Anarchy’s Neighborhoods: the Formation of a Quadriplex Urban Ecology

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Abstract
In each of four nearby city areas, residents orient to local centers of collective activity in different geographic patterns. In a “perimeter” neighborhood, residents and outsiders are drawn to religious and retail organizations located on streets that form a rectangle. In an “intersection” neighborhood, residents are most visible to each other at an agglomeration of stores and services located where two high traffic streets cross. Residents of an “in-between” area travel to socio-economically and culturally different neighborhoods centered in all directions elsewhere. In a “contested” geography, rival organizations disagree over who, living where, for what purposes, has the right to define the neighborhood’s boundaries and social identity. These different social ecologies took shape without coordination yet became an interdependent, quadriplex set. After 1965, a series of retreats in government control of local social life created unprecedented opportunities for intermediaries who reshaped the social landscape with new businesses, cultural institutions, and interpretations of neighborhood identity. This case study revives the “collective action” explanations of the “Chicago School” by showing how urban social ecology was transformed in the late twentieth century as people of different generations and in different geographic areas interacted indirectly, creating durable neighborhood patterns without centralized, top-down leadership from business or government, in response to locally recognized affordances of anarchy.

Keywords Social ecology · Neighborhood · Urban geography · Anarchy · Urban sociology · Ethnography · Chicago school

Urban social ecology has usually been studied in a way that parallels governments’ mapping of social space into census, postal service, school, policing, electoral and other control-and-serve geographies. Every inch of urban territory falls into an exclusive spatial unit within a scheme that comprehends a law-defined city or composition of multiple legal jurisdictions. The “Chicago
School” of urban research that began 100 years ago offered a comprehensive view: the character of each area was seen as shaped through interactions with other areas in an integrated ecology that covered a city-wide political jurisdiction. Today, leading quantitative researchers have continued to follow government maps when they sample households within and across areal units in order to study neighborhood differences in social problems such as health needs, exposure to crime, educational disparities, and unemployment levels.

Yet cities differ by time and place as to how far state power has organized local life. Over the last 50 years, in cities new and old, large and small, social life has changed in novel ways, creating neighborhood configurations that may not fit official community area maps (Brown-Saracino 2018; Deener 2012; Halle and Tiso 2014). When researchers “see like a state” (Scott 1998), some of the geographies traced by residents in their daily routines fall out of the research agenda.

If we reduce reliance on the state’s geographic units and its demand to map all of a city’s space, we can discover neglected differences in neighborhoods’ social ecologies. We may then find unobserved ways that social processes have created socially diverse neighborhoods as sets, each neighborhood operating on a day-to-day basis in seemingly independent ways but the set emerging historically through inter-area interactions.

What is meant by “social ecology”? The term has useful meanings at the collective and at the individual level. At the collective level, social ecology refers to both contrasts across and interdependencies among areas. As in a quilt or mosaic, each of several neighborhoods displays a distinct fabric of publicly visible social life. Ecological interdependencies among neighborhoods can be detected in various overlapping patterns, including actions taken by individuals, based on stereotypes or generalizations about the people living in another area, that shape their own neighborhood’s life; actions taken by groups of residents of one area that unintentionally or indifferently alter the landscape for actions by people in another area; limitations of local life that send residents to other areas to fulfill certain life needs; and attractions of neighborhood life in one area that motivate people to reside, form businesses, and bring non-profit community activities to a nearby area.

I start at the individual level of social ecology, by describing something almost literally pedestrian: differences by area in how residents in their everyday practices orient to neighborhood centers. In an ethnographic study of the Hollywood area of Los Angeles, I found four contrasting ways that residents orient to collective destinations.

Western Hollywood was distinguished by cultural activities that occur regularly on borders that circumscribe a rectangular residential area. As they move to and from commercial and non-profit cultural centers located on all sides of the rectangle, local residents cross paths with each other and encounter visitors from distant areas who are drawn to the same sites. These interactions create a distinct fabric of neighborhood life (Fig. 1).

In a second area, residents’ daily lives concentrate around a principal center. In eastern Hollywood, the intersection of two streets, Santa Monica Boulevard and Western Avenue, offered positive attractions to nearby residents, while in other directions from their homes they confronted impediments to pursuing their interests. The closer one’s home to the central intersection, the more one’s local life was influenced by the neighborhood’s character (Fig. 2).

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1 Halle and Beveridge (2011) question whether any comprehensive theory of the city fits the facts in New York and Los Angeles.

2 Even earlier the fit was problematic. See the exhaustive study by Hunter (1974) and Venkatesh’s (2001) description of a historical interaction between sociologists and government Census definitions of community areas.
Fig. 1 Perimeter neighborhood (Western Hollywood)

Fig. 2 Intersection neighborhood (East Hollywood)
In a third type of local area social ecology, residents orient to institutions located neither at the center nor at the boundaries of their local area: they live “in-between.” In central Hollywood, people who reside next to each other travel in segregated fashion to different distant neighborhood centers. Neighbors may not neighbor much. When they arrive at distant neighborhood centers, they interact with people who travel from other residential areas to the same center of dynamic activity or live around it. For a large part of a city’s population, the everyday reality of local life is living on the periphery of a given neighborhood of interest while understanding that their neighbors live on the periphery of other distant neighborhoods (Fig. 3).

In a fourth social ecology, residents disagree on boundaries and struggle to define the social character of the area. In perimeter, intersection, and in-between neighborhoods, neighbors do not fight over the definition of the local area. Indeed, each may be unaware of or studiously indifferent to the meanings of the local area that is embraced by many of his/her neighbors. But in Beachwood Canyon, one of Hollywood’s many hillside areas, residents have fought over rights to possess the same golden apple: there is consensus on what is precious about the local area but not about who, living where, with what purposes in mind, has a right to define the neighborhood’s geography and exploit its treasures (Fig. 4).

How can we explain the type of social ecology that characterizes an urban area and the formation of the interactive web that ties socially diverse neighborhoods into a set? The explanatory theories that have dominated urban sociology in recent decades are of little help. One major approach, dubbed the Los Angeles School (Dear 2001; Scott and Soja 1998), draws a provocative contrast with resident-grounded research done in the tradition of the Chicago School of sociology. The “Los Angeles School” has focused on the city as a producer of symbols, economic patterns, and ethnic/racial conflicts. These topics have been sufficiently meaningful to analysts that they have found no need to develop data sets that might explain differences in the lived geography of neighborhoods as constituted by residents’ quotidian movements to and from their homes. On a world-wide scale, a

![Fig. 3](https://qualitative-sociology.springer.com/content/pdf/44%2F175-204.pdf)
generation of urban researchers have found issues to study without comparatively analyzing how residents move out and about from their homes.\textsuperscript{3}

More dominant in academic sociology has been an approach which, by theorizing a central role for political-economic elites in structuring urban space, has in practice been indifferent to differences in local life as experienced by residents (Logan and Molotch 1987). The “urban fortunes” approach would be helpful if historical research showed that neighborhood social ecologies were in fact shaped in a more or less direct way by government subsidies, law enforcement policies, and land use regulations developed in collaboration with private real estate developers’ profit strategies.

But political policies and capitalists’ interests have been too constant, too lacking in foresight, and too often frustrated to explain contemporary neighborhood differences. The “growth machine” (Molotch 1976), a collaboration of capitalists and politicians that sees mutual benefit in expanding the city’s population, targets all areas, and so cannot, without more, explain the distinctiveness of each. Ironically, the “urban fortunes” view of the city suffered a fate that all sociologists might hope for: it was so right it became wrong. The view that developers and politicians had become a class whose interests lay in undermining the quality of local life in cities arose in academic sociology as part of a broad social movement which, since the 1960s, has transformed the political economic dynamics shaping urban social geography in many democratic nations, whether through NIMBY, ecology protection, historical conservation, or racial or income equality advocacy.\textsuperscript{4}

\textsuperscript{3} Instead, researchers contribute to a “reconstituted understanding of the city in the third millennium” by studying “how the city affects the imagination and how the city is imagined” (Bridge and Watson 2000, 3, 7).

\textsuperscript{4} The earliest academic contribution was Herbert Gans’ (1962) ethnography, based on research in the late 1950s, of an Italian-descent neighborhood in Boston that was destroyed by an urban renewal project. By the time Robert Caro (1974) won a Pulitzer prize for his monumental study of New York’s Robert Moses, urbanites’ suspicion of top-down planning and projects restructuring metropolitan areas had become too powerful to ignore.
A third major approach to the city’s social geography uses census-related area definitions and quantitative survey data to study “neighborhood effects” and differences in “social efficacy” by area (Sampson 2012; Sastry et al. 2002, and hundreds of subsequent publications from the LAFANS project). These approaches have brought the study of neighborhood back to the center of sociology’s concerns. But in these research programs, neighborhood is of interest as cause of policy-significant consequences, not as a social phenomenon to be explained.⁵

**Blinkered Collective Interaction and the Affordances of Anarchy**

In order to explain how different areas of a city take one or another social ecological form, historical research into “collective action” is necessary.⁶ In the case at hand, four contemporary urban neighborhoods were formed through blinkered interaction made possible by the emergence of widespread, multi-faceted anarchy. Even as neighborhood entrepreneurs in each of four areas acted without awareness of their predecessors’ and their contemporaries’ area-shaping strategies, collectively they produced a quadriplex social ecology of seemingly independent yet historically interdependent neighborhoods.

