

Introduction

Miami, Neoliberalism, and Fragmented Spaces

SELLING SPACES ADVERTISED IN NEWS

At first glance, a real estate advertisement in *The Biscayne Times*, a monthly magazine focused on communities that run the length of Biscayne Boulevard in Northeast Miami-Dade County, appears innocuous (Figure I.1): The December 2014 ad is for a selection of 27 properties, all being offered as a “Corridor Sale” along NW 18th Avenue, is titled “LAND PLAY WITH INCOME: OPPORTUNITY FOR SAVVY INVESTOR.” And, it’s a deal of a lifetime, a moment to leave a mark on the community.

The ad itself isn’t immediately noteworthy: Real estate advertisements feature prominently in *The Biscayne Times*, which overtly presents its target audience and coverage area along the Biscayne Boulevard in a frequent map that runs inside its pages as a guide to potential real estate advertisers. Realtors promoting deals in land, housing, and commercial properties, as well as the familiar language used to promote those properties, are on nearly every page of the *Times*; the magazine is largely supported by a local economy heavily dependent on real estate and development, particularly in the communities the publication serves that have seen some of the region’s biggest surges in construction during the post-recession development boom.

And so the asking price of the “Corridor Sale” isn’t shocking: \$2.5 million. Also unsurprising are descriptions of a “beautiful art deco bungalow” with an “updated kitchen” a few pages away from a condo with a “private elevator” that “feels like a home in the sky.” Elsewhere in the same issue, a commercial parcel is cast as “prime for an adaptive repurposing following in line with the high growth and gentrification.” Indeed, to read through the pages of *The Biscayne Times* during a building frenzy that began in late 2014 is to catch a glimpse of a real estate market that is quickly reheating after a spectacular

LAND PLAY WITH INCOME: OPPORTUNITY FOR SAVVY INVESTOR



PROPERTIES FOR SALE JMI-DADE COUNTY PROPERTIES

NW 18TH AVE CORRIDOR SALE

- Bundle sale of 27 properties located in NW 18th avenue, stretching from 62nd street to 71st in Miami, just minutes away from Midtown and Downtown Miami.
- Sale also includes all licenses and inventory.
- Sale consists of 12 lots of land and 15 income producing properties, including commercial rental properties and businesses.
- BU-2 zoning
- Monthly income is estimated to be \$29,700 per month according to the managing owner.
- You are buying a total of 21,140 sf in empty Lots of Land plus 16,211 sf of property sitting on 37,340 sf of land. This is a total of 58,480 sf of land, approximately \$43/sf
- Offered at \$2,490,000



BRIAN CARTER, P.A.
Broker Associate
305.582.2424
brian.carter@askelliman.com



ELAINE INCORVA, P.A.
Realtor Associate
646.662.8504
elipo.inconava@askelliman.com

ASKELLIMAN

ASKELLIMAN.COM Douglas Elliman REAL ESTATE

December 2014

Biscayne Times • www.BiscayneTimes.com

13

Figure 1.1 Spatialized Advertising. An advertisement by developers in *The Biscayne Times* depicts a land-grab sale of properties in a Miami neighborhood. Illustration courtesy of *The Biscayne Times*.

collapse in the mid-2000s. Mega-development projects promising billions of dollars in construction and investment are announced seemingly every day in the pages of local press, while high-rise condominiums are sold out almost before the foundations have been poured.

But the “LAND PLAY WITH INCOME” advertisement, on closer inspection, emerges as decidedly different from many of the glossy, high-end real estate offerings elsewhere in *The Biscayne Times*. It is only with a deeper, critical reading of the full-page advertisement by understanding underlying cultural meanings and assumptions that an entirely different narrative begins

to emerge. The “bundle sale” of twenty-seven properties in unincorporated Miami-Dade County is rooted in a dominant narrative and history of racial and economic segregation, enforced through public housing policy and public-private infrastructure, the disintegration of the “inner suburb” through public disinvestment, and the symbolism embedded in urban geographies that makes this space home for private investment rather than for the development of space for the public good.

As a cultural text, “LAND PLAY WITH INCOME” stands as a proxy for larger social and cultural systems of oppression from which hegemonic, neoliberal policies go unquestioned as the powerful alone benefit by growing and protecting their wealth. Under these systems, 60,000 square feet of land, some of it already home to buildings and residents, are easily considered ripe for replacement with little or no thought given to the social impacts of such a redevelopment. In fact, the map of the properties being offered serves as a central element in the suggested “land play.” And, as maps do, this one holds symbolic meanings that are expected to resonate with its target audiences.

