

acadienne, je trouve les critiques parfois trop sévères à l'endroit de l'histoire sociale, puis l'appel très peu expliqué pour un nouveau projet collectif acadien chez les historiennes et historiens d'aujourd'hui, infirment le succès du livre. À mon avis, l'avenir de l'historiographie acadienne se trouve dans la poursuite des pistes de recherche proposées par l'histoire sociale, surtout l'analyse de l'expérience acadienne dans ses contextes régionaux, nationaux et internationaux ainsi que dans la pluridisciplinarité. Néanmoins, je suis bien heureux de voir la contribution intellectuelle qu'apporte cet ouvrage collectif et je suis certain qu'il suscitera des discussions intéressantes parmi les spécialistes de l'histoire acadienne.

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CURTIS, Daniel R. – *Coping with Crisis: The Resilience and Vulnerability of Pre-Industrial Settlements*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2014. Pp. 381.

There has been a marked increase in the use of the concepts of 'resilience' and 'vulnerability' within the humanities and social sciences, two concepts that sprung forth from the fields of ecology and the natural sciences. It is fitting that Daniel R. Curtis turns to the concepts to explore the questions of why and under what conditions pre-industrial societies seemingly thrived in the face of crisis, while others appear to have failed in attempts to withstand calamities. Spurred on by 'disaster studies' literature, *Coping with Crisis: The Resilience and Vulnerability of Pre-Industrial Settlements* offers a sweeping empirical investigation of the intricate relationships between property, power, modes of economic exploitation and resource management strategies across Western Europe between the Middle Ages and the nineteenth century. The book succeeds in its effort to empirically demonstrate that the concepts of resilience and vulnerability can be productively deployed historically.

In an attempt to construct a predictive model for resilience and vulnerability, Curtis posits that settlements can be divided into four 'types' of societies based on distinct configurations of property and power – including a 'social distribution of power' category which captures the historical specificity that "land was not always worked on or used by the interest groups that 'owned' it" (p. 27). Curtis assesses property and power relations through a mixed-methods approach, relying in part on Gini indexes of property distribution. The model crafted by Curtis attempts to classify settlements along egalitarian-polarized and dynamic-persistent spectrums by averaging quantitative scores. These classified settlements are then linked to distinct strategies for resource management. The exercise of assessing settlements as utilizing either protectionist, short-termist, flexible or restrictive-coercive resource management strategies culminates into the prediction of the settlement's relative position within the resilience-vulnerability nexus (pp. 60-61). Curtis argues that population, agricultural land and housing act as three main 'markers'

for measuring the extent to which a settlement was resilient or vulnerable (p. 19). The framework performs simultaneous analytical and organizational functions for the book's five substantive chapters, each being a carefully selected case study.

Curtis sets out the lofty goal of documenting and comparatively assessing the internal dynamics of nine pre-industrial settlements, selected to offer a variety of socio-political and economic contexts during particular periods of flux to ascertain if the areas were characteristically resilient or vulnerable. Chapter 3 draws contrasts between two rural regions in Tuscany, the Florentine *contado* and the Casentino Valley, during the expansion of pre-industrial urbanization between 1300 and 1580. Chapter 4 traces the effects of the Black Death on Bourn Valley and East Chilford, two rural societies in medieval Cambridgeshire, from around 1200 to 1340. In chapter 5 Curtis asks: "what happened when common property forms disappeared or when many rural inhabitants became excluded from major 'community' decisions" (p. 150). This chapter is a welcome addition to an area of contemporary research that links community involvement and resilience. Here, Curtis' focus is on medieval commercialization processes from around 1300 to 1600 in the Betuwe, located in the Northern Low Countries. Chapter 6 turns our attention to the furthest northeasterly point of present day Netherlands, the Oldambt region of Groningen, from around 1700 to 1900 to explore the link between land consolidation and rural population movement, another important contemporary topic. Curtis shows that newly proletarianised rural inhabitants created a 'dual economy' which acted as a strategy to withstand urban pressures and migration to the city. This dual economy was composed of "wage labour on the large farms, intensive production of vegetables on micro-plots, the development of proto-industry and reliance on an initially well-functioning welfare system" (p. 184). The findings from this chapter do not fit neatly into Curtis' model and are particularly problematic for his theoretical argument on the whole. Curtis attributes the problems to the idea that Oldambt had a "society within a society" (p. 220) and that the model cannot account for this dynamic. Chapter 7 presents a final case study of two agro-towns in the region of Apulia: Ascoli Satriano, which experienced rapid growth and decline in population between 1600 and 1900, and Locorotondo which experienced relatively steady population growth over the same period. One important finding stemming from this portion of the book is that in the face of inequitable distribution of land and power, viticulture combined with emphyteutic leases laid the historical foundations for peasant adaptive strategies. Curtis argues that the traditional 'backwardness' narrative of the south of Italy "may soon come to be replaced by a new appreciation of how widespread inequality existed simultaneously with (and facilitating) very dynamic and diverse institutional structures" (p. 257).

While this work offers us a model to assess resilience and vulnerability historically, it does not engage reflexively with the concepts in any sustained way. Curtis stays close to the empirical findings of the study and constantly relates back to the resilience-vulnerability model introduced earlier in the book to 'test' for 'best fits' and assess if the model's predictions were accurate. While Curtis positions pre-industrial settlements "as a 'laboratory' for testing hypotheses with societal

relevance to the present” (p. 17), the concepts of resilience and vulnerability need to be imported into the past with some level of caution. Where Curtis points to an adaptive resilient response to crisis one could just as easily call it survival tactics. Furthermore, Curtis spins the classic Marxian base/superstructure argument as “the very base or foundation of pre-industrial society is made up of alignments in property and power” (p. 24). We are told that these structural conditions are ultimately responsible for settlement resilience or vulnerability; however, the model is disappointingly silent on issues of state and cultural formation, which seem to me to be important aspects of the historical ‘politics of resilience’.

Curtis’ focus on the dynamics between interest groups, coming close at times to a game analytic, is a methodological position that others attempting to grapple with resilience and vulnerability may find beneficial. Curtis’ discussion of material arrangements such as aqueducts, drains, and moats also opens up new questions around the historical materiality of resilience. Finally, while a book of this sort could have easily been written for a particular specialized audience in mind, Curtis is able to show some important empirical findings that should resonate with a broader audience.

One last, editorial, remark: the book’s 77 figures and tables and the 1,401 footnotes are met with a meager two and a half-page index, which is unfortunate for anyone wanting to easily explore the empirical tract laid down by Curtis.

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DI MASCIO, Anthony – *The Idea of Popular Schooling In Upper Canada: Print Culture, Public Discourse, and the Demand for Education*. Montreal and Kingston; McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2012. Pp. 257.

Anthony Di Mascio’s *The Idea of Popular Schooling in Upper Canada* is a story of education in Upper Canada, the baptismal name of what we now know more familiarly as the province of Ontario. It responds to the following question: why did popular schooling begin in the province? More pointedly, it concerns the origins of the *idea* of popular schooling. In this distinction lies Di Mascio’s most important contribution to the historiographical record of Ontario’s schools. Educational historians have painted a vivid and detailed picture of the establishment of Ontario’s public system of education, drawing on the rich archival and prosopographical evidence that we can associate with a formal department of education and the great figures that are linked to its establishment, and yet more work needs to be done to explain why public education came to be at all? How was schooling conceptualized in the popular imaginary? *The Idea of Popular Schooling* begins to answer these questions by inquiring into the evidentiary basis for this system’s origins, proceeding to explore the reasons for its existence.