



Colonias and Public Policy in Texas and Mexico: Urbanization by Stealth

Peter M. Ward

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Today in Texas, over 1500 colonias in the counties along the Mexican border are home to some 400,000 people. Often lacking basic services, such as electricity, water and sewerage, fire protection, policing, schools, and health care, these "irregular" subdivisions offer the only low-cost housing available to the mostly Hispanic working poor.

This book presents the results of a major study of colonias in three transborder metropolitan areas and uncovers the reasons why colonias are spreading so rapidly. Peter Ward compares Texas colonias with their Mexican counterparts, many of which have developed into fully integrated working-class urban communities. He describes how Mexican governments have worked with colonia residents to make physical improvements and upgrade services—a model that Texas policymakers can learn from, Ward asserts. Finally, he concludes with a hard-hitting checklist of public policy initiatives that need to be considered as colonia housing policy enters its second decade in Texas.

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