Specific audiences for this advertisement undoubtedly know the history of this space, the people who have (or might have) lived here, and the social value of the space beyond that of the economic promise, where even the street names and directional bearings hold meaning. It is in the communication of the advertisement’s design, then, where spatial and place meanings are represented and can be “read”: Technicolor images of homes and condos found elsewhere in *The Biscayne Times* showcase gleaming kitchens remodeled with stainless steel and marble, expansive bedrooms with walk-in closets, and glistening pools provide a stark contrast to the bird’s-eye view used to promote this particular sale. The feeling is one of omniscient surveillance, a sterilized scene of the community in question from 5,000 feet.

Reminiscent of a Google Earth view, the advertisement’s map is shot from high above, with houses, trees, cars, and streets clearly visible. Notably invisible at such heights, however, are the neighborhood’s people. Indeed, a main difference between most of the magazine’s real estate ads and this one is the place-name of Gladeview, veiling this community and making it ready for its identity to be rewritten. Placed on top of this narrative of place, specific design elements suggest that this property offer is different from all others: All along NW 18th Ave., between NW 61st and NW 71st Streets, the parcels up for sale have been outlined in thick rectangles; they are special, with distinct boundaries, and of a special status. The map’s legend, using quaint, peak-roofed houses resembling Clip Art or Monopoly pieces, tells readers that properties outlined in white—27 in all—are the ones up for sale, while interspersed 14 blue rectangles are “Miami-Dade County Properties.” No explanation is given as to why these county-owned properties are included on this map, though. Are they for sale as well, or is the “savvy investor” being

subtly warned about the social costs that may accompany an investment in this area, with so many properties having fallen under state control?

Government-owned properties are usually the sign of foreclosure or other bureaucratic legal proceedings that emerge out of failed investments, predatory lending, or personal calamity; as such, these properties usually carry with them real human misery. And this constant cycle of lending and reclaiming, settlement and disruption, land grabs and redevelopment—all of it is rooted in a process of white supremacy, with institutions targeting the poor and dark-skinned—a history familiar to Miami, and one that continues today.

We use this introduction to examine these themes and to identify several moments of Miami experiences during a time of great change, as discussed in the foreword. We present these moments through conceptual analyses that are also captured with the intention of returning in the future, as changes to Miami geographies continue to change the meanings of a moment in time continually altered by memory, forgetting, and as notions of “new ideas” take hold through public and press rhetoric. By placing media (and mediatized) discourses of Miami into a larger context of social and cultural meaning, we identify neoliberal forces that inform communication of geography, particularly at a time of local environmental change due to sea level rise (i.e., Weiss, 2016), international flows of capital and culture, and localized oppression in a city presented as diverse but that is in fact designed—and that continues to be designed—to divide and conquer certain populations.

THE MEANINGS OF A MIAMI MAP

The “LAND PLAY” map serves as an artifact of racialized and mediatized spaces in and of Miami. Street and avenue names are central to the telling of important stories about the area’s urban planning, race relations, and the history of segregation in Greater Miami. Since incorporation, the City of Miami has been built along a north-south/east-west grid, with Miami Avenue running north-south, splitting the city into east and west, and Flagler Street dividing the city into north and south with its east-west orientation. This configuration originated with Miami proper and was extended into expansion throughout the county (See Figure I.2), making grids that have been extended beyond city limits as other neighborhoods adjacent to Miami have incorporated over the past century.

The grid is helpful for navigating the bewildering mix of streets and avenues that wind their way through Miami-Dade’s thirty-four municipalities and its expansive and populous unincorporated areas. For instance, since all streets run



Figure 1.2 Miami-Dade County. This map locates geographies examined throughout this book, including the Upper Eastside and the Wynwood Arts District (chapter 3), Gladeview (Introduction), the Miami Worldcenter development (chapter 1), the American Dream Miami development (Conclusion), and Miami’s Liberty City neighborhood (Introduction and chapter 4). Illustration by Authors.

east-west and all avenues run north-south in the county, 6200 NW 18th Avenue, the address listed for the properties in the “LAND PLAY” advertisement, tells the traveler that this address is eighteen blocks west of Miami Avenue and sixty-two blocks north of Flagler at 62nd Street. However, beyond orientation, the maps and compass bearings of an address in Miami tell another story, particularly for the “savvy investor” familiar with the city’s neighborhoods.

