



Tales of the Periphery : An Outline Survey of Municipal Employees and Servives in the 19th and 20th Century City

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Michèle DAGENAIS & Pierre-Yves SAUNIER 'Tales of the periphery: an outline survey of municipal employees and services in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries', p.1-30

Michèle Dagenais and Pierre-Yves Saunier

Any scholarly inquiry into the history of municipal employees and services in the modern city immediately involves consideration of the roles played by local institutions and the particular processes that contributed towards shaping the urban fabric. Indeed, to study the subject entails a rediscovery, from models and maps, of the constituent dynamics of cities since the beginning of the nineteenth century, and how, over time, patterns can be traced in the way services and locations were organized. Urban transformation was underpinned by structural development, and the municipal workforce was an integral and increasingly prominent part of the agencies of change. The reference to 'the periphery' in this introduction does not relate to the subject's place in the definition of modern cities, but to the relatively sparse amount of attention it has received from historical scholarship. This book aims to redress the balance by suggesting that the municipal experience should be more central to urban studies. Its focus of analysis ranges across Europe and the Americas from high-ranking bureaucrats to firefighters, touching upon engineers, accountants, town clerks, and minor public servants along the way. Most of the papers were presented at the 'municipal services and employees' session of the Fourth International Conference on Urban History, held in Venice in September 1998. They subsequently were modified and other essays added, with the aim of producing a more complete and comprehensive volume.

The contributions have their own priorities and impulses, yet they incorporate a number of shared features. They provide detailed information on how change was formulated or resisted within the administrative apparatus. They offer insight into a sector of the 'white-collar' class and the degree of commitment to public values and an ideology of service, often at times of social and political upheaval. They explore

the course of relationships between local and central government, and the shifting bounds of municipal interventionism over a broad period. And they use a social history approach to interpret the day-to-day responsibilities and routine of administration. Together with these points in common, the contributions also display differences and distinctions. Inevitably, they reflect diverse traditions of municipal governance; a characteristic that makes comparative analyses of urban administration all the more rewarding. Yet individually they are also influenced by the constraints of existing historiography, whether the paucity of comparative case studies or the uneven distribution of relevant primary source material. The task of describing the specific background to each of the countries covered far exceeds our knowledge, interpretative skills and linguistic abilities, which is why each contributor was asked to incorporate basic bibliographical information to help the reader to explore further. But an outline of the broad intellectual and practical conditions to which the researches were exposed is a necessary preliminary, before we can consider some of the common questions shared by the participants.

In this introduction we will first elaborate on why municipal employees and services is a relevant and revealing theme in urban history, and then go on to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of existing scholarship. With particular reference to the contributions to this book, we will consider the consolidation of civic expansionism from the mid-nineteenth century. Next, we will examine the complex relationships that emerged between the executive and administrative spheres of local government, the changing role of central government and employees' responses to the needs and directives of the often highly politicized municipal power-base. Finally, we will look to further research approaches to open out this important, yet under-rated aspect of urban history.

Researching municipal employees and services

It is tempting to plunge into the repertory of academic discourse to provide a convenient explanation for the importance of studying municipal employees and services. We could claim, for instance, that the subject has been ignored by historians and must be rescued from obscurity. But that would not be (wholly) true. We could build on trends in urban history, stressing how far the success of the 'urban

governance' approach, in political science as well as history, justifies research on municipal employees and services as integral components of a wider system of government.¹ It would be relevant, in this context, to refer to the recent 'rediscovery' of the municipal dimension by scholars of sociological history, especially in France.² But all that would be too easy. Alternatively, we could highlight recent developments in the study of the social and cultural history of government to demonstrate how municipal administration, its organization and servants, constitute a great laboratory for exploring aspects of the theme further.³ But that would be too trendy. Last but not least, we could elaborate on the 'dull' aspects of municipal bureaucracy to make it look like a cursed and unglamorous subject, in need of historical rehabilitation. But that would be too inhibiting. Instead, what we intend to do in this introductory section is to offer our own reasons for being interested in municipal employees and services, and point the way forward for further developing research.

The first reason relates to municipalities as a locus for the formulation and implementation of public policy; part of the 'social domain' of communities that have been shaped by urbanization, democratization and industrialization. The evolution of a wide range of public policies was the outcome of close co-operation between national governments and local authorities, including municipalities. The need for co-operation could arise from conflict, and central-local relationships took many forms, from domination to subsidiarity through to autonomy. Between 1850 and 1950, albeit with varying degrees of intensity, municipalities, through their services and employees, were major influences on attempts to solve key social issues, such as unemployment, housing, public health, city planning, transportation, or the construction of utilities' networks. This was a period characterized by central state building, but even in the most 'centralized' systems, such as in France, the municipalities played a vital role (Cohen 1998).⁴ The theme is familiar to historians. Jonathan Kahn (1997) for budgeting in the United States, Anne Hardy (1993) and Benoit Gaumer (1995) for public health in Britain, Canada and United States, Gilles Pollet (1995) for the French welfare state, Bénédicte Zimmermann (2001) for the *Kaiserreich* unemployment policies have expanded on the municipal contribution to the design and implementation of public policy. Italy also provides convincing evidence of interaction between the two spheres of government. For the inter-war period, Ugo Giusti (Gaspari 1999) has traced a professional trajectory from the municipal to the national civil service, based on his statistical expertise. Examples

such as the *Segretaria alla Montagna*, where an organization born out of inter-municipal co-operation was turned into a state-run agency (Gaspari 1994),⁵ and the *Societa Umanitaria* in Milan (Nejrotti 1994), all point to the importance of municipal officials and services as pioneering and innovative agencies of administration.

Other related themes rank high in our commitment to ‘bring the municipal administration back in’; for example, the intense circulation of information between civic authorities (Hietala 1987), and the creation of municipal associations which sought to influence the decision-making process (Gaspari 1998, Beckstein 1991). This leads into our second area of our interest, which considers municipalities and their place in social history. A point that should be stressed from the outset is that the local government workforce was and remains important quantifiably. The chronological limits of this volume, broadly from the mid-nineteenth century up to the 1970s, do not mean to imply that there was a rise and fall of municipal relevancy. French municipal employment ‘took off’ during the 1950s, the figures doubling between 1975 and 1994; this represented an increase in parallel with the activities and budgets of municipalities. In terms of numbers, 236 000 persons worked in French municipal services in 1946, rising to 1 087 000 by 1995, while British local authorities employed 2 214 513 in 1993. This is obviously significant in relation to total figures for employment, especially when compared with those for central government civil servants; for example, in 1993 there were 565 000 in the United Kingdom (Byrn 1994, Bellanger *et al.* 2000).⁶ Indeed, if we consider all the countries dealt with by the contributors in this book, the collective evidence indicates the growing scope and scale of employment in the municipal sector throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

While the rise of municipal work opportunity is an important area of study in its own right, it takes on special resonance because of the interest historians have recently displayed for the ‘middling sort’ and the ‘professions’. The work of Jürgen Kocka (1980, 1989), Geoffrey Crossick and Heinz-Gerhard Haupt (1995), and Mariuccia Salvati (1992) has addressed the experience of a range of employees in both the public and private sectors. Of course, municipal establishments did not just relate to the clerical services in city halls; most staff members were blue-collar workers, in the utilities or public works’ units. Nor did all authorities operate on the scale of London County Council (LCC), which employed thousands of ‘blackcoated’ workers at the beginning of the twentieth century. Yet municipalities inevitably had a

concentration of clerical staff, and as city halls were often the largest employer within a community, they could also be the largest administrative employer, especially in towns with a limited service industry.⁷ The characteristics of municipal clerks are illuminating for a variety of reasons, among which is the niche that they occupied in the labour market. Being hired by a civic department, even as an ordinary employee, offered promotion opportunities and, from the turn of the century, the prospect of a retirement pension. A career in government administration secured a place in the hierarchy of public power, if only at the municipal level. Along with these distinctive qualities were features shared with other clerical workers in large private enterprises. White-collar status sustained a sense of corporate belonging, even if aspirations did not necessarily match the financial rewards. Clerical work generally nourished a desire for social advancement, because it implied intellectual capability and was readily associated with the business world.⁸

