

## Urban History Review Revue d'histoire urbaine

URBAN HISTORY REVIEW  
REVUE D'HISTOIRE URBAINE

Badcock, Blair. *Unfairly Structured Cities*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984. Pp. xiii, 3985. \$21.35

John H. Taylor

Volume 14, Number 3, February 1986

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1018096ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1018096ar>

[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

Taylor, J. H. (1986). Review of [Badcock, Blair. *Unfairly Structured Cities*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984. Pp. xiii, 3985. \$21.35]. *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine*, 14(3), 296–298. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1018096ar>

culaire, d'abord destinées aux petits propriétaires de bâtiments désuets des quartiers ouvriers et qui constitueront l'incitation essentielle à l'entrée des promoteurs professionnels sur le marché de la conversion des lofts. Les statistiques montrent que c'est très majoritairement à des vastes projets de caractères luxueux réalisés dans les zones centrales que sont allées ces subventions et exemptions fiscales; l'auteur croit que ces projets auraient probablement été réalisés, de toute façon, contrairement à ce qu'affirment les promoteurs. Puis, le rezonage sélectif : en canalisant l'industrie dans certaines artères jugées particulièrement appropriées, on a fait éclater les réseaux de complémentarité sur lesquels reposait l'industrie légère et entraîné sa perte alors que l'intention officielle était de préserver l'industrie. La création de sociétés de développement local (sociétés mixtes sans but lucratif) utilisées, en réalité, pour transférer certaines propriétés du domaine public au domaine privé de même que diverses décisions des tribunaux sont venues entériner les changements de statut créés par les mécanismes du marché. Enfin, l'extension très poussée de l'encouragement de l'État aux arts, alliée à une politique de prestige et d'influence au plan mondial, créeront un nouveau marché du travail dont les objectifs de régulation sociale ne sont pas les moindres : la fourniture de milieux de travail/vie aux bénéficiaires devait faire partie intégrante de cette politique.

- 5) La non-segmentation du marché de Soho, généralement considéré comme le point de départ d'un mouvement qui aurait essaimé par la suite. Une fois les professionnels de l'immobilier entrés dans le jeu (dès la levée des interdictions municipaux), les prix pratiqués dans le sous-marché des lofts ont atteint des niveaux comparables à l'échelle de l'ensemble de Manhattan. Soho n'a servi qu'à rendre visible, à ancrer le marché des lofts partout à l'échelle de Manhattan.
- 6) Enfin, et surtout, l'analyse de la composante culturelle dans l'émergence du loft living. L'auteur décortique très finement l'attrait paradoxal du loft, forme qui réconcilie les oppositions habituelles art/industrie, usine/foyer, privé/public, hédonisme/domesticité, etc., tout en plongeant ses racines dans l'imagerie architecturale paysanne des siècles précédents aussi bien que dans les prescriptions de Frank Lloyd Wright relatives au pavillon de la cité jardin. Elle relie également le phénomène à l'émergence de certaines formes d'art («action painting», art conceptuel, performances, etc.) où l'acte de la création et la personne du créateur deviennent eux-mêmes objets d'art. De là à transformer le lieu de ces performances en un objet de fascination et d'identification vicariale, il n'y avait qu'un pas. Le tout est évidemment fortement soutenu par les galeries d'art, les médias, etc., et se situe dans le contexte de mise en place non seulement d'un vaste marché de l'art mais de ce que Sharon Zukin appelle un véritable «mode de pro-

duction artistique», où l'artiste, du «beatnik» marginal qu'il était se voit intégré peu à peu aux classes moyennes respectables . . .

Il y a certes des accents de théorie du complot en maints points du développement de ces thèses et l'on pourra ne pas être d'accord avec un certain nombre d'aspects évoqués au cours de l'argumentation : par exemple, cette nostalgie par rapport à la désindustrialisation liée au remplacement du travail productif par du tertiaire — donc du travail «mort» — qui entraîne la disparition de la classe ouvrière et des espoirs de révolution auxquels s'accroche le sociologue. Pour l'auteur il semble clair que les villes y perdent à favoriser le remplacement des activités industrielles désuètes par du tertiaire. De plus, les coûts de restructuration seraient socialisés de manière à effectuer un transfert net des bénéfices du secteur public vers le secteur privé, opérations dont on fait porter le fardeau par les groupes les plus défavorisés. Un autre aspect fort discutabile est le rôle attribué dans l'émergence de ces formes marginales d'habitat à la crise du logement des années 70, qui consiste à voir dans la recherche et la mise en place de solutions de rechange une réponse forcée à une situation de rareté économique. Il reste toutefois que le livre de Sharon Zukin constitue un ouvrage extrêmement stimulant pour montrer comment la réanimation urbaine se situe au carrefour de l'émergence de nouvelles pratiques culturelles et de la mise en oeuvre d'une stratégie d'accumulation économique. La nécessaire jonction entre les aspects économiques et idéologiques dans la formation des pratiques sociales y est particulièrement bien mise en évidence.

