

Gentrification and Displacement: Assessing Responses in Santa Ana, California

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Abstract

Working-class immigrant populations have historically played a significant role in building the nation's economic prosperity, yet have remained an invisible population in matters of social well-being. Current urban trends pose a particular problem for these populations. They are increasingly targeted as the "unwanted," the symbols of urban degradation, and are systematically pushed out of their homes. This study researches present day urban revitalization and its consequences for working-class immigrant populations by examining effects of and responses to gentrification in Santa Ana, California. It is an ethnographic account of the lived experiences of Santa Ana residents, the efforts of local organizations, and the role of the city. This research discusses the significance of a sense of belonging, sociological imagination, empowerment, and cultural citizenship on confronting and resisting negative effects of urban development. It additionally presents an alternative approach in Santa Ana by highlighting existing contributions towards truly inclusive community development.

Introduction

Neoliberalist philosophies in the last decades have had profound effects on political, economic, and social orders on a global scale. These effects have been particularly visible in city politics, policy, and design. Neoliberalism has brought about tremendous deregulation and decentralization in governments, allowing for the forces of the market to operate freely. As a result, the years have seen declining public resources and investments in cities throughout the United States. Meanwhile, the influence and power of private entities has significantly increased. For urban loci here and worldwide, this signifies a growing interest to reinvest in urban centers through private developments. Christopher Niedt argues that "the neoliberal state's

retreat from social programs and its emphasis on private-sector redevelopment allay suspicion of government and enable collaboration between the local state, developers, and homeowners” (Niedt, 2006: 99). Consequently, developers in the private sector have assumed key roles in urban planning and revitalization projects throughout the nation. Such is the general overview of transformations in our cities, changes that are tied to greater ideologies that dictate the direction of the world today.

Among the most visible transformations occurring in countless cities throughout the world is the movement of peoples. Current trends reveal that middle and upper-income classes who were once moving out to the suburbs are now returning to the cities. In a study on urban housing renovation, Andrew Helms contends that “a countercurrent in the tide of suburbanization was first detected in the late 1960s: some inner-city neighborhoods were unexpectedly being resettled by middle- and upper-income ‘pioneers’ who were typically young, childless, and well educated” (Helms, 2003: 474-5). This movement of affluent peoples into urban centers is termed gentrification, and has continued persistently, increasing over the past three decades (Freeman and Braconi, 2004). It is a phenomenon that is greatly reflective of larger transformations worldwide. Once limited to isolated projects in Europe and North America, gentrification in today’s neoliberal world is accepted as a global urban strategy (Smith, 2002). Investment in the cities is a more lucrative business for private developers, who are confronting a decline in the housing market particularly in the suburbs. A return to the city for the privileged classes is made possible by the development of luxury condominiums, attractive artist lofts, multi-use facilities, extensive shopping centers, and more. Rapidly springing up in cities across the nation, these developments serve the purpose of increasing land value and tax revenue for city governments. As Hackworth and Smith argue, “continued devolution of federal

states has placed even more pressure on local states to actively pursue redevelopment and gentrification as ways of generating tax revenue” (Hackworth and Smith, 2000: 464). But in making way for the “gentry” to return, in erecting fancy lofts and brand-new developments, what happens to the populations who presently inhabit urban spaces?

Swept by the priorities of a neoliberal world, cities delve into efforts to create an image of the “livable city”, which has become “a key aspect of a city's ability to compete in a globalized, knowledge-based economy” (Florida 2003 in Rose, 2004: 281). The dismantled welfare state has left less power and resources in government, legitimizing redevelopment by private corporations. Gentrification is consequently welcomed. However, as Kathe Newman and Elvin Wyly argue, “This approach does not benefit low-income residents” (Newman and Wyly, 2006: 23). Private investment and development, while reinvigorating economic prosperity, can ultimately result in the displacement of working-class people from their homes. Because they are economically disempowered, cities have become actors pushing for gentrification. In an effort to renovate and reinvigorate their cities, officials often opt to push out their poorer populations by obtaining their lands through eminent domain and selling to developers. The efforts towards creating “livability” in urban centers signifies “socially sanitizing’ urban space, i.e. by removing the most marginalized groups from public space or eradicating their housing when it is located in neighborhoods with potential for settlement by middle-class families” (Rose, 2004: 282). Urban governance in the 21st century has become representative of neoliberal philosophies, and gentrification seems to be the accepted avenue by which cities engage in the neoliberal world. Amidst the dynamics of these global trends remain the world’s underserved populations of working-class, often immigrant peoples.

Working-class immigrant populations have historically played a significant role in building the nation's economic prosperity, yet have remained an invisible population in matters of social well-being. Current urban trends pose a particular problem for these populations. They are increasingly targeted as the "unwanted," the symbols of urban degradation, and are systematically pushed out of their homes. This study illustrates present day urban revitalization and its consequences for working-class immigrant populations by examining effects of and responses to gentrification in Santa Ana, California. It focuses on the displacement of city residents, addressing the factors that influence resistance to displacement.

Santa Ana

Located in the heart of one of the wealthiest and most expensive counties of the United States, is becoming a prime example of the afore mentioned transformations in cities of the new century. It is the largest and oldest city of the county, and the seat of the county government. Santa Ana residents are primarily working-class Latino immigrants, employed in the service sectors of the surrounding cities. It is over 76% Latino, with the highest concentration of Spanish-speaking residents in the nation. It was proclaimed the number one mid-size city in the nation with most urban hardship, by a study from the Rockefeller Institute of Government (Montiel, Nathan and Wright, 2004: 11). Amongst these hardships were unemployment, dependency, education, income level, crowded housing, and poverty (Montiel et al, 2004: 8).

