Will young professionals “return” to the centre in Latin American cities? The residential aspirations of professional households of Puebla, Mexico

Hélène Bélanger

INRS-Urbanisation, Culture et Société, Corresponding Address: Hélène Bélanger, 1281 Rachel, Montreal, Quebec, H2J 2J9, Canada, Tel. 514-524-8450, email: helene_belanger@yahoo.com

Keywords: residential mobility, residential aspirations, central neighbourhood regeneration, Puebla (Mexico)

Many cities in developed countries have experienced or are experiencing the regeneration of their central neighbourhoods. The professional class that (re)appropriates these areas is also present in Latin America. However, for many researchers the socio-residential regeneration process will be uncommon for several reasons.

First, the professional households are not interested in the old residential neighbourhoods because of the poor quality of housing and infrastructure, the social mix, the extremely high level of pollution and the (real or perceived) security problem. They would rather choose among the sectors at the periphery of the old centre that are newer and in better condition. Perhaps for other reasons, the literature shows that this behaviour is not uncommon, even in cities in the process of regeneration. Only a fraction of the households is interested in architectural heritage, which is present in the oldest neighbourhoods.

Second, the usual practice of intergenerational cohabitation does not favour residential mobility. Finally, some local particularities do not facilitate regeneration of the central area, such as economic development because of the small growth of quaternary activities, urban morphology and the failure of urban planning.

These reasons affect the professional households’ decision making concern-
ing their residential mobility. It is not the lack of interest that delays or postpones a process that could occur in many Latin American cities. In fact, it is more the lack of opportunities that make the difference in socio-residential patterns. In the case of Puebla (Mexico), professional households aspire to the same residential mobility as those in cities in developed countries. Even so, they are not able to reproduce the mobility pattern of their North American or European counterparts. This could be the result of the problem with the credit market (accessibility and costs) and with property titles that interfere with the fluidity of the housing market. These would be the principal constraints to residential mobility and thus, to the regeneration of central neighbourhoods.

Culture, lifestyle and the meaning of a dwelling

Henny Coolen and Ritsuko Ozaki

OTB Research Institute for Housing, Urban and Mobility Studies, Delft University of Technology, Jaffalaan 9, 2628 BX Delft, The Netherlands, Tel. +31 15 278 2747, Fax +31 15 278 4422, email: h.coolen@otb.tudelft.nl

Keywords: meaning of a dwelling, lifestyle, culture, home

The meaning of a dwelling, sometimes called the meaning of “home” has been studied from many different perspectives (Moore, 2000). In our research we use a conceptual framework that is based on two theoretical distinctions introduced by Rapoport (1988, 1990). The first theoretical distinction concerns the concept of dwelling, defined as a system of settings in which a certain system of activities takes place and makes a distinction between fixed features (physical aspects), semi-fixed features (furnishings) and non-fixed features (activities and behaviour). The second one concerns the concept of meaning, distinguishing between high-level meanings (e.g., world views), middle-level meanings (e.g., values) and lower-level meanings (e.g., manifest functions).

The focus of our own research is on the middle-level and lower-level meanings of fixed features (Coolen and Hoekstra, 2001; Ozaki, 2003). Our conceptual framework seems to have several interfaces with the more familiar notions of culture and lifestyle, which are quite frequently used in studies on the meaning of a dwelling. Although these notions have been touched upon in our research, their possible role as analytical concepts has not clearly been indicated. The purpose of the paper is therefore to find out whether the notions of culture and lifestyle can become an integral part of our conceptual framework, and what the added value of integrating these notions is for understanding the meaning of a dwelling. This venture will be illustrated with empirical case studies, many from our own research.

