the Boomers’ interest in selling their (inflated) housing assets. But Myers was writing before the housing bubble burst, which might have relieved some of the pressure that had been building under housing prices. Myers also stresses the link between “demographic self-interest” and needed public policy, but he does little to explain what, besides public awareness, will bridge the distance between them. “Could” is not the same as “is” or “will” (as he acknowledges in Chapter 2). He does not directly address the merits of any specific approaches to immigration policy (e.g., how should we deal with people who are in this country illegally?). Further, his analysis of policy focuses mostly on the intergenerational transfer between older (usually White) middle-class Boomers and younger (usually Hispanic) upwardly mobile immigrants. He ignores the impact of this scenario on the low- and moderate-income native-born workers (also typically White, but many are Black), and the equity issues that it raises. Is it ethical, as a policy position, to shore up the retirement of elderly middle-class Whites by importing immigrant workers at the expense of resident lower-class citizens? But these are cavils about the policy recommendations he draws from his analysis; the analysis itself is excellent. This is an admirable piece of work, well written, well documented, and well argued. While it is aimed at citizen-voters and taxpayers, it should also prove thought provoking for a subset of that group, students of urban affairs.

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As Nicholas Dagen Bloom succinctly argues in *Public Housing That Worked: New York in the Twentieth Century*, the success of a well-managed and often intrusive housing authority comprised almost entirely of high-rise buildings did not occur overnight and without incident. Bloom’s book rejuvenates the debate about public housing and its ability to provide model housing in the United States.

Bloom delivers an ambitious review of the history of the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) which currently houses nearly 406,000 residents. *Public Housing That Worked* offers a much needed response to existing stereotypes of American public housing policy (crime-ridden and poorly managed), an image supported by a plethora of well-publicized disaster stories, for example, Pruitt-Igoe in St. Louis and Robert Taylor Homes in Chicago.

Bloom examines the influence of European social innovation and progressive urban planning on NYCHA during its conception, outlines the historical context and legal precedents for the authority’s existence, illustrates how property management became NYCHA’s top priority, and frames what would be NYCHA’s raison d’être: slum clearance, job creation, and model housing. The latter was a way for progressives to displace the private sector where old-law tenements had failed to provide hot water, private bathrooms, steam heat, and other necessities.

Utilizing journal articles, memos, letters, clippings, and other documents, Bloom provides us with helpful insights into policy formation. NYCHA’s history is divided into three periods. In the first period (the 1930s through the 1960s), the focus was on making public housing a legitimate municipal service for New York City. Senator Robert Wagner stated that “partially subsidized housing, like free schools, free roads, and free parks, is the next step that we must take to forge a
better order” (p. 35). Bloom asserts that during the second period, from 1968 through the 1990s, NYCHA marched toward a welfare-state public housing system that abandoned paternalistic policies and liberalized them. The final period, 2000 to the present, is characterized by the NYCHA focusing on affordable housing alternatives with a return to working-class preferences.

Bloom’s primary contention is that NYCHA is America’s most successful public housing system and that NYCHA stands out from other local public housing authorities because of its managerial leadership, early paternalistic policies, and maintenance efficiencies. These successes have generally been overlooked in previous critiques of public housing. NYCHA’s accomplishments offer important lessons for other less successful authorities.

First, NYCHA was able to garner broad political support from all levels of government and citizens alike. New York State and New York City’s public housing programs produced better-quality housing than their federal counterparts and were immune from federal regulation. As a result, NYCHA was able to attract higher income tenants to neighborhoods throughout the five boroughs. Among new developments built between 1944 and 1965, about two-thirds of the units were either city or state funded.

Second, while other public housing authorities emphasized housing as a “last resort,” NYCHA conscientiously sought out working families that met strict selection criteria pertaining to debt obligations, social character, and current living conditions. This policy continued discretely through the social-liberalization climate of the 1960s and 1970s vis-à-vis the “Tier System” that insulated NYCHA from becoming overpopulated with welfare tenants.

The significance of strong maintenance policies should not be underestimated. NYCHA never abandoned buildings because of broken windows. Ongoing staff reorganization and a regimented approach to maintenance that mirrored the private sector thrust NYCHA above its peers.

