

# **Planning for the Immigrant City**

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## Abstract

In the United States, the recent surge in the immigration of people from non-Western nations has engendered an unprecedented level of racial, ethnic and cultural diversity. This paper explores how the planner should respond to the planning issues that immigration poses in U.S. cities. My argument is twofold: First, in light of immigration's profound impact on American cities, understanding how to plan for a multicultural society is a practical imperative. As society becomes more diverse, the traditional planning practices are becoming less salient for addressing current and future planning challenges. Planners need to develop new sensibilities, tools and policies if they are to meet these challenges.

Second, the resurgence in immigration represents not only challenges for planning, but also opportunities. Questions about how to accommodate immigrants in receiving cities force us to consider the adequacy of existing planning paradigms, policies and practices. In turn, immigration can prompt planners to rethink fundamental questions about the limits and potential of planning and to imagine new ways to create more inclusive, diverse and adaptive communities—for the betterment of the population as a whole.

In the first section, I lay a foundation for understanding the nature of the planning issues that immigration raises. More specifically, I provide an overview of immigration flows to the United States and their demographic impact. I then explain concepts that shed light on the social processes and geographies between immigrants and their receiving cities. Lastly, I explain the planning implications of these trends and relationships.

In the second section, I introduce four models of planning intervention to use when considering the various approaches to planning for immigrant and multicultural cities—neutral, partisan, equity and resolver. Using this framework, I trace the history of planning's response to immigration, in three broad categories: early and modernist planning, pluralist planning and multicultural planning. Within multicultural planning, I pay particular attention to the three strategies most often invoked either in scholarship or practice—process-based dialogue, educating the planner to work in multicultural contexts and design-based diversity—and to the “intercultural perspective” approach. I then assess how planners are handling immigration in practice.

The third and final section focuses on the topic of housing—one of the key areas where the conflict between immigrants and their host societies emerge. I outline some of the major planning issues, but focus on three examples of how immigration could present new opportunities and possibilities for planning to: fill the baby boomer void, rethink housing norms and standards and source a new social imagination.

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In the United States, the recent surge in the immigration of people from non-Western nations has engendered an unprecedented level of racial, ethnic and cultural diversity. While in the past, planning scholars and practitioners tended toward universalist and assimilationist responses to immigration, they have come to acknowledge multiculturalism as an empirical reality and diversity as a normative good. Today, that planners should plan so as to recognize and sustain different cultures seems a truism. What is less clear is how planners can accomplish this in practice. This paper seeks to understand how the planner should respond to the issues that immigration poses to U.S. cities.

My argument is twofold: First, in light of the profound impact that immigration is having on U.S. cities, understanding how to plan for a multicultural society is a practical imperative. As cities become more diverse, the familiar planning theories and practices are becoming less relevant. If planners are to meet the challenges that immigration presents, they need to develop new sensibilities, tools and policies. Second, the resurgence in immigration represents not only challenges to planning, but also opportunities. Questions about how accommodate immigrants in receiving cities provide opportunities to consider the adequacy of existing planning paradigms, policies and practices. In turn, immigration can prompt planners to rethink fundamental questions about the limits and potential of planning and to imagine new ways to create more inclusive, diverse and adaptive communities—to benefit the population as a whole.

The first section lays a foundation for understanding the nature of the planning issues that immigration raises. More specifically, it provides an overview of immigration flows to the United States and their demographic impact. It then explains concepts that shed light on the social processes and geographies between immigrants and their host cities. Lastly, it explains the planning implications of these trends and relationships.

The remaining sections focus on the planner's responses to immigration-related issues. Section two examines how planning scholars and practitioners understand and address the planning issues presented by immigration and multiculturalism. The aim of this section is to present and assess the range of possible approaches and to identify those that planners should reconsider, apply or develop. It begins with a general framework for understanding the various planning responses. It then traces the historical progression of planning's response to immigration from the early period of American planning to present day. Finally, it discusses how planners are responding to immigration-related issues in practice. While this section draws from various critical dialogues among planning professionals, it also looks to literature grounded in case studies.

The third and final section moves from theory to practice and from a general discussion of planning to the specific topic of housing—one of the key areas where the conflict between immigrants and their host societies' policies and practices emerge. This section seeks to clarify the planner's role by

explaining some of the specific housing problems that arise in connection with immigration and by providing some examples of how planners can capitalize on the opportunities.

## **Immigration and Planning**

### **Migration Flows and Their Demographic Impact**

With the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, the United States began its Fourth Wave of immigration, when it reopened its borders to foreigners, most of whom were from Latin America and Asia (P. Martin & Midgley, 2003).<sup>1</sup> Beginning the 1970s successive waves of refugees from Southeast Asia, Eastern Europe and Africa settled in the United States (Vitiello, 2009). Prior to the Fourth Wave, which spans from 1920 to 1965, the nation experienced a forty-five year lull in immigration (P. Martin & Midgley, 2003).<sup>2</sup>

From 1965, authorized immigration in the United States increased steadily from a level of around 250,000 per year before 1965 to 500,000 per year in the latter 1970s. After 2000, this number reached one million per year. The total immigrant flow (which includes authorized and illegal immigrants) grew at an even greater pace, reaching an average of 1.6 million from 1998 to 2003 (Myers, 2008).<sup>3</sup> The 1990s witnessed an unprecedented level of migration to the United States, with approximately 13.2 million immigrants, many of whom migrated without legal authorization, entering during the decade (Theodore & N. Martin, 2007).

Currently, approximately 38 million immigrants reside in the United States. This figure represents the largest number of immigrants in U.S. history and approximately 13 percent of the total population (Vitiello, 2009). P. Martin & Midgley (2003) projected that the number of foreign-born<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Demographers refer to the major peaks in United States immigration as the four major waves of immigration. During the First Wave, which precedes 1820, immigrants came primarily from Northern and Western Europe. The Second Wave, from 1820 to 1880, coincided with frontier expansion and brought immigrants from the same regions. The Third Wave, from 1880 to 1914, took place during the Age of Industrialization and drew immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe (P. Martin & Midgley, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> By 1970, less than 5 percent of America's population was foreign-born (Vitiello, 2009). Shutting off the flow of new residents had major impacts on American cities, as it led to the problems of urban decline and decay in the 1950s and 1960s (Myers, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> The total inflow of immigrants is difficult to measure accurately because, in recent years, a sizeable number of them have been undocumented because of the unauthorized nature of their entry (Myers, 2008).

<sup>4</sup> I use immigrants and foreign born interchangeably as both groups are defined as persons living in the United States who were not born as American citizens (Myers, 2008).

residents will rise from 31 million in 2000 to 48 million in 2025 to 60 million in 2050. In 2050, the foreign-born share will be approximately 15 percent of the population. Roughly consistent with this projection, Myers (2008) projected that by 2030, 15 percent of the U.S. population will be foreign-born.<sup>5</sup>

Immigration is not a new phenomenon or a new issue for planners. As Vitiello states, the “American metropolis is a migrant metropolis” (2009, p. 245). In 1910, nearly 15 percent of the nation's population was foreign-born (Vitiello, 2009). However, immigration today differs from previous waves and therefore, presents a new and different set of challenges. Today's immigrants are mostly from non-Western nations, with the greatest share coming from Latin America and Asia.<sup>6</sup> They are far more economically diverse than earlier working class immigrants. Another key difference is that many arriving today, as many as 700,000 per year, are undocumented, illegal immigrants (Myers, 2008).

