

Book Reviews

Book Review Editor is Anne Sweaney

A Book Review:

***ADVANCES IN ENVIRONMENT, BEHAVIOR, AND DESIGN Volumes I, II, & III* by Ervin Zube and Gary T. Moore, Editors. New York: Plenum**

Marjorie Inman

This series of volumes review theoretical, substantive, methodological, and applied advances in the fields of environment, behavior, and design. Quality of life and the environment is the concern behind these three volumes based on two questions: What is the relationship between the sociophysical environment and human behavior, and how can the answer to that question be used to develop environments better adapted to human beings?

Volume I (1987): New ways of creating environments better suited to human living are being discovered by researchers through rapid advances in methods and procedures. Contributors to this volume chart new conceptual directions for empirical research in a broad array of disciplines including agricultural economics, anthropology, architecture, environmental studies, geography, landscape architecture, psychology, sociology, and urban planning. The concepts proposed are illustrated with high-quality line drawings, sketches, and half-tones. (\$49.50)

Volume II (1989): This volume addresses the relevance of ecologically oriented theory building in environment and behavior research; folk and scientific theories in environment and behavior research; housing and fieldwork techniques in developing countries; environmental perception and cognition; facility programming; advances in evaluation of the built environment; and research utilization in design and policy decisions. As in Volume I, the concepts proposed are illustrated with high-quality line drawings, sketches, and half-tones. (\$49.50)

Volume III (forthcoming in 1991): In this volume, the series' scope expands to include chapters on design theory, providing the comparison and possible integration of explanatory environment-behavior theories and prescriptive design theories. Papers surveying new directions on the cutting edge of the field are an integral part of the text. Topics include the significance of architectural theory for environment-behavior research; behavioral and spatial issues in the design of facilitative workplaces; children and housing; and participatory and action research methods. (\$59.50)

Each of the three volumes is organized into five sections: 1) advances in theory, 2) place research, 3) user-group research, 4) sociobehavioral research, and 5) applications and research utilization. Integrating the very latest in theoretical, substantive, methodological, and applied advances in the multidisciplinary environment, behavior, and design fields, these three volumes are a "must" on the desks of all who research in any of these and related fields.

Marjorie Inman is an Associate Professor at East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina.

A Book Review:

***NEW IDEAS FOR HOUSING* by Michael Harloe and Maarje Martens. London: Shelter, 1990, 163 pages.**

Bryan Dodson

British housing needs inspired the creation of this book. *New Ideas for Housing* accomplishes its goal of revealing some new ideas. Although many of the projects discussed are not totally new, some of the highlights deserve mention.

A report of various projects occurring in the United States, West Germany, and the Netherlands is provided. The spectrum is broad with a survey of these countries, but it clearly focuses on the development provision of low-income housing. Important ideas concerning the construction of "bridges" between renting and buying or management and tenants provide a framework for more measurable examples of tenant motivation, project funding, and equity participation. For example, the issue of how to encourage tenant management for a deteriorating housing project is addressed by suggesting bartering improvements for participation in management of the complex. Although such a trade off may only work in isolated situations, this idea is significant because progress was made at the grassroots level and living situations improved as tenants and management learned to work together.

Various funding methods are reported in this survey, but one example is of particular interest. Large amounts of money are borrowed for short lengths of time from wealthy people at either no interest or very little interest and then lent for long periods of time, with no interest or very little interest, to those with low income. This "Robin Hood" technique, theoretically, works well as long as enough wealthy people are willing to continue the process of alternately funding such loans. Another proposition suggested a way to provide land for low-income developments. The idea proposed that the land values of housing projects be increased. This could benefit the community at large rather than private interests that, typically, fund housing projects for tax breaks which yield all the benefits of increased equity when the property is sold.

Although not written specifically for those interested in the success and schemes of these specific countries, anyone with an interest in housing concerns and particularly low-income housing will find *New Ideas for Housing* informative.

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A Book Review:

***HOUSING, DWELLINGS AND HOMES* by Roderick J. Lawrence, New York: Wiley and Sons**

Marjorie Inman

The presentation of theoretical and methodological principles relating to analysis, design, and use of residential environments is the primary objective of this book. The illustration of these principles communicate the core of a contextual approach for understanding house design. The insights are useful in analyzing existing houses and for designing new ones.

