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## Research in urban history: a review of recent theses

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This year's review is slightly shorter than usual, but does provide a broad overview of the types of current research being undertaken in the field of urban history by doctoral students in Great Britain and North America. As in previous years, the survey employs a wide interpretation of 'urban history' which includes both the history of, and history in, urban areas. Providing brief summaries of a selection of abstracts published in the *Aslib Index to Theses* [ASLIB] and *Dissertations Abstracts International* [DAI] of theses completed mostly in 1998 and 1999, it attempts to highlight both the novel and traditional in current research. Access to thesis abstracts has been greatly improved by the development of on-line services, including the electronic version of *Index to Theses* available at <http://www.theses.com> and *Dissertations Abstracts International* which can be accessed through Proquest at <http://wwwlib.umi.com/dissertations>. The twenty-seven dissertations, drawn fairly evenly from candidates in British and North American institutions, cover a broad range of topics, with the time-span once again ranging from the ancient world to the post-Second World War era. As has been the trend in recent years, the bulk of the dissertations on both sides of the Atlantic focus on the late eighteenth to the mid-twentieth century, with particular concentrations around the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, though there is an enduring interest in the early modern period in England. Geographically, nine deal with elements of British urban history (including Ulster), twelve cover aspects of United States history, whilst the rest address Indian, Italian, Spanish, French and Middle Eastern subjects. Unlike last year, there is no particular concentration on any one city or type of city, although London, San Francisco and Memphis both warrant two studies. Other places covered include Edinburgh, Belfast, Birmingham (England), Birmingham (Alabama), Paris and Jaffa. The subjects covered do not reveal any particular trends or concentrations. Now familiar topics like gender, racial politics, consumption, planning and the use of space are joined by more novel areas such as the effects of guns on crime rates, the art market in provincial Britain, urban zoos, and gender, sexuality and social control. However, two aspects worthy of note are: the group of dissertations which merge evidence from architecture and the urban form to supplement the written records of Mediterranean and colonial cities; and a group of American theses which unpack the relationship between the law, economic change and civil society, especially the way associations developed to regulate and contest the development of the corporate economy.

The first group of dissertations show how the urban form itself can be used as a text to complement a diverse but incomplete corpus of written materials.

F.J.D. NEVOLA, **'Urbanism in Siena (c.1450–1513). Policy and patrons: interactions between public and private'** (Ph.D., London, Courtauld Institute of Art, 1998) [ASLIB] utilizes archival sources and fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Sienese architecture to re-evaluate the scholarship on Siena which has written off the period as largely retrospective. The context for urban change is set through analysis of legislative control on urbanism; settlement patterns and structures; wealth and professional distribution; and investment in architecture. Focusing on Siena's main street and magnate architectural patronage, it unpacks how the physical form of the city was renewed along with the dynamic interaction between public and private space, leading to a re-evaluation of Sienese Renaissance architectural style, and its significance in the formation of urban identity. An examination of the ritual and ceremonial use of the city assesses how the changing physical fabric of the city interacted with its users, to present a renewed public facade. R. KANA'AN, **'Jaffa and the waqf of Muhammad Aga Abu Nabbut (1799–1831): a study in the urban history of an east Mediterranean city'** (D.Phil., University of Oxford, 1998) [ASLIB] employs Islamic Court Records, a composite waqf manuscript (1812–16), and local chronicles along with the architectural remains and inscriptions of the waqf complex to reconstruct the history of the city during a period of steady growth. It contends that Jaffa's rapid recuperation after 1799 was the result of its regional pattern of trade, its importance for pilgrims, and the building projects of Muhammad Aga Abu Nabbut, Jaffa's mutesselim between 1803 and 1819. As part of his plan to turn Jaffa into a provincial city and attain the Pasalik, Abu Nabbut constructed fortifications, (re-)built the mosque, madrasa and some of its sabils, and established a waqf that furnished the city with its main social and commercial infrastructure. By examining a provincial colonial site outside of the main Presidency cities, R.M. BROWN, **'The architecture and urban space of early colonial Patna'** (Ph.D., University of Minnesota, 1999) [DAI] questions many paradigms related to colonial urban and architectural histories. In attempting to ascertain how the terms colonial and colonial city might be understood through architecture and art, it utilizes extant late eighteenth- and early-nineteenth century architecture, images by British colonizers and Indian artists, and textual descriptions to explore pivotal elements of Patna's colonial history: a monument to the massacre of British officers in 1763, representation of Islamic ceremonies and European-style architecture built by British and Indian residents. Comparison with both the similar town of Dhaka and the cities of Madras, Calcutta and Bombay suggests that only by embracing the ambiguities and slippages of colonialism can we account for the contradictions within urban history and space.

