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BOOK REVIEWS

Ronald van Kempen, Karien Dekker, Stephen Hall, and Iván Tosics (Eds.), *Restructuring Large Housing Estates in Europe* (Bristol, UK: The Policy Press, 2005).

This edited volume is the main product of an ambitious EU-funded research project examining the current situation of, and prospects for, large post-war housing estates in Europe. Research was conducted in 10 countries (Britain, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden), in 16 cities, and on 29 housing estates. Field research followed a common framework to facilitate analytical comparisons, and a multinational team wrote each chapter with cross-national examples.

The book is organized into three parts. The first part presents basic information on the history of the estates; their physical characteristics and the changing demographic and socio-cultural backgrounds of residents; the social theory underpinning the research; and the almost universal trend toward privatization. The second part of the book questions the main assumptions underlying policies for the large housing estates and examines key ideas, such as social cohesion, social mixing, displacement, gentrification, and residualization. In the book's third section, which covers specific policy approaches and their effectiveness, the contributors discuss demolitions, partnerships, citizen participation, employment assistance, programs addressing youth delinquency, and women's needs, and the more systematic application of knowledge to problem-solving on the large estates.

Contributors to the volume take the position that the decline of large public housing estates in Europe has not been universal, and that where decline has taken place, it has not been inevitable. They do not think demolition is the best option for most estates, and suggest that effective remedies will require the inclusive participation of many different kinds of stakeholders, including residents, and a sophisticated understanding of the new relationships between global economic structures and local housing markets.

Several chapters stand out. Alan Murie and associates (Chapter 5) describe Europe's varied experience with privatization: new non-profit and for-profit management organizations, sales to existing tenants, and the stock transfer of public housing from the public sector to housing associations of various types. The reasons for privatization vary considerably. In the UK, the Right-to-Buy schemes initiated in the 1980s reflected the ideological position of the Thatcher government to broaden property ownership. In Eastern Europe in the 1990s, time-limited sales at dramatically discounted prices offered local authorities a mechanism for off-loading their economic burdens as they embraced the market. Other places have been more cautious about privatization. The Netherlands, for instance, has used limited privatization to regenerate declining public housing estates and to achieve tenure mixing.

Bråmo and Andersson's analysis of who moves out of Swedish estates (Chapter 9), and van Beckhoven and associates' discussion of participatory approaches in Spain and the Netherlands (Chapter 12), are particularly strong. As the Swedish case illustrates, the challenge is to reduce middle-class "leakage" from the estates by creating more options for these households within the

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estates: dwellings of different sizes and tenures, and different house types. As for participation, the Spanish example of strong resident activism on one specific estate (Trinitá Nova) raises the intriguing question that could have been explored more fully: what is it about this estate that it makes it different from the rest?

Despite its title “Does gender matter?”, Chapter 15 (Droste, Molino, and Zojczyk) describes mainly women’s needs. Within the context of gender analysis it should have been possible to ask many other relevant questions. The previous chapter on youth, for instance, argues that the anti-social behavior of young men creates insecurity on the estates. A gender analysis could have asked why it is that young men are the subpopulation of residents who vandalize property and terrorize other residents.

The book would have been improved with more ruthless language editing and the contributors could have made better use of their invaluable comparative data. A number of the chapters seemed undigested and incomplete, with intriguing questions unasked.

Two final observations may be made. First, given the overall attention of the researchers to questions of diversity and participation in envisioning the future on the estates, it is unfortunate that they do not give more voice to the very people about which the research is concerned: the residents of the large estates. In Western Europe, many are immigrants from Muslim countries. How do the estates’ newest arrivals understand concepts of citizenship, cohesion, solidarity, integration, and identity? In what kind of a place do they wish to live? We know that not all estate residents participate in formal organizations or are represented by them. Fine-grained ethnographic research paying attention to ethnic and cultural diversity should have complemented the interviews conducted with resident organization leaders.

