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Christian Topalov, editor, *Laboratoires du Nouveau Siecle: La nebuleuse reformatrice et ses reseaux en France, 1880-1914*. Paris: Editions de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, 1999. 574pp. Notes, bibliography, indices. FF260. ISBN 2-7132-1323-1 (paper).

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Now that transnational history is all the rage, this volume is a timely reminder about the need to consider carefully the national contexts before we can produce the best in transnational history. This volume also reinforces the comment Pierre-Yves Saunier made as a participant in the online symposium on Daniel Rodgers' book recent book, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age*, as to how American historians often privilege certain nations over others when writing transnationally. French contributions to the themes of reform, progressivism, and social politics have often been overlooked; outside of Italy, how many urban reform specialists know about the reform accomplishments of Rome's mayor Ernest Nathan (1907-1913)? Such privileging may happen because some American historians do not read French or Italian, and American progressives themselves privileged England and Germany, making factfinding trips there rather than elsewhere, and then publishing the accounts of what they found.

So Anglophone urban historians and planners read about these two countries rather than about the rest of Europe. I want to clarify that of necessity some of this review will be from the perspective of an American and some comments will be addressed to the American context. I am an American urban historian, not a specialist in either French history or French urban history. But, I hope to make this also general comments about how we all study the urban context and the conjunction of national with transnational history.

The Topalov volume provides an opportunity to consider both the parochialism that national histories can reflect, but simultaneously to see how the national context remains important not just for understanding what happened in any given country, but why cities have developed differently and adopted different solutions to the common web of problems that they identified beginning in the last decades of the nineteenth century. The volume contains 17 essays of historians, sociologists, architects and other academics all concerned with the development of reform ideas and networks of reformers in France during this time period. Not all the essays are especially relevant to urban development, so this review will focus on those essays that are.

In his introductory essay, "Les 'reformateurs' et leurs reseaux: enjeux d'un objet de recherche," Topalov explains that the essays focus on uncovering some specific facets of French reform history. French historians, he explains, need a better understanding of who were the "reformers" of the Third Republic, what were their organizations, and how they connected with one another both inside and outside of government. He suggests, and the essays bear out, this can only be answered by realizing that the Third Republic was awash in reform sentiment: inheritors of the revolutionary tradition, new industrialists, socialists, Christian socialists, academics, new professionals were all working for social reform. This being the situation, Topalov then asks how one can understand what reform meant to these often disparate groups and how can one find a language to classify the different currents of reform they proposed? His solution is to suggest, first, borrowing from the non-French historiography to refer generically to all these groups as "reformers." [L'argument peut surprendre: pourquoi des categories qui seraient pertinentes outre-Manche ou outre-Atlantique devraient-elles l'etre aussi en France? La proposition est ici de donner sa chance a une notion importee pour interroger des evidences enracinees dans nos traditions politiques, intellectuelles, historiographiques nationales." (p. 12)] Second, Topalov urges French scholars to utilize this term "reformers" according to the definitions of English and

American scholars who, Topalov believes, have given a specific, contextual meaning to the term. ["En Grande-Bretagne comme aux Etats-Unis, la notion de "reformers" est en effet d'usage routinier pour decrire les mouvements qui ont marque la fin du XIXe et le debut du XXe siecle: dans chaque domaine de l'action sociale, des organisations "reformatrices" se constituent, elaborent des programmes, entreprennent des "croisades" et, finalement, contribuent puissamment a faconner les institutions et les politiques sociales du XXe siecle." (p. 12) Eng. translation: 'In Great Britain as in the United States, the notion of "reformers" is used routinely to describe the movements of the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century: in each area of social action, reform organizations were formed, they elaborated programs, they undertook "crusades," and they strongly contributed to fashioning the institutions and the social politics of the 20th century.']

By borrowing the Anglo-American definition of reformers, French scholars can understand the range of reforms and reformers that worked in France in this period and analyze the national and transnational contexts. They will be able to see what was distinctly French, what was borrowed from outside, and how French reformers then refashioned outside ideas to fit into French culture and politics. He finishes his essay by applying this analysis to three turn-of-the-century French reform issues: the debate over public assistance versus private charity; the garden-city movement; and the organization within universities of a new field of specialty, social economics. His insistence that there was indeed a "network" of French reformers at work in this period that falls within the Anglo-American definition of reformers will be given shown in the following essays by the fact that many of the names he mentions as the reformers engaged in the these 3 issues reappear in other reform contexts.

Of particular relevance to urban scholars are the essays by Janet Horne, "L'antichambre de la Chambre: le Musee social et ses reseaux reformateurs, 1894-1914"; Susanna Magri, "La reforme du logement populaire: la Societe francaise des habitations a bon marche, 1889-1914"; and Viviane Claude, "Technique sanitaire et reforme urbaine: l'Association generale des hygienistes et techniciens municipaux, 1905-1920." Each essay exposes the elements suggested by Topalov at work within the urban social reform context.

