

Hauch, Christopher. *Coping Strategies and Street Life: The Ethnography of Winnipeg's Skid Row*. Winnipeg: Institute of Urban Studies, 1985. Pp. vii, 101. Figures, illustrations. \$12.00

Fred Bever

Volume 15, numéro 3, february 1987

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1018028ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1018028ar>

[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

Bever, F. (1987). Compte rendu de [Hauch, Christopher. *Coping Strategies and Street Life: The Ethnography of Winnipeg's Skid Row*. Winnipeg: Institute of Urban Studies, 1985. Pp. vii, 101. Figures, illustrations. \$12.00]. *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine*, 15(3), 295–296.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1018028ar>

Book Reviews/Comptes rendus

Hodge, Gerald. *Planning Canadian Communities*. Toronto: Methuen, 1986. Pp. ix, 386. Illustrations, bibliography, index. \$20.50.

After nearly 75 years of planning in Canada here at last is a book that answers the question "What is planning in a Canadian context?". Gerald Hodge's *Planning Canadian Communities* will be warmly welcomed in many quarters because the style and content make it useful to newcomers to planning who are in academic planning schools as well as programs with a planning component, community organizations, elected office or the generally interested public. He presents a full-scale overview of Canadian planning as opposed to a more intensive study of a spatial, functional or historical subset. From the point of view of an academic in a planning school, Hodge's book is indispensable because it covers the basics of planning in a single text so that students and faculty no longer need to piece together the story from an amalgam of British, American and Canadian sources with the inevitable gaps, overlaps and potential copyright infringements. Importantly, since students now have access to a coherent outline, instructors are freed to move on to extend the debates around any number of issues that Hodge raises but does not elaborate.

The book is divided into three main sections: principles and purposes; practice; and participating and decision-making in community planning. The first section, while beginning with a historical synopsis of origins of cities and the forms of early Canadian cities, moves generally toward justifying the need for community planning. Hodge's outline in the Prologue of the two reasons why community planning may arise sets the context for the first section. Singly or in combination these reasons are that a community may wish to achieve some ideal form of development that is different, and presumably better, than it now has; or a community may wish to solve some problems associated with its development that it assumes will lead away from the future condition that it prefers (p. 6). Thus, separate chapters in the first section describe the physical, social and institutional conditions that evolved in Canadian communities, and demonstrate how need arises and changes over time.

The second section devoted to practice comprises more than half the book. Descriptions are given of types of plans, planning controls and guidelines, the process for implementing plans, as well as chapters on special types of planning, including regional and metropolitan planning and small town planning. In this he succeeds in treating planning from a Canadian perspective despite its provincial specificity by focussing on general procedures and purposes without a tedious review of every province's particular approach to planning legislation and practice. It is left to interested read-

ers to supplement this by seeking out for themselves the current details for a given province or municipality. And this seems an appropriate treatment. On the other hand, I feel it would have been useful to have had references to the analytical literature that gives perspective to the implications of these tools where time and regional particularities are less critical. For example, the discussion of density might have directed the reader to specific studies that elaborate the socio-cultural implications, or the discussion of relations among land uses to the literature on class and gender. There are almost no references of this ilk.

The final section includes two chapters dealing with deciding on the community's plan and with participation in planning, and are a good introduction for those starting to grapple with these rather difficult areas.

As will be evident from the foregoing, this book is descriptive and moderate, and apparently written from the stance of one who feels positive about the development of planning in Canada. It provides little if any explicit analysis of events and practices, and does not engage in discussions about theory at all. A clear advantage of this matter-of-factness is that it leaves the entire field of analysis and interpretation open to its users. For this reason it will serve excellently as a text to be read in conjunction with works of theory and analysis. One hopes that the correlative disadvantage — that a reader using the book alone could conclude that planning is largely technical and neutral — is adequately guarded against by Hodge's explicitness that planning is a political activity.

With distinction, Gerald Hodge has filled a yawning gap in the bookshelf of Canadian planners, and someone has seen to it that this handy book is particularly well edited, illustrated, designed and priced.

Beth Moore Milroy
School of Urban & Regional Planning
University of Waterloo

Hauch, Christopher. *Coping Strategies and Street Life: The Ethnography of Winnipeg's Skid Row*. Winnipeg: Institute of Urban Studies, 1985. Pp. vii, 101. Figures, illustrations. \$12.00.

