

Sabie O.M.

BOOK REVIEW: A RECONSTRUCTION OF URBAN MANAGEMENT. THE ADMINISTRATION OF CITIES,
THEIR SERVICES AND THEIR GROWTH by IRENA BAČLIJA

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**A RECONSTRUCTION OF URBAN
MANAGEMENT**
**THE ADMINISTRATION OF CITIES, THEIR
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by Irena BAČLIJA

Oana Matilda SABIE

Academy of Economic Studies, Calea Serban Vodă 22-24, Bucharest, Romania
oana_maty@yahoo.com

In the middle of december 2013, The Edwin Mellen Press released the book “A RECONSTRUCTION OF URBAN MANAGEMENT. The Administration of Cities, Their Services and Their Growth” written by Dr. Irena Bačlija, who is an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. The book contains 267 pages structured in 6 chapters, and it underlines the role of urban management in city governance.

The way the author presented the concept of urban management, how she explained in which ways urban managers can use the set of indicators she developed in order to evaluate cities’ administrative performance, has become an excellence source of documentation and practical solutions especially for scholars, decision makers and other practitioners that are in charged with urban management, city governance and urban public service provision.

In the „Foreword”, professor of City Leadership, Robin Hambleton from Bristol, University of the West of England, points out that this book provides „a fresh and intriguing examination of the changing nature of urban management”, as well as „fresh insights on the relationships between urban management and the performance of cities as measured by familiar measures, such as GDP per capita”.

In the „Introduction”, which is before the first chapter, the author presents from where the concept of urban management has its roots and how it evolved. It also states that there is no definition of the concept of urban management widely accepted at international level, although a large number of authors have tried to define it. Irena Bačlija explains why a single definition of urban management has

not been achieved yet, and that is because of its' interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approach, that caused confusion with other related terms like „urban governance” or „new public management”. The author argues that the term „urban management” has to be preserved and given substance. In the end of the „Introduction” Irena Bačlija presents the key questions addressed in her book, which are:

„What is the role of city administration in the neoliberal globalised world?

What problems do city administrations encounter and how do they solve them?

How do we (re)conceptualise urban management?”

In the first chapter „The City in Public Administration Theory” the author makes a short presentation on theories about city administration and city management, how the city is seen in public administration theory and how political science, sociology, economics, management, juridical science, etc. influenced the process of city governance.

In chapter 2, „City – a Subject of Management”, Irena Bačlija argues why is important to an urban manager to know what is a „city”, especially because there is no unified definition of a city in the scientific literature. The author presents from the legal point of view what is understood by a city in different countries around the world. In this chapter she also gives a short insight on legal framework to govern and manage cities, and she also describes the urban government structures and the urban management structures with the main elements that differentiate them.

Chapter 3, „The Twin Roles of City Administration”, makes an interesting comparison between traditional administration and new public management of the cities. In the beginning of the chapter is presented the traditional function of city administration, which is of public services provider. In time, this basic function has evolve and turn into an entrepreneurial function, giving the modern city a proactive role. The author tries to answer to a number of questions and to clarify some aspects of urban public service provision, especially as public services are decentralised at local level. It seems that the quality of services is not necessary high in major cities (Urban Audit, 2004; Bačlija, 2013), and that in literature there are two theories explaining the correlation between city size and public service provision. In the end it is argued why New Public Management is not sufficiently addressing urban problems and how global pressures on public services are manifested differently at national and city levels.

In chapter 4, „Defining Urban Management: Origins and Development” Irena Bačlija explains the evolution of urban management concept. In time, the concept was influenced by different way of addressing city administration. The most important periods mentioned are: the gatekeeper period (urban managerialism), the agencies'period and the governance period. At the end she presents with

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argumentations why the concept of urban management differs from urban governance and New Public Management, why this concept remains elusive in international literature, and before the end of the chapter the author gives her own definition of urban management.

Chapter 5 – „Urban Management: Dimensions, Index and Indicators” contains a proposed set of indicators for measuring urban management performance. The author identified and defined the variables needed for measuring the urban management concept, its dimensions and its operationalisation. The next step was to test to what extent the proposed model holds merit. The research presented by professor Bačlija is based on mixing results from a survey conducted by the author among urban managers between March and November 2009, with the Urban Audit database. The questionnaires were sent via a personalised URL to a total number of 120 urban managers across EU. Only 58 cities (urban managers) answered and thus comprised the final survey. The results, discussions, the urban management impact on city performance, are presented in the end of the chapter. In the last chapter are presented concept limitations and lessons from the study.

Based on the survey conducted, the author concludes that by applying the urban management concept, when that concept is defined as proposed by Irena Bačlija in this book, it might have a positive effect on some aspects of a city's performance.

In my judgment, the author's arguments (reasons) are correct, especially as they are well documented. Irena Bačlija has provided sufficient evidence to prove that the documents she studied date from early beginnings of urban management until late materials published in this area. The authors' bibliography may not cover the entire literature, especially because of the concepts interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approach, but in my opinion she read and presented the most important and known studies.

In the end of this review, I would like to say that this book is useful because it makes a complex analysis of some concepts like urban governance, New Public Management and urban management, and tries to explain the differences between them. The book “A RECONSTRUCTION OF URBAN MANAGEMENT. The Administration of Cities, Their Services and Their Growth” by Dr. Irena Bačlija is an important contribution to the study of urban management and urban governance, especially as it is well researched.

This book provides information, useful data, a set of indicators and possible solutions for political factors, policy makers, urban managers and scholars.