

Preface

Trausti Valsson has achieved an extraordinary feat of scholarship: he has written the comprehensive, definitive, encyclopaedic account of planning in one European country, from the beginnings to the present day. True, Iceland is a small country in terms of population, even though respectably large in area. But that area contains huge variations – in position, in terrain, in natural resources – and Icelandic economic and social development is as sharply differentiated in economic terms as that of other European countries. Because however the country is so distinctive in its relative geographical isolation, it has developed in quite special ways, though culturally part of the Scandinavian or Nordic group as its strong planning traditions reflect.

Until now, all too little was known of this rich history. That is now definitively remedied. Trausti Valsson not only tells the story in rich detail, from the earliest origins of planning to the present day; he also sets it firmly within a rich geographical and historical context, so that in important respects this is a definitive general history of the development of social policy in a very distinctive Northern European country, with a distinguished story of positive intervention in social matters. Little known outside its homeland, this story needed to be written, and it has found an exceptionally able chronicler.

Thorough in its research, comprehensive in its scope, always highly readable, Trausti Valsson's book sets a new standard in historical scholarship and provides a model for other scholars in other countries to follow.



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