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Hynda Rudd, ed.. *The Development of Los Angeles City Government: An Institutional History, 1850-2000.* Los Angeles: City of Los Angeles Historical Society, 2007. Bibliography + index $100.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-9795790-0-4.

Reviewed by Michan Connor

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The Development of Los Angeles City Government, edited by a team headed by Hynda Rudd, a past Los Angeles City Records management officer and archivist, is a dual-purpose reference work.[1] Its two volumes combine explanatory chapters documenting the development of municipal institutions in Los Angeles and analytical chapters that link those institutions to currents of economics, politics, and, particularly, racial and ethnic conflict in the city. This work has been motivated, and in a sense mandated, by a critical gap in the Los Angeles School of urbanism. The best work in the Los Angeles School describes a particular form of metropolitan political economy and geography characteristic of late twentieth-century Los Angeles: spatial dispersal and decentralization, stunted democratic and public institutions, domination of a multiracial society by a white/Anglo bloc, and a stratified labor market.

While individual authors have linked regimes of capital accumulation and cultural forms, and theorized the relationship between postmodern urban form and fragmented social relations, the Los Angeles School has not thus far developed a systematic discussion of the institutions of California over which competing factions have struggled. Thus, a less-than-complete vision of the exercise of political rule has been presented.[2] This gap in scholarship is not simply an academic concern; the editors of these volumes express their hope that the work will provide a valuable reference to public officials and policy analysts who may benefit from a more systematic understanding of the development of local government in Los Angeles. In this reviewer's judgment, this accessible, if weighty, collection accomplishes these purposes admirably, assembling contributions from scholars in multiple academic disciplines and veterans of Los Angeles city government.

The first of its five sections, dedicated to "Organization and Core Function," presents a detailed chronology of the evolution of the institutions of local government (the city charter, administrative structure, finance, courts, and the police and fire departments). This is no small task as these chapters detail institutional developments that accompanied Los Angeles's growth from a frontier settlement and economic backwater to a global city in only a century and a half. However, one effect of narrating such a compressed institutional history is to leave a reader of this first section bewildered by the magnitude of institutional change. In political scientist Raphael J. Sonenshein's phrasing, "to a certain degree, the history of Los Angeles government in the twentieth century is the history of departments" (p. 875). Scholars of municipal government will appreciate the presentation of institutional evolution, but readers accustomed to the dramatic and politically charged narratives spun by Mike Davis may be

unsatisfied by the lack of clear connection between the growth of municipal departments and the impact on the fortunes, aspirations, and everyday lives of Angelenos. Readers may wait impatiently for the implications of Sonenshein's qualifying phrase "to a certain degree" to be addressed.

A chapter by Marc F. Girard and Paul Girard on efficiency and administrative structure, for example, conceptualizes the municipal government as a machine, making little comment on the roster of the League for Better City Government, formed in 1896 by Harrison Gray Otis, Henry O'Melveny, I. N. Van Nuys, and J. B. Lankershim (among others). These were men who orchestrated the city's war against organized labor in the name of the open shop and amassed vast fortunes in real estate, but their support for municipal government reforms--nonpartisan elections, the dismantling of the city's ward system, and the elevation of nonpolitical commissioners to positions of authority--could be interpreted from this presentation as having streamlined administration as its only object. Organizational charts prepared by reformers in 1914 further illustrate this dynamic; where "the electorate" sat at the top of the chart for the prevailing form of government, reformers contrasted a corporate model with "Stockholders" at the apex. While Girard and Girard ably demonstrate how this model was realized in successive charter reforms, they do little to assess the impact of the change to professionalized, remote government on the realization of local democracy in Los Angeles.

Thankfully, successive chapters link institutional change to the social, political, and economic history of the city. Nearly all functions of city government are addressed, and readers will recognize the recurrence of key institutional changes contextualized in their historical moments. This review will address the relationship of social diversity and political power, the strongest thematic aspect of the composite work. In one of the best contributions, planning historians Greg Hise and Todd Gish demolish the myth of Los Angeles as an unplanned city, arguing that historians recognize planning only in the realization of comprehensive master plans. Hise and Gish propose an understanding of "planning as a process, a contest among competing interests, interests that have differential power and authority" (p. 331). They extend this critical perspective into discussions of road and freeway construction, civic beautification, zoning and land use regulations, and racial segregation as instances where citizens seized available municipal institutions to realize their goals or agitated to produce new institutions, as in the creation of a civilian City Planning Commission by council ordinance in 1920. Commissioners, drawn from the ranks of civic and business groups, enacted a "coupling of the visionary and the pragmatic [that] has informed, and still characterizes, city planning in Los Angeles" (p. 345). This approach, as the authors note, tended to make the poor and racial minorities objects rather than subjects of the planning process, leading to intense debates over the breadth of inclusiveness in planning the future of the city, which continue to trouble the question of community empowerment in the vast city.

