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Blum, Alan. *The Imaginative Structure of the City*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003. Pp. x, 330. $44.95 (hardcover)

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Citer ce compte rendu

teer firefighters. In the case of São Paulo, Cristina Mehrtens describes the links among municipal officials, new survey techniques for understanding the local population, and the development of the social sciences in Brazil. These developments involved the municipal structures and services, the universities and programs that trained the new municipal officials, and the professional associations that built expertise and strengthened the position of the relevant professional groups. In the São Paulo case, many of the key figures were foreign intellectuals living in São Paulo who brought their international experience to bear. The importance of international contacts also comes up in the chapter by Irene Maver on Glasgow, but here it is delegations from Glasgow that visited not only London, but also Paris, Brussels, Amsterdam, and a variety of German cities. Her chapter is full of examples of what the Glaswegians learned—from Paris, the ability "to reinforce the aesthetic qualities of urban design by means of sanitary control" (192), from the Belgian museum and gallery system, "the kind of integrated approach that fostered both community identity and national unity" (193), and from Germany, "the power of the professionals" (194). And Maver makes the more general point about the importance of these international connections: "The growth of professionalism has been a recurring theme, not only in the context of education and training, but in the dissemination and exchange of ideas locally, nationally and internationally" (197).

The importance of networking and contacts beyond the municipality is also highlighted in Emmanuel Bellanger's chapter on the town clerks in the Paris region. In this case, these key municipal officials combined the resources of their knowledge of the local terrain with a strong associational network that linked them across municipalities. In the early period, they were not a particularly highly educated group, but they made up for it, in terms of resources for exercising power, by this combination of local knowledge and associational ties.

The book is primarily interested in municipal employees, and even more particularly in the key municipal officials, but there is also much to be learned about the role of elected officials. Michèle Dagenais' chapter on Montreal in the 1930s is noteworthy in this regard. The growing importance and professional expertise of the key officials was supported by the politicians as they began to realize that professional management of the city not only pleased the financial community, but could also be popular with the general electorate. This led to the realization that an alliance between elected officials and key civil servants could be more productive, but also more successful politically, than earlier conflictual relationships. This is certainly a theme that resonates today in looking at municipal policy and at sources of municipal innovation.

Another theme of current importance is the relationship between municipal officials and civil society, and the role of community participation in the programming and delivery of municipal services. The chapter by Bénédicte Zimmermann on municipal unemployment policies in Germany in the period 1871–1918 is one to be read by all those interested in the municipal potential for innovative policy-making. Zimmermann's argument is that, in this period, it was the municipal governments and not the national government that were the innovators, and the reason was the proximity of municipalities to local civil society. The participation of trade unions in municipal policy-making created a variety of policies across German cities, and this policy innovation moved the policy agenda from programs around poverty to programs related to employment and unemployment. The link between proximity, the participation of civil society, and policy innovation is a lesson that should be picked up by all those interested in good urban policy, be they at the municipal, provincial, or federal level.

The book is a delight to read. The detailed case studies give an intricate sense of the ways in which personalities, structures, and contexts interrelate in the development and mobilization of professional competence, scientific research, and political commitment to produce the services of modern cities. At the same time, we are continually drawn to reflect on the vast themes raised by the authors: the importance of bureaucracy and of professions to the modern world, the role played by the new emerging sciences of the 20th century, and the rescaling strategies of the various actors, particularly those of the key officials. The first chapter, by Michèle Dagenais and Pierre-Yves Saunier, nicely develops the themes of the book and reflects on what we might learn about comparative analysis by comparing cities rather than national experiences. This book is certainly a good argument for doing just this.

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Blum, Alan. *The Imaginative Structure of the City.* Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003. Pp. x, 330. $44.95 (hardcover).

*The Imaginative Structure of the City* is a product of the Culture of Cities project, one of the very large Major Collaborative Research Initiatives (MCRI) funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. The project is a broadly interdisciplinary comparison of Montreal, Toronto, Berlin, and Dublin, looking at the ways in which these cities are influenced by global trends and express their own distinctiveness. The project is centred on the cultural expressions of the cities, *culture* being understood in a broad way relating to the daily patterns of life.

The context of the book is to me essential to understanding the complex, many-layered reading of the city that Alan Blum proposes to us. The book seems to me both an intellectual argument for a project on the culture of cities and an intellectual argument for why a broad knowledge of political and social theory is useful to laying the foundations for understanding the modern city. Seen in this light, the book is first and foremost a contribution to, and a celebration of, an interdisciplinary approach to looking at cities. An incredibly rich and varied set

of authors are brought into play to compose Blum's argument about why cities matter.

