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BOOK REVIEWS

Housing, Urban Governance and Anti-Social Behaviour: Perspectives, Policy and Practice
John Flint (Ed.)
Bristol: Policy Press, 2006, 360pp., £24.99 (pbk), £55.00 (hbk),
ISBN 1 86134 684 0 (pbk), 1 86134 685 9 (hbk)

This book has three main parts, all focused on residential areas: the first explores Foucauldian approaches to understanding anti-social behaviour (ASB); the second looks at legal and other mechanisms to address ASB; and the third describes how ASB is addressed in Australia, France and the USA.

The theme of the Foucauldian chapters (by Flint, Card, Carr & Cowan, and Nixon & Parr) is that our lives are becoming increasingly regimented through the application of a variety of governmental techniques, and the problematisation and tackling of ASB is part of this process of increasing regimentation. At one level, this seems obvious and indeed has echoes of Stuart Hall's concept of 'authoritarian populism' in relation to the Thatcher Government of the early 1980s. However, the latter construction was unable to explain why people would vote for a government that sought to oppress them. A similar problem arises here, in attempting to explain why measures to tackle ASB are supported by the vast majority of the British population, and Card and Carr & Cowan deploy aspects of labelling theory for this purpose, e.g. the concept of demonisation. Evidence in favour of this is offered by Nixon & Parr's research, but the findings are more ambiguous, as some respondents recognise that perpetrators are not 'demons' and are capable of changing their behaviour and that enforcement and rehabilitation can go hand in hand. Overall, the evidence cited in the book is not sufficient to prove that the government and media have manipulated public opinion through the demonisation of perpetrators.

It is acknowledged at various points in the book that ASB is a real problem for a large number of people, and this is arguably a more plausible reason for popular support for action against ASB. A number of contributors (Flint, Atkinson, Nixon & Parr, Arthurson & Jacobs) recognise the deep ambiguities of interpretation involved here. It could be concluded, therefore, that research on ASB would be better focused on looking into this problem in greater depth rather than trying to explain it away by reference to 'dominant discourse' or suchlike.

Atkinson's chapter stands out from the others in the first part, because of its explicit geographical emphasis and sophisticated treatment of these ambiguities of interpretation. It agrees with a theme of the Foucauldian chapters that "housing tenure … has dominated our understanding of the location of social problems" (p. 101). However, outside of the housing policy community, this assumption is highly questionable, as can be seen from debates on city centre disorder, failing schools, rural depopulation, environmental decay and factory closures, to name but a few. The claim that responses to ASB started with public housing and then "spilled over into central city spaces" (p. 105) is contradicted

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by the experience of CCTV, for example, which was installed first in city centres and shopping centres, etc., and then 'spilled over' into council housing estates. The thesis that "concentration of poverty has served to contain problematic populations" (p. 101), making them more easily subjected to surveillance and rehabilitation (Card, p. 51), is also not proven—indeed, Atkinson later admits that "areas of concentrated deprivation potentially overload agencies of formal social control". Atkinson does at least suggest a possible explanation of the rise in ASB, in terms of "impaired connections and lax local normative frameworks" (p. 112) but does not suggest how these problems might be tackled. An increase in extra-local networks, for example, does not necessarily imply a reduction in intra-local ones (p. 107) (see Day, 2006). Finally, the argument that the duties of the state have declined (p. 110) seems odd, given that, under the British constitution, we are subjects of the sovereign, who has no specific duties towards us, and the duties of government, both national and local, have tended to increase, not least with new legislation and European Union directives. Notwithstanding this, it is at least arguable that, contrary to what is stated here (p. 111), current strategies on ASB are addressing problems of absence of authority (e.g. through the introduction of neighbourhood wardens, PCSOs, etc.) and helping to reverse the decline of secondary social control agencies.