The structure of the present paper will be as follows: 1. Introduction; 2. Discussion of Rapoport’s three types of features and three levels of meaning; 3.
Neighbourhood change and new social divisions in the post-industrial city

Ray Forrest, Alex Marsh and Richard Webber

ESRC Centre for Neighbourhood Research, School for Policy Studies, University of Bristol, 8 Priory Road Bristol, BS8 1TZ, U.K. Tel. +44 (0)117 954 6755, Fax +44 (0)117 954 5565, email: alex.marsh@bristol.ac.uk

Keywords: neighbourhood change, house prices, post-industrial city, Bristol

This paper explores the changing socio-spatial structure of the contemporary city using longitudinal house price data and census-based neighbourhood typologies. Using Bristol as the exemplar of the post-industrial city, the paper analyzes the extent to which the overall residential price profile of Bristol has changed; how that change maps onto neighbourhood types; and the extent to which neighbourhoods can be differentiated according to their trajectories, in terms of both price movements and social composition.

The analysis is set in the context of theoretical debates about the impact of globalization, labour market change and changing consumption patterns on the shaping of residential space.

Distinguishing “house” from “home”: Residential satisfaction of Indian Bengalis and Bangladeshis in Toronto

Sutama Ghosh

Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Geography, York University, 4700 Keele Street, Toronto, Ontario, Telephone: 416-736-2100 ext. 40615; Email: sutama@yorku.ca

Keywords: house as home, residential satisfaction, intra-immigrant group comparisons, Canada

Exploration of residential satisfaction provides an understanding of the housing experiences of immigrant families in the migrant city. Residential satisfaction is a complex socio-psychological phenomenon in which the concepts of “house” and “home” emerge as distinct ideas.

This paper evaluates differences in residential satisfaction for two South Asian subgroups in Toronto, Indian Bengalis and Bangladeshis, who speak the same language (Bengali) but belong to different religions (Hinduism and Islam).
The study is based on detailed interviews with 30 respondents from each group. Respondents were first asked about their residential satisfaction with each dwelling and neighbourhood occupied in Toronto. They were then asked to compare their overall housing situation in Toronto with their experiences elsewhere (country of origin and country of last permanent residence). In each instance, respondents were asked to express their opinion on a scale of satisfaction followed by an open-ended question asking for further elaboration.

In their evaluations of residential satisfaction in Toronto, and the overall housing situation in Toronto compared to the country of last permanent residence the respondents took an "objective" approach, describing specific measurable aspects of dwelling (tenure, type, size, quality, and cost) and neighbourhood (length of residence, perceived crime, and social networks).

When evaluating their overall housing situation in Toronto compared to their country of origin, however, they offered "subjective" explanations. Several respondents revealed their attachments by noting that they have "only one home" that is in their country of origin, distinguishing it from the "house" they currently occupy, irrespective of their levels of residential satisfaction. These results confirm the importance of distinguishing between house and neighbourhood as physical entities and "home" as a concept with important symbolic meaning.

Explaining national origin differences in Toronto’s homeownership rates: A closer look at the effect of ethnic clustering

Michael Haan

Department of Sociology, University of Toronto, 725 Spadina Ave. Toronto, ON, M5S 2J4, Canada Tel. (613) 951-3762, Fax (613) 951-5403, email: mdhaan@chass.utoronto.ca

Keywords: ethnic community, homeownership, ethnic capital

Researchers increasingly suspect that there is something new about how recent immigrants are settling into their host societies, suggesting that a "one size fits all" account of immigrant ecological succession (Massey and Denton 1985) may be an outmoded description of locational attainment for some groups (Fong and Wilkes 1999).

This research uses the 1996 and 2001 Census of Canada Master Files to assess the neighbourhood-level ethnic determinants of homeownership in Toronto, one of the world’s truly cosmopolitan urban environments and an ideal social laboratory for studying the effects of race and ethnicity on various outcomes.

By doing so, recent arguments made in the United States by Logan, Alba and Zhang (2002) about the emergence of "ethnic communities" and of an "enclave
Adequate and Affordable Housing for All

...effect" on homeownership posited by Borjas (2002) can be better assessed. Both have suggested that voluntary residential segregation for some ethnic groups is on the rise, implying that in some instances homeownership is becoming a means of maintaining residential segregation instead of spatial assimilation. Both look at all households, however, regardless of length of tenure, and therefore cannot address the “disequilibrium problem” that plagues inferences about household choices made in the past from current conditions (Painter 2000). This problem is accentuated in ecological studies by the often rapid transformation of a neighbourhood’s ethnic composition in the modern metropolis (Hou 2004), and attempts to connect present ethnic characteristics to tenure decisions made in the past, when a home was purchased.

