

Urban History Review Revue d'histoire urbaine

URBAN HISTORY REVIEW
REVUE D'HISTOIRE URBAINE

Caulfield, Jon, and Peake, Linda, eds. *City Lives and City Forms: Critical Research and Canadian Urbanism*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996. Pp. x, 347. Maps. \$60.00 cloth, \$21.95 paper

John N. Jackson

Volume 29, Number 1, October 2000

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1016435ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1016435ar>

[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

Jackson, J. N. (2000). Review of [Caulfield, Jon, and Peake, Linda, eds. *City Lives and City Forms: Critical Research and Canadian Urbanism*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996. Pp. x, 347. Maps. \$60.00 cloth, \$21.95 paper]. *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine*, 29(1), 72–74.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1016435ar>

All Rights Reserved © Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine, 2000

This document is protected by copyright law. Use of the services of Érudit (including reproduction) is subject to its terms and conditions, which can be viewed online.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/en/users/policy-on-use/>

érudit

This article is disseminated and preserved by Érudit.

Érudit is a non-profit inter-university consortium of the Université de Montréal, Université Laval, and the Université du Québec à Montréal. Its mission is to promote and disseminate research.

<https://www.erudit.org/en/>

and their successors wished to represent themselves to the world. By the end of the eighteenth century, the families of bankers as well as of financiers would live in the square and be involved in such processes. On the whole, while seeking to substantiate their claims to noble status, the financiers would avoid attracting the spiteful attention of their political opponents and social betters by not overstepping the bounds of decorum.

Rochelle Ziskin's study of the social mobility and domestic architecture of the eighteenth-century residents of the Place Vendôme is based on an exhaustive knowledge of the full range of pertinent secondary sources and extant primary documentation. The author makes good use of the work of French and other authorities of the 1960s and 1970s—including that of the Canadian historian, John Bosher—in explaining the services rendered to the king and his administration by the royal financiers. She also effectively employs the techniques of the more recently developed cultural history to elucidate the dozens of architectural drawings and contemporary engravings that she herself has assembled and to establish the significance of the location of public and private rooms and of other space within the financiers' homes. She demonstrates that the position of women was paramount of women in determining domestic arrangements, and effectively links such examples to social class. She uses a case-study approach to measure developments in other houses and households for which adequate documentation exists against the examples provided by the *maisons* of the financier Antoine Crozat and his descendants. In her descriptions of the furnishings of her subjects' homes, including a model of the Girardon sculpture, her subjects come to life. Rochelle Ziskin has combined financial, social, cultural, and architectural history in new and exciting ways, and her study will be of interest to a wide readership, including students in standard advanced courses in eighteenth-century French history. Visitors to the Louvre who have read the book may wonder, as this reviewer did, whether the model of the Girardon sculpture now to be seen in the entrance to the Richelieu Wing is the same as the one that was once in a private residence of the Place Vendôme.

This is a very good book that have been an outstanding book. But it is flawed. It lacks basic scholarly apparatus: the reader looks in vain for a list of the archives and archival collections consulted. Any scholar attempting to reconstruct such a list from the endnotes faces a tedious task, for there are many complicated archival references, yet separate collections are inadequately identified in the notes. Moreover, much of the book is written in unidiomatic language that obscures the author's meaning, and a number of the translations from the French are patently absurd. University presses ought to employ editors capable of rectifying—or encouraging authors to rectify—these kinds of faults and shortcomings in such otherwise distinguished works of scholarship.

D. Gillian Thompson
Department of History
University of New Brunswick

Caulfield, Jon, and Peake, Linda, eds. *City Lives and City Forms: Critical Research and Canadian Urbanism*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996. Pp. x, 347. Maps. \$60.00 cloth, \$21.95 paper.

"Key current themes in the urban field are explored through a representative cross-section of the preoccupations and perspectives of 'critical urban researchers' in Canada." And, as "urban researchers are sometimes less conversant than they prefer with the breadth of interest and activity in the field, . . . [the book seeks] to familiarize researchers in different branches of urban study with a least a fragment of the work of their colleagues."

In pursuit of these two aims, fifteen disparate essays from universities across Canada provide the core of the book. They are introduced by six papers on the social and physical fabric of the city that emphasize features different from the generally accepted morphological situation of urban land-use models, and present difficult if not controversial issues in the formulation of public policy. This sequence begins with an essay by David Ley (Geography, University of British Columbia), which focuses on the costs and benefits of gentrification in the inner city, especially Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. The author emphasizes the bifurcation of this change, placing the reduced availability of affordable housing for the lower-income groups against the close relationship between inner-city investment, including the arts policy, of the city.

Alan and Josephine Smart (Anthropology, University of Calgary) consider the incursion into Vancouver of monster homes built by rich immigrants from Hong Kong. This movement reverses the common assumption that in-movers are of lower social status than those being invaded, and conflicts with existing attitudes towards social and physical space.

