

# H-Net Reviews

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Michael F. Logan. *Desert Cities: The Environmental History of Phoenix and Tucson*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006. vii + 240 pp. \$29.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8229-4294-8.

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## When Comparing Urban Development in Phoenix and Tucson, an Ethnographic Approach Is Useful

In the book *Desert Cities: The Environmental History of Phoenix and Tucson*, Michael F. Logan provides an insightful look at the development of Arizona's two largest cities. The book is important because it adds ethnography as a criterion to examine when studying urban development. Logan's purpose is to explain the commonalities and differences between the two cities using two features. The first feature he defines is the natural and environmental differences between the communities, while the second encompasses cultural and ethnic divergence. At first glance, a reader might dismiss the link between these two characteristics, but Logan relates them well and makes them relevant to urban development in these two cities.

With few exceptions, people who study development in the western United States consider water acquisition the most important element of urban growth. Logan begins his book with an important discussion of the geography of Phoenix and Tucson, and compares water availability, highlighting the different ways in which both cities acquired new water resources. He also includes a discussion about how ancient populations in the southwestern United States fared. His inclusion of Phoenix and Tucson geographical maps is helpful here. In general, Phoenix utilized the water of the Salt River, which had an average low-flow rate of about 116 cubic feet per second (cfs) near the turn of the century. The Santa Cruz River near Tucson flowed at about 25 cfs at that time. Later, Phoenix would become a master of water capture, and would dam the Salt River to provide both water and electricity. Tucson would become reliant on groundwa-

ter and conservation.

Generally speaking, Logan's ethnographic description advances his arguments regarding development. In discussing the development of the two cities, he explains that Tucson was populated, in large part, by Mexican people whose citizenship frequently changed when the Mexican and U.S. governments encountered conflicts. He cites the citizenry in Tucson as rich in ethnographic elements and as proud of that diversity. In contrast, white settlers from the eastern United States populated Phoenix; they often moved there for health reasons.

Logan does an excellent job of incorporating Apache raids into the context of community planning. He states that Tucson residents purposely did not renovate their structural dwellings, because they did not want to appear wealthy. They believed a wealthy appearance would be more likely to make them a target for Indian raids. "Despite the Apache threat, however, the steady stream of travelers stirred commercial activity to life" (p. 34). On the other hand, Phoenix did not have this worry. Generally, it was not a target for raids, and its commerce came less from trade and more from tourism. It often boasted about its amenities, stating that it was a "modern" town. Phoenix eventually called itself the "Air-conditioned Capital of the World" (p. 137).

Previously, the description of access to water alone has defined how both Phoenix and Tucson developed. Logan's inclusion of ethnography adds a complexity with regard to time elements. Although a reader might hope for a timeline that addresses all aspects of research in

perfect order, this is not feasible without an initial understanding of geography. Therefore, it is appropriate that Logan addresses water first. At times, however, the book becomes confusing after Logan introduces the element of ethnography. Later in the book, time periods regarding water and ethnicity intersect within Logan's descriptions; this convergence has a tendency to confuse the reader. In many cases, the book could have benefited from use of headings and subheadings.

One of Logan's most important points is that he highlights the difference in conservation ethics between Phoenix and Tucson. Because Tucson did not have as much water to spare, it was much more aware of water scarcity. Although both cities promoted conservation during the 1970s, some people might argue that residents of Phoenix, to this day, still do not have this understanding. The many golf courses and fountains of this city stand testament to that argument.

Finally, Logan states that even though Phoenix residents moved to the desert to admire it, city leaders continued to "move" the desert to the city's outskirts. This movement intensified sprawl. On the other hand, Tucson incorporated the desert into city planning. That mode of incorporation, along with its Spanish architecture, gave the city a look very different from that of Phoenix.

Logan's methodology is generally solid and diverse. The secondary sources he uses are well known and often used by Arizona historians. He also uses several primary sources that lend to his arguments, for example, General Crook's autobiography.

Overall, Logan's book adds the important attribution of ethnography to the field of urban development. Although this element might not be relevant for all studies, it is quite pertinent to comparative studies highlighting the similarities and differences of growth between Phoenix and Tucson. Ultimately, this study gives us a better frame of reference with regard to this growth, and it provides a new criterion by which to compare populations. It is important that this type of understanding be incorporated into future studies of this nature. In essence, it can help shed light on environments as they exist and on future development as well.

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