

CULTURE AND SPATIAL BOUNDARIES :

COOPERATIVE AND NON-PROFIT HOUSING IN CANADA

Matthew Cooper
Department of Anthropology
McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario
Canada L8S 4L9

Margaret Rodman
Department of Anthropology
York University
Toronto, Ontario
Canada

Summary

One of every six people in Canada today is an immigrant. A major problem faced by immigrants is housing. Initially, for many the chief concern is shelter. But a broader range of issues soon emerges that has to do with the larger meanings of housing and dwelling. Based on preliminary research during 1993 in Ontario, this paper is concerned with the theme of "cultural appropriateness" in the design, meaning, and use of housing. The focus of our research is on how people negotiate cultural differences partly through the social construction and use of residential space. This paper examines briefly some spatial expressions of this issue by considering the creation and manipulation of transitional spaces in cooperative and non-profit housing projects. The meaning and use of housing must be considered at different scales. In this paper, we are concerned particularly with shifting transitions between household/unit and the collectivity and the project and the neighbourhood.

Résumé

Au Canada aujourd'hui une personne sur six est un immigrant. L'un des plus gros problèmes auxquels sont confrontés les immigrants est celui du logement. Pour beaucoup au début le logement est la première source d'inquiétude. Plus tard d'autres questions, toujours reliés à l'habitation, mais plus vastes, se posent. L'article basé sur une recherche préliminaire entreprise en 1993 en Ontario, aborde le thème de "l'appropriation culturelle" dans le projet, la signification et l'utilisation du logement. On examine comment les gens négocient les différences culturelles à travers la construction sociale et l'utilisation de l'espace résidentiel. On analyse la création et la manipulation d'espaces de transition dans les coopératives et les logements sociaux.

La signification et l'utilisation du logement doivent être examinées à plusieurs niveaux. L'article est centré particulièrement sur les transitions changeantes entre 1) le logement individuel et la collectivité, 2) le projet de logements dans son ensemble et le quartier.

Introduction

Like other Western countries, Canada in recent years has become increasingly diverse culturally. One of every six people in Canada today is an immigrant. These migrants differ from earlier streams, however, in that a much larger proportion come from nonwestern areas. About two-thirds of recent immigrants to Canada live in Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver (Mogahaddam, 1994).

One of the major problems faced by such migrants is housing. Initially, perhaps, the major concern is shelter. But a broader range of issues soon emerges that has to do with the larger meanings of housing and dwelling, especially in relation to culture and identity. Based on preliminary research during 1993, this paper examines briefly the spatial expression of some of these issues by considering the creation and manipulation of boundaries and transition zones in cooperative and non-profit housing projects in Ontario. We argue that spatial boundaries in housing are important sites at which the construction and expression of cultural identity and difference may take place in contemporary North America. Definition and manipulation of these boundaries occur through complex processes that differ at different scales, e.g., between the unit and the project or between the project and the neighbourhood.

An important term that recurs in recent discussions of the meaning of housing is 'culture' (e.g., Arias, 1993; Altman, 1993; Gauvain & Altman, 1982/83). Francescato (1993, 44) argues that social and cultural "[D]iversity affects both meaning and use." We must "understand the web of relationships tying meaning, use, and socio-cultural variety if we wish to obtain a credible conceptual picture of housing." Amos Rapoport (1990, 10) in "dismantling" the concept takes it to represent "ideational" rather than social or behavioural variables. Because of its great generality and high level of abstraction, he says, it must be linked to its more specific components or expressions to make it useful for research on the built environment. Thus, he proposes the linear sequence: Culture - World view - Values - Lifestyle - Activities. His discussion includes many useful suggestions for research on culture and the built environment. However, his approach to the analysis of culture is one that many contemporary cultural anthropologists do not share.

Indeed, the concept of culture has been extensively re-evaluated by anthropologists over the last ten years (e.g., Clifford and Marcus, 1986; Marcus & Fischer, 1986; Clifford, 1988; Comaroff & Comaroff, 1992; Borofsky, 1994). The unreconstructed anthropological concept of culture obscured the political dimensions of symbolic systems, the differential distribution of knowledge, and other dimensions of power

(Keesing, 1989, 1994). Contemporary anthropological approaches have gone beyond the characterization of culture as "passively inherited legacy" to probe the process of cultural construction and invention (Linnekin, 1991, 447). Rodman (1992) has argued that sites where cultural meanings are contested should be taken seriously as places in ways analogous to the reconsideration of voice in recent years. These newer conceptions do not treat meanings (note the plural) as *objects* existing separate from but somehow possessed by individuals. Instead, meanings are seen as emergent, contested, unstable, variable historically, socially, and individually. They are viewed as emerging in and shaped by the shifting contexts (both discursive and nondiscursive) in which people find themselves.