Municipalities also constitute a useful case-study for those with an interest in the growth and development of the professions. Whether in the public or private sector, at local or national level, collectively or individually, professional work was imbued with the competitive impulse; the ‘system of professions’ depicted by Andrew Abbott (1988). Recent research by Martin Laffin (1998) has shown how the strong link between local bureaucracy and the professions has come to be challenged under the pressures exerted by changing managerial practices; for instance, value-for-money approaches and market competition. Yet the theme of change is by no means new, and was reflected in the preoccupations of municipal professionals even before the 1980s. The ongoing debate illustrates that the professionalization of municipal work from the nineteenth century has had long-lasting effects, one of which, with important implications for this volume, is the tension that emerged between expertise and democracy. Various studies describe how the growth of expertise in public life had an impact on the conduct of public affairs, especially when national government was involved.⁹ The arguments are familiar to historians of the Progressive Era in the United States, as well as to European scholars of the municipal ‘reform’ movement, such as Martin Schiesl (1977), Kenneth Finegold (1995) and Christian Topalov (1999). However, research remains patchy. Better knowledge of the practical work of public services, as well as greater understanding of employment patterns, will help to provide a clearer view of how expertise gained ground in municipal affairs.

The third and final factor accounting for our interest is that administrative history offers considerable scope for understanding municipal development (Dagenais 2000, Saunier 1997, Dumons, Pollet and Saunier 1998). At first sight the institutional components of the administrative apparatus can appear daunting, not least the intricacies of the legal process, internal regulations and organization charts. The human resources dimension compounds the complexity; how did the institutional base relate to employees, their assigned tasks and responsibilities, especially for intermediary and higher public servants? Unravelling this question entails research into administrative techniques, the definition of values and norms, attention to the practical details of work and daily routine, and analysis of the abundant primary literature, whether textbooks or official periodicals from professional societies, associations and trade unions.¹⁰ There is also a range of interacting factors to take into account; for instance, recruitment and promotion procedures, the relationships between services, the connection between municipal executive and legislative powers, the operation of commissions and agencies designed to regulate and organize municipal administration. Last but not least, even the legal characteristics of municipal activity, usually scrutinized through law enforcement and judicial decisions, can be seen from a different perspective if the evidence of legal and administrative practices is used as source material. Indeed, municipal administration often serves as the first point of contact between citizens and the institutions of government, and is therefore a useful testing ground for approaching this kind of ‘grassroots’ administrative history.

The legal framework provides one of the most striking differences between the cities and countries covered by the contributors to this book. In this specific context, various ‘models’ of local government have provided an immediate point of contrast, notably the classical opposition between the ‘French’ and ‘English’ experience. The French model, which circulated in continental Europe as a result of revolutionary and Napoleonic expansion, is characterized by the legal conception of the municipality as a basic cell of the national state and political life, with centralizing consequences (Wunder 1995). It differs radically from the English model, based on a conception of municipalities as communities of property-owning citizens, enjoying relative autonomy on the basis of incorporation or charters. English imperial expansion, notably from the seventeenth century, encouraged the spread of the latter model. Yet inevitably, this Western-centred approach is limited, paying scant attention to possible

alternative models, such as China. It also crumbles if taken as a basis for more detailed comparison between the two models, or if differences ‘inside’ the models are investigated. For instance, arguments in favour of municipalities as the domain of ‘landlord-citizens’ were not unfamiliar in nineteenth-century France (Bourjol 1975), while the dialectic of central-local relations in England was often complex (Bellamy 1988). There were also practical differences of size and scale. Thus, although they came under the aegis of a shared legal system, there were obvious organizational differences between small French cities and large ones, headed by a mayor and a member of parliament. The same can be said for the monolithic LCC and smaller urban district councils in England. Moreover, an approach that takes account only of ‘national models’ fails to appreciate the diversity of municipal laws. There could be wide disparities within national borders; for instance, the variety of *Städteordnungen* or *Gemeindeordnungen* in Prussia before 1870 and then in unified Germany until 1919, the piecemeal approach to urban legislation that prevailed for a long time in Italy, or the conditions under which municipal charters were given by State legislatures in the USA. In the British context, Scotland has a different tradition of local government and a separate legal system from England and Wales. But for our purposes the most important aspects of the municipal laws do not necessarily lie in what they said or enforced, but in the way the protagonists, both individually and through municipal associations, tried to cope with them, seek accommodation and manage changes appropriate to their aims.¹¹

As far as municipal employees were concerned, general or particular municipal laws or charters outlined, rather than defined, their precise role and conditions of service. The power to appoint or dismiss employees might be given to the executive or legislative branch of municipal government. The functions and appointment conditions of higher officials were sometimes written into generic municipal laws or city charters, as was the case with the German *Bürgermeister* or American and Irish city managers.¹² But the general conditions of municipal employees were not incorporated into these generic municipal laws. With the notable exception of Ireland, where an Act of 1926 established a central body of ‘local appointment commissioners’, this was the task of specific laws. For example, the 1902 *loi sur la protection de la santé publique* in France created municipal health offices and defined their responsibilities and the appointment of their directors. Statutory laws could also elaborate on the rights and duties of municipal employees.

The French law of 1919, the civil service regulations introduced in several American cities from the 1890s, the Italian law of 1902 on *segretari comunali* (municipal secretaries), the Spanish law of 1924,¹³ the Local Government Acts that recurred in England and Wales (for instance, in 1875, 1888, 1894, 1929, 1931 and 1933), shared many features regarding the guarantees given to municipal employees, especially over tenure and freedom of opinion.

However, they were all subject to local constraints and controls, often inspired by particular interest groups, such as the anti-machine reform movement in the United States (Schiesl 1977) or the national government of Italy in its quest for municipal control (Romanelli 1989). The activities of different classes of municipal employees should be read in light of these regulatory influences, as they had to move between rules, between the controlling ambitions and powers of local and central government, and of the executive and legislative branches of the latter. Conversely, one should not forget that the preparation of these laws was in most cases a joint venture, where the municipal employees and their trade unions and associations played a participatory role. The laws also often emerged from existing municipal regulations that had previously set up rules for the recruitment, promotion, management and behaviour of municipal employees (Dumons *et al.* 1998, for France; Adorno 1998 and Mozzarelli 1992, for Italy).

Regarding the organization of municipal services, with the exception of those under central (or state) government supervision, like capital cities, the municipalities were in total control. The history of this structural aspect of civic government is relatively unknown, as few researchers have plunged into the grim and complex world of service organization charts and regulations. Yet those intrepid enough to do so have come back with a rich picture that provides greater understanding of the constraints and limits of how municipal policies were defined and implemented (for France, Dumons *et al.* 1998; Saunier 1995 and 1997). They have also found evidence that organizational changes could reconcile the ‘rationalizing’ aspirations of the government machine and employees’ conflicting claims (Dagenais 2000, Mozzarelli 1992). In her work on Montreal, Michèle Dagenais has illustrated the value of examining structural administrative reforms, showing how the work of a private consulting firm, Griffenhagen & Co., from Chicago, can be read as much more than a play with charts and positions; it had wide implications for municipal relationships, whether employees with their work, employees with their superiors, or top officials

with elected representatives. These studies point to the importance of investigating the construction and reconstruction of the municipal administrative apparatus. We need greater understanding of how national laws influenced the creation of positions and services – which seems to have been crucial in the United Kingdom, for instance – in order to have a better grasp of approaches to municipal organization work, whether incrementally or more radically creative.

