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HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF LATINOS AND PLANNING IN THE SOUTHWEST

1900 to the present

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The historical experience of Latino communities is marked by segregation, poverty, and discrimination. Through a critical understanding of the effects of cultural, economic, and governance processes on urbanization patterns, placemakers start to reverse these effects in the contemporary moment. This chapter presents an account of the challenges, opportunities, and agents of change in the three historical periods of pre-end of Second World War, post-war, and in contemporary Latino communities, with a focus on Mexican Americans in the US Southwest.[1]

As with black communities in the South, for decades urban planning facilitated the segregationist management of Latino neighborhoods and proceeded unabated through the control of land use, discriminatory practices, and resistance to Latino social mobility.[2] Latinos over the years have been victims of the "barrioization" of their communities: the effect of policies and processes of domination by the mainstream non-Latino white society resulting in the formation of residentially and socially segregated Latino neighborhoods.[3] Communities fought back through grassroots movements that created local civic institutions—such as community development corporations—that have been instrumental in resisting marginalization and subordination, and critical in refocusing and channeling policy to the specific needs of neighborhoods. To resist barrioization, Latino communities have engaged in "barriological" practices that recreate and re-imagine "dominant urban space as community-enabling place."[4] In other words, through a variety of tactics—many of them informal—and social actions, Latinos have reclaimed spaces that at best were insensitive to their cultural needs, and at worst, were designed to disenfranchise them.

Mexican-American communities in the pre-end of war period: 1900–1945

At the conclusion of the Mexican–American War, the Latino population in the US stood at only 50,000; by 1930, it had already increased to 2.4 million people.[5] Restrictions on immigration from Eastern Europe and Asia helped create conditions that drew hundreds of thousands of Mexicans to the United States. They found employment building railroads, harvesting agricultural crops, and manning factories.[6] It was not until the Great Depression and the Second World War that this immigration was greatly tempered. The privatization of communal lands dispossessed many Mexican Americans of their property and heralded the siege of the Latino community.[7] The archetypical Mexican-American settlement of the early twentieth century was the plaza-centered town.[8] As non-Latino white settlement intensified, discrimination resulted in the formation of dual towns, where both Mexican and non-Latino white sections retained distinct commercial cores.[9] Some of the distinctive features of the barrio today—the social use of semi-public space, the prevalence of vernacular architecture, and a vibrant small-retail economy—reflect a history of the struggle for survival under these conditions of adversity.[10]

The main cultural challenge in the early decades of the twentieth century was that of "Americanization," a high priority on the agenda of the dominant Anglo-Protestant elite. Although Latino heritage was palpable through the survival of Mexican place names and bonds of community molded by propinquity and family ties, segregation and racism thrived under the aegis of an elite that equated patriotism with the trinity of productiveness, non-Latino white values, and Protestantism.[11] For progressive reformers who loathed urbanity's vices, an alteration of values through assimilation was instrumental to socioeconomic advancement, as practiced through "Anglofication" campaigns derogatory of Mexican culture and Catholicism.[12]

Industrialization molded many Mexicans and Mexican Americans into an unskilled working class.[13] The industrial expansion that accompanied the First World War fueled a demand for labor, but employers only reluctantly sought foreign nationals and minority workers.[14] Although Latinos found employment in the railroad, tire manufacturing, agriculture, and construction sectors, unions were wary of the downward push on wages they might induce. As factories, railway stations, and depots sprung up, Mexicans and Mexican Americans were displaced into poorly serviced neighborhoods, such as Sonoratown in Los Angeles. They found little employment due to racist hiring practices, occupational structures, and logistical issues such as a lack of adequate transportation means to the plants.[15] As the Great Depression took hold in the Southwest, Latinos found themselves being no more than a "Mexican problem" competing for "white jobs."