Santa Ana was established in 1870 after William Spurgeon bought land from the Rancho Santiago de Santa Ana of the Yorba family. It became an important center for agricultural settlements in present day Orange County, expanded into an urban center with its access to the Los Angeles-San Diego stage line, and underwent further growth from an expanding industrial

base after World War II (Harwood and Myers, 2002: 2). With expansion and growth of the overall region came demographic changes; the 1970s saw a “fleeing” white population and the rise of “the minority” majority. By 1990, the Latino population made up 65% of Santa Ana, while White, Asian, and African-American populations were 23%, 9%, and 2% respectively (US Census Bureau, 1990). The foreign-born population became significantly notable in the 90s when “one-third of the entire population in Santa Ana had entered the United States within the last 10 years, an extraordinary concentration of recent arrivals” (Harwood and Myers, 2002: 4). These trends have continued; today, Santa Ana is undeniably a majority Latino immigrant city, as reflected not only in Census demographics, but in the character of daily life. All one has to do is take a walk through the bustling retail center along La Calle Cuatro in downtown, beaming with quincenera shops, Mexican restaurants, paleteros, and mobile vendors with sliced fruit, *churros*, and *duritos con chile*.

It is particularly important to contextualize Santa Ana within Orange County. Orange County is in the top 100 highest-income counties by median household income (Census 2000 Demographic profiles) in the nation, and in 2005 became the country’s second most expensive housing market (Webber). Orange County has distinguished itself as a hotbed for anti-immigrant sentiment and activity; it is the birth place of policies like California’s Proposition 187, a controversial initiative that sought to deny benefits like health care and education to undocumented immigrants, drafted by Huntington Beach resident Barbara Coe in 1994. It is also the home of “anti-immigrant pioneers” such as Aliso Viejo resident Jim Gilchrist, founder of the notorious Minuteman Project, which seeks to enforce existing U.S. immigration law along the U.S./Mexico border; and the county where Costa Mesa mayor Alan Monsoor, in an unprecedented effort, positioned ICE officials in the offices of the city police department. The

Orange County Republican Congressional delegation additionally played a big role in crafting HR 4437, and congress member John Campbell (R-Newport Beach) boasts of having blocked law enforcement grants to cities such as Los Angeles that forbid police from turning information about illegal immigrants over to federal authorities. (Arellano, “Let Orange County Bash Immigrants, Please!”). Terms like “Santa Ana’s spillover” today characterize the growing Mexican populations in neighboring cities such as Tustin, an act reflective of the anti-immigrant and really anti-Mexican sentiment prevalent in wealthy, conservative Orange County.

The city of Santa Ana has struggled with its image of urban hardship and inequality, painfully disreputable since the Rockefeller study exposed life conditions for Santa Ana residents. Great efforts have been invested, therefore, to create changes to “revitalize” Santa Ana. Within the last year, the motto of the city has changed from “Education First”, to “Downtown Orange County.” This move, along with recent development efforts, parallel efforts of the 21st century neoliberal city, a city of consumption, retail and service that seeks not to immediately meet the needs of its population, but rather to increase economic activity. While some laud the efforts of the city to “clean up” Santa Ana, others are critical of the cities “self-hatred” and its disregard for the underlying ills (Arellano, “Santa Ana’s small-minded self-hatred”).

Development

History of development in Santa Ana exposes strong discontent amongst the city’s residents. Lisbeth Haas writes of a period of organizing and protest by the Latino residents between 1976 and 1987 when tens of thousands of them organized to oppose city policies. The city of Santa Ana tried to implement redevelopment plans in the 1980s that sought to build

corporate convention and hotel centers and “‘revitalize’ more aggressively than before the downtown and civic-center area for use by a middle income residential and commercial population.” Feeling their neighborhoods and homes threatened by these plans, the largely immigrant Latino residents organized into neighborhood associations, planned and executed a rent strike, and created a coalition of tenants, neighborhood leaders and middle-class residents to oppose the plans. Haas points out that although the formal redevelopment plans of 1982 did not include explicit demolition of neighborhoods, the city council did impose far-reaching code enforcement in 1984 intended to change the demographics of the city by forcing out the undocumented population (257). This period is regarded as a dark period for Santa Ana, quoted in the Congress for the New Urbanism as an experiment with urban renewal-based practices that scarred the city (www.cnu.org/node/1529). But are redevelopment plans for the city of Santa Ana much different today?

Significant development has unfolded recently in Santa Ana towards an effort to dub it the “Arts and Culture City” of Orange County. In 1994, the city of Santa Ana set out to create the Artist Village, a nine-square-block area in downtown that features the Santora Arts building with thirty studios and galleries, the Empire Arts Building with a dance theatre and additional studios, surrounding artist lofts, and a retail and dining area along 2nd street. The central goals of this development were to revitalize downtown, increase commercial activity, and improve intercultural relationships (Mattern, 2001: 301). And while downtown has seen increased activity partly due to the promotion of arts form development, the Artist Village succeeded only in dividing the community by excluding the Latino community from development efforts and their benefits. In “Art and Community Development in Santa Ana, California: the Promise and the Reality,” Mark Mattern writes:

“Although art helps create and develop community in Santa Ana, art also divides people within Santa Ana along interrelated class and ethnic lines by segregating experience and by providing inequitable opportunities for participation in the public and civic life of Santa Ana” (302).

He specifically addresses only art directly supported and propagated by the city, the art that is part of city redevelopment projects. Even after the 1980s, city redevelopment projects, though dynamic and “artistic”, seemingly continued to disengage the actual Latino, working-class population in efforts to cater to a higher-income, white population.

