Journal of Urban History

http://juh.sagepub.com

Private City, Public City: Power and Vision in American Cities

John D. Fairfield

Journal of Urban History 2003; 29; 437

DOI: 10.1177/0096144203029004004

The online version of this article can be found at:
http://juh.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/29/4/437

Published by:

http://www.sagepublications.com

On behalf of:

The Urban History Association

Additional services and information for *Journal of Urban History* can be found at:

Email Alerts: http://juh.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts

Subscriptions: http://juh.sagepub.com/subscriptions

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

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

Downloaded from http://juh.sagepub.com at SUNY AT BUFFALO on January 31, 2008
© 2003 SAGE Publications. All rights reserved. Not for commercial use or unauthorized distribution.

PRIVATE CITY, PUBLIC CITY
Power and Vision in American Cities

JOHN D. FAIRFIELD
Xavier University

The successes and failures of the American city have resulted from struggles over the uses of public power as much as from a capitalist culture of "privatism." Public visions of the city's possibilities have, at times, proved as powerful as private economic interests in shaping the city's future. Examined in relationship to one another, Sam Bass Warner Jr.'s *The Private City* and Zane L. Miller's *Boss Cox's Cincinnati* illustrate the clash between economic interest and civic aspiration. Both argued for the necessity of civic spirit and public action if we were to build better cities. *The Private City* told the story from the point of view of failure, while *Boss Cox's Cincinnati* examined it from the point of view of success. Miller's analysis of the politics of an urban crisis serves as an essential, hopeful complement to Warner's powerful indictment of the American tradition of privatism.

Keywords: *Social mobility; civic; historiography; Cincinnati; Philadelphia; Zane L. Miller; Sam Bass Warner Jr.*

When Sam Bass Warner Jr.'s *The Private City: Philadelphia in Three Periods of Its Growth* and Zane L. Miller's *Boss Cox's Cincinnati: Urban Politics in the Progressive Era* first appeared in 1968, inner-city unrest and new, ambitious public programs had thrust what might otherwise have been an obscure academic discipline into the limelight. In a nation engaged in a "war on poverty" and building "model cities," urban history found its audience. *Boss Cox's Cincinnati* was reviewed in the *New York Times*, which reported that our "understanding of contemporary urban problems would be considerably enriched if a comparable history existed of every major city." *The Private City*, too, was recognized as a major study, at least within the profession. Taken together, the two studies illustrated the clash between economic and civic aspirations that has shaped our cities, creating both their problems and their possibilities. Both argued for the necessity of civic spirit and public action if we were to build better cities. *The Private City* told the story from the point of view of failure, while *Boss Cox's Cincinnati* examined it from the point of view of (partial) success. Miller's analysis of the politics of an urban crisis thus served as an essential, hopeful complement to Warner's powerful indictment of the American tradition of "privatism."[1]

JOURNAL OF URBAN HISTORY, Vol. 29 No. 4, May 2003 437-462
DOI: 10.1177/0096144203252469
© 2003 Sage Publications

Downloaded from http://juh.sagepub.com at SUNY AT BUFFALO on January 31, 2008
© 2003 SAGE Publications. All rights reserved. Not for commercial use or unauthorized distribution.

Warner's history of Philadelphia hinged on a struggle between private and public aspirations. But it was always the private economic interests that triumphed. *The Private City* traced the "endlessly repeated failures" to "create a humane environment" to a neglect of civic affairs. What the "private market could do well American cities have done well," Warner wrote, "what the private market did badly, or neglected, our cities have been unable to overcome." Philadelphia was "a private city and the public dimensions of urban life suffered accordingly." Starting from the other end of the equation, Miller emphasized the political dimensions of turn-of-the-century urban problems—particularly the incompetence of municipal governance—and examined a public effort to take responsibility for the city's growth. *Boss Cox's Cincinnati* showed how political action could, at least partially and in one historical context, successfully tackle the problems generated by the private economic system. Both Cox and his reform antagonists responded to the urban crisis with more efficient methods of governance and an expanding array of public services. Machine and reform pursued a strategy that "could educate, discipline, organize, and coalesce without arousing the divisive, emotional, and hysterical responses which helped immobilize municipal statesmen in the 1880s." Providing citizens with "new outlets for their emotions, new avenues to action, and new sources of power and social control," both machine and reform "were able to bring positive government to Cincinnati and to mitigate the chaos which accompanied the emergence of the new city."[2]

The insights of these two studies would do little, however, to shape subsequent urban policy. In large part, this was due to the Nixon administration's waning interest in the problem of what it called "the cities" and had addressed with such fanfare early on. But it was also the result of the greater attention given to the quantitative methods and social scientific approach of the "new urban history." Energized by the intellectual ferment and political engagement of the 1968 Yale Conference on the Nineteenth-Century Industrial City, the new urban history "emerged in part out of impulses to connect history with the political spirit of the moment," not "in the service of some political ideas but the history of the common people." The new urban historians' interest in rewriting the history of ordinary Americans reflected a concern with the impoverished in the contemporary inner city. Their social scientific orientation promised insights to guide and direct future policy initiatives. These techniques and approaches have enlarged our understanding of the city. But the most immediate product of the new urban history was a spate of studies of social mobility that spoke more to private than public aspirations. In neglecting politics and power and their role in the promotion or frustration of civic ideals, mobility studies had little to tell a nation intent on producing "model cities." Ironically, the concept of social mobility helps to explain our failures in the inner cities since the 1960s. The unintended consequences of the war on poverty and subsequent policies have been to enable some of the most talented to

Downloaded from http://juh.sagepub.com at SUNY AT BUFFALO on January 31, 2008
© 2003 SAGE Publications. All rights reserved. Not for commercial use or unauthorized distribution.

move up and out, into the suburban middle class, leaving behind an ever more impoverished majority.[3]

Mobility studies arose from laudable intentions, beginning with the determination to rewrite the history of cities from the bottom up. Studies conducted before the 1960s, Steven Thernstrom lamented, had been "based largely upon tradition literary sources" that revealed little about the experiences of ordinary people. The use of new types of sources (census manuscripts, city directories, tax lists) and a host of "useful concepts, analytical techniques, and data-processing methods" that facilitated use of these sources allowed the new urban historians to explore "the social experience of ordinary people." The problem with the quantitative approach, as Thernstrom himself warned, was that in ignoring literary sources, historians missed the opportunity to "understand the perceptions and emotions of the people" they dealt with. The objective, quantifiable facts, Thernstrom wrote, were ultimately "filtered through the consciousness of obstinately subjective human beings." Unfortunately, the new urban historians did not always heed that warning. Thernstrom's own study of social mobility in Newburyport, Massachusetts, between 1850 and 1880 purported to have discovered "a permanent floating proletariat" in "the masses of ordinary workers" who as "transients . . . could easily be ignored." The "extreme volatility of the urban masses severely limited the possibilities of mobilizing them politically and socially," Thernstrom argued, "and facilitated control by other more stable elements of the population." Yet in the very period he was examining, first the Republican Party, then the Union war effort, and finally the Knights of Labor, the United Labor Party, the Populist Party, and a variety of movements to organize unions and cooperatives, were mobilizing ordinary working people.[4]

The assumption that working people were not among the "articulate" members of society marred the new urban history. Failing to leave behind documentary sources is not the same as lacking a coherent view of the world and the ability to express it. Focusing on "formal institutions and the articulate elements of the community," Thernstrom explained, older urban histories had neglected "underlying social processes and mass behavior." The problem was that social scientific methods focused on mass behavior—the unthinking, routinized, predictable, and quantifiable—as the only thing worth knowing about the "inarticulate." Edward Pessen wondered whether historians' "increasingly intimate relationship with a branch of learning so indifferent to the individual, the concrete event, the dramatic, the idiosyncratic" was a good thing. Warner, too, worried that urban history was too much enmeshed in the techniques and assumptions of eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century social science. "We try to grasp the city in some kind of generalization," Warner argued, relying too heavily "on old counts of mortality and registrations of marriages and births and old tax records." "If workers had not spoken directly," Lynn Hollen Lees has recently written of the new urban history, "we were sure they would acquire a voice indirectly through quantification of their collective

Downloaded from http://juh.sagepub.com at SUNY AT BUFFALO on January 31, 2008
© 2003 SAGE Publications. All rights reserved. Not for commercial use or unauthorized distribution.

decisions and social fates." But mobility studies were better able to determine social fates than collective decisions. The biological cycle of birth, marriage, and death appeared more clearly than the conscious, unpredictable, purposeful actions of historical agents.[5]

THE FREEDOM TO RISE OR THE LIBERTY AND WELL-BEING OF THE PEOPLE?