Since 1965, the annual flow of new immigrants has dramatically increased the size of the foreign-born and total populations. Moreover, immigrants have made the population more racially and ethnically diverse than ever before. In 1970, non-Hispanic Whites made up 83 percent of the population, Blacks 11 percent, Hispanics 5 percent, Asians and Pacific Islanders 1 percent and American Indians, Alaska Native and others 1 percent. In 2000, non-Hispanic Whites made up 70 percent of the population, Blacks 13 percent, Hispanics 13 percent, Asians and Pacific Islanders 4 percent and American Indians, Alaska Native and others 1 percent. P. Martin & Midgley (2003) project that in 2050, nearly half the population will be minorities, with Hispanics making up 25 percent of population, Blacks 13 percent, Asians 10 percent, and American Indians, Alaska Native and others less than 1 percent.

Moreover, immigration is now a pervasive phenomenon. While immigrants previously concentrated in New York, Miami, Chicago, California and the Southwest, immigration has spread nationwide (Vitiello, 2009). Whereas immigrants historically settled in “ethnic enclaves” in cities, today, the majority of them settle directly in suburbs (Vitiello, 2009).

## **Understanding Immigrants and the Contemporary City**

### **The nature of cities and immigrants.**

Immigration is changing the composition, physical form and socio-cultural processes of cities. As migration research develops, scholars are increasingly recognizing a dual process of socio-cultural

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<sup>5</sup> The demographic effect of immigration is even greater when one considers the number of children that the foreign-born have and will have. In 2000, the foreign-born and their children made up 21 percent of the total population. P. Martin & Midgley (2003) projected that by 2025, they will represent one third of the population.

<sup>6</sup> In the 1990s, 51 percent of legal immigrants were from Latin America and 30 percent were from Asia, while less than 13 percent were from Europe (P. Martin & Midgley, 2003).

transformation. “By their presence and behavior, migrants make demands on their hosts that...force societies to alter how they function in both large and small ways” (Hanley, Ruble, & Garland, 2008, p.2). At the same time immigrants undergo their own transformation through their continual negotiation and renegotiation of the terms of their presence with society at large:

Urban life transforms migrant groups into ethnic communities with shared memories and perceptions, because it is on city streets that migrants discover their own similarities in opposition to the world around them. Cities become the locus of migration chains and economic networks in which brokers move easily between minority communities and societies at large. These brokers ranging from street market vendors to international bankers—integrate migrant communities into the host society. (Hanley et al., 2008, p. 2)

As a result, immigrants and their host communities are constantly evolving.

Indeed, immigrants do not retain the characteristics that they had upon first arriving. As Myers (2008) argued, immigrants are best understood as individuals who are following life stages very similar to those of the native-born. They “are not Peter Pan, frozen in the life stage at which they arrived in America” (Myers, 2008, p. 250). Rather, their “lives assume an added dimension of transition to America, followed by their progressive adaptation and merger into our society” (Myers, 2008, p. 250). While Myers’s notion that immigrants evolve similarly to the native-born is important, his concept bears amending. The process of ‘progressive adaptation and merger into our society’ is complex and uneven. As members of immigrant communities seek to incorporate themselves into the life of their new city, they face language barriers, racial discrimination, unfamiliar cultures, and hostile labor markets (Hanley et al., 2008). They must find an appropriate balance between maintaining their cultural and ethnic integrity and simultaneously accessing their new city's social, political, and economic opportunities (Hanley et al., 2008). There is always a tension between the immigrants’ desires to sustain the culture and language of their sending community and their need and wish to adapt to a new and different society (P. Martin & Midgley, 2003). Still, immigrants have differing levels of commitment to their new host communities—many will settle for several generations, while others view their host communities as temporary (Hanley et al., 2008).

These dynamics undermine the binary understanding of immigration and society held by the “assimilationist” and the “pluralist” schools of thought—two opposing concepts that frame much of the discussion about how to accommodate immigrants in American society. Assimilationists imagine a society in which the host community imposes its values so that immigrants integrate into society. They regard America as composed of equal individual citizens. They aim to eliminate ethnic boundaries and integrate immigrants into the ‘melting pot’ of American society. In contrast, the pluralists aim to maintain ethnic boundaries and preserve the immigrant’s ethnic identity and awareness of his origin.

They view America as a 'salad bowl,' a society of equal groups, each with distinctive characteristics (P. Martin & Midgley, 2003).

Neither the assimilationists nor pluralists approximate the reality of immigrants. The melting pot analogy overlooks the fact that immigrants maintain affiliations with their country of origin and the importance of home culture. Meanwhile, the pluralists' insistence on group identity assumes immigrants are static and passive, ignoring the individual agency of individuals to construct their affiliations and identities and to alter their host society (P. Martin & Midgley, 2003). Both views overlook the divisions within and associations between ethnic groups. In short, both of the above perspectives fail to grasp the dynamic process of change that takes place between immigrants and their host societies.

### **Contemporary immigrant geographies.**

For a century, scholars, political leaders and immigrants have used the notion of the "ethnic enclave"—the spatial concentration of newly arrived urban residents according to their ethnic identity—to describe immigrant communities and their relation to the larger city. They conceived of ethnic enclaves as "self-sufficient 'little worlds' with clear boundaries, as transitional inner-city territories close to the central business district, and as places with distinct 'old world' character through which immigrants pass on their way to an assimilated life in 'mainstream' (typically suburban) society" (Abramson, Manzo, & Hou, 2006, p. 343).

While this conception arguably may describe some past and present immigrant communities, it fails to capture important contemporary geographies and processes, as today's immigrant communities are more fluid, porous and heterogeneous. As Abramson et al. (2006) argued, recent empirical studies challenge the descriptive validity of the ethnic enclave as a monolithic community; as only a 'way station' for particular immigrant groups on the path to assimilation in the suburbs; as an inner-city neighborhood of culturally excluded, minority, working-class residents; or as an economy that survives through spatially concentrated self-sufficiency. For Abramson et al. (2006, p. 343), conceptualizing the city as a network of "space of flows" is a better alternative to the conventional view of the city as mosaic of bounded territories.

Indeed, immigrant communities can no longer be defined solely by their physical boundaries or by co-residence within in them. Today, many are heterolocal. Heterolocalism refers to recent populations of shared ethnic identity who enter an area, then quickly adopt a dispersed pattern of residential location, while managing to remain cohesive through a variety of means. These means include ethnic churches, business associations, athletic leagues, social and service clubs, bars, cultural centers, festivals, retail centers and other institutions that may or may not be situated in spatial clusters. For example, Asian Indians spatially dispersed throughout the Dallas Fort Worth region are constructing

immigrant communities through internet technologies (Brettell, 2008). These virtual spaces are serving as sites of cohesion and redefining the nature of immigrant communities.

On a more global scale, immigrant communities are transnational spaces of flows. These “partially denationalized” spaces are “where global economic restructuring and practices of everyday life combine into a distinctive form of urbanization” (Theodore & N. Martin, 2007, p. 270). Transnational communities are places with dense networks that link it socially, politically, economically and culturally to other places across national borders. These networks are constructed and maintained through means such as migration channels, transportation systems, telecommunication grids, multinational financial institutions, social movements, cultural exchange programs, nongovernmental organizations and foreign consulates (Theodore & N. Martin, 2007).

