

Loreto, Richard A., and Trevor Price, eds. *Urban Policy Issues: Canadian Perspectives*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1990. Pp. 246. \$22.95

Jim Simmons

Volume 19, numéro 3, february 1991

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1017608ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1017608ar>

[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

Simmons, J. (1991). Compte rendu de [Loreto, Richard A., and Trevor Price, eds. *Urban Policy Issues: Canadian Perspectives*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1990. Pp. 246. \$22.95]. *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine*, 19(3), 248–249. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1017608ar>

process of negotiation termed "the politics of historic sites." The key players in Canada's heritage conservation movement, namely the national parks branch, the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, the provinces, politicians and grassroots heritage advocates, have represented varied and frequently conflicting interests since the formal establishment of a federal heritage program in 1919. According to Taylor, the federal government mediated these diverging perspectives in the development of a national program of historic site selection, interpretation and preservation. Canada's historic parks and sites program has thus been the result of an ongoing process of negotiation.

Taylor describes the evolution of the heritage conservation movement in Canada from its beginnings in the 1880s, through its institutionalisation in the early 20th century, and the growth of conservation megaprojects beyond 1960. The formation of a national heritage movement in the late 19th century was spurred mainly by Ontario-based imperialist nationalists. Influenced primarily by the British heritage movement, the Royal Society of Canada launched a national heritage body in 1907, later replaced in 1919 by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, an honorary board created to advise the national parks branch on the administration of a federal heritage program.

The history of interaction between these two bodies dispels the idea that the board was central to the federal program. As Taylor depicts, the parks branch frequently played a more significant role than the board, whose members tended to assume a nationalizing mission as elitist custodians of culture. The primary concern of the Historic Sites

and Monuments Board remained a commemorative plaque program, while from the 1930s onward the branch increasingly shouldered responsibility for architectural preservation, site development and tourism promotion.

Negotiating the Past contends that the politics of historic sites carried regional perspectives into a national forum, and argues that "national historic sites reflect regional identities." At the same time, these political dynamics, combined with factors such as the fragmentation of government administration and the far-flung geographical location of Canada's historic parks and sites, limited the development of coherent, rational policy objectives for the federal heritage conservation program. Projects such as Fort Chambly, Quebec, and Louisbourg, Nova Scotia, illustrate how regional heritage activists shaped the interpretation and development of national historic sites. Throughout the book, there is a sensitive awareness to questions of regional representation. Future editions would benefit from the addition of a map indicating the regional distribution of parks and sites.

Taylor brings the history of federal involvement in historical heritage projects alongside that of the growth of the national park system and the movement to conserve natural environments. The conservation of built heritage in Canada contributed to the expansion of the idea of national parks. In this regard, Taylor brings further information to light about James Bernard Harkin, the innovative commissioner of national parks, 1911–36. As a result of Harkin's proposals, the Canadian national park idea was extended to encompass historical parks. Taylor's analysis imparts a welcome account of Harkin's instrumental role in

federal activities to conserve both natural and historical heritage.

Taylor's book brings discerning insight to the structure, operations and politics of a federal cultural agency over the course of its lifespan. The focus on a national agency is clearly directed, and reflects the influence of the federal state on heritage conservation in Canada. The study draws a close connection between the federal process and the articulation of Canada's cultural identity. In this respect, it strikes a chord with Bernard Ostry's work on Canadian cultural policy, *The Cultural Connection*. The cautious and noncommittal conclusion raises several unanswered questions about the future of federal heritage initiatives during an era of spending restraints and increased provincial involvement in site conservation. Nonetheless, it is apparent from Taylor's argument that the federal government has a central role to play in heritage conservation and the active interpretation of Canada's national history. *Negotiating the Past* is a significant analysis and a well-written book that contributes greatly to the history of heritage conservation and the Canadian cultural identity.

P. A. Reichwein
Department of History
Carleton University

Loreto, Richard A., and Trevor Price, eds.
Urban Policy Issues: Canadian Perspectives. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1990. Pp. 246. \$22.95

This useful little book consists of ten essays on various local government programs in Canada, each written by someone who has carried out substantial research in the subject area. The topics are public finance, economic develop-

ment, land-use planning, housing, transportation, the environment, education, social services, public health and policing. Each essay includes a brief review of the historical context, a discussion of the role of local government relative to other levels of government, interprovincial comparisons and a summary of current issues. The result is an admirable introduction to issues and research in each of the subject areas as they apply to local governments—the sort of reference that you can hand to a student who wants to do a paper and say: “Start with this!”

The book lacks, though, a sense of the complexity of local government itself. The latter is treated as an aggregate, the third tier of government, without numbers, size variation, location or differences in roles; Metro Toronto and Matachewan Township, it's all the same. As a result geographers and historians cannot get a feel for the degree of local variability, hence the importance of particular institutions, issues or individuals. Few authors emphasize the choices available or the decision processes in local governments.

Two powerful impressions remain from the package as a whole. First, every chapter underlines the intermingling of actions and responsibilities of different levels of government for the same topic area. Policies by different agencies, concerning the same problems, are formulated and implemented in parallel or in response to one another. As someone once said, “The responsibilities of different levels of government are more like marbled cake than layer cake.” Second, and not independent of the first, these different policy areas remain amazingly diverse in goals and procedures. They may be all part of local government but

the operating style of the police force, the social workers or the teachers are fundamentally different. The same is true of their responsibilities: the schools embrace all the social ills, whereas police and planners tend to restrict themselves to the letter of the legislation. Local governments have been largely unable to integrate these agencies in any significant way: they are still dominated by professional associations at a national or international level. Kiernan picks up on this in his discussion of planning, as does Loreto, to a lesser extent, in his paper on police.

The book's format gives equal space to each of the ten topics, unlike the real world in which activities like public finance, public works and education absorb disproportionate amounts of attention and funding. Gertler gives us a thorough and sophisticated review of economic development initiatives at the local level that is undercut by the revelation that on average these activities account for less than one per cent of municipal budgets. The paper on public health reveals that in most places it has nothing to do with local government. In contrast, Siegel gets the same amount of space to summarize public finance, and most inevitably, the result is rather mechanical and elementary. Loreto gives himself an extra ten pages for policing, which permits appreciably more depth.

I enjoyed Carroll's review of housing policy in the post-war period, which to some degree summarized our attitudes to urban issues in general: the 1950s and early 1960s were devoted to a frenzied expansion; followed by a decade of debate about the quality of urban form, transportation, participation, etc.; followed by a period of benign neglect in

which urban issues received lower priority as growth slowed and governments cut back. Woolstencroft's essay on education provides a unique overview of the diverse forces operating on the Canadian education system—the number of participants, the difference of goals—and the variety of solutions under discussion—consolidation, decentralization, fragmentation, parental inputs, etc. Keirnan's review of land-use planning is the most personal and provocative piece. He is unhappy with the role of urban planning; he wants pro-active planning departments that take the initiative in redeveloping the inner city. I suspect that he lives in the wrong place at the wrong time.

The direct relevance of this volume to the readers of UHR is limited. While it provides a good overview of the complex current literature on these urban public issues, it seldom provides connections between the issues and the way specific local governments deal with them. And in most instances the historical background is minimal. Except for Carroll's paper, the historical perspective is given something less than two pages in a 25 page essay.

Jim Simmons
Department of Geography
University of Toronto

Wrigley, E.A. *Continuity, Chance and Change; The Character of the Industrial Revolution in England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988. Pp. viii, 146. Figures and Tables.

Having established himself as the dean of English historical demography, Dr Wrigley returns, with these four lectures at the University of Cambridge, to his “first main research interest, the better