

## BOOK REVIEW/COMPTE RENDU

**Sarah Glynn**, ed., *Where the Other Half Lives: Lower Income Housing in a Neoliberal World*. London: Pluto Press, 2009, 224 pp. \$US 26.95 paper (978-0-7453-2857-7), \$US 95.00 hardcover (978-0-7453-2858-4)

**W**here the Other Half Lives aims to bring to public attention the ever-growing population that suffers most from neoliberal economic restructuring. Through case studies of social housing issues in North America, Europe and Australia, the book links the detrimental experiences of tenants of social housing to the neoliberal reforms of housing policy and the global political and economic forces that drive those policy changes. Contributors include both academic and non-academic activist researchers.

In “If Public Housing Didn’t Exist, We’d have to Invent it,” Sarah Glynn provides a detailed historical overview of state public housing policies. Her focus is British, but she also briefly reflects on national variations. Her main finding is that the market has proven incapable of providing decent housing for a large section of the population, even under the guise of a more philanthropic capitalism. In the second chapter Glynn reviews the plethora of effects that neoliberal policies have had on social housing and lower income communities, and in the third, she shows how the language of “regeneration” is utilized as a Trojan horse for state-sponsored accumulation by dispossession on an immense scale.

Stuart Hodkinson examines the deployment of disciplinary neoliberalism in Leeds, showing how rules of access and use by local authorities come with in-built mechanisms that unlock public revenues and assets for capital accumulation. In the following chapter, Glynn discusses the myth and reality of regeneration in Dundee, Scotland, demonstrating the squandering of resources, the shortfalls of local democracy, and the ruinous effects of current neoliberal policies on those with the least economic and political influence. In the sixth chapter, Corinne Nativel considers the politics of housing under France’s new right government of Sarkozy.

In their historical overview of housing policy in Sweden, Eric Clark and Karin Johnson show that since the 1990s the housing sector has been radically reformed in line with neoliberal ideology. In the eighth chapter, Laurence Murphy documents the shift from “roll-back” neo-

liberalism and the dismantling of the welfare state in the 1980s in New Zealand to the “roll-out” neoliberalism in the 1990s which centered on the institutionalisation of market processes, competition and consumer sovereignty within new state regulatory and governance structures. As a result of political pressure, Murphy shows that there was a reinsertion of interventionist policy towards public housing in 2000, albeit within neoliberal parameters. Peter Phibbs and Peter Young provide a short history of the denigration of public housing in Australia through reduced stock, reduced funding and a reduced political commitment. They also highlight the positive impacts of public housing on the lives of public housing tenants.

In separate chapters Jason Hackworth reports on public housing in the United States and Canada. In the US he describes the systematic destruction of subsidized rental housing beginning in the 1970s. He contends that this destruction was predicated on a neoliberal desire to reduce government involvement and promote “self-sufficiency” in housing. In Canada, Hackworth notes the erosion of the discourse of our social housing system being “not as bad as the US” (a perception that softened political activism and distracted from the brutal reality facing an increasing number of impoverished Canadian families) and recognizes the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty as the most hopeful source of change in the current political environment.

In the final two chapters, Glynn suggests strategies and tactics to combat neoliberalism, using lessons from British successes to examine some contemporary campaigns across a broader geography. Glynn concludes by offering a series of proposals to move beyond the current housing crisis to a healthier, more equitable society.

*Where the Other Half Lives* fills a gap in the housing studies literature by critically engaging with both housing policy and broader global economic forces that affect the urban poor. Its detailed case studies of the impact of neoliberalism on housing across nations contribute to the comparative housing literature. One criticism is in order, however. Glynn asserts in the introductory chapter that the experiences of those suffering from neoliberal housing policies will be put into socio-political context. Yet none of the chapters present the voices of those who are impacted by neoliberal housing policies. Despite this lack, *Where the Other Half Lives* is a thought-provoking and insightful addition to the library of anyone interested in poverty and housing.

Carleton University

Dale Spencer

**Dale Spencer** is a PhD candidate in sociology at Carleton University. He has co-authored pieces in *Criminology and Criminal Justice* and *Canadian Journal*

*of Sociology* and sole-authored articles in *Punishment and Society* and *Body and Society*. Research interests include bodies, sport and masculinities, organizational sociology, sociology of emotions, and criminology.  
[daspone@gmail.com](mailto:daspone@gmail.com)