Introduction

David R. Diaz and Rodolfo D. Torres

The last three decades of the twentieth century marked the beginning of epochal socioeconomic transformation of U.S. society. The economic reverberations of these changes have continued through the first decade of the twenty-first century as the income and wealth gap continues to widen. Nowhere is this more obvious than in U.S. cities and surrounding metropolitan areas, where the damaging effects of the deep recession on the living standards of working-class, lower-class, and middle-class American workers and their families are felt the most.

In addition to macroeconomic trends, immigration and population shifts have had a tremendous economic impact on U.S. cities. Recent protests in major cities across the United States against several proposed changes in U.S. immigration policy and citizenship status have once again brought attention to big cities, where much of the precipitous growth of immigrant populations has occurred.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2011), as of April 1, 2010, an estimated 50.5 million Latinos lived in the United States, making people of “Latino origin” the nation’s largest ethnic minority group. Latinos constituted 16.3 percent of the nation’s total population of nearly 308.7 million. It was projected that this population would grow to nearly 132.8 million by July 1, 2050, and that Latino men, women, and children would then constitute 30 percent of the nation’s population. The Mexican American population constituted 63 percent of the nation’s current 50.5 million Latinos, with Puerto Ricans another 9.2 percent, Cubans 3.5 percent, and Salvadorans 3.2 percent. The remainder were of some other Central American, South American, or other Hispanic or Latino origin.

William H. Frey (2001), in a recent publication of the Brookings Institute, asserts that over half of America’s cities are now majority nonwhite. Primary cities in fifty-eight metropolitan areas were “majority minority” in 2010, up from forty-three in 2000. Cities lost only about half as many whites in the 2000s as in the 1990s, but “black flight” from cities such as Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas, and Detroit accelerated in the 2000s.

Frey also reports that ethnic minorities represent 35 percent of suburban residents, a proportion similar to their share of the overall U.S. population. Among the hundred largest metro areas, thirty-six feature “melting
pot” suburbs where at least 35 percent of residents are nonwhite. The suburbs of Houston, Las Vegas, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C., became majority minority in the 2000s.

More important than the sheer numbers is the fact that Latina/o men and women and their families are a growing sector of the U.S. working class and a fragile first-generation middle class. Equally significant, they are increasingly concentrated in the very industries that have been most influenced by the economic restructuring of the United States. They are trapped in low-wage jobs in an economy that is producing far too few living-wage jobs to accommodate the increasing number of workers entering the labor market and to sustain a robust and democratic economy.

Principles of critical urbanism will guide the reader through this volume, which examines Latinos within the context of the changing role of cities in a market-driven and racialized environment. A growing portion of the world’s population lives and works in cities, thus the knowledge of how cities develop and function is a critical component of a planner’s intellectual tool kit. Applying an understanding of the effects of socioeconomic change on cities to other major areas of urban theory will enhance planners’ ability to develop appropriate policy measures. In addition, the dramatic social changes that are reshaping the terrain of planning politics are predominantly an urban phenomena. The characteristics of contemporary cities—increasing diversity, globalization of production and consumption, new sources of inequality, and uneven development—are creating different terrains for the policy actions that are the primary focus of the urban studies under late capitalism.

The contributors to this book represent a diverse group of scholars attempting to link their own unique theoretical interpretations and approaches to political and policy interventions in the spaces and cultures of Latino everyday life. It matters how cities are theorized, as this underpins the ideological and political designs and the policy frameworks adopted. Given the gaps between explanatory and normative concepts underlying urban planning and the radical changes in the United States, as well as globally, regarding economies, political systems, and information technologies, many subject areas must be considered experimentally.

On a range of levels, urban environmental crises are traceable to racism and market-driven forces. But the approach called New Urbanism or Smart Growth, which claims to address the latest iteration of urban crisis, fails to adequately analyze and address these factors. When Bullard, Johnson, and Torres (2000) denounced planning’s main production
in the modern era, sprawl, as "stupid growth," they implicitly exposed the profession’s dubious history of complicity in creating a failed suburbia (Diaz 2005). The current race to envelop planning practice in a new ideology is a shallow and intellectually dishonest evasion of the task of thoroughly and painfully acknowledging planning’s institutional and intellectual failure. Eurocentrists, who continue to control the educational and administrative functions of planning, are reluctant to give credit where credit is due, especially in the necessary discourse over why the suburban model and the programs promising federally funded revitalization in the post–World War II era have been characterized by systemic irrationalities with regard to planning, public policy, and the environment.

