
BOOK REVIEWS

Margaret F. Brinig and **Nicole Stelle Garnett** (2014). *Lost Classroom, Lost Community: Catholic Schools' Importance in Urban America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Brinig's and Stelle Garnett's book is a timely and insightful look at Catholic schooling in America. Until now there has been little written about the history of Catholic schools in urban America that not only documents their history but also focuses on the complexity of their societal contributions and dilemmas. This book reasonably contends that the closure of Catholic schools negatively impacts social capital in urban areas throughout the United States. One of the most noteworthy facets of the book is its in-depth chronicle of Catholic schooling in America. It is only through understanding and appreciating the history of Catholic schools and their struggles that it is possible to mourn their decline, which the authors carefully document. The political, cultural, religious and economic intricacies of urban Catholic schools are carefully explained while the impact of current educational trends such as school choice and charter schools are thoughtfully entwined into the chapters.

The insights gleaned about the expansion, adaptability (or sometimes lack thereof) and closure of Catholic schools and the context in which the authors relate the schools as sociocultural institutions makes this book an informative read for scholars interested in Catholic schools and researchers concerned about school administration in changing times. This text can give practical lessons to Catholic educators, historians or administrators as

well as any policy maker or researcher studying urban anthropology and seeking to read about the evolution and now decline of the largest private education system in the world. This book is a must read for any Bishop considering closing a Catholic school.

As a Catholic reader, this book reminded me that Catholic schools in America are the largest private school system in the world and are therefore noteworthy of study in higher education; they should not be dismissed based on the laws guiding separation of state and religion. The authors chronicle the rise of Catholic schooling during the Common School era. Catholic bishops promoted Catholic schools at the time due to the lack of separation of church and state actually inherent in a the text that was being used in Common Schools. In public schools all children, including Catholic children, were being made to read the King James Bible, a Protestant Bible. In 1852, in the spirit of protest, Catholic schools began as an alternative to public Common Schools as a place where Catholic children would no longer be forced to read the Protestant Bible. Before this, few Catholic schools existed in the United States. These former schools were mainly to serve the very rich and the very poor. Widespread Catholic schooling was started as a sign of protest because Catholic children were being discriminated against in public Common Schools and being forced to read a religious text that was not from their own religion.

This book takes a critical look at why Catholic schools prospered, why declining in enrolment, and most important the legacy of community they have given to

neighbourhoods, which is lost when they shut down. The intricacies of sociocultural factors at play as they interact with religion, ethnicity, infrastructure, music and languages are presented and how these factors have contributed to the rise, sustainment or fall of Catholic schools are analysed and discussed.

The 1950s saw Catholic schools strained beyond capacity in terms of enrolment and approximately one third of all Catholic children were being educated in Catholic schools. Enrolment demand was so high that there was a shortage of teachers for Catholic schools and often there were no fewer than forty-nine students per classroom. Diocese schools became strained due to unsafe conditions, high costs (tuition was often minimal or free to parishioners), and the scarcity of teachers caused many schools to begin to close. This first wave of closings happened in the 1960s. The suburbanization of Catholics, as well as the radical transformation of the Catholic Church through Vatican II, also led to the decline in enrolment in urban Catholic Schools; parish communities were decimated as parishes were lost and schools either adapted to changing demographics or closed.

As Catholic schools close, the authors document that charter schools may indeed be trying to fill the void that is being left by them academically as well as in terms of building and sustaining community. Charters Schools are publicly funded and the authors point to the fact that there are quasi-religious charter schools, which are currently receiving government funding. For example, there are twenty-six notable ones in Minnesota,

which are authorized by religious institutions. The debate therefore ensues as to whether Catholic schools should be funded through school choice vouchers. Much like charter schools, Catholic schools do not rely on a relationship with the government, but the authors also point out the autonomy within and amongst the different Catholic schools as they receive little to no financial or curricular support from the diocese. If Catholic schools were to receive this same type of funding as charter schools, the authors' hypothesize, then enrolment would no longer be a challenge at urban Catholic schools.