Reform movements both directed and reflected trends in the evolution of municipal government, and the institutions that generated such impulses are worthy of attention. Municipal associations like the *Deutsche Städtetag* in Germany, societies such as the National Association of Local Government Officers (NALGO) in the United Kingdom,¹⁴ and information and consulting services such as the Chicago Public Administration Clearing House and Public Administration Service were among the diverse components of the ‘municipal movement’ that worked in such directions, helped at a time of intense international circulation of information and news (Saunier 2001). Nevertheless, as demonstrated by the contributions gathered here, the organizational patterns were of such dazzling variety inside each country that, in response to international inquiries about the ‘usual office organization of a local authority’, many national or local associations of municipalities could not answer the question, or obliquely answered by stating the absence of a ‘usual way’. Such was the case of the general report on the ‘Practical working of local authorities’ presented by George Montagu Harris at the 1932 London Congress of the International Union of Local Authorities, where the question of administrative organization was bypassed.¹⁵

Historiography: international comparisons

Potential researchers anxious to explore existing scholarship have found that there are not many accessible works on municipal employees and services. Some countries are better served than others, and the examples of the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy and the United States illustrate the varying degrees of development. In terms of accessibility, the state of British and French scholarship is about the same, although the perspectives taken by historians can be very different. An exploration of municipal policy has not been absent from British research; on the contrary, from housing to public health, the theme provides a continuous thread in the fabric of British urban

history.¹⁶ But the mass of employees who implemented this policy has not been the subject of sustained or serious interest. Irene Maver (2000: 69) mentions the ‘often shadowy presence’ of municipal officials in historical analyses of local government, while Gloria Clifton (1992: 4) has shown how the intensive studies of Victorian-era municipal policies concentrate overwhelmingly on elected representatives. The consolidated bibliography on urban history and the survey of doctoral and master’s theses compiled by Richard Rodger (1994) confirms the accuracy of these statements, for both published and unpublished research.

Nevertheless, a recent, if territorially scattered, interest has emerged. Maver has written several pieces on Glasgow (2000, Fraser and Maver 1996), focusing on the role of municipal managers and town clerks in implementing public policy and shaping (and exploiting) the image of civic virtue. Another group of writing relates to London’s municipal employees and services. Gloria Clifton (1989, 1992) and Susan Pennybacker (1995) have made outstanding contributions to research on London County Council (1889-1965) and its predecessor, the Metropolitan Board of Works (1856-1889). Pennybacker’s incursions in the world of LCC staffing and organization are major landmarks for students of municipal employees and services because of her range of coverage, from the social and cultural life of clerical staff to her analysis of the ‘direct labour’ experiment in the works’ department. Clifton extensively covers the administrative machinery, management practices, recruitment and conditions, workforce origins and the ‘out of work life’ of the various grades of staff of the Metropolitan Board of Works. The fact that at time of writing both historians have not pursued these research interests, and indeed Clifton is working for a navy museum somewhere in the United Kingdom, might well be a sign of the relative academic disinterest in the two books and their specific contribution to knowledge about municipal employees and services.

The French landscape is at first sight different. National civil servants have left a distinctive mark on literature. From Balzac’s *Les employés* (1844) to Flaubert’s *Bouvard et Pécuchet* (1881), the bureaucrat has been a cherished object of derision. While municipal servants were never accorded such literary honours, they nevertheless acquired an ambiguous reputation. In France, a ‘*travail à la Ville*’ (a job for the municipality) is still taken as synonymous with a position combining a second-rate wage with a pressureless job. Indeed, until recently the whole field of municipal administration seems to have been a second-rate subject for historians. On the

academic front, Claude Penner (Bellanger *et al.* 2000: 5) has stressed the complexity of the subject. He argues that factors such as weak professional identity, the mix of white- and blue-collar workers, employer-employee relationships that fluctuated between authoritarianism and accommodation, may be responsible for restricting the appeal of the municipal workforce, especially for social historians. On the other hand, during the 1980s there was renewed interest in the local dimension to political history, expressed, for instance, in research on French mayors (Agulhon *et al.* 1986, Georges 1989). Working-class history has also inspired research into left-wing control of municipalities, notably in the Parisian Red Belt (Fourcaut 1980, 1992, Brunet 1981), although the employees in charge of implementing policy were not identified as important actors in the political process. In furtherance of their interests in bureaucracy, it was jurists, political scientists and sociologists who paid the closest attention to municipal employees and services. Work by Catherine Lecomte (1987, 1989), Jean-Claude Thoenig (1982), Dominique Lorrain (1989) and Jean-Yves Nevers (1983) illustrate a trend that developed in the 1980s. From the beginning of the 1990s, French historians used these works as basis to develop their own research. This bore fruit in a crop of student master theses developed in Paris under the direction of Claude Penner from 1994 onwards, and in the work of Bruno Dumons, Gilles Pollet and Pierre-Yves Saunier in Lyons. They focused particularly on the role of different ranking civic officials, the range of services and the organization of the municipal machinery (Bellanger *et al.* 2000, Dumons *et al.* 1998).

These scattered landscapes contrast with the vigorous field of study on municipal personnel and services in Germany and Italy. They can be considered as strongholds of the subject, having pioneered research into issues that are only beginning to be investigated elsewhere. The German experience is probably the most widely known. Work on professional urban administrators evolved in the context of change within the bureaucratic structure of German cities, represented by the shift from domination by social elites acting as honorary municipal executive officials (especially in the Western Prussian *Magistrat*) to the professionalization of civic positions and careers. Honorary administrators did not disappear; in 1910 there were still 2845 in Dresden, of whom 2011 worked unpaid for the municipality. In Berlin, the number of non-paid staff was 10 087.¹⁷ However, *Honoratiorenverwaltung* (administration by honorary officials) gradually gave way to *Leistungsverwaltung* (administration by paid officials). Historians have analysed both groups. The honorary

administrators, who worked in the *Magistrat* or in the numerous specialized commissions of the municipal apparatus, form the theme of several books emanating from the *Burgertum* studies in Bielefeld; in particular, Ludovica Scarpa's investigation of Berlin (1995). Particular interest has been taken in the role of professional administrators from the mid-nineteenth century to the fall of the Weimar Republic in 1933 (Blotevogel 1990, Fischer 1995, Grottrup 1973, Krabbe 1985). Case studies have been written about the technicians of planning, architecture and utilities (Fish 1988, Scarpa 1983, Schott 1999) and the *Oberburgermeister* (Croon 1971, Hoffman 1974), while Fabio Rugge (1989) has provided Italian readers with an insightful analysis of the *Gemeindebeamte* (municipal employees) in Prussia up to 1914.

Two features are worth underlining about this rich German body of research. Firstly, it has been stimulated by the welcome existence of research institutions and publishing outlets. Centres like the *Institut für vergleichende Städtegeschichte* in Münster (Institute for Comparative Urban History) or series like the *Schriften des Deutschen Instituts für Urbanistik*, from the Stuttgart publisher Kohlhammer, have promoted the history of municipal employees and services. This is not surprising, if we consider that the *Deutsches Institut für Urbanistik* (Berlin) is the heir of the *Kommunalwissenschaftliche Institut*, one of many institutions created by the German municipal movement during the early twentieth century to encourage research and training in municipal administration (Rugge 1986). A second point worth noting is that the research output of German historians abruptly halts with the demise of the Weimar Republic. What subsequently happened to municipal officials and the German municipal movement, especially after the *Deutsche Gemeindeordnung* (municipal law) of 1935, is an intriguing question that remains unanswered.

