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Thabit, Walter. *How East New York Became a Ghetto*. New York: New York University Press, 2003. Pp. xv, 304, maps, notes, index.

Inner-city communities across the United States have experienced devastating decline over the past half-century. How did it happen that stable working-class communities turned into decimated, depopulated, dangerous, riotous, and burned-out ghettoes in the space of a single generation? Why has it been so difficult to turn these urban disaster zones around since the 1960s? Urban politicians, planners, and policy-makers have been working on inner-city solutions for decades, but why has so little been accomplished? Walter Thabit's book takes on these questions in a case study of the Brooklyn community of East New York. In 1966, the Lindsay administration engaged Thabit's planning firm to develop community-based programs for low-rent and moderate income housing in East New York. Over the next five years, as the anti-poverty and Model Cities programs of President Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society came and went, Thabit's work involved intensive community participation aimed at the development and implementation of a local housing policy. Consequently, his book combines aspects of urban policy, recent urban history, and memoir.

Originally settled by Dutch colonial farmers around 1690, East New York by the late nineteenth century had become home to prosperous German immigrants. In the early twentieth century, Jews, Italians, Poles, and Lithuanians spilled out of Manhattan's immigrant ghettos into East New York, attracted by the area's new tenement and two-family and four-family housing, as well as by its numerous factory jobs. By World War Two, East New York had become a stable, relatively prosperous, working-class community, anchored by schools, synagogues, Catholic churches, and a thriving retail sector. The postwar era, however, brought rapid change to East New York on many fronts, change that within the space of a decade produced a devastated, burned-out, depopulated ghetto of African American and Puerto Rican newcomers. One of the strengths of Thabit's book is his analysis of the powerful forces at work that produced the East New York ghetto.

East New York's rapid decline stemmed primarily from the combined effects of postwar prosperity, new migration patterns, ruthless real estate practices, and failed government policies. The postwar suburban boom pulled whites, especially younger families, to better housing in Canarsie, Queens, and Long Island. Population pressure in the nearby black ghettoes of Brownsville and Bedford-Stuyvesant, partially produced by the widespread housing demolition that accompanied urban renewal, first brought blacks to East New York in a desperate search for affordable housing. Agricultural mechanization in the American South and in Puerto Rico drove hundreds of thousands of both minorities to New York City, many finding their way to East New York. The area's population turned over quickly in the early 1960s: 85 percent white in 1960, the community was 80 percent black and Puerto Rican by 1966.

The local real estate industry hastened the racial transition in a variety of ways. Landlords converted older houses into multiple dwellings, intensifying overcrowding. As minorities moved into apartments and tenements, landlords raised rents and cut back on maintenance, contributing to ghettoization. Many landlords abandoned their buildings altogether. Blockbusting by real estate agents and redlining by banks and mortgage companies stimulated neighborhood turnover and decline. As Thabit writes: during the early 1960s, some 200 real estate firms "worked overtime to turn East New York from white to black" (p. 1). At the same time, massive urban renewal destroyed housing and disrupted community stability. Federal Housing Administration (FHA) policies generally supported segregated housing into the 1960s, thus strengthening the racial divide that ghettoized East New York. White religious institutions closed or moved, schools and public services declined, and most of the older community organizations disintegrated as a result of population transitions. As East New York went into a quick downward spiral, political leaders and public policy-makers remained immobilized. Racial violence in East New York in 1966 simply punctuated the dramatic neighborhood shifts that had occurred over the previous decade.

The central portion of Thabit's book recounts in withering detail the effort of planners to halt East New York's ghettoization and revitalize the community. The summer riots of 1966 got the attention of the Lindsay administration, which contracted with Thabit's community planning firm to develop a housing rehabilitation program for East New York. The goal was to rehab some 2,300 low-rent and moderate income housing units over five years. As it turned out, however, rehabing a few thousand housing units presented some severe challenges for advocacy planners. In developing and implementing the housing program, Thabit had to work closely with a variety of community organizations and with politicians and agency bureaucrats from multiple levels of government — and that was the problem.

Pursuing the goal of community involvement, derived from the practice of the Johnson administration's War on Poverty, Thabit's firm worked with diverse community organizations. Many dedicated community activists fully supported the goals of housing rehabilitation, but more generally, the entire process of community involvement produced persistent patterns of disagreement and squabbling over power, control, and project specifics. Community organizations often faced off with one another; many community leaders pursued their own personal goals. Political ambitions, personal profiteering, corruption and contract kickbacks, patronage jobbing, racial disputes, and more sapped the vitality of the larger community housing effort. As rehabed buildings were completed, according to Thabit, some non-profit sponsors "looted" their projects or provided incompetent management. Community action, in short, seemed to be the democratic way in the turbulent 1960s, but it made building inner-city housing a difficult, messy, and time-consuming process.

Navigating political waters and the shoals of government bureaucracies provided further challenges for community planning.