Second, the book’s treatment of design quality is weak. Contributors (for example, Musterd and Ostendorf in Chapter 8) rightly criticize reductive physical determinism (the assumption that bad design *causes* bad behavior), but appear, wrongly, to dismiss the importance of design altogether. Anne Power’s seminal 1997 text *Estates on the Edge* provides a more balanced examination of the social consequences of bad design, and the new “Cost of Bad Design” campaign organized in Britain by the Commission on Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) reinforces the point that physical design does indeed make a difference. Not all large public housing estates in Europe have problems. Could part of the explanation for the liveability of the estates that do *not* have problems be their dignified and durable materials, well-conceived landscaping, casual surveillance of outdoor spaces, and clear definition between private, semi-private, communal, and public areas? My research on social housing in Finland found this to be the case (Myntti, 2005). Restructuring must employ good design principles and these should have been drawn out more explicitly.

A great book raises as many questions as it answers. This book does that. Nevertheless, the more appropriate textbook for graduate level courses on housing policy is, *Estates on the Edge*, mentioned above; its tables, glossary, and overall style make it a clearer introduction to the subject. That said, *Restructuring Large Housing Estates in Europe* provides a useful update on the restructuring process, and its Eastern European case studies offer valuable new information. It should be recommended reading to students and will be of interest to both academics and practitioners on both sides of the Atlantic.

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REFERENCE

Myntti, C. (2005). *What makes housing durable? Seven social housing projects in Helsinki*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the European Network for Housing Research, Reykjavik, Iceland, June 29 to July 3.

Alan Berube, Bruce Katz, and Robert E. Lang (Eds.), *Redefining Urban and Suburban America: Evidence from Census 2000, Vol. III* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2006).

The micropolitan statistical area makes its debut in this third volume of *Redefining Urban and Suburban America*. Volume III comes closest to the promise of the series title. Among other things, it provides a summary of the Office of Management and Budget's new geographic categories to be adopted by all federal agencies. Gone are the Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) and "central city" that census users have grown accustomed to. In the future, analysts will find data for the reconfigured metropolitan statistical area (MetroSA), the *principal city*, and the micropolitan statistical area (MicroSA). The principal city replaces the central city in recognition that many metropolitan areas now include multiple nodes instead of just a single core. The Census Bureau, in other words, has cut its ties to the Chicago School and has embraced the LA School. These definitions, and more, are explained in Chapter 9, where authors William Frey, Jill Wilson, Alan Berube, and Audrey Singer have compiled a "field guide" to help users make the transition. This chapter alone is worth the price of the book.

The MicroSA recognizes the growth of independent smaller cities outside MetroSAs. While the principal city of a MetroSA must have a minimum of 50,000 residents, principal cities in MicroSAs vary from 10,000 to 50,000 in size. Morgan City LA, for example, 100 miles from New Orleans, qualified as a MicroSA in 2,000 with a total population of 54,000. It, and Louisiana's other 15 MicroSAs, have no doubt grown in size after Hurricane Katrina displaced so many New Orleans residents.

Since many federally funded programs depend on census designations, it is important that census statistics accurately reflect contemporary settlement patterns. Under the old terminology, analysts used "nonmetropolitan" as an inadequate proxy for "rural", even though 41% of the nonmetropolitan population was urban (p. 195). Much of that urban population is now captured in MicroSAs. The result is that areas falling outside both metro and micro designations are now more "deeply rural". MetroSAs (N = 361) and MicroSAs (N = 573) combined represent 93% of the U.S. population and nearly one-half of the land area. By comparison, the old MSAs contained 80% of the nation's population and only one-fifth of its land area.

The editors describe Volume III as a "confluence" of the first two volumes in the series. It draws on long-form and short-form census questionnaires, and focuses on metropolitan areas, cities, and neighborhoods. (An exception is the chapter on "boomburbs" that uses 2003 population estimates to measure change since 2000.) The first four chapters cover the effects of immigration, migration, and development on centers of growth. Medium-sized cities, downtown living, growth counties, and boomburbs are the focus of this part. The findings, in brief: *Medium-sized cities* grew faster than the largest cities in the 1990s, fueled by Asian and Hispanic immigrants (Vey and Forman, Chapter 1); between 1970 and 2000, the *downtowns* of 45 large central cities lost population but gained households, became more ethnically and racially diverse, and increased in the proportion of homeowners and young educated adults (Birch, Chapter 2). *Growth counties*, metropolitan counties in the 50 largest metropolitan areas that experienced double-digit growth