The class and racial hierarchy that persists in the planning profession is not “new,” nor will the construction of a “new” ideology undo a history of failed urban policy. On a multitude of levels, uncritically adopted rational-functional principles have been reified by an elitist, Eurocentric planning profession that has proven resistant to critique from ethnic communities (Taylor 1998). Innumerable planning graduate programs maintain only token minority representation, with the University of California system being among the worst. One of the editors of this volume is one such token faculty member in a planning department. Power in the profession, whether in the public or the private sector, remains concentrated among a cloistered Euro-American elite. Yet when this system of dominance is challenged, the tried-and-true class-based defense emerges, asserting technical knowledge, professional experience, managerial proficiency, bureaucratic power relations, and/or privileged educational attainment over public ignorance.

The structural economic, psychological, and environmental crises of suburbia that now confront planning were created and defended by this very hierarchy (Beatley 2000; Deleage 1994; Barry 2005; Booth 2004). Current planning discourse, despite its claims to novelty, is still rife with contradictions and irrationalities that are evidence of the fundamental failure of Eurocentric control over planning education and practice for over two generations. Thus, any claim to enlightened discourse will be initiated only by addressing who was (and is) most responsible for the failures of planning into the current era. This analysis, which must incorporate the voices of excluded ethnic others, will necessarily confront a legacy of racism in planning on multiple levels: in planning education, in the training of students, in private and public sector practice, and in the blatant ma-
The manipulation of redistributive federal programs and planning ideology. Only then will planning create the potential space for meaningful transformations and potentially egalitarian transitions in both practice and urban social change. Specifically, this historical and critical approach is a necessary initial stage for restructuring an urban planning strategy that is based on barrio urbanism and that includes and engages Latina/o community leaders. Latino scholarship on the urban condition must also be included: for example, the urban writings of Ernesto Galarza, a progressive public intellectual and prominent in Mexican American community activist whose wide-ranging and groundbreaking work in urban politics and human geography has been largely neglected by the planning community as well as by urban scholars.

Situating “El Barrio” in Planning Discourse: Lessons from the Front Line

Though barrios were historically created and maintained by segregation and discrimination, their everyday life has kept a vitality and sense of place that validate the importance of the urban in the midst of the logic of decentralized sprawl that permeates planning. The power of Latina/o culture is a fundamental characteristic of barrio urbanism, a symbolic resistance to racism and a celebration of culturally situated social practices. Interwoven into this urban milieu is an internally defended concept of the importance of the social, testifying that the significance of what Alain Touraine (1988) described as “the social actor” persists, despite its loss in academic discourse in the rush to a postmodern explanation for all things urban. Without the reconstruction of the art of the social that barrio communities vividly exemplify, sustainable urbanism is unlikely to succeed in this consumption-obsessed society.

The concept of the ciudadano, the citizen situated in everyday life and urban culture, is linked to the most mundane and fundamental act, the act of walking. Walking makes possible the evolution of a cultural community over time through shared experiences on the human scale of relationships. Visually, walking in the neighborhood lends itself to an appreciation of jardines, color, calles, árboles, tiendas, arte publico, y la vida de la calle. Culturally, it has offered a historic respite from a repressive, discriminatory society that has traditionally marginalized everyday life as much as ethnic difference. The art of traversing through a neighborhood, both practical and pleasurable, is part of an aesthetic that planning has only recently and lamely attempted to reclaim.
Historically, environmental sustainability is fundamental to spatial relations within el barrio. The defense and utilization of la tierra for food production in collective gardens and farms, watershed management, communal celebrations, and the protection of nature have all been normative in the barrio; these practices predate European immigration to the Western Hemisphere. Other essential features of barrio life, such as mixed use, reliance on public transportation, recycling and adaptive reuse, collective sharing of space, and eclectic reproduction of the urban landscape through public art, have only recently been rediscovered as important reforms to past planning practice.

Because of discriminatory redistribution of public funds, barrios have received little in the way of formally recognized public spaces such as parks and recreational facilities, but they have developed numerous ways of maximizing the utilization of space for the community and particularly for children. La tierra es par los niños, even when the spaces available are merely neighbors’ side or front yards, streets, and vacant lots. Even private spaces may be turned into civic resources and made inviting (Gámez 2002; Rojas 1999). Most barrio residents would be amused to learn that in trendy architectural discourse front porches are a “must amenity.”