Evelyn Peters (Geography, Queen's University) examines the role and status of aboriginal people in the city through the eyes of four nonfiction authors who represent the idea of "aboriginality" in Canada: Mark Nagler, *Indians in the City* (1970); Edgar Dosman, *Indians the Urban Dilemma* (1972); Larry Krotz, *Urban Indians: The Strangers in Canada's Cities* (1980); and Larry Shorten, *Without Reserve: Stories from Urban Natives* (1991). She raises questions about the compatibility of aboriginal culture and urban life, and how Natives fit in with the current urban mosaic when they are socially marginalized.

Jeffery Hopkins (Geography, University of Western Ontario) interprets Toronto's extensive underground street system. The corridors—legally public space—are not public property but space shared among the principal land-owning corporations, the hundreds of businesses that rent space, and the public agencies that operate subway stations, and train and bus depots. "The problem of how to distribute the benefits and burdens of spatial control . . . is a morally charged, ideologically laden question of social justice the resolution of which has immense economic, legal, political, and social consequences."

Rob Shields (Sociology and Anthropology, Carleton University) introduces the pleasure factor in the human appreciation of the city, yet the urban environment is studded with prohibitive signs such as *Keep off the Grass*, *Children Only*, or *No Loitering*. How pleasure might be introduced directly in architecture is explored through the actions of three groups: the searcher looking for a particular feature, the onlooker who is not part of the crowd but part of the scene, and the drifter who flows with the crowd and is diverted towards some activity.

Enqin Isin (Social Science, York University) reviews the challenges to understanding that are posed by the transition from the metropolitan concept of 1921–71, to a fragmented, multi-nucleated, metropolitan region of greater size, that offers a diminishing political and economic role for the inner city, and immense distances between activities. Isin argues that legislators and interpreters of the urban scene have failed to understand and to act together on the old urban form or the new one, which the authors call a “cosmopolis.”

In part 2, the emphasis changes to five papers on economic aspects of the urban environment. Damaris Rose (Université du Québec) examines the theme of gentrification in selected neighbourhoods of Montreal where, after 1970, the city promoted resettlement in middle-class areas that had lost population and industry. This study questions the universality of the stage model that working-class neighbourhoods can be converted into higher-class enclaves in predictable stages, and also that this is the dominant process through which the inner city is changed.

Graham Todd (Political Science, York University) contrasts the demand for a reduced role of government in the economy with the reality that new kinds of state institutions have appeared. He studies public-sector economic-development corporations, their direct participation in the economy, and, in particular, the Toronto Economic Development Corporation.

Michael Goldrick (Political Science, York University) examines international financial services for their impact on the growth and changing character of the urban situation. This essay examines how the governments of Canada, Quebec, and British Columbia were largely unsuccessful in their attempts to divert global financial arrangements from Toronto to Montreal and Vancouver. “The inertia of present location tended towards maintenance of the status quo.”

Beth Milroy (Urban and Regional Planning, Ryerson Polytechnic), using the Kitchener-Waterloo area for her study, compares change from 1900 to 1980 in the full-time female labour force. Her essay argues that community, domestic, and traded work are inter-related and equally important. In the earlier part of the century, most community work by women was carried out informally or through religious organizations. Later, essentially the same types of work were performed, but the tasks had become more professional, more specialized, and paid for rather than voluntary.

Robert Lewis (Geography, Toronto), examines the Great Depression in Hamilton during the 1920s and 1930s. His paper covers the adverse impact of severe unemployment on different social classes including women and minority groups, the inadequate roles of the state and the municipality, the control exercised by employers, and the ramshackle structure of welfare provision. The conclusion notes that, in the depressions of the 1930s and 1990s, “the similarities in the dynamics underlying the weakened position of the working class in the Canadian labour market are extremely obvious.”

Gerda Wekerle and Linda Peake (Environmental Studies and Social Science, York University) introduce a topology of women’s urban activism that ranges through a focus on children, their families, and welfare mothers, to concern over patriarchal domination and women’s disadvantages. This activism has spread into areas not traditionally seen as women’s issues: to change the culture of the city and the nature of urban life.

Agnes Calliste (Sociology and Anthropology, St. Francis Xavier University) introduces the struggle against racism directed toward the Halifax black community, and resultant changes: the elimination of racism in state institutions, the economy, and civil society; reforms to ameliorate the social and economic conditions of blacks; and state actions to co-opt and regulate the Black Power movement.

Franz Hartmann (Political Science, York University) faces the reality that more people than ever before live in cities, yet urbanization is environmentally destructive. The impact of urban-based environmentalists on the contemporary city is examined through two campaigns in Toronto. His conclusion is that citizens are not powerless puppets of capitalism, but can become conscious agents of change.

Warren Nagnussen (Political Science, University of Victoria) concludes the sequence of papers with a philosophical discourse on the nature of cities, using Victoria as the node in a global city whose hierarchies we have hardly begun to comprehend. “We have found a city that is now and always has been beyond itself: a city that is neither contained within its immediate environment nor governed by its local government.”

I enjoyed this book as a useful reminder of the range of practical urban research undertaken in Canadian universities, but find the tenet that research workers are unfamiliar with the breadth of urban research being undertaken is exaggerated. Even so, the fifteen varied essays are interesting, often provocative reminders of the broader field of urban understanding. As the coverage is selective and limited, it would, however, have been instructive to know how the themes and their authors were selected.

