
William T. Perks
There are at least two major problems in taking a systems approach to Canadian urban politics. First, this approach — at least as it is articulated by Kaplan — takes scant account of provincial governments. Although Kaplan is quick to acknowledge that municipal political systems are affected by all kinds of external factors in their environment, he provides no special analysis of the provincial role. Provincial premiers, ministers, legislatures and regulatory bodies appear from time to time, but the reader is given no comprehensive account of their pervasive presence. Sorting out the autonomy of municipal politics in relation to provincial politics would seem to be the first step in any successful systemic approach. If the two levels are inextricably intertwined, then the theory must be structured accordingly.

The second problem is more serious. As with other studies using the systems approach, this one tells us little about who wins and who loses in urban politics. We learn how municipal systems persist, develop, and adapt over time, but there is little enlightenment as to how these systems connect with the major political and economic forces in society or how they act to advance or hinder the particular interests of such forces. It is this kind of issue which is once again preoccupying political science and that is why the systems approach is not “taking hold.”

Students of city politics in Montreal, Winnipeg, and Toronto will not be able to ignore this book. There is enough new information and insightful comment to reward the persistent reader. Unfortunately, however, the factual material needs to be double checked. Without footnotes, this is no easy task.

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The fifteen essays in this latest of “S and A/A and S’’ enterprises forms a collection generously organized around a central though intellectually diffusive theme. Among and between essays, the concepts “Landscape” and “City-build-
discussion of Canadian city development through the three historical periods of patterning.

Four essays are grouped under "urban growth strategies"; the remaining eleven appear under "evolving urban form." Over half of these works are reprints. This design of the volume suggests the editors had in view a compendium of titles with, for the most part, established and enduring merit to be commended to serious students of Canadian cities. An index would, therefore, have helped; the editorial dereliction in this regard is a serious shortcoming. The added omission of a list of illustrations is a lesser sin but another dereliction no less.

Among the first four essays, only two are faithful to the "strategy" theme. In saying this, I mean only to make a distinction, to define a term, not to discount the other two essays (the authors of which no doubt had no say in the classification of their works in any case). Strategy should be understood as the declared or discernible practical goals set by men in order to win a specified contest, and for which they design and marshall the means to win it; be these means institutional, human (labour), or financial, or all of them at once. In short, what we know of what men set out to do is what gives "strategy" any sensible meaning. Johnson's account of monopolistic ventures and public ownership in Guelph, and the Artibise essay on prairie city boosterism are written with sound reference to the meaning of strategy. These are informative and insightful documentary works which highlight two significantly influential strains in Canadian urban development. Contemporary idioms of civic aggrandizement and development politics, demonstrable in east and west, can be traced to the ideological and political behaviours so well described and discussed in the Johnson and Artibise essays. They are recommended reading for today's would-be city builders.

A third essay, McCann's analysis of post confederation Halifax, is really about non-strategy. The non-growth that McCann detects in his data is said to equate with "failure" to "industrialize." Considering what Halifax today represents as a richly endowed, sought after "urban as entity" resource, this is not exactly a tragedy in my view. In any event, the failure occurred essentially by defect of marginal advantage within the policy of economic continentalism; by default of entrepreneurial public leadership to an extent; and by a perceived deficiency of certain raw city-building resources (for example suitable urban lands, water). Similarly, the Rudin article about antipathetic Montréal anglophone banks searches for the explanation of a non-event: the retarded commercial-industrial development of francophone towns from 1840 to 1914. He relies heavily on data inference and very little upon the pro-active decisions and verifiable intentions of actors. Rudin does not say it, but it could easily be implied from his construction of the evidence that the anglo-banks operated a conspiracy (a strategy?) of deprivation. Still, as Somerset Maugham once wrote, "Fact is a poor story-teller." Had Rudin gone further in a cross-disciplinary sense, seeking additional explanatory factors or hypotheses to be found in cultural and elite, sociological and financial histories of Montréal and Québec society, he might have confirmed a fragile thesis — but, I suspect, the contrary is equally probable. In fairness, Rudin acknowledges his data does not uncover "motives," and that a larger study is in progress. But these are insufficient excuses for presenting a thesis without disposing of possible counter-explanations or counter-hypotheses. McCann's thesis, over-extended as it is by maps and tables, is more impressive in range and depth of confirming analyses; as a result, he offers an interesting confirmation of urban Maritime "victimization" under Canada's heartland-hinterland politico-economic regime, but not a strategic analysis.