Further, everyday life in barrios has always involved recycling. Responding to economic marginalization and necessity, barrio residents have actively recycled a wide range of materials (Peña 2005). Ropa, madera, pipas, ventanas, puertas, ladrillos, y tinas have been adaptively reused for personal use, landscape design, structures, and/or art. In fact, no other social sector has been more directly engaged in active recycling throughout the twentieth century than barrio residents.

For centuries barrio residents have also produced food, as a leisure activity and to supplement household nutrition. Particularly in the past quarter century, a vibrant jardinero movement has turned numerous vacant lots to productive use. Una explosion de verde, yerbas, floras, verduras y fruta has resulted from intensive labor that beautifies the city and offers nontoxic food resources for local and regional residents (Pinderhughes 2004).

El barrio thus has important contributions to make to the sustainable urban policy that will be needed in the future: not only in relation to efficient energy use, maximization of existing resources, support for collective public amenities, urban density, adaptive reuse, and eclectic uses of space, but in the role of the ciudadano, which exemplifies the vibrant social agency within urbanism that planners of virtually all ideologies
hope to restore (Katz 1994; Fung 2001; Calthorpe 1993; Bailly et al. 2000). Arguments to reconceptualize urban design, create open space in neighborhoods, revert to mixed uses, and abandon rational functional zoning logic are all predicated on the vision that Alain Touraine has articulated: “Political and social institutions can no longer be the servants of a supposedly rational order or a progress that is supposedly inscribed in the laws of historical evolution; they must be made to serve the Subject...to defend the radiant future from the past” (2000, 303). Henri Lefebvre’s ([1974] 1991) demand that urbanism challenge the gentrification that has displaced the working class from the center of the city must also be met if this vision is to be fulfilled; the defense of barrio space is thus critical to the project of urban restoration.

Yet planners seeking solutions to the urban crisis have been unaware of the barrio’s living demonstration of a rational, economically and environmentally sustainable form of urbanism in their midst. One reason for their ignorance may well be the history of pathetic Eurocentric fear of the other (Doob 1999; Bowser and Hunt 1996). El barrio has been stereotyped as a mysterious, dangerous, and threatening space. Unwarranted assumptions about barrio life are reinforced by racist ideology and skew perceptions: thus, for example, el ciudadano caminando por la calle is viewed as a frightening figure to be surveilled and controlled rather than a citizen interacting socially with his community. Everyday cultural practices are perceived as sinister resistance to mainstream society, and a suburban mindset imagines cities as zones of crime and degeneracy. Cloaked in mystery, barrio culture has been ignored and misunderstood.

Planners have also had little awareness of the rich and eclectic history of Latino urbanism. Along with the initial settlements of First Nations, barrios and colonias have been some of the earliest urban forms in the Southwest, dating from the 1600s. In fact, until the era of railroad expansion, barrios were the only urban centers. The influx of Euro-Americans into the Southwest in the latter stages of the nineteenth century ushered in a fundamental ethnic transition (Rosenbaum 1981), that has been reversed only in the last two decades. The evolution of cities is directly correlated with the growth of barrios and colonias. The three largest Latina/o urban communities in the United States are in El Paso, San Antonio, and Los Angeles.

In the past twenty-five years, barrio communities of the Southwest have significantly expanded their territory and are on the verge of achieving an ethnic reconquista (Diaz 2005; Suro and Singer 2002). The most sub-
stantial Latina/o community in the country, East Los Angeles (Valle and Torres 2000; Romo 1983; Acuña 1988), has expanded into what is now considered “the Greater Eastside.” This is a zone of approximately 450 square miles, stretching east of the Los Angeles River into the central San Gabriel Valley and south from Highland Park into the small cities that constitute Southeast Los Angeles County. This ethnic and cultural transformation is the most fundamental aspect of urban change associated with virtually every city in the Southwest and, increasingly, cities throughout the nation. Barrios are rapidly making inroads into surrounding urban communities and working-class suburbs and in some areas are taking over entire counties. Los Angeles County is now 50 percent Latina/o and is largely a system of barrios showing the polynucleated pattern of growth that Mark Gottdiener, in an enlightened theoretical analysis, projected for suburbs in this region in 1985.

