

almost always nodding in agreement, and confirming the judgment expressed in the first paragraph of this review.

**Roger Lane**

Haverford College

**Håkan Forsell**, *Property, Tenancy and Urban Growth in Stockholm and Berlin, 1860–1920*. Historical Urban Studies, Aldershot/Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2006. xiii + 303pp. 4 maps. 1 table. 6 figures. Bibliography. Index. £55.00.

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There are not many studies that try to balance the economic underpinnings of urban growth with the political and socio-cultural perspectives that often are more familiar to historians. Håkan Forsell's actor-oriented dissertation, however, is a promising attempt. Its subject matter is a comparison between the property owners' organizations in two north European capital cities – Stockholm and Berlin – during the transition phase from mid-nineteenth-century liberal capitalism to the democratic breakthrough of the first decades of the twentieth century. The study is divided into three parts: first, the formation of the property owners as organized pressure groups; second, their role in the urban development process; and third, the debates about the legal character of tenancy, leading up to law amendments and rent control in the first decades of the twentieth century. Moreover, in both cities the main part of this period was characterized by the proliferation of and intense debate about the large tenement building – *die Mietskaserner/hyreskasernen* – that constituted the staple of urban expansion. There is good reason to see these perceptions as ways to conceptualize the modernization of urban life.

One of the main strengths of Forsell's study is its broad contextualizations and how he uses the property owners as a key to a general and deepened understanding of the economic preconditions of urban development. Both modernized forms of municipal administration and the sequence of reforms of credit institutions were important conditions for change, but, as Forsell shows, so was the degree to which changes in the economic structure were accepted, and not resisted, by the main actors. Yet, there were some important differences in the roles played by the property owners' organizations in the two cities. While property owners in Berlin retained much of their status and obligations from the older, corporative, city administration, municipal administration in Stockholm (and other Swedish towns) from 1862 was purely in the hands of the city council. While property owners in Berlin thus drew much of their influence from their status as burghers, in Stockholm voting power grew exclusively out of sheer economic wealth. This difference made the Stockholm property owners more likely to take part in national and party politics, and in that way gave them a progressive role, helping to integrate important new political actors from the labour movement and the free professions into the political process. Not least, the Stockholm property owners looked favourably on state intervention in order to modernize the system of building credits. The influence of the Berlin property owners, on the other hand, was much more conservative in that they tried to defend their inherited status. As a consequence, they favoured a larger degree of municipal independence and a system where the control of credit facilities was kept largely in private hands,

as in the huge land companies characteristic of the city. On the other hand, their influence on urban development was more direct, in that they had to part-finance infrastructural projects. Indeed, the discussion of such economic issues would probably have gained from a section giving a general theoretical overview of the economics of urban growth in this period. Overall, the comparative perspective of Forsell's study proves useful, although it might have gained by being taken one step further, in a concluding comparison of key components also found in other cities. The reader is left somewhat at a loss about how far the conclusions derived also apply to, for example, European cities in general.

**Mats Deland**

Stockholm University

**Mia Fuller**, *Moderns Abroad: Architecture, Cities and Italian Imperialism*. London and New York: Routledge, 2007. xiv + 280pp. 74 figures. Bibliography. £58.00.  
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A given socio-historical moment is never homogeneous; on the contrary it is rich in contradictions. It acquires a 'personality' and is a 'moment' of development in that a certain fundamental activity of life prevails over others and represents a historical 'peak'.

(Antonio Gramsci, 'Art and the struggle for a new civilization', from *Prison Notebooks*, translated and published in *Selections from Cultural Writings*, ed. David Forgacs and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (Cambridge, 1985), 93)

In a section of his *Prison Notebooks* entitled 'Art and the struggle for a new civilization', Italian Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci argues that one of the central problems of historical writing is the choice of what is representative of a particular time and place. In this context Gramsci rhetorically asks whether more reactionary views are not also representative – in the end asserting that the task of the historian is to convey the full complexity of the social and historical context with all of its conflicting elements. While this might seem a daunting task, this approach at least in part underlies the writing of Mia Fuller's *Moderns Abroad: Architecture, Cities and Italian Imperialism*. This book offers a broad examination of urban and architectural theory and its related practices in the Italian colonies in North and East Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean conducted over the full range of its historical trajectory – roughly from the 1880s until the fall of the Fascist regime in 1943 – and in relation to the constantly shifting political imperatives that shaped Italian colonial policy.

One of the most striking features of the book is its effort to deal with such an expansive geographic context over a long span of time while trying to maintain some sense of the contested nature of political and cultural production in Italy's colonies. This effort is supported by the structure of the book, which begins with the various contexts of Italian colonialism. What seems particularly useful in this section of the book is the discussion of what Fuller describes as conceptual geographies – both physical and human – such as the idea that Libya was part of Italy's historic destiny in the Mediterranean. In the second section, the book outlines theories of architecture and urbanism as they related to Italy's colonies and