

## Urban History Review Revue d'histoire urbaine

URBAN HISTORY REVIEW  
REVUE D'HISTOIRE URBAINE

Lewis, Robert, ed. *Manufacturing Suburbs: Building Work and Home on the Metropolitan Fringe*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004. 304 pp, 16 tables, 2 figures, 20 b/w illustrations, 14 maps. Cloth ISBN 1-59123-085-2/ Paper ISBN 1-59213-086-0

Bradley Cross

Volume 34, Number 1, Fall 2005

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1016058ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1016058ar>

[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

Cross, B. (2005). Review of [Lewis, Robert, ed. *Manufacturing Suburbs: Building Work and Home on the Metropolitan Fringe*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004. 304 pp, 16 tables, 2 figures, 20 b/w illustrations, 14 maps. Cloth ISBN 1-59123-085-2/ Paper ISBN 1-59213-086-0]. *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine*, 34(1), 122–123. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1016058ar>

All Rights Reserved © Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine, 2005

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/>

**é**rudit

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/>

l'auteure situe ici les débuts d'une gestion moderne de l'eau, cela avec la réalisation de travaux à grande échelle. Après un survol des principaux courants théoriques en histoire des techniques, l'auteure fait l'étude de la réalisation du canal de Willebroek et de l'établissement de la machine hydraulique de Saint-Josse-ten-Noode, deux ouvrages phares selon Deligne, qui illustrent le passage à la gestion moderne de l'eau. Ces grands travaux ouvraient sur « une ère qui ne laissait que peu de place à la concertation entre toutes les parties concernées » (p. 207), confirmaient l'émergence du pouvoir technique, celui des ingénieurs en particulier, et révélaient à l'échelle du bassin des oppositions : entre Bruxelles et son hinterland, entre intérêts particuliers et intérêts généraux et entre pouvoir central et populations. Enfin, l'ouvrage se termine avec le chapitre 6 dans lequel sont présentées les conclusions générales. L'auteure reprend là l'essentiel de ses propos tout en les inscrivant à l'intérieur de considérations actuelles en matière de gestion de la Senne.

L'édition de l'ouvrage *Bruxelles et sa rivière* de Chloé Deligne est d'une facture remarquable. Aussi, fort justement à notre avis, cet ouvrage a déjà été primé en 2002 (prix d'histoire Dexia). Dans son ouvrage, l'auteure nous convie en quelque sorte à une histoire plurielle qui est menée avec rigueur malgré les difficultés et les pièges d'un tel exercice. L'auteure termine en se questionnant : « certains lecteurs et lectrices restent peut-être sur leur faim » (p. 227). Non, au contraire. La qualité du travail de Chloé Deligne réside notamment dans son ouverture sur les différentes réalités de l'eau. Cette qualité est aussi son défaut au point où on en perd à l'occasion l'esprit du sous-titre de l'ouvrage, « Genèse d'un territoire urbain ». En effet, à bien des endroits il semble davantage être question d'une histoire de l'eau que de celle d'un territoire et son eau. Aussi, prévenons les lecteurs : bien que cet ouvrage porte un caractère universel, certains passages réfèrent à des considérations historiques propres à la Belgique.

Dany Fougères  
Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières

---

**Lewis, Robert, ed. *Manufacturing Suburbs: Building Work and Home on the Metropolitan Fringe*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004. 304 pp, 16 tables, 2 figures, 20 b/w illustrations, 14 maps. Cloth ISBN 1-59123-085-2 / Paper ISBN 1-59213-086-0.**

Robert Lewis and eight contributors have produced a fairly loose collection of essays oriented toward the common theme of industrial development in suburban contexts, from the perspective of historical urban geography. There has been a need for synthesis in the sprawling field of suburban history, but most of what has been written about North American suburbia concerns mainly middle-class residential enclaves. *Manufacturing Suburbs* corrects this by focusing on the industrial and working class facets of suburban development from the mid-1800s up to the mid-1900s. Lewis warns the reader that we *think we know* a

lot more about pre-1950 suburban processes than we really do.

The tour of industrial suburban United States and Canada begins with Lewis' introductory chapter priming the reader on the purpose of the collection, and concludes with an essay by Richard Harris suggesting directions for future scholarship in the field of industrial-suburban history. Of the remaining essays, three have been written expressly for this book and six have been reprinted from journals; five from a special edition of the *Journal of Historical Geography* (volume 27, 2001) and one from *Geographical Review* (volume 26, 1979). The individual chapters stand alone, albeit with some revisions from their original publication. Ideally a book as important as this might have had a closer link among chapters offering a more consciously comparative framework. Instead, we are given views of American and Canadian industrial suburban experiences and have to rely on the introduction and conclusion to weave them together.

The original essays (chapters 4, 8 and 10) make some important contributions to the collection by challenging prevailing theories of suburban and industrial development. In "Model City? Industry and Urban Structure in Chicago," Mary Beth Pudup reveals that industrial Chicago's formation and growth process was episodic, poly-nucleated, and more the result of real estate market speculation (and other macro-level factors) than the heroic efforts of industrial barons. She also challenges the sociological paradigm of central place and its attendant concentric ring model of the urban process that ironically emerged from the "Chicago School" at the University of Chicago. The Chicago School observed the process "backwards" seeing a filled-in city, mature in its suburban and industrial formation, rather than in its initial stages of suburban manufacturing development.