The second part of the book contains chapters on tenancy agreements (Lister), legal changes (Hunter), more on measures to tackle ASB (Pawson & McKenzie), intensive rehabilitation projects (Jones, Pleace & Quilgars; Scott), policing (Crawford), and gated communities (Blandy). Lister is particularly good on the inherent weakness of legalistic approaches to tackling ASB, while recognising that law does have a useful part to play. However, it could be more clearly stated that contractualisation is not inherently incompatible with community and social solidarity—consider the contract of marriage! Pawson & McKenzie provide a useful and up-to-date review of our knowledge on how ASB is being tackled. The two chapters on rehabilitation projects (in Rochdale and Dundee) are particularly informative, demonstrating clearly the effectiveness of rehabilitating anti-social tenants. Libertarians should note Jones *et al.*'s conclusion that enforcement may have its place in getting perpetrators to recognise the consequences of their behaviour (p. 195) and Scott's finding that rehabilitation was less successful in relation to alcohol and drugs problems (p. 212). Crawford's chapter is a useful overview of policing of ASB, with an interesting conclusion about the limitations of a consumerist approach to policing. Similarly, Blandy provides a thoughtful review of our knowledge of gated communities, although it is not clear how effective such communities really are in preventing/tackling ASB within the community itself. They are probably better understood in Crawford's terms as part of a shift towards more contractual forms of governance.

The final part of the book is a brave attempt to widen our understanding of ASB, which partially succeeds. Arthurson & Jacobs recognise that the dominant academic view on ASB (as expressed in chapters 1–5) is structuralist but appear to think that the only alternative is a flawed one that emphasises individual pathology, so this leaves something of a theoretical vacuum. The possibility of a strategy that involves a combination of enforcement and rehabilitation, relating to a plurality of causes, seems to be ruled out in advance. Nevertheless, they provide some important findings from an Australian context, which tend to echo the situation in the UK. Ratouis & Brissonade's chapter on France is useful, particularly for its focus on gang culture or the "culture of the streets" (p. 286). Ireland, Thornberry & Loeber's chapter on the USA, however, focuses on a narrowly defined topic, namely the role of residential stability in keeping crime down in public

housing. The findings of their research are very shaky but are perhaps sufficient to show, once again, the invalidity of theories of contagion, according to which the longer a person lives in an area of high crime and ASB, the more likely they are to commit crime and ASB.

Overall, the book contains a considerable amount of valuable policy analysis but could have benefited from greater clarity about the nature of both state power and citizen power. For example, on governance, nation-states have, since the 16th century, acted through 'non-state actors', particularly citizens, simultaneously empowering and disciplining those actors, and enhancing, not limiting, their own power in the process (Douglas, 2000; contrast Flint, pp. 25, 34; Card, p. 42). Basically, the key task of government is to ensure that we learn to be 'good citizens', and (at least under non-totalitarian states) this includes us taking responsibility for our own conduct. However, some citizens are more powerful than others, and therefore more capable of assuming responsibility. The less powerful include most perpetrators as well as most victims of ASB. As power inequality grows, so does the problem of ASB.

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British Housebuilders: History & Analysis

Fred Wellings

Oxford: Blackwell, 2006, 304pp., £49.99 (pbk),
ISBN 1 4051 4918 3

This is a book about house builders rather than house building. It takes an historical view on who the house builders were and are, their motivations and how the structure of the industry has evolved. The book is written by a retired stockbroker who had specialised in the building industry for 40 years, for much of this time producing an annual statistical commentary on the performance of individual firms. The author's encyclopaedic knowledge from researching and monitoring the industry shines through, but the book also draws on company accounts and a series of in-depth interviews with firm founders and senior directors or their relatives.

The book draws on the existing literature and has a series of hypotheses that it tests, but the exposition of theory is kept to a minimum. The style of the book is as a series of stories, personal stories that overlap and are woven together to create a tapestry to support the author's arguments. At one level it is in the same mould as Scott's *Property Masters* and Oliver Marriott's *Property Boom*, but it is more than a series of personalised corporate histories. The author argues that previous studies of the industry had ignored the firms themselves so they provide the centrepiece to explain the history of the economics of the industry.

The structure of the book has essentially two parts. Part 1 examines the changing corporate structure of the house-building industry based on league tables of output of individual firms and their shares of total output. There are separate chapters in chronological order: between the wars, the period after the Second World War that embraced severe building controls, the post-war housing boom from 1955 to 1973, and two periods of recession and recovery, 1973–1988 and 1989–2005. These chapters detail the growth and decline (and rise again) of many (once) household names in the house-building industry. It provides effectively a comprehensive family tree of the house-building industry. The strong message that this analysis presents is of consolidation within the industry as the industry is transformed from a predominance of local builders to the emergence of national firms.

