Disclaimer: The points of view in this document do not represent the institutions involved. They represent solely the views of the Dialogo participants as they were expressed in preparation and during the two-day event.
Hispanics are becoming the largest minority in the US. According to the Pew Research Hispanic Center, this population has increased by 48% from the years 2000-2011; geographically, two-thirds of Hispanics live in five states: California, Texas, Illinois, New York and Florida; however, fast growing rates are observed in Minnesota, Kentucky, North and South Carolina, and Arkansas (Pew Research Center 2013; Carrasco & Giusti 2013). This dramatic ethnic transformation ought to bring changes in economic dynamics, the ways communities interact, and the layout and organizations in the cities. Because of this, the planning field needs to be responsive of such changes. Planners need to understand the increasingly diverse communities in order to better serve these emerging new realities. What is interesting is that under the umbrella of “Hispanic” or “Latino” a variety of groups and countries are represented which respond to different characteristics and our understanding of these groups needs to be complex and inclusive.

Since its establishment approximately 10 years ago, the Latinos and Planning (LAP) Division of the APA, had been using a pioneering initiative planning methods to engage with Latino communities. “Dialogos” (Dialogue in Spanish) are some of these ways that the LAP Division has worked around the country to address two growing concerns: 1) What are the current trends in the US regarding this growing population? 2) What are some of the considerations that planners should take into account when trying to engage Latinos in the planning process?
Several Dialogos have been held all over the country and new information is being processed. In Texas there had been two dialogue: in 2008 and 2013; in both cases Texas A&M University students have been the main organizers. All of the Dialogo initiatives have been steered by Dr. Cecilia Giusti, Associate Dean of Diversity and Outreach for the College of Architecture.

The first one, in 2008, was held at the Texas A&M University campus in College Station. Planning for the 2008 Dialogo was coordinated by Miriam Olivares, a doctoral student in Urban Regional Science. Attendees came from all over Texas, with concentration of researchers and leaders from all over the state.

The second Dialogo was held in 2013 in Brownsville, a Mexico border city; it was called a “Dialogo on the Border” and this was the first Dialogo held in an actual border town. Moreover, in this city a wall has been built in the last years as part of the initiative of “protecting” the US border. The emphasis of the Dialogo on the Border was on the inclusive and extensive meaning of borders. As it was in a geographic border, it also focuses on language, cultural, social and heritage borders. Both Dialogos had approximately 100 participants, but in the case of Brownsville there were more community participants as well as local students with a distinctive perception of their own reality. This reality is drastically different and the Dialogo showed very clearly such differences. Efforts for planning and coordination the Dialogo on the Border were led by Edna Ledesma, a doctoral student in Urban and Regional Science. The Dialogo on the Border was a collaboration between College of Architecture and College of Engineering students. In addition to this, the Dialogo involved students at a local university, community college, and public high school in Brownsville, Texas where the Dialogo took place.

Learning from the lessons of the “Dialogo on the Border,” Master of Urban Planning (MUP) students worked on a further planning collaboration and organized a national Dialogo Webinar the fall of 2013. This Dialogo Webinar was a broad collaboration between faculty and students in the Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning at Texas A&M University, students at the Department of City and Regional Planning at the University of California Berkeley, the Regional and Intergovernmental Planning Division of the APA, and the Latinos and Planning Division of the APA. The 2013 Dialogo Webinar was organized by Masters of Urban Planning student Cristina Odenborg.

This report will address the main lessons learned from the Dialogo initiatives of Texas A&M University students. The report will focus on the importance of dialogue between academia, planners and community leaders. The report will emphasize on the Dialogo on the Border, and will close with a look at the continuing efforts in collaboration that Texas A&M and LAP Division in continuing research across the United States through Dialogo webinars among academic researchers and practicing professionals.

This report focuses on addressing the following lessons from the Dialogo on the Border:

1) How the characteristics of a border city compares to other non-border cities;

2) The reality of communities where Latinos are the actual majority population;

3) The meaning of the wall that has been built, physically dividing the city; a workshop was held specifically to better understand the perception of the wall in the local
community;

4) Perception of isolation, limited resources available and the physical distance from mainland US;

5) Perception of lack of presence of Latinos or Hispanics in the narrative of US history;

6) Poverty issues and lack of economic opportunities in the border;

7) Local participation, building capacity, and political representation.

Additionally, the report will analyze the role of participatory planning tools and their efficacy as crossover method for academia to practice. Ultimately, the report attempts to give light to the importance of the Dialogo efforts for creating a multidisciplinary dialogue in participatory planning practice and its contribution to the planning pedagogy as an academic project that took students beyond the classroom.
Chapter 1: Introduction
  i. Notes from the Editors

Chapter 2: Overall Discussion and Summary
  i. Pre Conference Planning
  ii. Formatting
  iii. Funding
  iv. Marketing
  v. Registration/Participation Statistics
  vi. Discussion Topic

Chapter 3: Analysis
  i. History of Latinos in the Border
     "We didn’t cross the border, the border crossed us"
     Where do we belong?
     A border in a Valley
  ii. Issues of Perception
     Forecasting who should be at the table
     How we saw them
     How they saw us
  iii. People of the Border
     The cultural, geographical and political [dis]connect
  iv. Who should be in the Dialogo
  v. Analysis of themes
     The human experience
     Cultural legacy
     Placemaking
     Public-private partnerships
     Economic revitalization
  vi. Dialogo and its contribution to the planning process
     Participatory technique; which techniques worked best?
     What is the best way to communicate
     Sensibility and flexibility