School choice is presented as a possible saviour per se for Catholic school although separation of church and state prevents government monies from funding religious schools. The authors point out that there seems to be a continued bias against Catholic schools and for this reason, school choice monies may never fully fund or save Catholic schools. Brinig's and Stelle Garnett's argument is commendable, that while Catholic schools cannot save urban America the social capital they supply is substantial and should not be overlooked. This book is highly recommended.

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Victor Buchli (2013). *An Anthropology of Architecture*. London: Bloomsbury.

Social scientists have had an eternal curiosity for the built environment of the past and present, and yet no work specifically addresses architecture quite as extensively as this book by Victor Buchli.

This is an appealing and necessary work that is neither about space, nor about place. It is about the built structure — the hut, the house, the home, the institutional building, the construction that once was and the construction that is — seen through the lenses of anthropology with a focus on technologies, social life, the formation of the individual, gender, kinship, artefacts and culture.

Buchli leads his readership on a deep excursion into anthropology, ethnography, archaeology, philosophy, phenomenology and material culture studies, and he takes for granted that they have the knowledge and the academic reading experience to undertake such a journey. Readers who are not too familiar with those disciplines should not jump on-board, as they are likely to be discouraged right from the first chapter. However, readers who are steeped in the concepts of the philosophy of science and processes, material culture studies and qualitative discourse of ethnography will find themselves comfortably navigating through different timeframes, space relationships and cultural ontologies which, combined, generate a new understanding of the built environment. In this regard, the book does a fantastic job by theoretically linking anthropological knowledge in a way that is rarely seen elsewhere. For once, anthropology is not evoked in order to present an assortment of non-Western testimonies through unique ethnographies that will support another discipline's proposition. On the contrary, Buchli unpacks and analyses the theoretical propositions behind strong ethnographically grounded cases studies (from the contemporary hospital to the

Mongolian yurt) in order to elevate our understanding of the built environment. If only for this reason, the book is a great contribution to anthropology as a science, and to architecture as an engaging and experienced form of social life.

The question underlying the work is, 'How does the materiality of built form in its great variety make people and society?' (p. 2). The author addresses this question in an unconventional way by using a book structure that is not easy to classify. While the theoretical foundation is predictably laid down in the introduction, as expected, the following chapters are either devoted to disciplinary explorations (Chapter 2: Architecture and Archaeology; Chapter 5: Consumption Studies and the Home; Chapter 6: Embodiment and Architectural Form), focused on a particular theoretical framework and its theoretical or conceptual heirs (Chapter 3: [...] Lévi-Strauss; Chapter 7: [...] Decay and Destruction), immersed in historical perspectives (Chapter 1: The 19th Century), or engaged in an exploration of meaningful concepts (Chapter 4: Institution and Community). One important thing to note (and a word of caution) is that the book is not so much about domestic space (Chapter 4), as presented in the blurb on the back cover, or on buildings, forms or spaces, but rather it is about the many registers of built material.

As described in the Introduction, the different registers of built form can be grasped '[...] as text, sign system, embodied experience; visually, tactilely, aurally, and so on; and in its variously configured material forms, lived building, construction tradition, text, visual image, sound-scape, model, and so on' (pp. 6-7).

The focus on the registers of materiality comes from the need to shed light on an underanalysed domain of human experience with the material of built forms; so far, the ‘immaterial abstracted social processes’ (p. 6) (such as space and place) and the ‘social within material culture studies’ (p. 10) have received all the attention. In contrast, the book explores the different registers of architectural materiality as seen through the eyes of anthropology with the aim of proposing not an innovative theoretical perspective, but a first draft of principles on which to build future knowledge. Of all the concepts defined in the introduction, the cornerstone concept of this book is the ‘illusory objectification’ of Carsten and Hugh-Jones (1995) following the concept of ‘fetish’ as inspired by Marx and Lévi-Strauss. Buchli thus defines the built form and its multiple registers as a shared object produced by the conflictual encounters of opposing values and understandings of materiality and immateriality within a social system (p. 7).