The second half of the book is more analytical, exploring the factors underlying these changes. A key presumption is the importance of the individual so it begins by examining the entrepreneurs behind the house building firms, the characteristics of the founders and dominant personalities. One chapter dissects the arguments for the growth of large firms. It rejects the argument that there are production economies of scale principally because of the difficulties of the administration of sites. While it accepts there are some economies of scope there are managerial diseconomies and the dilution of entrepreneurial flair with scale. A chapter also focuses on the reasons for the decline of firms, noting the frequent importance of succession where a firm is dominated by one individual, the difficulties of house building activity in multi-sector firms and the role of recessions. The conflicts between house building and construction activities within a single firm are particularly highlighted. The most successful house builders are shown to be those that concentrate on house building as their mainstream activity and are not diversified or part of a conglomerate.

The final chapter attempts to bridge previous arguments suggesting that the optimum profile for a house builder is an annual output of around 500 house units within an individual regional context with an industry structure now dominated by the national builder. The latter, it is argued, is the consequence of a mix of stock market pressures that require constant growth to satisfy shareholders and the personal motivation of individuals. Success in predicting recessions is also shown to be a key to greater success.

The focus of the analysis on the individual firm and entrepreneur rather than the industry has its limitations. The underlying economic history approach underplays fundamental characteristics of the economics of the housing market. Hence how individual firms fared in recessions is considered, but the interaction between macro-economic forces and the industry is not set out. This micro-perspective draws the following conclusion:

> The proximate reasons why housebuilders fail in recessions is the same as in any other industry—they misjudge the level of demand and have insufficient financial strength to survive. (p. 244)

This is clearly true at one level, but ignores substantial issues about time lags. Almost certainly for similar reasons the issues of poor performance in the development of housing design such as the incorporation of insulation are also not addressed.

Notwithstanding this limitation, the book meets an important gap in our knowledge of the housing system in Britain. It is well written although there is a tendency to repetition and to speak to a financially literate audience, and it has an idiosyncratic use of references.

Nevertheless, the book is a carefully crafted academic research effort with references meticulously reported and caveats and limitations to the analysis clearly set out. Our understanding of the economics of house building is greatly enhanced and along the way a number of arguments previously promoted by academics are debunked.

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Biography of a Tenement House in New York City: An Architectural History of 97 Orchard Street
Andrew S. Dolkart
Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press (Distributed for the Center for American Places), 2006, 142pp., $27.50 (hbk),
ISBN 1 930066 57 0

A significant relationship exists between everyday life and culture and the built environment. Dolkart captures this interactive link in this short book, which he could have aptly titled, *Three Tales of the Same Tenement.* The book traces the history of the tenement house, 97 Orchard Street, at three different points in time: its design and construction as a residential building, its later conversion into a commercial establishment, and its ultimate transformation into a tenement museum. Because 97 Orchard Street, which survived the first wave of tenement construction in New York City in the 1860s and 1870s, retained much of its historic fabric over time, it provides a unique opportunity to gain insight into housing conditions of immigrants in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The tenement biography consists of seven chapters, which Dolkart organises around the residential, commercial and museum uses of the building. The first five chapters chronicle the early development of the Lower East Side, the design and construction of 97 Orchard Street, and its continued alterations as a residential structure. Chapter six examines the transformation of 97 Orchard Street from a residential tenement to a commercial building, while chapter seven discusses its metamorphosis into the Lower East Side Tenement Museum.

Studies of the housing reform movement exist, but scholars have not explored the specific impact that regulatory laws had on the alterations of individual buildings and apartments in which people lived. Dolkart hopes to fill this gap by examining the design, construction and ongoing alteration of 97 Orchard Street. In the process, he also reveals the role played by the city building process in shaping neighbourhood development, dictating the population composition of the community, and influencing the use of the building. Within this context, this biography of a tenement is also a narrative about the social life and culture of an immigrant neighbourhood.

Dolkart argues that the term 'tenement' refers not only to a multi-family unit, but also to the class of people living in it. Contemporaries referred to multi-family units occupied by higher-income groups as 'French flats' and 'apartments', while they reserved the term 'tenement' for those dwelling units occupied by low-income groups. This distinction also reflects differences in the quality of the dwelling units. 'Flats' and 'apartments' had more amenities and better design and construction than tenements. Within this context, Dolkart's explanation of the poor quality of tenements is contradictory. He says, at one point that the root cause of substandard living conditions in tenements relates to the division of New York City blocks into narrow building lots and in the resulting pattern of individual lot ownership (p. 14). However, at another point he says that the quest of entrepreneurs to construct houses that maximised profits is responsible for the deplorable tenement house conditions (p. 16).