Chapter 4: Post Conference Evaluation
  i. Participant demographics
  ii. General conference Evaluation
iii. Workshop evaluation  
iv. Critique, feedback and Limitations  

Chapter 5: Conclusion: Lessons Learned  
i. Lessons Learned  
ii. Moving Forward
   
   Webinar: multimedia engagement  
   Planning Pedagogy
Notes from the Editors

Texas A&M University’s College of Architecture (COA) and the Dwight Look College of Engineering co-sponsored the First Dialogo on the Border conference which took place April 19-20 in Brownsville, Texas. Dialogos (Spanish for “dialogue”) have been held around the United States to identify critical planning issues affecting Latino communities and Latino Planners as an initiative of the Latinos and Planning Division of the American Planning Association. This is the second Dialogo organized by the COA at TAMU; the first one was in 2008 in College Station (http://www.arch.tamu.edu/media/cms_page_media/1074/TX_Dialogo_Report.pdf), and this is the first one done on a border area dealing specifically on border issues.

The goal of the conference was to provide a platform for multidisciplinary discourse amongst planners, architects, researchers, community leaders, professors, political leaders, community and grassroots organizations, students, environmental leaders, public officials, technical experts, school districts, law enforcement personnel, funding and charity organizations, and in general all interested citizens that could work collaboratively to develop solutions that might improve living conditions in border areas.

The preparation for the conference was informed by the results of the 2008 Dialogo; from that event a series of “top ten” issues were developed following the most pressing themes that emerged at that time: transportation, immigration, resilience, water/sewage, housing, mobility, education, security, climate/disaster, construction, public space/civic space, incremental construction, and economic development. At registration participants were to choose the top three topics from such a list as a basis for planning for the event.

This document presents a narrative of the effort and trajectory for planning and executing the Dialogo on the Border 2013. The document is broken up into three sections: an overall discussion of planning logistics and execution of the Dialogo on the Border; an outline and summary of the two day event providing short abstracts presentations, panels and discussions; and a final section summarizing the key topics that were derived from the conversations, the actual “dialogo” that emerged from the presentations, workshops, and in general, from the interaction among participants.

The Dialogo on the border was made possible thanks to the generous support from Texas A&M College of Architecture – Diversity Council, the Dwight Look College of Engineering, and the Maps and GIS Library; and Sea Grant; and from the American Planning Association – Latinos and Planning Division, the Center for Maximum Potential Building Systems, the University of Texas at...
Brownsville – Texas Southmost College and the City of Brownsville.

We would like to thank the steering committee members: Gabriella Campagnol, John Cooper, Sarah DeYoung, Edelmiro Escamilla, Miriam Olivares, Janelle Troxell; volunteer faculty and staff: Janice McCoy, David Bierling, John Jacobs, John Peters, Ming Wei Li, Boon Yeol Ryoo, and Texas A&M volunteers: Jolene Kollman, Rachel Curtis, Xiaoyan Huang, Stephanie Caraballo, Matthew Ramirez, Zuleica De La Cerda-Ordaz, Tyson Bartlett, Glenn Reese, Ryan Skinner, Benjamin Wiseman, and Michal Braier.

Special thanks to Dr. Jorge Vanegas, Dean of the College of Architecture, for providing basic logistics and overall support for this initiative.

Edna Ledesma
Cecilia Giusti
Bara Safarova
Pre Conference Planning

Preparation for the 2013 Dialogo on the Border began the fall of 2012. Under the leadership of Dr. Cecilia Giusti, a conference planning steering committee was established based on a call for participation from faculty in the College of Architecture. It must be noted that though the Dialogo is a national effort in the planning field, the conference leadership strove to set up a committee that would be multidisciplinary and representative of the diverse spectrum of disciplines within the college and across the university. The steering committee members:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Department/Position</th>
<th>Email</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gabriela Campagnol</td>
<td>Architecture: Assistant Professor</td>
<td><a href="mailto:campagnol@tamu.edu">campagnol@tamu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Cooper</td>
<td>Chair of Community Outreach: CHUD &amp; HRRC</td>
<td><a href="mailto:j.cooper@arch.tamu.edu">j.cooper@arch.tamu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah Deyong</td>
<td>Architecture: Associate Professor</td>
<td><a href="mailto:sdeyong@tamu.edu">sdeyong@tamu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edelmiro Escamilla</td>
<td>Construction Science: Associate Professor</td>
<td><a href="mailto:eescamilla@arch.tamu.edu">eescamilla@arch.tamu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cecilia Giusti</td>
<td>Associate Dean for Outreach and Diversity</td>
<td><a href="mailto:cgiusti@arch.tamu.edu">cgiusti@arch.tamu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Lang</td>
<td>Architecture: Associate Professor</td>
<td><a href="mailto:petertlang@neo.tamu.edu">petertlang@neo.tamu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edna Ledesma</td>
<td>Ph.D Student, Urban and Regional Science</td>
<td><a href="mailto:ednaledesma@tamu.edu">ednaledesma@tamu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miriam Olives</td>
<td>Texas A&amp;M University-Map and GIS Library</td>
<td><a href="mailto:olivares@tamu.edu">olivares@tamu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bara Safarova</td>
<td>Ph.D Student, Architecture</td>
<td><a href="mailto:barasafa@tamu.edu">barasafa@tamu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenelle Troxell</td>
<td>English: Assistant Professor</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jenelletroxell@tamu.edu">jenelletroxell@tamu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Steering Committee Members
The 2008 Dialogo was a one-day event on the Texas A&M Campus structured in par with the National APA. Latinos and Planning Division’s previous Dialogos. Where the scope of the conference diverted and expanded from the 2008 event was in taking the event out of the Texas A&M University campus and focusing the discussion of the Dialogo to be about border issues. As the steering committee began planning, three key goals were established that would distinguish the 2013 venture from the 2008 event. The 2013 Dialogo conference would expand to become a 2 day event, the topical focus would be border issues in a broad sense, and the venue would be a location on the actual border and not on the TAMU campus.