Latinas/os have had a history throughout the last century of challenging planning and spatial relations. It has spanned land grant battles in New Mexico from the 1880s through the 1960s (Peña 2005; Rosenbaum 1981); rent strikes in Spanish Harlem in the 1940s (Cayo-Sexton 1965); and numerous struggles, over the decades, to save Chicano neighborhoods from urban renewal, whether Chavez Ravine in Los Angeles in the 1940s and 1950s (Lopez 2002; Parson 2005), Varrio Viejo in Tucson in the 1960s (Dimas 1999), or Chicano Park in Logan Heights, San Diego, in the 1960s and 1970s (Cockcroft and Barnet-Sanchez [1990] 1993). The Crusade for Justice in Denver, one of the first organizations of the Chicano Power Movement, evolved from a critique of that city’s racist redevelopment and redistributive policies (Vigil 1999). Throughout the Southwest, barrio social movements like La Raza Unida in the 1960s engaged cities over their failure to provide the most basic urban amenities, such as sewer and water systems, storm drains, paved streets, and recreational facilities for youth (Vigil 1999). One of the first Chicano protest movements in California was a result of the dismantling of the entire western sector of Barrio Logan by California’s state transportation agency; by claiming land for a community park where Chicano artists painted murals that portrayed Chicano politics and history, the protesters gave cultural workers a unique interventionist role in redefining space in a distinct culture image. Since the 1970s, the Chicano environmental justice movement has attempted to halt the environmental poisoning of working class Latino communities.

Oppositional movements have been barrio leaders’ only recourse, due to the fact that Latinos both in and on the periphery of planning have had
limited agency in advancing the promise of Model Cities, advocacy planning, and working-class community revitalization. These social actors, marginalized by the profession, have had few avenues available to proactively shape policy. Yet in any project of barrio revitalization, those most at risk should have the most influence over matters that will be affecting their everyday lives. Self-determination, direct control over actions that have potentially have long-term or even permanent impacts on individuals, families, and communities, is a fundamental human right.

The legacy of planning documents the opposite. Barrio residents have sensed that they are under attack by urban policy mandates that they have had no political influence to challenge (Acuña 1988). From the beginning of eminent domain in the post-World War II era of redevelopment and transportation route designations, the state has viewed barrio space as vulnerable and expendable. The destruction of barrios, involving the demolition of massive amounts of affordable housing, the dismantling of zones of minority property ownership, and radical reconfigurations of space, has been carried out with a dismissal of minority concerns that expressed a racist contempt for marginalized communities. In the aftermath of the enlightened federally financed War on Poverty, only minimal influence has been ceded to representatives from disenfranchised zones of the city. Since that era, as documented in this volume, the relationship between a Euro-American planning profession and Latinas/os has been oppositional and conflictive rather than egalitarian and inclusionary. But through a long history of being marginalized economically and politically, Latina/o communities have asserted their right to active participation in land use decisions (Darder and Torres 2004).

Planning Literature and Barrio Reality

Despite the many lessons that planners might draw from the long history of Latino urbanism, mainstream literature has rarely situated Latinas/os in the center of urban crises or in relation to oppositional movements critical of urban revitalization policy (Valle and Torres 2000; Peña 2005; Diaz 2005). Latina/o environmentalists, including Devon Peña, Benjamin Marquez, and Laura Pulido, as well as critical theorists Rodolfo Torres and Nestor Rodriguez, have developed the most important urbanist analyses of barrios and planning. Mike Davis is one of the very few non-Latino urbanists who has written on urban policy and Latinas/os with analytical specificity and incisive social critique. His book Magical Urbanism (2000) contains a wealth of information and is a major contribution to under-
standing the emerging Chicano and Latino urban landscape in the United States.

Why has this failure to incorporate Latinas/os into planning literature persisted into the twenty-first century? Given that they constitute a significant ethnic community and that barrios are a fundamental component of every major city in the Southwest and other powerful cities across the country, why have planners remained so ignorant of them and so narrowly focused on the “lily white” suburbs nurtured by the profession since the post–World War II suburban expansion? To answer this question, a few key aspects of city planning—racism, classism, and endorsement of discriminatory exclusion in public policy—will be briefly explored.

Planners’ failure to acknowledge, much less learn from, ethnic others in the domains of theory, policy formulation, and practice is reflective of an earlier era of segregation, a construct designed to nurture, celebrate, and defend white privilege (Almaguer 1994; Doob 1999; Bowser and Hunt 1996; Young 1990). A predominantly Euro-American discipline, in its staunch resistance to incorporating other, existing visions of urban spatial relations, continues to practice, on an intellectual level, the kind of segregation more broadly and thoroughly enforced in an earlier period of U.S. history.