The latter explanation appears to be the most plausible. The lot size explanation seems deterministic, while the profit motive of entrepreneurs appears to be a more reasonable explanation of the poor quality of tenement buildings. For example, Dolkart says that in 1855, the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor (AICP) developed a 'model tenement' that could produce a modest profit of 5 to 7 per cent for builders. However, speculative builders scoffed at the idea. Unlike the houses, their primary goal was making money, not providing decent housing for the poor. Thus, the elimination of amenities and cutting of corners characterised their approach to the design and construction of tenements. Unfortunately, the tenement housing market only attracted a handful of humanitarian builders. As a result, speculative builders constructed the bulk of tenement houses in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This meant that regulatory housing legislature was the only way to insure quality housing for the poor. Consequently, improvements in tenements result from the enactment and enforcement of these regulatory laws, rather than the humanitarian gestures of builders.

Biography of a Tenement House also explores the social world of the tenement house community. Dolkart demonstrates that a relationship does not exist between 'deplorable' housing conditions and the vibrancy of everyday life and culture on the Lower East Side. The 97 Orchard Street community was no dark ghetto. Dolkart discusses two dimensions of the social world of immigrants. At one level, he talks about the life of immigrants inside the building, while he discusses the vibrancy of street life at another level. Despite the crowded nature of the apartments, argues Dolkart, immigrants nevertheless built a rich social life. Every room had multiple uses, and some apartments even doubled as garment, flower-making or cigar-making factories. The small apartment size made residents transform fire escapes into extensions of the apartments, which provided them with extra storage space. Meanwhile, the rooftops became a social space where residents interacted. Down on the ground, street life, according to Dolkart, was amazingly animated in the 97 Orchard Street community as hundreds of people walked to and from work, shopped and played in the streets.

This succinct volume provides insight into the housing conditions of immigrants, the role of regulatory legislature in the design, construction and development of tenements, as well as insight into the complex relationship between the built environment and everyday life and culture. Dolkart convincingly argues that regulatory laws and their enforcement were central to improving the housing condition of the immigrant population. Left to their volition, entrepreneurs would only produce housing that maximised their profits, and there were not enough humanitarian builders to produce a sufficient quantity of

high quality tenements for the poor. The book's major flaw is the tendency of Dolkart to drift into descriptions, rather than analysis, of tenement house issues. Consequently, at times, the mundane details bury the richness of the tenement house biography. Despite these limitations, every urbanist should read this important book.

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Crossing the Line. Vagrancy, Homelessness and Social Displacement in Russia
Svetlana Stephenson
Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006, 189pp., £50.00 (hbk),
ISBN 0 7546 1813 7

The book under review is to be commended to a wide readership. Through this book and her other published work on homelessness, listed in the bibliography, Svetlana Stephenson can claim to be a leading authority on homelessness in Russia. I first set it in the academic context in which it was conceived.

Responding to changes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, in 1989 the ESRC allocated £1.8 million to an East-West Programme. Of the 20 projects, one was *Causes and Consequences of Homelessness in the USSR and Bulgaria*, with the fieldwork to be undertaken in Moscow and Sofia. The research, on which Svetlana Stephenson was the principal investigator in Moscow, consisted of three parts: an empirical investigation into homeless in the two capitals, which was to be set within a theoretical framework of stratification in Soviet and post-Soviet society, and the institutional changes which would emerge in order to deal with this social phenomenon. Readers will learn a great deal about the homeless themselves from this anthropological study, but less about institutional change and, as for theoretical analysis, I anticipate further fruitful academic exchange. In the year that the ESRC project was launched I outlined the broader ESRC initiative and the homeless project component to the director of Charities Aid Foundation (Russia), which culminated in CAF publishing a report, 'Homelessness in Russia' in 1994. Since then, homelessness has been a topical subject, on which a sheaf of essays has been published in newspapers, newsletters, magazines and journals, together with the occasional television documentary. The book by Svetlana Stephenson sidesteps this vast, but often repetitive, catalogue and focuses on the interviews conducted as part of the ESRC project and her later follow up interviews. Her mission is to rescue this group of people from being seen as 'waste', to reveal them to be "resourceful and deeply social agents" (p. 20). A very tiny portion of the research budget was used to gain access to data held by the Ministry of the Interior (MVD), which could be likened to obtaining reports internal to the Home Office and which form an important contribution to the book.