Thus, in this view, 'culture' cannot be considered as a background causal factor or variable in a linear or functional analysis. It cannot be taken as a set of static or received analytical objects "conjured up as universals from our own folk sociology" (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1992, 44). In particular, one must seek to avoid the reification and essentialism often found in earlier anthropological work. One can no longer speak of "the Bongobongo," a neatly bounded social unit, who "have" "Bongobongo culture," an abstracted set of shared meanings and practices that exists apart from the actual contexts of contemporary everyday life, yet somehow determines attitudes and behaviour.

Rather, (following Comaroff & Comaroff, 1992, 30), we take 'culture' to refer to "a shifting semantic field," instead of a closed system of signs and relations, "a field of symbolic production and material practice empowered in complex ways." In this semantic space human beings "construct and represent themselves and others, and hence their societies and histories" (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1992, 27). Thus, 'culture' represents historically situated, contestable (and often contested) ensembles of material and symbolic signifiers. The coherence of these ensembles and the degree to which they are shared both are problematical.

Part of this anthropological rethinking focuses on space. As Gupta and Ferguson (1992, 11) observe, "there is hardly an older or better known anthropological truth [than that] the experience of space is always socially constructed." What has been missing is the politicization of this observation. They call for anthropologists to ask: "Who has the power to make places of spaces? Who contests this? What is at stake?" These questions are not new outside anthropology. Foucault, Giddens, Harvey, and Castells, among others, have made important contributions to anthropologists' work on power and the social production of space (see D. Lawrence & Low 1990, 482-493 for a review of this topic). But what often has been lacking is the attempt to meet "the challenge of taking up the specifically *cultural* issues surrounding the mapping of otherness onto space" (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992, emphasis in the original; see also Marcus, 1994, 46-47).

We have sometimes used the term 'cultural appropriateness' to indicate some of our concerns in thinking about the relation between culture and housing. However, it is

important to note that *all* housing is a cultural and social product, not just housing built or used by people with cultural backgrounds different from the majority. For Lawrence (1987, 79), the important question is not "*whether* cultural factors are implicated in the design and use of buildings, it is crucial to comprehend *how* they function in the design and use of the built environment." In North America, recent writers (e.g., Hayden, 1984; Franck & Ahrentzen, 1989) have argued that even housing designed by and for "mainstream" North Americans can be culturally inappropriate.

In this paper, we examine several cases to explore how boundary definition and manipulation may be implicated in the construction and expression of cultural identity and difference. We concentrate on how people negotiate cultural identity and differences, within and across cultural boundaries that are also shifting. As noted above, the research we are reporting on in this paper is preliminary. It is based on interviews with architects and key informants, as well as site visits in 1993 to six non-equity housing co-operatives and non-profit projects in the Toronto and Ottawa areas of Ontario. Four projects consist of townhouses, while the other two are midrise apartment houses. The organizing groups represent members of the Chilean, Vietnamese, Tamil, and Central American communities in Canada. We also visited another townhouse co-op that was built for a group of francophone Ontarians who espouse the philosophy of Transcendental Meditation.

Canada has tended to rely on private-sector solutions to housing provision (Miron, 1993). However, the market generally has not been able to provide adequate housing for those at lower income levels. Hence, various social housing programmes developed by the Canadian federal and provincial governments have attempted to supply housing for those whom the market did not serve adequately (for overviews, see Fallis 1994, Cooper & Rodman, 1992, Chap. 2). Both the co-ops we have studied and non-profit projects are not-for-profit organizations. For convenience, we refer only to the projects that are not co-ops as "non-profits." The co-ops are all "continuing cooperatives," that is, members collectively own the project but individually have no equity, although they have security of tenure. At least 25 percent (and often considerably more) of the member households pay a subsidized housing charge geared to income. Crucially, residents control the management of the co-ops, although the co-op may actually be run on an everyday basis by non-member professional staff. Occupancy bylaws require members to participate and regulate how the co-op is run, under the relevant provincial legislation. Member participation and democratic governance have been essential defining features for the cooperative housing movement in Canada, as well as long-lasting topics for debate.

Non-profit projects vary considerably as they have been developed by provincial, municipal, and private non-profit organizations to meet demonstrated community needs. Many recent non-profit projects contain a mix of residents, most on a rent-geared-to-income basis while some pay market rents. Non-profits have hired property managers and staff responsible to the board of directors of the organizing group. In

some non-profit projects, residents may participate in project decision making to a degree, for example through a tenants' association. But such participation is not required of residents nor do they have the right to control the project, as is the case in-co-ops.

