

## Urban History Review Revue d'histoire urbaine

URBAN HISTORY REVIEW  
REVUE D'HISTOIRE URBAINE

Friskén, Frances. *City Policy-Making in Theory and Practice: The Case of Toronto's Downtown Plan*. London: University of Western Ontario Press, 1988. Pp. 101. \$10.00 (paper)

Brenda Lee

Volume 17, Number 3, February 1989

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1017650ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1017650ar>

[See table of contents](#)

### Publisher(s)

Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine

### ISSN

0703-0428 (print)

1918-5138 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

### Cite this review

Lee, B. (1989). Review of [Friskén, Frances. *City Policy-Making in Theory and Practice: The Case of Toronto's Downtown Plan*. London: University of Western Ontario Press, 1988. Pp. 101. \$10.00 (paper)]. *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine*, 17(3), 228–228. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1017650ar>

Probably everyone in the preservation field hopes Huxtable will continue to do so since we need her unique voice wherever buildings and neighbourhoods are threatened. Her inspiration through all her writings has been immeasurable and it is in books such as this that we are reminded of her foresight and dedication to building a better urban environment.

Judy Oberlander  
Commonwealth Historic Resource  
Management Limited  
Vancouver

Friskén, Frances. *City Policy-Making in Theory and Practice: The Case of Toronto's Downtown Plan*. London: University of Western Ontario Press, 1988. Pp. 101. \$10.00 (paper).

In this compact volume, Frances Friskén has given clarity and momentum to a body of information that resists both. Any historical sample of Toronto's CBD planning and development delivers a quagmire of intergovernmental plans, plots, and legalities; a case-book of popular democracy; and a foundation for the ascendancy of Canadian development negotiation. Friskén is among the few who have made the process generally accessible, and even if we argue over the details, we can at least agree on the value of her synopsis as a context.

Her thesis is that despite evidence to the contrary, municipal governments in fact have the capacity to develop distinctive policy: they are able to do more than simply channel the demands of the most powerful interests. They are, however, often severely constrained. The particular nature of their function as provider of services or "public goods" to a diverse and mobile clientele restricts their ability to implement certain unpopular policies such as income redistribution. Constraining as well is the need to serve the cities' economic interests; the policies of parent governments,

particularly in relation to housing; historical geography and its legacy of developable land; and local demographics. Friskén is concerned to clarify the importance of external influences — particularly the reliance of municipal on provincial and national governments — but at the same time to avoid deterministic explanations. In doing this, she is consciously presenting a counter argument to those who define the problem of urban policy development without reference to context and those who defend deterministic economic or power-related theories.

Her work is organized so that discussion of theory is separated from that of the case study, although, of course, she relates the two throughout. While the latter is strong, the former is not well developed. Her thesis, as far as it goes, supports the work of this analyst, but she does not clarify its structural foundation or relate it at that level to the other theories which she reviews. Cited are their aims and contributions but not their structural weaknesses and strengths. It seems to have been important to keep text to a minimum but the compactness of the argument makes it difficult to follow her through the variety of theoretical frameworks, especially since the development of her own explanation integrates terms from several that are structurally incompatible.

The escalating power of international capital in the urban policy arena makes the need for incisive explanations of policy development ever more pressing. The sheer complexity of urban phenomena weighs against theories that compress all dimensions (e.g. rational, power-based, economic) into one; this complexity gives increasing credibility to those, like Friskén's, which connect and integrate the insights of many. To be theoretically sound, however, this integration requires a reformulation of concepts and a clarification of the compatibility of the

conceptual relationships. This, perhaps, is Friskén's next step.

Brenda Lee  
School of Urban and Regional Planning  
University of Waterloo

Berdoulay, V., et Phipps, M. 1985. *Paysage et système*. Ottawa, Éd. de l'Université d'Ottawa, 195 pages.

À travers une analyse systémique du paysage, 19 spécialistes tentent de démontrer qu'il est possible de relier les analyses de type écologique aux analyses sémiotiques liées à l'organisation visuelle du paysage.

Définissant le paysage comme système intégré d'unités spatiales et écologiques, les trois auteurs du premier chapitre élaborent une cartographie des systèmes écologiques (J.-P. Ducruc), définissent le rôle des nités symphytosociologiques (C. Anseau) et entreprennent une démarche méthodologique basée sur l'analyse des relations fonctionnelles solvégetation. Principalement descriptif, ce chapitre s'énonce résolument autour du concept d'unité, nait en quelque sorte la primauté de l'espace (M. Phipps).

La deuxième partie rassemble quatre textes autour de la thématique du paysage vu et analysé comme un modèle d'organisation spatiale et écologique, tel que postulé précédemment, mais dans une perspective conceptuelle différente. De la définition d'unité, élément de paysage naturel, nous passons au format de cellules topologiques (unités artificielles) dans les approches énoncées pour la formalisation du concept de paysage. La théorie de l'information en tant que théorie applicable à l'analyse de systèmes organisés (J. Baudry et F. Burel) est centrale dans ce paradigme systémique. Elle offre des champs méthodologiques fort intéressants : l'auto-organisation (A. Armand), la thermodynamique (M. Phipps) et la théorie