Blinkered interaction occurs when people act in a social landscape that they encounter as an impersonal product of actions taken by anonymous contemporaries or put into place by long gone predecessors. Current political leaders may not know; newly arrived residents, retail business owners, and leaders of religious organizations often will not care; and land developers eyeing the prospects of real estate projects need not research the formative processes behind the factors they take into account when making their own plans. People deciding where they would like to live take the location of a highway intersection into account without knowing why it was built there. Commuters use streets around small blocks without knowing the history that gave a singular business control of a large plot of land that they cannot travel through. Retailers serve dense ethnic populations with varying awareness of the macro-historical changes that propelled immigration waves. Only local historians are likely to know why one old residential area has apparently intact, original architecture, while there is a mix of historical styles in the buildings of a nearby area that was first developed at the same time. Among the social processes shaping urban space, there is always a mix between the upshots of blinkered collective interaction and the structuring power of top down, government/business collaboration on explicit and consistent policies. In ways urban sociology has yet to appreciate, the balance, or imbalance, differs by historical period.

⁵ While offering jurisdiction-comprehensive analyses of the impact of local area characteristics on individual lives, the work of Sampson and the LAFANS researchers has not been social ecological in the sense of offering a theory of an organic whole that attempts to explain how each area’s social character is formed in relation to the shaping of the character of other areas, nor by making a foundational research commitment to describing residents’ movements around their home neighborhoods and to other areas in the city or metro region when they engage in significant activities. Innovative studies of the relationship of residences to geo-located behaviors, as opposed to surveyed opinions, have begun to take up the latter challenge (Cornwell and Cagney 2017; Papachristos and Bastomski 2018).

⁶ The study of collective action in the sense used in this paper was developed by “Chicago School” sociologists in parallel to and independent of the substantive ecological claims made about urban social ecology. After Robert Park, the chief mentors sustaining the tradition were Herbert Blumer and Everett Hughes. Perhaps the best single example of the application of this tradition to a major area of social life is Howard S. Becker’s (1982) work on “art worlds.”
If we drop nihilistic connotations of the term, the best overall explanation for the shaping of Hollywood’s four neighborhood social ecologies as they existed at the millennium is an extended period of anarchy that fostered new dynamics of collective interaction. Anarchy as used here refers to a wide ranging but only partial retreat, in one historical period as compared to the prior, of government’s use of physical force to control social life. The retreat may occur because of successful resistance from below; because, after deliberations, authorities decide it is wise to curtail their power; because forceful state policies are uncoordinated and inconsistent in effect; or because of prolonged political stalemates which, during periods of massive social change, preclude decisive government disciplining of new social formations. I use “anarchy” to refer to a specific historical time and place, roughly 1965 to 2010, when central government and business controls over urban neighborhood life retreated from previously powerful levels.

Anarchy was never comprehensive. In many forms, central government power remained essential to the neighborhood transformers who emerged to fill the gaps. Non-profit organizations exploited tax advantages to fund operations that reinforced the emerging character of various neighborhoods. The public-school system altered programs to aid the settlement of a new immigrant population. City administrators monitored the conformity of land uses with zoning regulations. Courts enforced contractual relationships that landlords and retailers relied upon. County government funded outreach and programs that aided immigrants and anchored a growing homeless population in Hollywood. In some powerful respects, such as imprisonment, social welfare, and police and military expenditures, government at all levels grew dramatically between 1965 and 2010.

“Anarchy” is not intended as an overall characterization of the times but as a summary of the historically novel opportunities for action that were grasped by intermediaries who, either self-consciously or indirectly through the complementary results of their actions, became entrepreneurs of urban neighborhood creation and transformation in the late twentieth century.

A full description of the declines in government control of urban life after 1965 that set the context for novel neighborhood-transforming collective action would include, at the national level, judicial relinquishment of an effort to define pornography in a manner reliably useful to law enforcement agencies; at the county level, the years-long reversal of funding for a new subway system and the withdrawal of mandated school busing/

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7 In various areas of scholarship, anarchy does not carry the alternatively negative and romantic connotations it is usually given in popular political discussion. The concept has been embraced in the study of international relations (e.g., Mearsheimer 2006) and across a wide range of political theory, from those who see in anarchy a non-Marxist possibility of socialism (Springer 2014) to followers of the Nobel-prized economists Ronald Coase and Elinor Ostrow, who find “market” and community-based solutions to prisoner’s dilemmas and tragedies of the commons. A century after Max Weber emphasized a monopoly over the legitimate use of physical force in defining the state (Weber 2004, 33), a definition of anarchy as a logically consistent, empirically clear antonym remains elusive. See the confession of definitional difficulties by a Coase-inspired economist of law who nevertheless finds anarchistic solutions working successfully in diverse socio-historic contexts: Leeson 2014, 3–9.

8 I end the period in 2010 in part because that is when fieldwork for this study ended and in part because of changes in political leadership and the organization of land development. After decades of political hesitation and reversals, shortly before the millennium government funding completed the extension of a new subway system to and through Hollywood. After a pause during the local and national recession of 2007–2008, this historic advance in transportation infrastructure triggered corporate business investments that began a still-rising wave of commercial and residential construction on a scale that had not been seen in Hollywood since the 1920s.
integration policies after a period of resistance; at the state level, the decarceration of people labeled mentally ill; at the county level, the abandonment of institutions forcefully housing “incorrigible” juvenile delinquents, runaways and orphans; at the state level, voter-imposed limitations on property taxes; at the regional level, successful opposition to large-scale transportation and commercial projects; at the national level, the tacit curtailment of federal government control over immigration; and at the city level, new, explicit police policies not to inquire about residence status during routine contacts with residents. Some of these retreats of central power were consequential for neighborhood change in many US and European cities. All were significant for explaining neighborhood change in the case at hand. In this writing I have space only briefly to indicate the consequentiality for neighborhood change of a few.

I do not find that profit-seeking developers or government planners transformed Hollywood’s social ecology, nor that Hollywood’s neighborhoods changed through democratic or populist direction from the “grassroots.” In each area, the retreat of central government power created new possibilities for using land in ways that intermediaries perceived and seized. Envisioning a changed future for the local area, they directly and indirectly guided new residents to each area, generally without interest in, and much less through coordination with the people who were reconstructing neighborhoods in other types of area. In Hollywood, those enacting a role as neighborhood entrepreneurs included rabbis sent to Los Angeles from east coast religious centers; middle man minorities setting up small businesses to connect with a concentrated population of Mexican and Central American immigrants; the creator of an essentially one-woman neighborhood organization; and a panoply of owners of small theaters, prop warehouses, lighting and camera supply businesses that proliferated after the in-house, vertically integrated Studio system for producing entertainment material declined.

Some of those who set the stage for the neighborhood-changing actions that occurred after 1965 acted early in the twentieth century, such as a land-hoarding ex-US Senator who, in the 1870s, got control over 500 acres and whose family, without a master plan, sold off pieces of the south region of Hollywood for commercial uses until he died in 1924 at age 102. In the 1960s and 1970s, retreats of government control over several sectors of the city’s social life converged to create an unprecedented, unanticipated, and initially chaotic setting for a new generation of diverse and disconnected neighborhood entrepreneurs. After 20 years of deliberate efforts by intermediaries to transform local areas, anarchy, initially a negative phenomenon of resistance, confusion, and the disruption of plans, became positive as the historical background of a wide-ranging transformation and reinvigoration of neighborhood social ecology.⁹

⁹ The current study begins with a concern for the explanandum, in that it describes and tries to explain differences in local social ecology. The “urban fortunes” and “growth machine” perspectives primarily drew attention to an explanans, government-business collaboration in land development strategy, that had been neglected in urban sociology, and focused more on comparisons across than within metropolitan areas. The two approaches are in principle compatible. The thrust of this case study is that within cities, differences in urban social geography as they existed at the millennium were shaped more by anarchic processes than a view of top-down power appears to appreciate. That may be read as consistent with the implication of the “growth machine” view and Jane Jacobs’ advocacy, that resistance to centralized authority is essential to the creation and persistence of dynamic neighborhoods.
Context of the Case

At the millennium, Hollywood was, in population size, cultural diversity, and geographic relationship to the city center, not unlike the northeast area of Chicago studied in the 1920s by Zorbaugh (1929). After a century of expansion out from downtown Los Angeles, Hollywood’s “close in” location and its collection of communities was, in one way, especially representative, and in another, uniquely unrepresentative of the metropolitan region. By the 1990s, Hollywood had become the most urban nucleus of Southern California, an area in which multiple archipelagos of neighborhoods – homeless service centers, enclaves of immigrants from different nations, elite neighborhoods, Bohemian areas, new religious communities, officially historic residential districts – intersected. Each of these chains of neighborhood islands stretched out across Los Angeles, creating a geographic pattern that nowhere else had as many crossing points. Elsewhere, residents of islands that figured into one type of neighborhood archipelago were likely to live distant from residents living in islands forming other archipelagos.

“Hollywood” was first developed as a suburb of downtown Los Angeles in the 1880s. Growth was rapid when a streetcar line reached the area in 1903, and further accelerated after 1907 as the movie industry took local root. In the 1920s, streetcars, which, as a matter of policy in Los Angeles were not elevated, slowed down just as, and because, the automobile was becoming a widely available occupational resource. Throughout the change in transportation technology, Hollywood remained about a 20-minute commute to downtown Los Angeles. After 1910, when it abandoned legal status as an independent city, Hollywood became a colloquially recognized but legally undifferentiated area in a rapidly growing city. After 1900 most of the land in Hollywood was converted from farmland to residential housing and the area’s population, like the city’s, increased by tenfold, reaching 100,000 residents in a city of 1.25 million by 1930.

