

Urban History Review Revue d'histoire urbaine

URBAN HISTORY REVIEW
REVUE D'HISTOIRE URBAINE

Teaford, Jon C. *Cities of the Heartland: The Rise and Fall of the Industrial Midwest*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993. Pp. xii, 300. 22 black and white plates, tables, notes, index. \$39.95 cloth

Margo Anderson

Volume 23, Number 1, November 1994

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1016703ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1016703ar>

[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

Anderson, M. (1994). Review of [Teaford, Jon C. *Cities of the Heartland: The Rise and Fall of the Industrial Midwest*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993. Pp. xii, 300. 22 black and white plates, tables, notes, index. \$39.95 cloth]. *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine*, 23 (1), 63–64.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1016703ar>

shopkeepers' collective identity was forged. Such considerations are necessary to understand the wide variation in shopkeepers' economic strength and organizational capacities between cities and countries, and the author's expert unraveling of Milan's development provides a model of analysis.

Less convincing is Morris's depiction of the shopkeepers' ideological evolution. Despite his pains not simply "to interpret the *esercenti* political experience as merely a progression from left to right," (p. 289) the rightward trajectory is clear. As evidence of the shopkeepers' independent and potentially variable course, Morris describes their opposition to the party of the large landowners and their admittedly halfhearted and ill-fated support for the "centre-left" administration of 1900-1905. But what drove them to the right was the emergence of a well-organized workers' movement that, even at its early stages, challenged the *petite bourgeoisie's* control over small workplaces (and particularly over hiring) and disputed its self-perception as the rightful spokespersons for the *menu peuple*. With the growth of a powerful and increasingly revolutionary workers' movement, it is not possible to do as Morris asks and "distinguish between anti-Socialism and support for the right" in early twentieth-century Milan. Was there no logic to anti-socialism in this context? From the evidence presented, the tide of class politics simply seems to have carried the shopkeepers in its wake. In short, Morris asserts a *petit bourgeois* autonomy, but increasing the choice was between workers and capital; it is difficult to agree that the "respect of property and the social order, through which the *esercenti* distinguished itself from the working class, did not demand an uncritical acceptance of the bourgeoisie" (p. 298), at least not in the electoral field.

In fact, the author's conclusions are forced onto the narrative. While shopkeepers clearly did have some autonomy, they moved inexorably into the camp of the right-wing party they had earlier criticized. Morris's case might be stronger if he could have elaborated upon the elements of a specifically *esercenti* world view and argued that, in some form, it had survived. Yet the shopkeepers' ideology, beyond a passing reference to Garibaldi and Mazzini in their newspaper and a general opposition to "privilege" is not well addressed. It is difficult not to contrast this with Geoffrey Crossick's rich portrayal of the social fabric of the British lower middle class predicated on anxieties and ambitions often at odds with broader economic developments. No doubt there is an issue of sources; this is perhaps not the kind of information that is easy to glean from the shopkeeper's organ *L'Esercente* or from reports of their federation. But this is crucial to understanding the *petit bourgeois* experience and (with due respect to Morris's concern about a teleology that assumes shopkeepers were inevitably fascists) will help explain their drift in that direction. This is not to say that there are not elements of fascinating social history here, as in his discussion of credit or *il fido*. Shopkeepers could claim credit for sustaining destitute working-class families and communities, although the institution seemed to control them as much as they it.

The lower middle class is a frustrating object of study, although made more so by attempts to follow too stringently Mayer's original dictum to study it in its "own right." This is not to denigrate studies of the *petite bourgeoisie* nor to suggest that we should assign it the status of a residual category of less interest and importance than capital and labour. In fact, the social values we might ascribe to the *petite bourgeoisie* have had (and arguably continue to have) a currency

beyond the economic weight of this sector and need to be understood. But, it would be more useful, I would argue, to take a leaf from E.P. Thompson and view class as nothing if not a social relationship. Throughout this narrative, the *esercenti* are constantly renegotiating their relationship with the other social classes of industrializing Milan. Often Morris is cognizant of what this meant for the shopkeepers' social identity and examines the role of their newspaper in consciously shaping it by seeking common concerns while eschewing discussions that could divide an already heterogeneous social group. While his attempts to claim substantial autonomy for shopkeepers in this process are strained, he addresses issues of concern to all historians interested in changing relations of class in the industrializing city.

James Naylor
Department of History
Brandon University

Teaford, Jon C. *Cities of the Heartland: The Rise and Fall of the Industrial Midwest*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993. Pp. xii, 300. 22 black and white plates, tables, notes, index. \$39.95 cloth.