The author adopts a broad architectural, social, cultural, and psychological perspective relating to the design, meaning, and use of domestic space. The study concentrates on medium-density housing, rather than detached housing, and the cross-cultural examples are largely limited to Australia, Great Britain, and Switzerland.

According to the author, each chapter shows that the fundamental difference between an architectural, ethnographical, and an historical study of houses is not one of subject matter or of goals but of interpretation and method. Such a diversification of studies of housing provides cues for a comprehensive approach that architects, ethnographers, historians, and housing administrators can employ to enrich our understanding of residential environments.

Lawrence states that despite the lack of a historical perspective in the mainstream of cultural and social research, residential environments can only be understood in terms of a historical perspective. This perspective has a dual nature: 1) a social component which includes the history of house designs, domestic technology, and household life in a specific locality; and 2) a personal component including the residential biography of the inhabitants.

Throughout the book, Lawrence illustrates the principle that houses are attributed a range of meanings and uses at specific times by various groups of people. In addition, these meanings and uses may change through the course of the life-cycle.

In contrast to many studies of residential environment, this book takes a humanistic approach that concerns itself with people and the built environment as related to housing research and architectural design practice. It attempts to dismantle the barriers between the diverse groups who study people in the built environment.

Refuted in several chapters of the book are several design methods. These include "design guidelines," "patterns," and "user needs" that are founded on broad generalizations about house planning. Some chapters illustrate the organization of domestic space in relation to the public realm of the street and the private realm of the interior spaces.

According to Lawrence, the most fundamental principle identified and analyzed in successive chapters is the notion of a boundary. This includes physical dimensions, symbolic markers, judicial borders, and administrative limits. He feels that architects and urban designers must address this principle because the kind of boundaries between different realms, such as between different rooms and activities both inside and outside of houses, reflects the cultural, social, and psychological dimensions that change during the course of time. The home should not be viewed as a single unit, but rather as a group of spaces or zones that conform to prescribed cultural conventions that are context dependent.

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Lawrence shows how the chasm between social research and design practice can be reduced by synthesizing different interpretations of researchers and practitioners concerning the wide range of principles related to house planning, dwelling practices, and homes. The theoretical and methodological issues that Lawrence addresses in each chapter illustrate how the application of notions and methods from the social sciences transcend specific design and management tasks that architects and designers confront, as well as managers of multi-family housing units.

Lawrence notes the scope and limitations of the book. Although each chapter focuses on issues relating to both the design and use of houses, there is no layout suggestions for the immediate surroundings of housing or neighborhoods. The focus is on the internal organization of domestic space and the ordering of household life.

Chapters of the book cover the following topics: 1) a historic perspective of the issues addressed, 2) a reexamination of house form and culture, 3) social, spatial, and temporal factors, as well as psychological issues, 4) a diagnosis of dwelling design and use as well as the planning in relation to simulation and communication, and 5) renovation, rehabilitation, and domestic culture.

Presenting a critical review of recent research and offering a variety of interpretations of domestic architecture, this book is fully supported by case studies and a substantial bibliography. It should be of interest to researchers, teachers, and students specializing in architecture, environmental psychology, or sociology.

A Book Review:

***A FRAGILE MOVEMENT: THE STRUGGLE FOR NEIGHBORHOOD STABILIZATION* by J. Saltman. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 472 pages.**

Anne L. Sweaney

A Fragile Movement: The Struggle for Neighborhood Stabilization studies the effects of the neighborhood stabilization movement. This movement was formed to maintain racial integration in the community but, as the author states, "it is easier to attain integration than to maintain it." Saltman has first-hand knowledge from living in Akron's west side for over 30 years. In addition, she founded Akron's Fair Housing Contract Service in 1965 and West Side Neighbors in 1967. In the study which led to this book, she sought to identify the factors that lead to success or failure in racial integration movements.

The book is divided into four parts: 1) Perspectives, 2) The Community Level, 3) The National Level, and 4) Conclusions. The first section focuses on the "Analytical Framework." Saltman defines neighborhood stabilization as "the organized effort to maintain racial integration in urban neighborhoods." The people who participated in these movements wanted neighborhood integration as a way of life but were faced with "massive institutional forces propelling their neighborhoods toward resegregation."

