

argument regarding the pivotal role that black nationalism plays in the development of African American politics, and he uses this point to illustrate that because black nationalism is not a static historical program but an evolving, influential part of black politics, it is something that scholars of political science must explore as a vital part of an understanding of contemporary black political behavior.

The role of faith as a major component of black nationalism and an essential element in the foundations of black politics is also explored in chapters dealing with Martin Delany and David Walker, which place their faith into the context of their political commitments and find a complex relationship that also reveals the role that nationalism plays in the formation of the visions of the ideal society. It is now important to understand black nationalism not only as a critical interrogator of American liberalism but also as an important agent shaping the moral and political contours of the alternatives to an unacceptable status quo. It is now clear that when looking at black nationalism and black faith as part of a continuum of ideological and intellectual exchanges, we must broaden our understanding of how, why, and who can and will articulate political visions in contemporary politics.

How can we understand the implications of the arguments set forth so far? If we understand black nationalism as shaping the visions of political society for many African Americans, the explorations by Taylor of the lives and politics of Malcolm X and Louis Farrakhan are valuable not as studies of historically important personalities but as articulators of political visions for the African American community. He finds that the community concern and moral visions of Malcolm X and other nationalists clash with the political realities of America during the decades

of the 1990s. He also asserts that Minister Farrakhan, by building on nationalist ideals, was able to argue against the status quo in such strong terms and denounce the moral problems of both America and the African American community in ways that were so aggressive that they appeared to be creating an alternative political program that would serve as an intellectual and ideological model for young people disaffected by the current structures of politics.

The impact of this understanding is to illuminate the perspectives of African American politics. If we can utilize the evolving and continuing influence of black nationalism on the African American community, it becomes easier to see what the people perceive to be the biggest barriers to their success, how they want to go about trying to overcome those barriers, and, ultimately, what it is that they want to see done in their community and in the nation at large. This understanding allows the author to critically address the structures of government and the problems and possibilities of political ideology and political behavior.

This work argues for a more complex understanding of black nationalism as a central feature in the evolution of African American politics, and it poses a role for nationalism as vital to the structures of our visions of what a fully politically integrated America should look like. If the impact of this book is to help scholars rethink our assumptions regarding the role of black nationalism as historical antecedent to contemporary politics, it will be only one of its many contributions to the study of African American political ideologies. Taylor has done excellent work and presented an important argument that will be critical for uncovering the nature of political visions and engagement among the youth of the hip-hop generation.

## URBAN POLITICS

**Moving to Opportunity: The Story of an American Experiment to Fight Ghetto Poverty.** By Xavier de Souza Briggs, Susan J. Popkin, and John Goering. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. 320p. \$99.00 cloth, \$19.95 paper.

**Mobilizing Communities: Asset Building as a Community Development Strategy.** Edited by Gary Paul Green and Ann Goetting. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010. 204p. \$59.95.

**Sprawl, Justice, and Citizenship: The Civic Costs of the American Way of Life.** By Thad Williamson. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. 416p. \$35.00 cloth, \$24.95 paper. doi:10.1017/S153759271200148X

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Scholarship examining the political, social, economic, and moral significance of the places where people live is not-

ing new. From urban classics such as Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton's *American Apartheid* (1993) and William Julius Wilson's *When Work Disappears* (1996), to suburban treatises such as Kenneth T. Jackson's *Crabgrass Frontier* (1985), to ethnographies such as Carol Stack's *All Our Kin* (1974), to social histories such as Mike Davis' *City of Quartz* (1990), scholars have explored the "politics of place." Each of the three new books under review makes an important contribution to this scholarly literature on the political significance of place. Yet each book specifies different ways in which our politics has become inimical to movements seeking to change the fundamental inequalities that cause sprawl and poverty in the first place.

Most work examining the relationship between politics and place—simply, the relationship between how we live and where we live—has taken one of two paths: 1) identify a political or social problem (e.g., poverty, job loss, crime, segregation) and examine it at the national or city-wide level (e.g., Massey and Denton 1993; Wilson 1996);

or 2) identify a land-use trend (e.g., urbanization or suburbanization) and trace its historical and political developments (e.g., Jacobs 1961; Jackson 1987). By contrast, these three studies argue that understanding the politics of place requires understanding the lives and experiences of people who live in specific places—indeed, specific neighborhoods. In distinct ways, all three—Thad Williamson's examination of sprawling neighborhoods, the review by Xavier de Souza Briggs, Susan Popkin, and John Goering of what they call "ghetto" neighborhoods, and Gary Paul Green and Ann Goetting's study of a variety of neighborhoods engaged in so-called asset building—sharpen our neighborhood lens. In so doing, they teach us that *where* people live tends to define *how* people live—not just in simple economic terms but also in terms of core values, political and social choices, and ethical judgments.