An overall goal was to allow for the idea of “border” to be taken in the broader definition of the word. Border could thus be defined by physical or psychological boundaries and municipal edges such as ETJ’s; and border could also be interpreted among disciplines, cultures, languages, etc. Additionally, issues of colonias which are an actual and important phenomenon of the border reality were to be addressed, but the conversation would go beyond colonias. Borders would include but would not be limited to Colonias.

A Texas border town or one of relatively close proximity to the border was considered the ideal location. Kingsville, Laredo, and Corpus Christi were considered good fit due to possible collaboration with their respective A&M branches. Three other cities, Brownsville, Del Rio and McAllen were also considered because of their border location. Overall, the location decision would also consider appropriate venues and affordability. The following criteria was used during the selection process: adaptive reuse spaces, museums, and community centers. The committee wanted the venue to be representative of the sustainability ideals of the college of architecture, and after much research, the committee selected the a venue In city of Brownsville, Texas. The venue was a jewel right to the wall dividing Texas and Mexico an adaptive reuse project which appropriated the outdated typology of indoor shopping malls. The facility, housing UTB-TSC’s ITECC was the ideal hub as an academic center, close to the historic downtown, minutes away from the Mexico-US International bridge, and the headquarters not only for various academic departments of the two academic institutions, it was also the home of the Mexican Consulate.

**Formatting**

The format of the Dialogo was defined, with academic sessions in the morning and more hands-on workshops in the afternoon. Figure 3 illustrates the purpose of the intended morning and afternoon breakdown.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Lunch</th>
<th>Workshop</th>
<th>Closing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Morning</td>
<td>Keynote</td>
<td>Afternoon</td>
<td>Keynote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>➢ More academic</td>
<td>➢ Community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>➢ Divided by sessions</td>
<td>➢ Community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>➢ A leader in each</td>
<td>oriented</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>session will work</td>
<td>Hands on</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>with the group in</td>
<td>sessions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the afternoon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>➢ Expert round</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>table discussions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3: Morning and Afternoon Session Goals

Presentations were to focus on examples of planning and architecture from a bottom-up approach. Much of the discussion surrounding presentations was focused around what would or should distinguish a keynote presenter from a panelist and vice versa. The committee envisioned the role of keynotes as a special invitation for two to three speakers; well known individuals who would attract participants, and at the same time address “border” themes from a global perspective. In addition to keynote speakers, panel sessions were planned to allow for a greater capacity of presenters to speak in short time frames of ten to fifteen minutes in a series of five to six speakers that could tie together common themes to stimulate the discussion. Each panel would be led by a moderator who would also be in charge of leading a Q&A section following the presentations. These open discussions went beyond the presentations and frame a more open Dialogos.
Hands-on workshops were intended to allow for a more didactic approach to challenging problems of border development. The purpose of the workshops was for a leader to present challenges to a group that will then have an opportunity to analyze and critically evaluate and brainstorm solutions and proposals for topical discussions. Each workshop was led by a professional and/or researcher and/or community leader who will present specific issues related to the built environment in the Border area. Workshops were intended to run parallel and each be distinct from one another in regards to issues discussed. The steering committee also saw the workshops as avenues for discussing “best practices” from both the academic and practice approaches.

A two-part seminar for all participants consisted of: 1) Short introduction of GIS as a tool to map data; and 2) a presentation of the weTable as a tool for citizen’s participation enhancement. Following the presentations, conference attendants were distributed into the workshops that best fit their areas of interest. To support the workshop sessions graphically, a weTable expert was assigned to each workshop to help map any information that might be pertinent and useful as a visual aid. Because of the depth of learning potential linked to the workshop exercises and the GIS training modules, continuing education credits were offered to practicing professionals.
Both the American Planning Association and the American Institute of Architect credits were available.

![Figure 5: Ph.D. student Miriam Olivares performing a Wii-Table/GIS demo for Brownsville Veterans High School students](image)

**Funding**

Planning the two day conference was possible due to funds allotted by the Diversity Council. These initial funds were later matched by the Dwight Look College of Engineering. In addition, to these two primary supporters, funding and resources were made available from the Texas A&M Map & GIS Library, the Sea Grant at Texas A&M, and the Center for Maximum Building Potential. Additionally, the full extent of the conference planning effort could not have been possible without the help and collaboration of the Texas Southmost College and their architecture faculty. Without their contributions and resources the event would not have been possible.
Marketing

The first round of advertising for the event came in the form of a “save the date” flier which was distributed via postal mail and email on December 2012 (the year before the Dialogo). A list of all the contacts that were sent a copy of the flier can be found in Appendix I. We contacted a number organizations: members of the APA-Latinos and Planning Division, all elected officials from the City of Brownsville, all planning offices and mayors of cities in the Rio Grande Valley, non-profit organizations conducting work for planning advocacy in the Rio Grande Valley, all universities in the area, every Dean of a college at Texas A&M University, state agencies involved with planning issues around the Texas border and others.