in every decade since World War II, represented more than one-third of the nation's population increase in the last 50 years (Lang and Gough, Chapter 3). Lang and Gough identify three subsets of growth counties: 1. Massively Enlarged, Growth Accelerated (MEGA) counties at the region's core with more than 800,000 residents; 2. Mid-metro counties with 200,000 to 800,000 residents; and 3. Fringe, or exurban counties with less than 200,000 population. *Boomburbs* are incorporated places with more than 100,000 residents that have maintained a double-digit population growth rate since the 1970s, but are not the major city in the region. Boomburbs typically lack a dense business core. Boomburbs have continued to grow faster than traditional cities since 2000. The only limit on their continued growth may be water shortages in the West (Lang, Chapter 4).

The next three chapters provide new data for two enduring issues: residential segregation and spatial mismatch. Fasenfast, Booza, and Metzger (Chapter 5) report that during the 1990s (1) *racial and ethnic segregation* declined in the 10 largest metropolitan areas, that in the 50 largest metropolitan areas, the per capita *income gap* between cities and suburbs stabilized, and (3) that income inequalities among suburbs increased because many suburbs had growing poverty populations (Swanstrom, Dreier, Casey, and Flack, Chapter 7). The *spatial mismatch* between jobs and residence is greater for blacks than whites in all 316 metropolitan areas, but the racial gap declined during the 1990s largely because blacks moved to the suburbs where jobs were (Raphael and Stoll, Chapter 6).

Chapter 8 on new home construction and central city decline, which can be paired with Birch's chapter on downtown living, confirms that metropolitan area housing surpluses speed central city abandonment, while metropolitan area housing shortages contribute to central city household growth (Bier and Post). Chapter 9, by Frey et al., is the guide to new nomenclature, and Chapter 10 expands the discussion of micropolitan areas introduced in Chapter 9 (Lang and Dhavale).

The book is rich in tables and charts that would make excellent classroom materials if available on a CD or on the web. An abundance of typologies will satisfy disciples of Linnaeus. Terms and methods are clearly defined, and each author follows the same format, which makes the chapters easy to summarize and comprehend. One of the most consistent findings is that every trend differs by region, and that suburbs can be as different from each other as they are from central cities.

The straight-forward writing style makes the book accessible to a wide audience, and a reasonable list of references at the end of each chapter allows readers to pursue a topic in more depth. Students in planning will find it useful, as will urban planners and policy makers. The editors are to be commended for their judicious choice of topics and authors.

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Alex F. Schwartz, *Housing Policy in the United States: An Introduction* (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2006).

Over the last 50 years, federal government programs have created more than five million housing units through construction and rehabilitation and have provided rental-housing vouchers to an additional two million families. While these numbers may seem impressive, Alex F. Schwartz reminds us that the U.S. has not met the goals established by Congress in the 1949 Housing

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2 Act, “a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American Family.” In 2005, the
3 National Low-Income Housing Coalition estimated that 94 million Americans, or almost 35% of
4 the nation’s population confronted serious housing problems (e.g., physically deficient housing,
5 a high rent burden) or were homeless.

6 The introductory chapters (Chapters 1 and 2) provide an overview of U.S. housing policy,
7 summarize the key trends and patterns in the housing market, and provide definitions for the
8 chapters that follow. Chapter 3 focuses on the largest housing subsidy of all—the tax benefits
9 of homeownership, which primarily benefit middle-class families and the affluent. Government
10 intervention in the housing market only began in the 20th century and blossomed during the
11 New Deal with the introduction of government-insured mortgage insurance, the establishment
12 of the secondary mortgage market and the promotion of long-term, fixed-rate mortgages. This
13 chapter is particularly insightful about the growing role of the secondary mortgage market through
14 government-sponsored enterprises, such as Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. Chapter 4 explains that
15 tax subsidies for homeowner housing benefit the affluent homeowners to a far greater extent than
16 households of modest means and illustrates how lower income homeowners are less likely to take
17 the mortgage interest tax deduction because they are less like to file an itemized tax return.