As was the case in geographies throughout the South, Jim Crow segregation played a major role in South Florida's urban development post-Reconstruction (Connolly, 2014). Under Jim Crow laws, black Miamians were forbidden from living in most of the planned, whites-only communities in Miami-Dade County, such as Coral Gables or Miami Shores, as well as anywhere near the beach that lines the Atlantic Ocean. Instead, black Miamians were initially confined to a fifty-block area north of downtown Miami known as Colored Town, which had NW Second Avenue as its main thoroughfare and ran from NW 5th Street to NW 20th Street.

As the conditions in this community became increasingly unlivable due to economic and racialized pressures from outside the community, overcrowding expanded, flimsy shotgun shacks easily leveled by hurricanes emerged, and a lack of clean water, safe electricity, and managed sewage, developed in a new "blacks-only" community north and west of Colored Town. This new space was called Liberty City (most residents still worked and had family closer to downtown, and so had to travel the five miles each day "over town" to return. Today, the name has been more formally recognized as Overtown, and remains one of the historic centers of black culture in Miami).

An important feature of the Liberty City neighborhood (see chapter 4)—which was still part of Miami—was the designation of a dividing avenue—NW 12th Avenue—separating whites from blacks. A wall was also built along the avenue, which was painted white on the side facing white neighborhoods, and covered with black tar on the other side, pointing toward black neighborhoods (Dunn, 1997). A history of redlining by government funding agencies, which applied color lines to real estate maps to demarcate "safe spaces" for whites to invest and to live, made sure that this neighborhood held very low levels of homeownership, with large swaths of land. In fact, these lines indicated what was deemed suitable—and unsuitable—for federally insured mortgages.

The construction of Interstate 95 directly through the heart of Overtown in the 1960s (just west of NW 5th Avenue) further fragmented and marginalized Miami's black communities, causing huge displacement as properties were claimed under eminent domain and thousands of families and residents were left scrambling for new housing options. Alternatives for housing made available for those displaced by development were extremely limited under Jim Crow laws, and continue to be scarce today as Miami-Dade County has become one of the least affordable cities in the country (Nehamas, 2015b). Redlining and highway construction, followed by years of forced displacement and disinvestment, have ensured that today an address like 6200 NW 18th Ave. (which marks the southernmost point of the "LAND PLAY" "parcel sale"), while seemingly straight-forward, is anything but. It tells us

that what we will find at this address is a space that has been historically disenfranchised, located west of I-95—a freeway that has been referred to as “the world’s largest race wall” (Connolly, 2014, p. 264).

ARTICULATING NARRATIVES OF MIAMI’S URBAN GEOGRAPHY AND DEVELOPMENT

The above description offers a contrast between the sterile and dehumanizing narratives created by the “LAND PLAY” advertisement in question and the economic benefits that might be most easily extracted from this geography. Embedded details about race and real estate in Miami and the value placed on certain communities—offered up in stark dollar figures—are all there in the “LAND PLAY” advertisement, though the details require digging.

Exploring Spaces of Meanings

The larger story being told here is about the power of mediated messages to relay to viewers and investors the “right way” to think about property and how it should be valued in a neoliberal economic system, one in which Keynesian ideas of investment and the potential role of the state in addressing structural economic inequalities and inefficiencies have been almost entirely erased from consideration. There are implicit power structures built into the world around us (in this case, real estate); through this process, the “frames of our thinking have been built into the physical infrastructure” (Hebdige, 1979, p. 364), which are identified through common forms of narration and characterization of place and people.

As a “community” magazine that relies on revenue generated by real estate advertisements, *The Biscayne Times* is heavily invested in frames of luxury, development, and the future. In the magazine’s section on “audience served,” for instance, editors include a map of the corridor along Biscayne Boulevard that highlights the communities where their magazine is delivered as a free, monthly publication. Notably excluded from neighborhoods included in this map are those in spaces west of I-95, easily identifiable by those familiar with Miami’s fragmented geographies as “Black Miami” (Connolly, 2014), which includes Gladeview, the neighborhood identified in the “LAND PLAY” ad. Thus, while as a neighborhood, its residents are not presented as a viable audience for the magazine, the people of Gladeview are viewed as being in a valuable location for potential investors who could very easily live in one of the tony, gated communities that line the waterfront just a few miles to the east and will see the opportunity to make a “land play” on devalued properties further west, properties that are blocked from view (both figuratively and literally) by the Interstate.