For example, consider the Albany Park neighborhood in Chicago (where I used to work). In many respects, it resembles a classical port-of-entry neighborhood. More than half its residents are foreign-born, with more than one third arriving within the past 15 years (Theodore & N. Martin, 2007). The neighborhood is highly diverse with immigrants from Latin America, Asia, the Middle East and Eastern Europe. Entrepreneurs have started small businesses in the neighborhood. It has served as a way station for immigrants who later move to the suburbs. Yet, Albany Park is also a transnational community, with transnational flows that link its residents to other regions across the world (Theodore & N. Martin, 2007). These connections to their home countries create the dual characteristic of immigrants: a tentative residence in a host city and multithreaded ties to a community of origin (Hanley et al., 2008).

The descriptive validity of the term ‘ethnic enclave’ comes into further question when one considers the settlement patterns at the level of the mixed household—defined as households headed by differently racialized partners, one of whom is foreign-born. Houston & Wright’s (2008) study of mixed households in Seattle brings attention to the fact of mixed race households as part of immigration settlement. Their focus on the day-to-day activities of these households drew out the interplay of immigration and settlement processes within everyday life to suggest that settlement “in a new city is not a singular moment, but a continual practice” (Houston & Wright, 2008, p. 74). As they contended, cities are “*both* places of segregation and places where lives interweave” (Houston & Wright, 2008, p. 74).

### **Planning Issues for the Immigrant City**

The idea that planners should respect and enable diversity is not new. As seminal authors on urbanism, e.g., Jane Jacobs, William Whyte, Lewis Mumford and Kevin Lynch, have argued, diversity is a normative good and “is often recognized as one of the most important conditions of a good (vital, well-functioning) human settlement” (Talen, 2005, p. 215). Moreover, there is a widespread view that urban diversity is essential to economic growth and development. By looking to works on the importance of

biodiversity, one can see that heterogeneous human settlement is a vital part of sustainability (Talen, 2005).

Even though diversity is now widely regarded as a normative planning goal, the planner must cope with the added dimensions of external socio-cultural forces that are reshaping cities of the twenty-first century: the unprecedented level of migration, the globalization of economic production and the rise of minorities and civil society (Sandercock, 1998). The resulting urban condition is one in which “difference, otherness, multiplicity, heterogeneity, diversity and plurality prevail” (Sandercock, 2003, p. 37). In the immigrant city, how can the planner accommodate subsets of the population—with a wide range of socio-demographic characteristics, languages, financial resources and cultural values that are different from their receiving cities—while at the same time serving the overall good of the city? The dimension of cultural difference, a marked characteristic of the contemporary immigrant city, further deepens the dilemma, for the planner must deal with the specific planning issues of daily life within the broader context of cultural difference and conflict. Conflicts over land use, allocation of resources, preservation and design are probable, if not inevitable. The planner is confronted with the question of how to evaluate competing claims, where everyone’s claims to cultural identity and expression are legitimate. He must reconcile the rights and claims of particular cultural groups with the interest of the multicultural whole of society.

Another issue is that the dominance of multi-ethnic, multi-racial and multi-national populations are challenging existing planning systems, policies and practices, in at least four general ways: First, the values and norms of the dominant culture are usually embedded in legislative frameworks of planning, planning by-laws and regulations. Underlying these frameworks are implicit assumptions and biases about what constitutes a ‘normal household’ or ‘appropriate’ urban form for such households, about gender relations and their spatial expression and about preferred recreational activity (Sandercock, 1998). Growing diversity is forcing a debate in many cities about the appropriate balance between respecting diversity and defending technical planning norms in urban development (Pestieu & Wallace, 2003).

Second, these norms and values are also embodied in the attitudes, behavior and practices of planners (Sandercock, 1998). Problems can arise from not only cultural misunderstandings, but also more deep-seated beliefs about the superiority of one’s own culture or that immigrants should adapt to the dominant norms. A third challenge is that xenophobia or racism finds its expression through the planning system, through planning disputes over issues such as the location of a mosque or temple, the retail practices of immigrant vendors and the housing preferences of immigrant families. A fourth challenge arises when Western planners are confronted with cultural practices that are incommensurable with their own values (Sandercock, 1998).

## **Approaches to Planning for the Immigrant City**

In spite of significant developments in recent planning literature, there is a lack of a comprehensive or unified theoretical framework to address the diversity that immigration engenders. Here, I examine the various ways that American planning has approached issues of racial and ethnic and cultural difference. I begin by setting forth a framework within which to organize the different approaches. I then discuss the history of planning's response to immigrants, from early planning to present day. Finally, I examine how planners have addressed cultural and racial difference in the field. The goal is not necessarily to advocate any single approach over the other, but to explain the range of possibilities and thereby broaden our understandings of directions we might take in specific situations and of how to plan more deliberately and productively.

### **Neutral, Partisan, Equity and Resolver Strategies**

In his article "Urban Planning and Intergroup Conflict: Confronting a Fractured Public Interest," Scott Bollens (2002) identified four planning strategies that urban planners might adopt in response to racially, ethnically and culturally divided cities: neutral, partisan, equity and resolver. A neutral strategy distances itself from issues of ethnic identity, power inequalities, and political exclusion. Under this strategy, planning acts as an ethnically neutral or "color blind" mode of state intervention responsive to individual needs and differences. A partisan strategy furthers an empowered ethnic group's values and authority and rejects claims of the disenfranchised group. Under this approach, planners seek to entrench and expand territorial claims or enforce exclusionary control of access. In contrast, an equity strategy gives primacy to ethnic affiliation in order to decrease intergroup inequalities. An equity planner is much more aware than a neutral planner of group-based inequalities and political imbalances in the city and recognizes the need for remediation and affirmative action policies based on group identity. Finally, a resolver strategy seeks to connect urban issues to root causes of urban polarization, such as power imbalances, competing ethnic group identities and disempowerment. According to this strategy, planners challenge the impacts and authority of government policy and attempt to link scientific and technical knowledge to processes of systemic transformation. Bollens's empirical study of Belfast, Jerusalem and Johannesburg found that resolver and equity policies tended to lead to less tension than neutral and partisan policies.

### **Early and Modernist Planning**

Since the 19th century, planners have contended with issues of the effects of immigration, focusing on the issues of housing, mobility and integration. Throughout the 19th and early 20th century, the question of the implications of immigration for cities had been a constant issue in American planning.

Paralleling the public health and social reform movements, much of early American planning was a job of responding to the physical, economic and social effects of immigration on people and places. Early planners regarded housing as the foremost problem requiring solutions in immigrant districts. They saw the lack of affordable housing for immigrants as an important cause of congestion. Many planners held that they could actively manage immigration in tandem with overall urban development by redistributing immigrant populations (Vitiello, 2009).

Similarly, early 20th century planning recognized the significance of immigration on planning issues such as housing, growth and congestion and economic development. However, soon thereafter, immigration became virtually irrelevant to the task of urban planning. Two factors seem to account for the severance of this relationship. First, foreign immigration largely ended in 1924 and did not resume on a large scale until 1965. Second, with the rise and dominance of rational comprehensive planning in the mid-20th century, planners concerned themselves with physical planning and neglected social planning issues (Vitiello, 2009).

This reliance on rational comprehensive planning was part of the modernist planning tradition, which rests on “six pillars”: (1) instrumental rational public/political decision making; (2) comprehensive planning, which was seen as integrative, coordinative and hierarchical; (3) knowledge and expertise grounded in positive science, with its propensity for quantitative modeling and analysis; (4) state-directed futures, with the state seen as progressive and reformist and as separate from the economy; (5) the planner’s ability to identify the singular gender and race neutral public interest; and (6) apolitical value-neutrality (Sandercock, 2003, pp. 31-32).