Chapters 1 and 2 delve into the early years of NYC public housing and help us understand what would become an acrimonious relationship between New York City and Washington. NYCHA differed from its peers from the beginning. Mayor La Guardia’s first board appointments included a housing advocate, a Catholic priest, a social worker, and a Socialist. Thus, whereas “other cities gingerly dipped their toes into the field of social housing, . . . New York plunged head first” (p. 44).

Chapter 3 focuses on design policy and federal regulation at NYCHA during the 1930s through the 1940s. Interestingly, NYCHA advocated for what is known today as transit-oriented development but had to overcome the resistance of the United States Housing Authority (the Washington DC agency monitoring local public housing authorities).

Chapters 4, 5, and 9 delve into NYCHA paternalism and its sometimes misguided yet frequently ambitious social priorities championed by powerful women such as May Lumsden and Catherine Lansing. Weekly door-to-door rent collections, apartment visits by social workers, strict tenant selection criteria, and restrictions on political activism were controversial, but may have helped stabilize and secure a broad spectrum of political support for public housing.

Chapters 6 through 8 illustrate what Bloom describes as the boom years, from the late 1940s to the 1960s, when NYCHA represented a full 20% of the nation’s public housing. A brief focus on design innovation interrupted years of standardization epitomized by Robert Moses and towers in the park. At a time when other cities were just completing their infamous projects, “NYCHA actually devoted much of its innovative spirit to quietly retrofitting its project interiors, grounds, and apartments” (p. 166).

The closing chapters (10 through 13) acquaint the reader with NYCHA’s management methods and policy challenges. From welfare-tenancy policies to integration strategies to operational-management procedures and policing, Bloom concisely illustrates NYCHA’s struggle to respond to crime, decay, abandonment, and reduced funding at a time when other public housing authorities faced similarly daunting challenges.
Public Housing That Worked is a remarkable history of the largest and arguably most successful housing authority in the country. A fascinating historical look at planning and policy making, the book highlights the role of key charismatic leaders in the housing policy power struggles that have helped shape New York City into what it is today. I strongly recommend this book to anyone interested in how to make low-income housing programs work.

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Yan Song and Chengri Ding (Eds.), Urbanization in China: Critical Issues in an Era of Rapid Growth (Cambridge, MA: Lincoln Land Institute, 2007).

While each of the books reviewed has a distinctive focus and methodological approach, all three generally agree on the core details of Chinese urbanization sparked by the economic reforms backed by the Communist Party beginning in 1978. Unlike the proverbial blind men feeling their way around an elephant, nearly all of the 40-odd contributors have at least one hand on the panda’s belly, so to speak, and are largely in agreement over the essence of recent social change in China resulting from this rapid urbanization. Certainly, all agree that the scope and pace of urbanization is unprecedented in Chinese history, and that the impacts will be felt well outside China’s borders. I will focus on where the works agree on aspects of Chinese urbanization before turning to the differences between them.

China has been a predominantly rural nation for nearly all of its history. Urban growth did occur after World War II until 1960 when the Communist Party decided to strictly control population movements by instituting a registration system known as hukou, which indicated whether the holder was an urban resident (with the right to live in the city) or not. During the Cultural Revolution, many urban residents were forcibly resettled in the countryside, and the total urban population dropped to roughly 18% where it remained until the Reform Era began in 1978.

The economic reforms introduced in 1978, limited at first to the Pearl River Delta in Guangdong Province and implemented in other Chinese cities in the late 1980s, led to job creation on a massive scale. Hukou restrictions were lifted to some extent and a blind eye was turned to the “floating population” of rural migrants coming to the cities for work. The share of China’s population living in cities reached 40% by the mid 2000s. It should be noted that the official statistics do not include 150 million rural “migrants” without any official right to live in the cities, so that the total Chinese population resident in cities is likely closer to 50%. Chinese cities have absorbed roughly 300 million people between 1995 and 2005. This is an order of magnitude above European immigration to the United States between 1892 and 1950, as well as the “Great Migration” of African Americans from the South to the North.

As a result, the formal administrative authority of cities has been expanded, both in terms of the total land area covered and the ability of city governments to raise funds independently of the