The "Musee social" was organized in Paris in 1894 to function as a "semipublic" group situated between the public (government) and the private. It was founded by a monarchist, dominated by conservative and moderate republicans, but had a number of working-class representatives who held positions in government or workers' groups ['...comme Jean Barberet, un ancien boulanger et syndicaliste devenu fonctionnaire au ministere de l'Interieur...'] (p. 124)]. By profession the members ranged from those such as Barberet to industrialists, university professors, doctors and architects. At its founding, the group possessed no homogenous language or practice, just the common idea that the city and country desperately needed social reform. Horne's essay elucidates the process by which reform ideas, language and practice took shape as men from disparate backgrounds, possessing different ideas, worked together to resolve social problems, for example, the problems of work-related accidents and insurance. According to Horne, such process moved the group from an initial emphasis on reform as a social need to reform as a social right; to coming to believe that the State had to be more interventionist and play a larger role in regulating social relations. Paris was important in this development because as the capital city it had the diversity of population and interests that could be drawn into the Musee and the means to connect the semipublic to the public world of government.

La societe francaise des habitations a bon marche (SFHBM) [French Society for Affordable Housing], explored by Susanna Magri, drew members largely from professional groups interested in the problems of building affordable housing -- industrialists, architects, sanitarians -- but also administrative officials whose ideas contributed less to directing the Society than to bringing it into the reform network by their participation in other reform efforts. In contrast to the Musee social, the SFHBM remained rooted in its earlier conservative ideas of protecting the right of

private development of affordable housing and was bypassed by other reform currents. It failed to prevent passage of 1912 legislation that created the Public Offices of Affordable Housing or to stem the tide of reform sentiment that saw the housing problem as an environmental one involving community building, not just one of providing a place to live. While some members accepted the new ideas, the SFHBM was marginalized in future housing reform activities as it transformed itself into a private corporation dedicated to defending private building interests (p. 261) The conflict between national legislation and private interests in housing highlights a difference between the French and American housing reform movements. The relationship of the French State to reform was much tighter than in the U.S. where reform organizations often were able to implement reforms that preserved the right of private property from government intervention.

The final essay addressed in this review looks at network of sanitary reformers that tied together different professionals, Francophone nations, and mediated between the semipublic world of reformers and the State. In France, Edouard Imbeaux, engineer, doctor and director of municipal services for 22 years at Nancy, founded l'Association generale des ingenieurs, architectes et hygienistes municipaux l'Association generale des hygienistes et techniciens municipaux (AGIAHM) in 1905, to systematize the circulation of information in the Francophone continental networks of municipal sanitary engineers. The society got the patronage of l'Alliance d'hygiene sociale, and reformers from the Musee social and other Parisian institutions joined AGIAHM. Members from AGIAHM also belonged to other reform organizations. The latter 2 circumstances give proof to the importance of Paris as a central generator of reform, but also to the growth of a reform network that looked less to solving particular problems and more to conceptualizing social problems as interconnected. According to Viviane Claude, the AGHTM (the new name of the society after 1911) saw the need to connect specialists in clean water, hygiene, social statistics, housing, architecture, in the law, the landscape in order to effect municipal reform (p. 284). Once having drawn together experts from these specialities, two things happened. The practitioners of each specialty developed a keen interest in protecting their expertise by professionalizing and standardizing their training. The more professional and standard the training became, the easier it was for professionals to communicate as experts and work together to formulate both concrete solutions and to develop new professions, such as city-planning, that would transcend national boundaries and whose practitioners would then work with government to resolve urban problems. The remaining essays in this volume present similar arguments on a range of social reform issues through an examination of, among other, the *Revue d'economie politique*, the General Society of Prisons, the Society of Visitors, and the associations for worker protection.

Having borrowed from Anglo-American scholars to hypothesize a notion of reformers, Topalov concludes in his essay "Le champ reformateur, 1880-1914: un modele" that the networks of reform revealed by these essays can be understood as developing a field [champ] of reform along the lines suggested by Pierre Bourdieu: it was an autonomous system of positions, actors and institutions, organized by specific internal issues and relations (p. 462)'. To the hypothetical question, does such a model allow scholars to understand French reform better than previously, Topalov answers affirmatively because it provides a means to draw together fragmented interpretations that result from a more specialized fields of study such as politics, cultural production, the literature of scientific disciplines, administrative or other professional fields, into a more coherent understanding of reform. For scholars of reform, such an understanding can then be applied transnationally as well as tested within other national contexts.

Finally, Topalov returns to the French context to explain that three internal processes contributed to developing the reform network in France. The first was the political context in which the old guard that had held control in France lost power after 1879 and were replaced in government by men drawn from new social groups. The second process was that once the idea

of reform took hold among certain groups, these initial ideas of reform quickly produced more and diverse ideas, drew in more diverse members especially from young ambitious men who now saw doors of social and political power open to them, and then greatly expanded the concept of reform. The final process is the growth of professionalism that allowed men initially outside of the network to put themselves into it.

This volume is lengthy, complex, and often steeped in French historiography and schools of interpretation. Being neither a native speaker nor an expert in French reform history, I hope that this review gives it justice because it has much to tell us about how to understand the very complicated -- and often maligned -- reform currents that swept across the United States and much of Europe a century ago. I have one final observation that it is a criticism. There are almost no women identified as members of the network. Given how much we know about the crucial presence of women in both the American and English reform movement, if indeed there were no women in the network, this situation at the least ought to be discussed, for it too would reveal much about the context of French social reform.

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