

Immigrant Pastoral

Midwestern Landscapes and Mexican-American Neighborhoods

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1 Hope and Home

Saturday morning, Main Street: a line of cars waits at the stoplight in the center of town as the tractor-trailers rumble by on the federal highway. Pedestrians stream across the crosswalks or, more adventurously, dart across the street mid-block in the occasional gap in traffic. The sidewalks are busy outside the gleaming storefronts—the hardware store, with bright red and green lawnmowers and garden tillers on display in front; the small department store, with well-dressed mannequins; the butcher beyond that, easily identified by the strings of sausages hanging in the window. Other storefronts offer tidy awnings and signs leading down the next block to the cluster of pick-ups around the towering grain elevator at the railroad. Bells jingle, announcing the arrival of customers in each store. On the corner sits a neatly painted trash receptacle proudly bearing the city's seal, topped by a planter of geraniums. An old man sits on the dark green park bench nearby. He nods to passersby under the newly planted street trees. Brick storefronts contrast with the limestone of the bank on the corner, its grand façade dwarfing the bakery beside it. Opposite the bank is a café, with patrons waiting outside amid the smell of coffee and hash browns as late breakfasts ease into early lunches.

This Saturday was in 1972.

Today: Saturday morning, Main Street: no customers spill from the closed café on the corner, its window displays of pies and cakes replaced by cobwebs. The hardware store, too, is gone, replaced by a business that claims to do watch and TV repair, yet posts no opening hours. A glance through the cracked glass of the front windows reveals a vacant room containing a solitary desk chair. The former department store is simply vacant, a faded "For Rent" sign hanging askew in the window. The butcher shop sports a remodeled façade, with display windows and sausages replaced by wooden panels. A sign proclaims that it now hosts an online auction service, where customers can bring spare items to be sold. On the corner the bank building appears unchanged, but upon closer inspection it too has closed. A transnational bank's ATM, awkwardly boxed in with plywood, blocks the elaborate front entrance. The storefront next door—once the home of wedding cakes and doughnut specials—now displays a haphazard

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collection of dusty items, “antiques” according to the adhesive letters on the door. Crumpled fast food wrappers and cups litter the street, swirling with fallen leaves in winds unbroken by awning or tree or car. Weeds sprout through cracks in the sidewalk and the crumbling curb and gutter along the street. It’s easy to cross the street on foot now, with just a few cars passing by, but those few cars threaten the pedestrian with their speed, racing through the old downtown in three lanes of one-way traffic. There’s no one to threaten, though, because the sidewalks are empty, just like the stores and the streets.

Further down Main Street, the uneven sidewalk and rough-paved street divide around a boulevard strip of unmown grass, thick with dandelions gone to seed. Homes with the scale and grace of an earlier age sit behind unkempt yards, devoid of landscaping. There are parked cars, but no people. The chatter of televisions through open windows underscores the lack of air conditioning, and makes the street feel emptier. Porches and yards hold the occasional lost toy, a sodden stuffed bear or a lone shoe. Paint peels from elaborate detailing, with pieces of soffit and eave missing here and there. Sloppy conversions to apartments abound, with unadorned steel doors wedged into former bay windows and patched-together fire escapes cutting across once-symmetrical façades. Insulation blocks many of the large double-hung windows. “For rent” signs proliferate.

Main Street slopes downhill to the river, and the buildings change from large houses to small houses to warehouses, constant in their air of disrepair and vacancy. At the bottom of the hill a large brick building sits on the riverfront, a factory with three stories of windows broken by thrown stones, and a “No Trespassing” sign on the chain link fence blocking its grounds. The far side of the factory is open, its large gravel parking lot empty. The river itself swirls by, muddy water overhung with massive multi-trunked sycamores. Its atmosphere of decaying leaves and mineral mud hangs undisturbed around the factory, thick with the buzz of cicadas.

Main Street crosses the river and the rise beyond through waves of newer housing: postwar Cape Cods, 1970s ranches, an apartment complex. A traffic light marks the intersection with the highway bypass around the city and the sudden presence of traffic around the strip malls and big boxes amid acres of asphalt. The pedestrians navigating carts of purchases through the parking lot deserts are small and indistinct from the road, easy to miss in the commotion of traffic. The smell of French fries mingles with diesel exhaust from the passing tractor-trailers and the whiff of manure from those carrying hogs or cattle.