Gunter Gad analyzes suburban manufacturing in Toronto from 1881–1951, noting that manufacturing spread across the political entity of the city, making limited headway in new suburban areas after 1914. Suburban Toronto's industrial development remained idiosyncratic and diverse in its location and production. Until the Metropolitan Toronto entity was created in 1953, industrial suburban development was modest by American standards especially when contrasted with Heather Barrow's next chapter on Detroit. In "The American Disease of Growth," Barrow examines Henry Ford's Detroit, 1920–1940. She suggests that the unprecedented suburban expansion of the 1920s came through a process of "metropolitanization," and that Ford's dual roles in (re)locating the automobile industry to suburban Dearborn and enhancing the mobility of automobile users had a magnifying effect on metropolitanization in Detroit. Her study anticipates the decline of the central city in Detroit, rooting the process in the pre-Second World War era. In this Detroit case study, contrary to Pudup's Chicago, "the metropolitanization of Detroit was...spurred as it was by industrialists spreading their factories around the city's periphery and by residents who pioneered the 'crabgrass frontier' in their automobiles" (p. 219).

The majority of the remaining chapters have appeared in print elsewhere, a quick survey of them will give the reader a sense

of the collection. Walker and Lewis' "Beyond the Crabgrass Frontier" more-or-less functions as a second introduction to the volume. This overview concerns the historiography of suburban industrialization and adds a reasonably broad perspective of trends in urban geography and history. Muller and Groves in "The Emergence of Industrial Districts in Mid-Nineteenth Century Baltimore" argue that in Baltimore during the middle decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, highly specialized industrial districts emerged within and outside the city itself, subject to both "centrifugal and localizing tendencies among large firms" (p. 51) that produced a highly fragmented and nucleated structural form. They note this "transitional city" yielded residential patterns corresponding to forces of fragmentation, segmentation, and specialization which had profound implications for ethnic and racial settlement. Originally produced in 1979, this analysis seems to operate as an assumption held within several other chapters in this collection.

Lewis contributes a chapter on manufacturing districts in Montreal. Extending from his book *Manufacturing Montreal* (2000) Lewis concludes that Montreal's suburban industrial development came from "a series of industrial complexes in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries" (p. 91) that took different forms at different times. These districts shifted as successive waves of capital formation produced new social and political contexts. Richard Walker's study of San Francisco Bay Area, 1850–1940, notices the growth of the Bay Area was driven by a varied and speculative cluster of industrial and commercial forces, that took hold of successive suburban locations to draw the city beyond its original geography. Ultimately the numerous Bay Area districts played home to suburban industry. Edward Muller's chapter on the geography of metropolitan Pittsburgh, 1870–1920, argues that corporate capitalism provided the engine for a complex division of labour and a widely scattered industrial landscape. He looks beyond the usual metropolitan scale of development to address the regional perspective of industrial suburbanization. The remaining reprinted content of the book concludes as Greg Hise examines "Nature's Workshop" of Southern California in the first half of the twentieth century to challenge conventional industrial and suburban narratives. He found in Los Angeles spatial and social orders that were in fact "not successive but concomitant" (p. 180). In other words, the creation of the industrial suburban landscapes did not depend on a series of stages for their development, but happened simultaneously in the early twentieth century.

Ultimately *Manufacturing Suburbs* provides a service to the fields of historical geography and suburban industrialization but it also leaves the reader hoping for more. The contradictions and overlapping conclusions of the essays remain undressed. Reconciling a series of independently produced essays (that were not necessarily intended for collaborative publication) is hard work by any editor's reckoning, yet this is both the strength and weakness of such a volume. *Manufacturing Suburbs* represents a cross-section of methodologies and a

wide geographical distribution of case studies, but one still hopes for a more integrated volume on the topic.

Bradley Cross  
St. Thomas University

---

**Fairbanks, Robert, and Patricia Mooney-Melvin (eds.)**  
***Making Sense of the City. Local Government, Civic Culture, and Community Life in Urban America. Columbus: Ohio State University, 2001. Pp. 192.***

This book is a collection of urban historical essays in honor of Zane Miller, professor at the University of Cincinnati. As is explained in the preface of the book, Miller brought to urban history a perspective centred on conceptions of the city as main drivers of how city life and governance evolve over time. "Zane's exploration of the political response to Cincinnatians to the impact of rapid urbanization at the end of the nineteenth century moved beyond the battle between the forces of 'good' and 'evil' for control of the city. He found that the way contemporaries perceived the spatial arrangements of the city and then used it in their attempts to solve governance problems helped explain the political world of turn-of-the century Cincinnati" (p. x). The papers that are anthologized in the book are all very faithful to this particular approach to urban history. All of them tend to break away from more common historical perspectives (or materialist leaning perspectives) based on "class, ethnicity or race" (p. x). They prefer to embrace a point of view that consider that city actors' efforts at "making sense of the city" is fundamental in shaping the city and its politics. One can assume that this theoretical coherence not only suggests good editorial work but also the continuing relevance of the approach developed by Miller's work.

I am not a historian which means that I am unable to judge this book's contribution from the point of view of historical debates. However, from the untrained eye of a political scientist primarily concerned with local and city issues, this book appears to be a solid piece of historical work. Most, if not all of the chapters, present an in depth look at different aspects of city life (housing policies, city charters, municipal governing machinery reform, planning etc.) and provide very interesting and detailed insight on these topics. Usually, the chapters are concerned with quite short periods of time (at least from the point of view of other social sciences) and very specific locations which allow for very careful analysis. I suspect that these methodological choices are consistent with the particular approach developed by Miller. In order to get a good sense of how people understand the city it is probably very helpful for a study to be grounded in a particular locale and a specific and limited time-frame. Interestingly enough, Miller himself has worked on Cincinnati his entire academic career (p. 178).

If this book sparked my historical curiosity it also proved to be useful in another way. Studies from urban sociologists as well as scholars of urban politics often identify sweeping changes that