Artist village consists of mixed-use dwelling units known as artist lofts, galleries, and up-scale restaurants. Most of these facilities are inaccessible to the majority of Santa Ana inhabitants—in addition to being expensive, they reflect an exclusive and elitist culture that marginalizes, rather than integrates, the ethnic community. Artist village was an imposed creation, designed in 1994, that serves and attracts people living outside of the city. “Most of the people who attend come from outside Santa Ana, and most are white middle- and upper-class residents of the region” (Mattern, 2001). The physical and ecological contradictions of space in Santa Ana reflect the larger forces actively seeking to displace poor, Mexican communities.

Today, the city of Santa Ana continues redevelopment in six project areas, namely Central City (downtown), Inner City, North Harbor, South Harbor, South Main, and Bristol Corridor. The Central City redevelopment area was adopted in 1973 and subsequently expanded in 1975, the following four areas were adopted in 1982, and the Bristol Corridor Project Area in 1989. Consistent with the aims of the neoliberal city, the intended purpose for redevelopment in these areas of Santa Ana is to act as a catalyst for new private investment (Santa Ana redevelopment homepage). Furthermore, a recent development activity report details over 35 individual projects, some under construction, many in planning stages. Some of the activity for

the downtown area of Santa Ana includes high-rise mixed-use facilities, including the West End Lofts to be built on Fourth Street, the mixed-use lofts across from the train depot, and the tallest building in Orange County—One Broadway Plaza.

Other projects include City Place and the Metro East Mixed-Use Overlay Zone, both of which have the potential, if not the intention, to further gentrify the city. “City Place is an 18-acre, \$125 million, mixed-use project expected to deliver an exciting urban alternative to suburban life in the heart of Orange County” (City of Santa Ana website). It will feature townhouses, lofts, and elite shopping and eating facilities, in addition to a residential high rise. This development is rapidly underway, expected to be completed by the end of this year. Similarly, the Metro East Mixed-Use Overlay Zone, from here on termed the Overlay Zone, was noted by the Southern California Association of Governments to be located in an area where development would “enhance livability” and “expand prosperity” (Overlay EIR, 2007). The exciting appeal of urban life, livability, and prosperity potentials are qualities that, while increasingly attractive in a globalized world, also have the potential of negatively impacting the underserved populations currently, and in some cases, previously living in Santa Ana, and therefore merit further investigation.

Furthermore, private developers in the areas surrounding the Santa Ana train depot have, in a shockingly short period of time, erected large loft-style multi-use facilities, known as the Santiago Street Lofts. Additionally, homes in the surrounding areas have been purchased and demolished by the city. The land will now be incorporated into the Renaissance Specific Plan, per the recent draft proposal, as Minter Court, a 12-unit live/work and townhouse project in a 16,000 square foot area.

The history of redevelopment in Santa Ana reveals constant efforts to spur economic activity, attract private investment, and increase the local tax base. The future of Santa Ana, with the leadership of its city planners and managers, will see many changes to capitalize on its “good urban form”, including the facilitation of a transit motivated community, increased walkability and all the pomp and excitement of an urban environment. While the vision or development plans of the city are expected to revitalize Santa Ana, to increase city revenue by increasing property value and taxes, and to beautify the city, few are considering the effects of such developments on the current residents of Santa Ana. The intent to change the demography of Santa Ana that was not successful in the 1980s has crept up once more, this time unsubdued.

Literature Review

Gentrification and displacement

Private investment and development, while reinvigorating economic prosperity, can ultimately result in the displacement of working-class people from their homes. Ruth Glass first termed this phenomenon as gentrification in 1964, defining it as the process of middle- and upper-class households moving into distressed working-class neighborhoods, upgrading the derelict housing stock, and eventually displacing the working-class residents (Glass, 1964 in Levy, Comey and Padilla, 2006).

Some scholars disagree that displacement follows gentrification. In a study on New York City in the 1900s, Lance Freeman and France Braconi found that rather than rapid displacement, gentrification resulted in slow and normal residential turnover (Freeman and Braconi, 2004). And Jacob L. Vigdor contends that gentrification in fact is not so harmful and that displacement “is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for declines in the living standards of poor

households” (Vigdor, 2002:134). Nevertheless, a systematic review of the English-language literature on gentrification reveals that a majority of the studies identify displacement as a significant problem (Atkinson 2004). Rowland Atkinson of the Department of Urban Studies at the University of Glasgow reports from his research from 1964 to 2001 that “existing evidence on gentrification shows it to have been largely harmful, predominantly through household displacement and community conflict” (Atkinson, 2004: 2). Atkinson points to the loss of affordable housing and the use of harassment and eviction to advance gentrification.

In a study on gentrification in New York City, Newman and Wyly report on considerable neighborhood transformations. A booming housing market translates into “skyrocketing rents, condominium conversions, [and] new construction and conversions of buildings that were former single room occupancy hotels” in previously low-income communities (Newman and Wyly, 2005). Low-cost renter housing in Harlem was transformed into homeownership and high-cost apartments, while tenants in the neighborhood experienced “unprecedented pressure from landlords” to vacate their housing.

A broader investigation into the case studies of six cities across the United States additionally points to negative effects of gentrification for underserved populations. Diane Levy, Jennifer Comey, and Sandra Padilla contend that “as housing prices increase, lower-income households are at risk of being pushed out or prevented from moving into certain geographic areas because of the prohibitive costs and limited household earnings” (Levy et al, 2006: 9). Strategies in response to gentrification at these various cities involved affordable housing production and retention precisely to mitigate the strong-felt displacement that subsequently follows gentrification.

