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For decades we have been told that we must come to grips with the changes in our culture brought about by evolving technology. Automobiles, jet travel, domestic appliances, telephones, television, fax machines and the continuing evolution of computing have all left their traces in our lifestyles, thought patterns and values, as well as in the concentrations of power that determine how we express our place in the world.

These changes touch the lives of all of us. Through the unfamiliar juxtapositions they foster we become aware of still another set of forces that lie deeper in the human psyche and are linked to social structure. Divergent aspirations and habits of mind carried forward from the past by traditions of differing ethnic groups and religions or spawned by generations of economic deprivation and strife have led to a multiplicity of cultures, seeking at once to find their way in the present and to forge their place in the future.

The dark, fearsome side of this presents itself to us every day: remotely in news reports of virtually incomprehensible brutality among peoples who, though neighbors, define themselves differently; directly in the degradation, violence and neglect that plague the workings of our society.

The protean, creative side of these diversities expresses itself in the glimmering vitality of many changing neighborhoods, the intricate resourceful-

ness of people with minimal means and expansive spirits, the energizing fusion of memories and wishes that can give new form to community.

We examine in this issue of *Places* what Guest Editor Douglas R. Suisman, who initiated this project, refers to as “the other American tradition” — patterns of urban organization rooted in Latin America, including the implanted forms that were mandated by Spain in the Law of the Indies, then adapted and transformed by evolving local interests and economic circumstances — by the lived experience of a people in transition.

Comparable transformations are taking place now as people of diverse origins take a greater role in shaping the future of North American cities, appropriating segments of the urban fabric according to

their own interests and resources, challenging conventional expectations of urban form and practice. Designing places that can effectively accommodate demographic and cultural change calls for a new kind of listening and observing, a wider range of knowledge about formal precedents, their significance and their potential to inform new work, and an ability to anticipate forms that have both resilience and flexibility, allowing the continuing investment of imagination and invention by their users.

The real test of our abilities to care for places will be our ability to extract creative and productive energies from these necessary disparities of background and expectation, to forge a positive future through spirited appropriation of the many pasts in our present.

— *Donlyn Lyndon*

Background: Mexico City, 1628. Juan Gomez de Trasmonte. Courtesy Museum of Mexico City. Inset and cover: San Andres Chalchicomula Pueblo, Mexico, 1764-5. Ventura de Arze y Castilla. Courtesy National General Archives, Mexico. Both images courtesy the New York Public Library, Map Division, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