Between unit and project: internal boundaries

Roderick Lawrence's (1987, 1990, nd) recent work on studying boundaries provides a very useful basis for thinking about how cultural differences are expressed and, to some degree, constituted spatially. He proposes transcending the various partial studies of boundaries, e.g., of architectural or spatial features, with a multidimensional and historical approach that includes architectural, administrative, juridical, symbolic, and functional dimensions. For Lawrence (nd), changing and variable contexts define the nature of boundaries. Different kinds of boundaries are discursive and nondiscursive means of separating and/or linking kinds of spaces, users, and activities. That is, they may be physical, symbolic (including legal and administrative forms), and/or behavioural in nature. Boundary definition and control reflect social, temporal, and spatial differentiation. They also reflect conflicting intentions, understandings, and practices related to the meaning and use of the built environment. Thus, Lawrence underscores the necessity of examining the political dimension, such as administrative practices and judicial instruments used to define and control boundaries.

Our first cases take up the shifting boundaries between households and collectivity, i.e., the project. Such boundaries may be created and manipulated through the use of architectural and symbolic elements, patterns of actual use, local administrative practices, and the changing understandings of residents. They are not the local instantiations of some transhistorical dialectic (e.g., Altman, 1993) but rather the products of the action of real people in real contexts.

La Paz Co-op in Toronto was organized by members of the Toronto Central American community and opened in 1990. Built on the site of a former school in an industrial area, it contains 52 townhouses and 10 apartments built above the co-op offices and community areas. Approximately 50 percent of its residents are of Central American background, while another 20 percent are from other Hispanic countries. The remainder of the residents are non-Hispanic spouses of Hispanic members, long-time residents of the neighbourhood, or people taken from the Metropolitan Toronto Housing Authority waiting list.

In this case, the architect attempted to include both symbolic and functional features that he thought of as being specifically Latin American. As he told us :

"We met with the Board of Directors to find out whether there were really any different things about being new Spanish-speaking Canadians as opposed to old English-speaking Canadians and it turned out that there were some . . . but . . . there weren't big differences . . . You'll find that people often use the street and outdoor space . . . in a different way than they do in say Rosedale or Forest Hill [nb. expensive, traditional To-

ronto neighbourhoods] . . . I suppose in La Paz the thing that generated the most . . . benefits . . . was the observation on my part that in squares in Central and South America you will often have colonnaded buildings around the central square and people kind of hang out under these colonnades".

Hence, in designing the project he provided a series of columns and benches along the main street frontage. The internal street was intended to give residents the opportunity to make public space sociable. Children could use it to play games, neighbours could socialize. One of his maxims is that :

"semi-public space can add a layer of neighbourly behaviour to architecture and site planning. [T]he extension of apartment units or housing units such as the front porches, . . . colonnades, fences, laneways, all those . . . aren't public . . . but are semi-public . . . they form the collective realm of that particular interest group. [T]hey can be very methodically used to promote a very viable good feeling of neighbourliness".

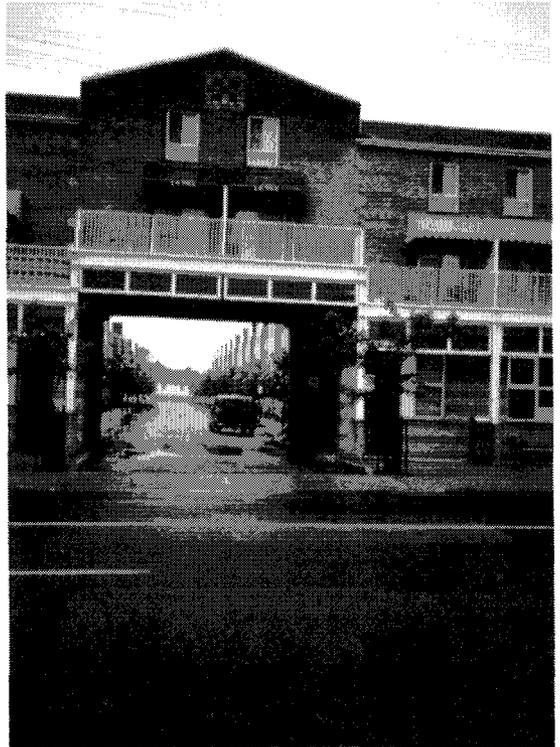


Figure 1: La Paz Co-op, Toronto

Thus, he also designed the project so that every two townhouses shared an entryway with a column. Making the entrances shared instead of single subtly altered the nature of the transition between the interior world of the household and the street. The column was scaled to shoulder height and was intended to encourage sociability among neighbours. And, according to members of the board of directors we interviewed, neighbours can be seen socializing in that space. In this case, an architect with experience in Latin America and an interest in good urban design has interpreted

ted in a generalized, non-literal way features of the built environment the residents had presumably known in Latin America to promote sociability through the use of architectural elements.