Italian historiography of municipal employees and services is more chronologically complete, and recent work by Luca Baldissara illustrates the depth of analysis that characterizes this particular area of scholarship. His study of Bologna's municipal government after the Second World War (1994) was followed by an exploration of the trajectories of ideas, institutions and individuals in Italian municipalities from the 1920s through to the 1950s, which incorporates the fascist era instead of treating it as a rupture (1998). Baldissara's work represents only one example of the innovative Italian approach to municipal studies, and a full historiographical essay would be necessary to do justice to the wealth and breadth of

research output.¹⁸ Scholarly interest in municipal services and employees was first manifested during the 1980s, when themes in public administration, social history and urban history coalesced as part of the study of Italian nation and state formation after the *Risorgimento* years. The pioneering and prolific output of this period provided strong foundations for further research, as is indicated by the Italian contributions to this volume. In particular, conferences became a major forum for interweaving the different strands of the municipal experience, and the published proceedings show how ideas were able to develop (Aimo and Bigaran 1986, Adorno and Sorba 1991, Salvati 1993). Together with the city profiles included in the monster volumes from the *Istituto Superiore d'Amministrazione Pubblica*, dedicated to the reforms instituted by Crispi at the end of the nineteenth century (ISAP 1990), and Raffaele Romanelli's key-work on municipal secretaries (1989), these first shots were soon followed by a flurry of monographic works about the municipal administration of specific towns (Alaimo 1990, Sorba 1993, Balzani 1992).

Interest in municipal employees and services took a very specialized dimension with the publication of *Il governo della città nell'Italia giolittiana*, whose contributions probably form the most detailed batch of data available on the organization of municipal administration (Mozzarelli 1992). Since then, the flow has not stopped, although some Italian colleagues feel that the historiography in the field is in need of a revitalising 'second wind'. If the evidence of a recent set of conference proceedings is anything to go by (Soresina 1998), this might come from integrating the experience of municipal employees in the wider picture of white-collar workers, or from considering municipal employees in the national context, through the existence of regional or national professional markets, for example. There is also need for further geographic diversity, with greater focus on cities in the south and east, rather than the usual centre-north cities that have attracted the lion's share of attention. Despite the limitations, two characteristics help to explain the relative vitality of Italian research. Firstly, there is fruitful collaboration between historians and scholars of public administration. The role of the Milan-based ISAP, the intensive participation of Fabio Rugge to many collective efforts previously mentioned, the attention paid to municipal administration by leading scholars like Sabino Cassese, Guido Melis and Ettore Rotelli demonstrates the commitment of administration specialists to understanding the municipal experience. The second salient feature is the sheer versatility of Italian research. Indeed, Italy might be the only place to have

developed an integrated knowledge of municipal services and employees.¹⁹ Not only is foreign scholarship read, used and commented upon, but Italian scholars have also conducted first-hand research beyond their home base, as with Rugge and Scarpa on Germany. The price of this versatility might nevertheless be quite high. The Italian landscape is characterized by an overabundance of monographs and conference proceedings, while the big synthesis of more than twenty years of stimulating scholarship is yet to come.

To conclude this historiographical overview, the case of the United States represents a reverse mirror image of the Italian experience, showing the relative absence of municipal employees and services from urban studies. Of course, it could be said that the diversity of legal forms of government in the USA, from commission/Council to manager/Council patterns through the wide range of autonomy and power allocated to mayors by city charters, makes analysis difficult as it multiplies the organizational possibilities. This is not helped by the bewildering variety of employment systems. These include a large number of popularly elected administrative positions, as well as independent commissions and boards, covering areas such as schools and parks. Co-existing alongside the extended possibilities in hiring and firing offered by the spoils system has been the development of the merit system and civil service regulations in the municipalities from the end of the 1890s. But the complexities do not explain why American historians have paid insufficient attention to the structural aspects of municipal government. Significantly, the general work of Sam Bass Warner (1968) and Eric Monkkenen (1988) on the development of the service city stresses the role of civic private organizations rather than city officials. Elsewhere the officials are often alluded to in the context of the reform movement, but they tend not to be treated as protagonists in their own right. Their exclusion is exemplified by Schiesl's account (1977) of the drive towards 'municipal efficiency', especially the chapter dedicated to 'the politics of bureaucratization'.²⁰ The focus on political machines and on the municipal reform movements that developed to counteract them seem to have absorbed the energy of American historians, leaving little space to consider municipal structures and employees as an integral part of the reform process.

Indeed, it is a strange irony that the efforts of American reformers to change the structures of municipal government, and their emphasis on civil service regulations, as showcased in the Municipal Program circulated by the National

Municipal League in 1900, were not followed by the efforts of American historians to study these same structures. The contrast between the work of Monkkonen (1981) and Jay Berman (1987) on the police force is revealing. Both claim to analyze behaviour, growth and change in police bureaucracies. However, they take very different approaches to the subject. The historian Monkkonen deals with structural developments in a general survey chapter and an account of the development of uniformed police forces in the United States, but then goes on to concentrate on areas of policing efficiency, such as trends of arrests. Conversely, the criminologist Berman focuses on reform of the New York Police Board, emphasizing the professionalizing impact of entrance examinations and the strengthening of centralized police executive control. This compartmentalized American approach is quite distinct from the Italian integration of the field. Jon Teaforde's *Unheralded Triumph* (1984) further demonstrates the reluctance of American historians to expand on the profile of municipal officials. The chapters dedicated to executives such as the city comptrollers, corporation counsels and city chamberlains, as well as municipal technicians, fail to draw out their importance as groups or individuals. They also fall short of examining their contribution to municipal government, sticking to famous 'stars' in engineering or park supervision. A glance at Teaforde's footnotes is revealing. Most of the information on employees and services comes from the professional and daily press or official reports. Conspicuous by their absence are archival records documenting the operation of the services and the careers of the officials; an approach that reflects the tenor of other American books dealing with the history of municipal government.

Of course, the availability of municipal records is very uneven in American cities, and not all communities have civic archives. Moreover, the fact that autonomous boards and commissions often performed municipal functions accounts for the dearth of 'inside' material that would enable researchers to document and analyse the course of administrative change and to reconstitute individuals' careers. But the well-known wealth of private papers in American libraries and archive depositories has not been used comprehensively for these purposes. For instance, the George McAneny papers (Princeton University and Columbia University collections) and the Leonard White papers (University of Chicago collections) are among several collections to include Civil Service Commission documents and related material.²¹ The daily journal kept by White during the late 1920s, when he was one of the civil

service commissioners for Chicago, is a fascinating account of his responsibilities, bringing much more light to the Commission's activities than any of its printed reports. Civil Service Commission records, such as the Philadelphia ones, also hold a considerable amount of material on organizational change, personnel classification and positions' lists. The relevant holdings of municipal repositories and historical societies are far from exhaustively explored. It is clear that historical research still has a long way to go.

The Expansion of Municipal Employees and Services

The modern city referred to in the title of the present work is one which took shape toward the middle of the nineteenth century in a period marked by the dual processes of urbanization and industrialization, characteristic of great European and American cities. The way in which particular communities and individuals interpreted these changes helped to create or redefine the role of local institutions, and contributed to the formulation of a municipal political domain, at least on the normative level. The mid-nineteenth century also corresponded with the advent of the 'governmental revolution'; the setting up of a new framework of political action that followed closely upon the development of nation states (Corrigan and Sayer 1985). Along with the centralization of power and authority, management of the multiple aspects of social existence, hitherto assumed by civil society, was gradually taken over by political institutions.²² Municipal administrations, then in formation, participated in this general reorganization of political and social relationships.²³ By law, charter and through granting specific prerogatives, they were assigned a whole range of powers and responsibilities for the governance of local concerns, at least in regard to what pertained to their jurisdiction.