18 In the next three chapters, Schwartz turns his attention to the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit
19 (LIHTC) program, which is currently the largest active subsidy program for affordable housing
20 production; public housing, its historical problems, and current reform efforts under the HOPE VI
21 program for the revitalization of distressed developments; and a variety of other federal programs
22 used to develop or re-develop low-income housing. The main advantage of the LIHTC is its
23 flexibility; State Housing Finance Agencies have a great deal of latitude in deciding what types of
24 housing should receive it. The major disadvantages of LIHTC are that it offers little incentive to
25 build mixed income housing (as the market-rate units receive no credit) and that there are simply
26 not enough credits allocated to states on an annual basis.

27 Public housing, covered in Chapter 6 is the oldest and most widely known form of subsidi-
28 zed housing on the public radar screen. Although the problems with public housing include
29 poor design, substandard construction, inadequate funding for capital improvements and operat-
30 ing support, concentration of poverty and in most cases weak management, resident satisfaction
31 surveys and other evidence indicate that most public housing developments provide adequate
32 housing. Among the supply-side programs covered in Chapter 7, only the Rural Development
33 Section 515 Program (under the USDA) continues to produce housing today. Section 221(d)
34 3, Section 236 and the original Section 8 Program were all designed to foster development of
35 low-income housing by private entities, and none of these programs lasted more than a decade.
36 In Chapter 8, the focus shifts to rental housing vouchers. Schwartz indicates that the shift from
37 housing subsidies to rental subsidies was based on two beliefs that have not been verified empir-
38 ically (1) that greater freedom of choice would improve conditions for low-income renters and
39 (2) that the integration of the poor into more middle-class communities would help these families
40 and their children to achieve socio-economic mobility. Chapter 9 discusses federal programs that
41 require greater state and local government participation, e.g., Community Development Block
42 Grants, HOME Investment Partnership Program, Tax-exempt bond financing, and Housing Trust
43 Funds.

44 In Chapter 10 Schwartz discusses programs targeted to special needs populations such as the
45 elderly, people with AIDS, the homeless, and persons suffering from mental illness. Perhaps
46 the most interesting aspect of housing for persons with special needs is that under both the Fair
47 Housing Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act alcoholism is considered a disability if it
48 limits one or more of a person’s major life activities. Around the nation, non-profit organizations
49 are increasingly targeting efforts to create housing for persons in recovery from substance abuse.
50 Yet these efforts receive no mention.

1 430 | JOURNAL OF URBAN AFFAIRS | Vol. 29/No. 4/2007

2 In Chapter 11 Schwartz covers fair-housing and fair-lending regulations including the Commu-
3 nity Reinvestment Act (CRA) that either encourage or force for-profit developers and financial
4 institutions to incorporate affordable housing developments into their plans. Chapter 12 spotlights
5 America's current policy focus on homeownership and income integration. While such initiatives
6 are politically popular there is little "empirical support for many of the benefits proclaimed for
7 homeownership and income integration" (p. 267). Schwartz concludes the book, Chapter 13, by
8 arguing that recent changes represent a continuation of a trend to shift funding from federally
9 administered programs to block grants that give more discretion and autonomy to state and lo-
10 cal governments. The most fundamental policy challenges today surround the inability of poor
11 households to afford decent housing without some form of financial assistance and the persistence
12 of racial discrimination in the real estate and mortgage markets.

13 The book's main weakness is the absence of a detailed discussion about how the provision
14 of affordable housing requires the blending of funds from a myriad of federal, state, local, and
15 private sources. Schwartz mentions the need to blend funds in Chapter 5 when he discusses the
16 LIHTC, but he does so as if it were a thing of the past. Perhaps my criticism is colored by the
17 fact that most of the developments I work on as a consultant serve populations with special needs,
18 but I am always dealing with issues such as blending HOME funds with tax credits and a healthy
19 shot of Affordable Housing Trust Funds, to boot.

20 In the current, rather dismal, political environment practitioners like me need to understand
21 the evolution of the different programs that make up the universe of housing policy. Schwartz's
22 study can help us understand why the different programs seem to speak different languages and
23 to utilize the tools we have left to preserve existing low-income housing for the future. Keep this
24 book on hand as a reference so as to maximize your effectiveness in these challenging times.