In the pre-war city, Latinos' quest for self-government was met by an impressive array of obstacles and severe opposition.[16] Business interests carved out industry in and around Latino communities, preventing residents from being able to control the adverse environmental impacts of industrial growth.[17] Police abuse flourished, using an impressive array of tools such as prostitution districts, no-speech zones,

and anti-miscegenation laws.[18] On the government level, the Federal Housing Administration's discriminatory underwriting guidelines and widespread practices by housing authorities, which channeled residents into segregated projects, exacerbated the barrio phenomenon and also substantially limited Latinos' mobility.[19] While non-Latino whites moved into new suburbs, followed by retail and services, Latinos remained concentrated in communities with limited resources.

As social and cultural segregation intensified, Latinos found themselves "barrioized" and their access restricted from most public facilities: drugstores, restaurants, hotels, movie theaters, maternity wards, bowling alleys, public parks, playgrounds, swimming pools, real estate, and public schools.[20] Discrimination was such that, in the Southwest, the Mexican Repatriation program of the 1930s, an effort at racial eviction, effectively emptied many Latino barrios of their inhabitants. Up to one million Mexican Americans, including US native-born citizens, were deported. Entire areas were sacrificed to industrial expansion in and around many of these already vulnerable Latino neighborhoods.[21] As Latino communities were being decimated, they were (almost cynically) revived at another side of town in the form of themed "Mexican" environments, complete with "authentic" architectural styles and cultural festivals (e.g., the *fiesta* theme co-opted for city parades), all of which fostered the benign reception of contained and scripted Latino culture.

Latinos did seize opportunities that came their way. They built networks of solidarity through churches and activist groups, which provided the community with cohesion and a sense of belonging. In the cultural sphere, the nascent Latino media and cultural and sports associations were instrumental in constructing a Latino identity.[22] These groups often provided the same kind of empowerment and social support that blacks found in churches and faith-based organizations. The quest for identity was particularly determined among the youth, whose exclusion from mainstream culture was counteracted by the formation of a unique Mexican-American subculture. After the Second World War, returning servicemen helped shape an emerging Mexican-American identity by fueling a nationalism that counterbalanced loyalty to the Mexican motherland.[23] The *El Congreso* and the Mexican-American movements helped nurture youth leaders. Building on nineteenth-century *mutualista* (literally "mutual aid") organizations, Latinos fostered a tradition of self-help leading to the development of local institutions (e.g., the *Sociedad Protección Mutua de Trabajadores Unidos*) that helped the barrio weather social and economic storms.[24]

Latino communities in the post-war period: 1945–1980

While immigration from Mexico sustained pace, the post-war period saw rising immigration from the Caribbean and South America, where Cubans, Dominicans, Puerto Ricans, and Colombians arrived in the US seeking opportunity and escaping political upheaval. By the 1970s, Latinos accounted for one-third of all immigrants, and more than 3.5 percent of the US population during that decade.[25] Although the Southwest continued to be home to the largest Latino population, many possessing skills or connections started to look for opportunities elsewhere. The Southwest

continued to be marked by a stark inequality in opportunities for Latinos as a reflection of neighborhood segregation.[26]

In the post-war period, Latinos grappled with how to position themselves culturally *vis-à-vis* an emerging ethnic majority consolidated from the various minorities of European descent, mostly through mutual identification as a rising, newly suburbanized middle class. A mainstream culture associated with suburban values took over where the segregationist Victorian values of the Reform Era (1890–1920) had left off in demonizing Latino culture.[27] Societal criminalization of poverty and an increased aversion to attitudes and actions that could be considered communist facilitated the construction of the barrio as an enclave of crime and poverty, with the associated prejudices against Latinos. Popular culture played no small part in demonizing city life and popularizing the suburban ideal of the post-war city, deriding the urban malaise resulting from racial impurity and cultural waywardness in the city.[28]

Latino communities also had to contend with the peripheral position they held *vis-à-vis* centers of investment. During the years of robust growth following the Second World War, manufacturers relocated to cheaper and larger sites in outlying counties, where centers of Latino population, though they supplied the low-skilled labor for these sites, would not be recipients of investment. Cities collected much more in taxation than it spent in Latino communities.[29] The ensuing economic restructuring of the 1970s and the bifurcation of the labor force and decimation of union jobs were important factors in why poor barrios persisted and coalesced, as white flight to the suburbs picked up pace.[30]