I will not do justice to the richness of Blum's argument about the potential importance of the city. What I took from his argument is that the city is a possible site for collective identity and, from that, collective action. The imaginative structure of the city "refers to the ways in which any city is conceived as orienting to the recognition, persistence, and maintenance of its difference as a feature of its routine problem-solving" (40). The problem-solving is about the mundane activities of daily life in the city but also about the big questions about existence. "The city is the place where (and it is a place because) the end of collective life is taken up as a question releasing experimentation and resistance, conflict and enmity. In taking up such questions, the city serves as a locus of collectivization for its civilization" (298).

As Blum relates culture back to problem-solving ("the notion of culture at its best makes reference to collective problem-solving in situations that are fundamentally destabilized" [19]) the culture of cities can be looked at in the production of new norms and in the ways in which this production serves as a locus of collectivization, as a potential site for collective action.

The different settings Blum examines in order to look at the production of new norms demonstrate the broad range of his analysis. To mention only a few that I found particularly interesting: cosmopolitanism (and parochialism), scenes, and nightlife all provide perspectives for Blum to analyze the ambiguities of the material and ideal dimensions of the city, and the ways these interact in the expression of distinctiveness. Cosmopolitanism and parochialism are both parts of all great cities, and Blum returns to his metaphor of the two-headed city, "both universal and local at the same time" (140). The analysis of "scenes" also plays on the idea of ambiguity—a scene is both art and commodity, pleasure and function, "as both a way of doing business and as an exciting departure from the routines of doing business" (188).

I found the discussion of nighttime particularly interesting, in part because of recent policies introduced in European cities looking at the 24-hour city. Blum concludes his analysis of nighttime and the expression of distinctiveness by asking whether globalization is turning all cities into identical 24-hour cities. And his answer, in the negative, suggests that "such specificity appears as those sorts of relations and observable practices through which cities mark the beginning and ends of their nights" (161). This describes very nicely the ways in which some cities have indeed been acting collectively to put into place programs and policies that take into account the 24-hour city, whereas others have not. As Blum says, global factors play out in all cities, but the reactions are not identical from city to city.

At the same time, this discussion of nighttime highlights for me the limits to *The Imaginative Structure of the City* or, rather, what I found disappointing about the book. With some exceptions, there is little about real cities, and after reading the book,

I did not feel that I knew more about Toronto's expression of its distinctiveness or Berlin's particular way of expressing the objectives of collective life. However, I do have some new and interesting ideas about locations where the distinctiveness of specific cities could be expressed, and also how they could be examined. In addition, the book does succeed in building the intellectual argument that the expression of distinctiveness is possible, and important, for a city, even with globalization, and thus justifies our wanting to understand the particular expressions of a particular city's identity. And that certainly is a worthwhile project.

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**Ruble, Blair A.** *Second Metropolis: Pragmatic Pluralism in Gilded Age Chicago, Silver Age Moscow, and Meiji Osaka.* **Washington, DC, and Cambridge: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Cambridge University Press, 2001. Pp. xvii, 464. Illustrations, bibliography, index. US$34.95 (hardcover).**

Although the products of very different cultures and nations, Osaka ("Kitchen of the Country"), Moscow ("Russia's Calico Heart"), and Chicago ("Porkopolis") shared a common experience of inclusive politics during the years 1870–1920. In a superb study, Blair A. Ruble (Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies) perceptively argues that, in an era of capitalist industrial development, spectacular demographic growth (largely the result of in-migration), and deep social diversity and fragmentation, an inclusionary approach to municipal governance—what he calls "pragmatic pluralism"—could (and did) advance community interests. Indeed, three positive examples—port revitalization in Osaka, the battle for public control over transit contracts in Chicago, and adult education policies in Moscow—illustrate how the pragmatic politics of compromise produced policy outcomes that, although still imperfect, improved the quality of life of city inhabitants in a meaningful way. The key to success here was that civic leaders and politicians, in particular Nikolai Alekseev, Seki Hajime, and Carter H. Harrison—both father and son—"accepted complexity, viewing urban management as a process rather than a series of finite policy results" (36). Contrariwise, three negative examples—housing and sanitation reform in Moscow, social welfare policies in Osaka, and charter reform in Chicago—fell prey to deep-seated contradictions and conflicts that a pragmatic search for compromise could not subdue.

But how convincing is it to explain essentially everything by a commitment (or lack thereof) to tolerance, compromise, and pragmatism? Can creativity, innovation, and the practice of politics without hegemony really tell the whole story? It may very well be too simplistic to attribute, for example, the rice riots of 1918 in Osaka or the red summer of 1919 in Chicago primarily to a breakdown in the process of political accommodation. National and international factors, over which municipal rulers