Most literature suggests a direct relationship between gentrification and the displacement of households of lower socioeconomic status. Scholars investigating cities through North America, Europe, and indeed throughout the world, recognize the multiple ways in which low-income residents are at the very least encouraged to seek housing outside of “revitalized” urban centers. Rich ethnographic research from within affected neighborhoods offers a more holistic understanding of the various forces at play in gentrification, the respective outcomes, and responses to the phenomenon.

Sociological Imagination

The term sociological imagination was presented by C. Wright Mills in 1959 through his book *The Sociological Imagination*. Mill’s desire was to see a “human sociology” that coalesced scholarship and social commitment; in his book, he contends that American sociology ought to link the social, personal, and historical dimensions of everyday life. Sociological imagination, then, describes the process of contextualizing one’s individual experience within broader social and historical issues. In this way, people recognize their problems as part of a common struggle, and turn them into public issues.

Mills describes sociological imagination as a “quality of mind” through which people are able to see what is going on in the world and what may be happening within themselves. The two cannot be separated—“neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both” (Mills, 1959). One begins to understand that his/her personal circumstances are indeed linked to broader social forces, rather than feeling detached from others and trapped within one’s personal reality. The history of a society, according to Mills, reflects the successes and failures of individual men and women. It is critical, therefore, to

understand problems at the personal level and problems historically, and analyze their intersections within a society (Mills, 1959).

Empowerment

Scholars describe empowerment as the “process by which individuals and groups gain power, access to resources and control over their own lives” (Robbins, Chatterjee, & Canda, 1998). Definitions are abundant and are utilized in multiple disciplines including business and management, but the empowerment investigated through this study is concerned with processes that take place within a community. It involves “mutual respect, critical reflection, caring and group participation” (Cornell Empowerment Group, 1989), and a critical understanding of their environment (Zimmerman, Israel, Schulz, Checkoway, 1992).

Douglas Perkins and Marc A. Zimmerman, in a special issue article reviewing the meaning and significance of empowerment concepts and problems, describe empowerment as including both processes and outcomes. Empowerment processes may include participation in community organizations, collective decision making, and shared leadership (Perkins and Zimmerman, 1995). Outcomes might include perceived control and mobilization skills (Perkins and Zimmerman, 1995).

Civic membership, cultural citizenship

Renato Rosaldo coins the term “cultural citizenship” in his work *Culture and Truth*, in which he focuses on Latinos and Latino participation in the United States. Culture, he stresses, is “always in process, enmeshed in history and social inequalities, rather than as existing in a state of equilibrium” (Rosaldo, 2003: 1). The process of cultural citizenship, then, involves

subordinated subjects claiming rights as citizens, which can include the formal definition with respect to the state, such as voting, or a more colloquial form such as the desire for recognition as a full member of a group. Cultural citizenship is linked closely to empowerment, but not an empowerment that reproduces existing power systems. Instead, a more radical concept of empowerment is utilized, in which communities construct their human, social and cultural rights, and create individual and collective identities—a concept which aptly comes to describe the process and practice of cultural citizenship (Flores and Benmayor, 1997: 12). Additional concepts central to cultural citizenship include human agency, social reproduction, and the production of new cultural forms. Through their human agency, Latino communities actively claim their rights, define their own interests and create solidarities, space and membership. These rights include the values of respect, dignity, community, and family.

Cultural Citizenship in Island Southeast Asia provides a collection of works that further develop the concept of cultural citizenship. In the introduction, Rosaldo points out the question of “belongingness”. He acknowledges that an analysis of the politics of citizenship entails a discussion of ‘the meaning and scope of membership in the community in which one lives’ (Rosaldo, 2003: 2). Using the literature of Stuart Hall and David Held, who in their research of social movements in Great Britain investigate who belongs and what *belonging* really means in practice, cultural citizenship involves socio-cultural identities and cultural differences that are “crucial to [the] sense of identity, identification, and ‘belongingness’” (Hall and Held: 187). Importantly, Hall and Held argue that the concept of citizenship entails claiming rights and entitlements as full members of a community without giving up cultural identities.

Methods and Procedures

This study was a qualitative study conducted through the use of participant observation methodology, including multiple interviews, attendance and participation at various meetings and relevant conferences, and constant dialogue with community members. In total, it spans about one year of research in urban development, and about five years of active participation in the community of Santa Ana.

This study addresses both the effects of gentrification and the responses to it in three different areas of work, namely the city, non-profit organizations, and the community. As such, I provide results from research in all three areas.

Through snowball sampling, I interviewed 22 residents of Santa Ana. Interview questions included how long the interviewee had lived in Santa Ana, how many times he/she had moved, when, and why. Interviewees were asked if they could identify any changes in their neighborhoods since they had lived there, and were asked if those changes had affected them personally. They were asked if they planned to stay in Santa Ana and what would influence that decision. Furthermore they were asked how well they knew the city and whether they made use of any resources. Finally, they were asked to identify both what they liked and what they did not like about Santa Ana.

In addition to individual interviews, participation in meetings and conferences allowed me insight into the strategizing within and between the city, the non-profits, and the community. Such meetings included informationals hosted by the city, to working meetings with non-profit organizations, to community gatherings in Santa Ana.

