, medium-density buildings are more affordable, adaptable, and resilient.”

Condon’s refreshingly novel collection of examples for the future include Vienna, Mumbai, Sao Paulo, Vancouver, and Oregon. His discussion of Vienna’s century-long policy of taxing land to build housing is worth the price of the book in itself. “More than 50 percent of their people now live securely in nonmarket housing.”

‘Designers are still being trained as if the middle class is not vanishing.’

—5 RULES FOR TOMORROW'S CITIES

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