And indeed, 2010 U.S. Census data related to Gladeview tell a familiar story about abandoned inner suburbs, one that can be found in most metropolitan areas in America. Home to 11,535 people, the community is almost entirely minority (its residents are 75 percent black and 23 percent Hispanic) with a poverty rate of 45 percent and a per capita income of \$12,000 (half the county average). Gladeview's population density is also five times that of the county average, indicative of the low levels of homeownership and of narratives of a white Miami that, while not interested in living there, has always been very good at extracting wealth from black Miami through rent (Connolly, 2014). This history emerges once more in the "LAND PLAY" ad; in one of its bulleted selling points, it promises any potential buyers that the "monthly income [generated by these 27 properties] is estimated to be \$29,7000."

Yet, very few of descriptors of Miami spaces grapple with the physical environment encompassing a stretch of NW 18th Avenue, running between NW 62nd and NW 71st Streets in Liberty City. The reality on the ground is as confounding and fraught with cultural and geographic meanings as the ads and history would suggest. While the map in the ad doesn't show it, this part of NW 18th Avenue is actually closed on either end; heading north or south along the avenue, a visitor must turn right or left upon reaching either NW 62nd Street or NW 71st Street. Thus, the design of the streets blocks through traffic in this neighborhood; if someone were to travel this avenue, it is most likely because they live either on it or somewhere nearby. To buy properties in this area is thus an investment in rental income, a further extraction of wealth from an already impoverished space, not a move toward true revitalization of an urban environment.

Going *through the space* is also virtually impossible. The Liberty Square Housing Development, Miami's oldest and largest public housing project, borders this neighborhood to the east. Liberty Square—known colloquially (and pejoratively) in Miami as "Pork 'n Beans"—carries with it stigmatized media and news narratives attached to its physical geography. Indeed, properties that line this nine-block stretch of Miami speak to the level of purposeful degradation and marginalization forced upon this space from outside pressures, including forms of economic genocide from business, government, police, and educational institutions (Skirtz, 2012).

Yet while boards on buildings, graffiti (or street art), and empty and overgrown lots may, to some, signal self-imposed blight, convenience stores appear on nearly every corner with names like "18th Ave Market," "A&T Discount Market," and "Miracle on Broadway," providing local jobs even if limiting local food choices to those that are high-priced and of poor nutrition. Amid what may most likely be described as desired disorder and decline in mainstream narratives of "the inner city" (see chapter 1), the

space also serves as symbol of contested meanings, raising questions about this space:

- What meanings may emerge from three neighborhood churches, all immaculately maintained?
- What of a pre-school's playground that is teeming with three- and four-year-olds?
- What stories are held by a group of older men playing dominoes in a small park at the end of the street?
- What are the meanings of repurposed spaces—one in particular that is behind a fence, featuring a collection of arm chairs, couches, recliners, and folding tables and chairs where residents gather under the shade of tall, leafy trees?

The layers of meaning that emerge once a critical context has been put around this “LAND PLAY” are both confounding and revealing—what at first glance appears to be a simple real estate transaction evolves into a complex narrative about race, segregation, neglect and the ways in which black spaces are created, abandoned and then sold.

Reporting Miami's Role in the Housing Bust

In May of 2014, the *Miami Herald* reported on the post-Great Recession real estate market in Miami-Dade County. As a part of the series titled “Boom, Bust & Back,” the newspaper highlighted how just a few years after the housing bubble burst, some areas of the county were creating great wealth and while others were still struggling to recover. In this series, the newspaper profiled the housing data in selected zip codes throughout the county and built stories around those neighborhoods. One of those zip codes includes Gladeview, the site of the “LAND PLAY.”

In its coverage, the *Herald* makes some important points about property values in Gladeview and surrounding neighborhoods, including Liberty City, and a real estate market rife with years of neglect as disinvestment by governments and business communities have meant that property values in this zip code have been in financial decline since well before the Great Recession. As Martha Brannigan (2014a) writes in the *Herald*, the area has been “struggling for decades to overcome poverty, unemployment, and urban decline.”

There are causes for these problems. Predatory lending in the area led to an influx of new mortgages for unqualified borrowers, increasing a demand for housing, which led to a spike in home values. The boom quickly crashed, resulting in a wave of foreclosures. In turn, then, these properties became prime targets for “bottom-fishing investors armed with cash” (Brannigan,

2014a) who buy the homes for a song and then convert them into high-priced rentals. Such business practices, which can only come to fruition upon the approval of zoning codes, building permits, and tax supplements approved by public officials, have led to the evaporation of homeownership and the perpetuation of a rental market that is very good for institutional investors flipping abandoned properties but not so beneficial for families trying to invest in their futures.