Perhaps the greatest contribution of mobility studies has been the incitement to subject the concept of "social mobility" itself to historical analysis. What Thernstrom examined in social mobility was a debased view of the promise of American democracy, one that had begun to dominate in the 1880s and that had become entrenched by the 1960s. Christopher Lasch has located what was perhaps the earliest use of the term *social mobility* in Frederick Jackson Turner's 1903 essay, "Contributions of the West to American Democracy." Famously brooding on the same 1880 census that Thernstrom would later use, Turner wondered what direction democracy might take with the closing of the frontier. Democracy had "tended to the production of a society of which the most distinctive feature was the freedom of the individual to rise under conditions of social mobility," Turner wrote, "and whose ambition was the liberty and well being of the masses." Turner thus juxtaposed the new conception of American democracy ("the freedom of the individual to rise under conditions of social mobility") and the old ("the liberty and well-being of the masses"), just as one was supplanting the other. His substitution of the term *masses* for *the people* gave the game away.[6]

The older conception of democracy, the liberty and well-being of the people, was more a civic than a narrowly economic ideal. It hinged on social equality, what Lasch described as the opportunity "to mingle on an equal footing with persons from all realms of life, to gain access to larger currents of opinion, and to exercise the rights and duties of citizenship." A democratic society would be a classless society, not one of mobility between classes. If labor and learning could be treated as complementary and knowledge and culture made the possession of all, there would be no working or leisure class. This vision underlay the free labor ideal of the antebellum Republican Party. Its classic expression was in Abraham Lincoln's answer to the pro-slavery theorists' concept of the "mudsill class," the proposition that all societies necessarily rested on the exploitation of menial labor. Pro-slavery theorists, Lincoln charged, treated it as a "misfortune" that workers "should have heads at all." Lincoln explained that the free labor position was that "heads and hands should cooperate as friends; and that [each] particular head, should direct and control that particular pair of hands." Not that Lincoln recognized this as an accomplished fact. The Declaration of Independence's assertion of the equality of all was, Lincoln said, "constantly looked to, constantly labored for, and even though

Downloaded from http://juh.sagepub.com at SUNY AT BUFFALO on January 31, 2008
© 2003 SAGE Publications. All rights reserved. Not for commercial use or unauthorized distribution.

never perfectly attained constantly approximated." Thus Lincoln understood, as Daniel Walker Howe puts it, that social equality was "as much a duty of the community as the right of the individual."[7]

Stuart Blumin, one of the founders of the new urban history, has captured the contested quality of these civic ideals. Blumin's great insight is in examining the growth of a pejorative distinction between manual and nonmanual labor. "He must take the responsibility, and do all the planning," went one antebellum paean to the business leader. "Hence he advertises for hands, not heads—for manual labor, and not mental." But Blumin nevertheless found the union of labor and learning honored in the breach. As headwork and handwork diverged, master mechanics appealed to "science" as a means of both dressing up what manual labor they still performed while simultaneously distinguishing themselves from those who remained outside the realm of honest producers. The worker's grievance, on the other hand, was less about "his economic exploitation by means of low wages and long hours," Blumin found, and more about "the humiliation he was made to suffer because he performed manual labor." The journeymen editors of *The Mechanics Free Press* of Philadelphia, for example, called for a workingman's ticket "to disprove the notion that men of mechanical pursuits are unfitted for political and civil stations." The editors railed against "the prediction of those useless animals" who "declare that the operative part of the community, particularly the mechanics, are not capable of supporting or conducting a newspaper; that they are fit for nothing but manual and mechanical labour, having little more intellect than the brute creation."[8]

Although Blumin's analysis begins by establishing the limited possibilities for social mobility among manual workers in the Jacksonian era, his argument suggests the irrelevance of social mobility for these historical actors. "Manual labor has a position with us," Whig industrialist Nathan Appleton asserted in 1844, "which it has never possessed in any period of the world. The high reward of labor in all its branches, is the great, important distinction which diffuses comfort, intelligence, and self-respect through the whole mass of the community, in a degree unknown in the previous history of civilization." Such sentiments abounded in Jacksonian America and transcended both partisan politics and politics itself. But as Blumin argues, abundant "social conditions and attitudes" contradicted this "celebratory rhetoric." The growing contempt for manual workers often took the form of telling them to stay in their place. "Avoid unions and ignore theories of equal rights," Blumin paraphrases the advice literature for manual workers, "which breed only discontent, and read for self-improvement and pleasure rather than to rise in the world." Social mobility was not yet offered as the great safety valve, nor had self-improvement taken on a narrowly economic meaning. Blumin later quotes Appleton in a more convincing vein, describing social equality—like Lincoln—as a duty rather than an accomplished fact. "It is our mission," Appleton argued, "to amalgamate, equalize, and improve the whole mass of population, by elevating

Downloaded from http://juh.sagepub.com at SUNY AT BUFFALO on January 31, 2008
© 2003 SAGE Publications. All rights reserved. Not for commercial use or unauthorized distribution.

the lower portions from their usual abject state, and depressing the higher, in dispensing with a privileged aristocracy." That ideal would die hard.[9]

The civic ideal of a union of labor and learning may have come closest to its realization in antebellum New York. New York City's artisans, Thomas Bender writes, believed they "did not have to cease being mechanics and tradesmen to embrace learning." Jacksonian artisans pressured New York elites to "democratize and extend learning on a ground acceptable to them." Although motivated in part by "a combative defensiveness," artisans also expressed pride in their contribution "to the progress of civilization and culture." The "acquisition of knowledge," Bender argues, was a means of "improvement within the artisanal culture rather than being, as it is today thought to be, a means of mobility out of it." Others shared the artisans' view. One popular educator advocated a "systematic course of popular lectures, adapted to their peculiar wants" as a means of achieving a "more elevated standing and estimation in general society . . . [for] working mechanics." Spokesmen for a practical course of education argued that a classical curriculum "would devalue the general culture of the city's mechanics, while allowing certain individuals to escape it." One Democratic politician defended a free academy because it would promote "a class of mechanics and merchants, well skilled in their several pursuits, and eminently qualified to infuse into their fellow-workmen a spirit that would add dignity to labor." Nor was this all rhetoric. The "most well-endowed and secure institution of advanced learning founded" in antebellum New York, Bender concludes in reference to Cooper Union, "was established outside the learned culture of the elite, founded by a mechanic for the education of other mechanics."[10]

While Lincoln, who launched his quest for the presidency at Cooper Union, understood social equality as a partial ideal to be worked for, post–Civil War Americans saw it slipping away. This concern informed an articulate criticism of corporate capitalism arising from small producers, of whom Henry George is the best known. Disgusted by an increasing tendency to regard "the masses as born but for the service of their rulers" and convinced that civilization depended on the democratization of intelligence, George insisted that the "people themselves must think, because the people alone must act." The Knights of Labor, of which George was a member, demanded for working people "all those rights and privileges necessary to make them capable of enjoying appreciating, defending, and perpetuating the blessings of good government." The Populists feared that the growing concentration of wealth would lead to political corruption and a class society. "From the same prolific womb of government injustice," the Populist Party platform of 1892 put it, "we breed the two great classes—tramps and millionaires." The Populists hoped to "restore the government of the Republic to the hands of the 'plain people,' " with which class it originated. It was in this context that Turner would speculate on democracy's future.[11]

Downloaded from http://juh.sagepub.com at SUNY AT BUFFALO on January 31, 2008
© 2003 SAGE Publications. All rights reserved. Not for commercial use or unauthorized distribution.

The idea of social mobility, the opportunity to rise out of the laboring classes, gained force only as corporate capitalism and the centralized state placed the articulate citizen-proprietor on the road to extinction. Warner has recently explored how social scientific approaches and the ideal of social mobility became associated in this period. As an urban symbol, "the slum" emerged at a time of the growing segregation of social classes in the late nineteenth-century city. Poverty came to be accepted as a natural, timeless fact of life, Warner argued, like "smoke, or bricks or saloons." The slum image separated poverty from "the new relationships of urban employment and the processes of urban building," connecting it instead to "the statistical methods" of the biological and social sciences that were "transforming people into numbers and thereby further mystifying the social relationships of society." Warner goes on to suggest how the "rise to prominence of the concept and symbols of social mobility" helped to transform the symbol of the slum into that of the ghetto. By the 1960s, the slum came to seem a "launching place for future social mobility . . . a place of hope and promise which by 1962 had largely been realized." The ghetto, by contrast, had become "a place without hope, a place of public abandonment of its residents." In addressing the problems of the ghetto, Warner argued, Americans had come to stress "mobility and the meritocratic sides of their tradition to the neglect of equalitarian elements in the same tradition." The "culture of poverty" symbol, with its emphasis on a tangle of pathology from which only individuals might escape, added "still another new symbolic element to a tradition which was sliding away from its equalitarian moorings."[12]

None of this is meant to denigrate the work of the new urban historians. Their interest in the "city as crucible, as a site where many intersecting dimensions of experience . . . all necessarily came together," has enriched our understanding our urban past. Our own shortcomings, in a profession that has lost the ear of the public, should also give us pause. Despite our interest in "public" history, we have done too little to engage and enrich public debates and civic aspirations. But it does seem fair to point out that the new urban historians, like all of us, were shaped by the temper of their times. In exploring the phenomenon of social mobility, they embodied the values and concerns of the time. They reflected the assumptions behind our urban policies as well as the rise of the meritocracy in the very institutions that employed them (and us). If we understand them in historical context, their studies of social mobility can help us clarify where we are and what we value. Their own personal experiences are also instructive. The Yale conference brought together established scholars and young historians fresh out of graduate school, but "there was no status games and no pulling of rank." While "trained in the archetypal, individualistic style of history departments," they nevertheless created a community of cooperative historians. In their collegiality, if not always in their scholarship, they resisted the allure of upward mobility.[13]

Downloaded from http://juh.sagepub.com at SUNY AT BUFFALO on January 31, 2008
© 2003 SAGE Publications. All rights reserved. Not for commercial use or unauthorized distribution.