The first chapter gives an account of this ‘illusory objectification’ as it relates to the hunt for the original hut, as undertaken by scientists from ancient Rome to the 19th century, with backgrounds as diverse as French sociology, British-American anthropology, and Russian archaeology. The author demonstrates how and why the historical research forms an ambivalent collection of work that (unsurprisingly) exudes racism, imperialism and ethnocentricity, but he also reevaluates their various contributions in order to underline the eternal search for universal values and the essence of humanness through analysis of the built form. These

tensions between diversities and universalities are further explored in Chapter 2, which focuses on archaeology (and by extension on evolutionism, language and structuralism, and ethno-archaeology). Thanks to new concepts such as the permanence of objects and artefacts, to the palimpsest metaphor, and to the emergence of context as a variable of analysis, architecture emerges as an active component of social relationships. Chapter 3 dwells on Lévi-Strauss’ house society concept to deepen analysis of the idea of house, of built form as an ‘illusory objectification.’ A great number of case studies, distributed across wide and diverse locales and material registers, are presented by association of ideas, within a very thick theoretical framework that links the cosmological and human body, social relations, and conflicts with diverse material registers. The focus on institutional buildings in the second half of the 20th century, discussed in Chapter 4, raises new concerns about regulation, control, management and power relations in the experience of built forms, of the alternatives generated by these material forms, and also, significantly, of the immaterial architecture of the virtual era. The home is brought back to the heart of the analysis in Chapter 5, as an object but also as a container and as content associated with movements of, creations of, and crumbling of social relations and identities. Chapter 6 draws on Heidegger phenomenology of dwelling (and its feminist critics) and Bourdieu’s habitus to give a very short account of the entanglements of the body and the material form. This chapter introduces (only) four major cases studies, and concludes with an

off-road ending on consumption-oriented works. What seems like a (regrettably short) presentation of built form as an extension of human life serves as a basis for the following chapter, Chapter 7, which explores the death and decay of the multiple registers of built forms. This chapter is certainly the most innovative, but also the most challenging, as the author readily admits, as it relies on ethnographies of disappearance. But Buchli is able to bring to light some unexpected dimensions of various registers of material, such as its permanence and its conflictual nature, as well as architecture as the animate. What is exposed here is only a glimpse of a new and mind-opening perspective, which is deeply grounded in the present moment and relies on what is lost-and-gone, hence bringing our mind to the limit of the known. The postscript is not a traditional recapitulation of the previous lines; the author continues his exploration of the material registers, throwing in the migrant experience of dwelling, the notions of flows, unremarkableness, instability and endurance of the material artefact in the context of the confluence of antagonist ontologies that form architecture.

In less than 200 pages, Buchli offers a very intense dive into human science theories and perspectives with the aim of revisiting our understanding of the relationship between the registers of the material form and humans as social beings, both being multiple and co-constitutive. Because of its very specific niche, the book leaves unaddressed some issues that have already been extensively discussed elsewhere (nature versus the built environment, space and place, etc.), but which would have been fascinating to

redefine from the fetishist perspective of the built form proposed here. I am personally doubly indebted to the author (firstly) for his amazing use of anthropological theories and empirical cases (and secondly) in order to push back the frontiers of our understanding of the human experience of architecture.

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Laurence Ralph (2014). *Renegade Dreams: Living Through Injury in Gangland Chicago*. University of Chicago Press,

Laurence Ralph's book '*Renegade Dreams: living through injury in gangland Chicago*' is a rich account of life in a Chicago neighbourhood troubled by violence, drugs and poverty. It takes an ethnographic approach to analysing urban disadvantage, which will be interesting to anthropologists and sociologists, as it wrestles with questions of agency, social relations and embodiment. Urban planners and local governments will also learn from Ralph's exploration of the de-humanising nature of some community engagement and urban redevelopment approaches.