Hidden within the *Herald's* storytelling are stark details of dismal housing conditions of North Central Miami-Dade County that rely on subjective language of blame and disorder of community residents. In fact, one story that features Gladeview opens with a fight between two squatters that leads to one stabbing the other to death (Brannigan, 2014a). The house where the violence occurred “remains abandoned,” the newspaper reports. “It is boarded up, though some planks are pried back and the door is ajar. Trash and yard debris pile high under a crumbling carport. Weeds have long since overtaken the yard.”

Gladeview's communities, the newspaper goes on to state, suffer from “blight,” its “humble homes” existing in a “labyrinth of foreclosure.” Such language and style of reporting is familiar, an expression of an underlying cultural fear of “urban (read, black) spaces” (Gutsche, 2015). At the same time, the narrative may provide a jolt to some readers who might find it difficult to imagine such social disintegration amid a building boom in South Florida that sees billions of investment dollars flooding the market. Yet, as *Herald* reporters clarify, the Gladeview neighborhood is “a world apart from the glittering condo towers that shape the popular image of Miami” (Brannigan, 2014a).

At the same time, throughout the *Herald's* series on the housing bust, reporters make little or no mention of any larger, systemic forces, and past histories, that are responsible for the present situation. Why, for instance, instead of a stabbing among squatters, did the story not start with an anecdote about predatory lending and lax government oversight that allowed criminal practices to destroy home values in this zip code? Where is the discussion of the history of racial segregation in this community, enforced through a system of publically funded white supremacy over decades? In fact, the article's only nod to a history closely aligned with Gladeview and Liberty City is a mention of the Liberty City race riots in 1980 as being another case of “black on black” violence (for review of such rhetoric, see Lawrence, 2000).

GEOGRAPHY AS NEOLIBERAL DESTINY: FLORIDA'S ACHILLES HEEL

During the last recession, Florida lost nearly 750,000 jobs. Personal wealth and retirement accounts were decimated. Millions of dollars evaporated, and

the number of home foreclosures skyrocketed, with Florida claiming the second-highest foreclosure rate in the country in 2008. Housing prices in Florida fell below the national average. Exotic mortgages, unethical lending practices, and complex derivatives traded at lightning speeds with little or no oversight from regulators all combined to squeeze immense profits out of flimsy property values that only ever existed on paper (McConnell & Blacker, 2011).

Following the crash, physical signs of a speculative bubble, inflated through home prices that in some areas increased nearly 200 percent in just a few years (Cohen, Coughlin & Lopez, 2012), could be seen throughout South Florida. Huge subdivisions were halted in mid-construction, their poured foundations sprouting brown shoots of iron rebar. Recently built commercial properties were completed and then stayed vacant. At the depths of the crash, as more mortgages sank “under water” and homes were suddenly worth as little as half the value owed to the lender, communities filled with “For Sale” placards, boarded windows were covered with graffiti, and signs announcing bank-owned properties appeared as new markers of yet another building bubble in the sub-tropics gone bust (Allman, 2013).

Less than a decade after the most recent construction boom decimated the local economy and housing market, however, developers have returned to South Florida—and they have brought with them a familiar refrain: “If you build it, they will come.” Once again, cranes dot the skyline along the coast as thousands of new condos draw foreign capital, much of it from South America (Alvarez, 2014). In suburban neighborhoods, green dumpsters overflowing with construction garbage fill front lawns as speculators and homeowners seek to capitalize on this latest frenzy. New office buildings are going up next to half-rented high-rises left over from the previous boom.

The rush to build is accompanied by a steady drumbeat of boosteristic coverage in local press (Gutsche, 2014b), as the dominant narrative of the local economy—shaped by a powerful real estate industry and a political machinery closely connected to developers—shifts from one of recovery to the embrace of a new boom. Mainstream media outlets provide sensational coverage of mega-development projects being proposed across the region. And in the heart of black Miami, local governments decide that the best way to address social and economic problems at Liberty Square, one of the country’s most historic housing projects mentioned above—and whose problems are an outcome of decades of neglect and disinvestment, ineffective governance, and the legacy of structural Jim Crow segregation built around property values—is to “raze and redevelop” (Connolly, 2014; more on Liberty Square in chapter 4).