Across the bypass, Main Street changes its name and heads into farmland, joined by a drainage ditch deep enough to swallow a car. The road and ditch run straight for the horizon, through an eye-level tunnel of corn. The scent of pollen hangs in the air from corn tassels, emanating from the field like the taffeta-skirt rasp of the rustling leaves and the clouds of mosquitoes. The endless corn breaks only for a vacant farmhouse and a collapsing barn,

cobwebbed hay mow vault open to the blue sky. Beyond the corn lies an ocean of soybeans surrounding another abandoned farmhouse with "For Rent" framed by the peeling trim of its bay window. On the horizon sits a long, low, white building, its blank walls contrasting with the architectural Americana of the farmhouses and barns. Clouds mass above it, white billows with ominously gray undersides, and the distant rumble of thunder or maybe the next train approaching the outskirts of town.

The postindustrial rural Midwest

These empty farmsteads, the half-filled factory, the vacant storefronts and the threadbare homes are all too familiar in the postindustrial heart of America. Manufacturing moved to Mexico or China or elsewhere, along with the prosperity that built this town. The loss of manufacturing in the American Midwest and Northeast is well-known enough to make the nickname "Rustbelt" common and recognizable. Farming, too, is not what it was. The fields of corn and soybeans outside the city have always seemed endless, but today their acreage is indeed larger, just like the machinery that works these fields and the transnational corporations dominating agribusiness (described in more detail in Chapter 2). Contemporary agriculture employs only a handful of the people who used to farm here (Lamm 1997; Stull and Broadway 2004), and so the houses sit empty and barn roofs collapse, revealing post and beam craftsmanship. No such skill marks the long, low buildings of the confined feeding operation in the distance. They could be mistaken for factory buildings or aircraft hangers, but never for traditional barns. Likewise, the inhumane conditions and cramped pens housing their thousands of hogs (Stull and Broadway 2004) could never be mistaken for the pig pens and pastures of days gone by.

Those previous generations of hogs lived on farms with families and field hands, but today most young people follow opportunity to other places with better prospects for employment and advancement (Harden 2005). Each year more of their older relatives follow grown children to more prosperous places, perhaps moving south or west to the sun (Frey 2002). Each departure strengthens the cycle, where falling population closes businesses and schools drop ever closer to consolidation with the surrounding struggling towns. The city finds the maintenance of roads and parks, along with those schools, beyond the reach of its falling tax revenues. Each turn of this spiral of disinvestment and decline makes the city less appealing to new arrivals who could revive the fortunes of this place, repair its houses, start new businesses in the moribund downtown, and fill the empty school with new children. Surely such rebirth is impossible; the idyllic burg of past decades is forever lost. Who would move to this, the abandoned small city of today?

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Today: Saturday morning, Main Street: around the corner sits something new. Brilliant blue leaps off the freshly painted storefront, its impact dwarfing its modest size. Against the background of dilapidation, color draws the eye. The storefront windows are a riotous display of brightly colored ads and signs for the store's products, with one window dominated by a flag in stripes of red, white, and green. The door stands open, and customers come and go from cars parked along the street. Their greetings, like the signs in the windows and the store name newly painted across the façade, are in Spanish. The store is a tienda, a small grocery selling a variety of items difficult to find in the chains on the bypass. The signs in the windows advertise ice cream, videos, ready-to-eat barbacoa every weekend and the essential services of money wiring and phone cards to call abroad. The flag in the window is a Mexican flag, proclaiming this an outpost of immigrants, a piece of home in a foreign land. It's a part of Mexico in the Midwest, a place made by outsiders, a landscape reflecting a new culture in an old place, but it is also more than any of these. It's the one storefront with fresh paint and windows with current displays and signs; it's the one business with the lights on. It's a reason to go downtown, a small counterweight against the tide of abandonment sweeping this city. It looks like the future, no more, no less.

The tienda is an obvious change in the landscape, the piece that can't be missed, but it isn't alone. Seeing the tienda sensitizes the vision to signs all around the city that something new is happening here. Follow the river just beyond the city limits and find a county park, woodsy and pleasantly overgrown. Today people, a large multigenerational family group, overwhelm the aged shelter and minimal facilities. Music plays, children frolic and grandparents visit while an elaborate meal cooks on the few grills the park offers. It's a festive scene, a place usually home to a lone fisherman or dog walker enlivened today by norteño songs and the rhythm of Spanish conversation.

