



Latine Urban Ecologies: Asserting Place, Transforming Space-Time

Adaiah Hudgins-Lopez¹

¹ Department of Social Anthropology, University of Cambridge, CB21TN, Cambridge, UK; E-Mail: ah2173@cam.ac.uk
<https://orcid.org/0009-0003-2314-8825>

Abstract

Latine Urban Ecologies: Asserting Place, Transforming Space-Time

Detroit's governance consistently aims to overcome the city's "underdog" status as an urban space of abandonment, violence, and post-industry. It is a simplified vision of Detroit that imagines its *past*, *present* and *future* through a particular 20th century trajectory of progress that ruptures with a white flight-"Black and poor" dynamic resulting in the city's spiral into decay. However, at the community organizing level, groups and individuals engage in projects designed to assert their presences historically and now, to establish economic self-sustainability, and to imagine futures that reflect the lives of residents more explicitly. The Latine community, in particular, struggles to assert its presence in a city considered through a white-Black racialised lens and beyond its collective economic value and its strategic, infrastructural border with Canada.

Drawing from 15 months of ethnographic research with Latine Detroiters, I consider their artistic and ecological interventions in space and time as indicators of a larger 'bottom-up' resistance to the city's constructed identity through challenging the city's self-perceived space-time. These individuals cultivate a "Latine space-time" in Detroit by agentively navigating Detroit and generating 'Latine urban ecologies'—unearthed in this paper through the depiction of the transformations of soil, façade, and air fashioned by local muralists, graffiti writers, urban gardeners, and architectural aesthetics. Their interventions compose a Latine space-time, carving themselves in place, that fundamentally contests and reimagines the city of Detroit by nurturing colour, creativity, and life in opposition to narratives of abandonment and decay.

Keywords

space-time, frontiers, urban ecology, race, place, street art