All of this development and talk of development is taking place at a particularly neoliberal moment in the United States, if we understand neoliberalism as a political, economic, and social ideology that views the free

market as the only legitimate mechanism for organizing and shaping nearly all arenas of modern life (Flew, 2015). At once amorphous and specific, embedded throughout social, economic, and political landscapes of the early twenty-first Century and yet at the same time difficult to find in concrete form or as a discrete policy or set of regulations, the processes of neoliberal transformation of urban spaces—some of which have been examined in this book’s foreword—are, like the causes and effects of climate change, often difficult to pin down.

In fact, as Theodore and Peck (2012) note, a true challenge for these conversations of change is in the process of “demystifying neoliberalism.” To be clear, rather than embracing a homogeneous view of neoliberal ideology as either imposed from the top down or as a process of “outward diffusion,” readers and scholars should “demystify” the complexities of neoliberalism in ways that “shed light on the means through which [neoliberal] policy paradigms are produced and propagated” and that “must be empirically demonstrated” (p. 21). In a project such as ours, the interrogation of neoliberalism is essential to better understand cultural and social systems in which geographic alteration and expansion demands communication to explain both the need for and purposes of development. In this way, this project is especially urgent for South Florida, similar geographies that are experiencing massive climate change, and within the urban core of U.S. cities where the landscape has been systematically devalued by capital, yet where, as in each of these spaces listed, people “struggle to defend the everyday practices and institutional compromises from which capital has sought to extricate itself” (Brenner & Theodore, 2002, p. 355).

It is precisely at these points of interaction between the overarching goals of the neoliberal agenda and the realities of the people and places on the ground where we hope to shed light through research related to rhetoric that energizes mass articulations of thought that then influence policy and press behaviors. The passage in the U.S. Congress of a stop-gap spending measure in late 2014, for example, bears all the markings of the pervasive free-market ideology that is a reflection of the times in which we live. Politicians, worried mostly about their base and the need for constant fundraising after campaign spending laws were gutted by the Supreme Court, could not compromise on a budget late in 2014. Instead, they rushed through a bill containing the following (Mufson & Hamburger, 2014; O’Keefe, 2014):

- The revival of derivatives trading, the kind of speculative activity that contributed to the previous recession, with language provided nearly verbatim by Citigroup
- The increase of contributions to political parties by 10 fold

- The hollowing out of pension funds, rolling back 40 years of federal regulation and allowing for the reduction of guaranteed retiree benefits for the first time in history

Similar neoliberal actions of governments and public actors can be seen across Europe, where the recovery from a recession there has been longer and more uneven than in the United States as “austerity” measures have taken effect, first in Greece and Spain, but now increasingly in larger economies such as France and Germany. Under neoliberal plans for recovery being pushed through by the European Central Bank, cuts to social spending appear to be the only answer to an ongoing fiscal crisis. The painful effects of these cuts—which tend to target welfare programs, education, health care, pensions, and public housing—almost all fall disproportionately on the backs of the poor and working and middle classes (Sassen, 2014). The idea that the wealth of the wealthy should also be up for consideration as a way out of crisis is never even broached, and has led to increasing unrest in the streets of Greece, Spain, Germany, and elsewhere as publics respond to social injustice (“Violent clashes as,” 2012).

In the United States, much has been written about the failures of the nation’s urban planning, the continued racial segregation that exists in America’s major cities, the genocide of politics and economy, and the expectation that the press will cover all of this ground in its day-to-day reporting (Edy, Snidow, & Rozzell, 2014; Matsaganis, Gallagher, & Drucker, 2013). Goals of this particular critique are to point out that not only were the deeper, institutionalized problems affecting the communities in question never mentioned, there was in all reality never a *consideration* of including them, nor, and this speaks to the power of ideology, was there really ever an *expectation* on the part of the audience that these alternative explanations would be included.

At the same time, language of stigma highlighted in the *Miami Herald’s* reporting on the decline of Gladeview following the Great Recession is not only unquestioned, but also expected as the media attempt to make sense of that which confuses and frightens us with characterizations that we have come to expect. Furthermore, any suggestion that real estate deals are perhaps not the best economic model for addressing urban decay is generally out of the question; stopping the economic machine driven by development is not an option even worth considering (for more, see Conclusion). Couldry (2010) refers to this process as a form of “neoliberal rationality,” which he argues is reinforced “not just by explicit discourse but through the multiple ways in which that discourse and its workings get *embedded* in daily life and social organization. . . . As neoliberal rationality becomes institutionalized, it shapes the *organization of space*” [emphasis in original] (Couldry, 2010, p. 12).