Behind the half-vacant factory on Main Street sits a modest neighborhood of small homes, mostly rentals crowded together on minimal lots and narrow streets lined with parked cars. On a block of nondescript one-story and Cape Cod houses, one stands out. It shares the size and roofline of its neighbors, but here terracotta tile lines the edge of the roof and all the windows. That tile matches the cap on the masonry block wall along the front property line. The wall is grand architecture, pierced with decorative metal inserts and featuring an archway over the sidewalk. Inside the wall the front yard is a shady haven, with tables and chairs arranged beneath a huge silver maple. They sit on neatly swept gravel, surrounded by beds of roses and hibiscus. The largest bed hosts an enclosed glass shrine, a house-like box displaying the Virgin of Guadalupe with her two kneeling worshippers. Potted plants abound both in this front yard space and on the adjacent tiny front porch, where a Mexican flag proudly waves. Even in the strip malls on the bypass, there are signs in Spanish. A check cashing store

proclaims “Se habla Español,” and convenience stores offer phone cards and money wiring to Mexico. In the next strip mall sits a cluster of Spanish-language businesses: a peluquería (barber shop), a panedería (bakery), and a tortillería (tortilla maker).

These scenes show the shaping of a small city’s physical landscape by its residents—not surprising, because vernacular landscapes are by definition the product of their inhabitants (Jackson 1984). Today in this city over a thousand miles from the Mexican border, those inhabitants include a substantial number of Mexican-American residents. As people shape their landscape (Jackson 1997), so the landscape in which people live shapes their experiences (Groth 1997), and this remains true even when the inhabitants change. Such a change is underway in the Midwestern United States, the north central part of the country. Although common usage of the term *Midwest* may add or subtract various states, the US Census Bureau defines the region as the states of Kansas, Nebraska, North and South Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa, and Missouri to the west, and Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio to the east (US Bureau of the Census 2012). The three latter states are the primary focus of this book, although the landscape types described here may also be found in other Midwestern states. This is a region known for its traditional way of life and old-fashioned values, whether exalted or derided. This stereotype hides a more complex reality, however, that includes large numbers of recently arrived Mexican immigrants and Mexican-American communities founded nearly a century ago (Millard and Chapa 2004; García 1996). In this, the Midwest and its Mexican-Americans exemplify the changing place and places of immigrants in the US, contrasting the traditional with the contemporary. This book tells the story of both these groups—the well-established and the newly arrived—and their neighbors, through the Midwestern landscapes in which they live and work.

This topic merits scholarly attention because of the rapid demographic growth and increasing dispersion of Latina/o residents within the US, the numerical dominance of Mexican-Americans within that group, and their persistent economic disadvantage—nearly three in ten of those living in poverty in the US are Latina/o, over twice the poverty rate of non-Hispanic white residents (Lopez and Cohn 2011). This disadvantage and the history of residential segregation (whether formal or de facto) of this group (Diaz 2005; Valdés 2000; Villa 2000) strongly suggest that inequality plays a role in the spaces where Mexican-Americans live, yet the interaction between Mexican-Americans and the built environment has received little scholarly attention. This is especially true of Mexican-Americans in regions outside of the Southwest, which is the setting for the bulk of the modest amount of literature devoted to Mexican-American landscapes, primarily within cultural geography (Arreola 2002, 2004; Rojas 2006, 2010). This literature is quite limited in its application to other regions, or generalizability, by the

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Southwest's contested history as a former part of Mexico. In contrast, Midwestern Mexican-Americans may be seen as one immigrant group among many others (Valdés 2000). The viewpoint of the built environment as a malleable medium for creating places for people is also missing from works addressing Mexican-Americans in the Midwest within geography as well as those in other non-spatial fields.

Because of the lack of information about Mexican-American landscapes outside the Southwest, designers and planners tend to overlook these communities, their landscapes, and their problems. While participatory process and community-based design hold promise as solutions, they are often beyond the reach of practitioners' schedules and budgets due to the considerable amount of time required. Thus plans and designs don't adequately consider Mexican-American communities, and thus those plans and designs serve these communities ineffectively if at all.

This book begins to remedy this deficiency by describing Mexican-American landscapes in the Midwest as a series of landscape types with associated social and economic characteristics, providing a foundation for practice within these places. The book also explores the role of these landscapes in expressing and perpetuating economic and social inequality through physical space, and investigates whether this spatially expressed inequality is changing in newly forming Mexican-American neighborhoods as compared to their more venerable counterparts within the Midwest. A final important question is whether this inequality depends on some quality unique to Mexican-Americans, such as culture or history, or if it is instead symptomatic of contemporary incorporation of immigrant or minority residents in the American landscape. For these reasons, Mexican-American landscapes are worthy of the attention of designers, planners, and scholars, not just as a specialty niche but as a mirror of life for all residents of these places, regardless of ethnicity.

Immigration

It's a cliché to refer to the United States as a nation of immigrants. With the exception of Native Americans, it's also true, in that all of the rest of us are descended from people who emigrated to this country at some point in the past. With this comes a beloved national myth of the immigrant experience, redolent of hard work and noble sacrifice. From the Pilgrims to Ellis Island, we glorify the immigrant ancestors who literally made the nation what it is. Yet at the same time, anti-immigrant rhetoric is a staple of political punditry, often rising and falling with election cycles (see, for example, Huntington 2004). This kind of overheated screeching can make the average person tune out everything concerning immigration. That is unfortunate, because here, today, immigration is a major force shaping places—economic, social and physical—where people live.