The impact of urbanization and industrialization fell heavily upon municipal authorities. This occurred because, in addition to particular exigencies, higher governments, freely interpreting their role, refused to recognize the social problems provoked by these developments, which the municipalities felt to be urgent (Fecteau 1995). Within this context of frequent turmoil, a range of questions was posed at the urban level relating to community organization, town planning, public health and the management of social relations. But towns and their institutions did not respond only

to this context, as compelling and troubling as it might have been. Were they not also undergoing transformation in their institutional, political and social structures?²⁴ The nature of such transformation becomes more transparent if municipal employees are given a central role in the formulation and implementation of public policy. Much can be learned from scrutinizing their practical responsibilities, their analytical tools, the way their actions and interventions took shape, and the context in which they operated. Analyzing the work of local institutions and of those who influenced urban life requires an examination of the processes relating to initiatives and public policy, not merely on the ground, in the political and electoral arena where results are evident, but also in the background. Even if they vocally promoted them, it was rarely elected representatives who devised specific courses of municipal action. An entire preliminary effort preceded these policies and measures, which is made evident from this book.

In more than one respect, municipalities can be likened to ‘laboratories’ where public policy was developed from around the mid-nineteenth century.²⁵ The term ‘public policy’ is not a direct synonym for policy on behalf of the public, but instead relates to measures and interventions issuing from political, and therefore public, institutions. Indeed, an important interpretative distinction between the American and the European experience is apparent in the very origins of towns, and strongly coloured the development of what cities actually did.²⁶ In the case of North America, cities created their hinterland and provided a large part of the impetus for economic development in the nineteenth century. The situation was virtually reversed in the case of European cities, which were more the product of their hinterland and the result of the development of these areas. The implications of these two contrasting histories are fundamental. In the Americas, where virtually everything had to be built and developed, the municipalities competed with one another to attract the capital necessary for growth. In consequence, they found themselves in a vulnerable position when dealing with private enterprise. Wielding the borrowing power conferred on them through municipal charter, local administrations sought to attract business through the means of low-cost loans, tax breaks and relaxed regulations.²⁷ At the same time as municipalities had to provide a whole range of basic services to stimulate economic development in their area, they concluded agreements with companies providing public utilities that benefited the providers more than they did the population they were supposed to serve (Armstrong and Nelles 1983). These

considerations go a long way towards explaining why local authorities were primarily viewed from the perspective of management, as bodies in the service of economic development and private property.²⁸

European cities were in a rather different position. They represented localities indispensable to the expansion of capital and were therefore less vulnerable to the demands of private entrepreneurs, although competition among cities was not unknown. On the other hand, their leaders had to confront the problems and tensions prompted by economic and industrial development, especially the need to maintain public order and social cohesion (Maver 1995, Morris 1997). The process of redefining the role of governance also took place in a different context from that characterizing the new communities, as it appeared within a framework in which old political structures already existed. Municipalities, especially in continental Europe, tended to be seen as extensions of the central state,²⁹ based in part on the French model stemming from the Revolution and subsequent Napoleonic conquest. In these cases, the notion of a public service generally appeared earlier (Rodger 1993). It was a component of the municipal sphere, sometimes as early as the middle of the nineteenth century, and issues relating to local management took on a more overtly political colour.

In view of these different contexts, how did definitions of the municipal sphere of action on each continent present themselves and how did they develop? In the Americas, public water services, for example, were established to meet the needs of private enterprise, rather than in response to questions of public health. (Fougères 1995, Poitras 1999). As the article by Amy Greenberg in this collection demonstrates, private sector initiative also was responsible for the professionalization of firefighting services. Around the mid-nineteenth century insurance companies, anxious about the runaway costs associated with volunteer fire departments, most of which they had to bear, became the chief proponents of professionalizing and ultimately municipalizing firefighting services. Prompted by economic imperatives, the municipalities followed in their wake and became party to a process of experimentation in techniques to fight fires. By embracing new technology, in this case the steam engine, the cities became sites for the dissemination of certain kinds of innovation. Through this process, as well as through a number of others in which the municipal authorities were prodded to develop urban services, the entrepreneurial conception of local institutions lost ground to a more communal vision of their role and activities.

There was a marked divergence in the way the public services' debate was conducted in large European cities, particularly those in Italy. As shown in the article by Filippo De Pieri, the Turin town council adopted an altogether different attitude when it obtained important powers to control urban development. Concerned with asserting authority and establishing their expertise in running the city, especially when faced with other local bodies and with the State, the city authorities placed *l'Ufficio d'Arte*, Turin's Department of Public Works, at the forefront. Furthermore, the municipal presence became apparent through the technical and prescriptive control it came to exercise in the course of the city's transformation. Relying on powers recognized by the state, local administrators took over responsibilities of a technical nature previously assumed by other authorities, such as drawing up building codes, urban development plans and public works projects. In consequence, questions once viewed as political, as the focus of power struggles between different local bodies, were posed increasingly in technical terms, to be managed by municipal services and specialized personnel.

By the 1900s a further wave of municipal expansion had followed on from the first pioneering, mid-nineteenth century period of activity. This second phase is often improperly termed 'municipal socialist', because the movement was characterized by increasing interventionism on the part of public bodies.³⁰ Such was the case especially for cities in the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy and France, which took over a whole range of urban functions. In the course of this process, which began in the middle of the nineteenth century, services as diverse as gas and electricity supply, sewers, slaughterhouses, public transport and street lighting were municipalized. Similarly, in North America, this period, termed 'reformist', was characterized by an expansion in services taken over by municipal authorities and by more energetic regulation of companies supplying public utilities. This more active interventionism was legitimized by borrowing, if only rhetorically, the principles of 'businesslike management' and the scientific management of labour, then very fashionable in business circles.³¹

On both sides of the Atlantic, interventionism was stimulated by urban development and population growth as well as by a consciously political dynamic. This last factor had been consolidated by the intensification of political debate arising from electoral extension, and the consequent growth of popular participation at the local level.³² The expansion of public administrations and their activities during the

course of the nineteenth century made them more visible in the city and conferred on them increasing legitimacy. Must we not also link this interventionism to the work accomplished by the growing number of white- and blue-collar municipal employees, who were working in the various departments of these administrations and to whom the authors in this collection direct their attention? In fact, the more systematic interventions upon and within the urban domain were fed by the expertise that local managers were developing and their knowledge of the city and its inhabitants. For projects and initiatives to be effective, they had to be supported by personnel familiar with the urban environment, structures and inhabitants. Municipal initiatives evolved at the same time as new social sciences, some of which would ultimately be systematized as ‘municipal science’, were also developing. Political institutions, national and local, would come to rely on these not only to maintain control but also to achieve a better understanding of the populations they were managing.³³ At the local level, the tensions and instability that accompanied the rise of large cities engendered a mounting preoccupation with social questions. This was the dynamic that drove German city statisticians, studied by Bénédicte Zimmermann, to perfect the instruments they needed to measure, literally, the consequences of these developments. Before intervention could take place, it was important to be familiar with, evaluate and measure social phenomena, such as problems of poverty and unemployment. Techniques of collecting and processing a mass of empirical data on living conditions lay at the heart of constructing new analytical categories and ultimately contributed to public intervention. Thus, certain new areas of public initiative expanded because they had been identified, described and were empirically based.

