

Teaford, Jon C. *City and Suburb: The Political Fragmentation of Metropolitan America, 1850-1970* John Hopkins Studies in Urban Affairs. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1979. Pp. vii, 231. Tables, \$15.00

T. J. Plunkett

Volume 9, numéro 2, octobre 1980

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1019342ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1019342ar>

[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

Plunkett, T. J. (1980). Compte rendu de [Teaford, Jon C. *City and Suburb: The Political Fragmentation of Metropolitan America, 1850-1970* John Hopkins Studies in Urban Affairs. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1979. Pp. vii, 231. Tables, \$15.00]. *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine*, 9(2), 141–143. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1019342ar>

introduction (p. 14). It is in this direction that he hopes to see planning history move.

Until we begin to ask these more difficult questions, questions which are not easily answered from the administrative documents or personal papers of leading planners which we are accustomed to use, we shall never know how important planning has been to the modern world, apart from the fact that it has kept a lot of people occupied. If we can tackle them, however, we shall at one and the same time contribute to the theory and practice of planning, and develop planning history into a more respectable branch of general historical studies (p. 14).

Sutcliffe is arguing that planning history is not only one legitimate aspect of historical research which ought to be pursued, but, in addition, it is an aspect which must be pursued if we are to gain a better understanding of the processes of change affecting planning and planned intervention and urban development. In this, he is agreeing with Sam Bass Warner who has pointed out that "to plan without regard for the processes of change is inevitably to fail."

Sutcliffe has, therefore, not only produced a very thorough bibliography but has also offered some insightful comments on planning history research and the directions in which it should be moving. His monograph is an essential resource for anyone pursuing planning history research. He is currently updating this initial bibliography, and we can look forward to an expanded revised

edition, probably published as a book, sometime in the near future.

J.D. Hulchanski
Department of Urban and
Regional Planning
University of Toronto

* * *

Teaford, Jon C. *City and Suburb: The Political Fragmentation of Metropolitan America, 1850-1970* John Hopkins Studies in Urban Affairs. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1979. Pp. vii, 231. Tables, \$15.00.

Nearly four decades ago one of American's most distinguished social scientists, the late Charles E. Merriam, observed that "the adequate organization of modern metropolitan areas is one of the great unsolved problems of modern politics." Merriam's assertion remains unchallenged. And in the United States the quest for institutional arrangements to secure the effective governance of metropolitan areas continues to challenge the best efforts of social scientists and practising politicians and administrators.

While the Canadian student of metropolitan government is able to point to considerable institutional innovation; e.g., the metropolitan Toronto federation established in 1953, the urban communities in Montreal and Quebec City areas of the late 1960s, the several regional governments established in Ontario, and the total consolidation into a single city of local government in the Winnipeg area in 1972, his U.S. counterpart confronts a much more meagre record of achievement. This is not to suggest that Canadian approaches have met with universal acclaim, but there appear to have been fewer

obstacles to change in Canada in contrast to the U.S. And this recent book, *City and Suburb*, by Jon C. Teaford illustrates not only the formidable barriers to institutional reform in metropolitan areas in the United States but also the complexity and scale of political fragmentation.

The modern U.S. metropolis Teaford describes as "a fragmented mass," noting that "throughout the nation a jungle of 'Heights,' 'Parks' and 'Woods' surround the modern central city, dividing the metropolis both legally and morally into a myriad of communities.... Hundreds of separate governments rule a single metropolitan area" (p. 1).

From the perspective of the historian Teaford explains the attempts to achieve institutional reform to overcome the inequity and inefficiency resulting from excessive governmental fragmentation in metropolitan areas. Consolidation of governmental responsibility, by extending the jurisdiction of the central city or developing federative arrangements, had for nearly a century been a major objective. However, by the 1970s "the chorus of reformers included dissonant cries for both centralization and decentralization, for unified metropolitan rule and dispersed neighbourhood power." One side "sought to broaden the power of the city, and the other sought to limit it" (p. 3).

Teaford sees "the American desire for expansion, growth and improved public services" as seeking to expand the rule of the central city as a means of achieving these ends. But very often these aims collided with "the

strong traditions of local autonomy and separatism" (p. 3). The class between these two forces constitutes the basic framework for this book.

The fragmentation of the American metropolis had its roots in the permissive municipal incorporation laws enacted by many states in the nineteenth century. State legislation did not want to be burdened with the task of deciding each application for municipal incorporation and established general procedures for incorporation. Thus, the Ohio legislature in 1817 adopted a bill which enabled the county commissioner to incorporate any town "of forty householders or upwards" if two-thirds of these householders petitioned for municipal status. Many other states adopted a similar approach.

While easy incorporation provided the tool for subsequently fragmenting the American metropolis it was the desire for social and economic segregation, resulting from industrialization and immigration, that furnished the motivation to seek incorporation. And the specific motives that compelled incorporation were many and varied: an industry seeking a tax haven, a middle-class Protestant desire to limit or prohibit the sale of whiskey in a particular neighbourhood, the wish to establish saloons in an area free from legislative harassment, real-estate development, and the desire of middle-class citizens to live free from contact with the habits and attitudes of the new European immigrant working class. All of those and more promoted social and economic particularism and the motivation for incorporation.

The procedure for establishing a new governing arrangement for a metropolitan area was, in many cases, complex, cumbersome and time-consuming. Generally this required a new charter. Under the state constitution in Ohio, for example, a commission had to be elected to draft a charter. Any charter drafted by a commission elected in this manner then had to be approved by a majority of voters in the county, a majority of voters in the central city, a majority of voters outside the central city, and a majority of voters in a majority of the county's political units. Teaford provides vivid descriptions of attempts in the 1920s and 1930s to secure new governmental arrangements in such areas as St. Louis, Cleveland and Pittsburgh. To a large extent the extensive fragmentation arising from easy municipal incorporation was protected and maintained by state constitutional requirements which made change difficult if not impossible. "Local self-government," suggests Teaford, "meant that each fragment of the metropolis would enjoy the right to govern itself and to decide its destiny." It became "a sacred element of the American civil religion and the nation's lawmakers were devout in their adherence to the faith."

For the serious student of metropolitan government, this book provides fascinating historical insights which help to make clear the forces that continue to inhibit U.S. efforts to provide for the effective governance of the metropolis.

T.J. Plunkett, Director
School of Public Administration
Queen's University

* * *

Cheape, Charles W. *Moving the Masses: Urban Public Transit in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia, 1880-1912*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980. Pp. vii, 285. Maps, illustrations, tables, figures. \$18.50.

Throughout its existence urban historical research has been characterized by what might be termed the "case-study approach." Most practitioners have focussed their analyses upon single communities, often of rather small size. Charles Cheape's *Moving the Masses* is a welcome departure from this parochial tradition. Not only does Cheape present a comparative assessment of the evolution of urban mass transit, but he does it for New York, Boston, and Philadelphia, three of the largest cities in North America during his study period.

Moving the Masses is an engaging, well organized, and well researched volume. For each city a separate chapter is devoted to both surface lines (horsecars, cablecars, and electric streetcars) and rapid transit facilities (elevated and subway schemes), with New York receiving a third chapter to underscore the importance of early steam-powered elevated railways in that metropolis. Primary and secondary sources are skillfully interwoven throughout the book. Each chapter contributes to an understanding of the two dominant themes of the study: "the constant pressure of rapid growth in city population and area and the requirements of the technology developed to service that growth" (pp. 1-2).

In all three of the cities studied the relationships between technology and policy were extremely dynamic and complex. New