

This book was completed just as a major economic decline hit the global economy. People with poor ethics convinced people with wants greater than their actual needs, and wealth to borrow money, that they could not reasonably pay back to the financial institutions whose greedy and high paid executives did not really care because they then bundled these financial products for sale to other institutions with executives whose salaries and bonuses far exceeded the type of prudence that bankers historically possessed. Politicians, professors and media who should all have been blowing the whistles were too caught up in benefiting from this system, obtaining funding, grants, advertising and the like. Economic historians will no doubt analyze why all of this happened, as we inevitably deal with the repercussions for years to come. Surely, some of the important reasons that will be discussed are the culture of greed, the culture of consumerism, and the culture of debt that came to predominate in the United States, and elsewhere around the developed world. Canadian financial institutions were more prudent, and better regulated, and so they did not proceed down the same path of doomed residential mortgage lending. In our global economy however, economies are so linked together that problems in the larger economies quickly affect the rest of the world. What was of interest to the author, more than the economics and the financial analysis of what went wrong, was how the cultures of greed, narcissism, consumerism and debt came to be so widely accepted. Why are there so many people in their 70s and 80s living modestly at the same time they have bank balances in the millions of dollars? And why are there so many people from subsequent generations living in luxury when their bank balances are far exceeded by their debts? According to Rotberg, the answer is Culture, or put another way, Ideology. The patterns of thought and the values people hold, are what govern their choices of lifestyle, politics, economics, and which essential choices they make in the way they live their lives. To analyze the politics and urban planning of any city requires a preliminary inquiry. It is that preliminary inquiry that is attempted by this book. That inquiry is to analyze the ideology and values, or lack of values, that exist in a certain area, as a precondition to understanding the municipal planning and political policies adopted within that area. The great Canadian journalist and writer on all things political and economic in Canada, Peter C. Newman, wrote a column in the October 11, 2008 issue of one of Canada's leading business newspapers, The Globe & Mail, in which he got to the essence of the matter: "What we need is new gods, freshly minted mentors motivated by values as the source of their experience" instead of experience as the source of their values. Accordingly, we explore Vancouverism: The Political Culture of Canada's Lotus Land. In a time of economic and political challenges, it is key that before we know where to go in the future, we understand where we are now, based on the ideologies and values that have predominated in the last few years. This book is Rotberg's contribution to furthering that understanding.

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