The essay by Christina Mertens analyses how the city administration of São Paulo in the 1930s carried out the task of constructing both the urban area and at the same time a perspective from which to comprehend it. During this period various social categories, previously invisible because the municipal authorities neither identified nor named them, acquired a certain degree of materiality due to the work carried out by a whole stratum of social scientists in the service of the city. In seeking to capture a sense of the city and its inhabitants, to construct a range of knowledge based on urban society, they contributed to the definition of the city itself, both physically and in relation to the mood of the populace. The contributions of these technical and social engineers, both in action and in representation, took on a

complexion that was all the more pronounced because it was part of a movement designed to produce a liberal and modern mode of city administration, even if the national political scene was dominated by an authoritarian and conservative regime. Thus, with reference also to Greenberg's article on firefighters and De Pieri's work on Turin, it can be shown that the remit of local city administrations was not just a reaction to prior necessity. The organization of structures and services represented more than a simple, functional response to the growing complexity of city administration. How 'problems' were formulated, needs defined and management styles developed was the result of the intellectual, political and practical work carried out by municipal administrations and other participants on the urban scene, in a movement made familiar by studies on the 'reformist moment' (Topalov 1999).

Politics, Administration and the Nature of Governance

Who were the persons who set these municipal policies in motion? What sort of relations developed among the various groups that were evolving within local institutions? A concern with city employees directly involves the relationship between the political and the administrative spheres. A complicated question, the connections between these two spheres would merit extensive treatment by themselves. A genealogy will ultimately have to be made to draw out the discourse and practices that contributed to defining them, and creating the borders between them, so manifold were the ramifications of these processes. Clearly, this poses important questions regarding the development and history of political institutions. For our purposes, we wish to direct attention to the interplay between these two specific spheres. Nevertheless, establishing the distinction between the political and the administrative, led by reformers, administrative experts and the aristocrats of political science, whose intentions were as much practical as professional and strategic, deserves far greater attention than can be afforded here. Echoing Dagenais' article, we wish simply to draw attention to the multiplicity of the processes manifest in the functioning of municipal administration.³⁴

Because marking the boundary between the political and the administrative is never clear-cut, any more than is the definition of the prerogatives and powers attached to each sphere, sources of tension between office holder and office worker

were numerous. Of course, local elected representatives needed employees to direct the fortunes of their cities, and this was why they supported a certain growth in the administrative apparatus, all the while attempting to keep it within bounds. Moreover, at a time when local government increasingly was intervening in city life, those in elected office tended to rely on the expertise of their employees to reinforce their own legitimacy and shed a favourable light on their capacity to govern. This was what happened in Montreal during the 1930s when those in office, grappling with the disastrous effects of the Depression on the city, opted to team up with senior administrators. Those who had up till then sought to retain the greatest possible control over the management of civic affairs now decided to support an important reform of budgetary procedures. Although they risked limiting the room for manoeuvre from which they had previously benefited, the elected representatives realized that the project permitted them to take the financial situation at City Hall in hand. With this information, they could more easily project an image of authority and competence, particularly useful in those difficult times.

At the same time, the collaboration between incumbents and administrators ran into its own constraints because the first group often viewed the knowledge and expertise of the second group as a threat. Some administrators owed their expertise to their technical training, some to their familiarity with city management acquired through experience, and some, indeed, to both components. If this expertise served the interests of those in office, who could take credit for it, it was also a source of tension that would advance in step with the increasing stability, scope and legitimacy of the administrative sphere. At the height of their competencies, merits and achievements, why might municipal employees not tend to stress the idea that they constituted, when all was said and done, the best guarantee for the stability and continuity of local institutions, in a kind of echo of the principles of ‘businesslike management’ and the separation of politics and administration?

Roberto Ferretti’s essay concerning Italian city engineers illuminates the ambiguous character of relationships between elected officials and city employees and the contradictions that ensued from the growth of a bureaucratic municipal apparatus. Here, employees’ interests collided with those in elective office, although both sides comprehended the necessity of collaborating with each other so as to consolidate the municipal apparatus. But while doing their work for the city, the employees developed recognition of their own interests and specific professional identity. Thus,

in the case of the city engineers, their increasing specialization and professionalism contributed to the formation of a particular group nurtured by its own expertise and endowed with a strong collective consciousness. The elected representatives showed determination when faced with the engineers' pursuit of status and their desire to maintain autonomy, and sought to label this group as mere subordinate technicians rather than professional decision-makers. Numerous tensions followed from their efforts, insofar as the image projected was altogether at odds with the engineers' quest to construct a professional identity and gain public recognition for their work.

What sorts of strategies did public servants develop to counter the limitations that elected representatives wished to impose on them? In order to promote their collective identity and obtain whatever recognition for their expertise they could, many municipal employees organized their own professional associations. Just like Bellanger's twentieth-century town clerks in France, Ferretti's Italian city engineers turned in this direction. By relying on the collective strength that came with organized numbers, both groups aimed to obtain recognition at the national level that they would then use locally, as the need arose, to press for their rights and points of view. Working towards the circulation of information about available jobs and the definition of salary standards and working conditions, these associations also favoured the establishment of job banks on the regional and even national level. This allowed for greater autonomy of their members in relation to the elected representatives. Moreover, the employees did not hesitate to call upon the state to recognize their legitimacy and authority when necessary, even if the effect was to produce a certain weakening of local autonomy and thus create new sources of tension between employees and those elected to run municipal government.

If it was relatively easy for engineers to stress the technical character of their profession in order to obtain this sort of recognition, those in other categories, whose fields of competence rested on different criteria, were not prevented from relying on the same sort of strategy. This was the case for the town clerks studied by Bellanger. They successfully defined themselves as a distinctive professional group on the basis of their detailed familiarity with the local scene, acquired on the ground, and on their indispensable role as intermediaries between municipal powers and superior authorities, and the community workforce and the mayor. By stressing their ability to transcend partisan political battles and inter-union strife, the town clerks from the Parisian suburbs grew in prestige and even achieved the local and national political

support that was necessary to establish their area of competence and their authority when faced with the elected administration. It is interesting to note that this class of professionals dualistically defined itself as apart from politics, but also relied on the political power-base to consolidate its position.

Employee associations seem, moreover, to have played an important role in the process of strengthening the skills of city employees. To those initiatives discussed by Bellanger in this volume may be added the activities of the British local government officers' association, NALGO, during the first decades of the twentieth century through the summer schools and qualification examinations that it developed as a means of gaining access to municipal service, or the correspondence courses and intensive courses set up in the United States in the 1930s by the International City Managers Association. The promulgation of rules for recruitment by employees' or by communes' associations (for instance, *Nederlandsche Vereniging voor Gemeentenbelangen* in the Netherlands, *Deutsche Städtetag* in Germany, as well as the associations of Swedish communes) is another element that shows how far this area was a point of contact between the municipalities and their employees, even if relationships could veer between conflict or co-operation.³⁵

The city of Toulouse illustrates yet another form of relationship between the political and administrative spheres, into which this time the trade unions were participants. Here, the local authorities openly and consciously depended upon city employees to increase their hold on the municipal apparatus, which at this point was nearly complete. As Jean-Yves Nevers explains, close association between the politicians, the unions and the city employees came to be established. The cohesion of this 'iron triangle', as Nevers calls it, was based on the interests of the dominant union, on those of the political party in power and those of the higher levels of the bureaucracy, all of which were in a situation of interdependence. This particular form of co-management developed progressively during the opening decades of the twentieth century,³⁶ beginning when a joint committee charged with establishing the working conditions of municipal employees was set up. This was the way found by the ruling socialist party to purchase peace and obtain the adherence of city employees to its programme of municipal services' development. The arrangement also permitted the party to count on the votes of employees and to benefit from a reservoir of important activists on its behalf. The uninterrupted re-election of socialists to the

Toulouse city hall between 1925 and 1940 attests to the success of such collaboration, while at the same time it provided the grounds for its perpetuation.

