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Book Reviews/Comptes rendus

Linteau, Paul-André, *Maisonneuve ou comment des promoteurs fabriquent une ville*. Montréal: Boréal Express. 288 pp. Illustrations, maps, tables. \$13.95.

Maisonneuve is an interesting addition to North American urban history. It contributes to our appreciation of the history of the Montreal area, and it challenges the reader to consider the nature of development activity within capitalist society.

Linteau attempts to describe the rise of Maisonneuve in the period 1883 to 1918 and the role of developers (*promoteurs*) in that process. Starting from a view of the Montreal region in the period of study and a perspective on the function of the urban developer, he provides a description of the growth of this suburb.

Linteau outlines the role of landowners and developers in the reproduction of capital. Landed capital (*capital foncier*) organizes space and reduces the cost of production whereas landed property (*propriétaire foncière*) holds inherited rights to land and raises production costs. Landowning and developing integrates other portions of capital and opposes them at the same moment. Linteau sees urban development as a four step process: 1) There are tracts of agricultural land transmitted by inheritance; 2) Commodification and reorganization of land occurs through the activity of the speculator; 3) The developer (*promoteur urbaine*) creates an environment through which profits are extracted; 4) The built environment is used by rentier capital (*capital immobilière*) and small proprietors. All of these steps may be embodied in one or more persons.

Most of the book is a detailed portrayal of the actions of landowners and developers, other capitalists and the fabric of the suburb. To do this Linteau uses an impressive array of sources, including city records, provincial reports, newspapers, atlases, and published studies on urbanism, North American urban history, Quebec history, and Montreal.

Seeing developers of urban land as somewhat autonomous in the process of capital accumulation, Linteau presents biographical sketches of major figures and traces their actions as land assemblers, then describes the way major developers created an industrial and residential environment. Pre-eminent in this process was the creation of institutions and services necessary for the growth of the area. Pivotal in this was the dominance of Maisonneuve's municipal administration by landowners and developers. Services such as water, lighting, gas, and transport had to be started and were put into operation by city council in-

itiatives. With considerable difficulty various private franchises were established. Using publicity, tax exemptions, and bonuses, council followed an industrial promotion policy in order to encourage growth. The council also embarked on a programme of civic embellishment in the second half of the study period. Such policies led the city into financial trouble and ultimately into becoming part of Montreal.

Linteau draws two major conclusions: that there was a special relation between landed capital and the other factions of capitalists; and that French-Canadian entrepreneurs had a special role in Maisonneuve's development. Linteau notes that, in Maisonneuve, industrial and landed capital were particularly close and together dominated Maisonneuve's administration. He also asserts that the particular relation of patrimony and land gave the francophone bourgeoisie an entrance point into development. Finally, Linteau suggests that the experience of this suburb has many American parallels.

The book is interesting and challenging. It is hard not to appreciate Linteau's theorizing on land development. Historians are often loathe to touch theoretical arguments even though they happily engage in making all sorts of assumptions. It is praiseworthy that Linteau considers political-economic theory; however, his discussion raises several questions. For example, whereas he describes four steps in land development, he does not consider the potential conflict between them. Are the land speculator's goals in harmony with the developer's? This process is complex, and Linteau might have explored it in greater depth. Similarly, much of the book is an elaboration of the state's role in a particular urban setting, yet there was no consideration of the potential role of the state in capitalist activity. Linteau seems to see the state as a direct agent of capitalists. He might have been able to go beyond this instrumentalist view had he considered structural arguments concerning the state. Further, it would have been useful had Linteau considered more fully the notion that whereas the imperatives of capital accumulation were important each capitalist is seen to have a margin of manoeuvring. What is his view of the relation between the individual capitalist and the social process of accumulation?

