

Leloup, Yves. *Les Villes du Minas Gerais*, Paris, Travaux et mémoires de l'Institut des Hautes Études de l'Amérique Latine no 25, 1970 ; Nestor Goulart Reis Filho. *Evolução Urbana do Brasil*, São Paulo, Livraria Pioneira Editôra – Editôra de Universidade de São Paulo, 1968; Warren Dean, *The Industrialization of São Paulo 1880-1945*, Austin and London, The University of Texas Press, 1969.

J. H. Galloway

Volume 15, Number 35, 1971

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/020971ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/020971ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Département de géographie de l'Université Laval

ISSN

0007-9766 (print)

1708-8968 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Galloway, J. H. (1971). Review of [Leloup, Yves. *Les Villes du Minas Gerais*, Paris, Travaux et mémoires de l'Institut des Hautes Études de l'Amérique Latine no 25, 1970 ; Nestor Goulart Reis Filho. *Evolução Urbana do Brasil*, São Paulo, Livraria Pioneira Editôra – Editôra de Universidade de São Paulo, 1968; Warren Dean, *The Industrialization of São Paulo 1880-1945*, Austin and London, The University of Texas Press, 1969.] *Cahiers de géographie du Québec*, 15(35), 403–406. <https://doi.org/10.7202/020971ar>

COMPTES RENDUS BIBLIOGRAPHIQUES

HISTORICAL STUDIES OF BRAZILIAN CITIES

LELOUP, Yves, **Les Villes du Minas Gerais**, Paris, Travaux et mémoires de l'Institut des Hautes Études de l'Amérique Latine N° 25, 1970 ; Nestor Goulart REIS FILHO, **Evolução Urbana do Brasil**, São Paulo, Livraria Pioneira Editôra — Editôra da Universidade de São Paulo, 1968 ; Warren DEAN, **The Industrialization of Sao Paulo 1880-1945**, Austin and London, The University of Texas Press, 1969.

Brazil is still a frontier for the urbanist. No matter what his academic discipline or special interest he will find there scope for research. Historical studies of Brazilian cities in particular are lacking and this is a little surprising. True, Brazilian cities are all comparatively young and it was not until the early eighteenth century that any of them attained a population of 20 000 yet to judge from the survivals from the past and from the little research already done, historical urban studies in Brazil should be a rewarding field of study. Some rather obvious topics still have not been tackled. There is for instance no thorough study of the baroque towns of the gold fields of eighteenth century Minas Gerais and no study of the fairs which have played, and still play, such an important role in the urbanization of Brazil. Difficulties do of course stand in the way of researchers. They will always be handicapped by the census record which is shorter and not nearly as reliable or as detailed as the record in North America or Western Europe. The archives, too, can be difficult to use but they have not been fully exploited. Even the major depositories have not been thoroughly searched for material bearing on the social and economic life of the cities. Little is known of the records of the smaller but still comparatively important colonial towns such as Cachoeira, the once wealthy tobacco emporium of Bahia, or the decayed and half-abandoned small Pernambuco port of Goiana which was once the chief town of the capitania of Itamaraca, or Sahara and Mariana in Minas Gerais to name but four out of many. Their town councils corresponded with colonial governors and the nineteenth century provincial governments ; these councils must have kept records which, hopefully, in some towns at least have survived. It would be a great step forward if a list could be compiled of the towns with archives containing documents dating back beyond 1900. This lack of knowledge of the sources for historical urban studies in Brazil is of course a commentary on the state of this particular art.

Three books have recently been published which can be gathered together under the broad umbrella of the title of this review.¹ They are by scholars in different disciplines and the books differ greatly in topic and approach. Yves Leloup is a French geographer who spent several years at the University of Minas Gerais in Belo Horizonte and has written a general account of urbanization in one state of Brazil. Nestor Goulart Reis Filho is an architectural historian whose topic is the early colonial city while Warren Dean has studied the industrialization of São Paulo and his book is a happy blend of sociology and economics. This review moves from what to my mind is the least successful to the most successful of the three.

¹ I would like to have included a fourth book : Rollie POPPINO, *Feira de Santana*, Salvador, Brazil, Editôra Itapua, 1968. I was unable to obtain a copy of this book in England where this review was written. Poppino does discuss an important fair and uses municipal archives.

Yves Leloup's subject is potentially a very large and interesting one for Minas has experienced possibly a greater diversity of urban life than any other state of Brazil. There is a rich legacy from the past to be studied in the old towns of the gold fields, in the towns of the coffee frontier of the nineteenth century, in the spas and resorts of the southern highlands of the state as well as numerous examples of the somnolent, small market and administrative centres at the end of long dusty dirt roads which are the typical *vilas* of traditional rural Brazil. The modern aspects of urbanization, too, are well represented. Juiz da Fora was one of the first factory towns of Latin America. Belo Horizonte is a rapidly growing metropolis with all the problems associated with such cities in Latin America but it dates only from the 1890's and is an early example of the Brazilian taste for planning capitals. There are also numerous mining and industrial centres scattered through the state.