The collaboration established between elected representatives and the municipal service administrators in Montreal during the 1930s resembles the Toulouse model in that it also allowed for the establishment of standards of performance that would encourage the bureaucratization of municipal structures. Taking advantage of the winds of reform blowing through City Hall during the Depression, certain highly placed bureaucrats achieved the adoption of new procedures relating to critical aspects of the careers of city employees. Thus the practices governing pensions and salary scales were reviewed according to pre-established criteria that no longer took the particular circumstances of each individual employee into account. The introduction of regulations defining various aspects of public service jobs helped to limit the degree to which politicians might encroach on administrative territories. As a result, the transfer of areas of responsibility accentuated the administrative sphere to the detriment of the political area, and, at the same time, increased the power of the bureaucrats. If ordinary city workers were less than enthusiastic about these reforms, because they prohibited them from presenting a personal case to secure certain privileges, they soon realized the advantages they might enjoy, particularly considering the insecurities of the Depression years. Whether through professional associations for certain groups or unions for the rest, it could be said that the bureaucratization of labour relations was part of the process by which the position of city workers was consolidated within the municipal apparatus and their status recognized. Several of the articles in this collection analyse the processes that were involved in the definition of public policy and in the elaboration of the modalities surrounding the intervention of municipal administrations in the city.

An examination of the history of municipal employees and services inescapably raises the question of the degree to which city administrations had the power and capability to shape cities at both the physical and social level. The reconstruction of various practices relating to installing water mains, building roads and public areas, establishing codes for improving the local environment, and the elaboration of new fiscal measures, allows for some response to this question. Indeed, all of these projects constitute tangible signs of the impact of municipal services and employees on the city. It is possible to reconstruct these effects from their surviving traces in lists of rental values and property owners, in geographical maps, urban

development plans, organizational charts of municipal services and structures, schedules of job classifications and public service salary scales. To paraphrase Philippe Minard (2000), these relics ultimately permit us to understand how municipal administrators helped to create the urban landscape by projecting their expertise and interests onto the town.³⁷

Conclusion

To attempt an outline survey of city employees and services in Europe and the Americas is like negotiating an obstacle course that requires taking shortcuts and detours, all of which may give rise to bias and misunderstandings. The undertaking also involves its share of successes as well as problems, happy discoveries and disappointments. Yet viewing, however summarily, the history of municipal administrations and their employees in São Paulo, Turin or Toulouse at once permits the main themes to emerge and brings to light the importance of certain phenomena. Without losing sight of all the essential subtle differences, it is necessary to begin by sketching out certain simultaneous developments that were taking place municipally in Western cities. From the mid-nineteenth century, and for about a hundred years thereafter, a large number of cities experienced the development of their municipal governments along paths that often converged. The dynamics of political life, though strongly influenced by distinctive types of economic, social and cultural developments as well as differences of region, country, and continent, were also similar on a number of levels. Questions of defining and establishing boundaries between the political and the administrative, the development of specialized municipal endeavours, the bureaucratization of labour relations, the professionalization of particular categories of employees, the development of associations and unions show that there are as many common tendencies as there are different cities studied in the various chapters in this volume.

A certain tension between the need to use broad strokes to describe phenomena in order to bring out overall trends and the desire not to obscure their specific qualities always accompanies attempts at comparison. Much as a certain form of generalization allows for broad vistas that give the reader the impression of covering vast areas, these can also detract from the diversity of situations and the

richness they entail. This uniformity, which lurks in every attempt to generalize, also depends on the current state of research. Although this introduction hopes to provide a relatively exhaustive picture regarding Europe and the Americas, it must be cautioned that a number of obscure areas remain that can be attributed as much to our own limitations as to the existing scholarship. No comparison is possible between the breadth of work on the Italian municipalities and the paucity of studies on Brazilian cities. This relative meagreness of scholarly work is also apparent in the case of towns that are otherwise quite well studied, such as North American cities. Furthermore, the differences in the level of scholarly investigation into the questions that concern us cannot be attributed solely to their national orientation. Within the same country, students of urban history have exhibited considerably less interest in certain classes of cities (medium-sized cities in Great Britain) or certain regions (the south-eastern United States, for example).

The act of comparison also exposes a number of snares that can render it a perilous undertaking. It is extremely difficult to stand on the cutting edge of comparison where diverse experiences meet. Despite efforts to extricate ourselves, we remain more often than not prisoners of the encompassing nation state, so resonant and pervasive in the study of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Therefore, whether we like it or not, comparisons are based on a given national situation, and other situations are judged in relationship to it.³⁸ This confinement makes sense up to a point in the case of municipalities, as their institutional history was closely linked to the formation of nation states. But at the same time, their histories cannot be understood in isolation, since the developments they underwent present similarities that are often unrelated to the national frameworks in which they were situated. There are at this point sufficiently numerous studies that demonstrate the autonomy enjoyed by municipalities in relation to the larger state, and these ought to encourage historians to more boldly undertake direct comparisons, not satisfying themselves with mere juxtaposition of municipal cases that would be meant to 'represent' national contexts. We also intend by this trying to draw comparisons according to a method that would not solely aim at labelling 'laggard' and 'pioneer' nation states, nor at being concerned only with differences. Working with cities is also an introduction to the complexity of the mechanisms of initiation, borrowing, diffusion, innovation and their variations inside national borders, and it suggests slightly different ways to operate on a comparative scale.

One way of escaping from the straitjacket of the nation state is to ask the kind of questions that are situated immediately at the intersection of a number of national contexts. Should we not go beyond the statement of similarities among the various municipalities to interrogate the structural and historic circumstances that brought them into being? We must therefore study very closely how municipal administrations came to adopt similar policies, practices and measures, despite their diverse characteristics and geographical locations. The scholarly work that already exists concerning the ideas involved with city management does not preclude further detailed research into the processes that were responsible for circulating these ideas, how they became established in various municipalities and the modalities surrounding their adoption. The comparatist perspective, therefore, becomes ‘trans’, ‘supra’, ‘super’ or ‘inter’ national; the choice of term is not important.³⁹ What is important is that this approach becomes more than a simple instrument in the historian’s hands. Comparativism can perhaps transcend some of its limits by becoming, at least in part, the very object of scholarly research. This seems particularly appropriate, since the officials and employees being studied used it so intensively. Indeed, it was comparativism in practice that various protagonists in the ‘municipal movement’ employed at the turn of the twentieth century, not just through their investigations, fact-finding trips, conferences and publications, but also through the rhetorical and practical transfers they derived from foreign connections.⁴⁰ The theme of city workforces and the organization of municipal services, which, as has been noted, was the focus of numerous inquiries, conventions, and investigative trips reflecting local and national experiences, is promising ground for further study. We hope that this volume will contribute to encouraging further steps in this direction.

Notes

1. See, for instance, the recent edited collection of Morris and Trainor (2000).
2. As exemplified by the work of Dubois (1996), (1998), (1999).

3. See Becker and Clark (2001); *Genèses* (1999); *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales* (2000).
4. William Cohen (1998) has presented a convincing argument about the wide margin of autonomy that French municipalities had in the nineteenth century, despite control by the Prefects, the *Ministère de l'Intérieur* and the *Conseil d'Etat*. These controls need to be investigated in more depth to reach a better understanding of their limits.
5. The *Segretaria*, created in 1919 by the *Associazione Nazionale Comuni Italiani* (National Association of Italian Municipalities), was created as a national agency by the fascist state in 1926.
6. The British figures come from Byrn (1994), 249; the French figures are quoted in Bellanger *et al.* (2000), 26, from the data of the *Institut National de la Statistique et des Etudes Economiques*.
7. That was the experience of London County Council in 1909 with 35 316 employees. (See Clifton, 'Members and officers of the LCC', in Saint, 1989: 10.) E. D. Simon, the ex-lord mayor of Manchester, wrote that his city's Corporation employed 25 000 persons in 1926, and that one-tenth of the city's population was living on a municipal stipend. (Quoted by Bellamy in Rugge 1992, 51). Glasgow employed 34 000 permanent staff in 1934 (Maver in Morris and Trainor, 2000, 83).
8. On public administration employees, see notably Aron (1987), Siwek-Pouydeseau (1989), and Dagenais (2000), chapter 5. On clerical employees in general, see Kocka (1980), Lowe (1987), Dagenais (1989), and Gardey (1999).
9. For example, Furner (1990) and (1993), Dubois and Dulong (1999), and McLeod (1988).