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34 Don Parson, *Making a Better World: Pubic Housing, the Red Scare, and the Direction of*
35 *Modern Los Angeles* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).
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37 Don Parson has written an extremely important book about the interplay between public housing
38 and the city building process in metropolitan Los Angeles between 1930 and 1960. *Making a Better*
39 *World* consists of an introduction, six chapters, and a conclusion. The Introduction and Chapter
40 One define two key terms, community modernism and corporate modernism, and situate the rise
41 of the public housing movement in the context of the Depression, deteriorating urban conditions,
42 and interurban migratory movements. Chapters Two, Three, and Four describe postwar efforts to
43 extend the housing program and discuss the role of the Red Scare in causing its downfall. The next
44 two chapters (Five and Six) chronicle the triumph of corporate modernism and the creation of
45 modern Los Angeles. The Conclusion presents policy implications of the decline of the political
46 Left and offers some insights into the genesis of urban discontent in modern cities.

47 Parson uses a diverse array of sources, including media reportage, oral histories, and case studies
48 of two Los Angeles neighborhoods, to contextualize his story. The book's central argument is that
49 conservatives used the Red Scare to defeat the Left, to destroy the public housing movement, and
50 "[to relegate] community modernism to the dustbin of history" (p. 9). This, Parson says, led to

1
2 the triumph of corporate modernism and the use of urban renewal and pro-growth strategies to
3 shape modern Los Angeles.

4 Parson coined the term community modernism to define those principles used by architects to
5 design public housing units that created a living environment in which residents interacted in a
6 holistic setting with schools, health centers, retail shops, grocery stores, communal play areas,
7 and gathering places. This type of built environment, Parson stresses, created communities char-
8 acterized by good citizenship, participatory democracy, improved health, high moral standards,
9 and low-rates of crime. Community modernism, he says, not only produced public housing that
10 provided wholesome living places for the poor, but it also created a template for the modern city,
11 which placed people and social development over economic development.

12 The public housing movement was not synonymous with community modernism. Public
13 housers supported the use of subsidized housing to provide lodging for those unable to pay
14 their rents or to maintain their existing accommodations, but this group was not monolithic. This
15 Left-liberal coalition included labor, civic, religious, and civil rights activists with diverse views
16 on the role of public housing in urban development. While Leftist members of the coalition sit-
17 uated public housing firmly within the context of community modernism, others did not. Many
18 coalition members viewed public housing primarily as a means of defusing social turmoil.

19 Parson argues that corporate modernism was the antithesis of community modernism. He
20 defines corporate modernism as an economic-centered or pro-growth approach to metropolitan
21 development in which unbridled capitalism guides the city building process. This corporatist
22 approach places economic development over people and social development, and it seizes the
23 best urban lands for profit-making ventures. This approach leads to the domination of inner-city
24 land uses by commercial development and monumental corporate skyscrapers and government
25 buildings, and the domination of the suburbs by modern housing, in the form of owner-occupied,
26 single-family homes.

27 Parson further asserts that the Left-liberal coalition wanted to use community modernism to
28 transform Los Angeles into a people-oriented city, built at a human scale with wholesome, racially
29 integrated neighborhoods that welcomed even the poorest citizens. Opposition to this vision came
30 primarily from business elites, realtors, and conservative civic leaders, who believed that public
31 housing was a harbinger for socialism and a threat to capitalism and pro-growth city building
32 strategies. To eliminate public housing as a threat, they used the Red Scare to undermine support
33 for it. Opponents of public housing, for example, argued that communist and communist sympa-
34 thizers, who wanted to destroy American values through racial and class struggle, had infiltrated
35 the City Housing Authority (CHA). When Frank Wilkinson, a CHA employee, appeared as an
36 expert witness in a lawsuit instigated by CHA against property owners resisting condemnation,
37 he invoked the Fifth Amendment when asked questions about the organizations in which he held
38 membership. This testimony not only caused CHA to fire Wilkinson and drop him an expert
39 witness, but it also led to an investigation of the CHA by the California Un-American Activi-
40 ties Committee (CUAC). The CUAC investigation led to the subsequent dismissal of other CHA
41 employees for questionable loyalty to the United States. Between 1949 and 1952, the relentless
42 anti-public housing campaign created divisions in the Left-liberal coalition, and the Red Scare
43 tactics led to the defeat of public housing in Los Angeles.

