

Economic Development Quarterly

<http://edq.sagepub.com>

Book Review: Lewis, R. (Ed.) (2004). *Manufacturing Suburbs: Building Work and Home on the Metropolitan Fringe*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press

Economic Development Quarterly 2007; 21; 292

DOI: 10.1177/0891242407301750

The online version of this article can be found at:

<http://edq.sagepub.com>

Published by:

 SAGE Publications

<http://www.sagepublications.com>

Additional services and information for *Economic Development Quarterly* can be found at:

Email Alerts: <http://edq.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts>

Subscriptions: <http://edq.sagepub.com/subscriptions>

Reprints: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav>

Permissions: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>

BOOK REVIEW

Thomas J. Vicino is an assistant professor in the School of Urban and Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Arlington. He holds a PhD in public policy from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, and his research focuses on the socioeconomic impacts of suburbanization.

Lewis, R. (Ed.) (2004). *Manufacturing Suburbs: Building Work and Home on the Metropolitan Fringe*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
DOI: 10.1177/0891242407301750

For more than a century, urban scholars have examined the intricacies of the process of suburbanization. This disparate body of literature has primarily focused on residential, middle-class enclaves in the suburbs. Charting the systematic growth of gritty, industrial suburbs, this book shatters the notion of a suburban frontier adorned with leafy trees and white picket fences. Often located on the city-suburban periphery, these suburbs were home to mighty industrial giants that served the central city's economic engine. In *Manufacturing Suburbs*, Lewis and his colleagues present a compelling body of evidence that demonstrates the roles that these suburbs played in suburban development, dispelling the myth of a "crabgrass frontier" in this highly readable and accessible volume.

As editor, Lewis's goals are threefold. First, he aims to compile a comprehensive collection of scholarly works on the role that industry played in the development of suburbs. Second, he tells us that research of the historical development of suburbs needs to be refocused. Lewis argues that scholarly thought has focused too closely on middle-class, residential suburbs and ignored working-class, industrial suburbs. Last, the editor seeks to demonstrate that the diffusion of factories from the central city to the urban fringe played a vital role in the development of pre-World War II suburbs. The volume is organized into 11 chapters. Five chapters are original essays, and another 5 chapters are reproduced from a special edition on suburbs from the *Journal of Historical Geography*. The essay on Baltimore, reproduced from *The Geographic Review*, is one of the earliest scholarly inquiries (1979) on industrial suburbs. In total, Lewis includes a multitude of regions in the volume: Baltimore, Chicago, Montreal, San Francisco, Pittsburgh, Toronto, southern California, and Detroit. One of the great strengths of this volume is the integration of comparative case studies in both the United States and Canada, which provides the reader a representative sample of suburbs in North America.

Of particular interest are the essays on Detroit and Baltimore. These two Rustbelt regions both experienced heavy industrialization and rapid social change during the early 20th century. In the case of Detroit, Heather Barrow shows the extraordinary power that one private actor, Henry Ford, wielded in shaping the suburban landscape. Ford chose to locate his manufacturing hub and corporate center in Dearborn, Michigan, in the heart of the suburban frontier west of Detroit. This location decision allowed Ford to exert a strong management power over his workforce and avoid the organized labor issues that plagued other industries in Detroit. Furthermore, Ford was able to exercise political control over the development of this suburb as he helped to incorporate Dearborn as a village in 1893. Later, Dearborn continued to annex its surrounding environs for some two decades until its municipal incorporation in 1927. An opponent of racial integration, Ford developed the Village of "Inkster" for his African American workforce and fought to keep Dearborn a blue-collar, White suburb.

By comparison, the essay on Baltimore by Edward Muller and Paul Groves demonstrates a similar geographic history. Specialized industrial districts, aligned along racial and ethnic boundaries, were the dominant spatial trend in suburban Baltimore during the late 19th century. For example, districts for shipbuilding, agricultural processing, clothiers, and artisan-dominated activities emerged during this period. Although Muller and Groves do not specifically point to this, it is interesting to note that the metal processing and iron foundries district laid the foundation for the creation of one of the largest industrial suburbs in the nation. Suburban Dundalk became the home of the largest steel plant in the nation, Bethlehem Steel. The suburb, due immediately southeast of

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT QUARTERLY, Vol. 21 No. 3, August 2007 292-293
© 2007 Sage Publications

Baltimore City, employed and housed some 32,000 White, working-class laborers during its heyday—making Dundalk one of the nation's quintessential manufacturing suburbs.

The book's overemphasis on the influence of industry and its understatement on the influence of housing is a collective shortcoming on behalf of the authors at large. The subtitle, *Building Work and Home on the Metropolitan Fringe*, implies that both of these forces were integral to the creation of manufacturing suburbs. Yet, throughout the book, *work* is explicitly discussed, and the role that *home* played in the development of these places is only implicitly discussed. To the editor's credit, the book's last essay by Richard Harris begins to examine the connection between residential development and employment. In Harris's words, "to understand the long-term spreading out of homes and industry, we need to worry less about the types of suburbs and think more about the process by which they came into being" (p. 222). Indeed, by focusing on the process of housing development and the development decisions by public and private actors, scholars can then begin to grasp a firmer understanding of the forces shaping these places. Additional research on how public and private housing decisions affect the sustainability of older, manufacturing suburbs would be especially welcomed. Many of these manufacturing suburbs are located in the inner ring of metropolitan areas, and they exhibit similar patterns of socioeconomic decline that central cities experienced. Thus, examining the roles that *housing* and *work* play in the process of suburban decline would further illuminate our understanding of the historical evolution as well as the future prospects of manufacturing suburbs.

In short, *Manufacturing Suburbs* is a splendid book that reveals the untold historical role that the location of factories played in building suburbia in North America. Lewis has assembled a tour-de-force volume on the diversity of suburbs across the United States and Canada, and accordingly, the book would serve as an ideal companion text in the urban studies classroom. *Manufacturing Suburbs* is a well-thought-out and welcome contribution to our understanding about the role that these suburbs play in the larger debate about increasing metropolitan decentralization and diversity.