Planning has long resisted acknowledging its history of racism in education, practice, and policy (Darder 1995; Hoch 1994). From its earliest inception in the modern era (since 1950), planning has actively resisted minority voices concerning urban policy. The result was a series of historical contradictions to any claims of a pluralist democracy in urban policy through the late 1980s. Planning remained one of the most segregated professions well into the 1980s. Planning schools practiced a de facto “color line” in annual admissions. University of California Berkeley (where one of the authors attended) was, and is, notorious for the paltry numbers of Latina/o graduate students admitted through the 1990s, though California has by far the highest percentage of Latinas/os in the nation. In addition, the scarcity of Latina/o doctoral students in planning is nothing less than a social crime, given the importance of urban policy and planning to the future of barrio revitalization.

Structural racism resulted in a distinctly racist social and professional environment for Latina/o planners through the 1980s (one that many would argue still exists today). Yet the 1980s was the critical period of federally supported revitalization programs. In the era when redistributive benefits should have substantially enhanced barrios, minorities were
forced into marginalized roles with virtually no power. Those that resisted were professionally repressed or blacklisted from the city planning profession.

Obviously, this had severe, detrimental impacts on barrio redevelopment and reconstruction. In fact, few attempt to claim that any meaningful level of tangible benefit actually accrued to barrios during this era. Racism and resistance to ethnic difference were key factors necessitating the evolution, in numerous cities, of barrio social movements engaging in desperate *luchas* for the very survival of barrios. Barrio leaders, instead of participating in principled inclusionary, egalitarian planning, were forced into confrontational roles in defense of barrio spatial relations and Latinas/os in cities.

Classism and sexism were also prominent forces in city planning practice through the early 1980s. City bureaucracies, like colleges, were reluctant to admit women and minorities into their ranks (Hoch 1994). For minorities in general and Latinas in particular, seeking a professional degree and a career in planning was a highly risky venture. Situated in an economy that supported systemic exclusion (Doob 1999), city planners often acted in defense of class privilege. Consequently barrio constituencies came into conflict with planners and criticized a range of failures in urban policy (Feagin 1989; Rodriguez 1993; Davis 2000; Diaz 2005).

The key goal of the profession was legitimation of elite interests rather than actual revitalization of deteriorating neighborhoods. A sequestered profession made up of Euro-American men developed a siege mentality in relation to the universe outside the “gates of city hall.” They normatively rejected oppositional voices, less on the basis of the merits of proposals than on the basis of maintaining their own total control over planning knowledge and urban policy (Taylor 1998). Thus they kept barrio residents from establishing proactive, community-based alternatives to rational-functional planning practice.

The political exclusion maintained during the critical early stages of Model Cities was and remains a central cause of the current crisis in planning. As we enter the fifth decade of predominantly Eurocentric control over the policy apparatus of the state, the only historical lesson is that of stark failure to assist, much less actually revitalize, barrios, almost anywhere. The demise of advocacy planning, the only true reform movement within planning, doomed the profession to a series of conflicts with barrios in which aggressive protests were the sole avenue for Latinos’ political expression and critique of planners’ constant policy ineptitude.
Thus, it is no surprise that by the late twentieth century the topic of Latinas/os’ relationship to space had yet to assume a central place in planning discourse. The sole arena was environmental justice. In a famous 1989 *Amicus* journal article (Russell 1989), planners “proudly” pronounced the “discovery” of environmental racism. But while addressing racism in any of its forms is important, claiming a “new” racism in the late twentieth century shows either lamentable ignorance or a hypocritical cover-up of the long-standing history of environmental insults to Latino communities and the vibrant social justice movements that arose as early as the 1940s and 1950s to address these problems.

Racism in planning practice has correlated directly with an exclusion from planning literature of studies focused on urban policy’s effects on barrios. For decades, the existence of any semblance of such a literature was due mainly to Chicana/o sociologists and historians who ethically could not escape documenting the urban planning injustices perpetrated on barrios as a subset of other narratives. A few ethnic historians, Rodolfo Acuña being the most prominent, have analyzed the Latina/o urban experience far more significantly than planners have (though Acuña’s most significant contribution, *A Community under Siege: A Chronicle of Chicanos East of the Los Angeles River* [1984], has been largely ignored by both Chicano and non-Chicano urbanists). Eminent domain, freeway destruction, land banking, targeted disinvestment, racism in public policy, and the devastation of Latina/o spaces were readily apparent to this field of academia. Further, literature from the fields of public health, education, social welfare, and law has at least occasionally touched on planning in descriptions of such issues as poverty, inadequate housing, and lack of infrastructure in Latino communities. Yet in planning, similar documentation was virtually absent well into the 1990s.