The next group is a general selection of dissertations exploring economic and political aspects of towns in the medieval and early modern period. In **'The renaissance of the English market town: a study of six Nottinghamshire market towns 1680–1840'** (Ph.D., University of Nottingham, 1997) [ASLIB] C.A. SMITH challenges the traditional notion that the eighteenth century saw a streamlining of the urban system with small towns declining as a result of the growth in size, function and sphere of influence of larger provincial centres. The author identifies two distinct periods of economic, social and cultural change. The first, from 1680 to 1770, saw the Nottinghamshire market town experience modest development with economic diversification; the emergence of a prominent middle income group; increasing consumerism and domestic comfort; and

the beginnings of architectural change with the adoption of brick and tile and classical styles. The second period (1770–1840), witnessed a renaissance of the market town typified by large-scale manufacturing; rapid urban expansion; more prestigious public buildings; an increasingly sophisticated cultural life; and growing environmental control which together suggest a period of prosperity for many small towns in the county. Drawing on the remarkable survival of a variety of sources, s. DIMMOCK, **‘Class and the social transformation of a late medieval small town: Lydd c. 1450–1550’** (Ph.D., University of Kent, 1998) [ASLIB] addresses the role of English late medieval small towns in the debate over the transition from feudal to capitalist production and productive relations. Focusing on three lists of names of the socially and politically significant by 1528, it suggests that between 1450 and 1550 class-struggle transformed the social formation of Lydd. During this time the declining income of feudal lordship led to the development of competitive rents and the formation of a new class of agrarian bourgeois whose position was secured by expropriating the small customary holdings which had supported the household economies of a broad base of petty traders, artisans and fishermen. Linking economic, political and urban change in the ‘second city’ of Stuart England, p. WITHINGTON, **‘Urban political culture in later-seventeenth-century England: York 1649–1688’** (Ph.D., University of Cambridge, 1998) [ASLIB] relates the socio-economic topography of the city to participation within the civic sphere and explores the interaction of the civic realm with other forms of urban public power between 1649 and 1688. Arguing that manifestations of ‘the public’ are crucial to understanding early modern political power, it emphasizes the underestimated importance of urban political culture in this process. For boroughs and cities, through their provision of public services, and the accretion of civic institutions, traditions and practices within their boundaries, inculcated potent notions of citizenship and facilitated processes of government, representation and communication at the provincial and national level which fed into state-formation, nationalism and the emergence of a national public sphere.

The politics of the urban form provides the connecting thread in this next selection. J.L. ANDERSON, **‘Marylebone Park and the New Street: a study of the development of Regent’s Park and the building of Regent Street, London in the first quarter of the nineteenth century’** (Ph.D., London, Courtauld Institute of Art, 1998) [ASLIB] takes as its theme the most extensive urban regeneration and development plan ever drawn up by a British government to that date. Rather than an exhaustive analysis of this important metropolitan improvement, this is a general, multidisciplinary study of government policy-making and its implementation in the early decades of the nineteenth century. It provides a novel explanation for the close link between interest rates, building cycle and post-Napoleonic Wars government micro-economic planning, and reveals that the much acclaimed plans for the Marylebone and New Street project drawn up by John Nash in 1811 were the result of years of planning by the Department of Land Revenues. In a study of the impact of infrastructure change in the French capital, s. HALLSTED-BAUMERT, **‘The Metropolitan: technology, space and the creation of urban identities in fin-de-siècle Paris’** (Ph.D., New York University, 1999) [DAI] shows how the debates surrounding the building of the Paris *métropolitain* became a forum for the expression of political, social and cultural ideas about the identity and image of Paris in the closing decades of the