10. For a useful introduction to the world of the press and periodicals aimed at clerks, or published by clerks' organizations, see Romanelli (1989), chapter 1, as well as Lucarini (1999).
11. For approaches that involve synthesis of municipal government in Europe, see for example Rugge (1992) and Naunin (1984).
12. Though this touches upon the limits of this volume, it is worth mentioning that the Country Management Act of 1940 established city and county managers in Eire.
13. Gregorio Nuñez of the University of Granada, is working on the under-researched area of Spanish municipal government, employees and services. See, for instance, his 'Notes sur les stratégies et la structure du personnel dans l'administration locale en Espagne au début du XXe siècle', from the colloquium, 'Gouverner la ville en Europe 19-20eme siècles', held at Lyons, France, June 2000.
14. The British trade union NALGO, now incorporated into UNISON, was originally the National Association of Local Government Officers, but from the late 1940s extended its sphere of recruitment to workers in the nationalized industries, notably the state-run gas and electricity monopolies. It subsequently was known as the National and Local Government Officers' Association.
15. International Union of Local Authorities (1932), *Fifth International Congress of Local Authorities*, Brussels: International Union of Local Authorities, 28.
16. For a summarized account of urban history in Great Britain, see Anthony Sutcliffe, 'Great Britain', in Engeli and Matzerath (1989).
17. Wolfgang Hoffmann, 'Aspetti politici e sociali', in Rugge (1992), 125

18. Carlotta Sorba (1977) has taken preliminary steps in this direction in a wider essay on the historiography of 'local administration' in Europe. We are indebted to her for our description of Italian research in the field.
19. In fact, it is amazing how, in other countries, works on municipal employees and services generally ignore the rich foreign contribution in the field, or do not integrate their questions and findings in their own framework, beginning with Dumons, Pollet and Saunier (1997).
20. The same observation can be made about Schiesl's contribution to Ebner and Tobin (1981). His account of the housing inspectors of Los Angeles does not consider this group or their administrative support as important actors in control policy.
21. Georges McAneny, a local leader of the municipal reform movement, was elected to different positions in New York City government during the first four decades of the twentieth century. Leonard D. White was Professor of Public Administration in the Political Sciences Department of the University of Chicago. He became a US Civil Service Commissioner later in the 1930s.
22. There is a whole collection of studies into the formation of the state in the nineteenth century, which provides an excellent account of this transfer. Chief among them are Greer and Radforth (1992) and Curtis (2001). See Morris (2000) for an analysis of the processes bearing more directly on the local level, and Dumons and Pollet (2001) for two complementary perspectives.
23. For an analysis of the whole, see Isin (1992).
24. This is also the question raised in the article by Joana on the development of municipal public action in France (1998).
25. The term appears notably in the title of the recent work edited by Topalov (2000).

26. This discussion of the towns and the development of municipal activity is strongly indebted to an essay by R. J. Morris in which he analyses the process of urbanization in Great Britain and in Canada during the nineteenth century and highlights the weak position of Canadian municipal authorities faced with private businesses (1989).

27. The frontier towns of western Canada clearly illustrate the strategy adopted by local administrators in order to encourage local development: Artibise (1975), McDonald (1996). For other localities, see Lord (1984) and Rudin (1982). Some authors associate this expansionist strategy with 'boosterism'; see Monkkonen (1998), 141-154, and Davis (1985).

28. For the situation in American cities, see particularly Einhorn (1991) and Monkkonen (1988). For Canadian cities, see Dagenais (2000).

29. This definition of the municipality as an extension of the state (or of individual states, in the case of federal structures) was and is the subject of debate in a number of countries. The German argument is perhaps the most familiar, especially in its juridical dimension, with the interpretation of local government as an organ and source of sovereignty and authority (*obligkeitliche Selbstverwaltung*) dividing jurists such as Laband, Gellinek and Preuss at the beginning of the twentieth century. But if the strictly legal dimension is less marked (or in every case less recognized), the debate was just as lively in many other countries from the point where it concerns attempts to settle practical questions such as municipal mergers or annexations, police duties, fiscal measures or possible revamping of the municipal legislation; for an example on France, see Payre (2001). In these situations and in a number of others (the establishment of associations of municipalities, for example) we may observe how far the discussion is animated by the historic and contemporary nature of municipalities as social, political, and economic structures. For some suggestions regarding the 'identity' element of these questions, see Saunier (1998).

30. For this term and the wealth of significations and configurations that it may reveal or mask, see especially Dogliani (1992), chapter 2, Rodger (1993), Fraser (1993), Joana (2001), and Kühn (2001).
31. In addition to the classic urban studies by Schiesl (1977), Teaford (1984), and Weaver (1979), see also Samuel Haber's excellent treatment of the existing connections between Taylorism and municipal public works services, particularly in Philadelphia (1964), and the more recent work of Indy L. Schachter (1989).
32. On the right to vote in European cities and the consequences of its extension into the realm of municipal politics in various countries and areas, see Stieber (1998), chapter 1 for the Netherlands, Dogliani (1992) for Belgium, and Ladd , chapter 1 (1990) for Germany. For North America, see Magnusson (1983).
33. Curtis (2001). On the idea of 'municipal science', see Rugge (1989) and Payre (2001, 2002).
34. The work of Stivers (2001) and Roberts (1994) clarifies this task of drawing analytical distinctions for historical research and of analyzing historical distinctions, one of the most famous examples being the dichotomy between politics and administration developed by Woodrow Wilson and Frank Goodnow in the United States at the end of the nineteenth century.
35. For an initial panorama of these initiatives, one may refer to the report published by the Fifth Congress of the International Union of Local Authorities, where the training and improvement of employees was on the agenda: International Union of Local Authorities (1932).
36. It would be interesting to compare how joint systems developed in different countries. The case of Toulouse calls for a comparison with the Whitley Councils that emerged in Great Britain after the First World War, despite their varied fortunes. For a contemporary assessment, see Hill (1935); although note that Hill was then General Secretary of the National Association of Local Government Officers (NALGO). The Whitley Councils became the focus of considerable attention from American civil service reformers, stimulated by

the likes of Leonard D. White, professor of public administration at the University of Chicago. Jean-Yves Nevers quotes the words of F. Bourdon, who anachronistically found the Whitley Councils an ‘inspiration’ for the system developed in Toulouse. In the context of ‘sites of importation’, Nevers also demonstrates the complex way in which foreign references were used ambiguously to legitimize or subvert power (Rodgers 1998).

37. In a similar fashion, see Pierre Rosanvallon’s work (1990) in which he refers to ‘l’institution du social’ (the establishment of the social sphere) by the French state.
38. For a consideration of comparativism and its limitations, especially on the question of ‘exceptionalism’, see the introductory chapter in Daniel T. Rodgers (1998).
39. For an introduction to various considerations of this point, see Espagne (1999).
40. Beyond the references at the beginning of this introduction, we may add the article by Viviane Claude (1999) for its development of the theme of the ‘autochthonous practice of comparativism’. Notice is also given of a special edition of *Contemporary European History* in November 2002 on the subject of the international municipal movement in Europe between 1900 and 1950. This will deal with aspects of the structures that either directed or were part of these international exchanges.

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