At the same time, these three books do not enter into the politics of place from a value-neutral perspective. All three of these authors articulate what Williamson aptly describes as the "civic costs of the American way of life." Americans' land-use choices not only reflect our political values but also help to define our politics in important ways. Where we live, who is allowed to live in those places, and how the people in those places understand their assets and needs largely define the scope and reach of our politics. As such, anyone interested in political change must be closely attuned to the politics of place.

I begin with Williamson's *Sprawl, Justice, and Citizenship*, which is the most far-reaching, indeed sprawling, work among the three. Williamson starts with a simple premise: Suburban sprawl—defined as "recently built suburban development characterized by low density and high reliance on automobile transportation" (p. 28)—provides substantial benefits for millions of Americans, but at a high cost to our nation. As he puts it: "Suburban sprawl as currently practiced is fundamentally hostile to the aspiration of achieving a society capable of meeting even modest norms of equal opportunity" (p. 4). The massive tide of suburban sprawl provides residents with strong feelings of safety and opportunity, even as it buries the most civically minded residents and "prioritizes privatism and consumerism over engaged political participation and ecological sustainability" (p. 4). Williamson's evidence comes from a massive project called the Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey (SCCBS) conducted at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government in 2000. The SCCBS, he claims, allows him to "explore the relationship" between sprawl and a "variety of important goods, including local quality-of-life, social trust, political ideology, and political participation" (p. 11). Williamson does not simply theorize the politics of place. He uses self-reported data from residents of sprawling metropolitan areas to assess the degree to which their neighborhood affects their values and politics.

The author carefully avoids the simplistic view that where a person lives *determines* whether or not he or she participates as a citizen. Instead, he argues that "physical form can help *structure* the nature of interactions that occur in the 'public realm,' so as to make some forms of interactions more likely and others less likely" (p. 219; original emphasis). Citizens who live in sprawling suburbs are less able to be citizens—to participate politically and engage in discussions of the common good. In other words, while sprawl does not *cause* failed citizens, it creates the conditions within which citizenship is unlikely to flourish.

Yet Williamson never accounts for the possibility that certain Americans are getting exactly what they want. Is it not possible that it is disengaged citizens—people who choose to reject notions of the common good—who tend to choose the suburbs? It is precisely the kind of citizenship that Williamson advocates—engaged participation in the common good—that "suburbanites" tend to reject. Instead, America's suburbs tend to attract citizens who want to pursue private goods while participating politically just enough to ensure that politics protects their ability to pursue those private goods. (For a detailed analysis of this suburban worldview, see Lisa McGirr's excellent *Suburban Warriors* [2002], especially Chapter 4.)

Moreover, most of these suburban residents both ignore and depend on the inexorable consequence of sparsely populated suburbs and exurbs: densely populated cities that contain high-poverty neighborhoods. In fact, then, we can think of *Sprawl, Justice, and Citizenship* and *Moving to Opportunity* as two sides of the same coin—one telling the story of suburban sprawl and why it simultaneously depends on and ignores urban poverty, and the other telling the story of so-called ghetto poverty and a massive social experiment that sought to transform the lives of people by enabling them to move from a "ghetto" neighborhood to what was perceived to be a safe, suburban neighborhood.

In *Moving to Opportunity*, Briggs, Popkin, and Goering assess the Moving to Opportunity (MTO) program, a massive and unique social experiment to save thousands of American families from the ravages of urban poverty. The MTO program was launched in 1994, ironically, the same year that the Republican Party won control of the House of Representatives and began to dismantle the social safety net. This program sought to test the idea that where a person lives can define a person's well-being, economic health, and life prospects (p. 13). It was the latest in a series of federal programs aimed at mitigating the worst forms of poverty in America's cities (following such efforts as the Community Action program begun in 1965).

