

levels of social analysis. However, one is left somewhat disappointed by the results. On the one hand, there is relatively little new research and few new historical and empirical insights into the Reconstruction period. On the other, one wonders whether the elaborate categorical scheme Ruef utilizes produces any new interpretive results. The best works on the Reconstruction era, such as Du Bois's *Black Reconstruction in America* (1935) and Foner's *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863–1877* (1983), highlight the class struggles that unfolded between planters, former slaves, and white yeoman farmers. These works demonstrate the *contested* character of what social-property relations (in Ruef's terms "economic institutions") would replace plantation slavery, and the *contingent* outcome of these struggles. Despite a sophisticated categorical schema, *Between Slavery and Capitalism* fails to break any significant new ground historically or theoretically.

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CARU, VANESSA. *Des toits sur la grève. Le logement des travailleurs et la question sociale à Bombay (1850–1950)*. Armand Colin/Recherches, Paris 2013. 411 pp. Ills. € 42.50.

Based on her 2010 doctoral dissertation, Vanessa Caru's book traces the evolution of popular housing schemes in Bombay from the 1850s to the 1950s. A major colonial metropolis and large industrial centre, Bombay was also characterized by a remarkable degree of government involvement in the construction and management of popular housing. In this context, Caru's work offers a finely grained analysis of the housing policy of the colonial state, the autonomous, Congress-led provincial government, and the independent Indian state that succeeded it. As well as providing a close analysis of policymaking, the book illustrates the way the *chawls*, the embodiment of popular housing, became important sites of politicization for the city's labouring classes. The study relies largely on official reports and correspondence, as well as on local and national press. While this allows her to capture the tenants' perspective in their interaction with the administration, Caru also, avowedly, chooses to read these administrative sources "*along the grain*" (p. 26), to capture the structure and practice of the state at the local level.

A long-term perspective allows the book to identify shifts in the state's treatment of the housing question. Caru argues that urban policy essentially developed as an instrument of administration, designed to address sanitary, political, and social concerns by asserting its control over "dangerous" spaces, through a mixture of concessions and repression. Identifying a trend towards increased state intervention, she shows how the housing question came to constitute an important tool in handling working-class agitation – this, incidentally, gives the book its title, *Des toits sur la grève*, building roofs on urban disturbances. Spanning the period of colonial domination as well as of Congress rule at the

provincial and national levels, the book further shows how the state's alliance with the propertied classes remained a constant factor shaping official policy.

The book is arranged chronologically, and divided into four parts, each corresponding to a distinct stage in the framing of the government's housing policy. A preliminary chapter shows how, throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, the colonial authorities remained rather indifferent to the forms taken by urban growth, giving a free hand to private entrepreneurs. It moves on to identify the first forms of state intervention, triggered by its concern with social order and sanitation, coming to the fore during the cholera epidemic of the late 1860s, and a strike outbreak in the 1890s.

The first part of the book describes the shift in the government's urban policy ushered in by the plague outbreak of 1896. Chapter 1 shows how this momentous sanitary, economic, and social crisis led to unprecedented levels of government intervention in the city, and gave impetus to the constitution of the Bombay Corporation Improvement Trust in 1898. While chapter 2 reviews the first twenty years (1898–1918) of the trust's sanitary policies, chapter 3 focuses on its popular housing programme. In both cases, Caru shows how constraints shaping the government's policies – its unwillingness to spend and the high priority given to the interest of propertied classes – limited their impact. Sanitary improvement schemes mostly targeted areas close to the economic and commercial core of the city, and heightened the spatial marginalization of those it displaced. The housing scheme soon moved away from its social rationale, as the state retreated to a posture of encouraging private initiatives, while concerns with profitability led to prohibitively high rents and the continuance of cramped and densely populated structures.

