Document généré le 16 avr. 2024 02:51

Urban History Review
Revue d'histoire urbaine

URBAN HISTORY REVIEW
REVUE D'HISTOIRE URBAINE

Clemens Wischermann and Elliott Shore, eds. *Advertising and the European City: Historical Perspectives*. Aldershot UK: Ashgate, 2000. Pp. xviii, 225. Illustrations, bibliography, index

Christopher P. Hosgood

Volume 30, numéro 2, march 2002

URI : https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1015911ar
DOI : https://doi.org/10.7202/1015911ar

Aller au sommaire du numéro

Éditeur(s)

Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine

ISSN

0703-0428 (imprimé)
1918-5138 (numérique)

Découvrir la revue

Citer ce compte rendu

Hosgood, C. P. (2002). Compte rendu de [Clemens Wischermann and Elliott Shore, eds. *Advertising and the European City: Historical Perspectives*. Aldershot UK: Ashgate, 2000. Pp. xviii, 225. Illustrations, bibliography, index]. *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine*, *30*(2), 50–51. https://doi.org/10.7202/1015911ar

All Rights Reserved © Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine, 2002

Ce document est protégé par la loi sur le droit d'auteur. L'utilisation des services d'Érudit (y compris la reproduction) est assujettie à sa politique d'utilisation que vous pouvez consulter en ligne.

https://apropos.erudit.org/fr/usagers/politique-dutilisation/

érudit

Cet article est diffusé et préservé par Érudit.

Érudit est un consortium interuniversitaire sans but lucratif composé de l'Université de Montréal, l'Université Laval et l'Université du Québec à Montréal. Il a pour mission la promotion et la valorisation de la recherche.

https://www.erudit.org/fr/

Gregory C. Randall. America's Original GI Town: Park Forest, Illinois. Baltimore MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000. Pp. xvii, 236. Maps, black and white illustrations, bibliography, index. US$42.50.

The cost of Gregory C. Randall's volume (especially north of the 49th parallel) is more than many GIs returning from battle put down for housing under that wonderful contribution to American growth after the Second World War, the GI Bill. A planner and landscape architect, Randall offers here a wide-ranging personal and professional assessment of everything one wanted to know but feared asking about Park Forest, Illinois, the first of myriad postwar American suburban developments. The author's story possesses intrinsic interest – it reflects his lifelong connection with the region, beginning as a resident at age five – an interest that burgeoned with the passing of time. Randall makes an empathic, yet dispassionate observer, and his assessment supplements and modifies William H. Whyte's iconic *The Organization Man* (1956).

Less well known than Levittown New York, the national metaphor for the emerging crabgrass frontier, Park Forest encompassed all the promise and problems of a new way of living. Under the auspices of American Community Builders, and led by local visionary developer-entrepreneurs Philip Klutznik and Elbert Peets, the town emerged as a publicly managed and privately built community twenty-six miles south of Chicago. From its inception the founders of Park Forest sought to apply lessons gleaned from New Deal greenbelt villages and English garden cities as they planned, designed, built, and supervised its growth.

Critics of suburbia, taking their cue from academics and city folk like Lewis Mumford and Malvina Reynolds, often harp on the negative, scorning the suburbanites' homogeneity, conservatism, boosterism, and lack of concern for declining urban centres. According to this narrative, suburbia valued only clipped lawns, fresh paint, and bigger and better flagstone walks. Randall's assessment reveals much self-interested Babbitry, but the author also delves beneath self-interest and snobbery as he limns a story remarkable in its complexity and its legacy. For not only did Park Forest become the first new kid on the block; the venue also exerted significant impact upon community planning in the United States generally.

