

**Kruse, Kevin M. *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005**

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process of change was largely attributable to the influence of the French and Industrial Revolutions, and to the zeal of national activists—writers, journalists, poets, musicians, linguists, and scholars (Count Istvan Széchenyi being the most famous figure here) –, who were committed to all things Hungarian, including costumes, dances, theater, cuisine, history, and, above all, language. The ability of these reformers to insert themselves into local public life (as witnessed, for example, the large number of voluntary associations, whose visibility increased through a rapid growth of the press), the memory of the Glorious Revolution of 1848–1849 (a revolutionary experience that “encouraged people to see themselves not as subjects, but as citizens belonging to a national community rather than a particular town, religion, or occupation,” p. 150), the construction of monumental buildings (museum, bridge, schools, theater, parliament)—all these initiatives combined with a rapid spatial and demographic growth (from c. 50,000 to c. 750,000 at the end of the century) to create an urban space that came to reflect an authentic national character. This campaign to nationalize Budapest had also a dark side: it often involved exclusionary practices, intolerant language, violent street demonstrations, and even vandalism. The author concludes his book with too brief a glimpse of the many changes the city underwent in the twentieth century. Hopefully, Nemes will continue his pioneering work on Budapest, a city that had its share of tragedies in this arguably most tragic of all centuries.

My only quibbles are that Nemes sometimes uses interchangeably the words Magyar and Hungarian; in the political context of the nineteenth century, such an approach is not quite exact. Also, a more elaborate treatment of the major changes in the urban economy would have further enriched this original study.

A book about a city and the political visions that molded its character, *The Once and Future Budapest* will appeal equally to historians, architects, and urbanists.

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**Kruse, Kevin M. *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.**

In 1963, James Baldwin wrote that “the black man has functioned in the white man’s world as a fixed star, as an immovable pillar: and as he moves out of his place, heaven and earth are shaken to their foundations.” While African Americans have consistently struggled to escape the fixed racial binary to which Baldwin refers, whites have just as surely reacted to these tremors by working indefatigably to restore their separation from and superiority over blacks. As a number of American urban historians have pointed out, this process of black assertion and white reaction utterly transformed the demography of American cities after the Second World War as blacks flocked to them and whites fled from them. In

his book, Kevin Kruse analyzes the ideology accompanying white flight and its ongoing impact on American politics.

Kruse traces a direct line between obscure neo-Nazi and Ku Klux Klan terrorists operating against residential desegregation in post World War II Atlanta, to the leaders of the conservative movement that dominates every level of American politics today, many of whom, including Newt Gingrich, have represented metropolitan Atlanta constituencies. In doing so, he puts to rest assertions that this movement is race blind or egalitarian. Instead, he demonstrates its roots in white reaction to and ultimate defection from the desegregating cities of the 1950s and 1960s and the “politics of suburban secession” that developed along with this exodus. In a beautifully written, clearly structured, and deeply researched narrative, Kruse lays out the historical processes that led to the development of modern conservatism. This political evolution resulted from the white fight against desegregation, first in neighborhoods, then in public schools, and finally in public facilities. Perceiving the civil rights movement as a fundamental threat to their rights as homeowners, taxpayers, businesspeople, and citizens, a growing number of white Atlantans began to subscribe to an explicit ideology of individualism, privatization, freedom of association, and distrust of the federal government to bolster their ongoing white supremacy.

Kruse’s examination of this anti-desegregation ideology does much to explain the current state of American cities. Deeply resenting civil-rights activism that resulted in the court-mandated desegregation of “their” public recreation facilities, schools, and transportation system, for example, white Atlantans in large numbers abandoned these services, not only by ceding them to blacks, but also by refusing to support them with their tax dollars and turning to their own white-only private institutions. Suburbanization, according to Kruse, was the end result of this racialized secessionist movement from the city and its services. He thus makes an important point about the pyrrhic victories of the civil rights movement in American cities. What did this courageous, decades-long movement for racial equality achieve if it led to the white abandonment of the public sphere to African Americans, white flight from “black” cities to “white” suburbs, and white suburbanites’ rejection of any connection or responsibility to city dwellers, especially if it meant higher taxes or expanded government services? Ruefully, Kruse concludes that white flight represented not the defeat, but the ultimate victory of the segregationists.