During the height of the immigration wave that spanned the end of the 1800s into the early years of the twentieth century, the percentage of Americans born in another country reached an all-time high of 14.8 percent in 1890 (Camarota 2002). Steady growth is approaching that historic territory: 11 percent according to Census 2000 (Grieco, Trevelyan et al. 2012), and 13 percent in Census 2010 (Grieco, Acosta et al. 2012), despite the global recession that slowed the movement of people into the country (Singer and Wilson 2010). The percentage of people born in another country tells only part of the story of the increasing diversity of the US. Driven in part by immigration, but also by the younger average age and higher average birthrates of non-white residents, the Census Bureau predicts the US will have no racial majority by 2042. This means that non-Hispanic whites will no longer be a majority at the national level (US Census Bureau News 2008). The 2010 Census reaffirmed Latina/os' status as the nation's largest minority group, at 16.3 percent of the national population (Passel, Cohn, and Lopez 2011). A very large majority (63 percent) of these Latina/os were of Mexican descent, with all other Latina/o national-origin groups less than ten percent of this whole (US Bureau of the Census 2010b).

While the nation edges toward that historic percentage of immigrants, today's new arrivals aren't the same as the last century's great wave. Then most immigrants came from Europe; now Latin America and Asia have pulled far ahead (Grieco, Acosta et al. 2012). In 2010, the Census Bureau listed Mexico as the clear leader in sending countries for foreign-born US residents (29 percent of all foreign-born US residents). China was a distant second at about 5 percent, with India close behind at just under 5 percent. Vietnam (3 percent) and El Salvador (3 percent) rounded out the top five countries (Grieco, Trevelyan et al. 2012). It's understandable, then, that Mexican immigrants are at the center of much of the heated debate over immigration in the US. One might easily infer that Mexican immigrants, in particular those without legal documentation, are a recent phenomenon, but people have been moving across the US/Mexican border since before a border existed. At one point the border leapt over an untold number of stationary Mexicans, when the US annexed what is now the Southwest (Gonzalez 2000). Thus immigration from Mexico is neither new nor temporary. As long as there are higher wages and better opportunities for workers here, with employers hungry for cheaper labor free of labor organization and regulation, people will continue to come north. The role of immigrant labor through a wide swath of the American economy—including agriculture, manufacturing, construction and service jobs—helps lower prices on many goods for the general public, which blunts the appetite for serious reform. This relationship holds true regardless of political viewpoints or piecemeal attempts to make border crossings or life for undocumented immigrants more difficult. The strength and age of this relationship also means that immigration from Mexico is woven into many aspects of

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American (and Mexican) life, extending far beyond the border on both sides, such as the cities and towns profiled in this book.

Rockwellian towns, farms and old-fashioned rural values form the image of the Midwest in the imagination of many Americans. Immigrants, especially those from outside Europe, are simply not a part of this image. Yet several recent publications document the phenomenon of rising numbers of immigrants settling in different places than those that received past immigrant waves (Smith and Furuseth 2006; Millard and Chapa 2004; Singer, Hardwick, and Brettell 2008; Zúñiga and Hernández-León 2005). These “new destinations” include the Midwest and the Southeast, and they emphasize not the largest cities within these regions, but their smaller cities and towns. The 2010 Census showed Latina/os formed 7 percent of the Midwest region’s overall population, a relatively small group that is growing at an astounding rate, increasing by 49 percent since 2000 (Ennis, Rios-Vargas, and Albert 2011). This far outstripped the growth of the overall population of the Midwest, which grew by only 4 percent during these same years (Ennis, Rios-Vargas, and Albert 2011). Of these Latina/o Midwesterners, over 74 percent were of Mexican descent (Ennis, Rios-Vargas, and Albert 2011). Just like in the national figures, Mexican-Americans form a very large majority here: the next most populous national-origin Latina/o group in the region (Puerto Ricans) is only about 9 percent of the region’s Latina/o residents (US Bureau of the Census 2010).

The change in destinations for new immigrants to the US has several causes, chief among them the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. This legislation shifted crossings away from the traditional border cities, breaking the established migration routes into California and Texas. It also extended amnesty to many immigrants already in the US illegally, freeing them to follow opportunities across the country (Durand, Massey, and Capoferro 2005). These opportunities included those created by the movement of meatpacking, food processing and light manufacturing to more rural locations in search of lower labor costs and less unionization. These new industries created great demand for immigrant labor just as that labor pool was becoming more available. Many of these plants shortcut the process of immigration flows by recruiting workers directly from the border (Stull and Broadway 2004; Chapa et al. 2004).