To assess the relevance of the enclave effect and of ethnic communities on homeownership more accurately, longitudinally-consistent 1996 census tract ethnic concentration characteristics are used to predict the tenure choices of 1996–2001 Toronto movers. Using movers is critical, as it implicitly accounts for the transaction costs of changing residential locations and tenure choice, which can be substantial for some households (Littlewood and Munro 1997), and identifies the ethnic character of a neighbourhood at the time of purchase. To correct for the bias included by using only movers, bivariate probit models with sample selection correction techniques are adopted (Boyes, Hoffman, and Low 1989; Van de Ven and Van Praag 1981).

"Difference," ethnicity, disability, and housing: Prospects for theoretical work and comparative research

Malcolm Harrison

School of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Leeds, Leeds, LS2 9JT, U.K., Tel. +44 113 3434430; Fax +44 113 343 4415; email: M.L.Harrison@leeds.ac.uk

Keywords: difference, ethnicity, disability

In many countries the agenda of “difference” has become more prominent in policy-related research and analysis in recent decades. As well as being aware of class and socio-economic differentiation, sensitive researchers and theorists know that they should acknowledge the importance of other lines of variation, including age, disability, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation.

In Western countries such as the U.K., some debates relating to the difference agenda have been extensive and intense, affecting housing analyses alongside other policy fields. Ethnic relations and disability provide strong examples, and there is evidence that both so-called “ethnic penalties” and disabling practices continue to inhibit prospects of households’ obtaining adequate and affordable housing or developing satisfactory housing pathways.

Along with numerous empirical concerns, there have been efforts at theory
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collection of difference in a concerted way while reviewing relationships between broad structural factors, human agency, and experiential diversity. The concepts of difference within difference and social regulation were deployed; but unfortunately the focus was restricted to the U.K. experience. It would be valuable to have more cross-country comparative work linking difference with housing and allied policy areas in order to test, improve on, or find alternatives to available theoretical frameworks, and to build up the interchange of empirical material on conditions, individual and collective strategies, empowerment, and policy preoccupations. Perhaps the ISA might be a key player in such a process.

Homeownership and migration in the Netherlands

Amanda C. Helderman, Maarten van Ham and Clara H. Mulder

Department of Geography and Planning, Amsterdam Study Centre for the Metropolitan Environment (AME), University of Amsterdam, Nieuwe Prinsengracht 130, 1018 VZ Amsterdam, The Netherlands, Tel. +31 20 525 4015, Fax: +31 20 5254051, email: a.c.helderman@uva.nl

Keywords: homeownership, migration, the Netherlands

Homeownership has a well-known impeding effect on migration. In the Netherlands, homeownership has grown enormously since the Second World War. If the immobility of homeowners stays the same while the group of homeowners grows, the impeding effect of homeownership might lead to an inflexible labour market. This implies that there would be fewer options for improvement on the labour market for individuals.

However, the impeding effect of homeownership could be counter-balanced by the changed composition of homeowners. Among homeowners we find increasingly young and more often childless couples who move more easily than other types of households. The reason for this is that they have not yet solidified choices and commitments to places to the same extent as the more traditional homeowners.

This paper investigates whether a decrease in the effect of homeownership on migration has occurred in the 1980s and the 1990s. The Housing Demand Surveys by Statistics Netherlands and logistic regression analysis are used to examine this. It is found that the considerable growth in migration in the Netherlands cannot be explained by the changed composition of homeowners.