As an anthropologist, Ralph values 'going to the particular', and he tells in detail the stories of individuals he meets while living in the neighbourhood for several years. We learn about Mr Otis, who is one of the oldest living members of the local gang — the 'Divine Knights — and who is seeking to establish a museum highlighting the gang's early community-

building efforts; about Amy who has recently been diagnosed with HIV; and about Blizzard, an ex-drug dealer struggling to develop a new career as a hip hop artist. In order to preserve anonymity the name of the gang and key people in it has been changed, with the neighbourhood being rechristened Eastwood. While Ralph weaves conceptual analysis in and out of the stories, much of this discussion is retained for the footnotes, while in the main text he attempts to '*grapple with what Eastwoodians already know*'. While this is an interesting approach, in the end it is clear that Ralph's conceptual framework draws as much from anthropological, philosophical and psychological understanding as it does from the thoughts of the people themselves, highlighting the age-old difficulty that anthropologists have in achieving 'objectivity'.

The book has five main chapters, entitled Development, Nostalgia, Authenticity, Disability and Disease, interspersed with excerpts from field notes. The themes of nostalgia and historical story telling will be of interest to many readers, particularly as Ralph highlights more positive histories of gang life that are not normally heard. Another key theme that runs throughout the book is that of 'injury'. Ralph insists that local residents are injured by many different processes, including not only drugs, HIV and violence, but also state processes such as redevelopment and gentrification. This broader notion of injury is interesting in that it helps to highlight the longer-term impacts of unjust and harmful social processes. However it introduces a 'psychological' or medicalising

perspective that some might find problematic.

What, for me, is most interesting in Ralph's analysis is the focus on 'renegade dreams'. In particular, the book explores the processes through which people retrieve a sense of agency from within the heavy burden of social networks. While many commentators portray poorer neighbourhoods as being somehow disconnected, excluded or isolated, Ralph makes the point that in fact Eastwood residents have a broad web of social relationships. Family ties and political allegiances criss-cross with networks associated with commerce and gang membership. Networks with the 'outside' are also strong, with government actors regularly connecting to individuals through, for example, the prison and medical systems. Commercial networks often have a global reach, particularly those associated with drugs.

While some of these relationships appear to be enabling (Ralph for example describes the positive influence of grandmothers on younger relations), in many cases they seem to perpetuate the negative situation in which people find themselves.

The social relationships built around gang membership are strongly territorial. Hillier and Hanson (1984) identify that people generally have both spatial and transpatial relationships. The first are based around local relations of proximity, the latter go across space and are based on common identification, economic ties, kinship ties, religion and so on. In Eastwood spatial networks appear to be particularly strong and binding, becoming embodied into particular streets that

become ‘owned’ by particular gangs. Hillier and Hanson describes how in more functional parts of cities, streets are public spaces which support a through-flow of people, both strangers and residents. When streets start to become ‘private’ and owned by one particular group this creates isolation and reduces healthy pedestrian movement flows. By pinning social relationships to a particular network of streets they also become very fragile, having to constantly be re-defended.

In Eastwood, territories are defended through reciprocal relations of violence. Ralph describes ‘the crippling currency of obligation upon which gang life is built’. Every time there is a violent act by a rival gang, the onus is on the victims to retaliate, with neither side able to ‘snitch’ and bring in outside forces. The irony is that it is this endless cycle of violence that keeps relations between the rival gangs alive. I am reminded of Malinowski’s analysis of the Trobriand Islands (1920), where it was gifts and delayed reciprocity that maintained such longer-distance relationships as opposed to violent crime.