The author specifies three theories that guided her research and analysis. These are: 1) the race relations theory; 2) the social movements theory; and 3) the urban community theory. The first provides a meaningful framework for analyzing the movement. The second offers an important analytical tool in studying the movement's origins, structure, process, and impact. The third helps to explain neighborhood transition and the linkage of the neighborhood and its organization to the larger community and society. Saltman discusses these movements in a sociohistorical, national context and as social movements.

The second part is divided into three studies. These are categorized as: Model A: Success; Model B: Failure; and Model C: Conditional. Saltman discusses three metropolitan associations that exemplify success. These are Indianapolis, with its Butler-Tarkington Neighborhood Association; Rochester, with its Nineteenth Ward Community Association; and Milwaukee, with its Sherman Park Community Association. The only example of a failure used by Saltman is Hartford's Blue Hills Civic Association. She considers her own West Side Neighbors of Akron to exemplify the conditional model.

The last chapter in the second part contains a variety of Models A and C from across the country. Each chapter is subdivided into parts that describe aspects of each city's neighborhood association. These include sociohistorical context, inception, structure, goals, program, impact, factors of success or failure, and the future.

The third section concentrates on the "National Neighbors" association. It follows the history of this organization from the first meeting, called the Carleton Conference, on March 30, 1969, and highlights the cities represented. The cities were Chicago, Cincinnati, Denver, Indianapolis, Los Angeles, New Rochelle, Oklahoma City, Philadelphia, Shaker Heights, University City, and Washington, D.C.

The first national conference, the Bergamo Conference, was held in Dayton, Ohio, on May 22, 1970. Saltman reviews the origins then discusses the structure, goals, program, and the impact of the organization. She adds a postscript noting that the National Neighbors changed their name to National Federation for Neighborhood Diversity at their 20th anniversary conference in Washington, D.C. in June 1989.

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The final section centers on "Summary and Policy Implications." Topics covered in this chapter are the Hypotheses of Stabilization Movement Success; The Community Level; Comparative Summary of Case-Study Models; Across the Country; The National Level; National Neighbors; Conclusions; Implications for Social Policy; and Strategies for Social Change. The appendix in this section is beneficial. It contains tables and figures of the case-study populations, the field-interview guide of the neighborhood stabilization movement, plus letters, articles, and memos from West Side Neighbors, Model C on the community level, and National Neighbors on the national level.

Saltman's work is worthwhile for those interested in community composition and dynamics. As lending institutions become more involved in meeting the requirements of the Community Reinvestment Act, Saltman's work will be a valuable contribution to the literature.

A Book Review:

NEW HOMELESS AND OLD; COMMUNITY AND THE SKID ROW HOTEL
by C. Hoch and R.A. Slayton. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 299
pages.

Anne L. Sweaney

Hoch and Slayton examine homelessness in Chicago in an effort to uncover the causes of this contemporary problem. The authors denounce stereotypical portrayals of the homeless. In particular they assert that moral judgements focus public attention on individual vulnerabilities rather than the institutional causes of homelessness. They view the "new" homeless as no more deserving than their "old" Skid Row predecessors. Instead, they see today's homeless as unfortunate latecomers to a problem that was mistakenly thought to be solved with the physical destruction of Skid Row.

The contemporary homeless are not a new social group. The new homelessness is marked by the same economic difficulties as the old. The declining availability of low-rent housing is an aggravating factor. The majority of the homeless are members of the single working poor that have been victimized by urban policies that encourage destruction of SROs and other types of low-income housing. Likewise this group has been adversely affected by changes in the national economy. Increased unemployment and underemployment are key factors now as before. This group has also been affected by welfare policies that undermine the social autonomy of the dependent poor.

The authors provide useful descriptions and discussions of housing alternatives over time. Of special importance is their discussion of the effect of policy shifts from the private to the public sector in the 1920s and 1930s. These policy shifts played an important role in housing development and in meeting the needs of low-income individuals.

Chapter 9 is noteworthy. Entitled "The Loss of SRO Hotels," it documents the unseen dimensions of poverty. Specifically it shows the increasing economic hardship among the poor and the close ties between this and the declining supply of low-income housing that helps spawn homelessness. In addition, this chapter examines how the loss of thousands of SROs perpetuates a vicious cycle of social dependence. The authors also point out political and economic causes that help fuel the crisis.

