Uta Wehn de Montalvo, 2003, *Mapping the Determinants of Spatial Data Sharing*, Aldershot: Ashgate.

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According to the specialists of cerebral physiology and developmental psychology, the development of spatial cognition of a small child tends to be much faster than the development of cognition of time sequence. A pre-school child can draw a sort of map of the place where he or she lives, however deformed it may be. But it is futile to cram children of this age with a chronological table of the history of their own village or town, let alone their country or continent, which would be more or less familiar to a ten-year-old child. This feature of the infantile development of our species may explain the reason why many public policy documents with serious intentions abound with visual maps and effective figures, which hold intuitive appeal to the general audience. Any logical causation presupposes linear time sequence, but the frontier of the ways of our logical understanding of the outer world should be much wider than sequential causation.

The book under review is all about the art of spatial mapping of information, the art of enlisting various stakeholders in public and private sectors as well as NGOs for effective data sharing across organizational boundaries. Successful combination in a computer system of spatial and socio-economic data amassed from numerous sources is expected to contribute to effective policy design, development planning and resource management. While data sharing is a key to the effective presentation of our collective ideas, importance should also be attached to the process of data sharing, as long as we wish the outcome of our research to be of really democratic nature.

The practice of spatial data sharing is important for industrialized and developing countries alike, so that the author chose South Africa, an emerging African nation with relatively well-developed information infrastructure, as the locus of her quantitative and qualitative inquiry. Although most pieces of preceding research in this field have tended to put focus exclusively on the technical bottlenecks of data sharing, the author sheds light on human, behavioural aspects of the data sharing management. What seems to be most interesting in this regard is that the author attributes the key determinant of successful data sharing to favourable configuration of power relations within organizations, and the failure to the contrary. Her major finding from extensive

interviews is that organizations tend to show reluctance to data sharing especially when decision-makers suspect that they may lose control over the spatial data possessed by their own organizations.

An obvious merit of this seminal work lies in its abstract reasoning based on social psychology, which detracts from dangers of being trapped in idiosyncratic details of the actors' institutional surroundings. However, any reader who knows the South African modus vivendi would feel as if one were reading a book about a no-man's-land. Since the end of apartheid, in reality, the South African government sector is gradually becoming a world dominated by the so-called black middle class, leaving the traditional white power to opt for the business world. Even though the new elites, both black and white, seem to share a certain degree of nationhood and even xenophobia, it is impossible to deny the primacy of racial and ethnic politics within and between organizations, sometimes of quite subtle nature, especially when one tries to trace behavioural determinants of resistance and adaptation in regard to decisions to share, or not to share the assets of each organization. The author's field research seems to have missed what is really functioning in South Africa in this point.

Despite this failing, the author's approach of understanding the attitudinal dynamics inside organizations still stands out. As the unit of analysis can go beyond the boundaries of nation states, we may well try to apply the frame of discussion to the arena of regional and international cooperation. One good field of exploration would be the joint efforts against natural disasters; for example, the development in the Indian Ocean Rim countries of an integrated set of geographic, seismological data and those of human habitation and poverty, as well as the successful presentation of the data set to international organizations and the governments concerned, would have been immensely useful to cope with a catastrophe such as the mammoth tsunami wave that devastated coastal areas of the region at the end of 2004.

Although research institutions of a similar sort in different countries are supposed to share a certain degree of common interest and ideal, it is neither easy nor appropriate to compel them to share their own research possessions. That is why the author emphasizes the significance of the 'culture' of sharing, which we recognize at least as a common starting point. Our next step should be not only to devise a system of sensible incentives but also to foster the culture of sharing, taking into account the unequal power distribution within and between organizations, and yet being united in the awareness of the gravity of global challenges.