Findings

Renaissance Specific Plan

The most recent development efforts in Santa Ana take the shape of the Renaissance Specific Plan. This plan outlines improvements in the Civic Center, downtown, the Logan and Lacy neighborhoods, and the industrial parks surrounding the train depot, changes that would improve the aesthetics of the city and encourage economic activity. It began in March 2006 as a guide for the redevelopment of over 350 acres of Santa Ana. The city hired the urban planning and architectural firm Moule and Polyzoides to develop the Specific Plan. This consulting firm assembled a team of professionals to conduct a study of the area and propose a plan. After an extensive process that has lasted over nineteen months, the city now has a second, updated draft of the Santa Ana Renaissance Specific Plan, and has scheduled further meetings with other bodies of city government, selected committees, and one downtown and one neighborhood meeting. The Environmental Impact Report will be completed and presented to the public by the end of year.

The first opportunity for community input and involvement came in May of 2006 during the 6-day charrette presentations. The public was welcome to come to city organized seminars on the various topics impacting the area, including historic and cultural resources, retail development, traffic, transportation and circulation, codes and zoning, and finance and implementation. Those involved in this process were able to have early input into the planning; those involved seemed to more readily reflect such stakeholders as Artist Village business owners than residents renting apartment units.

Charrette meetings were held in an office space on Main Street everyday for six days. The office was one big open room with work stations set up for the architects and drafters

designing the Charrette catalog and creating exhibits used in the presentations. Color-coded maps and various exhibits lined the walls of the room. Towards one corner of the room, numerous chairs were set up for the public presentations, in which one or two representatives of the planning team would describe the various aspects of the plan. The meetings were held exclusively in English with no visibly available translation, and the language utilized was laden with planning and architectural-specific terminology. The presenters allowed for questions towards the end, at which points several community members would express their frustration at not having received adequate notice of the project. Several others would take the opportunity to relate their suggestions for the plans. All along, the team members assured that the public's concerns were being noted.

Shortly after the charrettes were concluded, the city presented their first draft proposal for the Renaissance Specific Plan. Meetings continued throughout the year, with an important period for public input for the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) Notice of Preparation, 30 days as mandated by State Law, from the dates of July 20, 2006 to August 22, 2006. After the EIR scoping meeting in August 2006, public activity on the Renaissance Specific Plan waned as the team followed up on the EIR and the draft proposal. In October 2007, activity resumed with the presentation of an updated draft proposal.

Accessibility to the location of meetings for the Renaissance Specific Plan did not seem problematic until the EIR Scoping Meeting of August 2006 was awkwardly held in a small room at the very top of the train depot station. While previous meetings had been consistently held at the working quarters for the Charrette presentations, at City Hall, and occasionally in community centers of the neighborhoods in question, without precedent, this meeting was scheduled in a room that was so difficult to find that there was no stairway access to it, only a single elevator.

Furthermore, this meeting being perhaps the most crucial for the progression of the planning process, excessively utilized technical jargon specific to the Environmental Impact Report that was undecipherable even for a fourth year student from a nationally acclaimed university.

Since then, more than a year after the beginning of this project, the city has presented an updated draft proposal, and continued to hold public meetings. One such community meeting was held in a local Catholic school and was moderated by a well-established community organization, namely the Orange County Congregation Community Organization (OCCCO). The meeting was well attended, filling the multi-purpose room, with a diversity of attendees. A group of high school students attended, with a notepad and pencil in hand, several neighborhood association members and leaders also attended, as well as community organizations and advocacy groups—even a very elderly Mexican couple made their way to this meeting of the future of Santa Ana. Present also were various people dressed in their business attire from the workday, as well as younger adults, one dressed in pajama pants and holding one dog in her lap and one on a leash beside her.

The meeting was designed to leave a large space at the end for question and answer. The first three questions that come from the public addressed some of the most important aspects of developing a vision plan of the future of the city while keeping its residents in mind.

- 1. What is the process for community collaboration to critique this plan or provide an alternative?*
- 2. What affordable housing thresholds is the city using for the housing that will be developed in the area?*
- 3. You say this is what we want? Whose homes will be taken? My community was not asked.*

The city's responses to these questions were that the plan was in the development stage and that in public sessions, they always take suggestions. If city staff thinks the plan should be modified, they make modifications. On affordable housing, they responded that it was not an issue for the

Renaissance Plan, but rather for the entire city. The city was to address the issue in its update to the Housing Element of the Master Plan. Lastly, to the concern of the city taking homes, they answered that the Renaissance Plan was not a development plan, that it just made structural suggestions. It would not be a requirement for things to actually happen. It was these statements that set the tone for the rest of this and every other meeting regarding the Renaissance Plan. It is not a development plan, they say; it is a vision plan.

At first glance, the recent draft proposal for the Renaissance Specific Plan presents substantial changes and additions to the previous draft. This draft presents the proposed development for the entire 350 acre area bounded by the project; the draft outlines the guidelines for design, including preferred architectural patterns for businesses and commercial areas, such as Main Street Commercial, Mission Revival, Art deco, Western Victorian, Craftsman, and Californian contemporary, as well as residential, which additionally includes landscape patterns. Building types include Tower, Commercial Block, Liner, Hybrid Court, Stacked Dwelling, Courtyard Housing, Industrial Shed, Live/Work, Rowhouse, Tuck-under Housing, Bungalow Court, Duplex/Triplex/Quadruplex, and House.