The relationships which Eastwood residents have with outside authorities are also dysfunctional in that people are often rendered passive. While the area is ‘awash with help’ and redevelopment strategies, many local residents are not given a voice, with decisions being made ‘for them’. They are even denied the possibility of looking out for each other and carrying out ‘self-policing’ of the streets. The urban economist Jane Jacobs (1961) points out that one of the basic preconditions for a sense of local community is the ability of people to provide ‘natural surveillance’. Local residents, café owners and passers-

by provide ‘eyes on the street’, policing bad behaviour and ensuring a set of common behaviours that keep street life civil. In Eastwood, local people have even been deprived of the ability to provide this service to each other by the ‘blue light’ cameras that put surveillance in the hands of security forces that watch from elsewhere. Mr Otis sits on his stoop and strains his eyes to see ghostly shadows in the blue light, unable to either see people or exert any day to day authority over them.

To complicate things further, mixed up in all this are the very commercial set of relationships associated with drug dealing, which sometimes mimic social relations of empowerment and solidarity, but which are in fact based on self-interest and profit. Ralph points out that the local drugs hierarchies provide people with an alternative mechanism for ‘achieving dignity’ — as people rise up the ranks they achieve political capital. Through their profits, people are able to make small investments in the future, by for example purchasing material objects such as sneakers. At the same time the need to defend local patches and thereby reach customers is one factor in reproducing the ‘territorialisation’ of the neighbourhood and its seemingly endless patterns of violence.

When Ralph sets out his vision of ‘renegade dreams’ therefore, he would appear to be talking as much about how people break out of these dysfunctional sets of relationships as about their dreams for a different future for the neighbourhood. Ralph notes that ‘a renegade dream is to imagine a different future even when living a life that is at

odds with the dignity of your aspirations' (p. 194). He draws on ideas from Deleuze and de Certeau to argue that people are constantly 'becoming' and recreating themselves in the everyday, and while government agencies such as the Development Corporation have 'strategies', the Eastwood residents have 'tactics' that they use to throw these strategies off course.

One aspect that Ralph explores is the strangely empowering nature of disability. When gang members are disabled through gun violence they are suddenly disconnected from the web of social relations in which they have been embedded, no longer useful to the drugs hierarchies or to the gang. This provides them with a new position 'outside their networks' from where they can inspire others into planning new lives, and taking different trajectories. There are moving accounts of disabled ex-gang members speaking to groups of young men about the likely consequences of their violence and the indignities of living with injury. Here I am reminded of the work of Kapferer (1997), who explored how people reclaim agency after having been caught in webs of negative social relations through sorcery rites in Sri Lanka. In Eastwood, it appears difficult to retrieve agency without first becoming the victim of violence or disease – with Ralph seeing injury itself as the source of new trajectories. The reader is left hoping for other mechanisms that might help people to escape their networks of obligation and forge new futures, but which do not rely on violence and harm.

For me the book represents a challenge — to understand better the power of social relationships in

reproducing situations of disadvantage, and to explore the imminent agency of the residents in difficult neighbourhoods, and how this may be harnessed to create social transformation. An easy lesson is for urban authorities to work with what is already there, building on the capacities, dreams and resources of local residents, to help people to help themselves. At the very least the book is a reminder that empowering people is always better than 'doing for'.

Please note that the content of the review does not represent the views of the OECD, but are those of the reviewer.

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Christine J. Walley (2013). *Exit Zero. Family and Class in Postindustrial Chicago*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Exit Zero deals both with a personal journey and a collective one. The personal journey started for the author when her father lost his job in the working class

demise of the Steel Workers of southeast Chicago that began in the early 1980s, and ended with her current comfortable living as a college-town middle-class professor. The collective journey deals with the dramatic circumstances of the Steel Mill Workers who lost their jobs without any hope of recovery. This is also a book about a central issue in American post-industrial cities and the broken *American Dream* of moving up in social and economic terms. Walley argues that 'in order to understand this kind of contemporary inequality, we have to go back and rethink deindustrialization' (p. x). And furthermore: 'this book is not only about my family; it is also for them, as well as for others who have shared similar experiences of deindustrialization' (p. xi).