Above all, the new urban historians made us aware that we had always been counting things and that we had better be as rigorous in counting as in everything else. But as Warner has remarked, there remains the question "of what it is that was counted in the first place." The social scientific interest in "mass behavior" led the new urban history astray, but so did the fascination with "underlying social processes." The search for such processes takes us perilously close to the assumptions of modernization theory and the belief that the conscious decisions of political actors—articulate or otherwise—are unimportant in the face of the irresistible evolution of society. It was, of course, the Marxist variant of the sociological tradition that shaped mobility studies. The interest in social mobility—how much there was, how it promoted or frustrated class consciousness—led back ultimately to the question of "why there was no socialism in America." That question betrays a conviction that certain things were supposed to happen, regardless of what people actually said or did. Similarly, the concept of class—while useful—carries the danger that in expecting certain forms of consciousness to emerge, we obscure the peculiarities, the possibilities, of our history. Thernstrom's *Poverty and Progress*, Michael Frisch and Michael Katz argued, served as the American version of Edward P. Thompson's *Making of the English Working Class* (1964). But this begs the question of how central class was to nineteenth-century American radicalism. Nineteenth-century artisans developed more of a "community consciousness" than a "class consciousness" and understood themselves as defending a threatened way of life rather than promoting a revolutionary transformation. The way of life, the civic ideal, that American artisans tried to defend was a worthy if imperfect one.[14]

PRIVATE CITY, PUBLIC CITY

The recognition that civic ideals were as important as material conditions in shaping the history of our cities brings us back to Warner and Miller. In their contrasting ways, they assert the importance of civic ideals and their potential to transform our cities. We may also see that Warner and Miller worked in the tradition of the not-so-new urban history. From colonial times, Arthur Schlesinger wrote in the 1940 essay from which professional urban historians trace their origins, the city "forced attention to matters of common concern which could not be ignored even by a people individualistically inclined." City life promoted a "necessary concern with the general welfare," Schlesinger argued, that "contravened the doctrine of individualism and nourished a sense of social responsibility." "Civic spirit" led to voluntary efforts, such as fire fighting, that provided "training in collective action, constantly reenforced by the everyday contact of the citizens in less formal undertakings." This was the tradition to which Warner and Miller belong.[15]

Downloaded from http://juh.sagepub.com at SUNY AT BUFFALO on January 31, 2008
© 2003 SAGE Publications. All rights reserved. Not for commercial use or unauthorized distribution.

In *The Private City*, Warner disapprovingly quoted what might be seen as an early, antebellum expression of the idea of social mobility. Let all children, rich and poor, attend the public schools, a 1834 report for the Pennsylvania legislature's Joint Committee on Education advised. There they would "imbibe the republican spirit and be animated by a feeling of perfect equality." Yet the report concluded without dismay that "in the course of nature, many no doubt will sink into mediocrity or beneath it." The "union of privatism and equalitarianism," Warner lamented, had produced a "dramatic call for social equality" only to degenerate into "the total acceptance of a society of economic competition." Later, Warner explicitly distanced himself from the study of social mobility. Although his own *Streetcar Suburbs* (1962) had employed quantitative methods in examining 23,000 building permits, Warner called mobility studies "bare-boned empiricism," "a quantitative antiquarianism" in which historical analysis became "lost in technique."[16]

Miller also identified with the not-so-new urban history, explicitly so in a 1996 essay discussed below. The connection is also evident in *Boss Cox's Cincinnati*. At the center of that study stood a group of *philopolists*, a term Miller borrowed from a nineteenth-century historian of the city to describe civic-minded reformers. Eager to turn municipal politics "away from its preoccupation with order and toward a concern with social justice and the preservation of an open society," Miller's philopolists exemplified the desire for civic renewal in the Progressive Era. Although Miller was more hopeful than Warner about the potential triumph of civic values, what made his portrait of the Progressive Era convincing was his ability to capture the anxieties of a period that so many historians have described as optimistic. What Miller called a "desperate yet confident quest for a new urban discipline" captured the concern that the city's civic energies might not be equal to the tasks that private economic development had set for it.[17]

By *privatism*, Warner meant a tradition focused on the individual and the individual pursuit of wealth, tempered only by loyalty to one's immediate family. In the revolutionary period, Warner argued, Philadelphia already depended "upon the aggregate successes and failures of thousands of individual enterprises, not upon community action." But the revolutionary city was a more public city than what would follow. The heterogeneity of the walking city, mixing classes and occupations, work and residence, and social exchanges in streets and taverns, "guaranteed every citizen a knowledge of town life." The pace of work, too, contributed to "a more public, gossipy style of life" than would characterize the nineteenth- and twentieth-century city. Formal and informal clubs provided the "underlying social fabric" that would be mobilized in the Revolution. Inclusive "patterns of social and economic intercourse" precluded a revolutionary fracturing along class lines, but privatism made it difficult to allocate resources for public purposes or to balance the demands of army, merchants, and artisans. Distrustful of activist government, radical artisans proved unable to comprehend the international dimensions of

Downloaded from http://juh.sagepub.com at SUNY AT BUFFALO on January 31, 2008
© 2003 SAGE Publications. All rights reserved. Not for commercial use or unauthorized distribution.

both the war effort and the city's commercial economy. Moderate merchants understood the intricacies of the international market and revolutionary finance, but they failed to appreciate "the immediate needs of the city for a fair, publicly supervised allocation of food." Addressing the inflation and shortages that beset wartime Philadelphia, Warner concluded, "was not a task beyond the economic capabilities of the society, but it was a task beyond the political capabilities of the society."[18]

Civic and economic aspirations clashed more sharply in antebellum Philadelphia. Ethnic associations and machine politics provided some stability, but the deterioration of public life and the business elite's abandonment of public responsibility meant that "as a meaningful democratic society [Philadelphia] was out of control." Civic engagement gave way to municipal governance and "a new order in the rule of political bosses and professional police." Business leaders were too specialized and too nationally oriented to take much interest in the city. The failure of economic elites "to take responsibility for the consequences of the scale and organization of their business turned their personal benevolence to ashes." Political bosses were prisoners of local interests, careful not to let "popular enthusiasms" overrun their "loyalty to local economic interests." Thus, neither "weak government" nor distracted elites guided economic interests in such a way "that the destructive environments of the city would not perpetuate themselves." Philadelphia's inadequate waterworks provided an appalling example of the costs of privatism, as "citizens taxed themselves with disease and dirty drinking water in order to allow private pollution of the rivers to continue unabated." The public schools, as noted above, also fell short of their democratic potential.[19]

By the 1930s, Philadelphia was no closer to becoming a public city. The development of work groups made the "informal sociability of the shop and office" a stabilizing element in workers' lives and helped make the early twentieth-century city a "peaceable kingdom." But this occurred at the cost of "the displacement of a large measure of personal responsibility from the worker up the hierarchy of the firm to some known or unknown authority." Just as the emergence of a "they" in the workplace encouraged impassivity, the city itself became a "passive victim of its building process" and the "accumulation of thousands of individual decisions." The result was "total loss of control over the metropolitan environment." In the absence of an active citizenry, downtown business, real estate dealers, contractors, and professional politicians dominated municipal politics, spending too much on transit systems serving the downtown and too little improving neighborhoods. Philadelphia needed to "set up its own land development and housing institutions" as European cities had, providing funds allowing "the city to build for the mass of Philadelphians according to the best standards of the day." "In the end the failure of the industrial metropolis was political," Warner concluded, a failure "to deal with it as a public environment of a democratic society."[20]

Downloaded from http://juh.sagepub.com at SUNY AT BUFFALO on January 31, 2008
© 2003 SAGE Publications. All rights reserved. Not for commercial use or unauthorized distribution.

Warner's indictment of privatism did not imply that a different future was impossible. The existing structure of the city in 1968, Warner pointed out, did not "derive from today's necessities." The industrial city was "our inheritance, not our creation." Understanding that "two quite different Philadelphias previously stood where it stood" should "encourage us to consider today's urban relationships as by no means controlling the necessities of the future." Four years later, Warner would publish *The Urban Wilderness* (1972) in the hope that "people can choose for themselves intelligently what needs to be done and what has to be done to build humane cities." A sense of possibility also underwrote Miller's study. "Make no little plans," Miller quoted Daniel Burnham in characterizing the "exuberance" of Progressive-Era democracy, "they have no magic to stir men's blood." Recognizing that in 1968 "many Americans are troubled by our cities," Miller hoped to provide "liberation from ancient myths and cliches, and new perspectives on our long experience with urban life."[21]

In *Boss Cox's Cincinnati*, Miller developed four overlapping arguments.[22] In his first three chapters, "The New City, 1880-1914," Miller crafted a spatial analysis[23] of Cincinnati's transition from the old walking city to the expanded metropolis of the era of corporate capitalism. Miller's sensitivity to how social and economic tensions worked themselves out in space provided a guidebook to the new metropolitan form of the early twentieth century, as well as a model for others thinking about the city in spatial terms and a still-useful introduction to the peculiarities of twenty-first-century Cincinnati. In the second three chapters, "Decade of Disorder, 1880-1894," Miller examined the political paralysis that beset the expanding metropolis in the Gilded Age. He highlighted the role of Cox's machine in establishing communication and accommodation between antagonistic classes and interests in the newly divided city. In these chapters, Miller encouraged an ongoing rethinking of machine politics and bossism, showing that Boss Cox played a positive role in bringing new public services and good government to the city.