The most significant change proposed by this plan is the re-zoning to allow for mixed-use, high density, condominium and loft facilities. This draft of the Renaissance Plan completely does away with the industrial area south of the train station, and proposes for it to be re-zoned as Urban Neighborhoods, which would allow for the design of a variety of housing types, with some opportunities for live/work, neighborhood serving retail, and cafes (Regulation, Plan and Zones, 4:3). “In all, the Renaissance Plan would add about 4,000 new homes to the core of the city. It would eliminate some commercial spaces, some industrial spaces – and, in line with a new emphasis on public transportation that could include a streetcar, hundreds of parking

spaces” (Irving, OC Register, Oct 8, 2007). The Vision and Plan section of the draft outlines new residential areas per neighborhood as follows: 800 new homes in downtown, 420 new homes in the First Street Corridor, 395 new homes in the Lacy Neighborhood designed as mid-density multi-family courtyard facilities, 770 new homes in the Logan Neighborhood designed as low-density single family homes with some medium-density housing, and 1,620 new homes in Railroad Station District (formerly train depot), designed as high-density, high-rise residential towers complemented by high retail and some civic and open spaces.

The city has pushed changes in Santa Ana towards “revitalization” since at least 1994, with the development of Artist Village and the push for an “Arts and Culture City”. According to Santa Ana residents living within the boundaries of the Renaissance Specific Plan, houses began being purchased and changes to their neighborhood began subtly emerging about five years ago. Yet it was difficult to know or learn of what exactly was happening to those homes as they were slowly boarded up and demolished. Residents of an apartment complex immediately adjacent to the area could not explain what was happening in their very neighborhoods. Many suspected the city was involved but did not know to what aim. One resident related that she had heard rumors of a park planned for that area. Residents that knew anything at all had heard it from neighbors, not from the city. The city planning counter informed me that the land had indeed been purchased by the city, and that it had been intended for an affordable housing project but was now being integrated to the Renaissance Specific Plan.

Residents related their stories and experiences in the city of Santa Ana through an interview that ranged from 30 minutes to one hour. Elvira is the mother of three children that attend dance and music classes at El Centro Cultural de Mexico. She came to meet her brother

in the United States from Mexico about 15 years ago—Santa Ana was her destination and she has stayed ever since. In her 15 years in Santa Ana, she has moved twice, living in apartments both times, first on Santa Ana Blvd, then on Garfield Ave. She noted that about four years ago, it looked as if their apartment complex was going to be demolished. Instead, there was a change in ownership, and it looks like an affordable housing organization now owns the apartments. She is happy living there and would like to stay. “Yes I plan to stay,” she related, “So long as I’m not forced out.”

Elvira referred me to another mother, Elsa, whose child also attends music classes, amongst other activities. She has been living in Santa Ana for 21 years, since she left her hometown in Michoacán, Mexico, and has moved about four times. She noticed that demolition began in her neighborhood about five years ago. It was said amongst the neighbors that a park was going to be built. The city would come and have meetings, they would talk about an empowerment zone, but “you know, they just use us like always,” she said. She never attended the meetings because of activities with her children, but she did attend once that they were meeting about building a school. The room was packed, she related. Nevertheless, her general sentiment was that “in the end, [the city] will just do what [the city] wants.”

Like Elvira and Elsa, I spoke to 22 individuals, each with his/her own story, experiences, and expressions of life in Santa Ana. Few knew about specific projects of redevelopment, but they all noted certain transformations in their neighborhoods. Interviewees would refer me to further research participants. Some I met through participation in local meetings. Rosa, mother of four and active participant in her children’s schools, was one of the few homeowners, the only one amongst immigrant interviewees. She had come to the United States, for “the American dream”, she said, 20 years prior, to meet her husband who had come before her. She knew

about the Renaissance Plan and had been participating not only in the meetings from the city, but also in a local coalition that had formed. She believed there was a big threat for current residents to have to leave, but that if they worked together, they could show those in charge that the community does not agree with the plan and that things can be different. Rosa believed that the city belonged to her.

During the interview process, interviewees related not only their experiences around living in Santa Ana and their observations on changes and development, but they also described their background, their current involvements, and their hopes for the future. The interview attempted to cover as much breadth as it did depth. In this way, the experiences themselves would capture the effects of gentrification on city residents, and the stories themselves would speak to responses of city residents. Through the interviews, I gather specific details related to the Renaissance Plan and other forms of development and gentrification, as well as observe the indicators of specific variables.

Of the 22 people I interviewed, 14 had never heard of the renaissance plan. Of the eight that had heard of the renaissance plan, three had learned about it through the efforts of a community coalition that did a lot of education. Three of them learned of the renaissance plan through their involvement in a local organization. The remaining two learned about the renaissance plan through articles in the local newspaper. None of the residents interviewed had heard of the plan from the city.

The variables I observed through the interviews amongst the residents included length of stay, times moved, knowledge of rights and/or resources, sociological imagination, empowerment, and cultural citizenship. Three of the 22 residents had been born and raised in Santa Ana, with Mexican immigrant parents, 19 were immigrants themselves. Length of stay

varied from 2 years to 30 years. Times moved varied from none to five. Those who were born in Santa Ana, or grew up in Santa Ana, unquestionably had a strong sense of belonging. Asked if she thought she would stay in Santa Ana, one resident answered, “Oh hell yeah, this is where I was born... this has always been home.” Another resident responded that what he most liked of Santa Ana was that it was home: “I call it sacred ground; they didn’t want us to live anywhere else except here. Hard times to live here, so now its part of us. It’s our roots.”

Knowledge of resources was another variable examined. Of the 22 residents, four did not have any knowledge of rights or resources. Others mentioned resources such as community centers, parks, churches, after-school programs for their children, health care programs, and non-profit organizations. Less evident amongst the residents was knowledge of rights as renters, of which 18 interviewees had no previous knowledge. Four residents had some knowledge of their rights as renters.