Figure 2: House-fronts, La Paz Co-op

Other aspects of the relation between private and collective space have been contested however. For example, two female board members told us how a group of "Spanish" men would congregate to drink, talk, and play music until 2 or 3 a.m. at the parking area at the end of the internal street. "Latin American people like to be together and drink. So we have that problem from the beginning . . . [She said to them] 'I don't want my children seeing things like that. If you want to drink, you have a back yard; you have a house. Go inside!'" The men did so, but only after these women had experienced such problems for a year and had threatened to call the police. In explaining their actions and feelings to us, the board members put them in the context of newcomers having to learn to adapt to Canadian ways. For these women, the issue was not only a matter of national origin and culture but also of the individual's prior experience with urban living. In this example, the police power of the state was drawn on, at least as a source of threats. But, as board members, the women also used the administrative powers of the co-op to make one of the men move to another unit farther from the contested area. "The people never realized why we done the change, but it was to stop the drinking."

Ironically, one of those aspects of the Latin American use of space admired most by

the architect, its intensely sociable street life, was the source of this problem. For the board members we interviewed, the solution was to make the public internal street less an area for socializing. Indeed, socializing of the offending sort, they said, should be restricted to the semi-private and private realms of backyard and house. Without going too far in interpreting this small situation, we see in it an attempt by these newcomers to work out in a spatial arena some of the problems of multiple cultural identities and differing interests. "We are Spanish but now we are here in Canada," said our informants. For them, the other residents must learn Canadian cultural practices (at least, as the board members understood them). In order to do so, residents had to change how they used space and how it was categorized. But this example also shows that working out such issues spatially can depend on the power of particular people to enforce their views. In this case, the power derived from a legal system and organizational structure in which the two board members were well positioned.

A second case has to do with how residents have tried to alter the boundaries between their units and the project in a small, but meaningful way. It concerns the Van Lang non-profit project in Ottawa, developed by a Vietnamese Canadian non-profit housing corporation. This is a seven-storey, 71 unit apartment building opened officially in 1992 on a site shared with a municipal non-profit project. All units are rented on a rent-geared-to-income basis. Roughly 25 percent of the units were filled by people, mostly not of Vietnamese origin, from the municipal housing authority's waiting list. The rest of the residents are of Vietnamese origin, mostly boat people, about 40 of whom are seniors.

At this project, unlike La Paz, there was no attempt to draw on Vietnamese or other Asian design traditions (see below). Both the exterior and interior of Van Lang and its neighbour are virtually identical, the major difference being that Van Lang has a large community meeting room on the ground floor.

As noted, many of Van Lang's residents are Vietnamese seniors. After coming to Canada, some of the seniors lived with their children but felt isolated at home when their children went out to work. According to the property manager, for them, "It is not like life back home where your children would take care of you. So, they feel isolated, worthless, powerless." As well, there are those who lived by themselves in housing projects. They also felt isolated, because they were unable to communicate with their English-speaking neighbours. The problems, thus, stemmed from dislocation, language and social barriers. But the property manager also explained to us that in Vietnam:



Fig. 3 Van Lang Non-Profit, Ottawa

"You won't see a senior living alone . . . They all live with their children and now when they came here that pattern of extended family living is not suitable here because they would have problems with the daughter-in-law or their son-in-laws or, you know the children have changed . . . because of their work, they wouldn't have time or they wouldn't devote their time to their parents like the way they expected in Vietnam . . . then when they came here [nb. to Van Lang] it was just like back in Vietnam, but it's different, because you are now living on your own".

For these seniors, Van Lang provided community and social support in many ways. "They won't have to get scared or frightened because somebody speaks to them in English and they can't figure out what that is," said the property manager. The Ottawa Vietnamese community and Van Lang provide opportunities for socializing as well as classes and other services. Yet individual units in an apartment building can be isolating, even for North Americans not used to living in extended family settings. The multiple dislocations suffered by these residents, of war, exile, moving to Canada, rural to urban migration, linguistic isolation, separation from their families, provide the contexts in which to view their actions. The alteration in boundaries we are concerned with consists of the seniors leaving their doors open during the day, going to their neighbour's, sharing meals, and so forth. The changes are small, to be sure, but to us they are suggestive of the many small details of everyday practice through which people configure and reconfigure their lives. In this case, periodically removing a physical barrier appears to have helped people in a small way to begin to

rebuild community ties by increasing their visibility and making themselves more accessible.