nineteenth century. By detailing the heated struggle between the city and the state for control of the *métropolitain*, it reveals how decisions were politically motivated and *tied* to a certain vision (political, commercial or cultural) of Paris or Parisians. Conflict arose over the placing of stations, as groups battled over historic preservation, business and commercial opportunities, private property rights and easy access to stations. The way in which these various *publics* reacted to the *métropolitain*, it is suggested, reflected the values, concerns and perceptions they expressed about their city and their role in that city. Shifting the focus of urban transformation from metropolis to provinces, C.M.H. CARR, **'The creation and transformation of inter-war suburbia in Birmingham'** (Ph.D., University of Birmingham, 1998) [ASLIB] suggests that generalizations about inter-war housing based upon studies of south-east England are misleading. Employing building applications and development control documents to trace the history of Birmingham's suburbs from 1918 to 1996, it considers the roles played by various groups, notably architects and developers. While questioning the significance of middle-class demand between the wars, it contends that planners and householders have played major roles in shaping post-war suburban townscapes. By linking the development of suburbs to changes in town planning, it suggests that recent shifts from modern to post-modern forms of planning have had a limited impact, whilst the local morphological frame has exerted the greatest influence on the form of townscape change. Moving on to the cultural influences on planning, T. HAGGITH, **'"Castles in the air": British film and the reconstruction of the built environment, 1939–51'** (Ph.D., University of Warwick, 1998) [ASLIB] examines mid-twentieth-century British films which discuss and propose the reconstruction of the built environment. Through a study of the production and distribution of the films it questions how and why the films were produced, how they present the issues of reconstruction, what they tell us about the relationship between planners, architects, politicians and the ordinary people, and what impact they had on popular attitudes to town planning and building. In illustrating the relationship between film-makers and the government propaganda agencies to which they were contracted, it reveals that, despite their efforts to produce radical work, directors were highly constrained in the kind of films they could make, limiting their effectiveness as democratic tools.

Work on the spatial organization of ancient cities continues to flourish. Based on the extensive and well-documented excavations of a Spanish Greco-Roman city, A.E. KAISER, **'The urban dialogue: use of space in the Roman city of Empúries'** (Ph.D., Boston University, 1999) [DAI] challenges the traditional interpretations of the use of space in Roman cities which emphasize the random distribution of buildings across the urban landscape by arguing that space in Empúries was highly structured. Using GIS to link artefacts from the site to the site's structures generated maps of the distribution of uses of space across the city at different periods of time. Analysing three variables – visibility, clustering/dispersion and access – it found visibility to be unimportant even in the cases of temples and villas, whilst clustering/dispersion proved significant, with public spaces located together while elite domestic structures had a tendency to be separated. Furthermore, public space and some private space appeared associated with streets easily accessible from city gates whilst industrial and non-elite domestic spaces were less accessible. In similar ways, K.E. KEITH, **'Cities, neighborhoods, and houses: urban spatial organization in Old Babylonian**

**Mesopotamia'** (Ph.D., The University of Michigan, 1999) [DAI] deploys archaeological data and texts (in Akkadian and Sumerian) to reveal the relationship between spatial and social organization, concentrating specifically on those patterns associated with domestic life. Analysis of the city as a whole (including its agricultural hinterland) identified regular patterns in the distribution of types of land in and around the city, with ownership of agricultural land in various districts forming a significant link between city centre and hinterland. The neighbourhood was explored through a comparison of plans from different cities which showed small-scale workshops embedded in residential areas as part of private homes and evidence of craft and commercial activity at different scales illustrating the complexity of modes of production. Whilst at the household level, examination of the spatial patterning of rooms helped determine how domestic activities were spatially organized, suggesting that extended family relationships played an important integrative role in Old Babylonian society.