From 1870 to 1970, Hollywood had a relatively homogenous ethnic population. From the start of land development in the late nineteenth century, people who might have made ancient claims to the land had long since been removed and the US-born and immigrant poor were excluded by racial discrimination and land values. By 1930, compression had also begun at the social top. By then, all but one of the major movie studios had moved to larger, cheaper lots elsewhere in the Los Angeles area and both movie executives and “stars” were settling to the west, most famously in Beverly Hills but more accurately over a vast, previously undeveloped stretch to the Pacific Ocean. For the next 40 years, Hollywood’s population remained stable in size. Residents were over 90% native-born white; the largest population not born in the US came from Canada; and the area’s population remained moderately stratified by social class.

In the late 1960s, Hollywood’s homogeneity began to vanish. By the millennium, Hollywood (as defined in the map in Fig. 5, which adopts the geography of a division of the city’s police department) was home to residents who differed widely by ethnicity, national origin, socio-economic status, and the role of religion in organizing family life. As Hollywood’s neighborhoods became more diverse, they became smaller in scale. The character of neighborhood life increasingly became highly differentiated, sometimes changing dramatically within what the census regarded as a single block group. In this writing, the nomenclature for neighborhoods tracks neither official nor
colloquial usage, both of which have often changed and are changing now, but uses geographic adjectives that represent contrasts in public interaction patterns. The social diversity of Hollywood’s neighborhoods circa 2000 is represented in Table 1. West Hollywood is the official name of an independent city that borders on the Los Angeles city area here labeled western Hollywood. The rubric East Hollywood has in recent years covered a rapidly changing geography in local usage. The area labeled eastern Hollywood in this study is the eastern-most section of the geography encompassed by the Hollywood division of the LAPD, centering on the intersection of Santa Monica and Western Boulevards. The “central Hollywood” area represented in this study is a southern patch of a larger central area in which street level interaction patterns change depending on local institutions. To the north, the densely used “Bright Lights,” nightclub and tourist destination streets of Sunset and Hollywood Boulevards create unique forms of daily social life that are not considered here. To keep the discussion manageable, the ecological set addressed here is limited to four. With the Bright Lights district, it would be five; with officially historic neighborhoods included in the analysis, six; with “little Ethnic” areas examined in the overall ecological analysis, seven. The quadriplex analysis presented in this writing is limited for convenience. There is no theoretical or empirical reason that the ecological analysis could not be expanded into a quintuple, sextuple, septuple or even more extended description of interactively formed social areas.

Fig. 5 Neighborhood archipelagos in Los Angeles, circa 2005

Table 1

| Central American Areas | Bohemian Areas | Orthodox Neighborhoods |
|------------------------|----------------|------------------------|
| Low Income (<$23,270)  | Low Income (Under $12,072) | Van Nuys ($32,059) |
| Middle Income ($23,000-$40,000) | Middle Income ($12,072 - 24,144) | Pico Robertson ($45,641) |
| High Income (> $40,000) | High Income (Above $24,144) | Fairfax-LaBrea ($70,161) |

Historic Neighborhoods

| Low Income (<$23,270) | Middle Income ($23,000-$40,000) | Highest Income (> $40,000) |

Homeless Service Areas

| Lowest Income (<$65,000) | Middle Income ($65,000-$110,000) | Highest Income (> $110,000) |

Hollywood as per LAPD
Eastern Hollywood: After 1965 the streets around Santa Monica and Western (SM&W) became a dense settlement area for low-income Mexican and then Central American immigrants.

Central Hollywood: At the millennium, central Hollywood contained two Bohemian areas. Data collection in this study focused on the southern area, which contained a minority of affluent homeowners and a socioeconomic range of renters, including poor immigrant laborers, college educated artists, and middle-income workers.

Western Hollywood: Since 1970 this area has been a home to multiple populations living segregated lifestyles, including Orthodox Jewish families, many with five or more children; secular families owning single family residences; and single adults renting small apartments while pursuing careers in the entertainment industry.

The hills: Among Hollywood’s social areas, a series of canyons occupy the most space and have the smallest population. One is Beachwood Canyon, which in its upper stretch contains Hollywoodland, a neighborhood named when created by developers in the early 1920s.

Table 1  Hollywood social areas, 2000

| Population | Eastern | Central (South) | Western | Hills | LA City |
|------------|---------|-----------------|---------|-------|---------|
| Density relative to LA | 452% | 295% | 135% | 16% | 100% |
| Median age | 29 | 32 | 33 | 46 | 32 |
| % Hispanic or Latino | 72 | 43 | 13 | 6 | 47 |
| % Foreign born | 73 | 66 | 31 | 11 | 41 |
| % Non US-citizens | 57 | 39 | 23 | 5 | 27 |
| Household | | | | | |
| % One person per room | 62 | 37 | 5 | 0 | 26 |
| % One person | 19 | 30 | 57 | 29 | 29 |
| % 5 years same address | 41 | 42 | 43 | 59 | 50 |
| % Rentals | 94 | 86 | 80 | 8 | 61 |
| Education and Income | | | | | |
| Age 25+, % high school grads | 35 | 70 | 85 | 96 | 67 |
| Per capita income, all sources | $7300 | $18,400 | $21,500 | $87,100 | $20,700 |
| Median household income | $20,700 | $36,600 | $30,900 | $148,400 | $36,700 |
| % Individuals in poverty | 36 | 20 | 17 | 3 | 22 |
| % Hh pub assist* | 13 | 8 | 5 | 0 | 7 |
| % Hh receive social security* | 9 | 13 | 8 | 19 | 18 |
| Occupation, Gender | | | | | |
| Of employed, % in arts, design, entertainment, sports, or media | 4 | 4 | 19 | 19 | 6 |
| % Hh with self-emp income* | 11 | 20 | 18 | 45 | 16 |
| % Hh receiving int, div, or rent* | 10 | 12 | 30 | 78 | 27 |
| Mean int, div or rent income per Hh receiving such* | $2600 | $44,200 | $4300 | $81,400 | $17,200 |
| F w/children, % employed** | 47 | 44 | 14 | 69 | 55 |
| Median earnings***, males | $12,000 | $19,800 | $23,200 | $51,300 | $22,100 |
| Median earnings***, females | $10,600 | 19,600 | $23,800 | $51,000 | $17,900 |

Source: Census 2000: 1909.01 BG 2, 1924.10 BG 2, 1920, BG 1, 1897.01 BG 1

*Hh = households; pub assist = public assistance; int = interest; div = dividends
**F with children = females over 16 with children under 18
***Earnings = individuals with earnings, 16 years old and above, includes only salary, wages, and net income from self-employment
Data and Methods

The following analysis draws on ethnographic data and historical records. Members of a three-person research team wrote participant observational fieldnotes and conducted approximately 200 biographical interviews. Interviews and observations in western Hollywood were by Margarethe Kusenbach; in eastern and central Hollywood, by Peter Ibarra; in the hills, with local historians, and in all areas with a changing set of informants from 1980 to 2010, by myself. I researched the early formation of social areas by reading newspapers published in Hollywood around the turn of the twentieth century; biographical material describing early twentieth century social networks and self-proclaimed “founders” of Hollywood; and archives, including over 40 boxes in the UCLA library that contain documents on and correspondence of Cornelius Cole.

The team used a common set of guidelines to focus the interviews, which were sometimes completed on one, sometimes multiple occasions. Adult residents were asked to relate the social processes of arriving at the current residence (where the person lived before, how the current home was found, what alternatives were investigated, and the relationships mobilized in identifying and acquiring the new home); changes in sustaining material life (the social history of income streams and of significant monetized and non-monetized material support from government, relatives, home mates, neighbors); experiences with and knowledge of local crime, including measures taken to avoid victimization; and the development of everyday routines organized from the home base (in shopping, work-related travel in the city, child care and schooling). Especially useful for the current analysis were recordings made during “go alongs,” a combination of observation and interview conducted while accompanying a resident on a trip along routine paths through the local area (see Kusenbach 2003).

Contacts were made in all neighborhoods through the author’s acquaintances with families and staff at pre-schools, which began in 1980 and years later provided initial contacts in all four neighborhoods; through the field researchers’ neighbors; through contacts with public school administrators, police, neighborhood organization leaders, and community group members; and by references from these contacts to others. Also informing this writing are separately conducted dissertations on Hollywood’s Orthodox Jewish (Tavory 2010, 2016), homeless adolescent (Ruddick 1996; Joniak 2010), and officially labeled ethnic neighborhoods (Sheth 2014). The following descriptions best fit Hollywood’s neighborhoods as they existed between 1980 and 2010.

A Quadriplex Neighborhood Ecology

Perimeters Defining the Neighborhood of Western Hollywood

In western Hollywood, on borders outlining a rectangular area, businesses and non-profit organizations act as magnets, drawing people from different directions to diverse cultural sites. A multiplicity of synagogues, Judaica shops, kosher restaurants and food markets are located on heavily trafficked streets that define the eastern, southern and northern borders of the rectangle (La Brea, Beverly, Melrose). Orthodox Jews walk back and forth along stretches of this configuration to and from their homes. On weekdays, a large stream of students arrive at religious schools from distant neighborhoods, and, on Fridays, a small stream of congregants arrive from homes elsewhere to live as guests so they may attend Sabbath services with esteemed rabbis.
At the same time, employees and customers are drawn to youth-oriented retail on Melrose Avenue. In the 1980s, this retail-dense street became an internationally known destination where local and foreign tourists might make a day by visiting multiple sites to shop, eat, and window shop “edgy” styles. Visitors, and some residents employed in the stores, pass back and forth to their parked cars or apartments.

About half a mile to the west, Fairfax Avenue forms the fourth border of the rectangle. In the 1920s and 1930s, ethnic Jewish businesses, including a famous delicatessen that is open on Saturdays and serves ham sandwiches, re-located on Fairfax from their original sites east of downtown Los Angeles. Fairfax high school at the intersection of Melrose and Fairfax Avenues became a high scoring public school that anchored the area for secular Jewish families. Orthodox Jews avoid the deli and the public-school system, using their own, sex-segregated private schools, but some visit scattered locations for food and religious services on Melrose and Fairfax.