Specific signifiers during conversations with the interviewees indicated a sense of sociological imagination, or the quality of mind through which people see and understand the intersections of what is going on in the world and in their own lives. Residents that exhibited social imagination identified various players in their interpretation of the world. They seemed to first make a distinction between themselves and another entity—us and them. “It seems like the more ignorant one is, the better for them,” one interviewee expressed. They saw their realities as being part of a collective experience and a collective history. Residents additionally identified imbalances of power amongst the different players: “They don’t care because they want to let it run down so that new things can come in.” — and— “Like always, those that have money are the ones that can... in the end, they do whatever they want.”

A sense of empowerment was reflected in the person's sense of ability and capacity to do something. It was expressed as a sense of confidence, a feeling of worth. Empowerment does not necessarily describe how likely it is that a person will be successful, but rather how deserving the person feels of the change he or she is seeking. Phrases that exhibited this sense of empowerment include: "Every time we have to fight them," and "reading, on my own, investigating" when asked how they knew about rights and resources. Empowerment describes the resident's assertion in his or her own power; "only if they kick me out by force" responded one resident when asked if she would leave Santa Ana. Those that exhibited a knowledge and utilization of resources embodied the process of empowerment, which Perkins and Zimmerman describe in part as participation in community organizations.

Lastly, interviewees exhibited cultural citizenship through their sense of belonging in the city of Santa Ana. Rosaldo states that through cultural citizenship, individuals see themselves as part of a larger community and claim rights, define their own interests, and create solidarities, space and membership. Interviewees that embodied cultural citizenship claimed their right and worth to live and be part of the community of Santa Ana. Phrases such as "this city is mine," and "it is a piece of me, a piece of my Mexico," demonstrated a sense of belonging and a sense of membership. Interviewees saw Santa Ana as meeting their interests—one mother described the availability of arts and cultural programs for her children, like ballet folklórico and Hawaiian dancing, and spoke highly of the easy access to Mexican food products. "Everything I need is here," she said. "I already know where to walk and where to go." Furthermore, interviewees expressed their solidarity to their neighbors and friends. When asked what she liked most about Santa Ana, one interviewee expressed, "*La gente*, the people."

Discussion

Gentrification seems to be the new phase of a broader, historical exclusion of underprivileged populations. It is a process whereby affluent populations return to the city, ultimately displacing long-time, often low-income urban residents—a process that has confidently asserted itself in Santa Ana. The effects of this gentrification are heartfelt; rows and rows of homes where families previously lived are completely gone. Several of those families moved to Riverside and San Bernardino counties, unable to sustain themselves elsewhere in Orange County. The city responds by prioritizing this development over the well-being of families, despite the real consequences of potentially changing the demographics of Santa Ana. Displacement does not have to occur by forcefully seizing lands. The rise in cost of living that follows development economically displaces working families, while changes to the environment culturally displace them.

Interestingly, the Renaissance Specific Plan has been carefully presented as a project necessitating and dependent upon community input. The flyer of introduction to the project stated, “The ultimate success of this or any Specific Plan really lies with the community it is designed for. Extensive public involvement will be a key component in the creation of the Plan.” But throughout much of the process, the city has been called out for its ineffective outreach efforts. Announcements for updates on the Renaissance Plan were placed on the internet, sent to each household in the water bill, and printed in the Orange County Register, despite a large renter population that would most likely not receive a water bill, and despite the availability of Santa Ana-based Spanish news media such as *Mini Ondas*, *Farandula*, *Excelsior*, and more. The meetings additionally were held exclusively in English, in a city with such a high concentration of Spanish speakers.

The city asserts that the Renaissance Plan is not a development plan—that the suggestions made will not automatically be put into effect. But what the plan suggests will become code and will have great power to direct the changes and transformations in the city. City planners leave us with the notion that those who want to will be able to resist negative impacts such as displacement. What is left unquestioned and unanswered is how rising costs of living might affect working-class households. What is not discussed is how marginalized a community might become when their neighborhood stops looking and feeling like home. What is dismissed is the right that the people have to be a part of the decision making process when their very livelihood is at stake.

The Renaissance Specific Plan will bring tremendous transformations to the city of Santa Ana. The Environmental Impact Report under this redevelopment project revealed potentially significant impacts in the displacement of substantial numbers of housing and people, necessitating the replacement of housing elsewhere (Renaissance Specific EIR, 2006: 10). This impact has already manifested itself in the Lacy neighborhood where several blocks previously lined with homes have been cleared to give way to multi-use lofts, residences most likely to attract affluent, young professionals. The construction of 4,000 new homes will necessitate further demolishing. The EIR response to this potentially significant impact is that the housing will be replaced with even more new housing. But the displacement of people is not addressed. To displace someone you don't have to buy out their house and tear it down. You can just as easily raise the cost of living in that neighborhood so that the person can no longer afford to remain. Or you can just as easily change the surroundings so that the person no longer belongs. Housing and the displacement of people is clearly a matter that deserves more attention.

Inclusive Community Development: The Power of Cultural Citizenship

But something beautiful is happening that brings a lot of hope for the future of Santa Ana. David Mattern, in his article on art and development in Santa Ana, specifically expressed that he addresses city sponsored art only, not the organic and grass-roots forms of art that are undoubtedly created and lived everyday. These organic, grass-roots forms of art, from mariachi music to bench making to poetry, he said, “potentially make an equal or even greater contribution to community development in Santa Ana” (Mattern: 2). It is here where Santa Ana residents and the larger community wield tremendous power.

Rosaldo presents cultural citizenship as the assertion of one’s belonging and ownership of his or her community. Santa Ana residents in actuality, in the present time, like Santa Ana for its people and its vibrancy. “Everything I need is here,” said one life-long resident. “I love the *paletero* going by on a hot summer day.” Another resident expressed that without the people of Santa Ana, “where else would you go if [the people] are one’s heart.” This sense of belonging comes from an affirmation of oneself within a larger community, and is essential for building a collective identity.