The last point is the most salient for the present discussion of Gladeview and of the following cases of fragmented geographies of Miami that will be discussed in this book. We are interested both in the discourse found in the coverage of these spaces *and* in how neoliberal narratives intertwine with spatial configurations and our understandings of not only how those geographies arrived at their current state but also what alternatives might exist moving forward. Navigating geographic contexts and building on theoretical work that interrogates the mediatization of urban space driven by neoliberal narratives of development and free market policies, this book attempts to answer some important questions that emerge out of the bewildering and seemingly contradictory situations of oppressive governance:

- Given the recent economic collapse, particularly in a region as acutely affected as South Florida, how is it possible that the same mechanisms that triggered the first crisis are being put back into place?
- Why are the drums of development once again beating, if they ever stopped?
- How can collective memory be so short with such evidence of racialized and capitalistic movements throughout history?
- What is so attractive about neoliberal ideologies that maintain and fuel power structures?

To address these questions, one must explicate the outcomes of nearly four decades of neoliberal governance in the United States that are fairly stark and can be seen in any number of outcomes:

- The disappearance of the middle class
- The largest gap between the wealthy and the poor since the Great Depression
- The collapse of local governments as tax revenues have shrunk, as evidenced in the state takeover of major U.S. cities, such as Detroit
- Racialized forced migration throughout the country following the destruction of black neighborhoods in Chicago, Detroit, New Orleans, Baltimore, and Washington, D.C.
- Health care that is increasingly unaffordable and unavailable
- Public school systems in crisis as charter school companies, backed by giant hedge funds, tap into one of the last great reserves of public money in order to educate students for private interests

The list goes on, in part because an ideological project as far reaching as neoliberalism, with its ability to exact such large social costs with little or no resistance, requires a robust hegemonic foundation in order to function.

The theoretical frameworks that will be drawn out in the following chapters are all aimed at investigating the “actually existing” (Hackworth, 2007) functions and outcomes of neoliberal narratives within specific geographic contexts. Our particular focus, then, is both on media narratives that are built up around space and place—the “place-making” functions of the press—and also the manifestation, or mediatization, of those narratives within physical settings (see chapter 1).

Indeed, urban environments have historically represented highly contested geographies, with complex power dynamics at play as competing interests vie for limited resources and valuable land that often serves multiple purposes and is managed by byzantine bureaucracies of local governments, agencies, and regulations. Cities, as centers of production and consumption, but also as complicated social fields with heterogeneous populations, have historically been sites of competition and contradiction, even more so under systems of free-market capitalism.

As the “embedded liberalism” (Hackworth, 2007) of the Keynesian state has eroded during four decades of increasing neoliberal governance, the fault lines of uneven and erratic development defining urban centers have become ever more pronounced. It is thus not uncommon in cities around the world to see immense, nearly unimaginable wealth, manifested through the built environment, next to or even on top of abject poverty; where cities are concerned, then, “the overarching goal of . . . neoliberal urban policy experiments is to mobilize city space as an arena both for market-oriented economic growth and for elite consumption practices” (Brenner and Theodore, 2002, p. 368). But, as Hall (2011) identifies, neoliberalism is filled with such contradictions, what he calls “traces without an inventory,” and is constantly being reformulated for changing contexts; it is able to do this “dis-articulating and re-articulating work” because “these ideas have long been inscribed in social practices and institutions and sedimented into the ‘habitus’ of everyday life, common sense and popular consciousness” (p. 711).

ABOUT THIS BOOK

Central arguments driving this book are concerned not just with the embedded meanings of urban geographies and the ideological systems that shape those spaces, but also with dominant narratives that are constructed to make sense of and ultimately reify their fragmentation. In the following chapters, we present conceptual and practical examples of how neoliberal “sediment” accumulates in the spatial geographies of everyday life in Miami and South Florida, an area of the country heavily influenced and defined by pro-market governing policies.

We are also concerned, of course, with the mediatization of the region and its cultural politics. A region with a strong focus on supporting and bolstering a tourism-based economy, South Florida has the largest division between rich and poor in the United States (Nehamas, 2015a). South Florida's is a globalized economy, given its central role as a hub for trade between the U.S., Latin America, and the Caribbean—all of which takes place in a complex and similarly globalized media sphere of immigrant media and established traditional press that has attempted to present itself as a forum for a diverse community (Aranda, Hughes, & Sabogal, 2014; Shumow 2012, 2014).

