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Editorial
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Editorial

The Historical Geography of Canadian Urban Industry

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Manufacturing is of critical importance to the understanding of urban development because it contains many of the clues for deciphering the dynamics, nature and intensity of urban growth, and for interpreting the economic and social geographies of cities. Over the past couple of decades historians have made a concerted effort to widen our vision of the historical development of North American urban manufacturing. In contrast, research on the historical geography of manufacturing has taken a back seat among geographers to studies of regional and international changes. With the exception of some of Allen Scott's work, there have been no recent attempts to theorize the historical dynamics of industrial geography within the city.[1] The historical context of urban industrial geography is still dominated by Weberian notions of transportation cost minimization or by determinist visions of technological change. While the classical approaches to urban industrial location have been roundly criticized, new theoretical directions such as spatial divisions of labour, flexible accumulation, the production of space, and production formats have been applied sparingly to the historical development of Canadian cities.[2] Furthermore, research on the contemporary Canadian city, while addressing some of these theoretical issues, has done so at the expense of historical questions. At the same time, the production of industrial space has been separated from wider causal powers. In particular, the interaction between economic imperatives and the social construction of the built environment are missing. Even where the built environment is considered, it is as an uncontested outcome of capitalist development. This is unfortunate as the impoverished condition of the historical context of the geography of industry urgently needs to be replenished by the new directions of social theory in contemporary urban and industrial research, and social and labour history.

Reflecting the lack of importance attached to the historical dynamics of urban industrial geography is the scarce attention paid to the subject in geographic journals. A study of the *Journal of Historical Geography* showed that only eight of the 174 articles published between 1975 and the mid 1980s were directly concerned with industrial change since the end of the 18th century.[3] Even when historical geographers are explicitly concerned with industrial change, their attention is usually given to cultural considerations and is descriptive, or draws heavily on structuration theory. The latter perspective, despite claims to the constitutional duality of agency and structure, has led most researchers to understand the social and cultural components of society at the expense of the economic. As Dennis and Prince state in their overview of British urban historical geography, "for all the interest in the *social* geography of cities, there has been little work on their *economic* geography."[4] This is also true for North America: an analysis of the *Urban History* Review revealed that of the 106 articles published between 1984 and 1993 only eight focused on industry, while only six out of the 118 articles published in the *Journal of Urban History* in the same period covered industrial issues. While Richard Dennis, in a recent review of historical geography, can state that "British historical geographers have shown less interest in the location of industry" than their North American colleagues, the latter, in fact, have done very little work on the spatial implications of the radical changes in industrial structure after 1850 that historians have identified.[5] And when they have, it is a broad scale; generalizations abound without substantial, if any, empirical research.

The most significant and challenging research on the historical development of Canadian (and American) urban industry has come from historians who have constructed new research agendas and employed new methodologies. Historians interested in industrial evolution and labour history have escaped from a technologically-based understanding of industrial change and the strait-jacket of institutional and union history to explore the intricate workings of the labour process and technological change, the changing role of women in the workforce, and the different dimensions of the family and industrial change. Linking a multitude of sources such as credit ledgers, government reports, company records, the census, and assessment rolls, historians have constructed detailed histories of industries and firms, with particular emphasis upon working life and conditions. Since the 1960s in the United States, social and labour historians have initiated a perspective which fundamentally differs from the prevailing institutional history, while a similar research agenda dates from the early 1970s in Canada. In Canada, for example, labour historians have expended a great deal of energy on issues such as class, working-class life, local communities and the early stages of the Industrial Revolution. In the last ten years, English-Canadian labour historians have become preoccupied with a new set of themes, namely the labour process, the position of ethnicity within working-class life, and women and history.[6] In short, the new social and labour history has given rise to a body of work which has provided a number of important leads for a re-interpretation of the historical evolution of capitalism.

