

Patrick Bond. *Cities of Gold, Townships of Coal: Essays on South Africa's New Urban Crisis*. Trenton and Asmara: Africa World Press, Inc. 2000.

**Caroline O'Reilly**  
*Westdene, Johannesburg*  
*South Africa*

Even the most casual observer of post-apartheid South Africa cannot fail to be struck by the gap between the aspirations of the liberation movement, as articulated, for example, in the *Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP)*, which was effectively the African National Congress' 1994 election manifesto, and the present day reality. Where are the jobs, the houses, the improved educational and health facilities, the rising income levels and improved child nutrition and mortality rates – all the indicators of beginning to achieve 'a better life for all'? In seeking explanations, the observer is offered a long list of possible culprits, including the replacement of the 'people-friendly' RDP with the more market-friendly Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy, the failure to attract foreign investment, the effects of trade liberalisation, the difficulties of reforming apartheid-era government structures, and the problems of corruption and self-enrichment. But such a list is not much use as a tool in addressing the situation, unless accompanied by an understanding of the history and dynamics underlying the often rather glib explanations offered for the current situation.

This collection of essays by Patrick Bond spans the decade from 1990 to 1999, reflecting the period of struggle for the 'new' South Africa in which they were written. They will be of interest to anyone concerned with how post-apartheid urban policy and practice has been developed, particularly in the housing sector. Writing variously as an NGO researcher, a consultant and an academic, Bond's longstanding and ongoing engagement with the iniquities of the apartheid and post-apartheid city make this volume a lively, often passionate call for, as he puts it in one essay introduction, 'reconstructing the politics of social and community movements in response to the strains that globalization visits, so that we transcend both anarchic "IMF" riots and tame urban reformism' (p 23).

The essays, fourteen in all, are each prefaced with a new, short, contextualising introduction, and grouped into four sections, covering urban theory and processes, infrastructure, housing and urban policy. The first chapter, originally published in 1992, examines the spatial and social organisation of the apartheid city, its irrationalities, and urban capital flows. Over-accumulation of capital in the 1960s led, in South Africa, to the channeling of huge capital flows into the construction industry, one result being the sprawling urban townships, an expansion of capital's geographical boundaries. The postmodern prescription for the city, current in the early 1990s, is rejected

in favour of a collective approach by designers and architects that seeks to couple the transformation of the city with a socially just organisation of urban space. The following chapter looks at globalisation and the city, and how it is shaped by the dual combination of uneven development and capitalist crisis, or what Bond calls the 'localization of globalization', whereby structural adjustment-type policies are applied to the municipality, rather than – or perhaps as well as – to the nation-state.

The second section Bond describes as coming from a period where, together with the civics and other progressive organisations, having lost the housing policy battles, he and his research colleagues 'retreated' into defending the extension of basic municipal services. In the introduction to the first of these chapters he further bemoans his and their 'co-option', which resulted in failure to provide backup to township activists engaged in combating water and electricity cut-offs. But, whatever his feelings about missed opportunities, this chapter contains a useful and detailed critique of the implications of the 1997 ten year plan, the *Municipal Infrastructure Investment Framework*, which is based on constitutional guarantees of socio-economic rights, and provides minimum standards in water and electricity provision, sanitation, roads, etc. The next chapter looks at the still current debates around privatisation of municipal services, the role of the World Bank and response of the unions involved, and the issue of public participation in urban planning. A case study of a Local Economic Development plan forms the topic of the final essay in this section, looking at the Eastern Cape town of Stutterheim, and how its apparently 'seamless' transition from the old to the new South Africa belies the reality of re-segregation and the failure of service delivery and land reform.

The next five chapters tackle the housing issue, and in many ways form the heart of the collection. As has been touched on in earlier chapters, the nature of the apartheid city is epitomised by how its inhabitants are housed, geographically, socially and physically, and Bond follows how the crises of capital and apartheid ideology played themselves out in the housing arena. The renaming of the original articles to read in turn '1980s Township Housing Boom', '1990s Gentrification Bust', 'Transitional Housing Policy Discourses', 'Do "Blacks Like Shacks"?' and 'The Crash of Post-Apartheid Housing Policy' conveys very well how his argument progresses. The first offers a detailed account of housing finance and development in Alexandra township, including the creation of an 'up-market, elite area ... to defuse tension' as an outlet is sought for excess capital, and the emergence of a black slum landlord class of home- and stand-owners, exploiting tenants through excessive rents. The following chapter traces the transformation of Johannesburg's Central Business District, as corporate owners and tenants fled to the northern suburbs, and the council developed – unsuccessful – plans to create housing for black middle and upper income earners in refurbished tenements. Attempts to displace the working and unemployed poor from these buildings have been resolutely resisted. The evo-

lution of housing policy discourses is traced in the central chapter of this section, which examines how the free-market approach to housing, as advocated by the World Bank, and the basic needs approach advocated by the civic and trade union movements, battled it out against a backdrop of serious economic crisis. The end result is a return to the worst offered by any apartheid government – a serviced stand, underlining the continuities between the old regime and the new.