As these three authors powerfully describe, during its first decade of operation, the MTO program operated in relative obscurity. It was limited to five cities—Boston, New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Baltimore—and only in Baltimore was there broad public opposition to

the program (pp. 60–64). Also, during the 1990s urban poverty sank more deeply into the political shadows, and there was virtually no national coverage of the MTO program (pp. 55–57). This changed, however, when the levies failed to protect New Orleans from Hurricane Katrina. (Like many commentators, Briggs, Popkin, and Goering describe the flooding of New Orleans in 2005 as one of the “deadliest and costliest natural disasters in American history.” Yet while they hint at the real cause, they fail to emphasize enough that the massive flooding of 80% of New Orleans was one of the deadliest and costliest *policy failures* in American history—the lack of funding to build adequate levies [see p. 25]. Recognizing this fact is essential in understanding the civic costs of our political decisions.) For the first time in more than a decade, Americans were presented directly with the reality of urban poverty (pp. 25–26).

What the nation saw was bleak indeed. While the majority of poor people in the United States live outside highly segregated, dangerous, and distressed urban neighborhoods, the experiences of those people who live in conditions of urban poverty are “some of the harshest, most extreme burdens and contradictions of a wealthy and increasingly unequal society” (p. 43). The MTO program provided ghetto residents with a unique opportunity—housing vouchers that would allow them to move to a “safer” neighborhood and “escape” the high-poverty, high-crime neighborhoods in which they lived (pp. 135–37).

In their book, the authors sought to analyze critically whether or not such a program to transform the lives of the people living in some of the most abject poverty in the United States can work. What they found was that the overall way in which American politics structures place—what they call “the geography of opportunity”—proves a substantial barrier to success. Overcoming urban poverty, therefore, requires a dramatic restructuring of land use, in particular “a major national commitment to make rental housing affordable in safe, livable neighborhoods” (p. 16). In other words, an end to ghetto poverty requires an end to suburban sprawl, because adequate affordable housing requires suburban neighborhoods to be more densely populated—and therefore less sprawling.

Importantly, Briggs, Popkin, and Goering, as well as Williamson, do not limit their discussions of poverty and sprawl to the economic consequences (e.g., resources, jobs, housing, etc.). Instead, they claim that the life a person leads is significantly shaped by their place of residence. The social, political, and moral values, choices, and relationships cannot be separated from the place in which people live. People who live in so-called ghettos are “embedded in ‘communities’ of kin that often expose them to extraordinary risk and burden,” *even if they move to another, safer community* (p. 18; emphasis mine). Moreover, suburban sprawl “has had the effect of locking in and reinforcing

racial and economic inequalities and of weakening (if not eliminating) the possibilities of meaningful redress of social and economic inequalities within metropolitan regions” (Williamson, p. 268). The politics of place can be as intransigent as the physical buildings that define those places.

So, the challenges that we face within the “geography of opportunity” are massive. In addition to concentrated poverty and suburban sprawl described previously, our places face challenges from globalization, segregation, and gentrification. Simultaneously, there has been a dramatic devolution of responsibility for these problems, from the federal and state governments to local governments and communities. Green and Goetting’s edited volume *Mobilizing Communities* is an effort to explain more comprehensively how communities can productively respond to such massive challenges.

In particular, Green and Goetting examine a particular way that communities are increasingly organizing themselves to advance their interests: so-called asset-based development. Originally conceived by John McKnight and John Kretzmann, asset-based community development focuses on the resources and assets of a neighborhood or community, rather than on the problems and needs. The focus on what a community has, rather than what it does not have, has been “transformational” as an approach to the empowerment of people in the places in which they live (Green and Goetting, p. 4). But whether the transformative approach has actually transformed anyone’s life is the question that they seek to begin to answer.

Collected in this volume are assessments of asset-based development in six different settings: community development financial institutions (CDFIs) on three Indian reservations in Oklahoma, Wisconsin, and South Dakota; arts-based community development in rural Alabama; environmental development in Guatemala; economic development in small-town Vermont; health- and religion-based community development in Chicago; and so-called amenity-based development in rural Michigan. What Green and Goetting and their contributors find in all of these contexts is that real communities, when faced with real problems and that maintain real assets, do not distinguish between “problem-first” and “assets-first” strategies (p. 185). Instead, communities—whether they are rural, urban, or suburban—have a keen understanding of their needs and assets, and they face their needs and activate their assets to the extent that the “geography of opportunity” allows them to do so. Not surprisingly, asset-based community development proves to be simply another tool for a community to use in order to challenge the politics of place. But it does not change the fundamental geography of opportunity. Green and Goetting thus conclude: “Our only hope is to build stronger and more resilient communities that can challenge these powerful political and economic forces” (p. 186).