Contact points where “embedded neoliberal rationality” (Couldry, 2010) intersects with urban environments, the resulting fragmentation of both physical space and ideological structures, and the mediatized geographies that emerge out of these encounters are the focus of this book. The following chapters represent our attempt at grappling with questions we have put forth above, as ours is an effort to confront a system that at times seems entirely overwhelming and permanent in scope, reach, and impact on daily life. We tackle an ideological project capable of not only eclipsing all other alternatives to the organization of social life but one that suffocates mere consideration of alternatives.

Throughout this project we ultimately argue for the ability to make choices and changes for tomorrow that, at the very least, function upon a known awareness of the choices available and of the communicative power of the elite's media to oppress and to destroy. In turn, *News, Neoliberalism, and Miami's Fragmented Urban Space* applies an aggressive critical lens rooted in notions of neoliberalism to examine Miami and South Florida's modern realities through the power inherent in dominant discourse as represented by the news. To do so, it is important to note that the project fully recognizes that by taking on the processes of neoliberalization in urban geographies, which are always uneven and contradictory—particularly within moments of measurable change—that one wades into fraught territory (see Foreword and Conclusion).

Chapter 1, “Place and Press as Tools of Neoliberal Hegemony,” conceptualizes the press as an ideological function of the power elite. At the same time, the reader is introduced to the notions of space and place—when geography is assigned social and cultural meanings that alter one's interactions with natural and built environments. This chapter also develops a theoretical framework for fragmentation of place as it relates to the ways in which the increasing influence of mediated communication in modern life have led to a mediatization of every day life, including the spaces we inhabit. We show how the press operate alongside other forms of popular discourse and interact with individuals' experiences and collective ideologies to complicate mediated articulations of culture and society and distract audiences from power mechanisms that drive accepted forms of commerce, communication, and culture. More specifically, we present a foundation upon which this project

complicates normative assumptions of ideological polarization by arguing that among collectives, ideologies fracture rather than polarize. In terms of place-meanings in Miami, we suggest, such an understanding explains a fragmented ideological landscape of people and places that is rooted in physicality and contested meanings of power.

Chapter 2, “Merging Memory in News of a New Cuba,” examines neoliberal narratives in press coverage from three mainstream newspapers in Miami following the 2015 announcement by President Barack Obama that the United States would normalize its relations with Cuba. Because of the tight relationship between the creation—and marginalizations—of Miami and narratives of Cuba, this analysis provides readers with an appreciation for the multiple levels of press influence in constructing notions of place, a deeper explanation of how geography is a layered function of dominant ideology and influence on dominant culture and governance. In the end, readers are introduced to means by which audiences interact with narratives and built environments of complex urban geographies of the twenty-first century, such as those found in media narratives of both Miami and Cuba that have been shaped and transformed through neoliberal projects at both local and international levels.

Chapter 3, “Miami’s Neoliberal Cities on the Hill,” applies geosemiotics to examine neoliberal meanings of two Miami geographies—the Wynwood Arts District and the Upper Eastside—as being central to the construction of dominant Miami narratives of luxury and neoliberal principles. Through photography, these built environments come to serve as evidence of ideological fragmentation through mediatization in which street signs, street art, concrete barriers, and community guardhouses operate in unison across the region of Miami-Dade County to maintain power systems that are said to benefit those behind the walls and within exhibits of international art that even the fans can’t afford to purchase. From this analysis, Miami is *seen* through a lens of fragmentation through which geography itself is media and is mediatized.

Chapter 4, “The Struggle for Digital Space in Geographies of Marginalization,” examines local effects of a national battle that is raging for control of broadband spectrum. Here, we take a final turn toward a discussion of how the embedded processes of neoliberal ideologies are migrating into virtual realms as poor communities in the United States continue to struggle for online connectivity. By examining community efforts in Miami’s Liberty City neighborhood to access low-cost, high-speed Internet, this chapter surrounds a number of questions that recontextualize the transformation of neoliberal geographies in the digital age and the continued role of the press in pushing forward these changes.

Our conclusion, “Meanings of ‘Miami No More,’” bookends this project by articulating the urgency of South Florida’s geographic and capitalistic

issues related to sea level rise, which was discussed in the foreword. In this conclusion, we place the fragmented geographies of Miami within a context of the region's fragmented media spheres by examining news coverage of climate change in South Florida by national and local mainstream and alternative media. Through this analysis, we address how intersections of neoliberal ideology and press perspectives operate to muffle major environmental outcomes related to climate change when those outcomes challenge the power systems of corporate-public endeavors.