Another small example from Van Lang illustrates how cultural differences may be played out spatially in disputes over the zonation of territory. Robinson (1993) suggests that it is useful to see an intimacy gradient as the organization of public, private, and intimate territories dependant on who controls access to and use of the space. She points out that in different types of housing, especially in institutional settings, these zones have different relationships to the exterior world (Robinson, 1993, 3). In apartment houses, halls generally constitute a semi-private zone, one that is under the control of the management (rather than the occupants generally) yet accessible to the wider community. The halls connect to the private space within the unit that is under the control of the household.

As well as the seniors altering the boundaries of their units, others do so as well. Children, particularly, use the halls to play, running to and fro and shouting. According to the property manager, this activity does not bother the Vietnamese residents. She has tried to explain to "Canadian" residents that, "It is our culture not to live behind shut doors." One Canadian tenant who complained to her insisted, she said, that there were regulations about what could be done in the halls and regulations must be enforced. This put the manager in a difficult position:

"I said, but who would enforce them? What are the fines? I can't fine them because they leave their doors open or because they speak too loud in the hallway or because their kids are running to and fro".

So she suggested to the complainant that she should move to a floor with no children. But the tenant refused. According to the manager, the tenant answered, "No. I'm here to educate them. If I move out and another resident comes in, he or she would have the same problems. But I want to see this changed." The tenant thus appeared to be assuming that all Vietnamese would behave the same way. The manager described herself as "obsessed with seeing that tenants comply with regulations, rather than imposing [nb. their own ways of doing things]. . ." This attitude has created many other difficulties for her that we cannot describe here, but that have to do in part with her being a young, well educated woman from Vietnam having to deal with a non-resident board of directors and staff all of whom are older Vietnamese-Canadian men.

In this case, she felt that she had to try to mediate the cultural differences, to find ways to get people to live in harmony. But could this be accomplished through administrative regulation of the meaning and uses of space? She reflected, "So here we have the management who wants to enforce regulations on residents who are not aware of anything." From her point of view, the halls *conceptually* (and not only behaviourally) were semi-public extensions of the private units for the Vietnamese residents. But, to her it was clear that for Canadians this was not the case. She added, "Here you have to respect well other tenants. They are all my tenants and they are

Canadians who want to see that regulations are enforced and that Canadian ways of life are respected." Part of her concern reflected her perception that the Vietnamese residents feel they "don't have to go by the books" because the building is Vietnamese run:

"They didn't behave like that if they lived in a Canadian building, but they did so because I am Vietnamese and because you [the residents] feel, 'oh, we are all Vietnamese,' and that family mentality, and 'we are like brothers . . . We should be lax towards each other.' So that is the mentality I want to fight against".

Thus, we may interpret her as asserting two differences between the "Canadians" and the "Vietnamese." First, she implied that, conceptually and in practice, the two groups segment residential space differently. Conflict arose directly from those differences. Second, she implied that they have different ideas of how this territorial zonation and the necessary boundaries should be maintained. For the Canadians, boundary maintenance depends on legal regulations and administrative practices while for the Vietnamese it is a matter of "that family mentality." In other words, it depends, by metaphorical extension, on assumptions of shared substance, trust, and customary ways of doing things. Her goal was to help the Vietnamese residents integrate into Canadian society. Therefore, given her conception of the "Canadian way of life" she was obsessed with making the Vietnamese residents comply with regulations "for their own good." From her perspective, the Vietnamese residents needed to learn a much larger lesson than where children ought to play.

Between project and neighbourhood: external boundaries

The construction and expression of cultural identity and difference also take place at the scale of the housing project's relation to its neighbourhood. Symbolic means may be employed to mark this boundary or transitional zone, as well as aspects of site planning thought to be culturally salient. Again, shifting contexts are important for understanding how this relation develops and, indeed, whether the boundary is marked symbolically at all.

At this scale, we found it interesting to contrast the Van Lang project in Ottawa and another Vietnamese-Canadian project, Lotus Housing Co-op in Toronto. Occupied first in 1982, Lotus consists of 80 units in stacked townhouses with a centrally-located community centre. Lotus was organized by the Indo-Chinese Refugees' Relief Trust Fund and is located in a new neighbourhood developed on an abandoned industrial site in the late 1970s (Simon & Wekerle, 1985). According to our informants, the organizers were both Chinese and Vietnamese. The main architect involved was of Chinese background.