Registration/Participation Statistics

The following Figures shows the total number of people registered to attend the conference. A total of 172 people were registered; of that number 36% were professionals and 64% were students. Of the total number of students registered, there was an almost equal distribution of high school and college students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Registration Type</th>
<th>Total number registrations: 172</th>
<th>Percent of Total: 100%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High school: 57 (52% of students)</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>College/University: 53 (48% of students)</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6: Total Number of Registrants
Total Registration

- **Professionals**: 62 (36%)
- **High School Students**: 57 (33%)
- **College Students**: 53 (31%)

**Total=172**

Figure 7: Total Registrants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Registration Type</th>
<th>Total number of attendants</th>
<th>Percent of Total: 100%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High school: 57</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(66% of students)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>College/University: 29</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(34% of students)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 8: Total Number of Attendants

A total of 128 of the 172 registered people attended, a 74% turnout rate.
Discussion Topics

The 2008 Dialogo report allowed us to identify topics to be discussed: education, economics, transportation, health, social issues, building capacity, urban issues, land use and the environment. These nine topics were then reshaped and modeled to be of relevance to the 2013 agendas as prescribed by the steering committee; the result was a proposed list of ten topics: water/sewage, housing and construction, mobility, education, security, climate/disaster, immigration, community health, public space/civic space, and economic development. Through the online registration, registrants were asked to select the top three topics of choice they wish to discuss during the conference. Figure 10 shows the results of this survey. The total number shows the number of people that picked that topic as one of their top three choices. The percent of total shows the percentage out of the 172 registered people. The top four topics of choice for registrants were: education with 38%, housing and construction with 36%, immigration with 33%, and public/civic space with 32%. Based on the registrants’ top choices, participants were distributed among the 4 concurrent Friday workshops that revolved along the top four themes.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic:</th>
<th>Total number of people:</th>
<th>Percent of Total:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Water/Sewer</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Housing and Construc-tion</strong></td>
<td><strong>62</strong></td>
<td><strong>36%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td><strong>65</strong></td>
<td><strong>38%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate/Disaster</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Immigration</strong></td>
<td><strong>56</strong></td>
<td><strong>33%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Health</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public Space/ Civic Space</strong></td>
<td><strong>55</strong></td>
<td><strong>32%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Development</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 10: List of Discussion Topics Selected at Registration
History of Latinos in the Border

“We didn’t cross the border, the border crossed us”

Bringing the Dialogo to the border was an attempt to define and understand the in-betweeness that is embodied by the political, cultural, and geographical transition of places defining an edge condition. The Mexico-United States border is a place where proximity to “the other side” accentuates disconnection and feeling of belonging to its proprietor, the United States.

Figure 11 below shows the total population living along transnational metropolitan areas in the U.S.-Mexico border. From this image you can see the importance in studying these metro populations on a transnational level. Similarly, the role of a political and geographical boundary can come into question when trying to understand issues of identity and citizenship.

Figure 11: 2010 Percentage of Hispanic or Latino Population
Source: Geo-Mexico
Where do we belong?

The concept of identity is one of the key issues addressing the duality of being in a border condition. For South Texas residents, the shared Mexican heritage is rivaled by the identity personified by the American dream as a shared identity. One is not outweighed by the other but instead, the respect for each of their unique ideologies allows for a unique amalgamation of pride for a place that is not one or the other, but both. Looking at Figure 12 below, we can see from the 2010 census that the highest concentration of Hispanic or Latinos reside along the U.S.-Mexico border. Using this demographic data, could the dividing line between the countries be drawn further north by looking at the concentration of Hispanics along the border?

Figure 12: 2010 Percentage of Hispanic or Latino Population
Source: Social Explorer, United States Census Bureau, 2010 Census Data
Figure 13: 2010 Hispanic or Latino Population (%)
Source: United States Census Bureau, 2010 Census Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geography</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United State</td>
<td>308,745,538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>25,145,561</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameron County</td>
<td>406,220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Brownsville</td>
<td>175,023</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 14: 2010 Total Hispanic or Latino Population
Source: United States Census Bureau, 2010 Census Data

**A border in a valley**

In 2006, the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate passed the Secure Fence Act of 2006 commissioning the Department of Homeland Security to construct a fence to divide and protect the U.S. along the nearly 2,000 mile border with Mexico. Figure 15 shows what the border wall looks like as it runs parallel the Rio Grande River and downtown Brownsville.
Though the walls reaffirms the physical, geographical, and political division between the two countries, it is important to analyze how border cities can address development in parallel to the neighboring city on the Mexican territory. Some of the challenges that border metro areas face include the following:

- **Urbanization**: The population in the South Texas border is expected to double by the year 2020 will impact demographic shifts at the regional, state, and national level.

- **Border security**: Narcotraffic, violence, and increased protection against terrorism have heightened the division of the Mexican and American sides.

- **Migration**: The border area serves as an intake to many immigrants coming into the United States. At the same time, an out-migration of border natives is experienced as young students leave the area in search of jobs and education not available in the region.
Transportation: How do international transportation linkages via road, air, and sea evolve with a comprehensive understanding of the capacity and needs of both sides.