The Introduction presents the analytical and theoretical frame of the book, in which the author deals and defines the complex issues of class and inequalities in the United States and how they are connected with ethnicity and race. By dealing with these issues she challenges the disjuncture of the different class worlds the author has experienced during her life, as well as the alienation she felt in the academia using theoretically sophisticated perspectives that did not account for her experiences and those of her family as working class. For that reason this is a book that offers an analysis of how the working class experienced and understood a broken world, using rich counter-narratives of her family and neighbours of southeast Chicago, to challenge the hegemonic ones.

'But the reason I can't let go of this history is not simply personal. It is because this journey illustrates in unusually stark

terms something larger and more troubling. It reveals the costs of both the class divisions that have long existed in the United States and those associated with the increasing economic inequalities of more recent decades' (p. 2). In this book the author shows what the statistics do not convey; for example, how the industrial 'jobs that are left are far less likely to serve as a rung up the social ladder to middle-class life for working-class and poor people' (p. 3).

The structure of the book is clear; she portrays the world that was as a family album. The narrative is built in a sensible and meaningful way, by showing the world they lived in.

In chapter one, we follow the author's remembrances as a daughter to make sense of a landscape made up of community, personal memories and a dense network of family ties. She carries us to a specific place in time by deploying her contrasting family's stories. This approach strikes me: settling in her (extended) family worldview and way of living, skipping the moral dimension so usually projected by ethnographers on their topic of research. Here the point is not to justify a world foreign to the reader, but to narrate and make sense of how the working-class life was and how it was left drifting to poverty with no access to middle-class. The author feelings are used as 'ethnographic "data" to be respected' (p. 15), and the stories she tells help her document a way of life disrupted by the shutdown of the steel industry of southeast Chicago.

Chapter two moves from the stories to the history of the demise of Chicago's steel industry, playing in the background

her father's destruction and suffering, in order to challenge the dominant narratives that account for the end of the industrial activity in this area.

In chapter three her attention is focused on her own journey, from a working class teenager to a middle class professor in a College Town. Her auto-ethnography offers the reader much more than a glimpse to a story of success and upward mobility. She deals with the pain and insecurities of leaving the disrupted world of her family for a life, she feels, of undeserved privilege. The pages about education are extraordinary, as she shows why she became an anthropologist and how academia is not an easy world for persons of working class origin.

Chapter four moves from counter narratives as the main thread of the ethnography, to an exploration of southeast Chicago's environment and future, exploring issues such as how the toxic pollution of such is embodied in southeastern Chicagoans, limiting the 'future possibles for the region' (p. 129). Here again Walley deals with the distinct worlds experienced by working- and middle-class people and how they promote and create different kinds of environmentalist movements. She suffered cancer as the daughter of a working class family and heals having access to middle class medical treatments. This experience directs her attention to the consequences of the industrial world, with all the ambivalence of a cherished, rough, lost world, and the polluted, dangerous environment they lived in.

The conclusions take us to the end of her journey. Christine Walley comes full circle by narrating her middle class world:

the adoption of her son, the future he will experience and the ties that bind us to the place and ways of life. She is deeply concerned because 'The path of upward mobility has now been shut off for many Americans' (p. 158). The once assumed American principle of upward social mobility, progress and increasing common prosperity has been shattered for some people by the end of heavy industry. The conclusion updates what has happened in the area since the eighties: the new developments and plans for a post-industrial southeast Chicago and the dangerous expanding social divides of American society. She wonders if the new jobs 'can foster a society that pays living wages and that supports families and communities' (p. 168).

This book is not just about a journey and a personal catharsis, it is also, and mostly, an excellent urban ethnography of southeast Chicago. One that spares us the romanticism and the usual moral ground of middle class, politically correct academia. Excellent food for thought about the worlds — and the people — we left behind, and the society the United States and the West are developing now. Nonetheless, the book offers a well-elaborated and sensible approach to class studies, immigrant narratives that do not fit into the hegemonic ones, and the painful side of upward mobility through education.

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