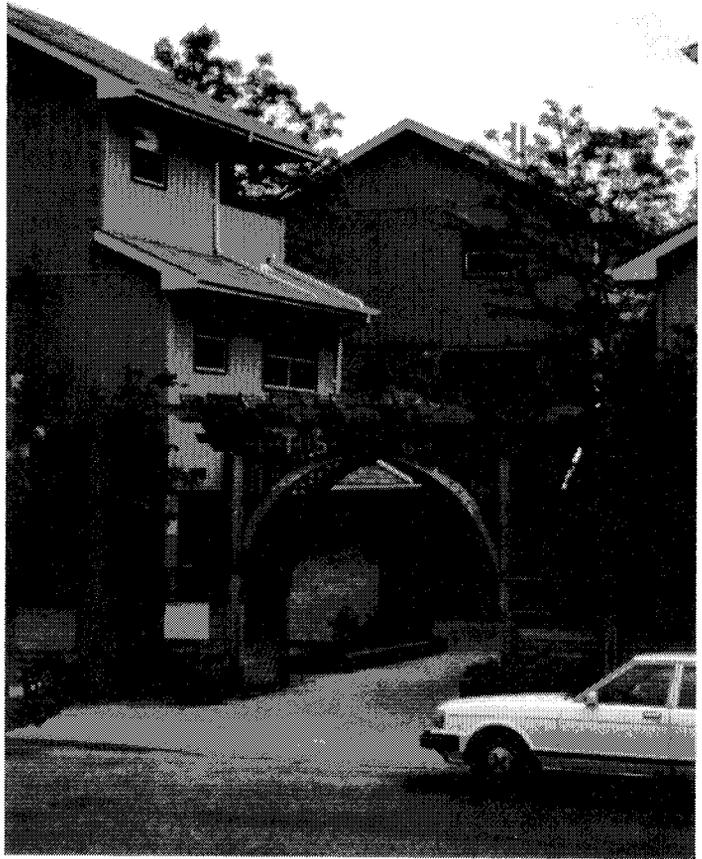


Fig. 4 Lotus Co-op, Toronto

The important contrasts have to do with the site plans and with the symbolic expression of identity. Approaching Lotus Co-op from the street, one immediately notices the large Chinese gate at the midpoint of the block. Passing through the gate one feels a distinct sense of arrival, of entry into a different place. The transition between neighbourhood and project extends further along a paved path leading to the community building. The latter is in the centre of the courtyard, around which radiate the townhouses. Unusually, the front doors of the townhouses face the courtyard. Each has a back door and small yard on the street. The roof lines are complex and dramatic. Thus, Lotus' site plan is strongly symmetrical, balanced around the community centre. The semi-public space of the courtyard largely is defined by its edges, i.e., the front of the townhouses and landscaping. However, the co-op announces itself to the neighbourhood at a single point, the gate.

According to one of the architects involved, all of these features had been important to the organizers. The architects had carried out library research on Chinese housing.

They also developed a participatory design method to use with the organizing group and consulted with other Chinese people about the designs. He told us that part of the design problem had to do with taking into account the differences among the Chinese, Vietnamese, and "cosmopolitans," (i.e., everyone else) who also might be residents. The site plan was one of the things that were "culturally-rooted" as were the number and layers of roofs. "All that came from dialogue and research into traditional Chinese construction techniques, reinterpreted for us," he told us. In order to have the gate, the organizers had to raise extra funding. Recalling what had happened eleven years before, he said:

"I remember getting a go mere minutes before the official opening . . . I remember I was helping them sketch it. They found somebody to build it after . . . I'm sure . . . they pushed that because it was so important culturally. The gate means a lot".

Putting the community centre in the middle of the site created problems with the City of Toronto. The architect told us, "The City of Toronto has a thing about buildings behind buildings and that became technically a building that was disconnected from the street and didn't qualify as a street address." So, the architects joined the basement wall of the community centre to the walls of the street-fronting townhouses, which turned it back into an allowable building. As well, this gave the co-op a larger community meeting space than it otherwise would have had.

The Van Lang non-profit project in Ottawa, by way of contrast, is a single midrise building on a platform shared with a municipal non-profit project. As with much contemporary building, Van Lang sits in the middle of an amorphous space, rather than defining that space as Lotus does. There is only one exterior marker of the nature of the project, a small plaque beside the front door. From more than a few feet away there is nothing to distinguish the two projects visually.

According to a housing consultant who was involved with the project from its inception, he and the architect proposed using symbolically Vietnamese or "Oriental" elements on the building exterior. The Vietnamese organizers, however, rejected such possibilities.

