

**Carolyn T. Adams.** *From the Outside In: Suburban Elites, Third-Sector Organizations, and the Reshaping of Philadelphia.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014. Illustrations, maps, tables. 232 pp. \$23.95, paper, ISBN 978-0-8014-7998-4.



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*From the Outside In* is a compelling study of the network of special-purpose authorities, quasi-governmental bodies, and nonprofit corporations that have come to dominate land use policy within Greater Philadelphia and reshape the city of Philadelphia, often in the interests of suburban elites. Because these institutions are not explicitly profit seeking or part of the government, they are considered “Third Sector” organizations. Despite not technically belonging to the private or public sector, Third-Sector organizations like the Old Philadelphia Development Corporation (OPDC) and Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation (PIDC) have wealthy businesspeople on their boards and receive government grants. While the book focuses on Philadelphia and the ring of suburbs that surround the city in both Pennsylvania and New Jersey, metropolitan regionalism and Third-Sector governance are emerging issues everywhere. In the last two decades, mayors have created organizations like Chicago’s Metropolitan Mayors Caucus and the Metro Mayors Caucus of Greater Denver to better

coordinate shared economic, environmental, and infrastructural concerns. Additionally, the number of American nonprofits has grown by 25 percent from 2001 to 2011, making the Third Sector the fastest growing sector of the US economy.

Carolyn T. Adams begins her study by looking at the area’s transportation authorities as failed examples of intergovernmental coordination. Initially, public authorities like the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) and Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) carried out large-scale projects like the downtown commuter tunnel and Vine Street Expressway with representatives from all of the counties within Greater Philadelphia. However, currently these representatives bicker over keeping money in their individual jurisdictions and struggle to repair and upgrade what they have already built. They seem unable to reshape the city for new economic and demographic challenges.

Instead, nongovernmental actors have played a much greater role in shaping Philadelphia, particularly in land development and public education. Dating back to the 1950s, the city of Philadelphia has relied on nongovernmental, nonprofit corporations to coordinate and implement development. These organizations have only become more important over time. Beginning in the 1990s, Mayor Ed Rendell used nonprofit development corporations to construct the Philadelphia Convention Center, National Constitution Center, and Atlantic Navy Yard, and to expand the city's universities and hospitals into their surrounding neighborhoods. Adams describes the details of the arrangements behind them all. While these nonprofits seemed to have succeeded in remaking Center City Philadelphia into a destination for new downtown residents, employers, and tourists, a similar approach has been less successful in restoring Philadelphia's poorest neighborhoods.

Third-Sector organizations also played a significant role in the city's education system. In 2001, the state of Pennsylvania took over the Philadelphia school system and put it under control of an appointed School Reform Commission (SRC). Since taking power, the SRC has supported charter schools and a "portfolio model" in which schools are supposed to compete for students and funding. Much of the implementation of this model has fallen on nonprofits like Philadelphia School Partnership, a group of wealthy suburban activists who draw money from foundations and venture philanthropists to support new schools. Even the parochial system has adopted the nonprofit model, creating Independent Mission Schools to prop up inner-city Catholic schools with donor money. Rather than looking at this shift in terms of educational performance, Adams looks at how the movement toward charters has shaped the built environment of the city. While new schools are built in major thoroughfares close to Center City or with easy access to the suburbs, the SRC shuts down public schools that have

long served as anchors within Philadelphia's inner-city neighborhoods.

Adams—a professor of geography and urban studies at Temple University—bases her analysis on annual reports, land use plans, funding proposals, press coverage, secondary urban studies, and personal interviews with two dozen board members and professional leaders of current Third-Sector institutions. The author also brings in her own experience in Philadelphia's nonprofit world, where she has spent thirty years serving as a researcher; consultant; and board member of or chair for colleges, foundations, and public interest nonprofits. This experience allows her to make sense of the opaque internal politics of the nonprofit world, and offers insight into the motivations of board members of these organizations.

What she finds is that these organizations are uncoordinated, leaving the city without a comprehensive redevelopment agenda. Board members often hew closely to the letter of their organizations' mission, and fail to work with other institutions to systematically address Philadelphia's inequality, poverty, and persistent budgetary crises. In response, Adams recommends that "city officials should work to induce greater sectoral coherence and concern for serving Philadelphians, to see that the city gains the greatest possible benefit from its concentration of tax-exempt institutions" (p. 181).

However, it seems unclear what powers city officials actually have over these institutions and whether these institutions even share the interests of poor, largely nonwhite city residents. One of the gravest problems the book highlights is how Philadelphia's anchor institutions have become increasingly focused on suburban and even more distant markets to the exclusion of those within city limits. For example, while Philadelphia hospitals reach out to affluent, suburban patients seeking the most lucrative procedures, they have cut back on more basic services like maternity care. And this is in a city with an infant mor-

tality rate of ten deaths per one thousand births, well above the national average. To really understand the larger roots of that kind of uneven geographical development requires study of the private development and municipal governance alongside the nonprofit sphere.

Still, Adams makes a compelling case that Third-Sector organizations play an important and increasing role in the governance and built environment of metropolitan regions. And her focus on the Philadelphia region makes the book indispensable for those interested in the area as well as an effective model for those studying nonprofits in other metropolitan regions throughout the country.

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