The next selection of dissertations addresses the growing concern with the relationship between law, economy and civil society in the United States. J.A. KAUFMAN, **'Sometimes civil society: urban development, municipal politics, and the impact of the communications revolution on 19th century American cities'** (Ph.D., Princeton University, 1999) [DAI] examines America's extensive tradition of civic associationalism; the role of information networks in the transfer of public ideas about the ideal polity; and the complex relationship between the state and the market (or the public and the private) in discourse about the American economy. Focusing on the impact of early nineteenth-century innovations in communications and transportation technology, intra-urban information-flows and the institutional origins of municipal government, it demonstrates the rise of three types of special interest group lobby within cities (commercial organizations, professional organizations and political advocacy groups), as well as the deleterious impact of associationalism on the American labour movement. Analysing the municipal reforms of the Progressive Era, it contends that the effect of communications networks on urban development began changing in the early twentieth century as information-flows became denser and more widespread. Focusing on a case study of the implications for civil society of the transition to corporate capitalism, K.A. BROSANAN, **'Uniting mountain and plain: urbanization, law, and environmental change in the Denver region, 1858–1903'** (Ph.D., University of Chicago, 1999) [DAI] opens new areas for debate by discussing cities' control over diverse hinterlands; local entrepreneurial control over a regional economy dependent upon outside capital; a regulated society's control over laissez-faire capitalism; and humans' control over nature. Centred on Denver, Colorado Springs and Pueblo, it explores the gradual, contested transformation of the United States from a nation of disparate traditional agrarian communities to a modern, integrated industrial society, and considers the consequences of this for the disparate ecosystems drawn into the new regional economy. Although local entrepreneurs were often guided by market values, the peripheral nature of the Denver region meant modern capitalist society did not emerge as early, as smoothly, or as completely as many legal historians suggest. Thus ranchers, miners and courts regularly formed quasi-legal institutions which regulated commerce and advanced the interests of the community ahead of those who seemingly put resources to more productive uses. Assessing a similar field in a large urban centre, A.W. COHEN, **'The struggle**



**for order: law, labour, and resistance to the corporate ideal in Chicago, 1900–1940'** (Ph.D., University of Chicago, 1999) [DAI] illuminates the contested and contingent origins of the modern corporate economy. Concentrating on the craft sector, it illustrates how in trucking, construction, shopkeeping, and other trades, workers and proprietors built labour unions and business associations to implement a distinctive economic and moral order with their own *laws* enforced by violence. As these favoured small, local and labour-intensive forms of production, big business petitioned the legal system to criminalize these rules, turning Chicago's streets, markets and courts into battlegrounds, both figuratively and literally, where tradespeople and industrial magnates fought to shape the city's economy. As a result of this local struggle, Chicago's building and trucking trades remain not only the most heavily unionized sectors of the urban economy, but also subject to continuing indictment at the hands of the legal system.

Class, gender and consumption remain important areas in the study of urban history and this collection of theses opens up some new and interesting aspects of the subject. S. HELMBRECHT-WILSON, **'Went a shopping': elite and middling women as consumers in Massachusetts, 1790–1830'** (Ph.D., University of Boston, 1999) [DAI] explores the stereotyped public image of female consumers and the complex reality of their actions. Focusing on Salem, Worcester, and the villages of Worcester County, it reveals the differing effects that profound economic and cultural change had on urban and rural consumers. Employing diaries, letters and storekeepers' account books it provides a picture of women's changing role in family consumption as the emergence of a new urban middle-class ideology of separate spheres and feminine domesticity allowed them to take control of family consumption. It then discusses negative press images of female consumers, suggesting that these denunciations of women consumers' excesses actually helped Americans exorcise their uneasiness about the extension of female consumerism as their hysterical claims made the actual changes taking place seem moderate. Conversely, C.J. BREWARD, **'Manliness and the pleasures of consumption: masculinities, fashion and London life 1860–1914'** (Ph.D., Royal College of Art, 1998) [ASLIB] takes as its subject the consuming habits of young men to test the specific links formed between masculine fashionable style and the capital in its era of imperial, cultural and economic pre-eminence. Challenging the conventional emphasis on the feminization of consumption and fashion, it repositions men as subjects in arising debates on the nature of class, sexuality, modernity, fashion and city life. The use of dress as an element of self-realization or performance – rather than its utilitarian function or the circumstances of its production – is at the core of the thesis as are the transformative effects of commerce which entail a consideration of its material qualities, its promotion and sale, and its use and representation. Linking gender, class and leisure, M.R. ROCKWELL, **'Let deeds tell': elite women in Buffalo, 1880–1910'** (Ph.D., State University of New York at Buffalo, 1999) [DAI] uses diaries, manuscripts, wills and approaches informed by anthropological theories of ritual to investigate the role of elite women in shaping and perpetuating class identity and structure. It explores each stage of elite women's lives – their childhood, education, courtship, marriage and leisure activities as well as their participation in social clubs and charitable organizations – to draw out the larger significance of their rituals and practices. In the process, it highlights the crucial role of Female Academies and

elite Eastern boarding schools in the creation of a national network of elite families; the importance of 'coming out'; the centrality of engagement and marriage practices in creating interconnected family networks; the significance of socially exclusive athletic and leisure activities such as golf, tennis and fox hunting; and their involvement in social clubs and charitable organizations which provided them a discreet public life without violating the norms of upper-class womanhood.