In chapters 7, 8, and 9, "Philopolism and the New Urban Discipline," Miller showed that Cox's suppression of the decade of disorder was not the culmination of Cincinnati's reform era but the beginning. Cox's efforts spurred a bevy of new reformers who rejected Cox's methods but not his strategy. Rather than puritanical or manipulative members of the middle class concerned only with social control, Miller's anti-machine reformers were civic-minded urban patriots. Although his reformers did sometimes come off as narrow-mindedly concerned with order (he is too good a historian to smother ambiguity), Miller conveyed the diversity of their motivations and the decency of their civic aspirations. In his final seven chapters, "Periphery and Center: The Politics of Reform," Miller analyzed the ensuing Progressive-Era contests between machine and reform, arguing that they hinged less on ethnic, class, or moralistic divisions than on a competition between central and peripheral neighborhoods. These final chapters are the most difficult to follow in the book. But perhaps that contributed to a larger message about the role of center-periphery

Downloaded from http://juh.sagepub.com at SUNY AT BUFFALO on January 31, 2008
© 2003 SAGE Publications. All rights reserved. Not for commercial use or unauthorized distribution.

divisions in the political paralysis that played such a large role in the deterioration of our cities in the second half of the twentieth century.

A SCAFFOLDING FOR OUR URBAN PAST AND FUTURE

Warner's and Miller's aspirations for the city do not markedly differ. Both have been actively involved in public planning projects and urban politics generally. Indeed, each has been honored under the rubric of the "urban historian as citizen." They are both committed to civilizing American cities and have seen public debate and civic enterprise as keys to the task. But they have developed different approaches and emphases that provide essential complements to one another. Frederic Jaher's complaint that Miller said little about business in *Boss Cox's Cincinnati*, for example, certainly could not be said about *The Private City*. At the same time, Samuel P. Hays's lament that *The Private City* never connected individual choices to the larger structure of politics could not be said about *Boss Cox's Cincinnati*. Taken together, the two books suggest the larger truth about our urban past, that Americans' faith in the free market has often frustrated their civic aspirations. In our own era, when government is labeled as the problem, privatization overtakes even the most basic public services, and the rich opt out entirely of the civic project, Warner's critique has never been more relevant. But Miller's work reminds us that Americans have never lacked for civic aspirations, that these aspirations have had incomplete victories and survived devastating defeats, and that politics remains the essential arena for their realization. These two seminal works provide a "scaffolding" for thinking about the past and the future of the American city.[24]

The central issue raised in comparing the two studies is the relationship of individual choice, civic vision, and economic and political power in city building. Hays found Warner's argument—that "an accumulation of innumerable decisions made by innumerable numbers of people in their private lives" shaped the city's development—a welcome relief from conspiratorial views of urban politics, with corporations and machines holding all the power and pulling all the strings. But he criticized Warner for failing to connect those innumerable private decisions to "networks of human relationships" and "the patterns of human interaction which generate structures." Hays wanted urban historians to examine the way those structures—and the inequalities of power embedded in them—encouraged or inhibited change. Warner's private decisions too often seemed to be made in a vacuum, never shaping and, in turn, never being shaped by a larger world of power and vision. Charles Tilly also regretted that Warner provided little "information about the political processes that have generated past decisions affecting cities" and failed to "tell us how the structure of American politics would have to change if his representation of popular interests were to come about" or "what might produce such changes." Warner agreed that he had "never done any systematic studies of politics"

Downloaded from http://juh.sagepub.com at SUNY AT BUFFALO on January 31, 2008
© 2003 SAGE Publications. All rights reserved. Not for commercial use or unauthorized distribution.

partly because of a belief "that the political system is only partially connected to the social and economic system." There seemed no way to get from the private city to the public city.[25]

Not that Warner lacked a conception of the public city. The public is at the center of his work. The early Warner, Robert Wiebe argued, saw a "combination of clear-eyed leadership and central planning to correct abuses of all kinds" as "the *public* alternative to *The Private City*." Warner's early studies, *Streetcar Suburbs* and *The Private City*, took a "jaundiced view of popular behavior," as millions of individual choices added up to dismal outcomes. Wiebe explained that the "very possibility of a public rather than a private city, in this scheme of things, depends on the capacity of some people to vault beyond the narrow push-and-shove of self-interest and turn their trained intelligence to the public interest." By the 1980s, Warner's faith in a rational, intellectual elite of enlightened planners had collapsed. The "distant central powers" had become "the primary enemy." Warner's later studies, especially *To Dwell Is to Garden* (1987), reflected the conviction that planners "monitored only by their own rationality threaten us with obliteration; individuals of conscience stand as our best hope." The "range of effective action in Warner's vision has narrowed," Wiebe explained, but the "numbers qualified to act have grown marvelously." In the early work, "individual decisions created the holy mess that planners had to resolve," whereas in the later work, "individual decisions . . . represent the sole possibility of resolving the holy mess that planners have wrought."[26]

For Warner, as for so many of us, the great attraction of the concept of the public is that it provides a way to talk about collective action that is distinct from the centralized, bureaucratic state. Richard Sennett recognized this in writing that Warner treated the "small efforts by individuals as more morally consequent than the large works of planners or the moves of bureaucracy." Wiebe, too, recognized that Warner's political transition was one that many Americans had gone through, including by his own account Wiebe himself. Becoming increasingly distrustful of a centralized, bureaucratic state, we have placed greater faith and hope in ordinary individuals. The problem, Sennett understood, was that the neglect and decay of American cities were the product of the policies of that centralized state. Without bringing that state under control, nothing could be changed. "Moral value and political reality," Sennett wrote as the 1996 welfare reform act was moving through Congress, "stands at odds—not only for Warner, for all of us" as "public decay accompanies the celebration of individual development." The elevation of the private above the public not only supported the "notion of punishing those who fail to sustain themselves." It also became "a way to divide the public and the private, the social and the individual—individual development versus the putrification of that which is collective." The decaying city became "a kind of negative confirmation that life lies in opposition, in resistance, to the mass."[27]

Downloaded from http://juh.sagepub.com at SUNY AT BUFFALO on January 31, 2008
© 2003 SAGE Publications. All rights reserved. Not for commercial use or unauthorized distribution.

A public that could not control the policies of the agencies that acted in its name was not worth much. Warner had struggled to overcome this problem in *The Urban Wilderness*, just as the "collective stain"—as Sennett put it—of urban decay had become impossible to ignore. The public response, Sennett lamented, had been "a deeply rooted, archaic political response: Reduce the scale of government, increase individual responsibility, decollectivize, and then regeneration can occur." Sennett did not mean to "lay the blame for Newt Gingrich at Sam Warner's feet." But the problem is a real one. George W. Bush, who is centralizing power in an ever-more militarized state, cynically campaigned for the presidency on essentially this platform: "I trust people, not government." Sennett urged us to consider a radically different approach to city politics. We should be searching for "new forms of collectivity" rather than "new forms of community," Sennett concluded, focusing not on "the charisma or the honesty of politicians" but on the larger political structures of power and the formation of a reinvigorated public that can control and redirect those structures.[28]

THE VISION THING

The issue is not the reality of privatism. Warner has correctly identified and appropriately railed against a central reality in our urban life. But how do we square the private city of our past with the public city of our civic aspirations? In focusing on the public process of thinking about the city and defining its problems—rather than on the private process of making economic and cultural choices—Miller addressed precisely those questions neglected in Warner's work. In a series of essays in *Reviews in American History*, Miller made explicit an approach to urban history that was implicit in *Boss Cox's Cincinnati*. Miller championed what he called "the cultural approach to urban history," a focus on the city as a city rather than a focus on particular social or economic groups within the city. He called for the investigation of "all facets of urban society as a means of understanding the development of American civilization." The key issue for Miller was "the problem of the definition of the term 'city,' and how the definition shapes the form, structure, and organization of urban life." In what was principally a review of Blaine Brownell's *The Urban Ethos in the South* (1975), Miller argued that Brownell was looking for "a guiding complex of beliefs concerning the nature and role of the urban community—an urban ethos." While he lauded Brownell's sensitivity to the "importance of space and place," Miller criticized what was only a "static snapshot" of the ethos that "provides us no sense of the mechanism and circumstances which triggered its formulation" and made it impossible to evaluate its consequences.[29]

Miller was, in short, interested in how new and different conceptions of the city gave rise to newly defined problems and possibilities. In a review of

Downloaded from http://juh.sagepub.com at SUNY AT BUFFALO on January 31, 2008
© 2003 SAGE Publications. All rights reserved. Not for commercial use or unauthorized distribution.

Richard B. Stott's *Workers in the Metropolis* (1990), Miller described our contemporary vision of the city as "an anti-deterministic impulse," the conviction that "individuals are or should be free to determine their own lifestyles and group affiliations as a means of achieving self-fulfillment." A product of the post–World War II rejection of the race- and place-based determinisms of totalitarian regimes, the new conception first appeared in studies of the national character, describing experiences and beliefs (not races or places) as the source of a democratic consensus. In the 1960s, the focus shifted to subgroups that historians argued had opted out of the consensus for one reason or another. Both the new labor history and the new urban history questioned the existence of a single working-class culture or experience. Enter Stott and his study of antebellum, male workers who created something different from "the highly ideological Anglo-American artisanal republicanism" of the early nineteenth century. In Stott's argument, an "abundance consciousness" made workers less suspicious of competition and more interested in enjoying a rough and vigorous plebeian culture. Their economic orientation was not toward a rejection of the wage system but only "about the denial of fair wages for their hard and fast work." Thus, Stott's workers were a more or less contented group, more or less sharing in American abundance. Although some critics might want to turn Stott's description on its head (thus condemning a hedonistic, sexist, and violent set of workers), Miller's point was that Stott's preoccupation with "amusement, recreation, and 'style' as a source of self-fulfillment and social satisfaction" was "characteristic of the latter twentieth-century revolt against determinism." It was, Miller chided, a "decidedly cheery account." He wondered whether Stott had read our own emphasis on private over public matters back into history and asked if that was a good thing for either the city's history or its future. The failure to put "politics back near the center of social history," Miller worried, led "away from social and economic questions and conflict, away from a concern for civic identity and civic virtue, and away from the question of the public interest."[30]

Miller had discovered privatism. The new understanding of the city that "emphasized the importance of individual choices in the past and made the advocacy of lifestyle choices a hallmark of American civilization," Miller wrote in a 1996 essay, generated tremendous interest in urban history. The city now seemed the ideal vehicle for the study of ethnic and racial minorities, popular culture and sports, and women and the family. But Arthur Schlesinger had long ago looked at such topics. The perspective, the approach, more than the topics, had changed. Schlesinger and his fellow urbanists of the 1920s and 1930s had assumed that groups, not individuals, were the "basic units of American life in the past and the present" and the source of personal and cultural identity. Some groups lagged behind others in adapting to city life, they believed, and so the city would always have problems. But urbanization—which encouraged improved standards of living, a "more inclusive democracy," and "the sharing of cultural traits among groups,"—meant progress, just

Downloaded from http://juh.sagepub.com at SUNY AT BUFFALO on January 31, 2008
© 2003 SAGE Publications. All rights reserved. Not for commercial use or unauthorized distribution.