This research indicates that homeowners are still very reluctant to move compared to renters. A further rise in homeownership might have implications for the flexibility of Netherlands labour markets.
Residential mobility of public and private tenants: Cohort approach and lifecycle analysis

Michael H.C. Ho

Centre of Urban Planning and Environmental Management, The University of Hong Kong, Room 840, Knowles Building, Pokfulam Road, Hong Kong, Tel. (852) 2857 8639, Fax (852) 2559 0468, email: drhcho@hkucc.hku.hk

Keywords: residential mobility, cohort approach, lifecycle analysis

Public housing tenants exhibit lower residential mobility than their counterparts in the private sector as shown in previous studies, which only focus on the impact of tenure mode on residential mobility. The difference in residential mobility arises because of the distortion introduced by housing subsidies, but the impact of housing subsidies on residential mobility may vary between different age cohorts and throughout the lifecycle of the household. Given the fact that residential mobility varies throughout the lifecycle of most households, studying the issue without proper treatment of age cohort and lifecycle factors may not be appropriate.

This paper attempts to study the residential mobility of public housing tenants using the cohort approach and lifecycle analysis. Examining the issue from these two perspectives should provide a more detailed and coherent picture of how housing subsidies affect residential mobility. Census data from 1981 to 2001 provide a history of residential movement every five years and the impact of tenure mode on residential mobility will be estimated with logit.

First, households will be grouped into different groups according to the age of the household head. Then, residential mobility will be compared between public and private tenants for each age group in order to eliminate the influence of lifecycle factors. It is expected that the difference in residential mobility is more significant between public and private tenants for age groups that are relatively more mobile.

Second, a particular age cohort will be selected and studied for the period 1981–2001 to examine the residential mobility pattern and a comparison will be made between public and private tenants. This method will provide the basis of a lifecycle analysis of a particular age group so that the difference in longitudinal residential mobility between public and private tenants could be revealed and compared. It is expected that the public housing tenants would be less mobile than private tenants due to the distortion caused by the heavy subsidies enjoyed by the former group.

Results of this study could provide insights to policy makers such that age-specific rather than universal measures can be implemented to minimize the distortion of residential mobility caused by housing subsidies.
Exploring the changing housing conditions and household composition in Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver CMA, 1981 to 2001

John Meligrana and Andrejs Skaburskis

School of Urban and Regional Planning, Queen's University, Kingston, Ont. K7L 3N6, Canada Tel. 613.533.2188 ext. 77145, email: jmeligr@post.queensu.ca

Keywords: Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, metropolitan areas, gentrification, filtering, GIS

This paper analyzes changing housing conditions and household composition over a twenty-year period, 1981 to 2001, for Canada's three largest census metropolitan areas, Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. Information is provided on changing population densities, gross rents, period of construction of dwellings, dwelling type as well as household composition and type at the census tract level. To undertake this analysis the paper converted variables from the 2001 census tract boundaries to match the 1981 census tract boundaries. These variables are mapping using GIS software to uncover evidence of both filtering and gentrification.

The evidence collected on changing housing conditions and household composition is compared with the latest discourse on gentrification and filtering.

Comparative housing systems: Favela boca do Mato (Brazil) and the suburb of Torvalla (Sweden)

Yngve A. Mohlin and Ethel V. Kosminsky

Mohlin: Mid-Sweden University, email: Yngve.Mohlin@mh.se
Kosminsky: UNESP-Marilia, Sao Paulo, email: Ethelkos@uol.com.br

Keywords: housing systems, comparative analysis, quality of life, favela, well-being, suburb

Today, comparative analysis of housing systems in developed and developing societies are common. Unfortunately, the standard of living is, in many senses, not equal. In this paper we will use the theoretical MDSD modal, comparing systems as different as possible but with a focus on their similarities. Therefore, the main purpose is to examine the quality of life and standard of living in two polarized housing systems: the favela Boca do Mato in the municipality of Cabo Frio (Rio de Janeiro) in Brazil and the suburb of Torvalla in Sweden.

The empirical study used questionnaires distributed to two different random populations in each of the two areas. The results are in many ways surprising. In spite of the differences at the macro-level system of housing there are simi-
The elements of well-being and quality of life for the citizens in the Swedish suburb are in many senses similar for the “moradores” in the economically depressed favela Boca do Mato.