Latino communities of the post-war era were "under siege" by the development of industrial zoning and freeways, which contributed to the view of government and its agencies as being subservient to the interests of the elite.[31] Cities engaged in selective, stringent enforcement of zoning, building, and housing codes in Latino neighborhoods and relegated public housing for Latinos to leased land, rendering them easily displaceable when large-scale redevelopment proposals matured.[32] In Los Angeles and other growing metropolises, wealthy communities were incorporated, while patches of unincorporated poor Latino areas were left behind, such as the Florence-Firestone area. In the 1970s and early 1980s, Latino empowerment was also occasionally co-opted by elite-propped Latino organizations, whose policies often did not reflect communities' interests pertaining to funding and development priorities.[33]

In short, the spatial ghettoization of Latinos in inner city neighborhoods and inner-ring suburbs (e.g., Boyle Heights and Huntington Park in Los Angeles) sustained momentum as wealthier Americans abandoned these neighborhoods. These barrios were also enclosed and/or bisected by freeways and punctured by urban renewal projects, destroying their urban and social fabric, such as in Bunker Hill and Chavez Ravine in Los Angeles.[34] As racially homogenous suburbs emerged, the ghettoized centers had little choice but to keep accepting poor immigrants and those otherwise incapable of breaching barriers into the emerging suburbs.[35]

In the face of these challenges, efforts at Latino empowerment in the post-war period gained momentum. The Chicano Movement contributed much to the

reinvigoration of Latino communal pride as the barrio was reconstituted as a site of resistance and celebration.[36] Some examples include the symbolic appropriation of public space by the Muralization Movement, the cultural appropriation of the built environment through vernacular architecture, and a revival of native traditions with the organization of fiestas and celebrations.[37] Local organizations continued their roles in social development and picked up where government had left off funding for language classes and social programs.[38] In the 1980s, churches throughout the Southwest also became very active in the Sanctuary Movement, offering refuge to Central Americans displaced by (often US-sponsored) conflicts in their native countries.[39] Alternatively, on the economic front, Mexicans and Mexican Americans were eventually able to break into higher-paying occupations in light manufacturing.[40] Their ranks were bolstered by the rise of the service economy and a large-scale middle-class migration from Latin America. As a result, they were able to make strides as proprietors and entrepreneurs, purchasing franchises and running service outlets.[41] In this milieu, grassroots and nonprofit agencies that engaged in economic activism flourished (e.g., the Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice) and lobbied for living wage ordinances and just development.

Latinos in the post-war era also finally made substantial inroads into the political arena. In Los Angeles, for example, veterans' associations carried the momentum after the Second World War, and placed Latino politicians on the city council. They protested credit and housing discrimination, school segregation, racial covenants, and freeway construction in their neighborhoods.[42] The intrusion of public institutions (e.g., prisons) and infrastructure (e.g., freeways and incinerators) into residential neighborhoods was contested.[43] In the "battles against the bulldozers," Mexican Americans protested racially motivated redevelopment priorities (e.g., the Temple-Baudery area in East Los Angeles), questioned accepted notions of urban blight, and appropriated space under freeways for parks.[44] Latino politicians catalyzed the establishment of national legal organizations to advance Latino civil rights, such as the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), modeled after the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.[45] In effect, by the late 1960s the need for a more sustained legal effort on behalf of the Latino community to confront police brutality, employment discrimination, and school segregation had become apparent.[46] Similarly, the earliest Latino Community Development Corporations (CDCs)—nonprofit organizations formed to foster human and economic development in the Latino community—came about in the 1970s, after the creation of the earliest African American CDCs.