Landscape

Immigrants moving to non-traditional destinations arrive not just in a different culture and society, but also in a different physical landscape from that of their homes and the traditional gateway cities. It’s rare for the landscape, or the physical environment where people live, to be a part of discussions about the immigrant experience, whether among scholars or in the popular media. Landscape is an easily trivialized topic. Most people,

both inside and outside academia, don't pay much attention to the physical environment in which they live their lives, beyond admiring the occasional scenic view or garden. This omission overlooks the fact that landscape surrounds all human endeavor, thus wielding a subtle yet pervasive influence over everything we do. For example, a resident living on a busy highway without sidewalks may never leave his/her property on foot, while someone living on a quiet residential cul-de-sac may walk or jog every day, getting to know the neighbors and keeping an eye on the neighborhood. A person's choice of restaurant may be based on the availability of nearby parking, and her decision about whether she feels safe walking from that parking is based on whether other people seem to be nearby, whether the path is well-lit and other people can see her walking on it, and whether the buildings and landscape along the path are well-maintained. On a hot day a person might choose the path in the shade, or through the air-conditioned building. On a cold day he might choose the sunny route, or just stay inside. So on a cold day he sees and reacts to what's along one path; on a hot day, he sees and reacts to what's along another route. Canopy trees, awnings, barriers to wind or sun and the lack of all these things create the routes that people choose. In a subdivision where yards blend together, homeowners feel pressured to mow their lawns as soon as the neighbors do, and to use herbicides and fertilizers like they do. A homeowner might even look at the neighbor's beds of flowers and new outdoor kitchen and think about calling a landscape contractor. The same person, living in the country where neighbors' yards aren't readily visible, might find the same yard is satisfactory just as it is, and put off mowing until tomorrow. In an unfamiliar city, a visitor doesn't need to be told that the "best" neighborhood has an elaborate gate at its entrance. Thus everyday life is influenced in ways large and small by landscape characteristics that a person might not even notice. These effects include aspects such as mental and physical health (Matsuoka and Sullivan 2011; Maas et al. 2006), satisfaction with residential neighborhoods (Lee et al. 2008), social interactions (Holtan, Dieterlen, and Sullivan 2014; Matsuoka and Sullivan 2011), and the likelihood of crime (Kuo and Sullivan 2001; Troy, Grove, and O'Neil-Dunne 2012).

We fail to see the landscape in the same way a fish fails to see the water—omnipresent is invisible. That invisibility doesn't mean that landscape has no influence or doesn't matter, but rather that it's chronically underestimated in its impact on and reflection of human life. In fact, that same invisibility can make landscape's influence more potent, since it is unrecognized and stealthy. This can be particularly dangerous regarding the role of landscape in issues of racism and inequality, where seemingly benign features can perpetuate the prejudices of days gone by (Harris 2007; Lipsitz 2007). These can be subtle, such as a Latina/o neighborhood that lacks the sidewalks of neighboring areas, or blatant, such as the elevated freeway running over the impoverished African-American neighborhood. The person living on a

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dead-end street gutted by the freeway's constant noise and pollution might scoff at the neighborhood without sidewalks, but in the Latina/o neighborhood, school kids and service workers walk in the streets to get to the bus stop each morning. In the working class neighborhood next door, people board the same bus without taking the risk of walking in the streets. Minor inconveniences like unpaved streets have a major impact on everyday life over time, when the dust and mud and perennial ruts are a problem for you, but not for the people half a mile down the road. Attitudes and policies may become more just over the years, but the road remains unpaved until someone paves it and the freeway stays where it is. Thus old inequalities remain in the physical landscape, and remain a hindrance to quality of life and opportunities today.

However, if landscape can be complicit in creating and maintaining inequality, it can also be a thoroughly concrete expression of those qualities: difficult to dismiss or fabricate, and thus easy to defend and trust. Critics may claim that differences in educational attainment or income are really the result of socioeconomic status or school quality instead of racial or ethnic discrimination, but the lack of paving in the Latina/o neighborhood's streets is objective fact: there is paving, or there is not. The streets are wide enough to allow ready navigation by garbage trucks and fire engines, or they are not. The neighborhood is between the railroad and the factory, or it is not. These facts are much more difficult to dispute and easy for the layperson to understand.