Randall assays the history of space, of place and "place," of continuity, and of change over time. In so doing, he contributes to a vital new historiography, combining a post-modern temperament with hard historical questions. More than a history of the planning, construction, and residential life of a GI town – Canadian demobilization towns like Barriefield Village across the Cataraqui River from Kingston were primitive by comparison – Randall argues that Park Forest was far more than an amalgam of sticks and stones. In ten fast-moving chapters and an epilogue, he tells the story of the builders' foresight (and, at times, cupidity); the pioneer arrivals and subsequent dwellers in the village's single-family homes, and their triumphs and trials (several basement drywalls proved permeable); battles over (and for) schools, a shopping centre, and growth generally; and what happened when other suburbs burgeoned, especially those that featured malls.

The saga of Park Forest is at once poignant and instructive. Most suburban developments – and there were thousands in 1950s and 1960s America that featured impossible names (Elmwood, Streamwood, Dreamwood, Driftwood, Happywood) that promised bucolic lives as part of the purchase – never lived up to this promise. But no matter. Randall demonstrates beyond cavil that dynamic new towns like Park Forest often pushed surrounding regions forward. The trick was to maintain the verve. The author finds significant impediments to continued development within the cultural matrix of these new sites – racist restrictive covenants, economic snobbery, the tendency to embrace the political status quo, and – most interesting – the existence of these developments as a threat to existing community property values. Withal, however, the author leaves no doubt of the complexity – increasingly so in the last two decades – of community planning. For those skeptics who decry the value of a liberal arts education as the republic moves into the twenty-first century, understanding this story – and community planning generally – involves history, sociology, psychology, economics, art, and several other fields. Arts and science courses may, in fact, save us from ourselves.

Think about it.

Geoffrey S. Smith
Department of History
Queen's University

Clemens Wischermann and Elliott Shore, eds. Advertising and the European City: Historical Perspectives. Aldershot UK: Ashgate, 2000. Pp. xviii, 225. Illustrations, bibliography, index.

This collection of essays reconsiders the relationship between modern advertising and urban consumption. The focus is on the period 1850–1930 when, the editors suggest, early advertising strategies crystallized. At the outset the collection makes use of recent advances in communications theory in order to place the consumer of advertising, rather than the advertiser, at the heart of the investigations. This emphasis reflects the editors' conclusion that old studies of advertising are now discredited because they accepted the "grand manipulator" argument, suggested by theorists such as Vance Packard in the 1950s, which assumed that advertising actually influenced behaviour. This collection is based on more recent theoretical work from the social sciences that, according to Wischermann, recognizes that the consumer of advertising filters and reconfigures information. In other words, advertising can only reinforce existing behavioural dispositions. Advertising is not misleading, but a tool to make the market comprehensible to consumers. With this as the central assumption, the authors reinsert advertising into the historical context from which the theories of manipulation have removed it and provide a model of how the history of advertising might be studied.

Elliott Shore examines advertising critics in Berlin and Vienna, such as Lassalle, Treitschke, and Sombart and concludes that their opposition to advertising and its perceived link to the editorial sections of newspapers was based on a hopeless yearning for a mythical golden age of journalism in which advertising played no part. More useful, Elliott suggests, is the work of early twentieth-century theorists such as Victor Mataja, who argued that advertising, while not a wholly positive force, was nonetheless an accepted, integral part of modern society that needed to be understood within its social context. Stefan Has examines visual commercial advertising and the process by which it conquered the whole city, and argues that early advertisers altered the city so that it became a signifier. The city was interpreted as a symbol representing the exchange of money and products. [Advertisers] contributed considerably to the metamorphosis of the city into a text which one had to learn to read in order to move through." (60)

Those in the city now became flaneurs, strolling through this textual world. Has reinforces the position of the editors that advertising cannot manipulate. Rather, "an advertisement becomes an attempt to offer the individual different types of lifestyles and to construct his own from them." (73)