The city of Santa Ana reflects a history rooted in a Latino heritage and cultural identification. The Orange County Mexican American Historical Society, amongst others, has documented stories and photographs of Mexican neighborhoods and families in Santa Ana. Mary Garcia, author of *Santa Ana’s Logan Barrio: Its History, Stories, and Families*, provides a historical account of Logan, one of the several original Mexican barrios of Santa Ana, “with roots going back to 1886.” The Yost Theatre, first opened in 1913 as The Auditorium, became a movie house for the Golden Age of Mexican Cinema, and saw artists such as Juan Gabriel and

Vicente Fernandez. After being out of use as a venue for several years, its doors recently reopened to the public with a concert of Son Jarocho, traditional folk music from the state of Veracruz, Mexico, and brought a renowned music group from Jaltipan, Veracruz, namely Los Cojolites. Santa Ana is alive and thriving with Latino heritage and culture. Today, a stroll down La Calle Cuatro reveals not only Santa Ana's Latino history, but its vibrant Latino present.

Fourth Street, commonly known as *La Cuatro*, is the Mexican retail district of Santa Ana and consists of small shops reflective of practices with cultural relevance to the ethnic community. These stores and businesses were created by members of the Latino community, driven by the demands of that enclave. Santa Ana's Latino community has established social networks and developed economic sustainability through such a business districts. Endless waves of people flow on and off the blacktops and sidewalks of La Cuatro. Women walk with a child in one arm and plastic bags of clothing and groceries on the other. Strollers even have a hard time finding their way through the bustling sidewalks. Every couple of steps someone hands you a flyer or a business card promoting the sales on the corner jewelry store, the new hair salon, or the established wedding-dress shop. This isn't Christmas time in American malls that I'm describing; this is an average afternoon or weekend on La Calle Cuatro in Santa Ana.

Community identity and cultural affirmation go hand in hand, as the acknowledgement of cultural differences is crucial even to a sense of 'belonging'. Indeed, Latino communities and neighborhoods often identify and distinguish themselves by the churches and cultural institutions closest to their homes. In Santa Ana, churches like Immaculate Heart of Mary, among others, have been known to aid recent immigrants by providing food, clothes, job assistance, and even help through the process of legalization. Other institutional developments include newspapers such as Mini Ondas and El Aviso, created by Santa Ana dwellers of Mexican descent, published

in Spanish and reflective of the culture of its local audience, the Latino community of Santa Ana. Lastly community centers such as El Centro Cultural de Mexico allow for the identity reaffirmation that links community members to their history, culture, and to their lives and roles in the city of Santa Ana. El Centro has made possible the Noche de Altares celebration of the Day of the Dead, an annual event in which community members can create an altar in the memory of a passed loved one, or to raise awareness to a social issue. This event remains an entirely grassroots event, with no sponsorship from major corporations, and has continued growing since its inception in 2002.

Furthermore, throughout the past two decades, Santa Ana has become a magnet for recently arrived Mexican immigrants, making it “an important stepping-stone and destination point from Mexico and other Pacific Rim countries” (Harwood and Dowell, 2002). City dwellers have been able to form associations with people from the same town or community in Mexico in what are called *hometown associations*. Through the creation of such organizations, Mexican immigrants have been successful in “retain(ing) cultural ties and improv(ing) their home country communities” (Orozco and Lapointe, 2004). Since 2003, these hometown associations have made possible the yearly *Fiestas Patrias* activities in celebration of Mexican Independence Day. Every year, around the dates of the 15th and 16th of September, over 250,000 people join in the celebrations, making Santa Ana’s Fiestas Patrias one of the largest Independence Day events in the country (Fiestas Patrias website).

Cultural practices such as the Noche de Altares and the Fiestas Patrias, as well as the churches, neighborhoods, and cultural centers could be indicators of the affirmation of Latino cultural values and identity in Santa Ana. These practices could be indicators also of a sense of cultural citizenship—a sense of belonging and empowerment. Though there is no doubt that the

city of Santa Ana is recognized for its working class, immigrant population, through forces of gentrification, the power and self-determination of the community is constantly challenged. Transformations have already been taking place that threaten this idea of belonging, that culturally and structurally disengage the working-class Latino population of Santa Ana from being a full member of the community. Santa Ana's push for the arts has not been an inclusive one representative of the cultural richness of its actual community, but rather an exclusive one. Additionally, stricter regulations on street vendors, such as the characteristic catering trucks and ice cream carts, and recent immigration raids, amongst other things, reflect a city increasingly hostile to its working-class Latino population.

Conclusion

This study comes at a time when trends of urbanization are sweeping cities throughout the nation, and throughout the world. Private investment and redevelopment in cities, while sought after to spur the economy, also results in the displacement of working-class populations. For communities to keep cities accountable and be able to fight for the right to their homes, and for cities to integrate their communities into the processes of development, this study shows the importance of empowerment, sociological imagination, and cultural citizenship. The situation in Santa Ana is particularly significant because it is home to a large young population of Spanish speaking immigrants, many of them recent arrivals, others with deep roots and long histories in the area. With Latinos as the largest minority in the United States and as a large pool of the labor force for the country, cities and governments cannot dismiss, disregard, or disengage these members of their communities. Development can occur without displacement, but to do so, we have to acknowledge that displacement does not occur solely through eviction. Transformations

that erase people's history and that dissolve the sense of belonging have just as strong of an impact. The significance of understanding these concepts can be critical for communities of underprivileged and underrepresented populations on a global level.

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