Early and modernist planning, though ‘neutral’ on its face, was in fact ‘partisan’ in that it furthered the dominant culture’s values while disregarding those of immigrant populations. Burayidi (2000) referred to the period in planning history from the beginning of the planning profession to 1960 as the “assimilationist/monistic” phase, which was part of a larger national ideology and policy of assimilation. Planners understood the ‘public interest’ as value-free and unitary. Minority groups were required to lose their distinctive values and replace them with those of the dominant culture. Planners did not have to concern themselves with how their work affected cultural and ethnic groups. They regarded ethnic enclaves as transitional areas that would eventually be replaced through the ecological process of succession. As a result, planners saw little need to focus on developing these neighborhoods (Burayidi, 2000). Such thinking enabled the urban renewal programs of the mid-twentieth century, which razed perceived slums and displaced urban immigrants (Bollens, 2002).

### **Pluralist Planning**

Beginning in the 1960s, planners began to adopt ‘equity’ strategies. This approach encompasses the rise of the various strands of pluralist planning (such as equity, advocacy and feminist planning),

which recognizes the significance of ethnic and cultural differences. This approach was a response to the need to address planning's disparate impacts along class, race and gender lines. As planners turned their attention to social justice issues, they focused on providing access to jobs, housing and basic public amenities and services. Their objective was to bring these disenfranchised groups into the decision making process to ensure that outcomes would be favorable to these groups. Planners were called upon to incorporate the voices of the marginalized racial, cultural and ethnic groups and to deal with the challenge of incorporating their alternative views into existing policies and programs (Burayidi, 2000).

During this phase, immigrants helped redefine the planning profession. Prompted by the injustices of urban renewal projects, migrants mobilized their communities and formed support networks to demand social justice. Some of their networks grew into service providers and community development corporations. Their mobilization inspired the rise of advocacy planning and the evolution of community development, merging planning, affordable housing and social services. Planners adopted their methods of community organizing and conflict resolution. More broadly, immigrant interventions forged an understanding of planning that re-integrated planning with related social policies and institutions (Vitiello, 2009).

### **Multicultural Planning**

In spite of immigration's role in redefining planning, for the latter half of the 20th century, those outside the planning field, such as sociologists, anthropologists and urban policy analysts, paid far more attention to immigration than those within it (Vitiello, 2009). However, over the past two decades, planning scholars and practitioners have produced a small but burgeoning literature on immigration and immigrant communities (e.g., Sandercock, Harwood, Talen, Qadeer, Vitiello, Burayidi). The resurgence of interest in immigration can be explained by two factors. First, while previously, ethnic urban landscapes could be contained in ghettos, barrios and slums, the "new spatial order"—marked by globalization, the international division of labor, immigration flows and transnational capitalism—has made the presence of other social groups and cultures "impossible to ignore" (Loukaitou-Sideris, 2002). These trends prompted planners to acknowledge immigration as an increasingly important economic and social factor in urban development, affecting both the physical form and social composition of cities. Additionally, from a demographic perspective, planners could not gloss over the impact of the revival of large-scale immigration on total population and housing markets (Myers & Pitkin, 2009).

Second, there has been a paradigmatic shift, both within planning and more generally, from the master narratives that governed modernist ideology to "social issues focused on questions of human agency, lived experience, and cultural reproduction" within shifting power relations (Nasser, 2004, p. 6). Up to that point, the dominant planning narratives could "make segments of the population invisible by assimilation, exclusion, or reconstitution to an amalgamated 'other'" (Loukaitou-Sideris, 2002, p. 271).

### **Critiques of modernist planning.**

Much of the emerging literature criticizes modernist planning on the basis of its failure to acknowledge the realities of the social, cultural and ethnic diversity. Planners traditionally have acted as objective proponents of rational, scientific planning methods and have developed and implemented generic, uniform planning processes on the assumption that land use problems could be isolated from socio-economic, racial, and ethnic concerns (Burayidi, 2003). Similarly, modernist planning has tended to homogenize urban space and at the same time silence many of the users of that space. Moreover, modernist notions of the public good have given planners a skewed sense of their own professional responsibilities, biased towards the white upper middle classes and business and propertied interests, rather than the public (Rahder, 2004). As Holston wrote:

Modernist planning presupposes a world without contradiction, without conflict. It assumes a rational domination of the future in which its total and totalizing plan dissolves any conflict between the imagined and the existing society in the imposed coherence of its order. This assumption...fails to include as *constituent* elements of planning the conflict, ambiguity, and indeterminacy characteristic of actual social life." (1998, p. 46)

As a result, modernist institutions and processes have not been “designed with difference in mind” (Burayidi, 2003, p. 270). This “neutral, color-blind planning, although seen as safe, is both inadequate and difficult to implement in urban circumstances of different values and trajectories” (Bollens, 2002, p. 36). Moreover, when applied in urban settings of structural inequality, it fails to produce equitable outcomes. Urban policy that does not take into account the quantitatively and qualitatively different needs of groups tend to reinforce, not lessen, urban inequalities (Bollens, 2002). As Sandercock wrote, we “have never been modern... planning practices have always been deeply interested rather than disinterested, deeply implicated in politics and in communicative acts” (2003, p. 33).

Seeking to address the premises and inequitable outcomes of modernist planning, multicultural planning scholars and practitioners have formulated a variety of responses. While there is ongoing debate about multiculturalism as an ideology, planners generally agree that multiculturalism as a “public philosophy acknowledges racial and cultural differences in a society and encourages their sustenance and expressions as constituent elements of a national social order” (Qadeer, 1997, p. 482).<sup>7</sup> Multicultural

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<sup>7</sup> Others conceptualize multiculturalism in different ways. As an ideology, multiculturalism has many strands of thought, ranging from the conservative to the revolutionary:

Conservative multiculturalism insists on the assimilation of difference into the traditions and cultures of the majority. Liberal multiculturalism seeks to integrate the different cultural groups...into the 'mainstream' provided by a universal individual citizenship...Pluralist multiculturalism enfranchises the differences between groups along cultural lines and accords different group rights to different communities within a

planners seek to forge a vision of a city that harmonizes distinctive cultures and to translate that vision into planning processes, policies, programs and standards. Multicultural planning goes beyond a pluralist or 'equity' planning strategy, for it does not only advocate for the disadvantaged (Qadeer, 1997). In this regard, compared to prior planning approaches, it is the most consistent with Bollen's concept of a 'resolver' planning strategy.

### **Approaches to multicultural planning.**

I see five broad kinds of responses to the question of how to plan for multicultural societies: (1) overhaul of the planning system; (2) market mechanisms; (3) process-based dialogue; (4) educating planners on the skills needed to work in multicultural contexts; and (5) design-based diversity (Sandercock, 2000; Talen, 2005). The first kind of response involves revamping the planning system through legislation and/or lawsuits, so that it is in line with multi-cultural policies and anti-discrimination laws (Sandercock, 2000). Of all the kinds of responses, this one seems to be the least developed in the United States. Compared to the multicultural planning policies in Canada and Australia, which have official national policies of multiculturalism, the United States is lagging (Qadeer, 1997; Thompson, 2003). The template for this kind of planning "has not yet been developed and the legislative overhaul is a daunting task which usually only occurs after at least a generation of powerful lobbying" (Sandercock, 2000, p. 3).

The second type of response is market mechanisms. Planning issues are implicated when, for example, small businesses providing culturally specific goods and services seek requests for signage or for changes in regulations concerning retail practices to allow street vendors or street displays. Similarly, businesses engaged in immigrants' housing construction might elicit controversy over nonconforming uses and design (Sandercock, 2000).

