

Sies, Mary Corbin and Christopher Silver, eds. *Planning the Twentieth-Century American City*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996. Pp. xiv, 594. Maps, black and white illustrations, tables, bibliography and index. US\$55.00 (cloth) US\$24.95 (paper)

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The theme of public space is addressed by Elizabeth Blackmar and Roy Rozenzweig's nuanced and careful analysis of the "development and transformation of New York's best known 'public park' and the shifting meaning of that seemingly simple phrase." (p. 109) Gábor Gyni's analysis of Budapest's public spaces offers insights into the contested nature of public space, but is not a parallel analysis to the New York essay. Gyni makes passing references to Városliget as "the only urban park of the city that can be compared to well-known urban gardens elsewhere," (p. 89) but most of the discussion centres on the politics of control on city streets and promenades.

The model of parallel analysis in the first two sections of the book is not evident in the discussion of class and ethnicity. Deborah Dash Moore examines New York city neighborhoods using the tools of ethnicity and class and like others finds "on the streets of Manhattan the materials with which to build ... models of ethnic residential patterns." (p. 139) While Moore relies on secondary literature, István Teplán's post-modern analysis of the St. Imre Garden City is based on primary research. It argues that the best way to uncover the "one-time spirit of a place" is to study the architectural objects left behind. (p. 161)

The final and longest two sections of the book focus on popular and high culture respectively. Robert Snyder's article suggests that vaudeville served to foster "communication across lines of ethnicity, class, gender, and geography" (p. 185) Similarly, Neil Harris writes how New York newspapers "helped define the self-consciousness of New-Yorkers about their city, specifying a new meaning for urbanity." (p. 248) As in many of the essays, the theme that emerges in the section on high culture portrays New York as place that could inspire artists, whereas Budapest artists "wished to escape the urban milieu and ignore it as much as they could." (p. 309) The essays on the literary arts in the final section struggle to restrict their focus to their respective cities. They find that the urban influences in the works of the authors they examine are not unique to New York or Budapest, but rather can be attributed to the times or urbanism in general.

The collection of essays is unique primarily due to the introductions and the afterword written by its editors. Their reflections on the differing historical approaches, the generational differences between authors, and the relative progress made in widening historical conversation bring clarity and coherence to the collection. The most serious omission is the absence of an analysis of the gendered qualities of the urban experience in the two cities. On the whole, however, this collection achieves what it sets out to do, while the editors' task of situating the essays in a historical and conceptual context engages the reader creatively in exploring the shortcomings of comparative history.

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Sies, Mary Corbin and Christopher Silver, eds. *Planning the Twentieth-Century American City*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996. Pp. xiv, 594. Maps, black and white illustrations, tables, bibliography and index. US\$55.00 (cloth) US\$24.95 (paper).

At the beginning of this thick and exceptional work, Sies and Silver note the "dynamic convergence" of the allied but previously discrete fields of urban history and planning history which occurred during the 1980s. This marriage has proved quite fruitful since that time, spawning an ever-expanding body of research and writing that is far better grounded in the time-and-place context of urban America. Even what we mean by "planning" — the scope of what is planning and who the various agents of planning are — has become more and more inclusive as the circle has expanded beyond visionaries, designers and bureaucrats to acknowledge the role of (among others) women, neighborhood activists, preservationists, and historically disenfranchised ethnic groups. This is not a trendy brand of inclusivity; it arises with inevitability out of the growing awareness that the growth and development of cities and neighborhoods can in no sense be attributed to professional planners alone.

The substance of this text is its four thematic sections: "Foundations of Twentieth-Century Planning", "The Organization and Process of Planning", "The Federal Presence in Planning", and "Broadening the Planning Agenda". These sections together contain twenty essays, eighteen written by other authors, many of which document case studies that examine the influence of these other "actors" on the planning stage. Of equal importance is the book's internal structure — the editors' concise and well-crafted introductions for each essay, which provide essential historiographic "establishing shots" that in every case neatly frame that essay within the book's broad agenda. The editors not only set the stage for each particular study; they relate the study to previous scholarship as well.

The book's broader agenda is clarified at the outset, in an excellent introduction written by the editors entitled "The History of Planning History". This introduction is an important establishing shot, a literature review (quite useful in its own right) that traces the intellectual history from its roots in the early part of this century to the first planning history text, Mel Scott's familiar 1969 *American City Planning Since 1890*. Scott's book exemplified the tendency to describe planning history primarily in terms of heroic and notable pioneers — Nolen, Geddes, Mumford, *et al.* Sies and Silver then document the divergent paths of historians since Scott who have, through a more interdisciplinary approach, contributed to the postmodern redefinition of the phenomenon of planning.