The social character of western Hollywood is constituted by the culturally diverse patterns of behavior that concentrate at sites on its boundaries. The “frum,” a Yiddish term for strict practitioners, live within walking distance of synagogues located on the area’s perimeters. The public visibility of the frum population is produced by their unique “black hat” appearance, recurrent trips to and from synagogue, and by the area’s concentration of religious schools. School schedules concentrate collective movements in time. Some schools require that students wear uniforms.

For about 100 years, young single adults exploring career possibilities in the entertainment industry have formed a distinct sub-population in western Hollywood. As secular singles encounter observant Jews, they interact in ways that are rare elsewhere in the city. Women new to the area discovered that “black hat” Jewish men will not make eye contact with them. For some, becoming a resident of the neighborhood means working out whether to take treatment as a non-person as relaxing or rude.

Some of the single residents who are geared toward work in the entertainment/media field find employment in day jobs at various sites on the commercially zoned perimeters of the area. Many more frequent retail sites that are scattered along the four boundary streets. Some of these sites are also attractive to tourists and to those who would prey on them. Around the northern boundary, on Melrose, for decades muggers targeted customers of the retail street’s “hip” and transgression-themed commerce, which has featured stores entitled Retail Slut, Necromance, boundary-challenging improvisational comedy theaters, and a pornography book and video store designed as if split by an earthquake.

For their part, the frum devise ways of not perceiving, and not being seen perceiving, what they regard as indecent displays. In order to avoid scantily clad pedestrians and sexually provocative window displays, the Orthodox choose routes that minimize their exposure to secular culture as expressed on border streets. Frum women sometimes walk to and from their homes via alleys behind commercial streets.

Social Life around an Intersection in Eastern Hollywood

In the late nineteenth century, the city created a high-traffic intersection on streets labeled Santa Monica Boulevard and Western Avenue (SM&W). In the early twentieth century, streetcar route designers reinstitutionalized the nexus. In the 1940s, customers in cars were drawn to the intersection by a Bank of Italy and a Sears department store. By the 1970s, car ownership had become relatively low among a new population of Latin American immigrant residents. Bus stops at SM&W began drawing new streams of pedestrians.
By the 1980s, an agglomeration of retail commerce was signaling that the transportation hub was surrounded by a relatively homogenous neighborhood. Even though the area had franchises of chains that were familiar across the US, a concentration of locally owned retail businesses — notary and health services, clothes shops, beauty parlors, storefront churches, and family restaurants — effectively announced the area as a low-income Latin American immigrant neighborhood. Signage used Spanish; shops indicated that they contain cheap products (swap meets, discount furniture, 99 cent stores); for decades, “pandilleros” (identified by locals as members of “MS,” Mara Salvatrucha, a Salvadoran-immigrant gang) congregated nearby; unlicensed street vendors sold homemade Mexican and Central American food to people near the bus stop; and many shops offered remittance services to Mexico and Central American nations as an add-on to whatever else they marketed.

In western Hollywood, a sacred/profane dialectic is manifested along different segments on the neighborhood’s perimeters, the religious institutions being concentrated mostly on the eastern and southern boundaries, and the youth-oriented retail drawing domestic and international clients to the neighborhood’s northern boundary. In eastern Hollywood, another sacred/profane dialectic is dramatized at the epicenter of the neighborhood. From the 1970s up to this writing, around SM&W, porn theaters, porn book/video shops, a venue for transvestite Latino-styled shows, strip bars, and alcoholism rehabilitation programs oriented to Spanish speakers operate near storefront churches. From a corner of the intersection, evangelists bullhorn their teachings. Through open doors, storefront churches broadcast musical invocations to passers-by. On three of the streets intersecting at SM&W, seduction and salvation directly face off.

The neighborhood’s residents are especially visible in eastern Hollywood at and near the transportation intersection. Commuters are drawn to the bus stop. Within walking distance of the intersection, to the west, an elementary school draws local students. Mothers and children populate the streets as they walk their children back and forth, converging at the campus and leaving for dispersed homes. About the same distance to the southeast, a public park draws local residents from surrounding residences.

Distinctive patterns of social life were regularly visible at the crossing of Santa Monica and Western, and within two or three blocks away. Transgender sex workers supported and competed with each other for business from sites about a block from the intersection. Patrons dressed in “ranchero” outfits walked nearby streets to and from a venue for Latino music and transvestite shows in a nearby mini-mall. For years, day laborers at a nearby corner lot waited to be picked up by construction contractors and homeowners. On side streets, older men played dominos at sidewalk tables and “cholos” gathered at reputed gang or drug dealers’ homes. A hillside and an empty lot adjacent to an exit of the Hollywood Freeway attracted homeless adults and youths.

Where they exist, public-sex markets significantly structure neighborhood social ecology. Street-visible sex marketing shapes what residents see, how they are seen, and what they deem worthy to relate to each other and to social researchers who inquire about local life. The concentration of prostitution in eastern Hollywood was different in substantive nature than street prostitution elsewhere, in that it was more prominently transgender Latina and blended into an agglomeration of sex marketing businesses. Elsewhere in Hollywood, female and male prostitutes worked on segregated strips, in isolation from other sex businesses, and in juxtaposition to quiescent backgrounds.

11 Attacks on transgender prostitutes occasionally brought press attention to the sex commerce near SM&W, and, to offenders, like the “Western bandit” (named after the street by police) who targeted the area for armed robberies (Quinones 2013).
Near the border with the independent city of West Hollywood, on a segment of Sunset Boulevard with stretches devoid of retail attractions, women strolled in halter tops and short pants, attracting motorized clients to a border of a quiet residential neighborhood of single family homes. In central Hollywood, shirtless young men strolled along major streets or hung out on side streets dominated by commercial buildings that were active during the day but empty at night. In eastern Hollywood, prostitution was part of a multi-faceted complex of sex marketing concentrated near the SM&W intersection, including XXX movie theaters, bookshops with video viewing booths, bars with pole dancers, cheap hotel rooms rentable by the hour, erotic stage shows, and a large theater located at the side of the Hollywood Freeway where each day several hundred thousand motorists could read billboards announcing nearby exhibitions of seemingly naked women wrestling in mud.

The social ecological concentration of neighborhood life around the intersection of SM&W is due in part to the attractions at the transportation nexus. But the centrality of the intersection to the area’s social life is also due to what is not available in other directions. There are relatively few attractions to motivate residents to walk far away from the intersection.

To the west, the immigrant low-income Latino identity of East Hollywood quickly fades into central Hollywood. In about half a mile, famous Hollywood institutions are prominent visually. The entrance to Hollywood Forever cemetery is on Santa Monica Boulevard. Separated by a dividing wall, the cemetery shares a large rectangular plot with Paramount Studios, whose iconic gates are on Melrose. The cemetery has a mausoleum containing tombs holding the remains of prominent families from pre-movie era, nineteenth century Hollywood; graves for popular twentieth century culture celebrities; and ethnic-themed sections to bury the twenty-first century dead from diverse immigrant populations, including Russian, Thai, and Mexican. The cemetery is also an entertainment venue that draws Los Angeles residents from outside the area to Days of the Dead, Halloween, and other festivals. When guiding friends to their homes, residents on streets near Paramount or the cemetery are likely to reference these internationally or city-famous beacons.

The cemetery/studio rectangle, along with nearby warehouses, building supply and media production facilities, and a high-income residential area to the south, discourage low-income immigrant residents from organizing their daily activities to the west of SM&W. Going east and north from the apartments clustered around SM&W, the streets become bridges over the eight lanes of the Hollywood Freeway. In order to arrive at retail destinations beyond the highway overpasses, residents would have a long, sterile pedestrian trip.

Central Hollywood: A Neighborhood In-Between

While eastern Hollywood’s business signage implies a nearby population of low-income Latin American customers, central Hollywood has scenic features enabling passersby to perceive that they are in a more socio-economically mixed and Bohemian area. That a population of working- and middle-class workers is in the area daily is indicated by movie studios, post-production facilities, camera stores, lighting equipment, and prop warehouses. On colorful banners hung from light posts, a row of tiny performance stages along Santa Monica Blvd are publicized as “Hollywood Theater Row.” Passersby can read play titles that signal the “Off Off Broadway” or experimental character of the productions.

The themes brought to life on the stages of theater row are not reliable guides to the lives of the bulk of the area’s residents and workers. Theater patrons come to the area in large numbers...
during a summer “fringe theater” festival. In contrast to the other three areas examined here, the day and night populations in central Hollywood are especially segregated by time.

The area may be characterized as one of half a dozen “Bohemian” neighborhoods in Los Angeles. To locate Bohemian areas, I used demographic criteria—in a given census tract, at least 20% of the population below the poverty level, at least 10% of the employed population working in arts or information industries, at least 20% of the population aged 25 plus as college educated—and added an institutional component: a concentration in that tract of at least six art galleries and/or small stage theaters.

Seen through the theoretical lenses of the original Chicago School, neighborhoods are understood as distinct community areas (a particular kind of ethnic, working class, bourgeois, “skid row,” “bright lights,” or entertainment area) that is known by a name and retains a distinct social ecological character as the resident population changes in ethnicity. The demographic complexion of the neighborhood is often reinforced by neighborhood organizations serving and representing residents. Some streets are closer to the center; on streets closer to a border with another neighborhood, residents live on the fringe of their neighborhood in the sense that they are less affected by its character. Some neighborhoods are “transitional,” whether in the cross-sectional spectral sense of lying between areas of different and more homogenous social character, and/or in a biographical sense as areas in which residents remain for a phase in the life cycle before moving to some longer-term home, and/or in a historical sense as areas undergoing rapid change in social composition.