"so long as the great variety of groups interacted in a competitive and cooperative manner that kept the social and civic peace." Schlesinger and his colleagues believed that "sophisticated managers of intergroup relations" could design the city to ensure that peace and progress. Temporary residential segregation of "lagging" groups—while "urban design and management" spread competence—would keep the peace and promote intergroup toleration and understanding.[31]

The anti-determinist approach took over when expert design and management failed to keep the peace or promote toleration. This anti-determinist approach shaped the new history. The focus shifted to individuals and the "obligation to define their own culture rather than to accept and learn the culture of the group into which they had been born." Richard Wade's *The Urban Frontier* (1959) was an example of the new approach, undermining the deterministic notion that successive frontiers created the American character. Instead, Wade found cities shaping the frontier and described those cities as collections of diverse, choosing individuals intent on the "creation and improvement of a civilization comparable to that of older places." This history usefully reminded "people that individuals in the past also sought to invent cultures and make cultural choices—reminders that help legitimize the doing of it in the present." But the idea of what Miller elsewhere called a community of "limited liability" provided "the basis for profound changes in the way Americans lived in and treated cities." Emphasis on choice brought not peace and harmony but a new set of conflicts based on "the assertion that one person's or group's choice should not inhibit other persons and groups from making their own and different choices." Experts and compromisers were rejected, the first blamed for telling others what to do, the second for being unable to make and stick to choices. A "policy paralysis" set in, based on "the general assertion that everybody possesses the right to choose a lifestyle but to exercise it only in a neighborhood of like-minded people." The private city eclipsed the public city.[32]

Rather than eliminate the freedoms of the private city, Miller hoped to balance them with the demands and the possibilities of the public city. The earlier urbanists, Miller wrote, had "tied economic and cultural progress inextricably to the civic and political realms." They took as axiomatic the "obligation of individuals to be good citizens, to cultivate intergroup tolerance and understanding, and to make the personal sacrifices and compromises necessary to keep the civic and political systems going." By obscuring "the idea of civic commitment and the pursuit of the public interest as a source of personal satisfaction," the emphasis on individual choice and lifestyle had created a "crisis of civic and political virtue." Civic and political engagement had been disastrously redefined as a "means for the realization of personal aspirations instead of the promotion of the public interest." The example of Wade, who shared the new understanding of the city but combined it with a concern for civic and political life, might "help put arguments about visions of the public welfare

Downloaded from http://juh.sagepub.com at SUNY AT BUFFALO on January 31, 2008
© 2003 SAGE Publications. All rights reserved. Not for commercial use or unauthorized distribution.

back at the center of our civic and political life." These public visions were essential to negotiating the private conflicts that now only "feed the country's antiparty, antipolitician, and antigovernment mood," fostering not just policy paralysis but corrosive cynicism. It might even help "revive the idea of civic identity," Miller concluded, "as a solution to the problem of historical narrative and synthesis about which we've heard so much." The public city has much to offer to both historical understanding and contemporary politics.[33]

UNITING THE PRIVATE AND PUBLIC CITIES

Just as Miller shared Warner's concern about privatism, Warner shared Miller's hope for public action. Dolores Hayden's response to Warner's "argument that urban residents need to be involved in pressing for public space and amenities" showed that he could also inspire such action. Hayden studied "urban landscapes as public history," teaching people how those landscapes "represent the social and economic struggles of the majority of ordinary citizens." Tilly also lauded Warner for examining cities as "settings for human life, reflecting incessantly on how that human life could improve through wise, historically informed public action." But Tilly cautioned about the need for a balance between the public and the private city. "Concentrations of political power and of productive capacity make urban life possible," Tilly wrote, "but that life only remains healthy below a certain modest scale and in the presence of a well-regulated balance between the two city-building forces." Too much of one gives us Rome; too much the other gives us Coketown. Similarly, our understanding of the urban past requires the insights and approaches of Warner as well as those of Miller.[34]

Terrence J. McDonald's review of Eric H. Monkkonen's *America Becomes Urban* (1988) provides some clues as to how a synthesis of Warner and Miller might work. Treating the city as an agent in its own right, not passively shaped by outside forces but actively shaping itself, Monkkonen identified the shift from a "regulatory" to an "active" city as the key transformation in American urban history. Once a reactive agency concerned to regulate the local economy in defense of the presumed public good or commonwealth, the city shifted to an active booster of the local economy. "Self-promotion, boosterism, and a constant attention to the economic main chance," Monkkonen wrote, led to the creation of an aggressive, highly bureaucratized municipality dedicated to the promotion of capitalist growth. Making investments, offering land grants, and providing an expanding array of public services, the active city created the economic and social environments that enhanced local advantages and attracted investment. Monkkonen thus turned the argument about privatism on its head. Rejecting the critiques of Lewis Mumford, Jane Jacobs, Warner, and others, Monkkonen argued that the booster mentality had generated great improvements in housing, transportation, and public utilities over the past 150 years.

Downloaded from http://juh.sagepub.com at SUNY AT BUFFALO on January 31, 2008
© 2003 SAGE Publications. All rights reserved. Not for commercial use or unauthorized distribution.

Pro-business promoters and reformers created a service-oriented municipal government, an active city that successfully tackled a host of urban problems. Monkkonen hoped to overcome the "invisibility" of the active city and the service revolution and encourage Americans to appreciate their urban accomplishments. Private interests, it appeared, had been responsible for the development of the public city.[35]

McDonald contrasted Monkkonen's synthesis of American urban history with a study similar in scope and sharing the ambition to reshape American attitudes about the city, Warner's *The Urban Wilderness*. The "urban wilderness" was the product of a system, a set of structures, arising out of privatism. Warner hoped to show that an alternative existed, at the neighborhood level, in the form of a "cultural consensus" about the importance of equal access to public utilities, amenities, and opportunities. But McDonald believed that Warner's neighborhood alternative remained, at best, speculative. Warner treated neighborhoods as victims of the structure of privatism. "By both emphasizing structure and failing to consider political—or other—examples of change, Warner defeated his own purpose," McDonald continued. "He set out to write a book about 'choice,' but the story he told allowed 'structure' to overwhelm it." *America Becomes Urban*, McDonald argued, more effectively restored "a sense of human agency to American history . . . putting politics back into that history." The same urban developments that Warner derided—the single-minded pursuit of wealth through boosterism, the preference for property values over community values, subsidies for private transportation rather than provision of public transportation—were simply popular, democratic choices. These choices were the products of "human action, human institutions, human organizations" and nothing more, Monkkonen wrote, certainly not "inevitable physical manifestation of vague economic and social and geographical forces." As McDonald put it, such choices were a "problem only for those who disagree with those choices."[36]

Private choice and private interest had given us just the level of public enterprise we desired, Monkkonen's study showed, which turned out to be a very high level. Monkkonen and others justly celebrated the accomplishments of the service city. In *The Unheralded Triumph* (1984), Jon Teaford showed that early twentieth-century American cities enjoyed a higher level of public services than their European counterparts. In *The American Planning Tradition* (2000), Robert Fishman also marveled at an early twentieth-century "legacy of public spaces, public transit, public parks, public libraries, public schools, public health, and public safety." But Fishman's warning that "merely preserving this legacy sometimes seems beyond our present capacities" suggests why McDonald refused to leave matters there. The long-reigning vision of the "active city" that supported the service revolution, McDonald noted, is currently losing out to a "coalition of ideological 'free marketeers' and victims of the city's failures," bringing the era of the active city to an end in favor of privatization. McDonald went on to argue that the urban vision that had

Downloaded from http://juh.sagepub.com at SUNY AT BUFFALO on January 31, 2008
© 2003 SAGE Publications. All rights reserved. Not for commercial use or unauthorized distribution.

underwritten the service city had a contested history and could not be treated simply as a democratic consensus built up out of innumerable individual choices.[37]

Returning to public issues, McDonald insisted on asking who did the choosing, under what circumstances, and in the context of what distribution of power. Corporate status, Monkkonen wrote, gave American cities the capacity to "borrow and lend, build and destroy, expand and contract," ultimately to "appear and disappear." He examined how cities "came to their corporate status, what they have done with this status, and how they have shaped themselves." But the history of the municipal corporation, McDonald reminded us, has been filled with arguments about "the use of public power for private purposes." These arguments called into question "the connection between corporate status and boosterism" that Monkkonen treated as part of a consensus. In McDonald's treatment, Monkkonen's story of a progressive march toward urban solutions becomes a conflict among taxpayers, boosters, bureaucrats, and ordinary citizens "over the boundaries between private and public." More than "some linear progress toward the solution of urban problems," McDonald concluded, the "reigning 'vision' of the city" might be nothing more than the "ideology that the 'winners' in these contests use to mobilize their coalition and its supporters." The public contest over competing urban visions, it turns out, was just as important as the aggregation of individual choices in establishing the boundaries of the private and public cities.[38]