The book also needs a strong concluding chapter to draw together the threads of argument, and to indicate how they individually and as a unit contribute to the theme of “critical urban research.” The papers certainly introduce the diversity of

the urban condition, but the reader is then left to wonder about the practical import of the lessons that have been presented. We have an interesting series of individual statements, and the book fulfils its stated objective to provide a bridge between the many types of urban research now being undertaken across Canada. But then what?

John N. Jackson
Professor Emeritus (Applied Geography)
Brock University

Fairbanks, Robert B. *For the City as a Whole: Planning, Politics, and the Public Interest in Dallas, Texas, 1900–1965*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1998. Pp. xiii, 318. Maps, bibliography, index. US\$47.95 (hardcover).

Wilson, William H. *Hamilton Park: A Planned Black Community in Dallas*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998. Pp. x, 256. Maps, black-and-white illustrations, appendices, index. US\$39.95 (hardcover).

Two recent studies of Dallas, Texas, demonstrate the richness of contemporary scholarship in a part of the United States long ignored by urbanists and an ongoing lack of consensus on whether a city should be viewed as a “physical, economic, social, and cultural unit” or a collection of interdependent neighbourhoods and communities (3). Robert B. Fairbanks explores Dallas’s early twentieth-century leaders’ embrace of a “systems approach” to planning and problem solving. Such an approach emphasized the comprehensiveness of the city and its surrounding suburbs. This city-as-a-whole discourse broke down beginning in the mid-1950s. William H. Wilson focuses on Hamilton Park, a middle-class African-American subdivision, and builds a convincing argument for the importance of place-based communities, even as residents’ commitments to non-neighbourhood activities and ties increased in the latter half of the twentieth century.

Fairbanks wants readers to take the public discourse of Dallas business leaders seriously. He links the development of city-as-a-whole rhetoric in the 1920s to scholars associated with the Chicago School of Sociology, reformers associated with the National Municipal League, and an emerging national network of planners (40–2). Committed to urban growth, fiscal restraint, and municipal efficiency, Dallas’s commercial-civic elite organized a variety of planning organizations and used the city’s major daily newspaper to advocate council-manager government.

Chapters 3 to 5 provide a well-researched account of Citizens Charter Association (CCA) leadership in Dallas. These fine chapters detail the development and consolidation of council-manager government and tensions among business leaders. Some supported a professional city manager, while others proposed a “Dallas man” for the job. Dallas business leaders’ tendency to feud publicly and organize “sectional” factions based on the locations of their downtown businesses made a

public discourse emphasizing unity and efficiency especially appealing to a mostly middle-class, white electorate. Fairbanks traces the tightening grip of business leadership through the Dallas Citizens Council (DCC) and its focus on growth and economic development in the 1940s.

According to Fairbanks, by the 1960s public discourse in Dallas and across the nation emphasized the needs of citizens, represented by racial/ethnic, class, and neighbourhood-based groups, instead of concerning itself with the city or metropolitan region as a whole (240). But was city-as-a-whole rhetoric ever more than a cloak for the interests of a particular race- and class-based elite tied to downtown business interests? In 1959, Earle Cabell, an insider who broke away from the CCA, called the Dallas machine, “nothing more than a syndicate of downtown landlords, bankers and millionaires” (225). The public discourse that helped Dallas business leaders acquire and maintain municipal power in the 1930s and 1940s was exposed as a sham by the 1960s.

Labour organizations and black leaders who chose to cooperate with Dallas business leaders in the 1930s and 1940s did so because the alternatives (the Catfish Club and/or Ku Klux Klan-backed candidates) were even less attractive, not because they believed city-as-a-whole rhetoric (169). After an interesting discussion of the elite’s limited responses to housing shortages facing African Americans and Latinos in the 1930s and 1940s, Fairbanks asserts “the emphasis always remained primarily on the needs of the city as opposed to the needs of blacks or Mexican Americans” (163). By the 1960s, it had become clear to most everyone that city-as-a-whole was code for whatever served the needs of white business leaders and their mostly middle-class political constituents.

Fairbanks’s call for a new focus on citizens’ “responsibilities to the whole” with “sensitivity to the rights and needs of individuals, neighborhoods, and racial and ethnic groups” is undoubtedly sincere (250). It will not, however, be embraced easily by those for whom historically *city-as-a-whole* meant “exclusion.”

William H. Wilson’s *Hamilton Park* is a case study in exclusion, segregation, and the late and limited response of business leaders to an ongoing twentieth-century housing shortage for Dallas blacks. At the same time, it chronicles the development of one Dallas community whose original residents “knew what they wanted and quickly mastered the techniques of presenting their concerns” (197). Wilson uncovers both hegemony and agency. Since construction began in the mid-1950s, Hamilton Park has remained a “defended neighborhood,” even as residents increasingly find meaning elsewhere (198–9).

There is much to applaud here. Wilson recreates Hamilton Park using a variety of traditional and nontraditional sources—most interestingly city directories and interviews with fifty-eight people who either lived in the subdivision or were instrumental in its founding. Appendices explaining Wilson’s use of specific sources make the work a fine model for graduate students. Both