Landscape and Immigration

While immigration is an old story in the United States, the country in which today's immigrants arrive has changed tremendously from that which received the Great Deluge of Europeans at the turn of the twentieth century. American cities grew, thrived and then waned with the growth of suburbs (Jackson 1985). Population shifted from the Northeast and Midwest to the Sunbelt (Frey 2002). Pedestrians and streetcars gave way to automobiles, and the landscape adjusted accordingly. These and other changes—the accumulation of a century or more of technology, fashion and societal shifts—stand between today's landscape and that of the last great flood of immigrants. This book is also a story of how the landscape of the twenty-first century meshes with the old narrative of immigrants arriving in America.

This story is increasingly critical in the globalized twenty-first century, because of the growing diversity of the nation and the broader geographic range of places directly affected by this diversity, as discussed above. A multicultural society requires changes in many areas, some readily apparent, such as governance and education, and others that are less obvious, such as the design and planning of the built environment. Landscape architects, architects and planners currently face monumental challenges including

adaptation to climate change, population shifts across the urban/suburban/exurban spectrum (Blanco et al. 2009), and the struggle to adapt business models to lean economic times (Baker 2012; Trimbath 2013). The interaction of immigrants and other minority groups with the built environment needs to be considered along with this list as the world becomes smaller yet more diverse. What does increasing diversity mean for those who shape and study the built environment? It means that assumptions about the public use of spaces need to change, the landscapes of non-white groups must be valued by outsiders, and the role of the built environment in reflecting and perpetuating social inequalities must be faced by the average practitioner.

Study of Mexican-American landscapes in the Midwest helps provide a new context for assumptions about public use of spaces. In every design project, the designers' assumptions are an invisible but potent influence, especially in the high-pressure world of design practice. Where time and budget are limited, comprehensive site inventory and analysis must often be supplemented or supplanted with the designers' preconceived ideas about the neighborhood, its people, and their use of the built environment. It is, therefore, increasingly important for these assumptions to keep pace with the growing diversity of the US. Simply designing a space to be used by people just like oneself is not enough; truly competent design addresses the reality of the social and physical context of the site, especially when those circumstances differ from the designers' own backgrounds.

Landscape architecture, architecture and urban planning share an unfortunate history of viewing neighborhoods with high concentrations of people of color as sites for urban renewal and redevelopment, with devastating consequences for social and economic life, as well as the built environment (Diaz 2005; Villa 2000; Jacobs 1993; Massey and Denton 1993). In recent decades this bias has changed considerably for the better. The view encompassed within this book—landscapes associated with Midwestern Mexican-Americans seen as valuable and distinct cultural spaces by a landscape architect—continues this attitudinal shift. The places studied in this research are unremarkable compared to the better-known Mexican-American landscapes of the Southwest and the more urban ones of large cities like Chicago and Detroit, yet these places, too, have Mexican-American landscapes that are valuable and worthy of consideration. These landscapes exist not just at the scale of individual domestic landscapes and neighborhood placemaking, but also at the level of city form and structure. This makes the phenomena documented here of vital interest not just to Mexican-American residents, but to all residents of these cities and regions. Shifting immigration patterns are only one current trend rewriting the landscape. Combined with the impact of globalization, climate change and the continuing deindustrialization of the United States, the impact of immigrants in new places is reshaping US cities and towns.

The story presented within these pages has profound implications for social justice, used here to mean the neutralization of disparity in opportunity

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and life chances associated with race, ethnicity, national origin, and similar designations. Here, social justice connects to the landscape through the difference in landscape types associated with well-established Mexican-American communities and with newly formed Mexican-American communities. These physical patterns of landscape characteristics consistently and predictably appear in tandem with certain social and economic features. The landscape types associated with newly formed Mexican-American communities demonstrate more spatial equity, or the expression of social equality through the built environment, than the landscape types associated with well-established communities, despite their decades of residency (Dieterlen 2012). This new/old difference in spatial equity raises the question: is this difference unique to Mexican-heritage communities? Mexican culture (and its Mexican-American counterpart) is rich and distinctive—is some aspect of it responsible for these spatial differences? The tradition of cultural landscapes study would support that notion, that culture is an important shaper of the space inhabited by ethnic groups (Groth 1997; Upton 1986). Mexican-American history differs from that of other immigrant groups in that a large part of the United States is conquered territory that once belonged to their country of origin (Gonzalez 2000). It's possible that this history or other events in the history of this group bears primary responsibility for these spatial patterns. Such characteristics specific to Mexican-Americans that set them apart from other groups within the US taken together could comprise a quality of “Mexicanness” that results somehow in the spatial characteristics documented within this book.