The second part of the book focuses on the period spanning the end of World War I to the late 1920s, when a renewed drive towards government intervention led to two important – albeit short-lived – reforms: the introduction of rent control regulations in 1918, and the constitution of the Bombay Development Trust (BDD) in 1920. Chapter 4 highlights the changing political and social nexus that served as the background to these changes. The rent control regulations were meant to placate an increasingly vocal middle class, whose demands concerning the issue of tenants' rights were increasingly relayed by the nationalist movement, eager to extend its support base. The ambitious building programme of the BDD, on the other hand, was part of an attempt to quell heightened working-class militancy. Chapter 5 analyses the implementation of both measures, their limits, and their discontinuation by the end of the 1920s. By 1926, most of the houses built by the BDD were still uninhabited, as a continuous drive to save money made them both unaffordable and unattractive to prospective tenants. Chapter 6 shifts the focus away from official policy to illustrate the way housing became a contested space, an instrument of both control and repression, and a key locus of workers' politicization.

The last part, spanning the 1930s until the early 1950s, explores how Congress, as it rose to power at the municipal (1935), regional (1937), and national levels (1947), dealt with the housing question. It shows that while the Congress government, much like its predecessor, catered to the interests of propertied classes, it was led to adopt an increasingly interventionist posture towards housing in the face of heightened working-class militancy, the growing influence of socialist and lower-caste movements, and its own rhetoric of nation-building and social reform. Chapter 7 shows how Congress endeavoured to maintain and strengthen its foothold among the labouring classes while highlighting the limits and ambiguities of its programmes of *slum service* and uplift of the lower-caste groups. Chapter 8 shows how the short-lived Congress-led provincial government (1936–1939) was characterized both by relative inertia in the realm of regulation and by a renewed drive to gain a foothold in the popular neighbourhoods. Chapter 9 shows how, after World War II,

in a context of renewed workers' agitation, the independent Indian government committed itself to the provision of decent housing for all, though emphasizing again the role of the private sector in this endeavour.

The book thus navigates skilfully between a fine chronological analysis and the identification of longer-term trends. Through a multiplicity of interesting case studies, and a careful analysis of administrative sources, the book captures the way official perceptions, rhetoric, and practices relating to popular and marginal spaces evolved throughout the period. It also stands out for the attention it gives to the built environment, through a careful analysis of the city's topography, illustrated by numerous maps, of the structure of its buildings, the techniques and materials used for construction, the development of infrastructure or lack thereof, but also the shape of the windows, the quality of ventilation, and the provision of lighting, showing how these came to constitute items of debate and contestation among colonial administrators and engineers, nationalist reformers, and, crucially, working-class tenants.

A focus on public-housing schemes also allows the book to highlight the centrality of issues relating to living spaces – from the point of view of both the labouring classes and of the state. Building on Rajnarayan Chandavarkar's emphasis on the neighbourhood as an important locus for the study of working-class history, Caru shows how tenants in public housing appropriated these spaces, and how issues relating to tenants' rights gave rise to sustained formal and informal mobilizations. In the 1930s, in a context of high unemployment, housing issues could bring together wide sections of the urban poor. Conversely, the book shows how housing could be used by the colonial and nationalist administrations alike to shift the debate away from production relations, allowing them to defuse social tensions, without having to address the more delicate issue of minimum wage regulations.

This book, very skilfully, takes housing as a vantage point to capture the social and political nexus that shaped colonial policy at its more local and mundane level. It might be regretted that the main categories mobilized – the colonial state, and the propertied, middle and popular classes – are often treated as homogeneous units. Indeed, the analysis is never as compelling as when it identifies specific actors, and tensions within these encompassing categories. Furthermore, the book overlooks the segmentation of these different groups along community lines. By showing how caste, linguistic, and religious affiliations play out in the context of the provision, management, and appropriation of popular housing, the book would have made a valuable contribution to the ongoing debate on the maintenance and reconstitution of communal affiliations in urban contexts. The predominant use of administrative sources further means that some figures, such as private homeowners, are rather absent, while others, most notably the tenants, are essentially captured in their relationship with the official administrator. While acknowledging the paucity of sources, a more diversified corpus might have deepened the analysis. Nonetheless, Vanessa Caru's detailed and well-written study constitutes a most valuable contribution to our understanding of the colonial state, of processes of urban development in a colonial metropolis, and to the history of labouring groups in Bombay.

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