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Developments at Canada's Urban History Journal

Owen Temby

Thank you for reading the spring 2017 issue of *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine.* The timing of the summer 2018 publication of this issue may seem strange to readers. We are roughly eighteen months behind in our publication schedule. Internal changes in the journal's editorial composition, coupled with challenges presented by the fast-moving scholarly publishing business (particularly acute for niche journals like *UHR/RHU*) slowed our publication process for the past few years. But our ongoing efforts to adapt have yielded a healthy pipeline of future issues that promises to get our publication schedule back on time and provide a set of practices and relationships that will enable the journal to maintain relevance.

Most notably, this is the first issue for which Harold Bérubé joins me as co-editor, serving as the editor for French-language content. Although there are no French-language articles in this particular issue, Dr. Bérubé has been a critical participant in the journal's planning and has managed the pipeline of French-language articles that may appear in future issues.

We also welcome two new associate editors. Joining our team of Jordan Stanger-Ross, Michèle Dagenais, and Stephen Bocking are Daniel Ross and Nicholas Kenny. They perform many of the important tasks necessary to maintain the intellectual vibrancy of the journal, including reviewing a good share of articles, guest editing special issues, and generally promoting the journal as a place to submit excellent scholarship on Canada's urban history. Indeed, Dr. Ross is guest editor of a forthcoming special issue of *UHR/RHU* (with Matthieu Caron) on bad behaviour in Canadian cities. This is merely one of several guest-edited themed issues under development.

But relying on our editorial board is not enough. For any journal to make a case for its ongoing existence, there must be a vibrant scholarly community underpinning it, with which it engages in iterative synergistic exchange. While the robustness of Canadian urban history scholarship is evident in the excellent articles appearing in our recent issues and several award-winning books of the past few years, there is unrealized potential for leadership in organizing intellectual exchange among this scholarly community. For this reason, we are pleased to announce the creation of an urban history committee formally organized under the Canadian Historical Association, called the Canadian Urban History Caucus.[1] The immediate outcome, like that of many years past, will be a themed panel organized annually for the CHA conference.

In the meantime, we have assembled an issue about which we are very excited. The first article, by Mary Anne Poutanen and Jason Gilliland, is called "Mapping Work in Early Twentieth-Century Montreal: A Rabbi, a Neighbourhood, and a Community." It provides an account of Montreal's Yiddish-speaking immigrant community during the early twentieth century from the perspective of the activities of an orthodox rabbi's interactions with it. In addition to the article's merit as an important contribution to urban religious community history and Canadian Jewish history, its methodological approach is particularly noteworthy. The authors use Historical Geographic Information Systems (HGIS) analysis of their extensive data sources to spatially map the rabbi's activities over time. Doing so underscores many interesting facts, notably the relationship between the rabbi's spatial mobility and social mobility. Canadian HGIS research has received a lot of attention recently, thanks to an edited volume by Jennifer Bonnell and Marcel Fortin.[2] There are many ways of integrating GIS into the study of Canadian urban history, and Poutanen and Gilliland's article provides a successful and innovative example for others.

The second article represents a substantial contribution to the growing (yet under-researched) topic of Canadian planning history.[3] In "Politicking for Postwar Modernism: The Architectural Research Group of Ottawa and Montreal," Dustin Valen tells of the Architectural Research Group of Ottawa and Montreal, a collection of young planners and architects seeking to inject modernist principles into postwar infrastructural development. As the title suggests, this involved more than the narrowly professional behaviour of their expertise. Their vision had an inherently political dimension. It maintained that modern planning was democratic planning and that citizen engagement was necessary for its success and fruition. Creating planning processes through which local participation could be expressed meant that the planners and architects necessarily advocated for these principles by seeking positions in influential professional organizations and producing films and pamphlets for mass consumption. As Richard White recently showed in *Planning Toronto*, the late-1960s reform era of planning framed itself as a democratic and inclusive response to the technocratic modernist planning

of the postwar era and 1950s.[4] Yet White also underscores the ways in which postwar planning was revolutionary. Valen's article further fleshes out the progressiveness of the misunderstood planning era. Like the reform era that rebelled against it, postwar planning sought a more democratic process as a means to unmoor planning so that a new vision (and the people who articulated it) could take hold.