Building housing through social networks: New Colombians in Toronto

Abigail Moriah, Luz Rodriguez, and Luisa Sotomayor

University of Toronto, Department of Geography/Planning, 100 St. George St., Rm 5047, Toronto, Ontario, M5S 3G3. Canada Tel. 416-921 6342, email: luz.rodriguez@utoronto.ca

Keywords: Toronto, housing trajectories, Colombian immigrants, social networks, settlement patterns

Recent studies suggest that immigrants in Toronto face barriers to integration, particularly in housing. The City’s housing market is characterized by a reduced supply of affordable housing, low vacancy rates, and high-priced rental housing in which recent immigrants are adversely affected. Newcomers must frequently occupy poorly maintained buildings, pay higher rents and comply with illegal requirements in the private rental market. Moreover, limited information, lack of employment, the absence of co-signers and inadequate institutional support exacerbate new immigrants’ vulnerability.

The purpose of this pilot research is to explore the experiences of Colombian newcomers accessing Toronto’s housing market. Because Colombians represent a recent, small but growing community, this group provides an interesting case study. Their reliance on social networks for accessing housing is significant, especially when considering the fragmented character of their societal background. The dynamics generated by Colombia’s internal conflict contribute to fragmented social cohesion, creating high levels of distrust and low social capital.

In Toronto, the strength and nature of Colombians’ social ties may affect how they gain entry to the housing market. Social ties such as family, acquaintances, ethnic organizations and virtual communities act as informal institutions that may mitigate the effect of housing market failures and respond to the disconnect between housing and immigration policies. Drawing from the social networks theory and through the use of semi-structured interviews, this study examines the intersection between social ties and housing trajectories. From a planning perspective, the recognition of these informal institutions may help to generate creative solutions to better integrate immigrants into housing markets.
Home away from home: the primary/second-home relationship

Harvey C. Perkins

Social Science, Tourism and Recreation Group, Environment, Society and Design Division, Lincoln University, Canterbury, New Zealand 64-3-325 2811, email perkins@lincoln.ac.nz

Keywords: primary home, second home, mobility, leisure, tourism

Our purpose in this paper is to interpret the primary/second-home relationship. In this context we define the primary home as the house or apartment in which household members reside for much of the time in the course of their daily lives. Second homes are those houses, cottages, cabins and condominiums (having myriad forms and being known by various names across cultures and between and within countries) that are sited in the countryside (often beside lakes and beaches) and urban locations, and used sporadically for recreation.

Our interpretation relies on several literature and data sources. First is social scientific research and writing about the meaning of house and home, with its significant empirical focus on the primary home. Second is the ethnographic research we conducted from 1997 to 2002 into the meaning of the primary home in New Zealand. Third is the international second home literature which gives important insights into the nature of the development of second homes, the uses to which they are put, and the experiences owners and others seek from them.

These three sources in combination point to the existence of a primary/second home dialectic which can be thought of as the web of interactions and meanings that arise out of, and are associated with, people's senses of place which are created as they use, experience and move between their primary and second homes. It follows therefore that an understanding of this dialectic requires a consideration of ideas about what constitutes home and matters relating to leisure, work, tourism, recreation, identity, consumption and human mobility as they work themselves out at a variety of scales ranging from the local and everyday through to the global.

Residential experiences and the culture of suburbanization: A case study of Portuguese homebuyers in Mississauga

Carlos Teixeira

Department of Geography, Okanagan University College, Kalamalka Campus, 7000 College Way, Vernon, British Columbia V1B 2N5, Tel. 250-545-7291 (ext 2275), Fax 250-545-3277, email: cteixeira@ouc.bc.ca

Keywords: suburbanization, Portuguese, Mississauga

Toronto - Canada's largest gateway city for immigrants - has experienced a sig-
significant transformation in its physical and social landscape since World War II. This has included changes in neighbourhood social composition, accompanied by high levels of residential mobility and suburbanization. Immigration has played a significant role in this process, transforming the region's social space, economy and real estate market. In this context, there is a growing awareness of the cultural importance some immigrant groups attach to homeownership in suburban Toronto.

