

**Wrigley, E.A. *Continuity, Chance and Change; The Character of the industrial Revolution in England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988. Pp. viii, 146. Figures and Tables**

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ment, land-use planning, housing, transportation, the environment, education, social services, public health and policing. Each essay includes a brief review of the historical context, a discussion of the role of local government relative to other levels of government, interprovincial comparisons and a summary of current issues. The result is an admirable introduction to issues and research in each of the subject areas as they apply to local governments—the sort of reference that you can hand to a student who wants to do a paper and say: “Start with this!”

The book lacks, though, a sense of the complexity of local government itself. The latter is treated as an aggregate, the third tier of government, without numbers, size variation, location or differences in roles; Metro Toronto and Matachewan Township, it's all the same. As a result geographers and historians cannot get a feel for the degree of local variability, hence the importance of particular institutions, issues or individuals. Few authors emphasize the choices available or the decision processes in local governments.

Two powerful impressions remain from the package as a whole. First, every chapter underlines the intermingling of actions and responsibilities of different levels of government for the same topic area. Policies by different agencies, concerning the same problems, are formulated and implemented in parallel or in response to one another. As someone once said, “The responsibilities of different levels of government are more like marbled cake than layer cake.” Second, and not independent of the first, these different policy areas remain amazingly diverse in goals and procedures. They may be all part of local government but

the operating style of the police force, the social workers or the teachers are fundamentally different. The same is true of their responsibilities: the schools embrace all the social ills, whereas police and planners tend to restrict themselves to the letter of the legislation. Local governments have been largely unable to integrate these agencies in any significant way: they are still dominated by professional associations at a national or international level. Kiernan picks up on this in his discussion of planning, as does Loreto, to a lesser extent, in his paper on police.

The book's format gives equal space to each of the ten topics, unlike the real world in which activities like public finance, public works and education absorb disproportionate amounts of attention and funding. Gertler gives us a thorough and sophisticated review of economic development initiatives at the local level that is undercut by the revelation that on average these activities account for less than one per cent of municipal budgets. The paper on public health reveals that in most places it has nothing to do with local government. In contrast, Siegel gets the same amount of space to summarize public finance, and most inevitably, the result is rather mechanical and elementary. Loreto gives himself an extra ten pages for policing, which permits appreciably more depth.

I enjoyed Carroll's review of housing policy in the post-war period, which to some degree summarized our attitudes to urban issues in general: the 1950s and early 1960s were devoted to a frenzied expansion; followed by a decade of debate about the quality of urban form, transportation, participation, etc.; followed by a period of benign neglect in

which urban issues received lower priority as growth slowed and governments cut back. Woolstencroft's essay on education provides a unique overview of the diverse forces operating on the Canadian education system—the number of participants, the difference of goals—and the variety of solutions under discussion—consolidation, decentralization, fragmentation, parental inputs, etc. Keirnan's review of land-use planning is the most personal and provocative piece. He is unhappy with the role of urban planning; he wants pro-active planning departments that take the initiative in redeveloping the inner city. I suspect that he lives in the wrong place at the wrong time.

The direct relevance of this volume to the readers of UHR is limited. While it provides a good overview of the complex current literature on these urban public issues, it seldom provides connections between the issues and the way specific local governments deal with them. And in most instances the historical background is minimal. Except for Carroll's paper, the historical perspective is given something less than two pages in a 25 page essay.

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**Wrigley, E.A. *Continuity, Chance and Change; The Character of the Industrial Revolution in England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988. Pp. viii, 146. Figures and Tables.**

Having established himself as the dean of English historical demography, Dr Wrigley returns, with these four lectures at the University of Cambridge, to his “first main research interest, the better

understanding of the industrial revolution." One wonders how the close argument and detailed quantification of *Continuity, Chance and Change* could have been absorbed aurally, but its striking reinterpretation of "the most important of all historical transformations to have taken place within [Britain's] shores" make reading this brief book well worth every challenge.

Dr Wrigley asserts that the central meaning of the industrial revolution is the significant augmentation of real incomes enjoyed throughout most of the population. He then argues that the reasons for this rise in productivity had to do with exponential increases in the supply of energy applied to so many human endeavours undertaken in Britain in the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Dutch economy had led everyone else in Europe, as could be seen in its agricultural productivity, its commercial activity, and its urbanization. Wrigley fails to credit the Dutch for what the English learnt from them, but he does show why the English economy was outstripping the Dutch by about 1700. In the "advanced organic economy" (Wrigley's first thesis), the relatively larger Dutch and English utilization of livestock augmented both fertility of soil and productivity of labour, but the Dutch peat bogs could not keep up with English coal fields in the quantity and efficiency of fuel.

Coal is the bridge between Wrigley's first thesis and his second. Although both coal and peat may be used to cook food, heat homes, and fire some industrial processes—in each case freeing up land from its formerly necessary contributions to heat, housing and energy, so that land

could be exclusively devoted to food and clothing—it was the virtually inexhaustible supplies of coal that, especially when harnessed to steam power, lifted the English into the "mineral-based economy" in which hitherto unheard of productivity could be realized. Nothing in the advanced organic economy made such a transformation the logical next development, Wrigley argues, as the eventual Dutch stagnation and originally slow English growth demonstrated. It was chance—a key word in the title whose use is explained in but one paragraph (p. 115)—that England sat upon such a rich capital stock of energy, which, in conjunction with its otherwise advanced economy, freed it from the centuries-old dependence upon the annual flow of agricultural production. This exploitation of coal and steam could be imitated in other countries similarly endowed with coal, without any prior need to develop the Anglo-Dutch "bourgeois" culture that had been so advantageous in the advance organic economy; Britain's former lead could no longer be maintained.

*Continuity, Chance and Change* has little to say about urbanization, except as a measure of Dutch and English advance over other parts of Europe. Wrigley does point out that a more efficient fuel allowed bricks to displace wood in construction (which further reduced the acreage required for timber), but for his thesis he need not follow the bricks to town, where their resistance to both fire and rats enhanced the safety and sanitation of urban living. And of course the whole story of agricultural and industrial productivity has important implications for any urban growth. His brief excursions into nuptiality, fertility, mortality, reinvestment, and social

welfare—not to mention his close reading of Smith and Malthus—also bear indirectly on urban phenomena in instructive ways. Though not focused on "urban studies" per se, this important and stimulating reinterpretation of some central issues in the industrial revolution should become required reading in the field.

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**Mackenzie, Suzanne. *Visible Histories: Women and environments in a post-war British city*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989. Pp. xv, 217. Tables, index.**

In the early 1980s, Suzanne Mackenzie conducted 60 interviews with women in Brighton, the Regency seaside resort in southern England. These provided the data for *Visible Histories*. Mackenzie notes the ways in which Brighton, and the respondents, were both typical and idiosyncratic. Although she is at pains to credit them with individuality, her major justification for the book is that the data illustrate an important, and hitherto unexplored, development in the history of contemporary Britain, revealed in the way women exercise control over their homes and neighbourhoods. The book is a human historical geography, chronicling a series of "mercurial and powerful women and environments."

The core of Mackenzie's evidence is in the interviews whose guiding questionnaires are reproduced in the appendix. Her respondents were "working-class," a term she makes no attempt to define although she describes her interviewees in economic terms of income, household amenities and aids, as well