Latino communities today: 1980–2010

According to the 2010 census, there are 50 million Latinos living in the United States, with presence in all 50 states. They constitute 16 percent of the US population and account for more than half of the growth of the country total population over the last ten years. As the population grew in the South and the Sunbelt, and economic restructuring accelerated in the ensuing decades, traditional

gateway states such as California, Illinois, and New York decisively lost ground to other destinations such as Arizona, Texas, and Florida by the mid-1990s.[47] Housing affordability and job accessibility have prompted migration to new urban and rural locales in states of the New South, including Georgia, North Carolina, and Tennessee, which saw dramatic increases in their Latino populations.[48] The metropolitan areas that have seen hypergrowth of Latinos from 1980 to 2000 include Raleigh-Durham (1,180 percent), Atlanta (995 percent), Orlando (859 percent), and Las Vegas (753 percent). The growth is not only in traditional "Latino" city neighborhoods, but also in older suburbs that were designed more as bedroom communities. Their design was more responsive to automobile-owning, backyard-oriented nuclear families than to people with a strong history of conducting social activities in public spaces with their extended families and acquaintances.[49]

Today, Latinos' newly attained status as the largest minority in the United States has catalyzed a spirited debate on cultural assimilation.[50] The most serious challenge comes from those who proclaim that for the first time in history we are witnessing a failure of assimilation and, more seriously, substantive incompatibility between Latino values and those of the American mainstream.[51] These debates and unjustified reservations about multiculturalism underscore the important fact that Latinos in the United States are transnationalized, in that they draw on intense and sustained migratory flows, cultural and economic exchanges, and hybridizations across national borders.[52] This interconnectedness has been made possible by a modern communications revolution, which makes it possible to build "communities without propinquity," the expanding geography of contemporary Latino settlement patterns and, of course, bonds of language and tradition.[53] However, an important consequence of the construction of an overarching Latino identity in the national consciousness is that the diversity of the Latino population and experience is somewhat lost on the mainstream.[54] Another important characteristic of this period is the growing and widespread entrepreneurialism. Latinos, and immigrants in general, are more likely to open businesses than other ethnic groups. In 2010, an estimated 560 out of every 100,000 Latinos opened a business; a business creation rate far above the national average of 440 of every 100,000 people. For the same year, this amounts to 23 percent of all new businesses that were opened by Latinos.[55]

Today, as globalization and neoliberal policies continue to restructure the American economy, pull US industry to border regions, and export industry operations to super-regions such as China, the survival of a robust service sector and labor intensive industries is crucial to the survival of the barrio.[56] Other than transforming the traditional urban landscape, reliance on service employment has had measurable consequences for job stability and opportunities for advancement.[57] Latinos still lag behind other social groups in securing well-paying jobs; hence, they face enormous difficulties in gaining entry into mixed-race neighborhoods with higher performing schools.[58] To counter these trends, planners have attempted to give incentives for low income Latinos to obtain subsidized housing in the suburbs, attract jobs to urban areas, or provide subsidies for transportation.[59] However, the role of race relations remains pivotal: the perception that Latino students reduce general educational

performance accelerates the exodus from areas receiving Latinos, which effectively starves school budgets and student body diversity. When middle-class Latinos move and seek better schooling themselves, they may be inadvertently hindering the formation of the sort of social capital that aids social mobility of less fortunate co-ethnics tied to labor intensive jobs in city centers.[60]

Latino urban neighborhoods remain underserved and continue to suffer from spatial and racial injustice.[61] Though some of the working poor are doubling and tripling up in the suburbs to gain entry to the housing market, underinvestment is raising racial tensions as various minority groups compete for limited resources.[62] The attractiveness of Latino neighborhoods rich in vernacular architecture and public art has also hastened gentrification, further straining communal stability, as in San Francisco's Mission District.[63]

Attaining the stature of the largest minority did however help shed positive light on Latinos' cultural and spatial practices. As barrio planners and private developers reconsider historic plaza-centered villages and Mexican settlements, planners have recently started to take interest in and show appreciation of the compact living, mixed use, and socialization-enabling public spaces characteristic of Latino communities.[64] Many of these communities have been designated historic districts (e.g., San Antonio), in recognition of their positive impact on the urban experience.[65] The rise of an overarching Latino identity starts at the neighborhood level with associations of civil society such as social and sports clubs, which have become important venues for the reproduction of Latino culture and solidarity.[66] Notwithstanding some evidence of assimilation, this cultural diversity is being nurtured and celebrated.[67]

Looking ahead: Latino communities in the United States

Planning and design professionals seeking to work with Latino communities should understand the unique challenges of the twenty-first century urban Latino experience: Latino multicultural citizenship, the effects of economic policies that minimize the role of the state and privilege that of the private business sector, interconnectedness with Latin America, and the new stature of the Latino minority as the largest in the US and its implications for political empowerment.