Francine Dansereau  
Professeur-chercheur  
INRS-Urbanisation

---

Badcock, Blair. *Unfairly Structured Cities*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984. Pp. xiii, 3985. \$21.35.

Blair Badcock in *Unfairly Structured Cities* has written a textbook study of the "capitalist" city "as a socially produced form" (p. 6). The undertaking is, obviously, a huge one. It must embrace a global space, cover two centuries of history, slalom through two generations of volatile and controversial theory-making, and, as is in the nature of social science, make some gestures toward policy-making.

The result is a book that is often chaotic where not inchoate. It implies links rather than proves them; it tends to prove by anecdote; it leaves huge and obvious gaps; it makes a theoretical promise but leaves it unfulfilled; and it ends on a note of exhaustion. The author admits to most of these problems.

Yet, Badcock has produced a remarkable and valuable book. It ransacks a global literature for material, and passes it on in a critical and partially digested form. This is precisely the sort of thing a textbook should do. *Unfairly Structured Cities* is, in effect, a primer on the geography of capitalism, but one in which the social realist school is placed in a context with other better known theoretical paradigms.

Like many recent scholars in the field, Badcock argues that urban development has proceeded unevenly. But a value judgement is also incorporated into the title: uneven development in cities is unfair. And if unfair, perhaps not so predetermined by physical or economic circumstances as many schools of theorists would choose to believe. As Badcock says; "Now that some sort of steady-state has been regained after what amounts to a theoretical metamorphosis in urban and regional studies, the time is ripe for a recasting of the materials available for urban courses" (p. ix).

Badcock divides *Unfairly Structured Cities* into four sections. In the first, "Putting Space in its Place," he reviews the theory of residential differentiation from the Chicago School to neo-classical economics, and couples it with an overview of the literature of social administration that has emerged since the 1960s.

In the second section, "Capital as the Architect of Spatial Structures," he pilots readers through the shoals of the marxist, neo-marxist, and "realist" debate, and then into an historical overview of industrial and post-industrial urbanization. Section three, "Sources of Inequality and Redistribution Within Cities," moves into the modern period, and particularly into the literature of the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia (where Badcock teaches geography). This part is in many ways the most innovative, rooted in a comparative framework which is rarely seen in modern urban literature. Despite global, post-industrial capitalism, things seem to work out differently in differing locales. Political structures, for example, *do* seem to matter. The final part, "The Rise and Fall of 'Urban' Policy," is a commentary on policy approaches and alternatives.

Badcock, in considering the city as a socially-produced form, seems to accept, most of the time, the "primary" role of capital and the social relations of production as the structure in which cities are embedded: "capital is the principal architect of spatial structures" (p. 53). But he is clearly uncomfortable with the more purely Marxist notion of capital as solely determinant. The notions of Castells, Harvey and others<sup>1</sup> that capitalism, marching to its own inner logic, produces certain social relations, which projected on space, constitute a city, are too limited.

Badcock is more comfortable with Gregory<sup>2</sup> and his "commonsensical view of structural constraints": "if men make history they do not do so entirely under conditions of their own choosing — hence the significance of bounded-

ness, which ensures that the production of social life coincides with the reproduction of social structures" (p. 61). But there is space for human agency.

With specific reference to the interplay of capital and space, Badcock places himself in the social realist school, in which social and spatial structures are "reflexive." There is a socio-spatial dialectic. Social relations of production are both space-forming and space contingent. That is, in a simplistic sense, what you earn is primary to where in urban space you live. But significantly, where you live can have a considerable bearing on what you earn, and, further, your capacity not only to retain a share of the labour value produced in a society, but also to command social goods and services supplied by the state. The unfairness in *Unfairly Structured Cities* proceeds geometrically. But what is more, Badcock seems to imply, that the third actor in the interplay, the "State," has and can successfully intervene to mitigate the unfairness."

Badcock appears to reject the notion of "capitalist" scholars in that the "State" in its efforts to supply some social justice has merely crippled economic development. He equally appears, however, to reject the notion of the "marxist" scholars that "the determination of life chances is monopolized by the labour market" and that the "State" is merely the "executive committee" of capital. City government, the Marxist sense, becomes the "local State." It is merely a miniature version of the central state, and the primary function of local institutions, like central ones, is to reproduce labour.

Badcock seems more comfortable with the notions of Pahl,<sup>3</sup> which, much revised, are rooted in Weber's notion that life chances are mainly mediated through the market, rather than in the sphere of production (p. 46). Pahl "postulated a set of spatial inequalities quite apart from the inequalities that derive from place in the workforce. Implicit in this is the suggestion that consumption, especially access to civic services, must be taken just as seriously as the sphere of production as a source of inequality" (p. 46-7).