The increasingly common acceptance of the ‘incremental housing’ approach following the failure to deliver on RDP promises (one million houses in five years) is exemplified for Bond by the arguments of ‘former leading Marxist scholars’ that, firstly this is acceptable to the residents involved, and secondly, there is in any case, no alternative. Thus the reference to ‘Blacks Like Shacks’ in the title of Chapter Nine, critiquing the *Evaluation of Informal Settlement Upgrading and Consolidation Projects* report produced for the Department of Housing, which argued for a pragmatic approach to the combination of shortage of resources and enormity of need. Bond leaves us in no doubt as to where he stands, as he concludes: ‘In short, the ... report is a reasonably well-written, though methodologically flawed, poorly argued, error-ridden, demonstrably misleading, conveniently neglectful, self-interested, inconsistent, and essentially inhumane piece of conservative social policy advocacy’ (p 280). Not content with pulling the report to pieces in twenty pages of closely-argued text, he adds another fourteen pages of dense footnotes. The final chapter in this section, in looking at the ‘widely recognized failure of existing policy’ forecasts that ‘more meaningful debate will emerge again’ (pp. 318-319), a prophecy which appears likely to be fulfilled as the national Department of Housing launches a new housing code, and the Gauteng Department undertakes a major appraisal of its programmes. Both bodies are apparently concerned with the unsatisfactory outcomes of their housing policies, or their implementation, to date. These initiatives will doubtless open space for community organisations and progressive NGOs to again return to the issue of decent, affordable accommodation for all.

The final section returns in chapter twelve to the issue of World Bank and South African urban policy making, detailing the organisations and personalities involved in the transition from ‘apartheid township’ to ‘neoliberal city’, and looking at the continuing township struggles over rents and service payments. The succeeding chapters look in turn at the failure to grapple with the ‘ongoing cementing of apartheid geography’ in the wake of the first municipal elections, whether the *Urban Development Strategy* document of 1996 lived up to its claims to be following RDP principles in the penultimate chapter, and a critique of the 1998 *Local Government White Paper* in the closing chapter. This latter concludes that as conditions worsen for black urban residents, hope nonetheless lies in the increasing strength and wisdom of the municipal workers’ union, SAMWU, as its members battle against privatisation, and in the emer-

gence of alternative township organisations. Progressive activists are building new structures, replacing those that capitulated to the serviced sites policy, and foreshadowing community forces which, he hopes, will organise against 'neo-liberal notions of development' (pp 372-3).

There are struggles over urban space occurring all over the developing world, and this account of the South African experience, which is by no means over, enriches our understanding of the problems involved in the redistribution of resources. There is, inevitably, unevenness between the chapters, which were originally written for a number of different publications and audiences. This also means there is some repetition – for example, of the arguments about the effects of capital in crisis. But until Bond is persuaded to draw all his material and experience into one coherent whole, this will suffice very well.

J. Kelly. 1998. *Rethinking Industrial Relations: Mobilization, Collectivism and Long Waves*. London: Routledge. (xiv + 177 pages). K. Moody. 1987. *Workers in a Lean World: Unions in the International Economy*. London: Verso. (viii + 342 pages). B. Nissen, B. 1999. *Which Direction for Organized Labor? Essays on Organizing, Outreach and Internal Transformation*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press. (260 pages).

**Geoffrey Wood**  
Coventry University  
Coventry  
United Kingdom

In contrast to the advanced societies, where, according to conventional wisdom, the story of trade unions over the last two decades has been one of unmitigated decline, South Africa retains one of the most vigorous and effective labour movements in the world. Moreover, South African trade unions face a range of exciting challenges and strategic choices that come from a mass based following, effective organisation, and a formal alliance with South Africa's governing party. Ironically, a case can be made for the view that the indigenous literature on trade unions has not fully kept pace with the latest international theoretical developments, which, when applied to South Africa, may assist in identifying new strategic options.

Traditionally, the more critical South African tradition of labour studies has been firmly rooted in the broad political economy paradigm. This served as a sound basis for a radical critique of the apartheid order, and was backed up by detailed case studies of individual worker struggles, and/or the emergence and reconstitution of individual trade unions. Examples of the latter would include individual articles in the *South African Labour Bulletin*, some of the most influential early articles being reprinted in compilations edited by Johann Maree (1987) and Eddie Webster (1978). However, the logjam in radical theorising in