The third and final article, by Michael Rowan, represents another contribution to Canadian planning history. In "'On Their Knees': Politics, Protest, and the Cancellation of the Pickering Airport, 1972–1975," he shows that this megaproject fell victim to the reform era of planning's tension between top-down technocratic planning and local participation. With distrust for politicians and planners pursuing large public works at a high level, the project was killed by resistance expressed through inclusive processes such as public hearings and inquiries. This article underscores what Richard White calls the reform era's conservative backlash.[5] In privileging citizen inclusion (and repurposing structures instead of demolition and replacement) during a time of considerable distrust in government, it brought comprehensive planning to a standstill.

We hope this issue of *UHR/RHU* inspires some of our readers to participate in the scholarly activities seeking to reinvigorate the study of Canada's urban past. In the nearly five decades since the founding of the main outlets of urban history research, urban history has been recognized as a "big tent."[6] Against narrow understandings of urban history as merely the study of cities, we agree with Raymond A. Mohl's formulation laid out in his introduction editorial to the *Journal of Urban History*'s first issue. He listed the types of studies the editorial board would consider within the journal's scope. (Shortly thereafter, in *UHR/RHU*, Norbert MacDonald approvingly reported Mohl's editorial.)[7] This list is as relevant today as it was when first published, and is worth quoting here:

1. studies which deal with the political, economic, social, and spatial systems of individual cities
2. studies which encompass larger systems, such as the ecology and spatial organization of large regions or the relations of cities to larger societies or nations
3. studies of small or narrow fragments of the urban experience will be considered, but only if they are clearly and strongly related to a broader context
4. studies dealing with "the idea of the city," or with the place of the city in intellectual and cultural history
5. studies comparing urban societies and systems over space or time
6. studies evaluating the urban historiography of the various nations and regions of the world
7. studies singling out the unexplored dimensions of the urban past for future researchers, or demonstrating significant new research techniques or methodologies
8. articles which make fruitful use of interdisciplinary approaches to the study of urban history.[8]

Mohl's prescient list of concerns foresaw the contemporary global process of urbanization and the beneficial lessons the American experience has to teach. We welcome contributions from a diversity of scholarly traditions concerned with Canada's urban past. And we look forward to being one of the relevant forums for the continuation of this dialogue.

Notes

1 The Canadian Urban History Caucus is a continuation and reorganization of the Canadian Historical Association's Canadian Urban History Committee, chaired by Gilbert Stelter during the mid-1970s. It fell into neglect and inactivity in recent years. During the 1970s its activities were closely coordinated with *UHR/RHU*. See Gilbert Stelter, "The Urban History Committee of the Canadian Historical Association," *Urban History Review*, no. 3-75 (1976): 55–7.

2 Jennifer Bonnell and Marcel Fortin, eds., *Historical GIS Research in Canada* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2014). For a recent application of historical GIS research in *UHR/RHU*, see Owen Temby and Joshua MacFadyen, "Urban Elites, Energy, and Smoke Policy in Montreal during the Interwar Period," *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine* 45, no. 1 (2016): 37–49.

3 For another notable recent example, from this journal, see Brad Cross, "Modern Living 'hewn out of the unknown wilderness': Aluminum, City Planning, and Alcan's British Columbian Industrial Town of Kitimat in the 1950s," *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine* 45, no. 1 (2016): 7–17.

4 Richard White, *Planning Toronto: The Planners, the Plans, Their Legacies, 1940–80* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2016). See also my review of White's book in *Ontario History* 109, no. 1 (2017): 141–3.

5 White, *Planning Toronto*, chapter 5.

6 Raymond A. Mohl, "Editorial," *Journal of Urban History* 1, no. 1 (1974): 4.

7 Norbert MacDonald, "The Journal of Urban History," *Urban History Review*, no. 3-75 (1976): 48–50.

8 Mohl, "Editorial," 4.