

Volume 32 Editors' Note

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More than two years since the beginning of the global pandemic,precedented times are both hard to remember and difficult to foresee. COVID-19 changed – and continues to change – our relationship to our built environment, each other, and *ourselves*. In nearly every context and across nearly every scale, we needed to adjust and adapt our behavior and expectations to accommodate ever-evolving public health protocols, social norms, and personal preferences. Inevitably, different places adopted different approaches to mitigate the spread and impact of the pandemic, with varying impacts and degrees of success. But what *are* these adaptations? Who implemented them, and under what authority? How might they *permanently* change our relationship to space and to other people? The ongoing transition towards a “post-COVID” world provides ample opportunity to interrogate these questions and learn from the multi-faceted impacts of the pandemic.

The research in this volume holds a magnifying glass to some of those changes and sheds light on new and existing dynamics in cities. To start off, we have a series of essays written by students and faculty from UC Berkeley’s Department of City and Regional Planning that highlight the pandemic’s impact on urban social and economic power dynamics and strategies to preserve existing political and social systems. Next, one author reflects on how positionality and identity influences research and activism both in and outside of the COVID-19 context, particularly in the Global South. Another paper contrasts the impact of the pandemic on the respective Chinatown neighborhoods in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Vancouver (Canada). The authors assess how each local government’s approach to business preservation influenced the response and recovery of the three communities, highlighting new and existing challenges to historic and cultural preservation in urban environments. Lastly, a case study uses mixed methods to analyze outdoor commercial spaces propped up during the pandemic on San Francisco’s Valencia Street, a prominent commercial corridor in the Mission District. The paper looks at patterns in the design and use of these spaces, and their tentative impact on the perception of private and public space and pedestrian behavior.

The pandemic, while tragic and ongoing, offers unique opportunities to learn about ourselves, our cities, and the interactions between the two. We hope this volume inspires critical reflection on the challenges and adaptations to our urban environments beyond the scope of COVID-19, specifically. Some lessons are old, some lessons are new, but they all shed light on our present situation and can critically inform the ongoing recovery efforts. We welcome any and all commentary and feedback on this volume and the research within. Thank you for reading.