

## Compte rendu

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Lancaster Regionalism Group (1985) *Localities, Class and Gender*. London, Pion Press, Research in Planning and Design Series, 238 p.

par John H. Bradbury

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LANCASTER REGIONALISM GROUP (1985) *Localities, Class and Gender*. London, Pion Press, Research in Planning and Design Series, 238 p.

There are three key words in the title of this book, *Localities, Class and Gender* which spark the immediate attention of researchers in geography and other disciplines who are interested in analysing current day problems in rapidly changing capitalist societies. This collection of essays makes a valiant attempt to synthesize the current threads of the problematic in a declining industrial region in England, namely the areas in and around Lancaster. There is an obvious concern in present-day England to come to some understanding, at least at the intellectual level, of the devastation brought about by the current round of industrial restructuring — which if not precipitated by Margaret Thatcher's actions has at the very least been left to bleed by her government.

The social and economic landscape of parts of industrial Britain in the 1980's resembles a rusting scrap heap of humanity and industry. While the United States has its sun belt and its rust belt, and Canada has its sunset and sunrise industries, Britain has its "north" where deindustrialization is rife and where capital has fled and abandoned its towns, communities, people and workforce. This is the primary theme of this book to explain how and why it happens and to seek salvation for the social and economic debris of Thatcherism in the 1980's.

The second theme of the book arises out of a complex set of issues surrounding gender relations in industry, community and household structures. In the first instance gender relations are examined in the contemporary context of the workplace suggesting that there is a major reorientation taking place from industrial to manufacturing jobs which has also embraced a swing from male to female employment, especially in the service sector. What is clear in the book, however, is that the service sector in Britain, just as it is in North America, is not the all embracing saviour of the so-called post-industrial society. Indeed it becomes clear in this book that there are only certain sectors of the economy, certain regions and certain classes who will benefit from the resorting of skills, gender roles and job locations in the restructuring phase of the 1980's. The drip down effect of the service sector is thus rather limited in extent and gender spread.

Several authors in the book pursue the issue of gender differences in the workplace in an historical context by noting that the debate on patriarchy in the workplace is one which is both revealing and very consistent. Briefly the argument over patriarchy as a causal factor, suggests that a male dominated workplace has created a male biased decision making climate and a rationalization of and for the subordination of women. The pursuit of this issue has raised a number of fascinating questions for recent changes in women's employment and invokes questioning of the whole thesis and issue of skilling and deskilling promoted by industrial sociologists in recent

years. Briefly the patriarchy thesis runs as follows: "Changes in modes of control at work do not necessarily link with changes in work itself. And, indeed, the main changes in the work tasks,... (which disqualify women from promotion), were (are) not the result of a changed mode of control at work, but were (are) the culmination of a particular form of patriarchal control." (p. 193)

The third theme of the book, and one must talk about themes in a multi-authored book, evolves from a strong move in Britain to structure research around an analytical framework which focusses on local research and «localism» but which embraces a regional and national understanding of changes in the political economy. This technique is not unique to the sociologists who are the authors and who form the Lancaster group on regionalism. Rather it is a strongly felt move amongst academics and policy oriented researchers in geography and other social sciences as well who have adopted a political economy approach. Indeed it appears that a decision to make such a research strategy move is proving fruitful for our understanding of current trends and problems at the local level. However, it does not appear to have resulted in any dramatic changes in government policy at the local or the regional level in Britain. Perhaps the recalcitrance of the Thatcher government is to blame for this and not the poverty of policy arising from the research groups at the local level. Nevertheless policy is an area touched on in the book and great attention is paid to attempting to explain "why different policy and political outcomes arise, particularly as these are mediated through local, spatially variable processes".

The cover jacket of the book notes that this is a jointly written effort. This implies a lot more than actually appears in print for it suggests a degree of uniformity and consistency in content, presentation and quality. The chapters are very variable in almost all matters suggesting that a further round of editing and match-writing was needed. There are eleven chapters noted with seven authors and it is probable (clear?) that they were written as separate units. I should note here that I both sympathize and empathize with the author group because multi-authored writing is the most difficult to achieve a balance in. Nevertheless we must note that some chapters are exceedingly complex and contorted, bearing the mark of a dense and "shorthand" note style of writing whilst others are more mature in their presentation and allow the reader to reflect and to grow with the writing. The book will prove useful to researchers and students in sociology and geography and for policy makers wishing to make a sympathetic linkage with local area studies. While the book will have a professional audience it does not readily lend itself to undergraduate classes.

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GIBSON, Anne et FAST, Timothy (1986) *The Women's Atlas of the United States*. New York/Oxford, Facts on File Publications, 248 p.

Voilà une publication qui vient à point et qui frappe par sa richesse et son originalité. Les auteurs affirment au départ que leur intention consiste beaucoup plus à soulever des questions qu'à y répondre. C'est vrai. Mais il n'en demeure pas moins qu'à travers une série tout à fait remarquable d'exposés cartographiques, ils développent un plaidoyer sur le mode interrogatif certes, mais un plaidoyer tout de même. Ainsi de la démographie à la politique en passant par l'éducation, l'emploi, la famille, la santé et le crime, ils dévoilent un scénario d'une grande clarté. S'agissant de la position des femmes dans la société et sur le territoire américain, les auteurs montrent à quel point celle-ci est à la fois en progression mais toujours en défaveur. À quel point, malgré leur pouvoir démographique et le dynamisme de leurs initiatives, les femmes sont encore défavorisées dans l'accès à l'éducation et à l'emploi notamment.

Mais là n'est pas la principale contribution de cet atlas où ce sont les répartitions des effectifs et des phénomènes qui sont bien étudiées. La quasi totalité des cartes ont comme base statistique les états américains. L'analyse cartographique pas plus que les commentaires qui s'y adressent ne