In the late twentieth century central Hollywood was a transitional area that contrasted with other Hollywood areas only in the spectral sense. The turnover at residences was similar to the pattern in western and eastern Hollywood (see the statistics on “more than five years at same address” in Table 1), and, after 1965, the socio-cultural character of central Hollywood changed as dramatically as did social life in eastern and western Hollywood. Central Hollywood became a neighborhood of multiple, diverse fringes. By the millennium, residents often were interacting with each other, or avoiding each other, on the understanding that each is tied to a community more homogenously represented elsewhere. Very few residents demonstrated interest in collaborating with neighbors to sustain organizations that would represent local residents. When living in the area, Peter Ibarra found that some residents only ever headed in one direction when they left home.

Hollywood’s social ecologically diverse neighborhoods of the twenty-first century grew from Hollywood’s urban status before 1965, when it was still homogenous ethnically and by class. Scott Greer studied central Hollywood in comparison with other L.A. areas in the 1950s and early 1960s. He found it to be, in his phrase, exceptionally “urbane” as contrasted with “familistic” areas.

Today, the map of neighborhood archipelagoes suggests that Hollywood is “urban” in the sense of being an area where multiple, contrasting social worlds intersect. For Greer (1972), who used demographic measures to argue against the generalizability of the neighborhood community focus of the Chicago School, central Hollywood at mid-century was urbane in that it was high in multi-unit structures, high in percentage of females working, low in mother/wife family roles, high in singles v. married. Greer’s data show no indications of residents’ interest

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12 Central Hollywood is vigorously represented in land use battles by commercial interests, such as the owners of the small theaters and media work facilities, by non-profit agencies with various constituencies (homeless, religious, gay and lesbian), and by a handful of homeowners who, through lawsuits, play powerful roles in blocking real estate development projects under collective names that claim to represent the area. The majority of residents, who are Latino, immigrant, and short-term renters, are not represented.
in neighborhood organizations. His arguments were complemented by subsequent survey research findings from other cities that depicted urban dwellers as maintaining network ties within and beyond family relations but not confined within residential neighborhoods (Fischer 1982; Wellman 1979). By the turn of the twenty-first century, central Hollywood, by remaining more or less the same in this respect, had become fundamentally distinct in its social ecology. With other distinct neighborhoods having developed around it, central Hollywood contained demographically diverse neighbors who oriented from their homes to different communities centered in all outward directions.\footnote{That central Hollywood’s in-between character is not idiosyncratic but representative of many other areas is suggested by others’ findings. In an analysis of large-scale survey research conducted in Los Angeles at the same time as the ethnographic study reported here, in census tracts where neighbors are unequal economically, residents’ activity spaces overlap minimally, in comparison with tracts of greater internal equality (Browning et al. 2017).}

In perhaps all city neighborhoods residents understand themselves as living at some point on the range between insider and outsider. In some situations one will be the oldest among younger people, the least affluent, the most educated, of a minority in a racial or ethnic sense, the most modestly dressed, perhaps so close to the area’s core identity that one’s uniqueness is defined when the newer residents who have come to dominate the area seek information on an earlier stage in neighborhood history. In one way or another, a resident may sense that he or she is seen as somehow locally different, as a Y among Xs. But that does not mean the exception is seen as deviant. In central Hollywood, a Y is not a “why?,” i.e., someone treated as an oddity among others whose presence is taken as the presumptive norm.

Being a Y among local Xs is a common experience in all of Hollywood’s social areas. In eastern Hollywood, residents sort themselves in frequent interactions in ethnic terms, for example as a Guatemalan interacting with Mexicans. In western Hollywood a member of a Chabad congregation may be proselytizing within an aggregation of secular Jews. In Hollywoodland (discussed below), the owner of a concrete-and-glass house built in the 1960s may be interacting with members of the homeowners’ association who live in original historic houses from the 1920s. But central Hollywood is different. Here the substantive meaning of X and Y is not just situational, not only demographic and socioeconomic, and not only different neighbor to neighbor, but more diverse in biographically profound ways.

As they came to know their neighbors, many central Hollywood residents became a singular presence in the area due to the impact on their biographies of historically specific, geo-political contexts, many shaped by war. For most, having a unique background emerged for the first time or in new ways as they discovered differences from their neighbors:

- An African American raised on a military base in the rural west. He was part of the small percentage of African Americans housed in Hollywood (about 3%), but he understood himself to be even more of a unique presence because to him the ways of Blacks in Los Angeles, whose image he understood would guide how he was seen in Los Angeles, were to him shockingly foreign;
- A middle-aged man raised near a US military base in Korea. After living as a denigrated minority in Japan, he worked as a construction laborer in the Middle East before becoming an evangelical Christian and moving to what he had understood to be Koreatown, a location where he would have blended demographically and in spiritual commitment with many of his neighbors;
An undocumented immigrant who, asleep while Los Angeles police helicopters circled above, dreamed of her male relatives hiding under beds as military helicopters searched her Guatemalan town;

A Japanese-descent man for whom the neighborhood had exceptional autobiographic resonances. After Pearl Harbor, his father’s stubbornness led to the family’s confinement in a camp segregated from other internees, after which they departed for Japan, where they endured starvation. A multi-year odyssey brought him back to California. He saw his audacity, as a union leader at his workplace and as a neighborhood activist resisting a movie studio’s plan to build a parking structure, continuing the boldness of his father’s refusal to disavow loyalty to the Emperor. His successes reversed the powerlessness that had shaped his family’s history in most of the twentieth century;

A gay man who migrated from Nicaragua as part of the exodus set off by the civil war of the 1980s. After encountering homophobia from Mexican-descent men when he lived in East Los Angeles (east of downtown, not to be confused with eastern Hollywood), he moved to central Hollywood, continued to work as a nurse in a hospital in East Los Angeles and met his roommate at a gay performance venue/bar in western Hollywood;

A film continuity editor, blacklisted in the McCarthy era, at whose home/compound friends on an everyday basis reviewed current politics in light of their persecution 50 years earlier;

A 25-year-old raised in the state of Washington. The lack of any geo-political tragedy in her biography was itself a local distinction. She blended in with her first neighbors in Los Angeles when she roomed with her sister at the University of Southern California. Now living in Hollywood and working for a marketing company, she was developing the temerity to buy from Latino food trucks and initiate relations with ethnically different neighbors in and around her courtyard apartment complex.

For these residents, being a Y among Xs was at once a context-dependent feature of personal identity and rooted in experiences that each individual understood to be a long-fixed part of his or her background. Interviewees affectively related their pasts to their presents in ways that were negative: the sleep of the undocumented Guatemalan immigrant disturbed by a government search mission; positive: the 25-year-old’s sense of adventure in buying from a food truck; both: the internment survivor’s bitterness and pride; or neutral: Reverend Kim’s use of his backyard to “rescue” drug-addicted prostitutes, which his neighbors, who were not Korean and not evangelical, neither condemned nor supported. Being a Y among Xs most generally is a vantage point, a source of contrast that, in any given moment, may be invoked to explain surprise, acknowledge misunderstanding, inspire irony, launch criticism, or reach across a divide with humor. For many central Hollywood residents, the discovery of how, in this neighborhood, one is a Y among Xs became a unique perspective that could be brought to bear on countless incidents in everyday local life.

Central Hollywood illustrates how neighborhood-as-lived thrives in-between the geographic units recognized by government, identified by formal community organizations, and targeted by commercial agglomerations. A low-income Mexican immigrant, who works in a restaurant kitchen west of Hollywood, gravitates to SM&W where he and his wife maintain a stand in a swap meet. Down the street from his residence, a middle-aged white woman delights in identifying with an upscale shopping district (Larchmont), which lies within an elite homeowners’ area (Hancock Park/Windsor Square) south of Hollywood. A few doors away, Reverend Kim’s family link their home to religious missions centered in Koreatown, to the
southeast. Meanwhile June Wayne, a graphic artist credited with resurrecting the art of lithography in the 1960s from the Tamarind workshop, a work/residential compound named after her street, was, when interviewed, oriented to an exhibit of a collaborator’s work at a museum in Pasadena. From her home/work space up the street from the Hollywood cemetery, she thrived for decades within a widely dispersed arts community. Nearby, a young woman, Dotty, wavered between the draw of the heavily stylized, drug-cultured “Boulevard Heads” who congregated around Hollywood Boulevard, to the north, and the gang world her boyfriend was part of in MacArthur Park, east of Koreatown, when he was not in prison.

Central Hollywood is distinct as a social area in that it is on the periphery of a variety of neighborhoods whose identities are institutionalized by government action (McArthur Park), commercially zoned retail island (Larchmont Blvd.), intersection business agglomeration (SM&W), government-labeled ethnic area (Koreatown), and historical designation as cultural destination (“Walk of Stars” and “Chinese Theater” on Hollywood Blvd.). The in-between character of central Hollywood had no source in residents’ preferences. Residents may enjoy the area’s biographical diversity but they did not come to their address to live in-between. They moved into affordable residences on the periphery of a center of communal interest.

A Contested Totemic Hillside Neighborhood

The most northern and elevated section of Hollywood contains a neighborhood that was developed in 1923 under a sign that originally read Hollywoodland. Outsiders do not need to know local history to know that they are approaching a distinct neighborhood. At its lower boundary, Hollywoodland announces itself as a virtual gated community: the entrance is marked with locally generated icons consisting of stone pillars, identifying signs, and a posted message which implies that entrants will be residents: “Welcome Home. Now Slow Down and Relax.” Also implied is that people residing below the gates belong to another social world.