Other contributions carry forward this thread, questioning which Angelenos have acted as subjects of municipal power and which have been cast as objects of that power. Harold Brackman's discussion of housing details pre-World War II housing actions by the city government as instruments of ethnic cleansing by an ascendant Anglo ruling class. Perhaps more fatefully, subsequent conflicts over housing policy saw advocates of the private market defeat public housing, decouple slum clearance and housing programs, and generally discourage the municipal government from intervening directly in the local housing market. By the 1990s, Los Angeles had a racially and economically stratified housing market and a severe crisis of affordable housing, problems, in

part, inflicted through the crafting of city housing policy.

Issues of democratic inclusion are productively cast by three contributors against the backdrops of Los Angeles's institutional development and its staggering territorial and population growth in the twentieth century. Chapters by historians Philip Ethington ("The Spatial and Demographic Growth of Los Angeles"), Leonard Pitt ("Neighborhoods: The Search for Community Empowerment in Los Angeles"), and Lawrence de Graaf ("The Changing Face and Place of Race in Los Angeles City Government") collectively raise important questions about the tensions among urban scale, racial diversity, and local democracy. Between 1850 and 2000, the City of Los Angeles accomplished 234 legal additions of territory to its original boundaries, with the greatest increase in area occurring between 1900 and 1930. Ethington warns that "it would be convenient, but unrealistic, to expect that territory was annexed simply to make room for a growing population" (p. 657). The city's rulers were generally motivated by economic concerns; adding territory to connect Los Angeles to a deep water harbor and, after the completion of the Owens Valley Aqueduct in 1913, to secure thousands of additional water customers. This period of activity brought previously independent cities within the borders of Los Angeles, including Hollywood, Venice, and Watts. After 1930, however, Los Angeles largely ceased adding new territory. People in many fast-growing areas outside of the city limits rejected Los Angeles's annexation overtures, in part, because they doubted their prospects for meaningful self-determination under the municipal government of Los Angeles, and, in part, because they disdained inclusion in a polity that included increasing proportions of racial minorities. Ethington presents two linked chronologies, one for the spatial growth of the city and another for the demographic composition of the region, to suggest that the utility of municipal boundaries as instruments of capital accumulation and racial segregation has weighed heavily on the changing spatial form of the city and the region, and the relation of demographic groups to local polities.

Graaf chronicles the organization of municipal government to protect white supremacy against the efforts of communities of color to secure inclusion. He documents the use of police power for the direct subordination of ethnic minorities in early Los Angeles, and the use of districting of the police, schools, and a host of city ordinances to spatially and institutionally separate minorities from power in the first half of the twentieth century. Further, he examines the city's halting response (exacerbated by immigration and economic restructuring) to various civil rights movements. Graaf concludes pessimistically, though with reason, that "the history of Los Angeles city's relations with ethnic groups will be as much one of things not done as of positive policies" (p. 729).

Pitt asks how residents sought to obtain and hold a voice in municipal affairs. To a large extent, he argues, Angelenos were excluded from power by design, as Progressive-Era reformers demolished the ward system, shrank the number of council districts, gerrymandered minority voters, and thwarted the establishment of semi-autonomous boroughs. Pitt charts the struggle for neighborhood empowerment through successive phases, in which disparate local groups with roots in Saul Alinsky's community organization movement, the War on Poverty, and homeowner mobilization demanded a formal voice in a city government organized around technocratic professionalism. Pushed along by the 1992 civil unrest, these demands gained force, culminating in the adoption in 1999 of a new city charter that established representative neighborhood councils within the city government. Though this reform created new problems--including debates over how neighborhoods were to be defined, how councils were to be recognized (sixty were established within one year), and how the neighborhood councils would

be held accountable to residents--the reform indicated "a decision to overturn a century of community disempowerment and elevate neighborhoods to a position at the center of government" (p. 720). Since neighborhoods reflect economic and racial segregation, it is yet to be seen whether neighborhood councils will institutionalize the spatial fragmentation of ethnic, class, and lifestyle enclaves or promote exchange and cooperation across the city, but one is hopeful that Pitt's analysis may support further research on neighborhood councils and how they may be used to connect diverse publics to city hall and to each other.

Notes

[1]. Those interested in purchasing a copy of this collection should visit The Thomas and Dorothy Leavey Center for the Study of Los Angeles, online at www.lmu.edu/csla.

[2]. This literature is diverse, multidisciplinary, and fast growing, but several monographs may be recognized as both influential and germane to the concerns of this reviewed work, including Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (New York: Verso, 1990); Robert Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles, 1850-1930* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); William Fulton, *The Reluctant Metropolis: The Politics of Urban Growth in Los Angeles* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001); and Edward Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1996). Two key edited collections are Allen Scott and Edward Soja, eds., *The City: Los Angeles and Urban Theory at the End of the Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); and Michael J. Dear, ed., *From Chicago to L.A.: Making Sense of Urban Theory* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2002).

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