Despite the propensity of some groups to show high levels of suburbanization and consume high amounts of ownership housing, the relative importance of the ethnocultural dimension in the context of immigrant suburbanization has been overlooked. In particular, more needs to be known about the new ties and social networks developed by immigrant groups once they become established in the suburbs. Do they develop ethnic communities in the suburbs? Do they retain ties to their previous communities – the ones they used to live in before moving to the suburbs?

The purpose of this paper is to explore immigrants’ “housing experiences” in the suburbs by examining the housing strategies, residential preferences/satisfaction, and moving intentions of a sample of Portuguese homebuyers that has been established in suburban Mississauga since the late 1980s.

Home and work: Negotiating the boundaries

David C. Thorns, Lorraine Leonard, Michelle Girvan, Harvey Perkins

Social Science Research Centre, University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand
Email: david.thorns@canterbury.ac.nz
Environment, Society and Design Division, Lincoln University, Canterbury, New Zealand
Email: perkins@lincoln.ac.nz

Keywords: home, boundaries, paid and unpaid work, negotiation

Boundaries between various types of work and the activities within the home have become of increasing theoretical interest for researchers. The move away from the traditional nuclear family combined with changing work practices and an increase in the number of women participating in the workforce have had considerable impact on home and family life.

Changes to the nature of work including technological advancement, extended working hours and the introduction of flextime and telework have seen paid work increasingly impinge on home life with home offices, home workers and home-run businesses becoming more common.

The paper, drawing from a recent qualitative study of house-home relationships in New Zealand, explores the forms of negotiation and strategies employed as people come to terms with this complex set of changes. The paper
reviews the current literature on paid and unpaid work and the home within New Zealand and shows that there has been an increase in home-based work. The paper then draws upon recent data to show how this shift has led to the breaking down of the boundaries within the home between work, recreation and leisure activities.

The specific areas addressed which show something of these changes are those of routines, food preparation, and children’s work. The New Zealand case study strongly supports the view that boundaries are becoming less distinct, however it also shows there is no simple correspondence between change in work practices external to the home and internal reorganization of tasks and responsibilities. For some, change did create new opportunities; for others, much continued the same and new activities were added rather than renegotiated. The idea of negotiation whilst useful tends to underestimate the power relations and the lack of symmetry in such relations within the household.

Housing policy and spatial control: Exploring national interests in periods of immigration

Erez Tzfadia

Public Policy and Administration, Ben Gurion University, P.O.B. 653 Beer-Sheva, 84105 Israel, Tel. +972-8-6472775; Fax +972-8-6472816, email: tzfadia@bgumail.bgu.ac.il

Keywords: housing policy, immigration, settler-society, “mixed” cities

Housing policy as spatial control mechanism is explored through research on the settlement of two waves of immigration in Jewish-Arab “mixed” cities – the first during the 1950s and the second during the 1990s. A fundamental discursive change took place in these two periods – from a modern and state-oriented discourse to a neo-liberal one. Yet this presentation contends that contemporary housing policy continues to advance national domination and control as well as neo-liberal interests of privatization and globalization – as these two interests (national and neo-liberal) are interwoven. This idea contradicts the common perception that housing policy gives priority to public well-being.

The Israeli settler-immigrant society employed public housing as a tool to enhance “population dispersal” (a code name for “spatial Judaization”). An intensive utilization of this tool during the 1950s contributed a great deal to populate small-size “internal frontier” areas by “Mizrahim” (Asian and North African immigrants). Houses in these towns were constructed and populated in the name of controlling Palestinian lands.

During the 1990s, when a “Russian” wave of immigration arrived in Israel, public housing was once again used as tool for “spatial Judaization,” but in a different manner: instead of compelling the immigrants to settle in public hous-
Defensible zoning: The social control of space in Mexico City

Alfonso Valenzuela

Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 77 Massachusetts Avenue 10-400. Cambridge, MA 02139-4307, USA, Tel. (617) 491.1428, email: aval@mit.edu

Keywords: zoning, social control, gated communities, public space

The paper addresses how the lack of accessible public space in vast peripheral areas in Mexico City has increased urban disparities. We demonstrate that inclusive strategies for public spaces can extend the standards of living to the entire city.

