



The road to resegregation: Northern California and the failure of politics, by Alex Schafran

Oakland, CA, University of California Press, 2018

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The road to resegregation: Northern California and the failure of politics, by
Alex Schafran, Oakland, CA, University of California Press, 2018

In *The Road to Resegregation*, Alex Schafran provides a deep and complex analysis of why the Bay Area of Northern California, a region known for its progressive politics and great wealth, remains deeply racially and class segregated and facing an affordable housing crisis. This situation has occurred even as older forms of inner city ghetto segregation have been replaced by a new and more mobile form. Resegregation, as he labels it, has resulted from a number of factors. These include the gentrification of old segregated central city neighborhoods accompanied by the flight of people of color from many of them in search of the suburban dream. They also include the refusal of local governments to ensure the development of adequate amounts of affordable housing in most of the Bay Area and the failure to provide adequate public transportation and highways between the suburban areas open to people of color and areas of employment. All of these have combined with the failure to ensure a healthy mix of housing and jobs in close proximity to each other, predatory lending in communities of color, and the bursting of the housing bubble in the late 2000s to create immiserated suburban communities of color side by side with some of the wealthiest communities populated by the elite.

Schafran examines a number of common explanations for this situation, including the infamous Proposition 13, which severely restricted the abilities of government to raise funds; the Balkanized nature of Bay Area governmental jurisdictions and the failure of regional planning; the foreclosure crisis and the Great Recession; the engines of development and sprawl; White racism; and NIMBYism. Each of these, he argues, contributed to the problem, but so did an environmental movement dominated by elite Whites who were more interested in green space and bike paths than environmental justice. And he argues that social justice advocates often found themselves so overwhelmed by the necessity of fighting localized battles to protect their neighborhoods that they were often unable to build coalitions across communities that might have been able to make a difference at a regional scale. Ultimately, Schafran finds that the inability or unwillingness of a multiplicity of players to work for the common good—or, as he calls it, a common purpose—has resulted in the disaster that has beset the Bay Area.

The solution, he argues, will require robust regional cooperation, but also recognition that problems occur at many scales—neighborhood, municipal, countywide, subregion, region, statewide, and national—and that solutions have to be tailored to the scale at which they occur. For example, adequate funding of solutions depends on the state repealing Proposition 13 and on adequate state and federal funding. At the local or subregional level, government can develop plans that allow for both affordable housing and job centers for their citizens. At the regional level, officials can develop transit and highway plans that adequately serve all of the region's citizens, and local officials can support those initiatives. Each problem must be approached at its correct level and understood where it intersects with other levels.

Schafran recognizes that critics of this book will blame him for not attacking those who the critics believe are the real culprits: capital, or right-wing politicians, or developers, or mortgage financiers, or neoliberals undermining the ability of government to solve problems. Some, he notes, will chide him for being critical of environmentalists or not being supportive enough of the efforts of activists in communities of color and their White allies. Yet his central argument is that the failures of politics that have led to the current crisis are not simply the fault of any one group or process, but the result of the intersection of multiple mistakes, miscalculations, short sightedness, and greed:

The only hope for changing the future of the Bay Area is for all institutional actors ... to ask more deeply how they could have done things differently It is only through building this form of collective responsibility, through leveraging the progressive majority which we have long had, that we can make the Bay Area the shining beacon that it should be. (p. xix)

This book is a valuable addition to the search for solutions to the Bay Area's problems and to the problems of many other metropolitan regions in the U.S. and elsewhere. Each of the eight chapters examines discrete portions of the problem while connecting them to a greater whole. Schafran's Introduction sets the stage nicely for the rest of the book. His Conclusion proposes solutions. Throughout this volume, Schafran has done an admirable job of wading through the literature of planning and urban studies, as demonstrated by his extensive notes and references at the end of the volume. His primary research appears to have been exhaustive. His experience as a planner and activist serves him well, as does his deep familiarity with the Bay Area, his home region. His arguments are complex. But they are also compelling, in no small part because of their depth and the generally clear way he writes. He avoids jargon and his analysis is well reasoned.

Perhaps seeking to head off critics who might chide him for not including stories of affected families and individuals, he acknowledges that such stories would be a valuable contribution to our understanding of the human dimensions of the crisis. He notes, however, that he did spend many hours listening to people affected and that this helped inform the policy analysis that he undertook. Moreover, he argues that more fully examining the human dimension would require a book of its own, one that would be best written by someone with a more personal understanding of the situation on the ground.

Schafran makes a thoroughly convincing case for collective responsibility for the Bay Area's problems—but a thoughtful reader may find his conclusions about how to solve them difficult to accept. In his concluding chapter, Schafran argues that all of the various factions that have contributed to the Bay Area's problems and/or sought solutions to them will have to be willing to search for a common purpose and develop a trust for each other. While he acknowledges that this will be difficult, one could argue effectively that within the current political climate, with the vastly different interests of the parties involved, and the depth of White racism in the Bay Area and, indeed, throughout the nation, agreeing on a common purpose and developing the trust necessary to work fruitfully together is a distant dream at best.

Minor criticisms include the fact that the trend lines in his charts are shades of gray that are difficult to match with the shades of gray in the legends. In addition, while Schafran included several useful maps, places referenced in the text are not always shown on them. Consequently, those not familiar with the Bay Area will want to have additional detailed maps at hand.

This book is best suited for planning practitioners; academics in social geography, planning, and urban studies; and civic activists and government officials concerned with the issues it raises. It will also be useful in advanced undergraduate and graduate courses in those fields. The interested layperson will also find it enlightening and useful, though perhaps daunting.

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Transit oriented development and sustainable cities: Economics, community and methods, edited by Richard D. Knowles and Fiona Ferbrache, Cheltenham, UK and Northampton, MA, Edward Elgar Publishing, 2019

Transit Oriented Development and Sustainable Cities, part of a series on transport, mobilities, and spatial change, brings together a critical analysis of the planned and the resulting changes brought by transit-