In the 1920s begging and vagrancy were the responsibilities of the social protection and public health agencies. This changed in the 1930s when the government introduced the passport (*propiska*), requiring everyone to register their address with the militia, and

sanctions were made against vagrancy; since unemployment had been eliminated and there was a labour shortage, every able-bodied person was obliged to work. Stalin's death in 1953 changed little in this regard. In 1961 the government issued an edict on "intensifying the struggle against individuals evading socially useful work and leading an anti-social, parasitical way of life". Further legislation was passed between 1965 and 1975 to control those living a "parasitic existence" and in 1981 the screw was tightened and extended to make 'scrounging' (*tuneyadstvo*) an indictable offence. Prosecutions took place under this Act until its abolition in 1991. The fact that from the 1930s until the final demise of the Soviet Union the law dealt harshly with vagrants and homeless people led to our re-conceptualising the whole issue of homelessness. To what extent did homelessness exist in socialist societies prior to *perestroika*?—a question discussed by the author.

Various factors, apart from the fact that vagrancy and being homeless were no longer crimes, account for the increase in the number of homeless people. The collapse of the Soviet Union gave rise to refugees and forced migrants. Economic restructuring caused unemployment, rising rates of alcoholism and drug addiction, and a dramatic decline in the number of new social housing units. The Law on Housing Privatisation, by commodifying accommodation and making it a subject of commercial transactions, encouraged some people to use criminal or unethical ways of gaining 'vacant possession', to the extent that in 1998 it was estimated that apartment fraud was responsible for 30 per cent of the homeless population in St. Petersburg. The Mayor of Moscow declared that "there are numerous cases where the sale, bequeathal and exchange of accommodation is accompanied by fraud, violence and threats from criminal elements, sometimes culminating in the physical elimination of citizens". In post-socialist capital cities, perhaps more so in Moscow than elsewhere, the emergence of a speculative real estate market and increased housing hardship (including, homelessness) are correlated.

This book is less concerned with these issues than with challenging "negative stereotypes" (p. 143) held by "Russian experts, academics and even charity workers [who] often argue that at least some of the people who migrate onto the streets have been complicit in their own fate . . . " (p. 142). In the author's eyes they have been ex-communicated from society and managed by the militia "with whom social services essentially join forces by acting to contain and control marginality" (p. 145). Except for the odd good-hearted militiaman or professional (hospital doctor or even employer), all state agencies appear unsympathetic to individuals who find themselves homeless. Her challenge is to reveal that homeless people "develop mutually beneficial relationships with the group closest to them . . . the *housed* poor" (p. 23) and that this "bottom layer of society, which is often presented by [Russian] sociologists as a dumping ground, a sphere of misery and alienation" is in fact "a structured and socially 'fertile' area" (p. 166).

En route to this conclusion, she notes that, although "homeless people engage in limited but mutually beneficial interaction . . . long term obligations are difficult to sustain" (p. 39). Even so, their world is *not* one of "every man for himself" (p. 40) as evidenced in the fact that "teams of *bomzhy* may work together . . . make plans . . . to look for seasonal work". Unfortunately, "such plans rarely materialise". Then there is the issue of violence: Not only "are they beaten up by the militia, harassed by local residents and attacked by groups of youngsters" (p. 46), but "newcomers [to street life] . . . quoted the risk of

violence as one of the key reasons to avoid other *bomzhi* despite the need for human companionship" (p. 48). The evidence forces the author to conclude that "social cohesion of homeless people is minimal" (p. 50). Besides the violence, in very many cases homelessness is associated with heavy undisciplined drinking, which "began long before their homelessness" (p. 62). This unpalatable social fact is colourfully dressed up by saying "... homelessness in a state of inebriation is preferable to homelessness in a state of sobriety" (p. 64).

For well over a century, commentators have explained vagrancy and homelessness as 'structural' in origin; or, as a consequence of 'personality defects', such as indolence or a proclivity towards finding illegal ways of obtaining money. Attempts to overcome this dichotomous approach founder on an ideological Barrier Reef—the 'underclass'. Svetlana Stephenson does not like the word 'underclass' and prefers 'lumpenproletariat'. In a section on the topic, 'The Soviet Lumpenproletariat' (pp. 108–112), she states that: "It would be wrong to regard all these people as members of some passive underclass, a homogenous group of socially and culturally isolated individuals". On the following page, however, she writes that: "we can say that they represented for the Soviet system its lumpenproletariat, ... [which] Marx [regarded] as an inescapable feature of capitalist society. State socialism had its own lumpenproletariat which it never named as such". What is the difference between an 'underclass' and a 'lumpenproletariat'?