44 Parson contends that the declining enthusiasm for public housing combined with increasing
45 access to homeownership, and the purging of Leftist ideas and influence from the public housing
46 effort led to a realignment of political forces. For example, union members, from the comfort
47 of their new suburban homes, became willing partners in the emerging pro-growth coalition that
48 sought to create modern Los Angeles. The triumph of the corporate model of urban development
49 turned downtown Los Angeles into an economic and governance center with massive skyscrapers
50 erected as symbol of corporate modernism, public housing became a warehouse for people at

2 the bottom of the socioeconomic order, and the suburbs became progressively dominated by the
3 owner-occupied, single-family home.

4 There is nothing new about Parson's argument that the Red Scare and Cold War politics led
5 to the decline of the public housing movement. What is novel about this argument, however, is
6 the view that the public housing war was a struggle between contending visions of the urban
7 metropolis; two warring social philosophies seeking to shape the future of Los Angeles. Thus, the
8 emergence of modern Los Angeles, and the metamorphosis of public housing from a way station
9 to warehouse was the result of deliberate policy choices, rather than the inevitable outcome of a
10 neutral city building process.

11 While this work is both informative and significant, I still have some serious concerns. Parson
12 implies that community modernism represented a major threat to the corporate, pro-growth model
13 of urban development. He suggests that the reshaping of Los Angeles along corporatist lines
14 happened only because the Right used the Red Scare to defeat the Left. This is an exaggeration. In
15 fact, community modernism never represented a "real" threat to the corporate modernism. Most
16 liberals never bought into the Left's broader vision of public housing as a component of community
17 modernism and a template for modern Los Angeles. Their primary concern was reducing social
18 unrest and economic development, not social engineering. Consequently, when socioeconomic
19 conditions improved, reducing support for public housing, the Left could not sustain the coalition.
20 The situation in Los Angeles might have been different, but Parson did not investigate or present
21 the internal debates within the Left-Liberal coalition nor did he delve into the tensions between
22 the Left and liberal factions within the housing movement. While he sheds significant light on
23 the political debates over public housing, he ignores those same discussions among the public
24 housing supporters. Therefore, we can only speculate on the role that divergent views on public
25 housing played in undermining the coalition.

26 Overemphasis on the importance of community modernism might also stem from Parson's
27 failure to situate his study firmly within the context of city and regional building. Most urbanists
28 agree that elites forged the model for developing the modern metropolis, along the lines of
29 corporate modernism, as early as 1929. Between the Depression and World War II, federal, state,
30 and local officials formulated pro-growth policies to build an urban metropolis based on market
31 capitalism, anchored by a residential environment based on homeownership and neighborhoods
32 stratified by race and class.

33 During this dynamic period, between 1930 and 1950, government at all levels formulated
34 policies to strengthen the corporate model of urban development. This included developing a
35 region-wide transportation system, implementing zoning laws, building codes, subdivision regu-
36 lations, and transforming the money mortgage system as well as establishing the Federal Housing
37 Administration, the Veterans Housing Administration, and the Home Owners Loan Corporation.
38 Cincinnati's 1948 *Metropolitan Master Plan* provides a clear example of the triumph of corporate
39 modernism in shaping the metropolis. Concurrently, as millions of African Americans and Latinos
40 poured into northern urban centers, the role of public housing changed from being a way station
41 to being a warehouse.

42 Parson incorrectly attributes the emergence of corporate modernism to the defeat of community
43 modernism. Those reformers who wanted to build model communities and have the government
44 play a major role in housing were a lonely crowd. Their ideas about community building and
45 creating a people-oriented city never became a genuine alternative to the corporate-centered, pro-
46 growth approach to urban development. *Making a Better World* would have been stronger had
47 Parson conceded this point and concentrated on explaining why the Left failed to overcome the
48 challenges it faced.

49 This point notwithstanding, the book does provide insight into the political debates, policy
50 choices, and social costs associated with the building of modern Los Angeles. Not only this,

1
2 but Parson demonstrates that the Right, by silencing the Left, spawned a dual housing system,
3 where millions have been forced to live in unhealthy homes. Don Parson has written an extremely
4 important book that those concerned about the urban crisis and the reshaping and rebuilding the
5 urban metropolis should read and study.
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