The challenges mentioned inevitably raise the following questions regarding the impact of building a wall that defines the border boundary:

What is the purpose of the border wall?
What type of border do residents of the area want?
Will the wall ever come down?
Would it be possible to use the river as an economic development driver for tourism and retail uses such as the San Antonio River walk?
Can the border wall be used to showcase a public amenity such as urban art?

Issues of Perception

Forecasting who should be at the table

The Dialogo was planned with the underlying goal of diversity in dialogue. In order to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the climate and conditions of the area, a full range of voices needed to be present. For this reason, the participants ranged in age, demographics, expertise, and level of connection to the region. By allowing for a mix of perceptions and association to the area, a crossover of geographical, political, cultural and professional boundaries could be induced. With the intent of providing a platform for conversation, the following questions were posed:

What are the most pressing issues facing border areas in 2013 and ahead?
How are we able to cross disciplines?
How are we able to cross cultural borders?
How are we able to cross over linguistic borders?
If we have to make a “priority list” of these issues, what would be the most important ones?
Who is involved now and who else should be involved in addressing these issues?
Ultimately, the crossover in perspectives could begin to shed light onto what could potentially be perceived as obstacles in planning and city development.

**How we saw them**

The organizing committed had a fear of negative perception from the locals to be perceived as outsiders. There was clear awareness of potential contention for who should be called the “expert;” is a view from the outside looking in more validated as an academic or professional opinion than that of the locals with their quotidian interactions in these places. A key concern was in the level of trust that one could gain from a short interaction and whether the platform for conversation would allow people to expose themselves with a degree of vulnerability that allowed for mutually enhanced learning. Ultimately, the need for a dialogue came from a need to understand the border area.

**How they saw us**

The local participants who are geographically disconnected from the rest of the country received traveling to the border to engage the community in conversation about the planning and development process as a commendable act. The gratitude expressed by the community was not only a response to the engagement but to the opportunity that the Dialogo provided for the locals to be listened.

**People of the Border**

Border residents showed that they embody a type of urban resiliency as a reaction to survive and make do with limited financial, social and political resources. The urban “renaissance” that is typical of many urban centers in the United States through downtown revitalization and adaptive reuse of a post-industrial urban fabric is evident in south Texas.

Figures 16&17 show Texas A&M students, faculty, and staff on a guided historical tour of downtown Brownsville. Dr. Anthony Knopp, professor emeritus of history at the University of Texas at Brownsville, guided the walking tour of the downtown. Through his narrative of the place, the group was able to see the evolution of the old center of the city and the significance in preservation of these spaces as we move into the 21st century.
Figure 16: Texas A&M University students tour historic Downtown Brownsville

Figure 17: Dr. Anthony Knopp guiding Texas A&M University students on the tour
The cultural, geographical and political [dis]connect

There is significance in studying the unique aspects that potentially marginalize the residents of the South Texas border region. Those with a unidimensional cultural identity sometimes reject the aforementioned cultural duality. For instance, to a native Mexican a person of Mexican American decent living in the United States is typically not perceived as a Mexican. Equally so, in the eyes of an American looking at this dual cultural identity, the need to remain connected to a Mexican heritage may not be understood.

The spatial isolation is another example of disconnect due to geographical conditions. Though separated by a river, a physical feature that is not easily traversed, the south Texas regional is spatially disintegrated from urbanization in the greater U.S. by private land holdings.

Who should be in the Dialogo

Participant diversity was seen in the following: local high school students, undergraduate and graduate students from local and outside universities, young professionals practicing both in or outside of the valley, experienced professionals, young university lecturers, tenured professors, and both young and old community activists. Additionally, both the public and private sector were represented along with community activists that crossed over from the non-profit world to academia.

At the same time, this spectrum of age and experience saw a crossover in the level of association and ties to the South Texas region. The common denominator was the desire to collaborate in improving the quality of life the border context.

Analysis of themes

In preparation, the conference events for the Dialogo pre-structured these dialogue around issues that might lead to a better understanding of the area and identifying key issues for an improved planning process. The sequencing of the events were designed to start more structured and transition into more relaxed and more intimate dialogue. As the level of comfort and trust grew over the two-day event, people were more willing to expose issues that compelled the diversity of the conference attendant.

Through presentations, workshops, and informal discussions the Dialogo aimed at shedding light to both the challenges and opportunities in development and planning in the Border area. The trans-border merging of issues was a key theme during the Dialogo. The political reality of this place is an example of this condition. Spill over of violence from Mexican into the United
States impacts decision-making in development. This tension impacts development politically, economically, and socially. The Dialogo focused on addressing changes such as these. Five recurring themes thus emerged during the Dialogo:

- The human experience
- Cultural legacy
- Placemaking
- Public-private partnerships
- Economic revitalization

The following is a close look at the lessons learned from each of the themes.

**The Human Experience**

Figure 18: Stan Marek talks to Brownsville Veterans High School students about labor force issues and the construction industry
A key lesson learned is the significance of humanizing development in the planning process. In the case of the Dialogo on the Border, one key speaker’s message resonated with the audience. Stan Marek, a native Texan, is the president and CEO of the Marek Brother, one of the largest interior contractors in the Southwest, with offices in Houston, Dallas, Ft. Worth, Austin, San Antonio, Harlingen, Atlanta and Oklahoma City. At the Dialogo, Stan spoke about what has been one of his major passions in the past three years, a push for Comprehensive Immigration Reform. He is the co-founder of Texans For a Sensible Immigration Policy and a member of the Greater Houston Partnership’s task force “Americans For Immigration Reform.”