While historians have explored a number of threads of society, they have put little effort into understanding the spatial basis of history. While a major interest of historians, for example, has been the reorganization of the labour process, they have paid little attention, at least explicitly, to the spatial character of industry or the relationship between home and work. For most, the spatial connections between

phenomena such as new industrial districts, the separation of home and work, and the expansion of the central business district are insignificant compared to the social dynamics. For historians, in other words, the dynamics of industrial change are played out on a featureless plain. There are, of course, exceptions to this: S. Buder's discussion of the creation of a new productive space at Pullman, south of Chicago is an excellent example of how the social relations of production are associated with the development of space; Philip Scranton's examination of Philadelphia's textile industry and how it differed from that of Lowell is an outstanding example of the varied trajectories industries take within different spatial contexts.[7]

The fact that few historians have concerned themselves with the spatial implications of their subject is, of course, no surprise. What is surprising is that few historical geographers have taken up the challenges presented by these new directions in social and labour history. One would expect an active cross-fertilization of theory and method between the new history and the historical geography of industry, but there has been little reformulation of the historical aspects of industrial processes and their impact upon urban structure within geography. In view of this lacuna, there are exciting possibilities for a reinterpretation of the relationship between urban and industrial structures after 1850. It is possible to identify three challenges at the intersections of history and geography that need to be explored if a more multi-dimensional picture of the historical geography of North American industrial urban change is to formulated.

The first challenge is to explore the geographic changes associated with the uneven development of new industrial technology, of the labour process and of the organization of production. Studies of technological changes to industry have explored the broad outline of the transformation from proprietary firm to corporation, while others have examined the impact of new technologies upon selected industries.[8] Bursts of technological change in particular industries were associated with large capital investments, changes to the labour process, the proliferation of new product lines, the capturing of new markets, and new forms of labour control. The implementation of new technologies was fraught with difficulties however: the integration of technology into production in the nineteenth and early twentieth century was severely limited by a series of obstacles. Likewise, historians have noted that a simple technological explanation is inadequate to explain the development of specialized divisions of labour, the reconfiguration of markets, and workers' control over segments of the production process.[9] Similarly, writers have pointed to the various forms that the organization of production could take. They have shown that the classic model of the social organization of production which portrays a monotonic progression from the small handicraft shop of the cigarmaker, weaver and blacksmith to the large corporation such as Imperial Tobacco, Dominion Textile and Stelco with a number of plants, a large labour force and international markets, is only one trajectory of industrial change. The paths of change were varied within and between industries as firms grappled with the problems of distribution, market share, and the implementation of technologies and new work practices. This had an important bearing on the geography of industry and, by association, the social geography of class, ethnicity and gender, and the politics of urban development.

A second challenge is to interpret the formation of urban industrial spaces within the context of the cyclical growth of capital investment. The sudden bursts, and just as sudden drying up, of capital investment associated with cycles of different length have important implications for the restructuring of urban industrial geography. Since the 1970s the geographic literature has emphasized the cyclical nature of capital in various ways. The theoretical work of Doreen Massey on the relationship between spatial divisions of labour and rounds of investment has triggered a great deal of discussion, though little empirical research.[10] The relationship of industrial depression and investment in the built environment has been a critical contribution of David Harvey over the years.[11] Empirical observations confirm the cyclical character of industrial and urban growth and relate the tempo of urban growth to the movement of capital through the international economy,[12] and the impact of the building cycle to the residential structure of cities.[13] Geographers have also made contributions to understanding the geography of the longer waves—the long wave or Kondratieff cycle—of fifty years. This has generally been geared to discussion of the industrial restructuring associated with introduction of major technological innovations, development of new class relations, and creation of new urban forms.[14] While the literature on economic cycles has proven a useful entry to comprehending the broad lineaments of the timing of industrial and urban changes, and a device with which to undertake more detailed analyses of the ups and downs of the building of the urban fabric, it has rarely been used to examine the making of industrial space.

A third challenge is to specify more fully the active creation of urban industrial spaces, and their links with wider social processes. An important line of research through local case studies has been to demonstrate the importance of land developers in the building of certain socially segregated neighbourhoods and

suburbs.[15] For example, Paul-André Linteau's study of the Montreal suburb of Maisonneuve looks at the flow of French-Canadian capital into the making of a working-class, industrial district.[16] Allied with this are the studies which look more closely at the dynamics behind the development of class, ethnic and occupationally-based residential segregation, and the relationship between home and work.[17] A second line of research is examination of the function of finance capital in the development of central business districts as a new landscape, and its impact on the core as a manufacturing district.[18] Lastly, writers have related urban growth to the actions of local elites in harnessing their search for profits to the apparatus of the state.[19] This boosterism literature, however, has had little to say about the importance of local growth machines for the creation of urban industrial spaces, and few writers have attempted to specify the processes responsible for the creation of new and the modification of old districts with chunks of industrial capital.