Jon Teaford has written a sprightly history of the network of large industrial cities in the states of the Old Northwest (Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin) in the last two centuries. He focuses primarily on what he saw as a common pattern of growth, development and decline in Cincinnati, Cleveland, Detroit, Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Louis (with some discussion of smaller midwestern cities), and uses a biological metaphor of birth, maturity, and aging to study the "urban life cycle" (p. vii).

Teaford's "biography" (p. vii) of these heartland cities begins in early nineteenth century. He discusses the settlement patterns of the "river cities" (Cincinnati, St. Louis); the "cities of the lake region" (Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Milwaukee), and the smaller "capital cities" (Columbus, Indianapolis, Lansing). He analyzes the economic base of these cities. They were manufacturing centers and provided commercial services to their agricultural hinterland. He then discusses the physical layout of the cities and their "cultural complexion" (p. 72). Teaford argues that by the early twentieth century midwestern cities briefly basked in their reputation as the "cultural vanguard" of the nation in terms of architecture, the arts, and the new spectator sports such as baseball. Teaford suggests that after 1920 these heartland cities were eclipsed by the growth in what later became the "sunbelt." The suburban areas around the cities also challenged the dominance of the central cities, and after World War II, "Midwesterners faced the ugly symptoms of aging" (p. 211). By the 1980s, the "heartland" became the "rustbelt;" cultural leadership in music, media, and the arts shifted to the coasts, and midwesterners found themselves victims of "cultural colonialism" (p. 243).

The themes Teaford conjures up certainly echo the current popular conception of the urban history of the midwest. Whether they will bear the weight of a more critical scrutiny is doubtful. Teaford's lively prose captures the breakneck speed with which midwestern cities developed in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Chicago, for example, grew from a marshy frontier settlement in 1840 to the booming metropolis of a million people in 1890. The population boom and bust in some cities has been equally dramatic. The city of Detroit had a population under 300,000 in 1900, just under a million in 1920, had grown to 1.8 million by 1950, and slid back to one

million in 1990. These were demographic roller coasters. Yet other midwestern cities displayed more sedate patterns which call into question Teaford's generalizations. Milwaukee, for example, was the same size as Detroit in 1900, grew to about 700,000 by 1950, and has dropped back to about 630,000 since.

In short the biological metaphor doesn't quite work. There is more variety in the growth patterns than Teaford can explain. Further, birth, maturity and aging, after all, lead inevitably to death in living creatures. Yet almost 18 million people currently live in the metropolitan areas of Chicago, Cincinnati, Detroit, Cleveland, St. Louis and Milwaukee. Many more live in the smaller urban areas of the Old Northwest. At the end of the book Teaford recognizes that he has conceptualized himself into a corner. By the 1980s, he writes, the heartland had "grown old;" the "Midwest's pulse [was] fainter." But he concludes sanguinely: "this did not necessarily mean that death was imminent" (p. 254). He finds no resurrection; rather he jettisons his conceptual framework: "Perhaps by the 1990s the notion of 'cities' of the heartland was a conceptual anachronism" (p. 255). He concludes by speculating on the future; he finds "conurbations defying definition" (p. 255). One wishes he had used these insights to refine his original conceptual framework of the "urban life cycle" or to retrieve the work of other theorists of urban development — from Kingsley Davis, to Eric Lampard or Allen Pred, or Jan deVries, to name just a few. Thus the book provides a useful overview of midwestern urban development, but it raises more questions than it answers.

Margo Anderson
Department of History
University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee

McLoughlin, Brian J. *Shaping Melbourne's Future? Town Planning, the State and Civil Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992. Pp. xiv, 261. 6 black and white plates, 22 maps, 4 diagrams, 6 tables, bibliography, index. \$69.95

Land use planners should read this book and weep. In *Shaping Melbourne's Future*, J. Brian McLoughlin compares the aims of land use planning with its outcomes. Asking the question, how effective have planners been in relation to other influences in the urban environment, he concludes that the real powers shaping land use and the built form historically have been the major factions of capital: industry, commerce, property, and financial interests. More recently, public corporations built around State bureaucracies have themselves become influential power blocs. The power of ordinary people to control their own living environment has generally been puny by comparison. His conclusion is even more damning when he states that not only have the policies and controls of the planners failed, planning has often been socially regressive. It has resulted in cost inefficient decisions and increasing social and income segregation.

The conclusion may not come as a surprise to professionals and academics in the urban field. Few books, however, document so effectively the reasons why planners have so seldom achieved what they have set out to do, notably to guide the overall pattern of growth in the urban area. McLoughlin provides a very comprehensive, yet organized and easily understood monograph built on historical, socio-political and geographical themes.

In the historical dimension, the discussion focuses on those crucial turning points which since 1930 have separated the patterns of urban development and