The authors criticize classifying the homeless as a special population identified by peculiar vulnerabilities. They show why the successful SRO hotel communities offer an important lesson about how the vulnerable can receive assistance without losing their status as citizens and residents. They conclude that housing for low-income groups must be provided as part of a universal entitlement. Moreover, programs that use community-based approaches to reduce the social inequities created by present market practices should succeed. The work contains some good insights about issues that need to be addressed at the community level.

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A Book Review:

***ONE-THIRD OF A NATION; A NEW LOOK AT HOUSING AFFORDABILITY IN AMERICA* by Michael E. Stone. Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute, 1990, 67 pages.**

Marjorie Jensen

An implied goal of federal, state, or local housing policies is to serve persons who are most in need of assistance. Thus, it is necessary to determine relative need among potential program users. Measures of housing affordability generally utilize percent-of-income standards to establish relationships between income and ownership or rental cost burdens. To qualify home-loan borrowers, for example, mortgage-revenue bond programs establish rules of thumb such as: 1) a percent-of-income ceiling for principal, interest, taxes, and insurance (PITI), and 2) a percent-of-income ceiling for PITI and other debt service. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) applies a similar standard in requiring percent-of-income tenant contributions toward rent in HUD-subsidized housing.

Housing policy literature overwhelmingly utilizes percent-of-income standards for estimating ability to pay for housing. Dolbeare (1989) has noted the "serious shortcomings of this approach" and has pointed out that,

a household with an income of \$100,000 could spend 50 percent of its income for housing and still have \$50,000 left over for other needs. But a household with an income of \$10,000 would have only \$7,000 left after paying 30 percent of its income for housing--probably far too little to meet their other basic needs (p. 1).

In *One-Third of a Nation*, Michael Stone argues that housing policies should acknowledge the existence of a minimum level of adequacy for nonshelter costs. Net income which exceeds such a standard would be the most a household could afford to spend on housing. Since many households do pay excessive amounts for housing, they are often without certain nonshelter necessities. Thus, because shelter costs have a priority claim on income, some households cannot afford basic nonhousing needs. Stone establishes this condition as "shelter poverty."

Stone has developed separate sliding-scale, shelter-poverty standards of affordability for renter and homeowner households. These standards vary according to income, household size, and type. The standards are established in 1987 dollars for the years 1970 through 1987 and are national in scope. This measure is the basis for Stone's analysis of selected, housing-cost data from the 1970 Census, the Annual Housing Survey (1973-83), and American Housing Surveys (1985, 1987).

Consistent with more conventional studies, Stone found that approximately one third of our nation's people were burdened with housing costs that were excessive. The most heavily burdened were low-income groups. Minorities, the poor elderly, and single-parent households were disproportionately represented. Stone's examination revealed three findings in regard to these groups. These are:

1) Shelter poverty was disproportionately greater for larger than for smaller households of similar income. Among renters, shelter poverty was 30 percent for one-person households but rose to 75 percent for households with six or more persons. For homeowners, shelter poverty was "insignificant" (10 percent or less) among households of one person with incomes over \$10,000; two persons with incomes over \$20,000; and three persons with incomes in excess of \$30,000 annually. But shelter poverty was "serious" (44 to 100 percent) among homeowner households of four or more persons even with incomes up to \$30,000 annually.

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2) Not all shelter-poor households exceeded percent-of-income rules of thumb. Many low-income households and large families paid less than 25 percent of income but were shelter poor. Some households who paid nothing for housing were shelter poor because their incomes fell below Stone's standard level of adequacy for nonshelter costs.

3) Not all households paying excessive percent-of-income amounts were found to be shelter poor. According to percent-of-income measures, higher-income households and many smaller, middle-income households paying excessive amounts for housing had ample income to sustain their nonhousing needs at or above a standard level of adequacy.

Stone concluded that percent-of-income standards understated affordability problems for families with children and other large households and overstated the extent of problems faced by higher-income households.

Stone makes a compelling argument against using flat percentage standards that disregard other factors which determine ability to pay for housing. Stone's work is a giant step forward in establishing affordability standards which address circumstances of household size and composition as well as income and housing costs. *One Third of a Nation* will be of interest to housing policy analysts and to educators, economists, and others who work with family and consumer-housing issues.

Reference

Dolbeare, C. (December, 1989). *Out of reach: Why everyday people can't find affordable housing*. Washington, DC: Low Income Housing Information Service.