Leloup has skimmed over this material in an unsatisfactory survey which has neither a unifying theme nor distinctive approach and which is written in a jerky note style, with the sections and sub-sections of the chapters numbered and lettered in a manner reminiscent of some committee reports. Leloup did not set out to write a research monograph but to prepare the ground, as he puts it (p. 3), for other workers to build on. His work does include some new information and analysis of the urban content of censuses but it is probable that most students in the future rather than take Leloup's word will want to test the ground for themselves.

The historical section occupies Part II of the book, about a quarter of the whole, but this includes discussion of the urban geography of Minas in the first half of the twentieth century. The examination of the eighteenth and nineteenth century towns is limited to about thirty pages. These towns are discussed in relation to phases in the economic history of Minas: the rise and decline of gold mining, coffee cultivation, the coming of the railroad and the establishment of the first manufacturing industries. Given the amount of space allotted the discussion is inevitably brief and very general. Deservedly, the gold towns receive most attention. Leloup outlines a sequence of four stages in the evolution of the gold towns, during the rise and decline of the gold boom, one stage yielding to another as the morphology of the towns and composition of the population changed. It is a pity this section of the book was not expanded and documented. Indeed, the historical section is based on secondary sources and does not add to our knowledge of the content of municipal archives.

Part I of the book is really an introduction in which Leloup surveys the progress of urbanization in Minas since 1920 and describes some typical « townscapes ». In Part III, he examines the present urban scene though his focus of interest is regionalization and the city-region relationship. Dissatisfaction with the treatment of the modern aspects of urbanization arises from the dated nature and conservatism of the approach for Leloup does not make use of current concepts and techniques of analysis in urban geography nor does he appear to be familiar with the literature in urban geography in English. In a survey of a large subject it is often difficult to please readers for inevitably many topics are touched on but cannot be dealt with thoroughly. The interest of readers is aroused but not satisfied. Leloup has sensed that this is a drawback of his own work for he has written: « Au moment de dresser un bilan nous pensons que notre large synthèse, qui peut être aisément présentée sous forme de séminaires, laissera cependant les spécialistes de la géographie urbaine latino-américaine sur leur faim » (p. 195).

Reis' book does not live up to the promise of its title of the *Evolução Urbana do Brasil*. He has in fact greatly limited the possibilities of his book by terminating his discussion in 1720, a date by which the urban evolution of Brazil had scarcely begun. In 1720, the largest town in Brazil was Salvador, the colonial capital, with a population of about 20 000. There were at this time according to Reis 71 towns in Brazil in the sense that these settlements had been awarded the status of *vila* (63) or *cidade* (8). A good many of these *vila* were very small indeed, supporting a few of the

traditional urban function. This book then is about the emergence of small towns in a large sparsely populated colony the economy of which rested largely on sugar plantations. Despite the restricted scope of the book, it is not a work based on primary sources. The only documents referred to are the published *Atas da Camara* of Salvador and maps. This book is largely a work of synthesis and interpretation based on standard, well-known, secondary sources.

Reis has divided his book into two parts. In the first he examines the manner in which the political, economic and social life in the colony influenced urban growth. His main thesis is that until the midyears of the seventeenth century, the circumstances in the colony were not conducive to the emergence and development of towns. The focus of life in the colony was the sugar plantation. Towns were lived in by a few officials, ecclesiastics and traders and were visited only infrequently by the planters and their families. During the second half of the seventeenth century, Reis argues, with a decline in sugar prices weakening the power of the planters and with the increase in the authority of the royal government, conditions in the colony became more favourable for towns. Reis in fact ends his book just as Brazil was acquiring a significant urban population in a few coastal towns and as the mining towns in the interior were beginning to emerge. In the second part of the book, Reis examines the functions, morphology and life of the towns. There is a large appendix of maps and town plans.