The four papers of this special issue present different facets of the historical geography of Canadian urban industry between the mid-19th century and the Great Depression. Two of the papers focus on the internal geography of the city, while the other two examine industrial urban growth. Brian Slack, L. Meana, M. Langford and P. Thornton examine the evolving industrial geography of Montreal between 1861 and 1929. They provide a description of the structure and geography of all manufacturing firms as well as a more detailed case study of the food and beverage industry at three different dates. The paper provides both introductory students as well as serious scholars of Montreal (and other cities in this period) with a basic background to the industrial geography of one Canadian city. The portrayal of the basic lineaments of Montreal's industrial geography provides insights into the complexity of the historical geography of the urban economy. The focus of Gunter Gad's paper is the industrial geography of Toronto in the early 1880s. His detailed cross-sectional analysis shows that the nineteenth-century Canadian city had a much more complex industrial geography than the model put forward by writers such as Allen Scott who argue that the 19th-century city was characterized by the concentration of manufacturing in the city core. The paper by Gerald and Elizabeth Bloomfield takes us away from the focus on the internal structure of urban manufacturing to an examination of the Central Canadian urban system in 1871. Employing the industrial manuscripts of the 1871 census, they examine a number of different facets of the urban-industrial system such as the location and importance of industry within the urban system, the different range of work environments that existed in 1871 and, through two brief case-studies of Trois-Rivières and Guelph, the industrial geography of urban Canada in 1871. The last paper transports us to the Maritimes where Larry McCann frames the industrial geography of the Nova Scotia Steel and Coal Company just before World War I within the context of the core-periphery concept and Alfred Chandler's ideas of corporate growth. Through an examination of the relationship between the company's spatial structure and strategy, McCann argues that the company had an enormous influence upon the urban geography of Sydney, Cape Breton, and New Glasgow and Trenton, New Brunswick. In short, these four papers furnish a wealth of empirical material relating to the internal structure and development of Canadian cities between 1850 and the Great Depression, and provide a first step to a better understanding of the historical geography of Canadian urban industry.

Notes

1. A. J. Scott, "Locational Patterns and Dynamics of Industrial Activity in the Modern Metropolis", *Urban Studies* 19 (1982), 111-142; *idem*, "Production System Dynamics and Metropolitan Development", *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 72 (1982), 185-200.

2. For a critique of classical approaches see D. Massey, "A critical evaluation of industrial location theory" in *Spatial Analysis, Industry and the Industrial Environment: Progress in Research and Applications*, ed. F.E.I. Hamilton and G.J.R. Linge (Chester, 1979), vol. 1, 57-72 and N. Smith, "Uneven Development and Location Theory: Towards a Synthesis" in *New Models in Geography: the Political-Economy Perspective*, ed. R. Peet and N. Thrift (London, 1989), vol. 1, 142-163. Recent studies which incorporate new theoretical perspectives on the industrial geography of the Canadian urban economy include D. Hiebert, "Discontinuity and the Emergence of Flexible Production: Garment Production in Toronto, 1901-1931", *Economic Geography* 66 (1990), 229-253; R. D. Lewis, "Productive and Spatial Strategies in the Montreal Tobacco Industry, 1850-1918", *Economic Geography* (forthcoming); *idem*, "Restructuring and the Formation of an Industrial District in Montreal's East End, 1850-1914", *Journal of Historical Geography* 20 (1994), 101-115; *idem*, "The Development of an Early Suburban Industrial District: the Montreal Ward of Saint-Ann, 1851-1871", *Urban History Review* 19 (1991), 123-152.

3. C.G. Pooley, "The Historical Geography of Industrial Change" in *Historical Geography: Progress and Prospect* ed. M. Pacione (London, 1987), 158. Pooley also refers to the fact that geographers have made few contributions to economic history journals.

4. R. Dennis and H. Prince, "Research in British Urban Historical Geography" in *Urban Historical Geography: Recent Progress in Britain and Germany*, ed. D. Denecke and G. Shaw (Cambridge, 1988), 18. The neglect of industry is exemplified by M. Billinge who writing of British urban historical geography only discusses social geography. See "Reconstructing Societies in the Past: the Collective Biography of Local Communities" in *Period and Place: Research Methods in Historical Geography*, ed. A. R. H. Baker and M. Billinge (Cambridge 1982), 19-32.

5. R. Dennis, "History, Geography, and Historical Geography", *Social Science History* 15 (1991), 265-288.

6. J. Burgess, "Exploring the Limited Identities of Canadian Labour: Recent Trends in English-Canada and in Quebec", *International Journal of Canadian Studies* 1-2 (1990), 149-173.

