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**reviews in brief: Chicago: a geography of the city and its region. By John C. Hudson. Santa Fe/Chicago: Center for American Places/University of Chicago Press. 2006. 260 pp. cloth \$45.00. ISBN 9780226358062.**

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that makes an excellent contribution to Nairobi's recent history, whilst illustrating the value of doing cultural geography in developing world contexts.

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DENIS LINEHAN

**Chicago: a geography of the city and its region.** By John C. Hudson. Santa Fe/Chicago: Center for American Places/University of Chicago Press. 2006. 260 pp. cloth \$45.00. ISBN 9780226358062.

John Hudson's *Chicago: A Geography of the City and its Region* helps fill a hole in contemporary American cultural geography. Although urban geography has flourished and theoretical and empirical research about cities has abounded within the discipline in recent years, book-length treatments of specific cities are few. The last time geographers provided such a thing was in the 1970s when the Association of American Geographers' sponsored the Comparative Metropolitan Analysis Project, which produced some thirteen monographs about major cities in the United States. Hudson's book joins other recent attempts to bring geographical portraits of cities back to the field, including the books by Colten (2005) and Lewis (2003).

Research from other fields, such as history and sociology, is not so scarce in this vein of urban studies, but the geographer's perspective is vital. Hudson claims in chapter one's conclusion that 'In Chicago... geography matters.' He supports that claim throughout the book by pointing the reader to basic geography lessons illustrated through Chicago's experience, including discussions of regions and boundaries, the impact of physical geography on the cultural landscape, and the patterns existing in many large cities as created by ethnic migration and settlement or white flight and population replacement. The book subtitle's generic focus suggests that specific aspects of Chicago speak to the broader types in cities and regions.

*Chicago's* organization is largely historical, but remains geographically focused. Hudson does not offer a detailed telling of historical events surrounding the development of the city. Hudson's goal, rather, is to tell, through census data, of change in the community through time and across space. Such geographical focus is solidified in Hudson's map-driven narration. Indeed, the more than 100 maps provide a quality to the work that is unattainable otherwise. With a huge presence of maps, one might expect a map-lover to pause for long intervals between paragraphs to stare and study spatial patterns. Although generally appropriate cartographically, I felt the maps lacked appeal. Their symbology or shading patterns in many cases were counterintuitive while other maps illustrating similar aspects of the city lacked conformity. In the end, the maps generally supported the text, but did not capture this map-lovers attention.

Having lived in the city for many years, Hudson is an insider, which lends strength and personality to the book. His long experience in Chicago can be seen in his use of local labels and landmarks and in his offering of rare, sometimes anecdotal insights into traits of the city that enhance the numerical and cartographic base of Hudson's analyses. Such connectedness, identifiable in Hudson's skillful and approachable prose, gives the reader a unique glimpse into the character of the city. The photograph gallery that accompanies the book supplies an

added measure of that character, but I was left hungering for more of the richness sprouting from Hudson's experiential perspective.

Although *Chicago* is by design data-oriented, the book is not the typical urban spatial analysis characteristic of past urban geographies. Indeed, John Hudson skillfully demonstrates that we, as geographers, can get past our phobia of constructing geographical portraits of cities, whether such fears stem from a perception that urban geography must be faceless number-crunched analyses, or from a city's size and complexity connoting a daunting research endeavor. Geographers, like Hudson, have the eyes of observation and the training in the study of place to facilitate the presentation of a specific locale to both general and academic audiences while, at the same time, using that locale to teach broader principles and patterns evident elsewhere. What, after all, more richly describes the duty of a geographer?

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**Englishpubshng: writings and readings 1991–2002.** By Colin Sackett. Exeter: Spacex. 2004. 96pp. £8.95 paper. ISBN 0906630215.

**The true line: the landscape diagrams of Geoffrey Hutchings.** By Colin Sackett. Axminster, Devon: Colin Sackett. 2006. 36pp. £9.00 paper. ISBN 0953704859.

Colin Sackett is a leading book artist. For the past 20 years he has designed and printed publications which sample material from a variety of sometimes arcane source materials, including book indexes, radio commentaries and watercress labels (for a list of work see [www.colinsackett.co.uk](http://www.colinsackett.co.uk)). These materials are edited and rearranged to make books and pamphlets which express the graphical qualities of text and image.

The anthology *Englishpubshng* gives examples of seemingly radical and unsettling reconfigurations, reminiscent of Dada style cut-up strategies, with words, letters, punctuation struck out to create new sections of text. But something more traditional is at work too, a clearing away to reveal and renovate, much like good countryside management: thus the technique of 'devow-elling', as in the anthology's title, is likened to 'coppicing'. A sense of topographical appreciation runs through Sackett's work. So as well as sourcing the artwork of Karl Schwitters and Richard Long *Englishpubshng* samples from geographical texts by J.A. Steers, J.B. Harley and L. Dudley Stamp (36 terms from the 4500 of the index to *The land of Britain, its use and misuse* [1950]). Also included are terms and abbreviations from the OS 1:25,000 map of the area in suburban south London where he spent his childhood which includes the kind of space bounded by arterial roads and railways lines (gravel pits, sewage works, rough grassland) used for such 'marginal' activities as trail biking, rabbiting and bird watching. This 'wild' space in suburbia provokes some 'largely hypothetical ideas of orientation – that there may exist a sort of historical and acoustical "depth" in the landscape, a pre-electrical *radio* of invisible/in audible sound'. 'Spotting' (as in train spotting) is redeemed as a form of knowledge: 'it is collecting at its most existential, free of sentiment, fetishism or acquisitiveness'.