Zambia is said to be one of the most urbanized countries in Africa and is known in the social sciences as one of the main research sites for the study of urbanization. Anthropologists, for example, recognize the research conducted on the Copperbelt in the colonial period as being on par with that produced by the Chicago school of urban anthropology. Mutale’s study however does not build on that colonial tradition directly. This book is not very sociological and pays little attention to the pioneering ethnographic studies of James Clyde Mitchell, A.L. Epstein or any of the other anthropologists who worked on the Copperbelt. Mutale’s field is classified as urban management and his book is one of Ashgate’s International Land Management series. It provides a fresh way of looking at the urbanization process—one that encompasses “...a range of traditional disciplines, for example, town planning; civil engineering, architecture, surveying, economics, law, management, administration, management and others.” (p.3) But is it possible for one researcher to employ all these different analytic frameworks and disciplinary traditions of urban anthropology in the comparative reference to Luanshya and other cities. Although, as already noted, little mention is made of the pioneering work of the Rhodes-Livingstone school of urban anthropology, e.g. A.L. Epstein and J.C Mitchell’s work on urban politics and ethnicity in the neighboring Ndola and Lusaka, this study of urban management is much more comprehensive than urban sociology or urban anthropology as far as the main aim of the book is to analyze urban policy and governance. Concerns of the day using the available and limited resources.

Chapter Five is dedicated to the growth of Kitwe and is one of the most important for it shows the structures that sought to determine the city’s development path in the colonial and post-independence period. Between 1913 and 1927, BSA, a number of policy recommendations which “balancing the needs of all power bases” (p.111), political, economic, and informal.

The next three chapters all show how the main power structures: mining companies, government and citizens have interacted to determine the nature of Nkana-Kitwe’s development. The supply of land and property and the changing structure of rates, of revenues allocation to finance service provision and the supply of basic services, and as they chose water and housing form the core of the book. I found these last chapters very informative, and the description of the conflict-ridden relationship between the local authorities, the central government and the mining company is a major contribution to our knowledge of the Copperbelt. The form and agency of housing provision and the nature of the housing problem. NNKana-Kitwe respectively are both excellent studies of real life in Zambian cities and would urge the sociologists and anthropologists to emulate Mutale’s careful use of council records, government plans and his own fieldwork to construct a very complete picture of urban development, one that researchers have in the past declared difficult to do because African countries lack reliable data.

In the concluding chapter, Mutale makes a number of policy recommendations which governments and other agencies involved in urban renewal after the collapse of the copper industry will find very useful and useable, which cannot be said for the most recent examples of urban anthropology. One major lesson that we can draw from this study is that leaving the people as the colonial and current town planners tend to do is a major reason for failed urbanization. After independence in 1965, the United National Independence Party (UNIP) government under President Kaunda introduced local government reforms that did away with indirect rule structures like the Native Treasurers and Native Authorities in the rural areas and the urban structures that favored white property owners with “democratically” elected rural councils and local authorities. Whether seen as democratization or Zambianization, this process had two major weaknesses (1) the exclusion of the public from the planning and implementation of development issues and (2) the politicization of the councils and committee members turning them into vehicles for personal and corrupting legacy needs to be addressed. As Mutale shows, with proper management, existing and emerging sectional interests in urban areas can help to provide conditions which foster the formulation of a more equitable urban policy. Although focused on Zambia, the proposed structural conflict approach has potential for wider application. Although it is based on his PhD thesis and has a substantial appendix on water consumption data, numerous tables on municipal service provision, and illustrations of housing designs, maps depicting town expansion and even city council civic awareness posters, none of it are superficial. This is probably the best book on Zambia to have been published in a long while and should be essential reading for everyone involved in the study of African urbanization or even in the formulation of urban policies.