Thabit's housing project and a subsequent Model Cities program required the cooperation of many levels of government, but neglect, delay, funding shortages, and outright opposition frustrated the community planners. Mayor Lindsay supported housing reform, but the city council tended to ignore housing needs in minority areas through the 1960s. City planning, housing, and building officials preferred top-down planning and worked more closely with landlords and the real estate industry. Parks and recreation officials shortchanged the recreation needs of East New York. Crime and youth gangs proliferated but the police presence on East New York streets became less visible. The New York public school bureaucracy and the teachers' union resisted local control of East New York schools. FHA policies that favored real estate speculators contributed to housing abandonment. The Nixon administration cut Model Cities funding in the early 1970s, shifting instead to revenue sharing that favored fast-growing suburbs. Rehabing West New York buildings turned into a bureaucratic nightmare.

Thabit's book serves as a sort of manual of what went wrong with urban policy implementation at the local level in big-city America. It also provides a useful interpretive framework for understanding postwar change in the inner cities. The book is densely packed with the details of housing projects, community activism, and bureaucratic infighting. Much of the documentation comes from Thabit's own planning records, supplemented by more traditional sources. The book powerfully conveys the forces behind the ghettoization of one urban community and illustrates the difficulties of community development and housing reform. Nevertheless, there were some accomplishments: in 1977, after ten years of community planning, East New York had 2,300 units of rehabilitated housing, although much of the community remained mired in poverty and hopelessness. In the final analysis, it is hard to argue with Frances Fox Piven's introductory comment that Thabit's housing initiatives ultimately were "too small to reverse the larger trends that were undermining East New York" (p. xi).

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Parent, Alain. *Entre empire et nation : Les représentations de la ville de Québec et de ses environs, 1760–1833*. Québec : Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2005. Pp. xx, 272. Illustrations, tableaux, bibliographie.

Issu d'une thèse doctorale soutenue en 2003 à l'Université Laval, sous la direction de Serge Courville, ce nouveau venu de la collection « Géographie historique » porte sur la représentation de la ville de Québec, depuis la Conquête (1759–1760) jusqu'aux Rébellions de 1837–1838. Plus précisément, on y analyse 48 gravures et aquatintes réalisées d'après les œuvres de militaires britanniques de passage dans la colonie et diffusées en Grande-Bretagne au XVIIIe et au début du XIXe siècle en vue de débusquer les significations dont ces images seraient les véhicules implicites ou explicites, particulièrement en rapport avec la construction identitaire de l'empire britannique et les enjeux géopolitiques que, partant, cette imagerie révèlerait.

Assez proche de la facture de la thèse originelle, comme en fait foi notamment un tableau de l'introduction consacré à l'énoncé de la « question générale de recherche » et aux groupes « de sous-questions », l'ouvrage est divisé en trois chapitres : un premier—près du quart de l'ouvrage –, voué au « cadre conceptuel », et deux autres sur le sujet lui-même, soit les représentations publiées, d'abord au lendemain de la guerre de Conquête, puis en aval de l'Acte de Québec (1774), de l'Acte constitutionnel (1791) et au début des années 1830. Si certaines des images présentées, dont celles de Cockburn et de Short, sont déjà assez connues pour avoir été relativement abondamment scrutées par des historiens et des historiens d'art, d'autres, comme les six aquatintes d'après Fischer, ont été relativement peu diffusées depuis leur réalisation. L'ouvrage est donc original et intéressant, autant par son contenu que par la thèse qu'il adopte, certes proche de la sémiologie et de l'archéologie du savoir (bien que l'auteur ne s'en revendique pas), mais jusqu'ici peu exploitée au Québec : le discours de l'image, particulièrement celui, très « chargé », de l'image de la ville, est un sujet passionnant pour qui veut comprendre les liens entre l'imaginaire et l'identité d'un lieu.

Dans cette voie, on doit malheureusement regretter que l'auteur n'ait pas davantage approfondi les dimensions de ce qui, à la base, relève de la plus pure tradition de l'histoire de l'art et n'y échappe que périlleusement, à savoir la description et l'analyse de l'image. L'auteur invoque bien Panofsky—notamment tel que lu par Moxey et Van Straten, et en méprenant la date de réédition (1991) pour celle de l'édition originale des *Essais d'iconologie* (1967) de l'historien d'art décédé en 1968—au fil de « l'approche éclectique » qu'il propose. Mais prise pour ce qu'elle est, un « entre-deux », l'interdisciplinarité ne peut faire oublier ses rives disciplinaires et tourne franchement à la désinvolture lorsqu'elle conduit à nommer par exemple « titre de l'emballage » ce qu'on appelle normalement « pochette », « première de couverture », etc. des séries de gravures en question. Certes, cet errement de vocabulaire, pour inconfortable qu'il soit, relève probablement du même français laborieux qui émaille l'ouvrage et ne suffit évidemment pas à disqualifier le regard peu commun proposé, d'ailleurs armé de bonnes références sur les méthodes de réalisation des œuvres. N'empêche que, en dépit d'une conscience critique avérée dans le méticuleux « cadre conceptuel », le recours transdisciplinaire à la « méthode iconographique » panofskyenne transpose le chercheur sous son propre microscope : pour comprendre l'image, « nous formulons, écrit-il, des énoncés descriptifs [des gravures] comme si nous en étions les acteurs » (par exemple, la *Vue de l'église et du collège des jésuites de Short* lui inspire que « La religion catholique est idolâtre et superstitieuse »), pour ensuite les regrouper sous des thèmes—« anti-catholicisme », etc.—censés rendre le portrait global des représentations, à la lumière des hypothèses préalablement formulées.