7. *Pullman: an Experiment in Industrial Order and Community Planning, 1880-1930* (New York, 1967); *Proprietary Capitalism: the Textile Manufacture at Philadelphia, 1800-1885* (New York, 1983).

8. A.D. Chandler, *The Visible Hand* (Cambridge 1977); *idem, Scale and Scope: the Dynamics of Industrial Capitalism* (Cambridge, 1990); C. Heron, *Working in Steel: the Early Years in Canada, 1883-1935* (Toronto, 1988); D. Nelson, *American Rubber Workers and Organized Labor, 1900-1941* (Princeton, 1988); Scranton, *Proprietary Capitalism.*

9. J. Burgess, "L'industrie de la chaussure à Montréal: 1840-1870 — le passage de l'artisanat à la fabrique", *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique Française* 31 (1977), 187-210; P. Scranton, "The Workplace, Technology, and Theory in American Labor History", *International Labor and Working-Class History* 35 (1989), 3-22.

10. D. Massey, *Spatial Divisions of Labour: Social Structures and the Geography of Production* (London, 1984).

11. D. Harvey, "The Urban Process Under Capitalism: a Framework for Analysis" in *Urbanization and Urban Planning in Capitalist Society*, ed. M. Dear and A. J. Scott (London, 1981), 91-121.

12. S. Olson, "Baltimore Imitates the Spider", *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 69 (1979), 557-574.

13. For Montreal such studies include D. B. Hanna, "Montreal, a City Built by Small Builders, 1867-1880", (unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, McGill University, 1986); G.J. Levine, "Class, Ethnicity, and Property Transfers in Montreal, 1907-1909", *Journal of Historical Geography* 14 (1988), 360-380.

14. E. Soja, R. Morales and G. Wolff, "Urban Restructuring: an Analysis of Social and Spatial Change in Los Angeles", *Economic Geography* 59 (1983), 195-230; R. Walker, "The Transformation of Urban Structure in the Nineteenth Century and the Beginnings of Suburbanization" in *Urbanization and Conflict in Urban Societies*, ed. K. Cox (Chicago, 1979), 165-212; *idem*, "A Theory of Suburbanization: Capitalism and the Construction of Urban Space in the United States" in Dear and Scott, 383-429.

15. The classical treatment of this topic is S.B. Warner, *Streetcar Suburbs: the Process of Growth in Boston, 1870-1900* (Cambridge, 1978).

16. *The Promoters' City. Building the Industrial Town of Maisonneuve, 1883-1918* (Toronto, 1985).

17. S. Greenberg, "Industrial Location and Ethnic Residential Patterns in an Industrializing City: Philadelphia, 1880" in *Philadelphia: Work, Space, Family and Group Experience*, ed. T. Hershberg (New York, 1981), 204-229; R. Harris, "Industry and Residence: the Decentralization of New York City, 1900-1940", *Journal of Historical Geography* 19 (1993), 169-190; R. D. Lewis, "The Segregated City: Class Residential Patterns and the Development of Industrial Districts in Montreal, 1861 and 1901", *Journal of Urban History* 16 (1991), 123-152; Y. Schreuder, "Labor Segmentation, Ethnic Division of Labor, and Residential Segregation in American Cities in the Early Twentieth Century", *Professional Geographer* 41 (1989), 131-142; J. Vance, "Housing the Worker: the Employment Linkage as a Force in Urban Structure", *Economic Geography* 62 (1966), 294-325; O. Zunz, *The Changing Face of Inequality* (Chicago, 1982).

18. Some important studies are G. Gad and D. Holdsworth, "Corporate Capitalism and the Emergence of the High-Rise Office Building", *Urban Geography* 8 (1987), 212-231; Mona Domosh, "The Symbolism of the Skyscraper: Case Studies of New York's First Tall Buildings", *Journal of Urban History* 14 (1988), 321-345; *idem*, "Shaping the Commercial City: Retail Districts in Nineteenth-Century New York and Boston", *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 80 (1990), 268-284; D. Ward "The Industrial Revolution and the Emergence of Boston's Central Business District", *Economic Geography* 42 (1966), 152-171.

19. C. Abbott, *Boosters and Businessmen: Popular Economic Thought and Urban Growth in the Antebellum Middle West* (Westport, 1981); A.F.J. Artibise, "Boosterism and the Development of Prairie Cities, 1871-1931" in *Shaping the Canadian Landscape: Aspects of the Canadian City-Building Process*, ed. G.A. Stelter and A. F. J. Artibise (Ottawa, 1982), 116-147.