He described how the organizers had originally proposed building a Buddhist temple on the site. Later, when the zoning required a large part of the site to be ceded for a park, the organizers proposed building :

"a very Vietnamese or Oriental-looking sort of structure . . . [S]o they submitted it to the city parks people and they [nb. the parks department] said, 'Forget it, we want fibre-glass, pre-formed stuff that we used everywhere else.' Wherever they did attempt to put their stamp on something, or do something that was reflective of their culture, it just got stomped . . . and in every one of these cases they gracefully backed away. These are probably among the toughest people on the face of the Earth. They have lived through generations of warfare . . . and it was kind of not really what I expected of them that they would back off that easily. I think what it is is that they just backed off temporarily, wait until things settled down, and have another go".

But the property manager described the situation somewhat differently. In her view, there were other important considerations:

"So we were asked once why didn't we design it in an outstanding way that would identify our culture our emphasis at the time was to get the building built, not to place too much attention on the cultural factors And we had so many difficulties with having it built, that if we wanted to make it different, I don't think it would be of benefit to us. And, the second thing was, we want to integrate, we don't want to stand out differently, so we don't bother with a pagoda roof top [nb. a suggestion of the architect's]. Even with a pagoda roof top, it doesn't say anything because we are not, we don't stand out religiouslyyou can see, the architectural design is exactly the same [nb. of Van Lang and its neighbouring municipal non-profit] and it is meant for our long term integration, the interaction between the two communities. So we don't care and we don't bother".

More research will be necessary to understand the complex history of this case. To understand why Van Lang does *not* announce itself symbolically or architecturally to the wider community, one would need to comprehend several of the changing contexts in which development of the project took place (Rodman & Cooper, 1995): e.g., factionalism and diverse interests within the Vietnamese community, changes in zoning relating to the site, wider community reaction to social housing in general and these projects in particular, the practices of city planning and parks departments. As it stands, the transition between project and neighbourhood is abrupt but almost unmarked. By comparison, at Lotus the transition is gradual, spatially complex, and symbolically rich.

Concluding observations

Our research is at a stage in which it is not possible to make generalizations or draw firm conclusions. However, we would like to conclude with some general observations that may be useful for further research, especially of a comparative nature. We suggest that spatial boundaries in housing are important sites at which the construction and expression of cultural identity and difference may take place in contemporary North America. Definition and manipulation of these boundaries occur through complex processes that differ at different scales. One must examine the scale and nature of the boundaries, how they are understood, how and by whom they are controlled, the institutional context, and administrative practices. As Lawrence (nd, 17) contends, "The multidimensional nature of boundaries is contextually defined. Consequently, it is misleading to isolate variables in order to identify cause-effect relationships between them." In our view, all of these factors must be seen as socially constructed and variable across time and social groups.

Clearly, processes important at the scale of the project differ from those that have to do with the meaning and use of space within units (not discussed here), transitions between units and the project, or internal collective space. The institutional and administrative contexts are crucial for understanding these processes. Conflicts over zoning and neighbourhood land use were important in the development of the Van

Lang project. At Lotus Co-op, city regulations had to be circumvented to locate the community house at the centre of the site. But Lotus was part of a larger neighbourhood redevelopment planning project of the City of Toronto. Although we have not discussed them here, differences between non-profits and co-ops in administrative practices also may be important. Those institutional and practical differences may affect relations between household space and the collectivity. However, in all cases administrative regulation is crucial for understanding boundary processes. Although the details of our cases differ from Lawrence's Swiss study (1990, nd), we concur with him in stressing the importance of legal instruments such as occupancy bylaws and tenancy agreements for understanding boundaries. Similarly, like him we also stress the importance of administrative regulation of the use of space, for example through the activity of property managers or co-op coordinators and committees.

Other important questions concern the nature of the practices residents use to make space more conformable to their needs and desires. For example, Chua (1988), writing about resettlement of Chinese, Malay, and Indian people in Singapore, suggests that symbolic adjustments are made more readily than behavioural ones. We have suggested that behavioural adjustments at the Van Lang project have been important for Vietnamese senior residents. However, it is important to note that the projects we have studied all contain residents of different backgrounds and ages. One cannot *assume* that all residents of a particular category (especially if the category is defined by an outsider) share understandings or practices. Rather, the degree of sharing must be investigated.