It is from this point of departure that Badcock's comparative studies begin to illuminate some rather interesting aspects of urban studies. Constitutional arrangements, intergovernmental financial arrangements, and fiscal policy toward urban capital formation in particular would seem to condition, in a significant way, social outcomes.

The author confines his focus to the United Kingdom, Australia and the United States, but his template, obviously, could be applied to other national agglomerations. American constitutional arrangements, for example, where local governments are the primary organs of urban government (in contrast with Australia where the states are) "shows the materialization of some of the most cherished American values — the worship of self-determination and local autonomy,

the ethos of privatization, and the principle that the user should pay" (p. 246).

Similarly the nature of local revenue, specifically the proportions allocated to local taxes, charges for goods and services, and transfer grants, "say quite a lot about underlying political ideologies as well as indicating where the locus of power lies in the government superstructure" (p. 247). In Australia, for example, the "overshadowing of local government by the states has left an indelible imprint on Australian cities. Urban investment undertaken by the states has always favoured the core of the metropolitan primates at the expense of the proliferating suburbs" (pp. 251-2).

Finally, the extent to which urban governments must borrow on the private capital market, in order to supply collective goods and services, can have "a lasting impact on the quality of life within their jurisdictions" (p. 253). "At the least, the private market can put a stop very quickly to any city's efforts to redistribute resources from the haves to the have-nots by refusing to purchase its bonds and securities" (p. 253), though one could argue, similarly, that capital funding from senior levels of government could hamstring cities just as much, though probably in different ways. At any rate, the source of loans can account for different social outcomes.

One other comparative insight, among many, is worth a comment. When the state does intervene on behalf of capital, on behalf of whose capital does it intervene? Given the many types of capital identified today — commercial, industrial, property and so forth — and given the rather different patterns of intergovernmental relations from nation to nation, which part of the state sides with which part of capital?

An overall assessment of the utility of *Unfairly Structured Cities* is difficult. Badcock has, admittedly and inevitably, left much out. He is primarily concerned with the distributive impacts of advanced capital in cities. He is not much concerned with the generative relationship of cities and capital and has not asked all the appropriate questions. For example, is the making of capital also space contingent and state contingent? Have cities been autonomous actors in the distribution of services?

Perhaps what is more disturbing, though, is the implication in this volume that both space and state have undergone little change while capital, in its odyssey to a global and corporate form, has. Urban space obviously has as well. For example, owners are rather more restricted in their use of it than they were 100 years ago, or at least the mechanisms of restriction are different. Our perceptions of space are also changed. And certainly intra-state relationships have, *de facto* if not *de jure*, undergone change. These changes *may* have a fairly direct relationship with the evolution of capital, but this is an unproven assumption.

And finally, the relationship of capital to space may well have been altered. It seems a reasonable hypothesis that 100 years ago, in the heyday of industrial capital, that capital necessarily had an identification with space, as did the local state. An identification between capital and the local state was both possible and inevitable, though perhaps the city was only an interim, corporate surrogate for early and simpler modes of capitalist production. In the past 100 years, however, corporate capital has become less identified with local space and with the local state. Certainly a characteristic of corporate capital is its footloose nature.

Badcock's work poses some tantalizing questions for urban scholars. To what degree has corporate capital taken over the distributive functions and the generative functions of the "local" state? Can corporations (private or government) innovate sufficiently to be creators of wealth? Can they distribute sufficiently well to be socially just? Or are they merely vast machines to appropriate the value created by the innovative context outside their walls and in the process leave urban structures even more impoverished and even more unfair?

John H. Taylor  
Department of History  
Carleton University

---

#### Notes

1. Among many, see M. Castells, *The Urban Question: A Marxist Approach* (London: Edward Arnold, 1977); D.W. Harvey, "The Urban Process Under Capitalism: A Framework for Analysis," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 2, 1 (1978): 101-131.
2. D. Gregory, *Ideology, Science and Human Geography* (London: Hutchinson, 1978).
3. R.E. Pahl, *Whose City? And Further Essays on Urban Society* (London: Penguin, 1975).

---

Oldenburg, Veena Talwar. *The Making of Colonial Lucknow, 1856-1877*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984. Pp. xxv, 287. Maps, tables, index. \$32.50.

The historiography of modern India is replete with general studies of colonial administration, especially of the period following the assertion of direct crown rule in 1858. What is refreshing about this study is that it focuses neither on central nor provincial administration but zeros in upon a specific urban centre, in this case the city of Lucknow, capital of the former princely state of Oudh which had been high-handedly annexed by the British in 1856, and a scene of intense fighting in the Rebellion of 1857. More refreshingly still, this indepth study of Lucknow challenges the long-accepted thesis that the traumatic events of 1857 led the British to abandon completely their former preoccupation with the