In summary, key historical challenges faced by Latino communities in the Southwest have been segregation, denigration, and government gerrymandering in the pre-end of Second World War city. In the post-war city, communities felt the added effects of suburbanization, the social criminalization of poverty, deindustrialization, failed economic mobility, and the government "siege" of the barrio through discriminatory planning policies. Today, the challenges of social exclusion, xenophobic sentiments, unsatisfactory access to education and jobs, and political disempowerment remain. Culturally, the pressures to "Americanize" and reservations towards an overarching Latino ethnic identification have been the main challenges in the struggle for recognition. In the economic sphere, the challenges of labor in the early industrial city and circumventing peripheralization in the context of a deindustrializing economy have been keenly felt. In the political sphere, empowerment has

been hampered by socio-spatial control of the barrio, the capture of city government by the elite, and challenges in the mobilization of the citizenry and electorate.

In response, Latino communities and their allies have sustained affirming practices in each epoch that have allowed them to develop and to maintain a sense of ownership and belonging. Early on, they helped rally the community around common purposes and created the conditions for mobility and advancement. Civil society Chicano/Latino organizations instilled pride in the Latino heritage, facilitated integration into the economy, and lobbied for and secured legal remedies to unconstitutional government policies.

The question about the role of government is today as pertinent as ever, as it was in the pre-war period with New Deal programs and the post-war period with civil rights reforms and Great Society programs.[68] The greatest challenge to the empowerment of Latinos has been the dismantling or weakening of many federal government programs—for example, the New Deal, civil rights legislation, and Great Society programs—that had been instrumental to Latino social mobility in previous decades. The effects that the downsizing of programs crucial to social mobility has had on poorer urban Latinos cannot be underestimated.

But any conceptualization of the role of government needs to address the present moment, as the current economic recession fuels nationalist sentiments. A reactionary attitude against Latinos reached unprecedented heights in the 1990s, as several states followed California's suit and ended funding of bilingual education and social services for non-citizens. Today, local and state governments across the country are discussing or enacting reactionary policies that constrict the mobility of immigrants and racially-profiled Latino citizens or prevent their access to housing, jobs, education, or health care. At the other end, some cities, including Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Maywood in California have instituted themselves as sanctuaries for immigrants both in defiance and protest of these trends.[69] The federal government needs to regain control over these policy arenas and initiate a responsible discourse and policymaking effort that ameliorates many of the misconceptions about Latinos. A national policy debate on issues of immigration and ethnic diversity, the transnational economy, and post-national citizenship is most pressing.

Finally, there needs to be a more concerted engagement by planners in a topic that remains dominated by urban and cultural theorists and historians. Scholars in affiliated fields have tackled some important issues, such as institution of occupancy standards that discriminate against Latinos' preference for extended family living arrangements, or the role of the informal economy in sustaining Latino communities.[70] Recently, through the activism of Latino planners and scholars, the American Planning Association (APA) and the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP) have acknowledged the timeliness of shaping the discourse on and practice of Latino communities. Recently, APA initiated a division titled Latinos and Planning (2005) and ACSP approved the Planners of Color Interest Group (2007).[71] In this vein, a literature that engages the policy discourse as much as the urban theory discourse is timely with these recent developments. There are many recent Latino planning-oriented projects that are promising: Latino New Urbanism,

Latino environmental justice campaigns, and Latinos and Planning's "*Diálogos*: National Agenda for the Latinos and Planning Division" (2005–2009 dialogue series, winner of the 2009 APA Award for Achievement in Communications Excellence for a Small Division).[72] These debates are stepping stones in an urgent and long-lasting research and policy agenda on the part of planning scholars and practitioners, which sheds light on and helps to realize the common destiny that unites Latinos to the rest of society.

Notes

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