As this last entry suggests, leisure has been vital in shaping class identity since the eighteenth century, with elite forms of patronage, consumption and associationalism particularly important, as these studies of Edinburgh and Belfast suggest. Thus, C. FORBES, **'Artists, patrons and the power of association: the emergence of a bourgeois artistic field in Edinburgh, c. 1775 to c. 1840'** (Ph.D., University of St Andrews, 1997) [ASLIB] explores the dramatic transformation in the size and complexity of the art world, as fine art consumption passed from the elite connoisseur to the more open and contested spaces of the urban public sphere. As the ownership of painting became the requisite component of refined urban living for bourgeoisie and lesser gentry, many contemporary artists continued to find the struggle for subsistence unequal. Yet protective associations like the Society of Artists and the Scottish Academy were riven by debilitating disputes between different groups of artists and their patrons which, during a period of acute political turmoil, the press represented as party feeling. It was only with the remodelling of Edinburgh's body politic in 1832 that the 'problem' of the public emerged as a central concern of elite patronage. Addressing a less elite aspect of urban art, E.E. BLACK, **'The development of Belfast as a centre of art 1760–1888'** (Ph.D., Queen's University Belfast, 1998) [ASLIB] suggests three main factors led to the development of Belfast as a centre of art: resident artists, professionals and intellectuals promoting and institutionalizing the fine arts; the latter's desire to provide educational facilities for the expanding labouring population; and the growth of a flourishing art trade, fuelled largely by middle-class demand. By examining the early failure of exhibiting societies and the varying fortunes of the two art schools set up in 1849 and 1870, it argues that the 1860s was the turning point for the fine arts in Belfast. Central to this change were Marcus Ward's commercial gallery and his successful Art Union of Belfast exhibitions in the 1860s, which together with an extremely lively art trade, increased middle-class support, whilst the drive by the middle classes to provide educational facilities for artisans, saw a free public library, with art galleries opened in 1888 and the municipal museum and art gallery in 1890.

Moving from elite to popular leisure, J.N. HYSON, **'Urban jungles: zoos and American society'** (Ph.D., Cornell University, 1999) [DAI] seeks to situate American zoological parks within their social-historical context, and to assess their cultural meanings, as popular entertainment and as public institutions. It proposes that while some pioneering directors attempted to ally their parks with museums and libraries, zoos' cultural standing was complicated by visitors' own assumptions and expectations and the institutions' *publicness*. The emergence of cultural forces such as imperialism, Progressivism, nativism and racism, along with increasing competition from more *spectacular* attractions, encouraged both managers and visitors to see zoos less as educational ventures and more as 'show business'. Although the post-Second World War boom associated with cars and television accelerated zoos' association with a family-based consumer culture,



the past generation has seen a redefinition of their cultural position as missions of conservation and education reasserted while commercial ideals of management and marketing were extended. Overall, it suggests, the ambiguous position of the zoo embodies central dilemmas and possibilities in modern American culture. Drawing on Memphis newspaper reporting and advertising, E.C. FAIN JR, **"Cut loose the corset strings of dull times": attending carnival in Memphis, Tennessee, through newsprint coverage, 1872–1901'** (Ph.D., University of Memphis, 1999) [DAI] examines the little-known Mardi Gras celebrations in Memphis that, in their early years, rivalled Carnival stagings hosted in other cities in the American South. Faced with daunting postbellum urban conditions, including three visitations of yellow fever and the loss of its municipal charter during the 1870s, Memphians focused on Carnival as an opportunity to showcase positive aspects of Memphis that could lead towards renewal, restore civic pride and translate into a revitalized economy. However, as the city's economy slowly revived and Memphians increasingly sought outlets in an array of philanthropic, recreational and educational organizations, Carnivals staged by an earlier generation were now viewed as raucous, even dangerous, artefacts of a river town's past.

