

Welfare Regimes, Informal Support, and the State

Money-go-round and circles of support: helping families to get by.

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Recently the population of Northern Ireland has been confronted by a number of developments which have had an adverse effect on their lives. These include: declining real income levels; rising unemployment and declining employment opportunities; and rising living costs. 'Getting by' has become a way of life for many families. The current economic downturn and the continuing recession have pushed many families to the limit of their resilience. Many families have little hope of finding employment to turn their lives around and have no other alternative but to turn to informal support systems from 'significant others'; family friends and neighbours to help them cope. There is considerable literature that explains the adaptive responses employed by those living on low incomes. The evidence base suggests a picture of daily struggles that households employ to make ends meet. Even in the face of adversity, people demonstrate tremendous levels of ingenuity combining a range of strategies to cope which mean going without goods, services and leisure that many other people take for granted. Emerging from these studies is the precariousness of many households situations despite systematic planning, emergency or unforeseen events often tip the balance and stretch budgets to breaking point. Few studies have explored the types of support received from family and friends to help people get by. What type of support is offered and under what circumstances? Is there a constant 'merry go round' of support and reciprocity? What is the impact on the family? This paper explores these challenges faced by families using evidence from the first round of in depth interviews with residents as part of a study undertaken in six different neighbourhoods in Northern Ireland.

Father's incarceration, family financial hardship and child housing conditions

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Homeless children are at higher risk of low educational attainment, incarceration, poverty, and illicit substance abuse. Factors related to parents have the largest influence on whether a child is homeless. One parental factor often overlooked that may affect child homelessness is father's incarceration. This study examines how the housing conditions of a child are affected by a father's incarceration, the social network of the mother, and the parents' self-control.

I use data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study (FFCWS) to examine the effect of father's incarceration on the likelihood that a child is either homeless or lives with her mother's friends or family due to financial hardship. The FFCWS is a longitudinal study following

a cohort of about 5,000 children born in large cities in the US between 1998 and 2000. The study focuses on unmarried parents and fragile families who are at higher risk of breaking up and living in poverty than other more traditional families. I plan on using propensity score matching methods in order to examine the causal effects of the variables of interests. While having a father incarcerated may increase the risk of homelessness or living with friends and relatives, if a mother has a strong social network, this risk might be mitigated. Furthermore, previous studies overlook the effect of self-control which affects one's risk of being incarcerated. Individuals with less self-control are more likely to be incarcerated which in turns increases the risk of child homelessness.

Illegal Urban Entrepreneurship? The case of Street Vendors in Lagos, Nigeria

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This paper investigates the vulnerabilities inherent in making a living as an urban informal entrepreneur in Lagos. The study begins by exploring the relationships between governance and local economic development as well as the concept of social vulnerability. The paper investigates the socio-economic profile of the informal workers, their basic survival strategies and goes further to consider the interface between municipal authorities and their informal workers. The methodology deployed is a survey analysis involving the administration of structured questionnaires on 306 street traders in the Tejuosho -Yaba-Ojuelegba-Barracks Quadrant of Lagos Metropolis. The study revealed that most of the respondents were aged between 16 and 35years old and over 40% of them had at least secondary school education. Many of them ran home-based enterprises which were begun due to unemployment and the high cost of the renting stalls at the neighbourhood markets. Major challenges experiences were the multiples tolls paid for stall space and the incessant harassment by touts and municipal authorities. The paper concludes by highlighting the potentials of the informal economic sector and the strategic role it plays in the emerging African city form and also advances strategies on how urban governance systems can be strengthened to propel local economic development. These include enhanced people-government relations through civic engagements and the designation of certain streets as street-trade areas.

Neoliberal Reform, Welfare Regimes, and Urban Governance: the Case of Affordable Housing in Chinese Cities

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The role of the state and the market in welfare provision has been under constant debate in

both academia and policy practice. In particular, housing always seems to be a “wobbly pillar” under the welfare state, with many controversies over whether it should be regarded as a pure commodity or as a right (Torgersen, 1987; Malpass, 2003; Kemeny, 2003). In China, the market reform since 1978 has been accompanied with rapid urbanization and commercialization of the urban housing market, which is often viewed as similar to the neoliberal urban reforms in other developing countries. Urban housing, while serving as an engine for local economic development and an important channel for government finance, has become increasingly unaffordable for low-income urban residents as well as rural migrants. Affordable housing programs piloted and implemented at local level, however, vary significantly in their institutional designs and received at best mixed results in achieving their affordability, equity, and integration goals. This paper explores the blurring boundaries between the state, market and society in the process of housing market reform in China. In particular, I argue that the current explanations of neoliberal economic reform and urbanization, as well as those tackle the fiscal and political dimensions in central-local relations are unable to explain variations in affordable housing program outcomes across Chinese cities. By disintegrating the structural concept of “state capacity” in welfare state literature and looking at the agency of municipal governments and their governing capacity in providing affordable housing, this paper seeks to examine under what conditions local governments are likely to prioritize equity and integration goals in affordable housing.