PUBLIC POWER, PRIVATE INTEREST

In trying to understand the struggle over the use of public power for private interests, we might examine how Warner's private interests shaped Miller's public process of imagining the city. In reviewing Arnold Hirsch's *Making the Second Ghetto* (1983), Miller gave a glimpse of what that examination might look like. According to Miller, *Making the Second Ghetto* reinforced the view that ghettos "emerge not from the operation of impersonal forces but because of decisions made and carried out by people." It did so by indicting private decision makers, realtors and bankers, violent mobs, and the public decision makers they influenced—governmental officials, political parties, and reformers of various stripes. The tension in Hirsch's study, Miller found, was between his "assertion of the uninevitability of the creation of the second ghettos (because of the availability of alternatives) and his stress on the pervasiveness of the white determination to preserve the residential color line." Believing that the ghetto was our central problem and that "like any legacy, we can reject it, if we choose," Miller wanted to emphasize the hopeful Hirsch. Referring to Hirsch's alternative visions of integration, on one hand, and nondiscrimination, on the other, Miller asked whether the triumphant vision of nondiscrimination was powerful enough to overcome the private interests that wished to

Downloaded from http://juh.sagepub.com at SUNY AT BUFFALO on January 31, 2008
© 2003 SAGE Publications. All rights reserved. Not for commercial use or unauthorized distribution.

uphold the ghetto. A more forthrightly integrationist vision, Miller concluded, might have been more effective in overcoming narrow self-interest. Miller here treats public visions—like all ideas—as tools that we should judge by their utility. Useful ideas and visions create new possibilities in suggesting new approaches and overcoming entrenched interests. This pragmatic approach to ideas suggests that public vision is potentially more powerful than private interest.[39]

Again, Miller is not so different from Warner in this. Tilly argued that however much the Warner of *The Urban Wilderness* borrowed from Lewis Mumford in his overall critique, he broke with Mumford on one point. "Whereas Mumford intimates that it will take acts of creative genius and benevolent despotism to bring about the better world of which he dreams," Tilly wrote, "Warner claims we have the essential knowledge for improvement and need democratic discussion to recognize our common needs." Hayden similarly found in Warner's work the challenge to create "a public, political culture that can carry the American city into the next century." Tilly called the Warner of *The Urban Wilderness* an "optimistic populist," writing at the University of Michigan that had given birth to the Students for a Democratic Society. "Warner insists that the past was open," Tilly concluded, "subject to the collective choices that Americans made without always foreseeing the consequences."[40]

The idea that the past was open not only reinforces our understanding of future possibilities but also encourages us to rethink how we write history. Hays argued that Warner's study of Philadelphia was less a description of what had actually happened than an explanation of why the city had not developed in the "progressive" manner that Warner held as normative. *The Private City*, Hays wrote, offered "an explanation for the failure of cities to develop in a particular way, according to Warner's norms, rather than a systematic description of the evolution of cities themselves." Warner explained his approach rather differently. In "every period of time, when you look back," Warner said, "it's perfectly clear that there were choices that the society turned down that would have made a difference." Hays's criticism is fair if a historian is importing options and possibilities not actually present in the historical situation. But in the hands of a present-minded historian, Hays's "systematic description of the evolution of cities" would make whatever has happened seem inevitable. It would flatten our historical understanding and collapse our sense of possibility. The fullest explanation of a historical situation requires an analysis of all the alternatives contained within the situation and, incidentally, heightens our sensitivity to choice and possibility in the present.[41]

Warner has something essential to add to this conception of ideas as tools. For, as McDonald and the postmodernists have suggested, ideas are also instruments of power. As free as we might be to pick and choose among competing ideas based on their utility, ideas do advance interests and require constituencies. Power and vision operate together. Warner recognized this in *The*

Downloaded from http://juh.sagepub.com at SUNY AT BUFFALO on January 31, 2008
© 2003 SAGE Publications. All rights reserved. Not for commercial use or unauthorized distribution.

Urban Wilderness when he wrote that "the late development of the labor movement, legitimized only in the mid-thirties, and the consequent failure of the labor and urban reform movements to coalesce have contributed to the heavy middle-class bias of our urban programs and weakened all attempts to serve the lowest third of the population." It is also a point that is implicit in *Boss Cox's Cincinnati*. In examining the rise of Cox's machine and the reformers who toppled the boss, Miller understood that the erstwhile antagonists actually shared the same strategy and "were interlocking parts in the new system of urban politics." Steven Ross's study of Cincinnati's artisans, *Workers on the Edge* (1985), helps us see that boss and reformers were advancing a new vision of the city that triumphed over an older one—what Monkkonen called the "regulatory city"—which the city's artisans had attempted to revive in the 1880s. In the hands of Cincinnati artisans (and nationally in the United Labor Party campaigns of the mid-1880s), the "regulatory" city became a powerful vision for redirecting industrial development in the interest of a cooperative commonwealth that challenged the service-city vision of the municipality as a business corporation providing a limited set of public services. In a variety of early twentieth-century reform movements inspired by Henry George, the view of the city as a republican commonwealth would continue to inject questions of social justice and democratic participation into city politics.[42]

Notwithstanding its real accomplishments, the service-city vision helped remove those explosive questions of social justice and democratic participation from city politics. Walter A. Draper, member of the Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce and one of Miller's philopolists, argued that "the problems that confront us will not be settled by the radical nor by the stand-patter, but by the progressive conservative." The city's business leadership, Draper argued, had seen that a "new order of things must prevail . . .[and] have determined that the knife that will perform the operation must not cut deeply enough to kill." Miller's philopolists organized their strategy around the service-city vision, which allowed them to avoid the "divisive, emotional, and hysterical responses" that had immobilized some municipal leaders but empowered others. In doing so, the philopolists narrowed the range of issues open to debate in ways that reinforced the power of business leaders. Warner and Miller still have much to teach us about the role of power and vision in establishing the boundaries between the private and the public city.[43]

NOTES

1. Sam Bass Warner Jr., *The Private City: Philadelphia in Three Periods of Its Growth* (Philadelphia, 1968); Zane L. Miller, *Boss Cox's Cincinnati: Urban Politics in the Progressive Era* (Columbus, OH, 2000; reprint of original 1968 edition); and William V. Shannon, review of *Boss Cox's Cincinnati* in the *New York Times Book Review*, February 9, 1969, 6. I would like to thank the book editor of the H-Urban Web site, Roger Biles, for originally asking me to review the new edition of *Boss Cox's Cincinnati* and for encouraging me to revise the essay for print publication. I would also like to thank my volunteer research assistant,

Downloaded from http://juh.sagepub.com at SUNY AT BUFFALO on January 31, 2008
© 2003 SAGE Publications. All rights reserved. Not for commercial use or unauthorized distribution.

Linda Dehner, who has provided me with a wealth of interesting material (including Shannon's review) that I would not have had time to gather for myself. A good introduction to urban policy in the 1960s is Mark I. Gelfand, *A Nation of Cities: The Federal Government and Urban America, 1933-1965* (New York, 1975). No one actually taught urban history at the University of Rochester where I did my graduate work. My second year there (1980), I did an independent study in urban history, directed by a nonspecialist. The reading list I put together featured *The Private City* and *Boss Cox's Cincinnati*. Having lived and worked in the Cincinnati metropolitan area for the past eighteen years and having developed a friendship with Miller, my debt to *Boss Cox's Cincinnati* has been made obvious even as it deepened. In the course of writing this essay, I have reread *The Private City* and now recognize how much that book, often unconsciously, has shaped my concerns. These two books, for one not formally trained as an urban historian, provided a provocative introduction to the field. Another remarkable thing about the two books is their efficiency. Both develop complex historical arguments, based on extensive primary sources, in concise 223-page (*The Private City*) and 241-page (*Boss Cox's Cincinnati*) volumes. In a period when monographs routinely reach 400 pages or more, these two works remain favorites of classroom teachers. They might also be taken as a model for younger, more verbose scholars.

2. Warner, *The Private City*, ix-xii, "public dimensions," 202; Miller, *Boss Cox's Cincinnati*, 239-41.

3. Even as Warner deepened his critique of the private city in *The Urban Wilderness* (New York, 1972), concern for urban affairs reached "low tide." See Reed Whitmore's review of *The Urban Wilderness* in *The New Republic* 168 (1973): 30-1. The Nixon administration's lack of interest in domestic affairs is captured in Jonathan Schell, *The Time of Illusions* (New York, 1976). Michael Frisch, Theodore Hershberg, and Michael B. Katz, "30th Anniversary of the Yale Urban History Conference," Lynn Hollen Lees, "The New Urban History Revisited," and Stuart Blumin, "Yale in 1968: The New Urban History?" *The Urban History Newsletter* (October 1998): 1-4. For a discussion of the war on poverty's impact on the inner city, see Nicolaus Lemann, *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How It Changed America* (New York, 1991). See also Nicolaus Lemann, *The Big Test: The Secret History of the American Meritocracy* (New York, 1999), on the pernicious impact of meritocracy in American life.