For most of us Skid Row is a place that we know of only through its portrayal in books and films or as the result of an apprehensive and accidental march through its confines. We view Skid Row and its inhabitants as both foreign and

hostile to our way of life, a blight on our more civilized society which, depending on how charitable we are feeling, should either be reformed or eradicated.

Christopher Hauch, in his paper, *Coping Strategies and Street Life: The Ethnography of Winnipeg's Skid Row*, presents us with a very different view of Skid Row and its inhabitants. Based on research that spans a period of eight years, he provides us with an overview of life on Winnipeg's Skid Row that focusses on the social and economic phenomena and rules of behaviour that are specific to that subculture. Patterns of behaviour which one might be tempted to label as anarchistic and self destructive are placed in the context of survival within Skid Row Society, with the result that they come to be appreciated as adaptive rather than pathological.

The author begins by providing us with some demographic information about the inhabitants of Skid Row. Unfortunately, given the transient nature of the population, he is not able to draw conclusions on much more than size and composition. These are two attributes which he found to remain remarkably stable over time.

Hauch then describes the Skid Row business community in all its decrepit glory. He pays particular attention to the casual labour offices, the hotels and the Salvation Army, because of their important roles in the daily routine of Skid Row life.

From his discussion of the business community Hauch moves on to an analysis of the Skid Row economy. His discussion of "binge style" spending and its role in the distribution of wealth is especially fascinating. Once one understands the social pressures which give rise to this spree-style of spending one comes to appreciate its value as an adaptive strategy for dealing with unexpected income. As noted by the author, "wealth is an accident on Skid Row, which places the recipient in great physical danger" (p. 46).

The next aspect of Skid Row life that Hauch deals with is criminal activity which, like binge spending, is an example of a form of behaviour which while reprehensible in "straight" society is an accepted way of life on Skid Row. "Virtually all crimes committed by immediate Skid Row residents may be understood as specialized adaptations to poverty in that they: invariably involve some kind of remuneration (so-called "senseless" acts of violence, vandalism, and so on are extremely rare); and are performed almost exclusively by persons who have either exhausted or have otherwise been deprived of all other avenues of income" (p. 54).

The final two issues Hauch deals with before his conclusions are social organization, or more appropriately the lack of it, and alcohol and welfare. His treatment of the latter issue, presented in Chapter 7, "Alcohol and Welfare: The

Myth of the Subsidized Drunk," is particularly compelling. Hauch's description of the suffering associated with alcohol addiction and the many hurdles facing Skid Row residents who attempt to secure welfare should put to rest once and for all the myth of the "welfare bum" who lives the good life, passing his days in a state of blissful inebriation at the public's expense.

If any criticism can be made of Hauch's paper it is of its conclusions. Having presented us with a graphic description of the "hell on earth" that is life for Skid Row residents, he fails to take the next logical step and develop proposals for the social and political measures needed to address their predicament. Nevertheless, Hauch has filled a significant gap and has accomplished his stated goals. He has provided us with an excellent study of life on Skid Row. Now it is up to the activists amongst us to use his research to develop proposals for action.

Fred Bever
Housing Department
City of Ottawa

The Working Lives Collective. *Working Lives: Vancouver 1886 - 1986*. Vancouver: New Star Books, 1985. Pp. 221. Illustrated. \$29.95 cloth, \$15.95 paper.

Working Lives is a remarkable accomplishment of a collective associated with British Columbia's universities and colleges. Usually, collectives and committees produce unwieldy, unreadable, boring copy but here we find a very pleasant exception: a very readable history of one hundred years of dreams, pain, love, achievement, life and struggle of working people who built Vancouver.

It is the story of immigrants — Scottish, Irish, German, Chinese, Japanese, Hindu, Sikh, Greek and others — who put that cultural mosaic on the face of Vancouver. Allan Scager, Elaine Bernard, Logan Harris, Robert MacDonald, Louise May, Jean Williams, Jeremy Morrat, Keith Ralston, Andrew Smith and Veronica Strong-Boag lead us through a hundred years of working class activities with vigour and realism, but without the sort of rhetoric and jargon attached to most other working class histories.

The history is somewhat light on the role of workers in the forest industry, who played a very major role in the economic and social development of Vancouver. It is also important to note that *Working Lives* is not a labour history but a history of workers: that mass of humanity whose needs are the same but in other ways are different and distinct. This book also avoids the pitfall of setting any standards of working class behaviour and comparing them with actual