As a person so acutely sensitive to the need for construction workers in the labor force, he presented a picture of the hard working immigrant as a key contributor to economic growth in the building industry. His respect for the immigrant populations paralleled with monetary quantification of the economic value of the immigrant labor force was message that resonated with the young high school students that attended the conference. Many of these students could relate to the immigration issues affecting the construction labor force in one of two way: their fathers are in the construction workforce; or they themselves aspire to be a member of the construction industry. Through this presentation and dialogue that followed, it became clear that Stan Marek had validated their contribution to society as valuable human beings making a great impact to the economic prosperity of the country.

**Cultural Legacy**

The “Los Del Valle: The Oral History Project” is an ongoing research project at the University of Texas in Brownsville that began in 1993. Dr. Manuel F. Medrano, professor or history at the University of Texas at Brownsville, is the principle investigator for research project. Over the last two decades, Los del Valle has cataloged a multimedia record of autobiographical stories of people from the Rio Grande Valley. These short documentaries on both leaders and everyday people are meant to trace those that have influenced the history and culture of the Rio Grande Valley.

Dr. Medrano saw an opportunity to bring the lessons from the Los Del Valle research project into the classroom. Integrated into his college history course, Dr. Medrano introduced the methodology of the Los Del Valle in a project titled “Los Abuelitos. The purpose of the project was to show students how to document personal and historic facts through one-on-one interviews. The project would thus focus on “the shadows” or the underside of history. The method for documented the legacy of the quotidian would be through oral conversation. The research students would thus collect, preserve and disseminate what some have called an “invisible history.” University students were assigned to interview their families or individuals in...
their community, allowing students to discover what for years had been kept from them.

Dr. Medrano believes that Latinos and South Texas must fight for inclusion of Mexican American history and culture before the history and legacy of those around them is lost. This is a contribution to local, regional and national history.

At the Dialogo on the Border, the presentation of the “Los del Valle: the Oral History Project” and the “Los Abuelitos” brought many in the audience to tears. Gaining perspective on the significance of the “shadows” of the working class and day-to-day people brought about a vulnerability that is uncommon in a typical conference environment. People connected to the stories and to the parallel that they saw to the stories of those around them. Looking to history to understand the future of development does not mean looking at the history of leaders, but the lessons of the two projects were to listen and record how those that struggled to form societies were able to do so.

Figure 18: University of Texas at Brownsville students Samantha Wells and Miriam Aguayo present “The Oral History Project”
Placemaking

James Rojas’ Place It! Workshop was an opportunity for individuals to think critically about spatial organization and urban space and how they affect their everyday lives. Rojas’ workshop is a design-based, urban planning initiative that uses on-site model-building interactive models to help engage the public in the planning and design process. Participants are able to translate conceptual planning ideas into physical forms, and learn about the value of planning and design in shaping how we live.

During the Dialogo, James introduced a method he has crafted and applied among many different population groups across the United States. Participants were given access to an array of materials, many small found objects. Using these as building blocks, the workshop participants were challenged to come up with a three-dimensional vision most cherished memory.

After every workshop participant crafter their memory in 3D representation, the participants presented their representation of their memories. The results of the exercise were not planned and surprised everyone participating. Everyone participating in the workshop had crafted a 3D representation of a public outdoor space thus shedding light to the role of public space and the significance of memory in placemaking.

There are a number of lessons to be taken from the Place It! model as a capacity building method for planning and education. James Rojas believes that everyone is a planner and they simply need the tools, i.e. interesting materials, to be able to apply their vision. He notes that it is important to pay attention to verbal and visual effects of the productions in charrette presentations. For these observations to translate into policy, Rojas urges planners to: encourage the use of the imagination; create awareness for the built environment; create an inclusive process; create a friendly environment to share ideas; build community trust/capacity; build non-conventional places; and provide in-depth data for plan, policies, and projects to the public. The Rojas method was well received at the Dialogo; in particular many recognized its capacity to allow for multi-cultural interactions that address the same issues regarding the need for public space.
Public-private partnerships

The theme of public and private partnerships was prominent in the Dialogo. Much discussion centered around the relationship between participatory practices, partnerships, and governance. Professor Nabeel Hamdi from Oxford Brookes University challenged the Dialogo participants to define the appropriate relationship between the state, private sector, and civil social groups. He asked people to first define partnerships and then determine what are the vested interested in establishing them.
Below are the criteria used to define the parties involved in developing partnerships:

- **International Organizations**: Wants efficiency, transparency, regional/local participation, proper program evaluation,

- **NGO**: Primary function is to meet community/individuals’ needs, understanding an interpreting community’s needs, reporting to higher authority the needs of the people, essentially running a business.
➢ **State:** Participation will be involving a committee or advisory group; participation is important because we don’t want to anger people, we want to satisfy legal requirement; will be helped by NGO as an intermediary organization; conflict resolution; involve community to the degree that is necessary.

➢ **Local/ Community Organizations:** Permeability (communication and connectivity) through dialogue, geography; self-sufficiency, but decided leadership; evolving identity; localism; regenerative cycles.

The results of the Dialogo was the determination of the following criteria: a need for transparency; change requires all levels of involvement - federal, state, city, business owners, local residents; change could be stimulated by academia; education is a public service and a powerful means of pushing for change; and public-private partnerships can occur at many levels and at varying degrees of scale.