Generally, American planners in the multicultural school have focused on the last three methods. I discuss each below.

### ***Process-based dialogue.***

In Sandercock's view, the process-based response of dialogue provides the most promise for managing intercultural co-existence in shared space. She described it as "a dialogical approach (as would occur in psychoanalysis) which brings antagonistic parties together to talk through their concerns"

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more...communitarian political order. Commercial multiculturalism assumes that if the diversity of individuals is recognized in the marketplace, then the problems of cultural difference will be dissolved through private consumption, without any need for a redistribution of power and resources. Corporate multiculturalism (public or private) seeks to 'manage' minority cultural differences in the interests of the centre. Critical or 'revolutionary' multiculturalism foregrounds power, privilege, the hierarchy of oppressions and the movements of resistances...And so on. (Hall, 2000, p. 210)

(Sandercock, 2000, p. 23). Careful to distinguish her approach from that of communicative planning, she has noted two critical differences. First, the communicative planning approach is a model that has assumed that rational discourse among stakeholders is both appropriate and achievable (Sandercock, 2000). As Rahder & Milgrom (2004) have noted, communicative planning fails to account for conflicting rationalities in that it contains universal assumptions about the nature of reason and rationality that do not hold in settings where there are fundamental differences among participants. Neglecting the differences in institutionalized power, it takes place within a framework of culturally defined sets of social and power relations. In these respects, while communicative planning theory has made advances in opening up the participatory process, it has inadequately addressed the issues of multicultural relations.

The second difference is that outcomes from the communicative planning approach are not necessarily or intended to be transformative, i.e., something beyond a merely workable compromise (Sandercock, 2000). Drawing from a case study in Sydney, Australia and borrowing from Sherry Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation, Sandercock has called on planners to create a political space that allows for a "therapeutic" approach to urban conflicts. This approach focuses on a language and process of emotional involvement and has the potential to bring about social transformation through a process of public learning that results in permanent shifts in values and institutions, as opposed and collective growth, not just compromise (Sandercock, 2003).

While case studies suggest process-based solutions that could guide planners facing multicultural problems, these approaches are not without limitations. Presented in specific cases studies, they may not have wide applicability (Sandercock, 2000). Moreover, although these processes and practice examples are beneficial, they are largely designed to address multicultural problems only after they arise. The "reactive approaches are knee jerk reactions that may solve *ad hoc* problems. What is needed is a redesign of the planning system for managing diversity without which planners' efforts, even when well intentioned, will only produce limited short-term gains" (Burayidi, 2003, p. 270).

### ***Planning education.***

Numerous scholars have called for changes in planning education (e.g., Sandercock, Burayidi, Bollens, Vitiello, Harwood and Rahder). Burayidi (2003) has sought to sensitize planners to the diversity of the urban public realm and the need to embrace planning processes that include all groups and address the concerns of a multicultural constituency. He has called for a change in planning culture so that it recognizes plurality as points of departure in planning practice. In his view, cultural sensitivity will enhance "(i) communication skills of planners so that they are able to interact with a multicultural public; and (ii) give planners a better understanding of the beliefs, values and customs of different cultural groups so that they develop insight into the lenses through which these groups operate" (Burayidi, 2003, p. 271). He has suggested that planners undertake cultural sensitivity training courses in their formal planning

education and in cultural workshops for practitioners. In a similar vein, Thompson (2003, p. 276) has called for the development of the “culturally inclusive planner.” While cultural sensitivity is an important component of multicultural planning, Sandercock (2003) has made the well-taken point that it alone is not enough and that action is needed on many fronts.

Still, cultural sensitivity is not the only aspect of planning education that stands revision. Planners need to learn methods of research and analysis that develop more sophisticated understandings of the dynamics of immigration and diversity and their relationship to planning policies and practices. For example, as Talen (2005) has noted, planners need to develop tools that provide more nuanced understandings of the relationship between regulatory tools, such as zoning, and human diversity.

***Design-based diversity.***

Some planners hold that design can enable diversity. Their response to the challenges of diversity is “place diversity--the phenomenon of socioeconomically diverse peoples sharing the same neighborhood, where diversity is defined by a mix of income levels, races, ethnicities, ages, and family types” (Talen, 2008, pp. 4-5). Place diversity is “diversity that exists in the realm of 'everyday life' activities - attending school and shopping for groceries, for example. It concerns the neighborhood, whose pattern, design, and level of resources constitute the 'things that really count' - schools, security, jobs, property values, amenities” (Talen, 2008, p. 5). Talen has focused her work on developing design strategies for neighborhoods, public places and housing that can provide “cross-cutting identities” that enable, sustain or manage diversity. Far from a systemic or comprehensive, these strategies are “a point of departure for elaborating a more explicit connection” (Talen, 2006, p. 243).

Talen’s ideas rely on physical contact theory, which holds that proximity of interaction can foster cultural understanding (Amin, 2002). While Talen acknowledges the limits of place-based diversity, the school of New Urbanism seems to ignore them. The New Urbanists have been gaining influence. Recently, the Congress for the New Urbanism worked closely with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to develop New Urbanist design principles for HUD’s HOPE VI projects (Day, 2003). Thus, it is important to explain New Urbanism’s shortcomings for addressing a multicultural society. Supporting diversity in neighborhoods is a pronounced goal of New Urbanism. The preamble to the “Charter of the New Urbanism” identifies the “increasing separation by race and income” as part of an “interrelated community-building challenge” (Congress for the New Urbanism, 1996). New Urbanists advocate for the principle that “neighborhoods should be diverse in use and population,” yet offer few strategies for directly achieving diversity (Congress for the New Urbanism,

1996). Their chief means toward this end is the provision of a range of housing prices and housing types in each community (Day, 2003).<sup>8</sup>

In her case study of a New Urbanist project in Coast Mesa, California, Day examined the use of New Urbanism to revitalize neighborhoods with diverse populations. She concluded that: physical changes may not be the best solution for the social problems that often face such neighborhoods; New Urbanist ideas may have different meanings to different groups of neighborhood residents; New Urbanist neighborhood renovation may displace low-income residents; and New Urbanist participatory design processes may not in practice accommodate diversity and may actually repress it (Day, 2003).

Day's findings point to fundamental incompatibilities between New Urbanism and multicultural planning. New Urbanism's limitations can be understood in light of the "myth of community" (Young, 1990, p. 229, quoted in Day, 2003, p. 86). New Urbanists, like early and modernist planners, hold to the belief that community is a place where its members "share common values and practices, a common vocabulary, and 'a common ordering of individual needs and wants into a single, shared vision of the future'" (Day, 2003, p. 86, quoting Young, 1990, p. 229). This ideal of community "ignores the fact that the polity is not a unity in which all participants share a common experience identity, and values" (Day, 2003, p. 87). It "expresses a desire for the fusion of subjects with one another that in practice, operates to exclude those with whom the group does not identify" (Day, 2003, p. 87). Similarly, New Urbanism's idea of community denies and represses difference. This runs contrary to the multicultural project.