The longest of the "form" essays, by Elizabeth Bloomfield, is among the best for its storyline quality and original research. It is an excellent case study of town planning in Kitchener/Waterloo, 1912-26, and it situates nicely between the ideological/political sheaves of urbanism laid out by Johnson and Artibise. An essay by Buggey on the prosperous mid-nineteenth century building industry in Halifax is among the better-packed, with short, readable accounts of actors and their institutional settings. One gets the feeling, however, of a reluctant attempt at scholasticism in Buggey's classification of Halifax builders according to E.W. Cooney's four-part typology. The attempt is not substantial or persuasive. But never mind, the portraiture of builders and their social antecedents is interesting. The use of photographs is excellent. Also, one gets some sense of the organization and style of the building industry, a topic which should now be pushed to advantage and receive the attention of other scholars in a variety of Canadian urban settings.

There is an interesting comparison to be made between Bloomfield's town planning history and the Linteau essay on entrepreneurial city layout and development in an earlier period, in a different cultural setting (Montréal, 1883-1918). Bloomfield's selected time and setting make correspondence with the flourishing work and missionary zeal of Thomas Adams and the Commission of Conservation; when City Beautiful from the United States and public development control from the United Kingdom were coming together to form a Canadian planning movement. That hybrid movement never really took hold in Québec; but City Beautiful did, on occasion, as Linteau illustrates. There is none of the tension or crise de conscience of Kitchener/Waterloo planning (between public control/public initiative and private entrepreneurialism) in Linteau's Maisonneuve example from twenty-five years earlier. In Maisonneuve, pride in progress dictated that municipal government and entrepreneurial city-building be married in spirit and corpus. "Pittsburg of Canada" would be the ideal, but architectural idioms as well as planning concepts could be copied with equal enthusiasm from l'Amerique contemporaine, eighteenth century and Beaux-Arts France, Victorian England, Olmsted, and (I...
rather suspect) from Tony Garnier. The result was sweepingly original for Canada, in its environmental aesthetic as well as layout, and in the architectural merits of working class housing (however modest they appear to us in retrospect). Linteau is correct in stating “Maisonneuve was unique . . . an impressive beautification program for which there are no Canadian equivalents.” Would that the C.P.R. (see MacDonald’s essay on Vancouver; see Calgary!; see Regina!) had a Viau and a Dufresne to steer land and civic developments rather than a parsimonious Presbyterian Board and their unimaginative surveyors who saw cities only as profitable sub-divisions and entrepôts.

City-building is elsewhere treated in this book from a descriptive, geographic or socio-cultural perspective. I must confess to not being enamoured by the bent of some history scholars to engage in massive number-crunching and/or mapping virtually for the sake of it. Modest sampling combined with inferential data or dialectical reasoning can frequently yield more productive insight on history; especially as the territorial slice or time frame enlarges. The Ganton essay on Toronto subdivisioning, for example, arrives at prosaic conclusions after endless mapping, all of which, incidentally, flows from a flat earth environmental perspective that makes for bland historical urbanism. The Lafrance-Ruddel article on eighteenth century Québec City social differentiation, while fundamentally interesting, acquaints us with percentage increases (of buildings) inconsistently calculated to two decimal places. Aquatints are gratuitously inserted in the text. In Doucet’s Hamilton land speculation study covering thirty-four years, the manipulation of series of large numbers attains virtuoso proportions (although without evident tests of statistical reliability, it should be said). Interesting facts emerge in the Doucet essay as to characteristic stages from original subdivision through speculation to development; what classes of people owned lots; who engaged in speculation or asset-holding; rates of ownership turnover; and so forth. One does get a detailed, albeit bloodless, picture of the land development process. But when the author asks, what should we make of this, his conclusions reach beyond interpretation of the dynamic process investigated. And they are of an order and kind that might have been more economically arrived at, by means less oriented to series analysis, and in part by a priori reasoning from economic theory, visual observation and engineering records. What Doucet has accomplished, but does not emphasize directly enough, is a fair description of the primitive states of municipal institutions, urban technology, and organized public purpose and control. Sprudicism ruled, and opportunities in land were boundless for worker and merchant alike. In such a golden age of laissez-faire urbanism (1840-70), it is hardly surprising that half the players were losers.