A number of models of partnerships types were presented at the Dialogo demonstrating the significant role that academia has in bridging through collaborations. Texas Southmost College (TSC) has pushed two of these models: one collaborating with the Community Development Corporation of Brownsville to design and build affordable housing options for south Texas residents; and the second was a TSC partnership with the City of Harlingen where they challenged architecture students to rethink urban revitalization for the 21st century urban center of Harlingen.

**Economic Revitalization**

During the Dialogo on the Border participants discussed the challenges in economic development for the border area. Looking closely at Figure 21 below, the 2010 Census Data shows income as being much lower then the national average for Cameron County and even less for the city of Brownsville. Seeing the average educational attainment as a parallel variable and indicator of economic vitality, the disparities in the South Texas region are clear (see Figure 22).
Figure 21: 2010 Income Indicators (US Dollars)
Source: United States Census Bureau, 2010 Census Data

Figure 22: 2010 Educational Indicators (%)
Source: United States Census Bureau, 2010 Census Data
Given that as the reality for the area, the following statement was made during the Dialogo:

‘I’d rather say the F word than the word gentrification; I don’t want to be the poorest city in the United States, I don’t want to have that issue, but we do. Right now you live in Brownsville and how do we work with that. Think of the people, don’t exclude people; keep that at the center of you thoughts.‘

–Nick Mitchell-Bennett, Executive Director of the Community Development Corporation of Brownsville

The city of Brownsville, like many other border cities, is pushing to overcome the challenges that come from an abundance of poverty and marginalization. At the Dialogo on the Border, we learned that much opportunity come from pushing for a shift in perception. The Rio Grande Valley is a place with rich history and opportunity in land in need of revitalizing. Many city leaders and elected officials present at the Dialogo emphasized the economic benefit of revitalization through adaptation of existing buildings and infrastructure. The city of Brownsville is using a land banking strategy to redevelop its downtown called out the importance in dialogue between public and private partnerships. In this case, the private investor plays a significant role in funding public initiatives that could lead to profitable gains.

From the perspective of academic and city officials, one of the biggest challenges for adaptive reuse as a strategy for economic revitalization is in education. How can you demonstrate that this mode for development will have long-term social, economic, and environmental benefits for an area in dire need of economic revitalization? The Dialogo challenged people to propose more sustainable development strategies even though land is plentiful, cheap, and conduce to sprawl.

Dialogo and its contribution to the planning process

Participatory techniques; which techniques worked best?

Participation was the primary goal of the Dialogo. Three types of participatory techniques were applied during the course of the conference, each evoking a distinct level of appropriateness in relation to the planning process. Their efficacy in the context of engagement in the border region is evaluated below:

1. Expert presentations followed by dialogue, question and answer.
   - Expert presentations were more effective when the issues discussed were stripped of advanced academic rhetoric.
Revealing to the audience that fear and/or failures in attempts allowed people to relate to the efforts by public officials.

Giving the audience an opportunity to react is key.

2. The use of “high tech” tools to engage in the planning process.

High tech tools for engagement are powerful if you can convince the audience of the relevance of the tool to their work.

You must be wary of potential technical failures and glitches.

Trying to navigate a high tech tool with groups larger than ten people can be a challenge.

3. Hands-on workshops as a dialogue stimulating mechanism.

Hands-on workshops proved to be the most effective and efficient way of breaking the ice.

Visual communication transcends language and cultural barriers.

Working with your hands during the planning process gives participants a feeling of ownership and pride in their contribution to the dialogue.

What is the best way to communicate

A challenge of the Dialogo was in determining the most effective mode of communication relative to the planning process. A key revelation from the Dialogo on the Border experience was the role in highlighting the human condition by being sensitive to the site and population at hand. In working with a predominately Latino population, planners must be mindful of the role of cultural legacy, language barriers, and economic limitations. Communication in the planning process must therefore reinforce visual, emotional, and quotidian experiences. Opportunity will arise in: how information is distributed; how stakeholders mediate and compromise; and how planning can catalog existing resources to maximize capacity.

Sensibility and flexibility

Ultimately the conversations from the Dialogo focused on taking challenges and limitations and turning these into opportunities for more prosperous development. Applying a more sensible approach to regulatory enforcement is one means of doing this. In the context of the border region, there are challenges that arise from the top-down effects of federal and
state regulations. Issues of international security in the border region do not give room for flexibility but the role of the local government and community is to leverage for site sensitive enforcement.

Analyzing the impact of the border wall as a contentious physical barrier, the Dialogo participants used the platform of communication and celebrated the border. Through dialogue participants were able to propose its potential. Potential planning opportunities to capitalize on include the following:

- Redesign fence to serve a more uniting purpose other than just being a cold hard separation between countries.
- Gradually grow Brownsville Downtown to the Rio Grande and maximize value of riverfront property utilizing levees and flood control measures. Replace the temporary fence with a fortified levee.
- Similarly, use intense development along river border to develop social presence and enhance border security.
- We could build a canal instead of a levee, so that nutrients from the river could still be absorbed by the ecosystem.
- Improve communication between diverse groups of peoples in order to exchange ideas, resolve disagreements, and celebrate border areas.
In order to gauge the success and response of the participants, an evaluation survey was available both at the Dialogo and later sent electronically to all Dialogo attendants. A total of 48 evaluation surveys were collected from the 128 participants that attended the Dialogo. The evaluation can be divided into three parts: demographics statistics, overall evaluation, and workshop evaluations. The purpose of this survey was to be able to perhaps measure and gauge the reception of the conference planning effort by its participant and give light to ways to improve the next planned event. The survey included a place for participants to write in feedback and overall comments about their experience at the Dialogo. The full content of that is discussed in the next section of limitations.