Another limitation is that New Urbanism engenders only co-presence, not actual engagement. Its contact theory-based policies rely on greater ethnic mixing in housing and the power of visibility and encounter between strangers in open or public spaces such as cafes, parks, streets, shopping malls and squares (Amin, 2002). However, planning that rests solely on location proximity creates physical but not discursive spaces (Sandercock, 2006). The contact spaces of housing developments and public places fall short of nurturing interethnic understanding, because "they are not spaces of interdependence and habitual engagement" (Amin, 2002, p. 12). In his study of three post-race riot cities in northern Britain, Amin observed that public spaces "tend to be territorialized by particular groups" or "are spaces of transit contact between strangers" (2002, p. 11). He concluded that habitual contact, rather than foster cultural

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<sup>8</sup> The Charter (1996) states: "Within neighborhoods, a broad range of housing types and price levels can bring people of diverse ages, races, and incomes into daily interaction, strengthening the personal and civic bonds essential to an authentic community." Similarly, the "Principles for Inner City Neighborhood Design: Creating Communities of Opportunity" states that to achieve diversity they seek to "provide a broad range of housing types and price levels to bring people of diverse ages, races, and incomes into daily interaction—strengthening the personal and civic bonds essential to an authentic community" (Congress for the New Urbanism & U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2000, p. 4).

exchange, can “entrench group animosities and identities, through repetitions of gender, class, race, and ethnic codes” (Amin, 2002, p. 13).

In Sandercock’s (2006) assessment, the multicultural project has been flawed because it has relied on ethnically and racially-based approaches, an understanding of culture as static, Western liberal ideals and understandings of community that do not correspond to the cities of the twenty-first century. Applying Bollen’s framework, the current multicultural approaches do not fulfill the criteria of a ‘resolver’ strategy, for while they address the impacts of planning decisions or policies, they do not attack the root causes of conflict, challenge planning’s underlying assumptions or seek systemic transformation.

#### **An “intercultural” perspective.**

More closely approaching a ‘resolver’ strategy is Sandercock’s (2006, p. 46) “intercultural perspective.” This theoretical basis for thinking about how to deal with difference challenges the social order on a fundamental level and addresses the root causes of conflict arising out of difference. It promotes more dynamic and inclusive visions of community and belonging that better address the multicultural condition. It holds that a sense of belonging, which is important in any society, cannot be based on shared cultural, ethnic or other characteristics. It rejects the notion that the ‘common good’ is a unitary concept or object and sees it as something that is “generated not by transcending or ignoring cultural and other differences (the liberal position), but through their interplay in a dialogical, agonistic political life” (Sandercock, 2003, p. 151). In a similar vein, Rahder & Milgrom (2004, p. 37) have argued that planners should be asking “how cultural diversity can generate new urban forms and new systems of neighborhood governance, rather than attempting to recapture an imaginary past.”

Sandercock’s intercultural perspective finds form and substance in the “micropublics where dialogue and 'prosaic negotiations' are compulsory, in sites such as the workplace, schools, colleges, youth centres, sports clubs, community centres and other spaces of association” (Amin, 2002, p. 12). In these “micro-cultures of place,” everyday lived experiences and “local negotiations of difference” take place, “through which abstract rights and obligations, together with local structures and resources, meaningfully interact with distinctive individual and inter-personal experiences” (Amin, 2002, p. 12). For Amin, cultural exchange is likely to be encouraged when people can step out of their daily environments into “sites of banal transgression” (2002, p. 13). Their effectiveness lies in placing people of different backgrounds together in new settings where engagement with strangers in a common activity disrupts familiar patterns and creates the possibility of forming new attachments. “They are moments of cultural destabilisation, offering individuals the chance to break out of fixed relations and fixed notion, and through this, to learn to become different through new patterns for social interaction” (Amin, 2002, p. 13).

For planners, a social project of an intercultural urbanism entails a planning focus at the level of the neighborhood—that creation of local institutions and public places that create the necessary spaces for meaningful interaction in daily negotiations of difference. Further, creating physical spaces alone is not enough. Planners need to develop “organizational and discursive strategies...in order to build voice, to foster a sense of solidarity across differences, to develop confidence among disempowered groups, and to mediate when disputes arise” (Sandercock, 2006, pp. 46-47).

### **Planning Practice**

In spite of the emergence of literature on how planning should respond to immigration and ethno-cultural diversity, there is far less literature that explains how these insights could be put into practice or that identifies innovative strategies that practitioners have implemented (Pestieau & Wallace, 2003). Practitioners’ limited success in mediating disputes about immigrants’ land use and building design reveals the limits of multiculturalism in U.S. planning practice (Harwood, 2005; Loukaitou-Sideris, 2002; Pestieau & Wallace, 2003; Qadeer, 1997). Harwood (2005) has found that while contemporary planners generally endorse diversity, they have not been as willing or able to embrace it in practice.

Harwood based her finding on three case studies of how planners addressed land use controversies concerning immigrants in Orange County. Her study highlighted how people involved in intense debates over land use drew on deeply embedded fears, concerns and resentments about different social and cultural groups. She observed that city officials rarely raised the topics of ethnicity, culture or immigration, which they held to be irrelevant to policymaking. Similarly, they rarely questioned existing procedures, which they viewed as impartial and neutral. In terms of outcomes, she noted that in the case of a Buddhist temple’s application for a conditional use, the planners addressed neighborhood concerns by requiring the temple to build walls to contain the temple’s members and activities.

Although Harwood’s study is limited to three specific cases, her arguments have more general application. Drawing out the ways that planning policies and procedures are used to “police difference,” she has argued that, in a multicultural community, the notion of an ethnically or culturally neutral planning process is implausible (Harwood, 2005, p. 368). Contrary to being neutral, planners are “acting politically when they decide what to include or exclude from staff reports; which planner to hire; and how to interact, assist, and interpret codes for residents and business people at the public counter—not to mention deciding when to translate information and when to solicit community participation” (Harwood, 2005, p. 367).

The role that a planner can and should play in multicultural and immigrant communities is still being worked out. A study of thirty-two planning faculty found that “the ability to plan in a multicultural environment is one of the most critical skills needed of planners in North American today” (Burayidi, 2000, p. 37). Yet, planners have had an “ambiguous and often ambivalent relationship with migrant

communities” (Vitiello, 2009, p. 245). Vitiello (2009) attributes this to three factors: U.S. planning’s focus on places more than people; the difficulty of distinguishing immigration issues from other planning and policy issues; and the attempt to make planning processes culturally neutral. In light of these factors, planners are struggling to make sense of how to understand and address immigration in their profession:

Planning departments have little interaction with immigrant communities; the media rarely frames immigration policy questions constructively; there is a lack of graduate planning courses on immigration; a full accounting of immigrants’ impacts is challenging to achieve; most analysis of basic social and economic trends in comprehensive plans fails to capture the ‘demographic dynamism’ shaping the future of metropolitan areas. (Vitiello, 2009, p. 251)

Of course, these are generalizations, and there are many exceptions. One example is the response by the planning department in Oceanside, California to a series of problems relating to illegal food services by Latino immigrants in the Crown Heights neighborhood (Holston, 2001). Rather than simply do away these illegal uses, the planners developed a comprehensive, creative and constructive response. In addition to considering the issues of code, enforcement and safety, the planners sought an “anthropological” perspective. They framed their inquiry in cultural terms, asking:

What kind of neighborhood installation would not only solve the problem of food supply but also that of transience, in the sense that it would enhance community attachment and stability in the absence of home ownership? How could the planning of this facility involve residents and thus benefit from a ‘bottom-up’ participation—or at least benefit from ethnographic information about the needs, habits, and desires of residents? Should the Department try to encourage a Latino cultural pattern of business to take hold in a new home—that is, food shopping as a public urban event in an open-air market—or try to Americanize food shopping by encouraging the development of a suburban-type [i.e., private and interior] supermarket? (Holston, 2001, p. 343)

In framing the issues in this way, the planners recognized that Latino residents have a right to sustain their culture, that the city benefits from a diversity of cultures, and that by supporting the right to cultural difference, planners could not only to improve neighborhood conditions, but foster the residents’ own self-help initiatives (Holston, 2001).