Finally, one of the most fundamental failures in the literature has been the inability to recognize how barrios are in the vanguard of sustainable urbanism. It is the height of Eurocentric arrogance to declare a New Urbanism when every feature of that framework has long been and continues to be exhibited as a vibrant and enduring reality in barrios through the country. Devon Peña and Raquel Rivera-Pinderhughes are among the leading voices addressing barrios’ traditions of sustainable urbanism and local economic relations. And in the past decade, as mentioned earlier, Latina/o urbanists and a few others have directed attention toward the urban crisis and the inherent value of barrio urbanism in the United States. Increased attention to the Southwest, in relation to civic plazas
Introduction

(Arreola 2002), the use of open space as community space (Rojas 1999; Gámez 2002), integrated business districts (Dávila 2001), and environmental justice (Peña 2005, 1998, 1997; Marquez 1998; Pulido 1996), has initiated a spatial discourse of the barrio. But ironically, adherents to the L.A. perspective, which has famously claimed to “make the invisible visible,” have apparently failed to incorporate Latinas/os.

Organization of This Book

This book, then, is part of a broader recent effort to address numerous issues related to barrio urbanism that have long been neglected in the planning literature. In the next chapter, “Barrios and Planning Ideology,” David Diaz, coeditor of this volume, challenges current planning ideology by claiming that what is being called “New Urbanism” is in reality “barrio urbanism” or “Latina/o urbanism.” The social function of the city that New Urbanists are trying to restore still exists in barrios and has not fundamentally changed over the past century. The barrio’s cultural logic of a communally oriented spatial arena that reflects rich interrelationships and social networks has intrinsic value for planning and urban sociology. Yet New Urbanism, in what is only the latest form of racialized and exclusionary urban visions, has not even so much undervalued barrio urbanism as totally ignored it. Why? What purpose is served when yet another “new theory” is propounded that fails to acknowledge enlightened urbanist practice that already exists?

The answer is that New Urbanists, especially architects and planners, want to evade accountability for the failure of suburbia. The fundamental crisis has finally reached the consciousness of suburbanites who are trapped on gridlocked freeways, stressed out, frightened by the economy, and freaking out over housing costs. New Urbanism advocates a reformulation of zoning and design principles that will compel a return to civic society and restore a social realm. It is a perspective grounded on the acknowledgment that because of suburban sprawl the concept of urban citizenship has virtually disappeared.

Diaz’s chapter shows how the everyday life of el barrio exemplifies a workable, enduring alternative to the suburban model that has persisted throughout the decades of failed suburban policy. Compact development, easy access to shops, live-work spaces, actively used open space, the cultivation of gardens and farms, and an emphasis on walking and public transportation all produce a vital public realm with flourishing social interaction. This historic urbanism is not “new.”
Chapter 3, by Johana Londoño, entitled "Aesthetic Belonging: The Latinization and Renewal of Union City, New Jersey," is an analysis of the politics of aestheticizing urban places that focuses on a working-class suburban barrio outside New York City. During the past two decades Union City has been gradually revitalized through New Jersey's Urban Enterprise Zone (UEZ) program. Though Bergenline Avenue, the city’s main commercial boulevard, features a colorful, multicolored environment that exemplifies the “Latinization” of urban space, upwardly mobile aspirations among the city’s Latina/o population and gentrification pressures generated by Union City’s geographic proximity to New York City have resulted in the UEZ’s promotion and financing of its replacement by a modern “Main Street American” look similar to that of many New Urbanist developments, characterized by muted “classic” colors and clean-cut sign typography. Thus, the aesthetic Latinization of commercial space in Union City has come into conflict with the UEZ’s definition of what constitutes a “proper urban aesthetic” for economic development, one that will encourage investment by projecting an image of regulation and uniformity. According to Londoño, the saying *Entre gustos no hay disgustos*, which translates to “In matters of taste there is no debate,” actually dismisses the power relations involved in the implementation of aesthetics: *el gusto*’s visual manifestation in cities is laden with discourses of power constituted by class and racial hierarchies, and the visual aestheticization of cities is a process by which opinions and perceptions focused on urban spaces are defined by specific groups with multiple interests. Londoño argues that economic redevelopment projects in barrios outlying large global cities engage with culture and ethnicity in different ways from those in historic central cities, a key factor when analyzing federally urban redevelopment programs: location plays an important role in whether a Latina/o-identified place will be appreciated and sustained for its economic, social, and cultural value.