If they fail to notice the neighborhood’s signage and historical iconography, motorists will soon realize they are in a neighborhood distinct from the lower canyons and the flats. Up the side streets that hold most of the houses, streets become narrow, which allows for parking only on one side. Where the two-way streets reduce to one lane, even the rudest of drivers traveling in opposite directions will find courtesy a necessity. At least for motorists, the hills impose obligatory civility on outsiders and long-term residents alike.

Further north lies an area understood as “wilderness,” even though the land has been reshaped with an artificial lake, retaining walls, palm trees and other non-native plantings, and the sculpting of its top into a helicopter pad used by police and the fire department. “Wilderness” effectively means a ban on housing development. Daily life in the hills is still penetrated by uninvited animals, which might take the form of a single rattlesnake spotted in a basement, an experience that lingers after an animal control worker comments that they usually come in pairs. Residents learn that their rose bushes are food for deer. The smell of skunks is common. A sociologist interviewing a hills resident might be implored to retrieve a pet dog from the reach of a coyote poised to descend a sharply inclined backyard. On entering the home of one neighborhood organization leader, unusual noises may be heard. They can be traced to a curtain-darkened living room where cages hold squirrels, opossum, and raccoons deemed in need of rescue.

Wild life and the structure of roads in the hills establish a seemingly “natural” ecological identity for the neighborhood. But another area-defining feature looms above: the world-
famous Hollywood sign. Unexceptional in its aesthetics, the sign has developed international symbolic power through the local movie industry’s 100 years of commercial success (Braudy 2011). In contrast to the spiritual claims made in European cities by cathedrals or by symbols set on hills such as the iconic Jesus looming over Rio de Janeiro, the Hollywood sign emits a prosaic message of materially flimsy materialism, first celluloid and now digital, at the peak of social life in Los Angeles.

This semiotic dialectic—the sign proclaiming Los Angeles’ identity as a center of internationally projected, industrialized culture juxtaposed against everyday encounters with nature persistently invading a relentlessly invasive human society—makes the hillside neighborhood uniquely precious. The built environment, with its scattering of charming 1920s-era homes below the sign, nostalgia for a century of star performers who have occupied hillside homes, and a seemingly wild ecology merge to make the neighborhood totemic for many of those who live in the canyon.

The neighborhood’s totemic appeal reaches beyond any clear geographic limits. The Hollywood sign is visible from great distances. In the 1940s, coincident with the last syllable physically falling off the original developers’ name for the neighborhood, the sign became an icon for the city as a whole. An upshot has been decades of conflict over who has the right to claim ownership of the area’s symbolic power.

In the 1990s, some Hollywoodland residents became antagonistic to the homeowners’ organization, an association which, through a “design review board,” had often frustrated residents’ building and remodeling plans. A minority created a rival organization identified with the canyon, an area that includes a large number of rental apartments. When the homeowner’s association supported creating a “Village Green” that would have installed benches and flowers in front of the grocery market, which, since the 1930s, has operated at the historic center of the neighborhood, an uncivil war broke out. The project was to be financed by donations; landscape features were to be hand-crafted by an elderly descendant of the original Greek immigrant family that ran the neighborhood grocery store. Despite its modest ambition, voluntary financing, and local sentimental appeal, the project was severely scaled down into a miniscule “Green” after a competing “Canyon” group circulated anxieties that the project might draw prostitutes, drug dealers, and other criminals up from Hollywood Boulevard. Anonymously distributed flyers suggested that the homeowners’ association was fascistic. In turn, some gossiped that the rebel group was controlled by covert forces, perhaps the Scientologists who have their organizational headquarters near Hollywood Boulevard.

The scare tactics might suggest that the rebellious group was more politically conservative than the homeowners’ association. But the homeowners’ association has been headed by right-wing affiliated individuals (from the era of Reagan to Trump’s reign), and the rebel group was also headed by a Hollywoodland homeowner. No demographic dimension clearly differentiated membership in the two groups. The Hollywoodland organization is of the type that Janowitz (1967) dubbed “limited liability”: conservative in style, focused on local issues. In the 1950s, the homeowners’ organization banned political endorsements. At the millennium, when some members suggested that the organization recommend individuals and companies that could provide household services, the board balked, anxious that endorsements might bring lawsuits from disgruntled customers. In contrast, the canyon-identified group conveys a rebellious “Sixties” spirit by promoting conspiratorial suspicion that local politics, corrupted by business interests, subsidizes neighborhood destructive building projects and ignores health risks from industrial pollution. On the surface the upstart organization seems to be more democratic, offering membership to renters living in the canyon below Hollywoodland’s symbolic gates. But while the
Hollywoodland board rotates its members over time, the more populist-styled community organization presents itself to the public through the same leader, year after year.

In the hills, conflicts break out only occasionally, but they sustain enduring tensions as injured feelings persist from old battles. After initial visits to meetings of neighborhood organizations in elite neighborhoods, some new residents become apprehensive that, should they continue to participate, inevitably they will be drawn into alienating pressures to take sides. At the root of the Village Green conflict was something difficult to pin down, something mystifying to many observing residents. Conflicts are relatively easy to understand when their causes are political or demographic. But what inspires civil wars in the hills is something both positive and vaporous: totemic neighborhoods are too precious to avoid competing claims of control.

**Anarchy’s Neighborhoods**

The Chicago School’s “concentric circle” model of social ecology characterized social areas in relation to the central business district of a society being transformed around the turn of the twentieth century by largescale immigration serving the needs of heavy manufacturing. Hollywood’s ecological differentiation at the turn of the twenty-first century developed on another wave of mass immigration supporting service work in a society being transformed by the increasing dominance of digitized intangibles. The Chicago School model of the city was presented as worthy of generalization, and then attacked for decades before being abandoned.

What is generalizable about Hollywood’s social ecology?

The general relevance of Hollywood is that immigrant enclaves, Bohemian areas, concentrations of homeless individuals, sections attractive to single young adults oriented to work in entertainment and new media, high income neighborhoods, and a moral geography of open sex and drug markets were common near the centers of many US and Western European cities from the late 1960s through the millennium. The limits are that during this historical period, in Los Angeles as in other cities, residents lived more isolated in one or another of the neighborhood islands that thrived cheek by jowl in Hollywood. Relatively few of the city’s residents were living in daily proximity to a low-income immigrant settlement enclave, and an elite neighborhood, and a homeless service area, and a dynamic religious community, and a Bohemian area, and public street markets for criminalized transactions.

Hollywood is the most urbanized segment of Southern California, with high population density and culturally diverse neighborhoods in close proximity. Within 5 minutes one can travel over a vast range of the city’s socioeconomic makeup; change language numerous times; choose among different versions of religiosity, each demanding pervasive control of personal life; sample hip new fads of secular profanity; and brush shoulders with people carrying scars from numerous traumas of twentieth century world history. For social researchers, the diversity of neighborhoods developing in close proximity offers a strategic opportunity to study a range of urban issues with qualitative methods.

Some of what we can learn can only be grasped with social ecological concepts. But those concepts do not require and, in important ways, are inconsistent with the understanding of social ecology with which university-based urban sociology began in the early twentieth century and for the most part continues. What we learn does not produce a map that locates all sectors of a city somewhere in a mosaic comprehended by state powers. Instead, the history of neighborhoods in Hollywood indicates that, between 1965 and 2010, urban neighborhoods in contemporary cities have been shaped into social ecological clusters by agents who have
been responsive to opportunities and constraints in local landscapes but have acted oblivious to what was happening in other neighborhoods.

Government officials do not debate options to create neighborhoods that will be dynamic on their perimeters, organized around intersections, located on the fringes of multiple other neighborhoods, or in perpetual conflict over their character and boundaries. Nor do people come to areas to create a neighborhood of one or another of these types. The behavior that produces these different local area ecologies emerges “historically,” i.e., as ongoing flows of people, separated from direct perception of each other by time and space, respond to features of their contemporary social landscape that they encounter impersonally. Street designs, ethnic enclaves, zoning regulations, traffic patterns, agglomerations of retail stores, the boundary between the built environment and wilderness, and much else in a resident’s everyday life is treated as taken-for-granted fixture. These fixtures are appreciated practically, taken into account as resources or impediments for courses of action that the resident would pursue, without question or even curiosity as to whose actions created them.

In the late twentieth century, urban sociologists rejected the social ecology of the Chicago School, arguing against its biological imagery and a rhetoric they read as suggesting that “natural” social processes shaped the city’s social geography. But if the original theory of social ecology now does not and perhaps never did fit city development, neither does a theory that imagines that any self-conscious group has consistently been in control, at least not in Hollywood. Various breakdowns and retreats of central control over the use of urban spaces set the stage for the reformation of Hollywood’s neighborhoods in the late twentieth century.

Early in the twentieth century, a capitalist syndicate exercising influence over government policy was notoriously in control. The developers of Hollywoodland, Harry Chandler (the nation’s largest landowner, owner of the Los Angeles Times, and, through syndicates, owner of 70 businesses in Southern California) and Moses Sherman and Eli Clark (builders of the streetcar systems through Hollywood; Sherman self-dealing as a real estate investor through his role on government committees planning streetcar routes and bringing aqueduct water from north California), had unexcelled power in business and government, but by 1930 they could not sell their lots. Despite anti-Semitic preferences, even before the Depression they had to accept offers from Jews. By the mid-1940s all three were dead and the neighborhood model they had designed into deeds was giving way to “modern” architectural aesthetics. Seventy-five years after their development broke ground, the homeowners’ organization that the original developers had created to protect the neighborhood could not hold off outsiders’ bids for power.