Socioeconomic divisions are not a new phenomenon in our cities. In fact, zoning and urban planning itself emerge as instruments designed to maintain a certain segment of the population's privileges, through regulating land uses and defining construction densities along the urban fabric. Since the city is seen as a scientific object of research, planning starts to transform the social and spatial structure under the assumption that social change can be produced, directed, and modified at will.

With the pre-eminence of functional urbanism as a reference in Latin American cities, the space division through differentiated and single-use polygons became institutionalized, fostering planned segregation and also setting the configuration of a dual city characterized by its profound differences. Castells points out a valuable distinction between zoning and segregation, in which the two concepts share the creation of highly social homogeneous internal zones. Segregation implies a razor-sharp disparity, not only in terms of difference, but in terms of kind. Residential enclaves put forward an urbanization model that stands for the creation of homogeneous residential compounds for specific
socioeconomic clusters, where controlled access, private security, and independent services ensure insulation from the city as an independent and self-governed entity.

These new developments are sustained on the creation of a privatized world, with little contact with the surrounding environment, and even less with a bigger political unit. This has serious implications for the city’s performance, since the exclusion of citizens from areas of the city is permitted, and basic services and security (functions traditionally provided by the State) are handed over to the residents.

The complexity of urban interfaces and their interdependency have been exposed by Lefevre and Alexander who highlight the “overlapping” and juxtapositions inherent in the city’s socioeconomic structure, differing from the simplistic view of zoning stated by functionalist urbanism, and which has been proved as a key element on the reproduction of division in the urban fabric.

We suggest that the city as an inclusive and integrated entity has implicit the establishment of interdependency bond among the parts, since the notion of integration deals with the “incorporation of a new element inside the psychological system previously constituted”; therefore, if integration implies the necessary acquisition of a new element within the system - that is, the one which identifies the unit and provides the overall sense - we can state that the contemporary city has failed at different scales to provide the inhabitants with a minimum sense of identity and belonging related to common grounds.

Therefore, we suggest that closed residential compounds represent a zoning of second generation, in which socioeconomic divisions and spatial segregation are assumed as “natural” components within the urban fabric, justifying with it the creation of fortified enclaves which continue to challenge the public significance of the city.

From housing to homemaking: Worldviews and the shaping of home

Brian J. Walsh
Wycliffe College, University of Toronto, and Toronto Christian Resource Centre, Regent Park, Toronto, Canada, Tel. 416-363-4234, email: brianw@tcrc.ca

Keywords: worldviews, home, cultural praxis

It is common to hear the argument that home is more than shelter, that an experience of being at-home in a particular place is something that goes beyond housing. But it is not always clear just exactly what that beyond consists of.

In this paper I consider the possibility that a place is experienced as home when that place is both shaped by and in turn shapes its inhabitants in terms of some kind of a shared vision of life or worldview. Beginning with Michael
Walzer's description of home as a dense moral culture within which people feel some sense of belonging, the paper suggests that such a dense moral culture and its concomitant sense of belonging is precisely what a fully functioning worldview provides in human life. And only when housing can be experienced as, in important respects, shaped by one's worldview, can housing become home.

Worldviews, I will suggest, are narratively grounded, answer what may be described as ultimate questions, are carried and communicated through symbols, and are embodied in cultural praxis. Taking these constitutive dimensions of worldviews in reverse order, we could argue that housing and all other dimensions of the built environment are an important way in which worldviews are embodied in cultural praxis. Buildings, cities, subdivisions are all legible, they all communicate something of the worldview that has shaped them. And communication is found especially in the symbols that are embedded in the built environment, wherein symbol is understood more broadly to include three-car garages, phallic bank towers and master bedrooms. These symbols and this built environment emerge, however, in response to the way in which the dominant society that has shaped these environments answers (usually implicitly) ultimate questions. And all of this is grounded in powerful narratives and myths.

