Preface

Passion and resourcefulness are positive driving forces in scholarly endeavours. Give us a challenge and we shall find the answers, so history has taught us. But experience has also taught us that ideological conviction could be a devilish factor, one that could turn passion and resourcefulness into a negative force. Personal conviction could mean finding a way of proving or disproving a particular view even if it means slanting evidence, withholding knowledge or even using propaganda for the sake of achieving the desired result. In his brilliant *A Short History of Nearly Everything* Bill Bryson showed how often in the past scientific progress in particular fields of research was slowed down by controversy caused by personal convictions and academic stubbornness. This volume – the second in a series of three – attempts to engage in some measure in discourse that has proven to be contentious.

While the first volume focused on issues that are globally significant and the third will look at issues in newly developed and the less developed countries, this volume focuses on issues that are relevant to policy formulation in the developed world, focusing largely on the USA and Europe. Although not all topics discussed in this volume are controversial, some certainly are. For the sake of reflecting differences of opinion, authors were asked not to shy away from controversy wherever it exists. Some tend to expose differences of opinion circuitously; others do it in a much more straightforward manner. Whatever the approach, the overall aim of the book is to deal with all themes, even the most politically sensitive, in the true spirit of intellectual freedom.

The book is divided into four parts. In the introductory chapter Michael Pacione outlines subtle differences in the mediating roles that the state can play in making capital accessible to people within different ideological policy frameworks. The second part deals with the evolution of urban systems. Since urban policy in the USA is largely individualized at the federal state level, the focus in two of the chapters in this part of the book falls on the European urban system. In the third chapter Peter Taylor looks at how the focus in world-city research has shifted from attribute to flow data in figuring out changes in the hierarchical status of cities in the global urban system. Part three deals with forces of spatial economic change. The new economic geography, land markets and controversies in the urban form debate are some of the themes dealt with in this part of the book. In the other chapters authors take a critical look at matters such as institutional design in spatial planning, the social articulation of urban economic space and realizing the information city. The last part of the book deals with the way in which migration has been changing the demographic landscape of cities in Europe and the USA in recent years. An attempt is made here to uncover some of the causes of the controversies that exist in current urban policy discourse in Europe and the USA.

As in the case of the first volume, the selection of themes and the way in which the authors handle the material mean that the book should be of interest to a wide readership but particularly to those who tend to spend more time at the economics, geography and planning sections of bookstores.

Constantly having to deal with heavy writing commitments is one of the burdens that

those of us who are tilling the academic acres usually have to face. With this reality in mind, I want to extend a word of true appreciation to the chapter authors and co-authors who remained committed to the project despite difficult circumstances. I also want to thank the staff of Edward Elgar Publishing for their professionalism in the production of this book.

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