An essay by Weaver also studies land development in Hamilton — a single, 800 acre tract, taken through 40 years leading up to 1951. This essay demonstrates a skillful blend-
community staging and the characteristic form(s) of Vancouver's urban environment today.

A reprint article (1978) on resource towns by Stelter and Artibise winds up the fifteen essay collection. Resource towns constitute a distinct urban species within the economic and cultural geography of Canada. They are very much a part of economic development history, and also intimately linked with the history of ideational themes in planning. The Stelter/Artibise essay essentially synthesizes extant research, providing thereby a decent overview of the role of resource towns in the frontier economy, their social character, and the evolution of plan motifs. It is, however, much too light on the discussion of “function” and “form.” There are a couple of impressions conveyed by this essay that are, in my view, erroneous. While the earliest resource towns were, strictly speaking, “company towns” by virtue of the authorities who designed, built and ran them, and the more recent ones are not company creations in the same terms, the latter are in reality company towns in social-cultural and political meaning. The newer public institutional formalities governing resource town planning and municipal governance have not altered (or remedied) significantly the social issues that flow from the single entreprise structure. In another vein, Stelter and Artibise are not correct in giving the impression that no cognizance was given to the British models of Port Sunlight, Bourneville, and other such garden-city schemes. True for the pre-1920 period; but in the “interwar-years” episode of new town building, Canadian company managers and experts were being sent to England to study ideas and accomplishments of these model towns. All in all, however, the essay on resource towns does provide a good rounded introduction to the topic as well as an historical appreciation according to chronological phases.

In summation, this collection is a valuable reference for a variety of students of Canadian history, and not just the “urbs.” I would hope, too, that selections from it will find their way into Canadian planning schools' curricula, government studies and political science.

Finally, Shaping the Urban Landscape provides a good set of building block materials for researchers working in the design history fields, such as architecture, civic design, and planning. There are a number of stages set in the book upon which the particularized and the comprehensively interpreted dramas in historical Canadian urbanism can be played.

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NOTES

1 Earlier co-edited works by Artibise and Stelter are The Canadian City, no. 109 (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1977); The Usable


I was born a Finn
I had to leave my childhood home
In search of work, in order to live
To a foreign land I had to roam.¹

A major demographic factor, Finnish emigration has drawn the attention of scholars in that country. Meanwhile, the Finnish immigrant community has produced “ethnic” histories of widely varying quality. The latter have played an important role in the collection of a surprising volume of resources which, of late, have found archival protection.²

These beginnings have promoted further study of the Finnish immigrant experience. Scholars of emigration and immigration came together in conferences held in Duluth (1974) and Thunder Bay (1975).³ Their efforts, supported by a growing body of graduate research, moved Finnish immigration studies beyond fileo-pietism or ethnic antiquarianism. Indications of the progress made, and the questions which remain, can be had in Finnish Diaspora.

The papers in these volumes were presented at the “Finn Forum” held in Toronto, November 1979. Some essays are quite reflective of their “Forum” counterparts; others, more finished than the busy schedule of that conference would permit. In any event, these papers suggest they myriad of approaches pertinent to immigration studies. Contributors include non-academics as well as specialists in sociology, linguistics, geography, history and other disciplines. These studies stretch beyond national, or even continental boundaries: Finns in Latin America, South Africa, Australia and Sweden, as well as North America, are discussed. Given this geographic and disciplinary range, it is hardly surprising that this is a rather uneven collection. Nevertheless, Finnish Diaspora sports more merits than flaws.

To the uninitiated, these papers, as summaries or continuations of fuller studies, touch upon many important issues. While their notes are, therefore, useful, it is to be regretted that no introductory notes or bibliography are provided. Furthermore, the geographical arrangement of these volumes seems less conducive to comparison than the thematic format of the “Forum.”