wealth reliably into numerous local languages. Chapter 2 considers the local enumerator who often jumps from project to project looking to eke out part of a living while adjusting survey delivery and even question wording to make the project more context appropriate and/or increase the rate of pay by speeding up the often piecemeal work. Chapter 3 uses LSAM's provision of two bars of soap to respondents to explore questions of informed consent, the value of data, and feigned cultural authenticity as a way to build rapport. Chapter 4 looks at the way dozens of judgement calls and improvisations by enumerators out in the field can be made to appear like standardised operations on a data assembly line. Chapter 5 follows data from the field as it metamorphoses into evidence in research journals and policy discussions where the stories told by hundreds of Malawians are converted into culturally biased discussions many cannot read or understand in an attempt to weigh in on how to improve their situation.

I recommend this book to anyone who does survey work in Africa. You will recognise yourself in it and maybe find a more empathetic way to collect data the next time you head out. This book would be an excellent gift from anyone who collects primary data to give her/his favourite colleague who exclusively uses canned data sets to conduct analysis. There is so much effort that goes into 'clean' data and so many decisions underlying the numbers that are completely out of even their peripheral view. This book could be very eye opening. In my university's research methods sequence I plan to pair the text with a more traditional textbook that covers the how-tos of survey data collection. Its prose is scholarly but accessible and Biruk does a good job of marrying theoretical concepts to real world examples. *Cooking Data* will provide something useful for students who have learned how to collect data using best practices in a completely antiseptic environment. Thanks to Biruk's text, I now have a valuable ally in convincing them that best practices always make way for pretty good, and sometimes less than pretty good, practices in the messy and unpredictable real world. The nature of these pretty good practices shapes the characteristics of the data we are trained like good positivist social scientists to look at as 'natural' and 'clean'. Hopefully my students will come to appreciate amazing data collection while simultaneously being cognisant of the relationships and power dynamics that shape the numbers and categories and ultimately our analysis of them.

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Monrovia Modern: Urban Form and Political Imagination in Liberia by DANNY HOFFMAN.
Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017, Pp. 205. $26.95 (pbk).

Danny Hoffman has crafted a beautiful book that weaves together urban theory, architectural comprehension, photographic excellence, and rich anthropological immersion in the lives of Monrovians. In it, he examines the 'conditions that make it difficult, and often impossible, 'to learn to dwell' in

the aftermath of civil war' (p. xxi). By uncovering how a sub-section of Monrovians – ex-combatants of Liberia's army – experience their city, Hoffman argues that an urban citizenship fails to exist, as the city provides no 'sense of permanence to the space' (p. 86).

Monrovia Modern provides a novel explanation for the observed absence of rights to the city experienced by the country's ex-combatants: the built environment. The 'authoritarian' architecture structures an urban 'form that also imposes real limits on what their vision of city life could be' (p. 47). Hoffman zooms in on four modernist buildings that are decaying, yet continue to feature symbolically in Monrovia's urban imaginary. These buildings include the Ministry of Defence, E.J. Roye, Hotel Africa and the Liberia Broadcasting System. Each building forms a central chapter in the book and Hoffman provides intricate details to theorise how they serve as 'politically ordering forms' (p. 59).

Hoffman provides new insights into what the African city is, while at the same time highlighting the limits of its transformative potential. Drawing from scholars such as Edgar Pieterse, Garth Myers and AbdouMaliq Simone, Hoffman observes a relational or liquid city, where the 'ex-combatant populace might play any one of these roles: money changer, baggage handler, watch committee member, thief' (p. 40). Yet Monrovia's architectural forms reproduce the violence of Liberia's past through a process of political subjection. The built environment prevents widespread popular mobilisation because there are no public spaces from which a collective identity emerges. Rather than ruins on which to build a new city, the buildings Hoffman photographs persist as rubble, restricting the possibility of a new and democratic future.

The book has the tendency to conflate the experience of ex-combatants with all Monrovians. It theorises the architecture of four buildings, yet uses these case studies to exemplify the overall architecture of the city. Therefore, there is a worry that the evidence presented does not reflect or represent that of Monrovia in its entirety. This matters because Hoffman claims that the architecture in the city restricts the political possibilities of its residents. Without knowing what political possibilities exist, and for whom, it is difficult to determine the validity of this claim. While Hoffman strongly suggests that the link between architecture and collective action is essential, the scope of urban citizenship and right to the city might extend beyond architectural forms and public space – to include opportunities in political parties and decisions made at the ballot box. Therefore, it is difficult to rule out alternative possibilities of democratic citizenship that exist outside the scope of popular resistance.

Few books are as ambitious or as creative as this one. Critical urban theory accompanies high quality (and attractive) photos of Monrovian buildings and public life. A detailed social and political history of Monrovia is told through the experiences of a neglected sub-set of the Liberian population. A theory of democracy emerges out of the ruins of Monrovia's violent past, even though this version of democracy is not achieved. *Monrovia Modern* will likely inspire scholars looking to combine photography, architectural design and critical social theory. For those interested in Africa's rapid urbanisation, the book provides new insights into the political potential of its cities. Hoffman teaches us

that while Liberia has exited from its debilitating civil war, it has yet to extricate itself from a violent past.

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The Africans: The History of a Continent by JOHN ILIFFE.
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017. Pp. 402. $26 (pbk).

For more than two decades, *The Africans* has been one of the best, single volume surveys of Africa's past. Now in its third edition, this seminal text continues to be an authoritative source to introduce students and the wider public to broad themes in African history. A historian of wide-ranging expertise, Iliffe demonstrates how environmental and global historical forces shaped African communities from the emergence of the continent's first societies to the present.

Much of the thematic link that weaves this broad survey together are the inter-related fields of demographic and environmental history, clashing with global historical forces. Iliffe portrays Africans as successful pioneers of the continent's rich and challenging environments and demonstrates how brutal impositions such as slavery and colonialism challenged local adaptation and development. Some have criticised Iliffe's approach as too deterministic, privileging demography over more nuanced social and cultural arguments. However, with such a sweeping scope, his well-sourced argument provides a needed comparative thread for tying such diverse historical experiences together.

Covering a broad historical scope, eight of the 13 chapters address regional and thematic histories prior to 1900, balancing discussions of local development with the adaptation of global technologies and religions into an African context. Three chapters address the colonial period, with one focusing specifically on South Africa. The final two chapters examine African history since independence. Revisions for the third edition have focused on updating the final chapters on contemporary history, but the extensive bibliography reveals integration of the latest scholarship throughout the text.

When the first edition was published at the end of Apartheid, Iliffe concluded that South Africa's transition would have to grapple with the larger post-colonial challenges 'bred by demographic growth, mass poverty, urbanisation, education and the demands of youth' (Iliffe 1995: 284). And when the second edition was released in 2007, the author added an additional chapter examining the contemporary HIV/AIDS crisis. While the first two editions end with rather sobering accounts of contemporary challenges, the third edition continues to place contemporary issues in important historical context and reflects on the last decade of African history as a more hopeful moment of recovery. Detailing health, economic and political changes over the past decade, this latest edition provides good data to challenge popular perceptions of contemporary histories of African 'failure', without simplistically embracing the 'Africa rising' narrative.