In a study which assesses the transformation of African-American politics, culture and consciousness which culminated in the tragic assassination of Dr Martin Luther King Jr, L.B. GREEN, **'Battling the plantation mentality: consciousness, culture and the politics of race, class and gender in Memphis, 1940–1968'** (Ph.D., University of Chicago, 1999) [DAI] probes the origins and trajectory, potentialities and barriers of the Civil Rights Movement in the urban South. Focusing on attempts to combat the 'plantation mentality', and placing working-class African-American women at its centre, it reveals hitherto unanalysed dimensions of struggle. It notes how paradoxical relations of modernity and tradition, paternalism and intimidation, militancy and accommodationism framed the complex and volatile politics of race in Memphis as various groups sought to reformulate concepts of racial advancement. Relying on oral histories and manuscript collections, the study argues that the process of transformation of consciousness, culture and politics was never linear and that popular culture proved crucial, especially radio station WDIA's conversion to black-appeal programming. Covering similar ground, L.P. MAXWELL, **'Remaking Jim Crow: segregation and urban change in Birmingham, Alabama, 1938–1963'** (Ph.D. New York University, 1999) [DAI] examines how blacks in the city seized upon the economic and political changes of the Second World War to challenge segregation in commercial and public spaces. It suggests the strategy of protesting spatial segregation gained strength and momentum from war and post-war changes in the urban landscape that multiplied the points of contact between blacks and whites outside of the workplace. The resulting escalation in black protest and white backlash laid the groundwork for the mass protests of the 1960s as blacks presented Birmingham business leaders with the choice of enforcing segregation or giving in to blacks' demands. The transformation to a service economy led businessmen to question segregation, but also reinforced a post-war pattern of white residential and commercial flight from the city limits helping to remake Jim Crow in a different spatial disguise.

In the first of two studies addressing aspects of urban social control, P.E. HOLLOWAY, **'Tending to deviance: sexuality and public policy in urban Virginia,**

**Richmond and Norfolk, 1920–1950'** (Ph.D., The Ohio State University, 1999) [DAI] reveals how policy-makers in the state paid increasing attention to the sexual behaviour of citizens. Focusing on campaigns against venereal disease and prostitution, state-wide sterilization practices, laws against interracial marriage, the treatment of *sexual psychopaths* and movie censorship, it shows how politicians inaugurated policies to control these behaviours or mitigate their purportedly harmful consequences. Comparison between Norfolk and Richmond underscores the conflicting objectives of federal, state and municipal governments, especially the failure of Norfolk to preserve public order and social hygiene during the Second World War. The construction of public policies directed at sexual behaviour illustrates key characteristics of the state in Virginia, particularly the ways economic and fiscal policies, and the narrow distribution of political, social and economic power, shaped its form of governance. Making use of a variety of sources, including the journals of tramping men, studies of contemporary social scientists, local newspapers, private relief and reform institutions, and city and state records, J.L. MALLERY, **'From a dangerous to a dependent and defective group of men: social policy, urban space, and the masculinity of hoboes in San Francisco, 1849–1917'** (Ph.D., University of California, Los Angeles, 1999) [DAI] illustrates the way San Francisco's elite reformulated the masculinity of homeless men, from the natural and manly passions of the hobo of 1880 to his pathetic and unmanly form by 1910. The shift in hobo masculinity, it argues, affected both notions of urban space and relief as male capitalists and 'respectable ladies' tamed and reformed the 'slum' district, whilst views of homeless males as 'dangerous' and requiring 'correction' gave way to relief models designed to manipulate and monitor their faulty lives. Central to this transformation was the depression of the 1890s which shifted attention from male 'danger' to male pauperization, allowing elites to codify environmental, eugenic and Freudian notions of manhood.

Finally, J.C. DAVENPORT, **'Arming the city: firearms, crime, and society in San Francisco, 1848–1906'** (Ph.D., University of Connecticut, 1999) [DAI] examines the impact of firearms on violent crime rates in the city, arguing that firearms themselves had little if any influence on crime. In exploring a range of topics from crime during the gold rush to the relationship between guns, murder and suicide, detailed attention is given to the 1851 and 1856 vigilante committees, the post-Civil War crime wave that swept the nation but somehow missed San Francisco, and antebellum sectionalism and Gilded Age labour unrest which revealed the role of firearms in the context of national politics and social violence. As San Francisco grew into the metropolis of the West, it emerged as a major centre of firearms production and distribution, with only limited controls on sale and possession. As a result San Franciscans experienced perhaps the easiest access to guns anywhere in the country, yet violent crime rates (with the sole exception of murder, which comprised a tiny fraction of all violent offences) remained low.