In his historical description one is struck by the topics Linteau discusses. For example, given that the thrust of the book is an exploration of how developers shape the city, why does he spend a whole chapter on workers' conditions? The information is fascinating but needs to be more clearly integrated into the study. Several newspapers were used, but reliance was placed heavily on francophone

papers. An in-depth survey of an anglophone paper might have provided more insight into ethnic involvement in real estate. Also, one aspect of the presentation of materials is bothersome. Whereas tables are well integrated with the text, pictures and maps are poorly placed. This is unfortunate since the illustrative materials are interesting.

In his conclusions Linteau shows that Maisonneuve's development was dominated by a francophone bourgeoisie. More evidence is needed to assert conclusively that the francophone bourgeoisie had a special entrance point into capitalist activity through land development. Furthermore, although his conclusion that landed and industrial capital were closely linked in Maisonneuve is important, it is not clear which faction he considers dominant or even if this is a significant question. Nevertheless while having these shortcomings, the work is both useful and an important contribution to Quebec urban history.

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Dickerson, M.P.; Drabek, S.; and Woods, J.T., editors. *Problems of Change in Local Government*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1980. 249 pp. Tables, graphs.

Perhaps the most prominent characteristic of this book is that it illustrates the difficulty in producing a coherent volume from the proceedings of a conference on local government. *Problems of Change in Urban Government* had its origins in such a meeting on alternate forms of urban government held in 1974. Participating in that conference were academics and practitioners who were brought together to discuss the then recent literature on, and experience with, local government reform in Canada and to establish the need for future research and action. As the editors say in their preface, this volume "grew out of" that conference and is not simply a reflection of the proceedings there. The pattern of this growth is somewhat unclear other than it took seven years to complete. They claim that most of the papers have been updated or reconsidered. In addition, they have added material to supplement the papers presented. However, most of this material dates from the mid-1970s. Also, it would seem that some of the papers presented at the 1974 conference (for example, the paper by D. Saunders referred to on page 231) were not included in the volume for reasons left unknown to the reader.

The book is divided into four parts with an overall introduction and an introduction to each part by the editors.

The general introduction has a hortatory tone. It attempts to set out the big picture with respect to urban problems in Canada, at least as the authors saw them in 1974. On page 2 of the introduction, the authors state, "the perspective adopted for the conference and for this volume places the elected official at centre stage." However, it is not at all clear that, once placed at centre stage, the elected official succeeds in holding that ground. In short, the volume drifts. This occurs despite the editors' attempt to organize the book according to three elements which they feel limit politicians' scope for positive action: the structure of urban government; the financial base of local government; and the need for citizen support.

Part I presents three papers dealing with the general topic of "Public Involvement in Urban Government." The first, by Paul Tennant, focuses on what he sees to be the unique nature of Vancouver city politics, especially its civic parties. Steven Clarkson proceeds to take on the discipline of political science as having inadequately addressed the question of redistributive impact of what he describes as the "new citizen participation in urban politics." The paper by Tennant provides some interesting descriptive material and observations on Vancouver city politics but does not really pursue its most interesting observation; namely, "the irony of prominent self-styled reformers on behalf of the people who deny the validity of the plebiscitarian tradition" (page 15). Clarkson's paper must have left some of the practitioners at the conference befuddled as to why they were there.

The most disappointing contribution to this section is by the editors themselves. In a paper entitled, "A Performance Approach to Urban and Political Analysis: The Calgary Case," which was not presented at the conference but which was added to this volume, Dickerson, Drabek and Woods begin with a series of unsubstantiated broadsides concerning citizen dissatisfaction with local government. They then argue for a shift in analytical emphasis to determine the roots of this alleged dissatisfaction. The second section of this paper presents the results of a citizen survey dealing with participation in and satisfaction with Calgary urban government. Although the authors admit the limitations of the data and conclusions presented from this survey (page 77), they nonetheless press on in their call for new approaches to performance analysis of urban government. The lack of substantiation for the general criticisms raised in the first part of the paper plus the tentative results presented in the second left this reader with an uneasy feeling.

In summary, the first part of this volume embodies some of the very problems which plague the whole book. At the most basic level, one has to wonder what the broad purpose of all of this effort is. We are presented with a series of papers which have a rather scattered approach to