This brief review cannot possibly do equal justice to the several essays. Each one is clearly there to tell an important story or paint a picture, explicating or illustrating a particular planning aspect or trend within a particular era. Viewed in sequence, they represent a hopscotch of shifting scholarly perspectives that cover a wide range of case study locales. Many focus on a

place, often a metropolis. In one particularly interesting and well-crafted study, Eric Sandweiss documents how purportedly benign planning decisions shaped the infrastructure of St. Louis in the early part of the century, favoring particular residential enclaves. Patricia Burgess renders a fine analysis of the actual (as opposed to the intended) effects of zoning on the health, safety and welfare of citizens of post-World War II Columbus, Ohio, and two other essays examine how this war contributed to the explosive growth and reshaping of the urban west, in California. The south is represented as well, with Charles E. Connerly's account of the emergence of citizen participation as a democratizing planning influence in Birmingham and Robert Hodder's especially interesting revelations on the role of the preservation movement in "constructing" Savannah's historic landscape. At another scale of place, Michael H. Lang's well-illustrated case study of the World War I-era "Shipping Board Scheme" of Yorkship Village represents the only account of a singular planned community.

Other chapters describe planning processes, trends, and social movements by casting a bigger net to include several place examples. Susan Marie Wirka contributes an important chapter on the powerful and underappreciated influence of progressive women reformers in the early part of the century. Only two authors explore a planning topic through analysis of the work of individuals, including Jon A. Peterson's chapter one account of the planning careers of both Frederick Law Olmsted Sr. and Jr., in which he describes the groundbreaking work each did as (respectively) visionary and practitioner.

The concluding chapter, like the introduction, is authored by the editors. Titled "Planning History and the New American Metropolis", Sies and Silver document the "fundamental shift" in urban form, from the traditional epicentral to the clusters of only partially interdependent edge cities. The editors make note of this trend in order to call for a more interdisciplinary (and not simply multidisciplinary) approach to the study of this phenomenon. Historical scholarship, in its most useful and perhaps most interesting forms, is scholarship that seeks outright to inform contemporary thinking and practice, and to help guide or frame further study. In every respect the editors and their several contributors have accomplished this in *Planning the Twentieth-Century American City*, a work that will be of great interest and usefulness for students, scholars and practitioners.

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Lemon, James T. *Liberal Dreams and Nature's Limits: Great Cities of North America since 1600*. Toronto and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996. Pp. x, 341. Illustrations, maps, tables, notes, bibliography and index.

This is an informed, provocative, and challenging book. It is obviously the product of years of careful thinking about the history of great North American cities, of the forces that distinguish these

metropolises from lesser places, and of the ideological context that has guided their past development but now threatens their very future. We would not expect anything less from Jim Lemon. More than most historically minded scholars, he has always been willing to put forth an argument and challenge us to consider its worth. For Lemon, cities in a liberal democracy are places where individuals should have the unquestionable right to the ownership of private property, and where society is obligated to protect this situation. Cities are also places subject to the constraints of changing technologies — nature's limits — particularly those that restrict the movement of people or goods in space, or retard economic development. Over the course of several centuries, from the seventeenth to the eve of the twenty-first and from one historical epoch to another, cities have responded positively, creating new and positive opportunities for most people. Now, according to Lemon, the obverse is beginning to take hold.

But is Lemon successful in demonstrating how liberal democracy and nature's limits have shaped North America's great cities? Is he successful in teaching our students how these two processes have interacted to create the present, more negative situation? My initial response straddled the fence: in some ways, yes; in other ways, no. This conclusion really depends upon two things: first, whether one accepts the "individual-city-as-representative-of-an-historical-epoch-a pproach;" and second, whether the reader is a student who is just coming to the field of urban historical enquiry, or is somebody who has already given ample consideration to the issues that James Lemon raises.

The book is written as a text, and is thus intended mainly, I suppose, for senior undergraduate students. For the uninformed novice, the task would be daunting, but not completely unrewarding. Even for students with considerable reading about the history of cities to their credit, the challenge is strong. Rather than focus on the great city as a general type, Lemon focuses on particular places at particular points in time. Thus, during the mercantile and commercial era, we first visit Franklin's Philadelphia in 1760 and then move forward a century to view the ascendancy of New York in 1860. Early in the twentieth century, well into the modern era, Chicago is examined as the shock city of industrial capitalism. Later, in 1950 and 1975, we gain insights about Los Angeles and Toronto, respectively. I cannot think of any other source that offers a better synopsis of the character of Philadelphia, New York, Chicago, Los Angeles or Toronto at these chosen points in time. These syntheses of a diverse and expansive literature are well worth the price of the book. The literature consulted is thoroughly multi-disciplinary in perspective. Sources and interpretations are drawn from history, geography, economics, political science, architecture, *et al.* fields of enquiry. They are then melded in a satisfying, interdisciplinary manner. Each chapter is therefore a wonderful distillation of the relevant literature on places that have come to be widely accepted as truly representative of both an historical era and a particular type of city.