All three books, then, ask us to think about key “place” questions for the twenty-first century: What, if anything, should we do to change the dynamics that cause urban poverty and suburban sprawl? What, if anything, should we do to empower and mobilize communities (urban, suburban, and rural alike) to overcome the massive challenges they currently face? In addition to these direct questions, however, all three books also ask us to think deeply and critically about issues we now most commonly ignore: How and why do we use our land in the ways we do? How do we understand “community” and what are the causes and consequences of that understanding? How should we regulate the “private” decisions that have “public” consequences? And to what extent can we change the “public” decisions that have “private” consequences? These questions too often remain opaque in public policy debates and in political science scholarship about such debates.

At the same time, each of these books also underscores the limits of any effort to transform the politics of place. In his introduction, Williamson describes the “anti-sprawl movement,” while Green and Goetting detail multiple efforts to “mobilize communities” and Briggs, Popkin, and Goering explore a “massive social experiment.” They have big ambitions that the politics of place can be changed. But the fact is that there is no anti-sprawl movement, no anti-poverty movement, and no community development movement. There are individual scholars and activists who oppose sprawl, poverty, and community disempowerment in a variety of important ways. But these anti-sprawl, anti-poverty, and pro-empowerment arguments do not constitute a social movement. Short of a group of citizens forming a movement to demand change in the “geography of opportunity,” such changes are unlikely to occur.

By contrast, there are at least two significant social movements occurring in the United States today—the so-called Tea Party and Occupy movements. Both of these movements seek to identify and change what they argue are forms of injustice (too much or too little government intervention in the sources of inequality are the most prominent). But they also largely ignore the places in which these forms of inequality are lived in America today—in the high-poverty urban neighborhoods, the sprawling suburban neighborhoods, and the shrinking rural communities. If urban poverty, suburban sprawl, and destabilized rural communities are to be addressed in a meaningful way, there will likely have to be a significant mobilization of grievances aimed at transforming the politics of place by demanding massive change in land use and access to essential resources. Will we see such a social movement in the United States to challenge the three-legged regime of urban poverty, suburban sprawl, and rural destabilization? Only time will tell.

**Demanding the Land: Urban Popular Movements in Peru and Ecuador, 1990–2005.** By Paul Dosh. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010. 280p. \$75.95. doi:10.1017/S1537592712001491

— Guillermo Trejo, *Duke University*

This book is part of a third generation of studies of urban land invasions and the development of informal housing settlements for the poor in Latin America. Unlike previous scholarship that analyzed urban popular movements in authoritarian regimes during the era of state-led development, *Demanding the Land* studies the organizational strategies, success, and survival of urban popular movements in Latin America’s postauthoritarian and neoliberal era. Focusing on Peru and Ecuador, the study analyzes popular mobilization in countries in which political parties collapsed and party systems experienced major transformations. While changes in economic policy and political institutions at the national level are important explanatory factors, one of the book’s most innovative aspects is the use of neighborhood-level organizations as units of analysis. This is a micro-comparative study that identifies which urban popular movement strategies work (and which do not) in struggles for land, housing, and social services.

Based on several years of intense fieldwork and on Paul Dosh’s experience within his own nongovernmental organization in Peru, the book analyzes 10 neighborhood organizations and 131 mobilization events in Lima and Quito. The author presents unique ethnographic evidence of these movements’ experiences with illegal land seizure and their subsequent struggles for the provision of public goods and government services, including electricity, potable water, and sewer drainage, and with the political negotiations of property rights of illegally acquired land.

The central focus is on the strategies of three different prototypical organizations that the author identifies as Old Guard, New Generation, and Innovators. In extensive ethnographic detail, the author discusses the main features of these organizations and their goals, the strategies their leaders and members adopt to achieve their aims, and the organizations’ ability to survive beyond the government’s resolution of their most immediate policy demands.

Old Guard organizations emerged in Lima and Quito under authoritarian rule in the 1970s and flourished in the 1980s under democracy. Relying on militant strategies of protest and violent mobilization, and on clientelistic exchanges with parties and government officials, these organizations were relatively successful. In the post-neoliberal era, however, under a different economic and political context in which national political parties faded and municipal elections became a major venue of participation and negotiation with government authorities, Old Guard organizations became ineffective. The rich micro narratives in the book show that the Old Guard leaders’