However, there are other differences between Mexican-Americans and the other residents of the cities and towns I studied: income, educational attainment, newness to the community, lack of social ties into the larger community, or perhaps simply outsider status or “otherness.” What role might the reaction of the non-Mexican-American part of the community play? If a city is 20 percent Mexican-American residents, 80 percent of the city is not within this group. Is it reasonable to expect that 80 percent will play little role in the spatial characteristics of local Mexican-American neighborhoods? This seems implausible, especially given the differences in political power, capital, and social networks across local racial and ethnic groups. Although the demographic growth and expanding geographic distribution of Mexican-Americans means that these landscapes are relevant to a great many communities across the country in any case, if the causes behind the differences in spatial equity described within this book are due to “otherness” or another characteristic not specific to Mexican-Americans, many more places and people need to pay attention to these issues. Do newly formed immigrant communities across the country live in more equitable landscapes, and do well-established immigrant communities ever fully escape the influence of environments crafted by outdated prejudice? This question makes anyone concerned with the future of American cities and towns, American society, or social inequalities a stakeholder in the

interaction between Mexican-Americans and the Midwestern landscape. This is not a Mexican-American topic, but an American one.

I learned about the interaction between landscape and Mexican-American communities through a process of scholarly investigation, beginning with reading the publications of others about Mexican-American neighborhoods in the non-metro Midwest. Few people who wrote about this topic mentioned the landscape in any way, but those who did provided descriptions that overlapped with each other. These authors mentioned the landscape only in passing, however, because their main focus was on topics such as identity formation or community history (see, for example, Millard and Chapa 2004; Valdés 2000; Vargas 1993). I wondered, therefore, if the descriptions I drew from the literature would match the landscapes of actual cities and towns.

As research based on observations and other data collected in the field, this is primarily inductive work, suitable to its exploratory task and not strongly driven by preexisting theory. I employed an exploratory research design using both qualitative and quantitative methods, based on a mixed method design presented by John W. Cresswell and Vicki L. Plano Clark (Cresswell and Clark 2007). Figure 1.1 shows a generic version of this research design in diagrammatic form, and Figure 1.2 shows this design with the specific steps of this research.

I visited eleven small cities and used aerial photos, maps and Census data to find that groups of cities had similar landscapes and similar demographic and economic characteristics. I called these similarities “landscape types.” Some of these landscape types matched the descriptions I’d found in the publications I’d read, but others were new. However, I didn’t know if these landscape types existed anywhere other than the eleven cities I’d visited, so I developed a shorthand classification technique for each landscape type, using a few characteristics from each one. Using this shorthand, I determined that there were many other small cities in Indiana, Ohio, and Michigan that had these key characteristics and shared these landscape types, and that their presence likely was due to more than random chance (Dieterlen 2009, 2012). For more detail about this investigation and the methods used, please see Chapter 8. The following chapters relate the results of this investigation and its implications.

Three of these chapters also feature hypothetical case studies of common landscape architectural projects within cities that exemplify the landscape type upon which each chapter focuses. These case studies respond to repeated requests from colleagues to explain what this research means for practice, with the detail and realism needed for people engaged in physical interventions in real places. As a former practitioner, I see the best answer to this question as consideration of what I would do differently in past projects if I were to do them now in the small cities I studied. These case studies are therefore compendia of my experiences and built projects as a practitioner, my observations within the cities I studied, and my conclusions about the applications of this research. Each case study combines projects I

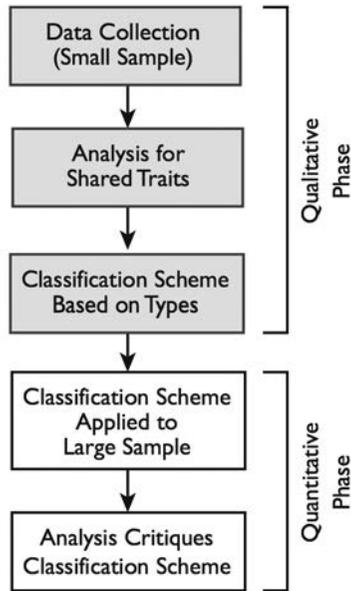


Figure 1.1 Generic mixed methods research design (Source: Susan Dieterlen/Erica Grohol)

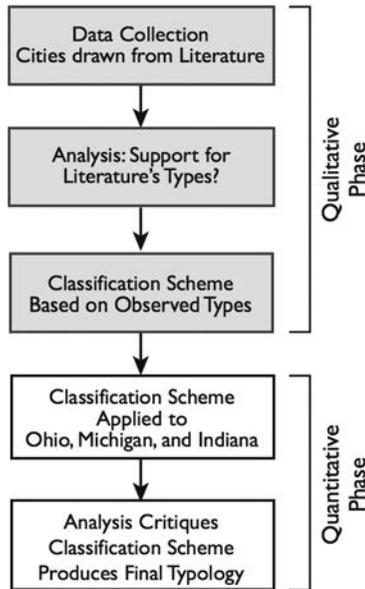


Figure 1.2 Mixed methods research design applied to this research (Source: Susan Dieterlen/Erica Grohol)

did in practice with locations I studied in this research, incorporating existing site conditions, discussions with the client, personal observations, and a proposed design solution. Although based on real projects and places, they are hypothetical in these combinations. I have also changed the names of the cities. For readers from design fields, these case studies provide a very realistic and detailed answer to the question of what this means for their work. For readers from Latina/o Studies and other non-spatial fields, they provide powerful illustrations of how these insights can impact physical environments, and how they in turn influence the social cohesion, economic health, and future of communities.