4. Stephen Thernstrom, "Reflections on the New Urban History," *Daedalus* (Spring 1971): 359-72. Stephen Thernstrom, *Poverty and Progress: Social Mobility in a Nineteenth Century City* (Cambridge, MA, 1964). Thernstrom's study focused on those at the very bottom of the occupational structure who were, admittedly, the most difficult to mobilize politically. But the claims made transcended the limits of the evidence. Alan Dawley's *Class and Community: The Industrial Revolution in Lynn, Massachusetts* (Cambridge, MA, 1976) explicitly took issue with Thernstrom's findings. "Electoral politics, not faith in occupational success or property ownership," Dawley concluded, "was the main safety valve of working class discontent" (pp. 218-9). A few other studies reflecting the mobilization of ordinary people in this period are Iver Bernstein, *The New York City Draft Riots* (New York, 1990); Phillip Shaw Paludan, *A People's Contest: The Union and the Civil War, 1861-1865* (New York, 1988); Leon Fink, *Workingmen's Democracy: The Knights of Labor and American Democracy* (Urbana, IL, 1983); the discussion of urban populism in Lawrence Goodwyn, *Democratic Promise: The Populist Moment in America* (New York, 1976); and Steven J. Ross, *Workers on the Edge: Work, Leisure, and Politics in Industrializing Cincinnati, 1788-1890* (New York, 1985).

5. Thernstrom, "Reflections"; Edward Pessen, "*Poverty and Progress*: A Critique," *Social Science History* 10 (Spring 1986): 5-14, quoted passage on 8; Bruce M. Stave, "A Conversation with Sam Bass Warner, Jr.: Ten Years Later," *Journal of Urban History* 11 (November 1984): 83-113; Lees, "New Urban History."

6. Instead of uncritically adopting such concepts as social mobility from social science, Christopher Lasch argued, historians would have been "better advised to subject the concept itself to historical analysis." Christopher Lasch, "Opportunity in the Promised Land: Social Mobility or the Democratization of Competence," the third chapter of Lasch's *The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy* (New York, 1995), 50-79. A number of mobility studies presented at the Yale Conference are reproduced in Stephen Thernstrom and Richard Sennett, eds., *Nineteenth Century Cities: Essays in the New Urban History* (New Haven, CT, 1969). On the influence of social scientific methods, particularly studies of social mobility, see Raymond A. Mohl, "New Perspectives on American Urban History," *International Journal of Social Education* 1 (Spring 1986): 69-97. For a fuller discussion of "behavior" and the outlook of the social sciences, see Christopher Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven* (New York, 1991), 120-67.

7. Lincoln's response to the mudsill theory quoted and examined in Lasch, *The Revolt of the Elites*, 50-79. "The point is not to reduce Lincoln's Whiggery to personal striving for 'upward social mobility,' " Howe adds, "but to see in his political and social views as expanding a dedication to human self-development that

Downloaded from http://juh.sagepub.com at SUNY AT BUFFALO on January 31, 2008
© 2003 SAGE Publications. All rights reserved. Not for commercial use or unauthorized distribution.

his own life manifested." Daniel Walker Howe, *The Political Culture of American Whigs* (Chicago, 1979), 291, 267; Lincoln quoted on 291.

8. Stuart M. Blumin, *The Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experience in the American City, 1760-1900* (New York, 1989), specifically chap. 4 on "Republican Prejudice: Work, Well-Being, and Social Definition," 108-37. Blumin's chapter does what Lasch urged historians to do, to subject the concept of social mobility to historical analysis.

9. Ibid., 108-37. Blumin's recognition of "the need to look beyond the celebratory rhetoric to social conditions and attitudes that may have differed significantly from those proclaimed on the political stump and the lyceum platform" (p. 109) has borne additional fruit in his study of the "engaged disbelief" that characterized Jacksonian politics. See Glenn C. Althschuler and Stuart M. Blumin, "Limits of Political Engagement in Antebellum America: A New Look at the Golden Age of Participatory Democracy," *Journal of American History* 84 (December 1997): 855-85.

10. Thomas Bender, *New York Intellect: A History of Intellectual Life in New York City, from 1750 to the Beginnings of Our Own Time* (Baltimore, 1987), 80-116.

11. Henry George, *Social Problems* (New York, 1883), 9-12; *Constitution of the Knights of Labor* (1878); *Populist Party Platform* (1892).

12. Sam Bass Warner Jr., "The Management of Multiple Urban Images," in Derek Fraser and Anthony Sutcliffe, eds., *The Pursuit of Urban History* (London, 1983), 383-94.

13. Even best recent historical work, Thomas Bender worried in 1986, explored the "private . . . worlds of trades, occupations, and professions; locality; sisterhood, race and ethnicity," while neglecting "the relations of those cultures in the public world." Thomas Bender, "Whole and Parts: The Need for Synthesis in American History" *Journal of American History* 73 (June 1986): 120-36. The "race, gender, class" orientation seems particularly pronounced in "public" history itself. In our zeal to recount and connect with the diverse histories of subgroups, we have a tendency to segregate and therefore minimize the importance of those histories instead of bringing them to bear on public debates. For a collection, some of whose essays point the way toward civic engagement (while others illustrate the problem addressed above), see Susan Porter Benson, Stephen Brier, and Roy Rosenzweig, eds., *Presenting the Past: Essays on History and the Public* (Philadelphia, 1986). The comments on "city as a crucible" and "status games" are from Frisch, Hershberg, and Katz, "30th Anniversary." Trained in the "archetypal, individualistic style" is from Lee, "New Urban History." For building a community of scholars, see Blumin, "Yale in 1968."

14. Stave, "Conversation with Warner," 87; Michael Frisch, "*Poverty and Progress*: A Paradoxical Legacy," *Social Science History* 10 (Spring 1986): 15-22; the original source of the comparison with Edward Thompson is Michael Katz, "Comment on 'Social Structure and Politics in American History' by Edward Pessen," *American Historical Review* 87 (December 1982): 1329. Pessen expressed a critique similar to mine. "Thernstrom's assertions about the likely effect of working people's changing material circumstances on their political and social thought," Pessen argued, "attribute to the former excessive influence on the latter." Edward Pessen, "*Poverty and Progress*: A Critique," *Social Science History* 10 (Spring 1986): 5-13. On "community" and "class" (and "craft") consciousness, see John H. M. Laslett, "Establishing a Philosophy for American Labor," in Howard H. Quint and Milton Cantor, eds., *Men, Women, and Issues in American History* (Homewood, IL, 1975), vol. 2, 67-87. See also Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven*, 209-25. On the "sociological tradition," see Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven*, 120-67. Lasch wrote in reference to modernization theory's certainty about how events would unfold and its impatience with political innovation: "With some irritation, [Daniel] Lerner noted that ill-conceived innovations, 'taken in ignorance of the model,' introduced a 'stochastic factor' into an otherwise predictable sequence of events" (p. 159).

15. Arthur M. Schlesinger, "The City in American History," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 27 (June 1940): 43-66.

16. Warner, *The Private City*, 117; Warner quoted in Raymond A. Mohl, "New Perspectives on American Urban History," *International Journal of Social Education* 1 (Spring 1986): 69-97.

17. Miller, *Boss Cox's Cincinnati*, xxi, 111.

18. Warner, *The Private City*, ix-xi, 3-45. Interviewed in the *Journal of Urban History* in 1974, Warner explained that he used *privatism* as a synonym for capitalism. But he hoped the term would suggest the "internalizing" of capitalist values, an "individualistic, looking out for their family orientation, as opposed to some more communitarian focus." Privatism was not "simply a political or general large-scale ideology," he explained, "but it's carried within each individual, and it affects individual psychology." Stave, "Conversation with Sam Bass Warner, Jr.," 85-111. In light of the importance of civic republicanism in historical interpretation since 1968, it is difficult to read Warner on revolutionary Philadelphia without questioning the predominance of privatism. The attack on Robert Morris and other international merchants, however unfair,

Downloaded from http://juh.sagepub.com at SUNY AT BUFFALO on January 31, 2008
© 2003 SAGE Publications. All rights reserved. Not for commercial use or unauthorized distribution.

reflected the prevalence of values other than individual profit maximizing. Warner cites several examples of the condemnation of the market manipulations that raised the price of "bread and other necessaries of life" and proved "ruinous to the industrious poor." Newspapers printed long letters complaining that the colonists had "become indolent and depraved." Mobs cruised the streets condemning monopolizers. A local militia company published a letter that concluded, "We will see the virtuous, innocent and suffering part of the community redressed, and endeavor to divest this city of the disaffected, inimical, and preyers on the vitals of the inhabitants, be their rank or station what it may." Warner, *The Private City*, 34-8.

19. Warner, *The Private City*, 49-157.

20. Ibid., 161-223.

21. Ibid., 202; Warner, *The Urban Wilderness*, 4; Miller, *Boss Cox's Cincinnati*, xxi.

22. A request to review the new edition of *Boss Cox's Cincinnati* for H-Urban occasioned the uncomfortable feeling that I have made something of a career thinking and writing about the book and its author. Consequently, I offer here only a brief account of *Boss Cox's Cincinnati*. For a longer treatment of *Boss Cox's Cincinnati* (examined in light of Ross's *Workers on the Edge*), see my "Cincinnati's Search for Order," *Queen City Heritage* 48 (Summer 1990): 15-26; on Miller and other historians of Cincinnati, see my "Democracy in Cincinnati: Civic Virtue and Three Generations of Urban Historians," *Urban History* 24 (1997): 200-20. In its original form, this essay—as the anonymous reviewer of the *Journal of Urban History* put it—was something of "a hagiography of *Boss Cox's Cincinnati* and its author." Given its original purpose as a retrospective and celebratory review, that approach was perhaps appropriate. But as a criticism of an article for publication, the comment was entirely fair. Indeed, I want to thank the reviewer for pointing out that *Boss Cox's Cincinnati* did not reflect the assumptions and approaches of the new urban history. The reviewer's comment that the new urban history "emphasized social mobility and omitted politics" provided the starting point for rethinking this essay.

