LANDLORDS AND PROPERTY
CAMBRIDGE HUMAN GEOGRAPHY

Edited by
BRIAN ROBSON
Professor of Geography, University of Manchester

DAVID LEY
Professor of Geography, University of British Columbia

DEREK GREGORY
Lecturer in Geography, University of Cambridge, and Fellow of
Sidney Sussex College

Cambridge Human Geography will provide an important new framework for the
publication both of the fresh ideas and initiatives often embodied in postgraduate
work and of the more substantive research and wider reflective output of established
scholars. Given the flux of debate within the social sciences as a whole, the series will
seek to attract authors concerned to address general issues of the conflicting
philosophies within and between the ‘political science’ and ‘liberal’ approaches.
Much of this interdisciplinary debate will be developed through specific studies: of
production and economic restructuring; of the provision and management of public
goods and services; of state investment and collective consumption; of human agency
and of the human-environment interface. The central aim of the series will be to
publish quite simply the best of new scholarship within the field of human
geography.
Cambridge Human Geography

Phenomenology, science and geography
*Spatiality and the human sciences*
JOHN PICKLES

Property companies and the construction industry in Britain
HEDLEY SMYTH

Crime, space and society
SUSAN J. SMITH

Land use planning and the mediation of urban change
PATSY HEALEY, PAUL MCNAMARA, MARTIN ELSON and ANDREW DOAK

Islands, islanders and the world
*The colonial and post-colonial experience of Eastern Fiji*
T. P. BAYLISS-SMITH, R. D. BEDFORD, H. C. BROOKFIELD and M. LATHAM

Landlords and Property
*Social relations in the private rented sector*
JOHN ALLEN and LINDA MCDOWELL

Unions and Communities under Siege
*American communities and the crisis of organized labor*
by GORDON L. CLARK

The Mediterranean city in transition
*Social change and urban development*
LILA LEONTIDOU

Lost words and lost worlds: modernity and the language of everyday life in late nineteenth-century Stockholm
ALLAN PRED

The city as text: the politics of landscape interpretation in the Kandyan Kingdom
JAMES S. DUNCAN
Landlords and property

Social relations
in the private rented sector

JOHN ALLEN and LINDA MCDOWELL
Contents

List of figures and tables .................... page vi
Preface ........................................... ix
1 Introduction .................................... 1
2 Private landlords: the anatomy of uneven decline 12
3 The structure of private landlordism .......... 40
4 Research design and methods ............... 59
5 Landlords in profile: an intensive survey .... 74
6 Landlords in the inner city: an extensive survey 110
7 Political ideologies and private rental policies 160
Policy postscript ............................... 184
Appendix 1: Selecting the landlord sample from housing waiting list records .......... 189
Appendix 2: Who was rehoused? ............... 194
References ..................................... 198
Index ............................................ 203
Figures and tables

FIGURES

2.1 The rate of decline of the private rented sector in the post-war period
2.2 The percentage of households who in 1981 were renting privately in each of the 403 districts of England and Wales
2.3 Regional rates of return in the private rented sector, 1981
4.1a The tenure distribution of the housing stock in Greater London, 1981: households in owner-occupation
4.1b The tenure distribution of the housing stock in Greater London, 1981: households renting from the local authority
4.1c The tenure distribution of the housing stock in Greater London, 1981: households renting from private landlords
6.1 Location of the Boroughs of Islington and Hackney
6.2 Housing conditions in Hackney and Islington in 1981
6.3 Indicator of municipal response to poor housing conditions
6.4 The decline of the private rented sector in Hackney and Islington, 1971–81
6.5 Household types in Hackney, Islington and Greater London, 1977
6.6 Household size in Hackney, Islington and Greater London
6.7 Percentage of the population born outside the UK (heads of households), Hackney
6.8 Percentage of the population born outside the UK (heads of households), Islington
6.9 Socio-economic structure of Hackney, Islington and Greater London
6.10 Hackney Housing Tenure, 1981
6.11 Islington Housing Tenure, 1981

TABLES

2.1 Major post-war housing legislation affecting the private rented sector
2.2 Decline of the private rented sector, 1938–77
2.3 Regional variations in the selling price of second-hand dwellings and average incomes of mortgage borrowers during the 1970s
2.4 Improvement grants for housing associations in England and Wales 1967–77
2.5 Region and privately renting sub-sectors
2.6 Local studies of the motives and intentions of private landlords in the post-war period
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figures and tables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Ownership structure of private lettings in Hackney, Islington and Greater London 1977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Private landlords in Hackney and Islington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 The six-fold classification of landlords in Hackney and Islington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5 Intensive and extensive research: a summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1 Dwelling types in Hackney and Islington, 1977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2 Estimated capital values of dwellings and rent as a percentage of capital value as at 1 January 1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3 Landlords’ reactions to vacancies in their dwellings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4 The strategies of informal landlords</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5 Household structure of previous and new tenants of informal landlords in Hackney and Islington, 1977–81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6 The strategies of investor landlords</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.7 Household structure of previous and current tenants of investor landlords in Hackney and Islington, 1977–81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.8 Who replaced whom?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.9 Decreasing densities of occupation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.10 Low income owner-occupation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.11 The strategies of commercial landlords</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.12 Household structure of previous and current tenants of commercial landlords in Hackney and Islington, 1977–81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.13 Who replaced whom?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.14 Decreasing densities of occupation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.15 The process of gentrification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1 Housing points schemes in 1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2 Lettings by the London Boroughs of Hackney and Islington, 1978 and 1979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3 Rehoused households in Hackney and Islington</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Preface

The private rented sector of the housing market, for all its overall decline, has remained an object of interest and fascination to researchers in a wide range of disciplines. Each, from their own perspective, have attempted to describe and explain the key attributes of this decline. What we hope we have done here is to provide a new perspective, a different way of looking at the changes that have taken place in this sector of the market since 1945. The arguments in this book cross established disciplinary boundaries. We draw upon evidence from many areas but if we are to be classified at all we fall into what may be termed the ‘new geography’ with its concern to link the particular to the general; that is to preserve both aspects of social change in one explanation. We attempt to explain the general decline of the private rented market in Britain, the wider processes of investment and disinvestment which lie behind the decline, without losing sight of particular form that the processes have taken in different local housing markets.

This book is the end product of an enjoyable research collaboration between the two authors over a six year period at the Open University. The collaboration was made possible by grants, at various times, from the Social Science Research Council, The Nuffield Foundation and the Research Committee of the Social Science Faculty at the Open University. We are grateful to all these bodies for their financial support. We should also like to thank our colleagues at the Open University, especially those involved in writing the geography course D205: Changing Britain, Changing World. Arguments and debates in that course team helped us clarify many of the issues raised in this book.

We derived our information from a wide range of sources. In particular we had help in selecting the samples from the Housing Departments of the London Boroughs of Hackney and Islington. We are very grateful to them for opening their records to us. We also received information from a wide range of organisations and individuals, too numerous to list, involved in private renting in one way or another. Thanks to them but in particular to the households and tenants who so patiently answered our questions. We hope they find what follows interesting.