The MVD regarded vagrants and homeless people as coming from dysfunctional families, which accounted for their displays of "infantilism and a propensity to act spontaneously, often under the influence of alcohol". In order to intervene in the reproduction of the cycle—graphically illustrated in a photograph and story of a homeless woman (not referred to in the book), who lived in a Moscow railway station, who left it to go to the hospital to give birth and then returned there with her baby—the authorities believed that *in extremis*, children should be 'taken into care', a policy which the author interprets as "stemming from the state's objective of achieving the maximum control over children's socialisation, including where necessary, taking over children's socialisation" (p. 99).

The Soviet system had many failings and its successor state seems to the author to be no better. She considers that the functions and remit of social services in post-Soviet Russia with regard to homeless people and vagrants are ill-conceived and have achieved little (pp. 153–159). However, there are major differences between (state) socialism and capitalism with regard to these groups of people. First, under the former, homelessness could not ideologically exist, while under capitalism, homeless people, beggars and vagrants are an important element in the social ideology. They have to be just as visible as the superlatively rich for they are social signifiers of how unthinkably horrific life can be. Second, there are factors inherent in the capitalist political economy that create homelessness which were absent from the soviet-type administrative economy.

Svetlana Stephenson's book contains a wealth of information and its bibliography is an important resource. Its polemical approach will make it an excellent text for seminar discussions of a range of issues.

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Influence and Invisibility: Tenants in Housing Provision in Mwanza City, Tanzania
Jenny Cadstedt
Stockholm Studies in Human Geography No. 14, Department of Human Geography, Stockholm University, 2006, 214pp.,
ISBN 91 85445 35 5

This book is based on the author's doctoral thesis, undertaken in human geography through Stockholm University during the period 2002–05. It takes a primarily qualitative approach, focusing on life histories of informal sector renting families in the second city in Tanzania, Mwanza. The approach is necessarily rather academic in structure, but the subject is, as the author argues, a rather under-researched area and as such worthy of more investigation.

Cadstedt has three objectives in the study: the study of housing practices; highlighting the neglect of informal rental in housing policies at international and national levels; and the impact of current urban development and housing programmes in Mwanza, especially with reference to engagement with informal renting households. These objectives are achieved in the research, which usefully reviews the most relevant international academic literature, as well as specific Tanzanian and Mwanza grey literatures. In general the study is sound and the arguments carefully constructed. However, two aspects of the reliance on the qualitative housing practices approach which are of relevance to a general housing readership are: (a) the need to place the detailed ethnographic work in a wider social context to be able to better assess the importance of this; and (b) the possible widening of the ethnography to the other actors who support the household studied—actual and 'classificatory' kin, social groups and community organisations as well as any other actors. In relation to the latter Cadstedt does investigate what could be termed 'vertical' civil society organisation in terms of tenants' organisations, which she finds rather irrelevant to the informal sector renting households, but the life histories show how intertwined the access these households (and members of these, especially women) have to rented housing is with wider social survival actions and hence the role of 'horizontal' civil society. In this she has not as such investigated the role of housing as an 'asset' in terms of a qualitative approach to poverty or vulnerability, although elements of this are present in her work. This is of course a reflection of her approach which draws on different literatures and discourses, and in no way diminishes the usefulness of her study, but would have linked her work to wider debates about urban poverty and the role of housing and shelter.

Naturally, a doctoral study has limited resources and time, as well as a specific focus in terms of discourse, and within these limitations and with the human geography focus, the book does provide a useful text on the detail of survival in the increasingly commodified housing field for the proportionally growing urban poor in Africa where rapid urbanisation is now becoming the single most important social phenomenon. It thus confirms more than adds new insights to existing knowledge of the sector, while providing new information on the Mwanza case. The book as such may not be one which would become required reading in developing studies, human geography or specialised planning and housing courses for areas in rapid urbanisation, but is an excellent example of an ethnographic approach to a subject area, and one which has tended not to be approached in such a manner. It is also a useful reference text for doctoral students as well as those who have a specific interest in urban affairs in Sub-Saharan Africa, to one of whom I have already passed my copy! Hopefully the author will build on this work with research which adds more to the

understanding of academics, policy makers and practitioners, and Stockholm University will continue to publish work of this nature, this being the second I am aware of and to which I have had access.

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