In focusing on Atlanta, Kruse made a canny choice for developing his argument for a nationwide process. Long characterized by city elites as the “city too busy to hate,” Atlanta has had a nationwide reputation for racial moderation and economic progress, especially when compared to other cities in the South. Kruse topples this myth in two ways. First, by focusing on grassroots whites rather than the elite, he demonstrates that a growing majority of Atlanta’s whites were vociferously opposed to desegregation in the 1950s and 1960s. Starting with the working class, which was most affected by black “incur-sion” into formerly white neighborhoods and segregated public

facilities, white opposition snowballed eventually to include even the city's putatively progressive business elite once black activism affected their bottom line. Second, he demonstrates the growing sophistication of the politics of white flight, especially in the context of postwar racial liberalism. Atlanta's grassroots anti-desegregationists learned as early as the 1950s to move away from the increasingly disreputable rhetoric of overt racism to a race-neutral language of individual rights, democracy, and Americanism, the power and logic of which ultimately appealed to white suburban interests nationwide. Certainly this strategy obscured the racist origins and ongoing racialized objectives of the politics of suburban secession, but perhaps it is wrong to accuse its architects of duplicity when they wrap their agenda in the flag. After all, as I am sure James Baldwin would ask, what could be a more American story than this one?

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**Forsyth, Ann. *Reforming Suburbia: The Planned Communities of Irvine, Columbia and The Woodlands*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005. Pp. 370.**

Urban sprawl. More than ever North Americans have become accustomed to seeing mass subdivisions of nearly identical single family homes being constructed on what was only a few years ago peripheral urban forest, or worse, expropriated farm land. In the suburbs, the home, employment, educational and recreational sites are separated by significant distances that are not conveniently covered by foot or public transportation, seemingly necessitating that every family own at least one car. But what if there was an alternative? What if there were communities that were planned to grow at a sustainable rate while remaining socially balanced, environmentally aware, economically efficient, and dominated by walking or public transportation?

*Reforming Suburbia* by Ann Forsyth examines the design, development and present outcomes of three such planned communities. Irvine Ranch in Southern California's Orange County, first outlined in 1960, is the earliest and largest planned community under examination. By 2000, the community had grown to over 200,000 people and is recognized for its emphasis on physical planning. The community of Columbia in Maryland, opened in 1967, is considered by Forsyth to be the most well known of her three case studies. Columbia, currently a community of 100,000, has been noted for having made attempts at racial and economic integration early on and for maintaining

this diversity throughout its history. The smallest and newest of the three communities examined, The Woodlands in the suburbs of Houston, Texas opened in 1974 and by 2000 had reached a population of 55,000. The Woodlands emphasized hydrology and unmanicured woodlands to help create an environmentally sensitive plan. This monograph reveals the successes, and failures, of these planned communities and how the new community movement of the 1960's and 1970's can offer today's urban planners a model and possible alternative to urban sprawl. While centrally focused on planning and urban design, Forsyth expertly links two interrelated issues, the history of the individual projects and the larger role that private planning can play in creating a holistic public urban plan.

Using a case study approach, rather than a larger survey method, *Reforming Suburbia* provides readers with an understanding of the new community movement, the three planned communities and alternative urban planning designed to meet sustainable social, environmental and financial goals. Beginning with a worth while review of theory and literature, the first chapter is followed by three consecutive chapters that are individually dedicated to Irvine, Columbia, and The Woodlands respectively, in which Forsyth examines the development and outcomes of the individual planned communities. Chapter 5 discusses the extent to which the projects created new social and physical environments while chapter 6 examines how these same spaces offered an alternative to the problem of urban sprawl. The concluding chapter examines new town planning, including urbanism and smart-growth planning, and the role of private sector planning and development within larger public goals.

Historians and geographers alike should admire Forsyth's ability to combine traditional historical, geographical and planning sources into a comprehensive package that appeals to readers across disciplinary lines. Original documents and pre-existing oral history interviews are combined with census data, surveys, maps, personal observations of the community's physical plan and social life, newspaper accounts and 140 formal interviews personally conducted by the author. *Reforming Suburbia* is of limited use to those desiring an in-depth survey of American urban planning or the new community movement. It is however recommended to those wishing a detailed understanding of the three planned communities and how innovative solutions to larger urban planning problems can be found within the for profit private sector.

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