Chapter 4, "Placing Barrios in Housing Policy," by Kee Warner, examines the magnitude of the housing crisis in Latina/o communities and traces the history of the policies that have created it. Before the civil rights era, federal housing policies and programs blatantly excluded racial and ethnic minorities, but even passage of civil rights laws in the 1960s did not eliminate discrimination in public housing. Challenges to redlining of neighborhoods and to racist exclusion from public housing projects and programs sought to redress these inequalities, but beginning in the 1970s a devolution of housing policy from federal to state
and local levels and from public to private initiatives generally weakened programs. Their emphasis shifted from directly assisting low-income consumers of housing, such as renters, to increasing the number of home owners—a project that in combination with unregulated subprime lending has for many Latina/os, changed their housing problem from gaining housing in the first place to keeping it. Programs also have tended to shift funds from affordable housing to community development that favors elites and the middle class over those most in need. Latinos certainly have not significantly benefited from HUD-funded programs and reallocation policies initially adopted to address deteriorating residential neighborhoods. The legacy of national legislation established to assist lower-income areas to improve the housing stock, revitalize the local economy, and improve social conditions has not reversed a history of underdevelopment, continuing neighborhood decline, and harmful land speculation. Instead, the funding from federal affordable housing programs has been confiscated by local elites for civic center-, sports- or office-oriented development, so that little has been directed toward increasing home ownership in barrios. A number of historical factors have blocked a proactive reallocation strategy, including overt racism, exclusion of Latinos from the political arena, elite control over land policy, manipulation of federal programs by local elites, rational-functional planning practice, and the inability of federal agencies to ensure the transfer of knowledge to the community level.

In chapter 5, “Urban Redevelopment and Mexican American Barrios in the Socio-Spatial Order,” Nestor Rodriguez addresses the effects of urban redevelopment on Mexican American barrios. As he shows, redevelopment policy has conferred little benefit, social or economic, on barrio communities in decline since the 1960s; indeed, more housing for the poor has been destroyed than created. Antipoverty programs originally designed to provide affordable housing for poor and working-class communities have been abandoned or manipulated by real estate and investment banking interests through legislative modifications that have allowed funding to be diverted to nonresidential development and the building of commercial districts.

During the most influential period of redevelopment, from the era after World War II until the early 1970s, barrios absorbed the worst abuses associated with urban reconstruction. Despite campaigns of resistance by barrio residents, numerous communities were destroyed, partially dismantled, and/or excluded from the benefits of redevelopment programs. In
fact, the logic of redevelopment destabilized rather than reinvigorated the economy of the barrio. Redevelopment policy as practiced in this society viewed barrios as expendable in relation to regional economic development strategy. Barrios, being generally located near downtown business districts, were prime targets for redevelopment, and residents generally lacked the political power to prevent their being exploited by outside economic interests.

Redevelopment has never achieved its legislative mandate. It has failed to increase affordable housing supply, reverse structural decline in minority business districts, empower communities through direct control over land policy, end employment discrimination, or significantly increase in employment opportunities—all major urban demands of Latina/o communities to this day.

In chapter 6, "A Pair of Queens: La Reina de Los Angeles, the Queen City of Charlotte, and the New (Latin) American South," José Luis Gámez explores the “invisible terrain” occupied by new Latina/o migrants in East Los Angeles and Charlotte, North Carolina. In East L.A., established Latina/o residents and new migrants inhabit separate worlds that rarely intersect: the latter rarely frequent the public and commercial spaces of Latina/o East L.A. because they lack the money and social connections to do so. Often their main social connections are to their homelands. New migrants are less likely to be home owners, more likely to seek privacy from a variety of prying eyes, more likely to share housing with other families who are not related by kinship so that even within one house barriers of privacy are maintained, and less likely to project their identity into their surroundings in obvious ways. Public socializing does occur but often in makeshift and temporary spaces out of the view of greater Los Angeles. In Charlotte, most of the Latina/o population consists of such new migrants, who have moved into aging auto-oriented suburban landscapes no longer attractive to middle-class residents, and who maintain a very similar way of life to that of the migrants in L.A. Even here, however, migrant communities have initiated spatial transformations: vendors’ trucks, for example, are revitalizing nondescript, marginal suburban spaces, though such transformations are often resisted by civic officials as evidence of urban decline or nonconformity to local regulations.