The Hollywoodland neighborhood might have acquired government backing for homeowners’ claims to define the area’s geographic boundaries and represent it exclusively, had its development remained within the guidelines required when the first houses were built. But at the end of the 1920s, less than half the legal lots had been sold. After WWII, the hills of Hollywood continued losing to newer areas further west in competition for elite home buyers. Here the causal relevance of the loss of central power was the declining magnetism of downtown due to the increasing availability of auto transportation, which made areas further from the city’s center more accessible.14

14 It might be thought that central government power, via state and national highway building, guided the change in area appeal. Here the timing is important. Beverly Hills, Westwood and other affluent areas west of Hollywood developed before the construction of a freeway through the Cahuenga Pass (the 101 or Hollywood Freeway) in the 1940s and decades before the completion in the 1960s of a highway between the coast and downtown (the “10” or Santa Monica Freeway).
In the 1950s and 60s, 28 years after lots were first sold, the legal power of design restrictions in original deeds had expired. New real estate buyers began constructing cheap homes, often on concrete cylinders supporting structures hanging over hillsides, a style that conflicted with the three “European” models originally authorized for the neighborhood. As a result, Hollywoodland faced obstacles for receiving official designation as a historic neighborhood, which, had it been obtained, would have given its organization of homeowners government backing for a clearly bounded, undisputed claim to represent the geography of the original development.

Forty years later Hollywoodland’s neighborhood leaders unexpectedly were confronted by aggressive claims that the homeowners’ area higher up should be submerged within a more comprehensive neighborhood that contained renters lower down. The challenge to the homeowners’ organization was not from a renter, nor was it a “grassroots” uprising. It was led by a homeowner who became the sole consistent voice for the rival organization for the next 20 years. When a small beautification project for the market area was supported by the “Hollywoodland” homeowners’ association, she built her “Beachwood Canyon” organization by invoking the anti-development spirit that hills neighborhoods had embraced in the 1960s to oppose a freeway project (the “Laurel Canyon” freeway) that would have cut through the hills. Renters living below and homeowners living above the lower boundary of Hollywoodland have always mixed without tension when they come to the café, grocery store, and other retail businesses located at a waist pinch in the canyon. But for decades now, two community organizations have conflicted over the geographies of the neighborhood.

On the borders of western Hollywood, government actions taken in one historical period set up unanticipated social formations decades later. The zoning classifications that allowed Orthodox Jewish congregations to build a concentration of synagogues and religious schools on the perimeter of an ethnic Jewish area were implemented in the 1920s. Decades later, in the wake of the Holocaust, the Orthodox movement gained sufficient strength to take root in Los Angeles. The development of Orthodox religious communities in the area was led by “emissaries” sent from Chabad’s Brooklyn headquarters and from a “Litvak” (non-Hasidic) Orthodox community in New Jersey.

The development of western Hollywood into a “frum” settlement area was not a grassroots development. While the area had a large Jewish population since early in the twentieth century, they were primarily ethnic Jews, many having socialist backgrounds that did not incline them toward religion, much less Orthodoxy. The rabbinical emissaries from the east operated as intermediaries but not primarily with already present populations. Chabad, first working on distant university campuses, recruited newly religious adult children of suburban families. Orthodox congregations drew immigrants who began life in other places, including the east coast of the U.S., European cities, Mexico City, South Africa, the republics of the ex-USSR, and Muslim nations in the Middle East and North Africa, many coming to Los Angeles after an intermediating stay in Israel. Some of these streams reflected various historical instances of anarchy that pushed or liberated Jews to emigrate, in particular the retreat of European control from North Africa and the liberalization and then dissolution of the USSR. The highly visible, local, daily movements of the Orthodox to synagogues, schools, kosher food shops and other Jewish businesses on the perimeters of their neighborhood in western Hollywood resonate with biographical and institutional connections to thriving, older Orthodox neighborhoods in New York, New Jersey, and Jerusalem.

Next to the Orthodox reside young adults who project life courses tied to employment opportunities in the entertainment industry. The neighborhood entrepreneurs who set up the
area for these young adults were the developers of “studio” apartments in the 1920s. They saw a demand for one-room, short-term rentals for a young adult population coming to Hollywood to seek “Studio” work when many of the major movie production companies still had a base in geographic Hollywood.

By the 1960s, the “Fordist model” of movie production had broken down. In another instance of declining central control, no longer did a handful of major and another handful of minor movie production companies function as movie factories putting a picture a week into the theaters they controlled. By the late twentieth century, employment sites in entertainment and new media had become spread out through the Los Angeles region (Christopherson and Storper 1989). But western Hollywood remained especially attractive for young adults wishing to organize their days around acting classes, auditions, and day jobs, all of which are abundant nearby, some operating on the same perimeter streets to which their Orthodox neighbors gravitate.

Another breakdown in central control was behind the settlement around Santa Monica and Western of a low-income immigrant population. No image of a new social landscape was behind the changes in a national immigration law passed in 1965. But within 15 years, the Hart-Celler Act, by discarding national origins quotas and authorizing family reunification and the recruitment of workers with specialized skills, began emigration processes that brought unexpected, new waves of immigrants. In Southern California, impoverished Mexicans and Central Americans came in the millions, transforming cities in ways government agencies had not debated or planned for. In addition to authorized immigrants, millions of others risked their lives to be smuggled into the country after news from early arrivers made those back home willing to bet that effective enforcement of immigration restrictions would not materialize.

The development of eastern Hollywood as a dense settlement area was in one sense “natural.” Topography favored the spot as an intersection of walkable routes westward to the coast and from the LA basin through a mountain pass to a valley. Long before a European-origin population came to the area, indigenous Cahuenga people stamped out intersecting paths by walking a mountain pass from the L.A. basin to the San Fernando Valley and a foothill ridge that became the course of Santa Monica Boulevard to the coast.

Centuries later, a series of government transportation policies reinforced the development of SM&W as an attractive focal point for urban development. Early in the twentieth century, wealthy landowners voted to tax themselves to bring a streetcar route near their properties. In the 1940s, California and national transportation funds paid for the building of freeways between downtown Los Angeles and outlying farmland, which lowered the relative value of close-in, already developed areas like Hollywood. Twenty years later, as part of large-scale highway development, the intersection at Santa Monica and Western was targeted for access to two freeways. Construction then displaced a middle income, highly educated, largely Jewish and Armenian population in the 1960s. When immigrants from Mexico and Central America came to Los Angeles in the 1970s and 1980s, the streets radiating out from the intersection of SM&W offered relatively cheap housing to a poverty-level population.

Again there was no central leadership designing this neighborhood to be a distinct social ecological area. The principal intermediating set of neighborhood entrepreneurs were what sociology has called “middleman minorities” (Waldinger et al. 2006, 121–122; Zhou 2004), in this case, Korean, Chinese, South American, Cuban, Armenian retail business owners, and professionally educated Mexican and Central American service providers. They put up Spanish signage and, when necessary, learned Spanish to market a full range of products and services to residents. In parallel, and in an important government reinforcement of the
neighborhood’s development that indicates limits to an “anarchy” characterization, administrators in the public school system and state officials planning the delivery of health services to the poverty population developed programs that gave an additional layer of institutionalization to the intersection-based, ethnic poverty neighborhood.

Central Hollywood’s in-between character, where residents live on the peripheries of neighborhoods centered elsewhere, is due to the long control of the area by a Civil War-era US Senator, who in the 1870s was given 500 acres as payment for successfully representing a land claim (to what became nearby Hancock Park) in the US Supreme Court. The family of Cornelius Cole forewent the strategy of prominent landowning peers to the south, north and west for extracting profit from their land, which was to create subdivisions for single-family homes and motivate high-priced sales by organizing neighborhoods around country clubs, community service institutions, large parks, horseback riding facilities, and quaint retail services. Until his death in 1924, Senator Cole postured himself as an elder statesman, frequently referencing his presence on the dais next to Lincoln at the Gettysburg Address. Cole developed infrastructure to enhance the value of the family’s properties, bringing a post office and a streetcar to Santa Monica Blvd; named streets after himself, his children, his projects, and places from his New York origins; gifted his sons a large area they managed as citrus farmers; and reluctantly sold off land to meet emergent needs. In what was then called “Colegrove,” construction supply, movie production, and business-to-business enterprises saw a rare opportunity to control unusually large lots. The Cole family’s landholdings became a unique area in Hollywood, which elsewhere was saturated with retail operations. When zoning was introduced in Los Angeles, Cole’s historic land was zoned for “industrial” use, which, in Los Angeles, meant yards with building supplies, an ice factory, brick manufacture, movie production facilities; and movie satellite businesses like prop warehouses, lighting and camera stores, and small theaters to display potential talent and develop potential movie material.

For people living in central Hollywood on streets around the movie production studios, cemetery, warehouses and construction yard facilities, the industrial use of land in Colegrove created a distinct in-between character of social life. By the 1930s, when the area had become residentially dense, residents had to orient elsewhere to anchor their everyday routines. After 1965, uncertainty about a highway project, described below, kept land values low, making the area attractive to the mix of artists and poverty-level populations that historically have defined Bohemian areas.

Paramount Studio’s history includes a long-forgotten land use battle that continues to structure the social ecology of central Hollywood. Early in the twentieth century, Paramount operated between Sunset and Hollywood Boulevards, from a lot a mile north of its current location, next to dozens of silent movie competitors. The move south was made only after Paramount lost a 20-years court battle with families that had settled in Hollywood before the cinema era. Through several judicial appeals, they objected to the Studio’s plans to incorporate a public street in order to build a large production lot. Paramount remained in Hollywood by moving south onto part of a 100-acre lot which, having been part of the Hollywood cemetery lot plotted in the nineteenth century, remained uninterrupted by the public street system.

