Taking Back the Boulevard
Jan Lin
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Taking Back the Boulevard tells the story of Northeast Los Angeles known popularly for historic Arts and Crafts architecture, bohemian cultural life, independent small businesses, immigrant diversity and quality of life on its boulevards. It chronicles the initial emergence of these prototypical LA streetcar suburbs and the Arroyo Culture bohemia, then disinvestment with growth of mid-20th century freeway suburbs and white flight with residential succession by incoming Latin American and Asian immigrants. Neighborhood revitalization followed through a Latino/a arts renaissance and Arroyo Culture revival involving muralism, youth involvement and public arts events and festivals. Neighborhood activism was also a key force through campaigns to preserve natural and architectural landmarks and museums, oppose mini-malls, “big box” and chain store franchises, and to “Take Back the Boulevard” for bikers and pedestrians. Yet the creation of a more culturally vibrant and livable city along with entry of speculator developers fostered accelerated gentrification and white return after the Great Recession with increasing mass evictions of working-class and Latino/a households sparking new rounds of local protest. Changing conditions and generational divides confront the neighborhoods as established slow growth leaders share space with newer “right to the city” activists. The author offers lessons for urban planners and policymakers on addressing gentrification effects of public transit-oriented development and smart growth through strategies like participatory planning, Latino Urbanism, and community advisory boards.

Spanish Harlem
Steven W. Bender
in Tierra Y Libertad: Land, Liberty, and Latino Housing

Published in print: 2010 Published Online: May 2016
DOI: 10.18574/nyu/9780814791257.003.0012
This chapter explores the urban geographies of Puerto Rican migrants who reside in New York City’s Spanish Harlem neighborhood, as well as the pressures of gentrification in the superheated New York residential market.

Situating Sustainability against Displacement
Giovanna Di Chiro and Laura Rigell

Based on an account of an ongoing campus-community collaboration between students and faculty at Swarthmore College and community leaders in North Philadelphia, this chapter discusses a critical approach to community “sustainability” in an historically African American, urban context. Narrating the development of the “Sustainable Serenity Collaborative,” the chapter examines the Collaborative’s values, best practices, and accomplishments, challenging conventional notions of both sustainability and community-based academic engagement. It highlights the generative possibilities and tensions associated with building genuine and reciprocal alliances to advance environmental justice and sustainable community development across differences marked by race, gender, class, geography, and expertise. Resisting “green gentrification,” the Collaborative embraces a vision of just sustainability without displacement driven by the needs and dreams of the predominantly Black, low-income residents of North Philadelphia. The chapter focuses in detail on one of the Collaborative’s projects – Serenity Soular – a community sustainable development initiative that aims to establish worker-owned solar enterprises to solarize and preserve the neighborhoods in North Philadelphia at risk of displacement.

Equality in the Air We Breathe
Lindsey Dillon and Julie Sze
This chapter brings an interdisciplinary and social justice perspective to the concept and practices of "sustainability" by foregrounding the work of anti-racist struggles in U.S. cities, like Black Lives Matter. It asserts that anti-racist struggles have always been struggles about life-sustaining environments, at least as "the environment" is defined by the environmental justice movement as the place where people "live, work, and play. It suggests an alternative notion of sustainability, as it has long been theorized by and lived through black and brown lives, focusing on breath and breathing as an intimate geography of race and toxic exposure. In so doing it contributes to the challenge to sustainability practitioners to rethink their ideologies and practices through a politics of difference.

Introduction

Rachael A. Woldoff, Lisa M. Morrison, and Michael R. Glass

in Priced Out: Stuyvesant Town and the Loss of Middle-Class Neighborhoods

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Readers are introduced to Stuyvesant Town by two residents: Ruthie and Jackie. Ruthie is an eighty-five-year-old woman emblematic of the long-term residents “aging in place” in a community that has experienced considerable change over the past twenty years. Jackie is a twenty-eight-year-old lawyer, drawn to Stuyvesant Town’s suburban amenities in the heart of New York City, but fearful of the rapidly escalating market-rate rents charged by the property owners. Their poignant recollections set the scene for Priced Out’s central thesis: first, that Stuyvesant Town represents an important case for examining urban renters’ struggles for affordable, stable middle-class housing; and second, that transitions from rent stabilization to market-rate housing create both cultural and generational conflict among residents. The book argues that we can only truly understand what it is like to live in a transitioning, gentrifying community by analyzing both the longtime residents and newcomers currently living there. By comparing their subjective views, readers gain insight into the clashes both between resident groups, and between residents and owners. We summarize the scholarship on rent control and conflicts surrounding this form of housing, describe how we identified this neighborhood as a representative case, and briefly review the methods employed for this study.
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Introduction
Jan Lin