Overview of the book

Chapter 2: The World Comes Home

Several larger trends and topics intersect in the landscape transformation of small Midwestern cities with Mexican-American communities. This chapter introduces several ways in which increasing globalization has affected the region, beginning with an introduction to the history of Mexican-Americans in the Midwest. This leads to a discussion about immigration in the past compared to current conditions, and to the economic shifts that have accompanied these shifts: deindustrialization and changes in agriculture, meatpacking, and food processing. The chapter closes with demographic shifts and the shrinking cities they produce.

Chapter 3: Learning the Language

Chapter 3 presents background information about the landscape, making the reader conversant with this often-overlooked but ever-present facet of life. Initial discussion focuses on the landscape of small cities of the Midwest. This sets the stage for the presentation of a series of neighborhood types used within this research to describe the landscapes I studied, regardless of race, ethnicity, or larger city form. The portrait created by the work of others regarding Mexican-American landscapes in the Southwest adds the last essential piece of introduction to the landscape types.

Chapter 4: Dynamic New Communities

Chapter 4 emphasizes the signs of revitalization appearing in the landscape of small Midwestern cities with new Mexican immigrants. This demographic change brings both renewal and growing pains. The pre-existing landscape of these cities was the product of non-Hispanic white residents and other non-Latina/os, including past immigrant groups. Their landscape now reflects rapidly changing places, in turn spurring further change. This description focuses particularly on Frankfort, Indiana, a typical New Community.

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This chapter culminates with insights about shaping similar places for people, primarily through a hypothetical case study of a project common in landscape architecture practice—a downtown streetscape and gateway.

Chapter 5: Resting Established Communities

The next chapter profiles a different set of postindustrial small cities: those with longstanding Mexican-American communities. In some ways these contrast with the New Communities, but in other ways they are similar, highlighting how tensions between different racial and ethnic groups have shaped and continue to shape the way residents live upon the land. The chapter opens with an examination of their landscape as a product of all residents, both Latina/o and non-Latina/o. Many examples occur, this time in Adrian, Michigan. The chapter closes with recommendations for interventions in the landscapes of these places, focusing on increasing spatial equity for their underserved neighborhoods. A second hypothetical case study of another common landscape architectural project, a pedestrian and bicycle trail system set in an Established Community, highlights this effort.

Chapter 6: Perennial Mixed Communities

Some small cities have maintained a recurring flow of Mexican-heritage arrivals while New and Established Communities have weathered ebbs and flows. This third group of cities, the Mixed Communities, are the subject of the next chapter. They are not merely a combination of the other two types, but a distinct third type, with their own histories, economic fortunes and spatial and social characteristics. Holland, Michigan, serves as a featured example of a Mixed Community.

Although Mixed Communities are in many ways more prosperous than either New or Established Communities, there are still opportunities for improving the quality of life of their residents through shaping the landscape. These opportunities close this chapter, underscored by a hypothetical case study of a landscape architectural project, the redesign of a public park.

Chapter 7: Other Camps, Other Gateways

Four additional types of Mexican-American landscapes found in the postindustrial Midwest are the topic of this chapter: Evolved Sugar Beet Camps, Evolved Railroad Camps, Postwar Industrial Suburbs, and Global Service Cities. As landscape types at the fringes of the research upon which this book is based, their descriptions here are less fully developed. However, they provide hints of other landscape types associated with Mexican-American communities in the Midwest's larger cities and in suburban areas.

Chapter 8: Equity, Design, and Landscape

This final chapter investigates the implications for spatial and social equity revealed by the study of Midwestern Mexican-American landscapes, what these implications mean for design and planning in these places, and what they mean for other emerging immigrant destinations within the US. The chapter identifies common themes from the earlier chapters, particularly the hypothetical project case studies, synthesizing a series of overall guidelines. As an aid to readers planning their own research, this chapter also discusses the design and methods of this research in more detail. This final chapter addresses the important question of how the study of Mexican-American landscapes in the Midwest can inform future work and research, and the way Americans continue to make places together.

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