Reis' most interesting contribution is possibly his challenging of part of the conventional wisdom of Latin American urban history, namely that Brazilian towns were unplanned, « spontaneous » developments in contrast to the rigid town planning in Spanish America. Reis' case rests heavily on the evidence of maps and town plans. He does not provide the documentary background to the planning such as instructions to the founders of towns. He reproduces two fine seventeenth century maps of the fortified grid-pattern towns of Damão and Baçaim in Portuguese India to show the use of the grid-pattern by the Portuguese and argues strongly for planning in early Salvador and São Luiz do Maranhão. There is greater evidence for town planning in Brazil during the eighteenth century which Reis does not exploit. To cite one instance: in 1746 the Crown issued instructions for the building of the town of Aracati in Ceara. The instruction were specific. The town was to have a central square and around this square were to be built the « casa da câmara », the jail and other municipal building. The streets leading from the square were to be straight and of equal width. Some of the instructions were plain common sense. The site selected for the town was to be above the flood level of the river and large enough to permit the town to expand. Care was to be taken to place the slaughter house downwind from the town.² Whether or not Aracati was actually built according to these instructions I do not know, but some towns were built along the above lines. Villa Bella, in the Mato Grosso, was one. The map of 1780 which Reis reproduces shows it to have been a neat little riverside town built on the grid-pattern. How widespread town planning was in colonial Brazil only further research in archives will reveal. Hopefully, Professor Reis has a sequel to this present work in mind in which he will continue the story.

The industrialization of São Paulo deserves, as Warren Dean says, historical study. This industrialization began late in the nineteenth century, proceeded so rapidly that by 1920 São Paulo had replaced Rio de Janeiro as the main industrial centre of Brazil while by 1940 the state of São Paulo contained the largest industrial complex in Latin America. Dean has written a very readable, well-documented monograph in which he not only sheds new light on this important subject but also questions the widely accepted theory that industrial growth in São Paulo was stimulated in times of war and world economic depression when local industrialists were forced to produce the goods

² *Documentos Históricos*, Biblioteca Nacional, Rio de Janeiro, 1953, Vol. C. Consultas do Conselho Ultramarino, Capitanias do Norte, 1716-1746, pp. 276-280.

which, because of the disruption of former trading patterns, could no longer be imported. His book is scarcely an urban study: industrialization rather than urbanization is his subject and the São Paulo of the title refers to the state and not to the city. Analysis proceeds always at the level of the state and we are not given studies of the industrialization of particular towns. But the inclusion of the book in this review can be justified on the grounds that it is surely indispensable reading for anyone concerned with the urbanization of the state of São Paulo.

In the first part of the book, Dean is concerned with the emergence of the entrepreneurial class of São Paulo, discovering who the entrepreneurs were and where they came from. He traces their origins in the aristocracy of the coffee planters and among the European immigrants, and follows the merging of these two streams to form the new industrial elite. Throughout the book, Dean keeps to the fore the ideas, attitudes and even the personalities of the entrepreneurs. In Part II Dean covers the growth of industry between 1914 and 1930. It is here that he takes issue the generally accepted view of the role of the First World War as a stimulator of industry in São Paulo. His examination of the evidence leads him to make the following statements: « If all or most of the revisionist arguments presented above are valid, then World War I was not in itself particularly stimulating to Paulista industry » (p. 98). « It might be asked », he adds a few pages later, « if the industrialization of São Paulo would not have proceeded faster had there been no war » (p. 104). Dean accepts that his revisionist case is less sure against the role of the Depression and he concedes when dealing with World War II that « It is possible . . . that the wartime shortages and dislocations had in the second instance the salutary effects often attributed to the first » (p. 228). In the third part of the book, Dean examines the social outlook of the industrial elite and follows this with what is really an examination of the economic policies of the Vargas governments to 1945.

These three books are a welcome addition to the literature. They contain new information, new ideas and insights and illustrate the possibilities and rewards as well as the hazards of historical urban studies in Brazil. There is no sure formula for success in this field, but perhaps the safest course lies in the choice of a manageable topic and original research. Urban history is now in fashion so it is probably safe to say that we can look forward to more studies of Brazil's urban past.

J. H. GALLOWAY

University of Toronto

MEXIQUE

DESOUCHES-AZNAR, Marie-Brigitte, Calpulalpan. Reforma agraria e industria nueva en un municipio del centro mexicano, Paris, Institut des Hautes Études de l'Amérique latine, laboratoire associé 111, 1970, 56 p.

L'étude de M.-B. Desouches-Aznar est précédée d'un résumé en français de deux pages qui nous dispensera de reprendre l'analyse des trois chapitres que compte ce cahier de 56 pages. L'attention de l'auteur se porte vers les problèmes économiques et sociaux d'un municipe situé à l'extrémité orientale de l'état de Tlaxcala (à environ 80 kilomètres de Mexico), à la lumière des données du milieu physique et de l'histoire.

On sent que c'est dans l'analyse du milieu physique que l'auteur se sent le moins à l'aise. Si l'on ne relève pas d'erreur majeure, on note tout de même que les sols sont définis de manière fort imprécise — imperméables (p. 12) ou perméables (p. 14) ? —, que les conditions d'utilisation de nappes d'eau profondes pour une éventuelle irrigation ne