in Taking Back the Boulevard: Art, Activism, and Gentrification in Los Angeles
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The introduction features scenes from Northeast LA including a poem titled “Taco Truck” by Lisa Marie Sandoval that describes a nocturnal interaction between a college student and a Latino taco vendor and his family. The scene at the annual Lummis Day Festival is described by the author with respect to Northeast LA regional arts culture and community organizations and the mixing between established residents and newcomers. There follows a vignette on anti-gentrification protestors for housing rights who disrupt the Figueroa Jam a public arts and community engagement event sponsored by the LA Mayor’s Greet Streets program. Research method’s and the author’s positionality is discussed along with a profile of the book plan along with brief chapter reviews.

Boulevards, Gentrification, and Urban Culture
Jan Lin

in Taking Back the Boulevard: Art, Activism, and Gentrification in Los Angeles
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Chronicles the recent commercial and cultural revitalization of boulevard life throughout Los Angeles and examines more closely the transition
in Highland Park and Eagle Rock in relation to local preservation and slow growth movements. Depicts the Northeast LA art scene and hipster culture as a convergence of Latino/a and Asian immigrant culture and vintage Americana. Features public characters and neighborhood leaders as they reflect on small business authenticity, safety, community building, community gardening, bicycle culture, economic development, gentrification and racial/ethnic transition. There is literature review of sociological studies of streets, bohemia and the creative economy in urban culture.

The Stages of Neighborhood Transition

Jan Lin

in Taking Back the Boulevard: Art, Activism, and Gentrification in Los Angeles

This chapter outlines the “stage model of gentrification” and neighborhood transition in Northeast LA through historical periods of emergence of the streetcar suburbs, then decline with the rise of outer freeway suburbs and white flight followed by residential succession by incoming Latin American and Asian immigrants. The presence of a revitalization stage involving immigrant pioneers and homesteaders, followed by speculator investors and more affluent gentrifiers is outlined. There follows analysis of U.S. Census of Population and Housing data on racial/ethnic transition and the recomposition of the household structure. Business data are presented that explores the sectoral profile of enterprises and identify growth trends.

Gentrification, Displacement, and the Right to the City

Jan Lin

Examines the impacts of the sharpening gentrification process in Northeast Los Angeles and its socioeconomic and racial overtones as immigrant working class Latino/a families are increasingly threatened by displacement through rent increases, evictions, and socially traumatic uprooting of multi-family networks. Gentrification is tied to neoliberal
local state efforts in Los Angeles to incentivize private investment through urban policy strategies like transit-oriented development, transit villages and small lot housing development. I argue the creative frontier of urban restructuring in Northeast LA also generates social violence expressing capitalism’s tendency to foster “accumulation by dispossession” that has been countered by neighborhood “right to the city” movements. I examine the rise of the urban social movements like Friends of Highland Park and Northeast LA Alliance that advocate for the rights of those threatened by housing displacement and eviction, address community and environmental impacts of new high-density housing projects, and campaign for more socially just housing and urban planning policies in Los Angeles. There is also examination of the plight of the homeless and rehabilitating gang members.

Conclusion

Jan Lin

in Taking Back the Boulevard: Art, Activism, and Gentrification in Los Angeles

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Examines prospects, implications and final comparisons. Considers the challenges of neighborhood activism in Northeast LA as an older cadre of artists and activists makes way for a new generation of movement leaders who confront a shifting racial and socioeconomic landscape in the transition from suburbanization and white flight to gentrification and white return. Attention to conflicts in the Latino/a experience in Boyle Heights and Northeast L.A. and the power of processions and rituals to cope with the social trauma of eviction and displacement. The struggle to save imperiled cultural landmarks and the promise of new cultural festivals and music scenes is addressed. NELA is viewed as an illustration of going “back to the future” in regional transit policy turns away from the failures of the postwar auto-centered metropolis towards smart growth and green alternatives. Urban policy solutions are considered with respect to transit oriented development, affordable housing development and supporting tenants’ rights and programs for the homeless. Reflections are given on meanings of taking back the boulevard. The significance of looking at the neighborhood scale in metropolitan change is addressed. Addresses the book’s contribution to interpretive, public and critical sociology.