In chapter 7, “Fostering Diversity: Lessons from Integration in Public Housing,” Silvia Domínguez reports the author’s fieldwork concerning two sets of Latina/o residents in public housing in Boston in 2000: residents of Maverick Gardens in East Boston, near a busy Latina/o enclave, and
residents of Mary Ellen McCormack in South Boston, in an Irish American neighborhood. These public housing developments, like others in Boston, had been court-ordered to integrate in 1988. The author expected a particularly hostile reception to Latina/o immigrants in South Boston, given that white neighborhood’s long history of antagonism toward integration. But she found that although South Boston was historically prepared to engage in a black-white struggle, there were no cognitive frames for a struggle against Latina/os. Further, the Latina/os, who also had no such cognitive frames, tended to defuse antagonism directed toward them by white community members and to point out problems and issues that the two groups shared. Racism was openly voiced in public forums, but the threat of gentrification, affecting all residents, made racial struggles increasingly irrelevant.

In East Boston racial tensions had decreased as the onetime majority Italian Americans diffused into surrounding neighborhoods and as wave after wave of Latina/o immigrants entered. But systematic, unvoiced racism continued to operate in the Maverick Gardens Tenant Task Force, where the Italian American minority maintained undemocratic control and cultivated patronage ties with the Boston Housing Authority. And for Maverick Gardens residents, the presence of co-ethnics in the neighborhood did not prove to be an advantage, since members of the Latina/o community outside the project often resented the “free ride” that project residents were getting. The economic fortunes of residents in the two projects turned out to depend primarily on the professionalism of the two tenant task forces: Maverick’s did not show leadership in disseminating information, democratizing the board of directors, or forging ties with local service organizations, whereas McCormack’s task force provided culturally responsive services that enabled many project residents to achieve economic and residential mobility.

In chapter 8, “Mexican Americans and Environmental Justice: Change and Continuity in Mexican American Politics,” Benjamin Marquez traces the history of the Latina/o environmental justice movement and assesses its future prospects. This movement arose from a break with the mainstream, Anglo-dominated environmental movement; Latina/o activists criticized it as being more concerned with the preservation of pristine recreational areas than with the issues most likely to affect poor and nonwhite communities, primarily exposure to toxins from illegal dumping, lead paint in aging homes, commercial pesticide use, dangerous working conditions, and the location of polluting industries
in regions whose residents have the least power to exclude them. Marquez recounts some of the many victories achieved by Latina/o environmental activists during the 1990s. Recently, however, such victories have been harder to obtain. Polluting corporations that once arrogantly assumed minority communities could not organize significant resistance are now far more legally circumspect and place more effort into public relations. Further, the Supreme Court decision that plaintiffs must prove intent to discriminate in environmental cases has greatly reduced the number of legal challenges to corporations. Thus the movement faces an uncertain future, but its activists are committed to the long-term struggle that will be necessary.

In the final chapter, Victor Valle and Rodolfo D. Torres make the general case for grounding a twenty-first-century critical Latina/o urbanism in something they provisionally call "cultural political economy" in an attempt to resolve lingering theoretical tensions between socioeconomic (structural) and culture-based (semiotic) approaches to our neoliberal present. Using this approach, the authors suggest new lines in Latino urban theory that can revitalize Chicana/o studies and progressive politics and confront capital in the neoliberal present.

Together, these chapters posit new directions for urban planning in both theory and practice. The demographic and political transitions in the current era, especially with regard to ethnic integration and the rapid expansion of barrio spaces, offer some level of optimism. Planning for the multicultural city must be planning with the multicultural city, encompassing inclusion in key decision-making arenas, ownership patterns in private sector consulting, administrative leadership in planning, housing and redevelopment departments, and largely segregated planning schools. Only then can the social, economic, and environmental crises of the city be truly resolved.

REFERENCES


Bullard, Robert D., Glenn S. Johnson, and Angel O. Torres. 2000. “Race, Equity and Smart Growth.” Policy paper, Environmental Justice Resource Center, Clark Atlanta University, Atlanta, GA.