23. Although this is not the place to develop the point, Miller and Warner both were sensitive to the issue of space. Miller's explication of urban politics in terms of a conflict between periphery and center is usually—and understandably—cited as its most important contribution. Warner, who also noted the periphery-center tension in modern Philadelphia, showed how the physical layout of Philadelphia first facilitated and later discouraged social and civic interaction. Although one reviewer of *Boss Cox's Cincinnati* noted that "most urban sociologists today have discarded the ecological approach," space has proved to be the central concern of postmodern urbanists—which may not be to recommend it! But for a reasonably coherent discussion of space as the central category of the postmodern study of the city, see Michael J. Dear, *The Postmodern Urban Condition* (Malden, MA, 2000). On the ecological approach, see Joel A. Tarr's conscientious and useful review of *Boss Cox's Cincinnati* in the *American Historical Review* 74 (April 1969): 1380-1.

24. On their planning experience, see Sam Bass Warner Jr., *Planning a Nation of Cities* (Cambridge, MA, 1966); Zane L. Miller and Thomas H. Jenkins, eds., *The Planning Partnership: Participants' Views of Urban Renewal* (Beverly Hills, CA, 1982); and Robert Wiebe, "The Urban Historian as Citizen: In Honor of Sam Bass Warner, Jr.," *Journal of Urban History* 22 (July 1996): 626-48. On Miller as citizen, see Fairfield, "Democracy in Cincinnati"; Frederic C. Jaher, review of *Boss Cox's Cincinnati* in the *Journal of American History* 55 (March 1969): 883-4; Samuel P. Hays, review of *The Private City* in *Political Science Quarterly* 85 (December 1970): 644-5; Stave, "Conversation with Sam Bass Warner, Jr.," 85-111; Roy Lubove, review of *The Private City* in the *Journal of Economic History* 29 (June 1969): 409-11; and Blake McKelvey, review of *The Private City* in the *American Historical Review* (February 1969): 1082. *Scaffolding* comes, of course, from Warner's influential essay, "If All the World Were Philadelphia: A Scaffolding for Urban History, 1774-1930," *American Historical Review* 73 (October 1968): 26-43. On the rich opting out of the civic project (and for a brief historical account of that civic project), see Lasch, *The Revolt of the Elites*.

25. Hays, review of *The Private City*, 644-5. Charles Tilly's comments in Wiebe, "The Urban Historian as Citizen"; Stave, "A Conversation with Sam Bass Warner, Jr." "What is missing in this argument is how to get from where we are to where Warner wants us to be," wrote Richard Wade in his review of Warner's *The Urban Wilderness* in the *Journal of American History* 60 (September 1973): 471-4.

26. Wiebe, "The Urban Historian as Citizen."

27. Richard Sennett's comments in Wiebe, "The Urban Historian as Citizen."

28. Sennett's comments in Wiebe, "The Urban Historian as Citizen." Warner understood that the public had to engage the structures of power. "The landscapes of American metropolises can only be developed for beauty and environmental soundness," he wrote in 1993, "if there are strong state and federal policies to support such efforts. Such general policies, in turn, can only come into being if the preservationists, the landscapers, and the regionalists reach out to others to form political coalitions that join social justice with

Downloaded from http://juh.sagepub.com at SUNY AT BUFFALO on January 31, 2008
© 2003 SAGE Publications. All rights reserved. Not for commercial use or unauthorized distribution.

environmental planning and land use regulation." But he also thought it would "be difficult, if not impossible, for the separated citizens of the contemporary metropolis to form coalitions." The problem was that Americans had lost the authentic popular culture that once thrived in streets, cafés, and bars. With the rise of the leisure industry, "American popular culture ceased to be something that many people did and instead became something that a few people and institutions provided for many millions to watch and hear." Sam Bass Warner Jr., "The Public Settings of Everyday Life," *Reviews in American History* 20 (November 1993): 133-41.

29. Zane L. Miller, "Defining the City—and Urban History" (review of Blaine A. Brownell, *The Urban Ethos in the South, 1920-1930*), *Reviews in American History* 4 (September 1976): 436-41. Miller cited Jon Teaford's *The Municipal Revolution in America* (1975) and Kenneth Fox's soon to be published *Better City Government* (1977) as examples of the "cultural approach."

30. Zane L. Miller, "Cheers! (But Is That All There Is, My Friend?)" (review of Richard B. Stott, *Workers in the Metropolis: Class, Ethnicity, and Youth in Antebellum New York City*), *Reviews in American History* 18 (December 1990): 485-92.

31. Zane L. Miller, "The Crisis of Civic and Political Virtue: Urban History, Urban Life and the New Understanding of the City," *Reviews in American History* 24 (September 1996): 361-8.

32. Ibid. For a case study of this problem in Cincinnati's Over-the-Rhine neighborhood, see Zane L. Miller and Bruce Tucker, *Changing Plans for America's Inner Cities: Cincinnati's Over-the-Rhine and Twentieth Century Urbanism* (Columbus, OH, 1998). The phrase *limited liability* comes from Morris Janowitz via Zane L. Miller, "The Role and Concept of Neighborhood in American Cities," in Robert Fisher and Peter Romanofsky, eds., *Community Organization for Urban Social Change* (Westport, CT, 1981). Michael J. Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent: American in Search of a Public Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA, 1996), examines the philosophical and practical limitations of public policies based on the right of all to choose their "lifestyles." Richard C. Wade, *The Urban Frontier: The Rise of Western Cities, 1790-1830* (Urbana, IL, 1996; reprint of 1959 edition).

33. Miller, "Crisis of Civic and Political Virtue."

34. Dolores Hayden's and Charles Tilly's comments in Wiebe, "The Urban Historian as Citizen."

35. Terrence J. McDonald, "Rediscovering the Active City" (review essay on Eric H. Monkkonen, *America Becomes Urban: The Development of U.S. Cities and Towns, 1780-1980*), *Journal of Urban History* 16 (May 1990): 304-11.

36. Ibid.

37. Jon C. Teaford, *The Unheralded Triumph: City Government in America, 1870-1900* (Baltimore, 1984); Robert Fishman, ed., *The American Planning Tradition* (Washington, D.C., 2000), 1; McDonald, "Rediscovering the Active City"; and Eric H. Monkkonen, *America Becomes Urban: The Development of U.S. Cities and Towns, 1780-1980* (Berkeley, CA, 1988).

38. McDonald, "Rediscovering the Active City"; Monkkonen, *America Becomes Urban*.

39. Zane L. Miller, "Villains All?" (review of Arnold R. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960*), *Reviews in American History* 12 (September 1984): 429-34. In *Changing Plans for America's Inner Cities*, Miller has made his own case about the urban visions that support and those that might undermine the ghetto. Miller and Tucker, *Changing Plans*. Although he does not explicitly say so, Miller is employing a pragmatic approach to ideas. For a brief and clear statement of the pragmatic conception of ideas, see Alan Ryan's review of Louis Menand's *The Metaphysical Club* (New York, 2001) in the *New York Review of Books*, May 31, 2001, 16-20.

40. Tilly's and Hayden's comments in Wiebe, "The Urban Historian as Citizen."

41. Hays, review of *The Private City*; Stave, "A Conversation with Sam Bass Warner, Jr."

42. Sam Bass Warner Jr., *The Urban Wilderness* (New York, 1972), 230-1; and Steven J. Ross, *Workers on the Edge: Work, Leisure and Politics in Industrializing Cincinnati, 1788-1890* (New York, 1985). On the transition from the regulatory city to the service city, see Jon C. Teaford, *The Municipal Revolution in America: Origins of Modern Urban Government, 1625-1825* (New York, 1984), and Zane L. Miller, "Scarcity, Abundance, and American Urban History," *Journal of Urban History* 4 (February 1978), 131-56. For a fuller discussion of the intersection of *Workers on the Edge* and *Boss Cox's Cincinnati*, see Fairfield, "Cincinnati's Search for Order." For a fuller discussion of the transition from regulatory to business corporation, see John D. Fairfield, *The Mysteries of the Great City: The Politics of Urban Design* (Columbus, OH, 1993), chap. 3. The weakness of Miller's otherwise convincing study of Over-the-Rhine is related to the role of ideas as instruments of power. That work seems reluctant to acknowledge that the idea of the "public interest" has too often been used myopically, if not cynically, in ways that ignored the needs and interests of

Downloaded from http://juh.sagepub.com at SUNY AT BUFFALO on January 31, 2008
© 2003 SAGE Publications. All rights reserved. Not for commercial use or unauthorized distribution.

the poor and the black. See my review of Miller, *Changing Plans for America's Inner Cities* in *The Northwest Ohio Quarterly* (Summer/Autumn 1998), 185-8.

43. Miller, *Boss Cox's Cincinnati*, 120-21, 239.

John D. Fairfield has taught U.S. history at Xavier University in Cincinnati since 1984. His most recent publication is "The Park in the City: Baseball Landscapes Civically Considered" in *Material History Review* (2001). He is completing a book on civic ideals and public life in the United States.

Downloaded from http://juh.sagepub.com at SUNY AT BUFFALO on January 31, 2008
© 2003 SAGE Publications. All rights reserved. Not for commercial use or unauthorized distribution.