Claire Walsh's examination of eighteenth-century London retailers suggests that shopkeepers were less concerned with manipulating consumers than they were with promoting the identity of their shop. Retailers did not advertise in newspapers to any great extent, and when they did they were more likely to announce changes of address than to promote their wares. Shopkeepers were more likely to invest in fashionable shop fronts and enticing interiors than newspaper advertisements. Conversely, Natacha Coquery's study of late-eighteenth-century Parisian shopkeepers suggests that merchants were skilled manipulators of taste. (96) Their advertisements to the court promoted their wares as foreign and exotic or fashionable; Parisian merchants "were the inventors of commercial advertising." (109) Moreover, Aaron J. Segals's chapter on nineteenth-century Parisian posters is a fascinating recounting of the attempts by urban authorities' to check the commercial and moral contamination of advertising. While posters became a feature of the urban landscape, clearly not everyone was convinced that their message was purely informative. Uwe Spiekermann's detailed reconstruction of four stages in the development of shop-window displays is of particular interest. The chapter chronicles the "universalization" of the shop window as a site for the price of goods and their display, usually in symmetrically proportioned stacks. Particularly useful is the description of the post-1900 period, which is treated as the last stage, when principles of window display were transferred to the shop as a whole, thereby creating a commercial ensemble. Spiekerman provides a superb account of the development of the salesroom, complete with lighting and decoration, as the site of the new consumer dream world. Finally. Esther Cleven's examination of early twentieth-century Dutch advertising theory suggests that outdoor advertising was eventually discredited as ineffective and abandoned. Advertisers began to heed the work of psychologists who argued that only text and illustrations together could motivate the consumer to buy. This decline in outdoor advertising does not appear to accord entirely with Has' conclusions about the importance of outdoor advertising and the urban flaneur who pieces together the flotsam and jetsam of advertisements to create a personal reading of the urban landscape.

Ultimately, despite the editors' initial claims about placing the consumer at the heart of this advertising history, the various studies offer a more traditional approach. To be sure the consumer is treated more sympathetically, occasionally as someone who is capable of reading advertisements as texts. Yet the emphasis is ultimately on advertisers rather than consumers. Moreover, while the chapters, including the three theoretical and the five case studies, present some fascinating and often original material, the thesis of the book is not always consistently argued. The problem, I suspect, is that the two options presented by the editors are not necessarily mutually exclusive. While it may be true that advertising is not the "grand manipulator", it does not follow that advertising as a means of presenting information is necessarily benign or lacking ulterior motive. Or does it?

Christopher P. Hosgood
Department of History
University of Lethbridge

Michel Pratt. Atlas historique (Boucherville, Brossard, Greenfield Park, LeMoyne, Longueuil, Saint-Bruno-de-Montarville, Saint-Hubert, Saint-Lambert). Longueuil, Société historique du Marigot, 2001, Pp. 159. Illustrations, bibliographie.

M. Filion et al., Histoire de Richelieu-Yamaska-Rive-Sud. Sainte-Foy, Presses de l'Université Laval, 2001, Pp. 556. Illustrations, bibliographie, index.

L'autonomisation de la banlieue par rapport aux villes-centres est un fait incontestable. Les données récentes des recensements ou encore des enquêtes origine-destination démontrent qu'un nombre croissant de suburbains fréquentent de moins en moins les centres-villes. En raison d'une mobilité accrue, leurs activités quotidiennes prennent place dans de vastes territoires métropolitains. Comment se sont développées ces aires urbaines distendues et multipolaires? Quels sont les principaux points de rupture ou de continuité dans le processus de métropolisation de l'espace? Qu'est-ce qui distingue un banlieusard d'un urbain?

Les deux livres dont fait l'objet ce compte rendu traitent d'un ensemble suburbain de la région de Montréal connu d'une manière informelle comme la Rive-Sud. Cette région s'est développée à la fois en lien et en opposition avec la métropole du Québec. En voulant nous faire découvrir une identité propre à cet ensemble régional, les auteurs reconstruisent une trame historique qui met en valeur plus de trois siècles d'occupation européenne. Bien que le fait suburbain y soit considéré comme un des processus ayant marqué l'histoire récente de cette