Finally, the paper will ask: what does worldview pluralism look like if allowed to shape housing? If there is no such thing as “generic” housing, and “one size” can never “fit all” then how does a pluralist society allow and even encourage the “dense moral culture” that is at the heart of homemaking?

Affordability or desirability? Housing and social aspirations in the London suburbs

Paul Watt

Department of Human Sciences, Owen Harris Building, Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College, Queen Alexandra Road, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire HP11 2JZ, England Telephone: 01494-603058 Fax: 01494-461704 Email: pwatt01@bcuc.ac.uk

Keywords: suburbs, affordability, social aspirations, London

Throughout the 20th century, private housing in London was consistently highly priced. Consequently many Londoners on low incomes experienced difficulties in meeting their housing needs.

Up until the last quarter of the 20th century, the problem of housing affordability in London was addressed in two main ways. First of all, local government provided support for those on lower incomes by building extensive public housing estates in inner and outer London. Second, working-class, as well as middle-class Londoners, moved out of the city in order to buy houses in
the more affordable suburbs around the capital, aided and abetted by private house builders and building societies. This suburban relocation was also associated with heightened social aspirations, as many suburbanites wished to move to what they regarded as “desirable” areas away from lower-status inner-city dwellers.

However, during the last two decades the affordability crisis has become acute in London, partly as a result of the collapse of public housing provision, and partly as a result of extremely high house prices leading to many middle-income, as well as low-income, families and individuals being priced out of the market.

This paper examines issues of affordability and desirability with reference to a survey of suburban dwellers living in Essex, a county located near London in the South East of England. The survey sample of 200 suburbanites had all moved to the Essex suburbs from London. The paper discusses their stated reasons for making the suburban move, both in terms of why they wanted to leave London and also their reasons for relocating to Essex.

The paper focuses upon whether the respondents’ move to the suburbs was connected to housing factors, particularly affordability, or was instead associated with their social aspirations exemplified by the aim to move to a “better area.” The paper concludes by discussing the survey findings in relation to debates on social polarization and racial differentiation in London and the South East of England.

The transportation implication of housing relocation in Beijing: Making transportation and land use connections in the setting of a transitional economy

Jiawen Yang

Department of Urban Studies and Planning, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 77 Mass Ave, 9-536, Cambridge, MA 02139, U.S.A., Tel. (001)-617-230-9521, email: yangjw@mit.edu

Keywords: housing systems, transitional economy, transportation

Chinese cities were praised for the cultivation of the multi-mode transportation systems, which supported the majority of everyday trips with bicycling and bus riding. The land use factor that made it happen was the spatial proximity of home sites and work sites resulting from a socialist development approach. With this approach, the government financed housing and various social facilities as part of work unit projects and built all physical structures within a work unit compound. The new development process, which is backed by the land and housing reforms since late 1980s, however, tends to break down the spatial linkage of housing and employment. An increase of the spatial separation of
employment and housing is expected either because of cost incentives, government plans or the shortage of land and housing supply. Therefore, significant transport impacts are expected in the process of the reconstruction of the housing systems.

This research studies the transportation implication of the new housing system in China by revealing the relationship between travel demand of households and the moving patterns of housing relocation. The data was collected in a survey in Beijing in 1996, when regulations of land and housing reforms were already implemented and location patterns of housing construction and consumptions were moving in a new direction. The survey contains information on housing location before and after relocation, and time and modes of work trips and non-work trips. It also provides rich information on the socio-economic status of household members.

The work firstly analyzes moving patterns of household relocation. Households are classified according to housing location before and after the move. Duration and mode shares of both work and non-work trips are compared among different groups of households. Then the research constructs regression models that examine the impact of household relocation on commuting duration. It tests the hypothesis that commuting duration increases as people move farther away from the previous job-locations. Several variables indicating the distance of move and the direction of move are constructed based on the housing location before and after the move. By doing this, the work hopes to increase the awareness of the transportation and land use connection among policy makers in today’s Beijing, thereby helping create a vision of growth that favors the spatial balance of housing, employment and other urban activities in a mega-city with rising congestion.