In the face of multicultural complexity, some planners define their role as managing diversity to minimize conflicts (Pestieu & Wallace, 2003). While this is an important aspect of planning, this approach is largely reactive and passive in that it seeks to respond to conflicts and social processes and attitudes, rather than shaping them. To focus only on conflict management misses out on some important opportunities.

## Planning Possibilities for Immigration and Housing

### Problems or Opportunities?

Many perceive the empirical reality of the multicultural city as much more of a threat than an opportunity (Sandercock, 2003). However, the multicultural city possesses both possibilities. Sandercock lays out the two ends of the spectrum:

The great possibility of the mongrel cities of the 21st century is the dream of *cosmopolis*: cities in which there is acceptance of, connection with, and respect and space for 'the stranger', the possibility of working together on matters of common destiny and forging new hybrid cultures and urban projects and ways of living. The real danger is that difference will further fracture, fragment, splinter the fragile urban social fabric as new demands for rights to the city emerge: rights to a voice, to participation, and to co-existences in the physical spaces of the built environment, which are then opposed by those who feel too threatened by the disruption to their accustomed way of life. (2003, p. 127)

Whether immigration constitutes a threat or an opportunity is an open question. Its resolution depends on how planners respond to the challenges that racial, ethnic and cultural differences present. Although many of the forces that are shaping cities today—e.g., international migration and the globalization of economies—might seem outside the control and purview of local planning, planners can shape how these forces manifest themselves on the ground (Bollens, 2002). “Planning and development decisions in today's multicultural cities can establish bridges and links between racial/ethnic neighborhoods or they can build boundaries and figurative walls” (Bollens, 2002, p. 38). Planners stand in a unique position to connect day-to-day urban issues with broader political and societal root problems. Accordingly, planners have the potential to minimize the dangers and maximize the opportunities that Sandercock described.

Here, I focus on the topic of housing because its issues—such as supply and demand in affordable housing and the conflicts that arise over appropriate use, design and occupancy—have been a central concern for immigrants and a key source of contention between immigrants and their host societies (Burayidi, 2003; Myers, 2001; Theodore & N. Martin, 2007; Vitiello, 2009). Much of the literature advocating for multicultural planning focuses on how current planning practices may not address the unique housing needs of ethno-cultural groups. Similarly, it focuses on how immigrant housing practices—such as the construction of monster houses, overcrowding, or the engaging in uses that are incompatible with residential zoning—are contested by host governments and neighbors. In this regard, the authors frame their discussions around three issue areas: first, to what extent the specific housing needs of ethno-cultural groups matter; second, whether the existing housing stock adequately serves the shelter needs of these groups; and third, how scarce public resources could be allocated to more effectively serve the housing needs of these groups (Burayidi, 2003).

Rather unexplored in planning literature are the ways in which immigration could offer new possibilities for planning. Even within the multicultural school, planners place far greater emphasis on the questions of how to minimize conflict and reach acceptable compromise. Choosing to take a different direction, in this section, I focus on how immigrant housing needs, demands and practices intersect with the larger population and wider objectives of planning. Immigration, I contend, presents new possibilities and opportunities, not just for the advancement of the interests of particular immigrant communities, but for all. In dealing with housing issues, the planner's role is not only to manage conflict and to allocate resources, but also to seek better housing patterns, designs, policies and visions. I discuss three ways that immigration could aid planners in this search.

### **Filling the Baby Boomer Void in the Housing Market**

In Immigrants and Boomers, Dowell Myers (2008) has provided forward-looking insight into the relationship between two major demographic forces shaping American cities: the aging of the baby boom generation and the revival of large-scale immigration. As Myers has argued, the aging of the baby boom generation could cause a “catastrophic generation housing bubble,” brought on by the flooding of the market with baby boomer houses for sale and not enough buyers (Myers, 2008, p. 243). However, the growing number of upwardly mobile immigrants could fill the void left by baby boomers in homeownership demand, as well as the job market and tax base.

Based on his research on Latino immigrants in California, the bellwether for the United States, Myers has predicted a growth in the number of immigrants who arrived after 1970 and the upward mobility of these longer-settled immigrants. He has argued that immigrants' progress has not been widely recognized partly because people have simply assumed that adult immigrants make no improvements. Also, the much larger numbers of immigrants who arrived in the later decades has obscured evidence of the progress of earlier immigrants. “Citizens have simply extrapolated past conditions into the future, ignoring the fact that settled immigrants grow older, assimilate, and make economic gains” (Myers, 2008, p. 11). In contrast, Myers has advanced the idea that as immigration levels off or even declines, there will be a greater predominance of longer-settled immigrants and more prevalent upward mobility.

Correspondingly, a study of the five states with the largest immigrant populations—California, New York, Florida, Texas and Illinois by Myers & Liu (2005) indicated a growing trend in homeownership among immigrants. Their study found:

- In 2000, the foreign born had a homeownership rate of 50 percent, as compared to 69 percent among the native born, yet were “now entering the housing market on an unprecedented scale” (Myers & Liu, 2005, p. 351). Those who arrived in the 1980s and 1990s had entered their prime home owning phase and had become first-time homebuyers.

- While upon first arrival, immigrants were unprepared for the housing market—lack of financial resources and institutional know-how—they tended to rapidly progress into homeownership with their growing experience and longer duration of stay in the country.
- While a number of factors affected the housing tenure choice of immigrants (including immigrants' age, ethnicity, educational attainment, national origin, location choice and occupational achievements), the most important factor was the length of stay. As immigrants progressed economically in society, they tended to approximate or even exceed the homeownership attainments of comparable native borns.

These studies suggest that immigrants could form a strong counterbalancing force in the housing market in the near future as the aging baby boomers sell their homes. Planners could serve their communities by “capitalizing on the infusion of immigrant energy” (Myers & Liu, 2005, p. 364).

### **Rethinking Housing Norms and Standards**

Immigration could engage planners and policy makers to rethink the relevance, efficacy and validity of existing housing policies, regulations and programs. Too often, planners and policy makers rely on housing norms, embodied in zoning codes and occupancy standards, to make decisions about housing. This approach leads to inefficient and ineffective programs and misallocation of public resources (Myers, Baer, & Choi, 1996). For example, consider the related standards of occupancy and overcrowding. Planners and policy makers use overcrowding—currently defined as the condition where occupancy exceeds 1 person per room<sup>9</sup>—as a key indicator of housing adequacy and affordability (Myers et al., 1996). Federal government laws and agencies rely on overcrowding indicators in their policies and programs. For example, HUD uses overcrowding as an indicator when targeting housing subsidies and as one of the core indicators in estimates of “worst case needs” (Myers, Baer & Choi, 1996, p. 67). Community Development Block Grants weigh overcrowding 25 percent in the formula for determining how much funding each city is to receive. Similarly, occupancy codes have had a profound impact on the design and size of housing units (Pader, 2002).