Given the increasingly diverse nature of Canadian (and North American) society, the question of how culture relates to housing must become more important both theoretically and practically. We have argued that studying this issue requires a revamped approach to the study of culture. And, we have suggested that comparative study of the creation and manipulation of boundaries is useful for studying the construction and expression of cultural identity and difference.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ALTMAN, I. (1993), Foreword, *The Meaning and Use of Housing* (Arias, E. Ed.) (Avebury, Aldershot).
- ARIAS, E. Ed. (1993), "The Meaning and Use of Housing" (Avebury, Aldershot).
- BOROFSKY, R. Ed. (1994), "Assessing Cultural Anthropology" (McGraw-Hill, New York).
- CHUA, B. H. (1988), Adjusting Religious Practices to Different House Forms in Singapore, *Architecture & Behaviour*, 4 (1988) 3-25.
- CLIFFORD, J. (1988), "The Predicament of Culture" (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass.).
- CLIFFORD, J. & MARCUS, G. (1986). "Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography" (University of California Press, Berkeley)
- COMAROFF, J. & COMAROFF, J. (1992), "Ethnography and the Historical Imagination" (Westview, Boulder, Colorado).
- COOPER, M. & RODMAN, M. (1992), "New Neighbours: A Case Study of Cooperative Housing" (University of Toronto Press, Toronto).

- FALLIS, G. (1994), The Federal Government and the Metropolitan Housing Problem, *The Changing Canadian Metropolis: A Public Policy Perspective vol. 2* (Friskin, F., Ed.) (1994) (Institute of Governmental Studies Press, University of California, Berkeley, and The Canadian Urban Institute, Toronto).
- FRANCESCATO, G. (1993), Meaning and Use: A Conceptual Basis, *The Meaning and Use of Housing* (Arias, E., Ed.) (Avebury, Aldershot).
- FRANCK, K. & AHRENTZEN, S. Eds. (1989), "New Households, New Housing" (Van Nostrand Reinhold, New York).
- GAUVAIN, M. & ALTMAN, I. (1982/83), A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Homes, *Architecture & Behaviour*, 2 (1982/83) 27-46.
- GUPTA, A. & FERGUSON, J. (1992), Beyond "Culture": Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference, *Cultural Anthropology* 7 (1992) 6-23.
- HAYDEN, D. (1984), "Redesigning the American Dream" (Norton, New York).
- KEESING, R. (1989), Creating the Past: Custom and Identity in the Contemporary Pacific, *Contemporary Pacific* 1 (1989) 19-42.
- KEESING, R. (1994), Theories of Culture Revisited, *Assessing Cultural Anthropology* (Borofsky, R., Ed.) (McGraw-Hill, New-York).
- LAWRENCE, D. & LOW, S. (1990), The Built Environment and Spatial Form, *Annual Review of Anthropology* 19 (1990) (Annual Reviews, Stanford).
- LAWRENCE, R. (1987), "Housing, Dwellings, and Homes" (Wiley, New York).
- LAWRENCE, R. (1990), Public, Collective and Private Space: A Study of Urban Housing in Switzerland, *Domestic Architecture and the Use of Space* (Kent, S. Ed.) (1990), (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge).
- LAWRENCE, R. (nd), "The Multidimensional Nature of Boundaries: An Integrative Historical Perspective" Manuscript.
- LINNEKIN, J. (1991), Cultural Invention and the Dilemma of Authenticity, *American Anthropologist* 93 (1991) 446-449.
- MOGHADDAM, F. (1994), Ethnic Segregation in a Multicultural Society: A Review of Recent Trends in Montreal and Toronto and Reconceptualization of Causal Factors, *The Changing Canadian Metropolis: A Public Policy Perspective vol. 1* (Friskin, F., Ed.) (1994) (Institute of Governmental Studies Press, University of California, Berkeley, and The Canadian Urban Institute, Toronto).
- MARCUS, G. (1994), After the Critique of Ethnography: Faith, Hope, and Charity, but the Greatest of These is Charity, *Assessing Cultural Anthropology* (Borofsky, R., Ed.) (1994) (McGraw-Hill, New York).
- MARCUS, G. & FISCHER, M. (1986), "Anthropology as Cultural Critique" (University of Chicago Press, Chicago).
- MIRON, J. R. Ed. (1993), "House, Home and Community: Progress in Housing Canadians, 1945 - 1986" (University of Toronto Press, Toronto).
- RAPOPORT, A. (1990), Systems of Activities and Systems of Settings, *Domestic Architecture and The Use of Space* (Kent, S., Ed.) (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge).
- ROBINSON, J. (1993), Messages from Space: Privacy & Power in Housing, (*Paper read at annual meetings of the Environmental Design Research Association, Chicago*).
- RODMAN, M. (1992), Empowering Place: Multilocality and Multivocality, *American Anthropologist* 94 (1992) 640-656.
- RODMAN, M. & COOPER, M. (1995), Housing Cultural Difference : Questions of Power and Space in Developing Canadian Non-Profits and Co-ops, *Canadian Journal of Urban Research*, Forthcoming.
- SIMON, J. & WEKERLE, G. (1985), "Creating a New Toronto Neighbourhood: The Planning Process and Residents' Experience" (Canada Housing and Mortgage Corp., Toronto).