About 50 years later, another uprising of residents succeeded in blocking other top down land reconfiguration projects. The new threat was double-barreled: the state proposed to build a freeway along Santa Monica Boulevard (historic Route 66) to connect with a freeway at Westwood (the 405), and another through the hills from the San Fernando Valley to the airport area that became LAX. After an almost 20-year battle, the state, then led by Ronald Reagan, finally conceded what was the first defeat in the previously unfettered power of the California
highway department’s power to build where it had planned. The battle against the “Beverly Hills” and the “Laurel Canyon” freeways began near the time that Jane Jacobs in NY was opposing the extension of the highway system through Greenwich Village and what became SOHO.

Across Western nations, a sea change in the location of social forces restructuring neighborhoods was underway. Resident protests also stopped plans that would have cut through settled urban residential areas in European cities, from Paris to Gothenburg, Sweden. Even before university faculty in the US polished and published their articulations of the argument, the understanding that a coalition of political and developer forces were ruining the quality of life in cities had become decisive outside of academia.

In the mid-1960s, the nation was stunned by the “Watts Riots,” an anarchic protest against an arrest in South Los Angeles by California Highway policemen. At about the same time, in another geographic area and in another institutional domain, residents began to oppose the “Beverly Hills” and “Laurel Canyon” freeways. While the Beverly Hills opponents to the freeway projects led the news stories, the resistance included working class neighborhoods stretching through all of Hollywood to the eastern starting point of the planned freeway (Hass and Heskin1981). Until politicians allied their arguments in Sacramento, the state capitol, the opposition was an uncoordinated, ethnic, and class diverse series of local collective actions.

The opposition movement did not start with organized power; it spurred new community organization. Fueled by widespread resident opposition to the highway plan in high income areas, local community newspapers were institutionalized; city politicians linked their careers to the protests; and neighborhood organizations in the canyons were formed or reinvigorated from moribund status through the entity of the Hillside Federation. The durable consequence of this initially anarchic process was the institutionalization of a powerful NIMBY force in Los Angeles. The Hillside Federation has for over 50 years repeatedly frustrated the plans of developers and city politicians to develop housing in the “wilderness” area, bring in a chain store supermarket, create tourist attractions around the Hollywood sign, redevelop the reservoir known as Lake Hollywood, etc.

The unprecedented defeat of centralized highway development authority became an unanticipated resource for reshaping social ecology throughout Hollywood. To clear land for highway development, the state had bought up hundreds of properties along the planned route. When the plan was finally abandoned, the properties were put up for quick sale at bargain prices. Rabbis from east coast Orthodox congregations, who had long targeted the area for expansion due to its historic ethnic Jewish population, were guided and funded by supporters who, over the prior several decades, had built real estate fortunes in Los Angeles. In the 1970s, property for religious schools were bought and became the nucleus for Orthodox community development in western Hollywood.15

The transformation of Melrose Avenue retail from family service to trendy, and, in some instances, transgression-themed stores, also rose from the detritus of the highway project. Melrose runs a few blocks below and parallel to the planned highway route. In addition to the broad east/west swath of residential properties that would have been cleared to build an eight-lane highway, ramps for entry and exit would have been built on north/south streets. The uncertainty about the project discouraged business investment on Melrose from the Sixties to the Eighties. Rents were available at bargain levels in the Seventies, which set the framework for experimentation by a generation of young adults who began culturally innovative

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15 For a brief account of this history, see Tavory 2010.
restaurants, trendy apparel and clothing shops, used clothing and record stores, comedy clubs and other low budget, youth-oriented businesses.\textsuperscript{16}

Around SM&W, the planned east/west highway would have meant building a massive cloverleaf interconnection with the existing Hollywood freeway (the 101). Uncertainty about the project here also froze land development in a large radius for about 20 years. When the highway plan was finally abandoned in the early 1980s, a low-income Latino immigrant population was looking for homes in Los Angeles. Some knew Hollywood from working in the Bright Lights area’s many restaurants (noted in Hamilton and Chinchilla 2001).

The collective action that produced the social ecology of Hollywood’s neighborhoods as it existed at the millennium was not led from above nor did it spring spontaneously from the grassroots. The neighborhood entrepreneurs who shaped the social ecology of Hollywood were landowners and businesses active early in the twentieth century (Cole, Chandler, Sherman and Clark; Paramount; and the developers of studio apartments in western Hollywood). After 1965, they were rabbis, middle-man minority retailers, the board of the hillside homeowners’ association, and the networking kin and hometown acquaintances who guided immigrants to Hollywood from nations stretching from the ex-USSR to Guatemala.

Various forms of anarchy set the stage for the collective actions that reshaped Hollywood’s various social areas. Urban social theorists cheered the resistance. But throughout the changes underway in diverse neighborhoods in the late twentieth century, there was no coalition that put the post 1965 neighborhood entrepreneurs in contact with each other to create an overall, positive ideology to guide urban development.

\textbf{Anarchy’s Blinkered Social Ecology}

The interactive transformation of Hollywood’s neighborhoods between 1965 and the millennium becomes visible only through detailed ethnographic and long-course historical research. As each area took a unique social ecological shape, it affected and was affected by the shaping of the other areas. Some of the interrelations were publicly expressed. In the hills, crime and disorder in the low-income flats of Hollywood was seized upon as a rhetorical resource used by dissidents to mount a challenge that broke the monopoly representational power of a homeowners’ association. Other interdependencies among areas were discovered in biographical interviews. For poor Latino immigrants, residing in the area around SM&W became especially attractive due to work opportunities in nearby high-income homeowners areas, including in the hills, in the restaurants and hotels of central Hollywood, and at businesses in western Hollywood, including elderly care/nursing home facilities serving the Jewish population.

Most of the interactions that mutually shaped perimeter, intersection, conflict, and in-between neighborhood ecologies were less direct. In central Hollywood, the Cole clan’s sporadic selling of their large acreage to commercial users put residents in the area in search of retail services and community connections in other neighborhoods. Decades later, the Cole family’s land marketing strategy meant that immigrant residents around SM&W would find little reason to travel west, away from the agglomeration of ethnic businesses that took shape around their area’s principal traffic intersection.

\textsuperscript{16} Based on interviews, in 2015, with Susan Feniger, a restauranteur; in 2008, with Gai Gherardi, co-originator of L.A. Eyeworks; and in 2008, with Richard Jebejian, owner of multiple retail properties on Melrose and founder of Merchants on Melrose.
The leadership of hills residents and others in high-income areas in opposition to proposed freeway projects was not only significant for neighborhood reinforcement in the hills. Leadership from affluent areas contributed to the freezing of land development through all of Hollywood’s residential areas, giving neighborhood entrepreneurs in eastern and western Hollywood an exceptionally low-cost historical opportunity to start new businesses and institutions.

Another fierce and ultimately successful resistance to centralized power contributed to the development of contrasting social ecologies and segregated neighborhoods. In the 1960s and 1970s, during the period of uncertainty about the highway project, sizeable Jewish and Armenian populations that had lived in east Hollywood departed, some moving homes and business to western Hollywood. For a decade, middle-class residents resisted the public school system’s new policies of forced busing, becoming clientele of an expanding private school system. The Orthodox Jewish community of western Hollywood depended financially on school enrollments from Jewish families that were not all equally “frum” but were in search of an alternative to the public-school system. In turn, in east Hollywood the departure of a residential middle class and the rise of a private-school system elsewhere formed a segregated, low-income, Latino immigrant, public school student population, where many families, with the encouragement of elementary school administrators, became acquainted and formed ties.

The study of Hollywood’s social ecology suggests a need to counter an imbalance in urban social theory, which either stresses top-down political economic imagery or reinvigorates mid-level, Durkheimian theory by identifying variations by neighborhood in collective efficacy as shaping the quality of local life. The phrase may seem a contradiction, but we appear to need an anti-theory theory. Insofar as the current case study has general implications, it is that the social processes which have reshaped the social ecology of the contemporary city in the period between 1965 and 2010 are best characterized as starting in anarchy and, through blinkered collective action, building interdependent, diversely structured neighborhoods of contrasting socio-economic and cultural character.

Coda

Ethnographic interviews and observations can document variations in social ecology that invite explanation. But to find the social processes that can account for differences in contemporary neighborhood form, another form of qualitative sociological research is necessary. We need historical documentation of the collective interactions that over several generations have shaped the different geographic designs of neighborhood that we find today.

Historical knowledge is dangerous for sociology because it is too rich. It reveals intriguing idiosyncrasies that inevitably risk sacrificing the sociological ambition of generalization. But once ethnography finds patterned differences in the social ecologies of contemporary urban life, historical research can be guided by the explanatory challenge and reigned in from a temptation to unfettered curiosity.

In looking into the past for the social forces that produced contemporary differences, we will find that no central power or class consistently has been in charge. Instead, if Hollywood is a model case, we will find that differences in the contemporary landscape can only be accounted for by actions by people who never met each other as they interacted indirectly over geographic space and generations of time. An implication is that when people are not forcefully led or directed by a ruling class, their interactions may be anarchic but there is no reason to presume they will be destructive. At least in Hollywood, a diversity of intermediaries with the foresight to seize on the chaos created by the unannounced abandonment of central control over immigration to the US, the frustration of large-
scale government transportation projects, the successful resistance to racial and socio-economic integration in public education, the rise of unanticipated emigration streams after the collapse of the USSR, emigration spurred by the outbreak of civil wars in Central America, the collapse of government control over the marketing of explicit sex in print and movies, the decolonization that gave rise to Islamic states and put Jews on new paths of exodus from North Africa and the Middle East, and the rise of NIMBY power that prevented a series of large-scale land development initiatives, produced a long enduring, if inevitably transitory, urban social ecology.

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