Occupancy standards have been justified “under the rubric of providing for the health, safety, comfort and convenience of the inhabitants” (Pader, 2002, p. 306). Implicit in discussions about crowding is the belief that the effects from crowding negatively impact people's mental and physical health. Yet, there “is no basis in the scientific literature for choosing one standard of unacceptable crowding over another” (Myers et al., 1996, p. 68). Pader has argued occupancy standards are not

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<sup>9</sup> The crowding standard has changed over time based on “assumptions about national income distributions, assessments of the nation’s housing quality, and prospects for the future” (Myers et al., 1996, p. 68). In 1940, the conventional standard applied by local and federal government was greater than 2.00 persons per room (PPR). By 1950, it was lowered to 1.5 PPR and, by 1960, to 1.0 PPR (Myers et al., 1996).

scientific, but a social and political construction of the ‘normal’ American family (Pader, 2002). Studying the historical origins of occupancy codes, Pader has concluded that these codes were designed to protect a culturally constructed ideal of health and safety from “the perspective of early 20th century upper class and mostly northern European reformers, transposed and naturalized into late 20th/early 21st century policies, and priorities about individualism, privacy, personal property, the body, responsibility, and social justice among other beliefs” (Pader, 2002, p. 315). In short, occupancy standards attempt to define family and the appropriate socio-spatial arrangements for an idealized ‘normal’ American household.

Accordingly, the debate over overcrowding is about the appropriate norms to use when evaluating the desirability of current and future housing development conditions (Myers, 2001). Immigration forces planners to confront questions about the usefulness of relying too heavily on these standards and the validity of the standards themselves. Current policies and practices answer the question by applying a single middle class standard to everyone. A multicultural perspective might lead to a different approach that more effectively responds to actual housing needs. Consider the various perspectives on overcrowding. Anthony Downs, a Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institute and housing expert, has argued that housing shortages create “slums dwellings” (Downs, 2005, p. 106). His solution essentially has been to build more affordable housing. Likewise, federal policies have typically included supplementing the incomes of low-income households through vouchers or subsidizing development costs through low-income housing tax credits for developers (Burayidi, 2003). Yet, studies have found that Asians and Hispanics regard higher household densities as culturally acceptable (Myers et al., 1996; Pader, 1994). Myer et al.’s study found that Asian and Hispanic households were much more likely to be overcrowded than are White or Black households. It also revealed that overcrowding levels for Asians and Hispanics did not drop markedly until income exceeded 80 percent of the median level. Similarly, Pader’s anthropological study of uses of domestic space by American and Mexican households found that Mexican households had a cultural preference for dense household living (Pader, 1994).

The immediate implication of these studies is that understanding the cultural context of overcrowding is important to devising appropriate public policy. The wider implication is that the existing policy of imposing a homogeneous standard on a culturally diverse population is counter-productive, leads to inefficient and effective programs and allocation of public resources and, in some instances, may be discriminatory (Burayidi, 2003; Myers et al., 1996; Pader, 1994, 2002).

Nonetheless, as Myers et al. (1996) have argued, overcrowding standards should not be dismissed altogether as they are useful for determining a community’s service needs. Planners should focus on increasing the services (such as schools, parks, trash collection) of neighborhoods with increasing population density. This approach would have greater impact on the overall welfare of the neighborhood than would increasing the affordable housing stock. Since much of the cultural conflict related to

overcrowded housing involves longtime residents' reactions to the effect of recent immigrants on a neighborhood, mitigating such effects would reduce friction in these neighborhoods (Myers et al., 1996).

### **Sourcing a New Social Imagination**

Immigration could provide “a source for a new social imagination” (Holston, 1998, p. 39). Responding to the shortcomings of current planning, Holston has argued that “one of the most urgent problems in planning and architectural theory today is the need to develop a different social imagination—one that is not modernist but that nevertheless reinvents modernist’s active commitments to the invention of society and to the construction of the state” (1998, p. 39). According to Holston, the source of this new social imagination lies in understanding “spaces of insurgent citizenship”—the terrain of social movements for “rights to the city” (e.g., rights to housing, property, sanitation, health, and education), “based on the exigencies of lived experience, outside of the normative and institutional definitions of the state and its legal codes” (1998, p. 52).

Planners might look to traditional information sources, such as demographic data, to understand the nature of social problems and to model codes or designs for their remedy. In contrast, Holston has urged planners to study the sites of insurgent citizenship because they can help planners see the city as a place where ideas “rooted in the heterogeneity of everyday lived experience” can emerge (1998, p. 53). The study of insurgent citizenship concentrates on practices that engage the problematic nature of belonging to society. “It privileges such disturbances, emergencies, and engagements because it is at the fault lines of these processes that we perceive the dynamism of society” (Holston, 1998, p. 49). Planning that is linked to insurgent forms differs from modernist planning in that “it aims to understand society as a continual reinvention of the social, the present, and the modern and their modes of narrative and communication” (Holston, 1998, p. 49). What planners need to look for then are the sources of insurgent citizenship that indicate this reinvention. By studying these moments, planners can see “alternative possible sources for the development of new kinds of practices and narratives about belonging to and participating in society” (Holston, 1998, p. 53).

Consider the work of architect Teddy Cruz, who studied the spontaneous assembly of housing from salvaged California bungalows, in shantytowns along the Mexican border— informal housing, designed not from regulations or policies, but in response to real human needs and day-to-day activities (Downey, 2006). These ‘spaces of insurgent citizenship’ inspired Cruz’s design of a mixed-use development in San Ysidro, a low-income district of San Diego dominated by immigrant families. His half-acre lot development includes 19 multi-family condominium style rental units, public gardens, multi-use common areas and a church retrofitted into a community center. Each housing unit rests on top of a one-story frame. The first floor is designed to serve multiple functions such as a party, a workspace or a market. Within each house, each room can be reconfigured to accommodate the occupants’ changing

needs by opening or installing a door. For the adjacent slightly smaller lot, Cruz designed 13 senior housing units and a childcare facility. Cruz's project not only could accommodate the housing needs of immigrants in San Ysidro, but also "could become a model for affordable housing around the U.S." and "an antidote to the McMansion-style urban sprawl that has dominated the landscape" (Downey, 2006, p. 28).

Another example is Theodore & N. Martin's (2007) case study on how the rise of migrant civil society is forging new more dynamic and inclusive forms of community and citizenship across ethnic and geographic divides. They traced how migrants, in response to their need to preserve and increase the stock of affordable housing, formed a citywide coalition comprising community residents and several dozen neighborhood organizations across the city of Chicago, to advocate for affordable housing policies. These migrant civil society organizations leveraged "place-based collective identity," i.e., local identities constructed in and through places, to bridge or partially transcend identities constructed along lines of class, race, ethnicity, gender and sexuality and form common bonds—both within their neighborhoods and across the city (Theodore & N. Martin, 2007).

### **Conclusion**

In light of the profound impact of immigration on U.S. cities, understanding how to plan for a multicultural society is an imperative. Recent unprecedented levels of immigration from non-European nations have made the United States more diverse than ever before. At the same time, the familiar understandings of immigrants (e.g., as static or passive agents), their communities (e.g., as ethnic enclaves) and their accommodation (e.g., assimilation or pluralism) tend to provide only partial understandings of the dynamics at play. Planners need new or more refined concepts and research tools to help them better understand the nature and processes of immigration and settlement, the relationship between immigrants and their receiving cities and the socio-cultural attributes of the immigrants themselves. Likewise, planners need to continue to develop approaches to planning for a multicultural society. Planners in the United States have addressed issues of immigration and multiculturalism by focusing on process-based dialogue, educating planners to be more culturally sensitive and design-based diversity. They have yet to address these issues at the level of systems, norms or policies. Yet, questions about the cultural claims and rights of immigrants are challenging traditional notions of planning, thereby presenting occasion and opportunity for planners to explore the possibilities that immigration holds.

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