**Evaluation Participant Demographics**

Part I of the evaluation survey consisted of three questions. The first question asked the participant to identify their background. Of the 28 survey respondents, 30% were students, 26% were academics, 35% worked in the public sector, and 9% were community activists.

![Participant Background](image)

Total Responses = 23

Figure 23: Participant Background

Of the 23 responses 35% were in planning, 22% work in education, 13% work in construction, 9% do policy related work, and 9% of the responded work in the non-profit sector.
General Conference Evaluation

Part 2 of the evaluation survey focused on the overall reception to the Dialogo organization and themes, consisting of nine questions. For detailed result and breakdowns per question, please see Figures 25-27 below. In summary, 84% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the conference met their expectations (52% agreed that the Dialogo met or exceeded their expectations). We also learned that 89% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were able to exchange and listen to innovative approaches (46% strongly agreed), and 86% agreed or strongly agreed that the presenters exceeded their expectations.
Overall, this Dialogo met or exceeded my expectations:

Total Responses = 44

Figure 25: Conference Expectations

In the Dialogo I was able to exchange ideas and listen to innovative approaches.

Total Responses = 44

Figure 26: Innovation
The workshop levels were evaluated as being somewhat advanced by 54% of the survey participants, and 80% agreed or strongly agreed that they learned useful ideas or techniques.
Chapter 4: Post Conference Evaluation

Of the 43 survey respondents, 35% of the survey respondents said they heard about the Dialogo conference through friends while only 9% learned about the conference through the TAMU website. And the majority of the respondents at 70% stated that they chose to attend the Dialogo conference because of conference topics.

Figure 29: Techniques

Figure 30: Publicity
Chapter 4: Post Conference Evaluation

**The format of presentations and workshops was adequate for the Dialogo.**

- Agree: 25 (58%)
- Strongly Agree: 12 (28%)
- Neutral: 4 (9%)
- Disagree: 2 (5%)

Total Responses = 43

Figure 31: Event Format/Structure

**Why did you choose to attend this Dialogo?**

- Topics: 31 (70%)
- Presenter/Speaker: 10 (23%)
- Professional Education Credit: 3 (7%)

Total Responses = 44

Figure 32: Reasons for Attending
Workshop Evaluation

Part 3 of the conference evaluation focused on measuring the five workshops. The first four workshops were thematic and topic focused. They ran concurrently and therefore only those that participated in each workshop evaluated them. The fifth workshop, Place It!, was attended by everyone at the event. The following are the participants evaluation of the workshop based on expectations and outcomes of the event.

Architect Steve Land Tillotson led the “Space and Security” workshop. According to the survey, 50% of the 12 survey takers rated the workshop as excellent, 33% rated it good, and 17% were neutral.

![Space and Security Workshop Evaluation](image)

Total Responses= 12

Figure 33: Workshop 1 Evaluation Results
Dr. Edelmiro Escamilla, professor of construction science at Texas A&M University, led the “Sustainable Competitive Advantage” workshop. Of the 11 survey respondents, 55% rated the workshop as excellent, 27% rated it to be neutral and 18% of the workshop gave it a rating of good.

![Construction and Sustainable Competitive Advantage Workshop Evaluation](image)

Total Responses= 11

Figure 34: Workshop 2 Evaluation Results

The third workshop, “Collaboration among Municipalities, Community Based Organizations and Academia,” was led by Dr. Murad Abusalim and Professor Erik Diaz from Texas Southmost College. Of the 14 survey respondents, 64% rated it to be excellent, 22% rated the workshop to be good, and 14% rated it as neutral.
Professor Nabeel Hamdi led the “Participatory Practices, Partnerships and Governance” workshop. Of the 16 survey respondents, 50% rated the workshop as excellent, 37% rated it to be good, and 13% rated it neutral.
James Rojas’s “Place it!” workshop was attended by all conference participants. Of the 18 survey respondents, 72% of the participants rated the workshop as excellent, 11% rated it neutral, 11% rated it good, and 6% rated it poor.

Total Responses= 18

Figure 37: Place It! Workshop Evaluation Results

Critique, Feedback and Limitations

Figure 38 shows a list of the comments and feedback collected from the conference evaluation forms. All of the comments were divided into one of three categories: planning feedback, event feedback and comments on future considerations. General comments about planning recommendations revolved around improving advertisement. Comments dealing with the conference events focused on the structure and format of the conference. Some of the suggestions included increasing informal “mingling” time and it was also suggested to not try to cover too many topics in one session. Feedback regarding future considerations targeted a refocusing on the issues and themes that the conference should address; additionally a number of questions were outlined to help initiate future Dialogos.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Planning Feedback</strong></th>
<th><strong>Event Feedback</strong></th>
<th><strong>Considerations for Future</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Better marketing (earlier) and stronger campaign to get commitment of other groups</td>
<td>Visiting case studies besides tour</td>
<td>Expand to global scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More details on the website</td>
<td>More time for informal chatting</td>
<td>Perhaps calling for presentation would bring knowledge and approaches that steering committee might not be aware of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get locals involved</td>
<td>More hands on activities for the high school students</td>
<td>I would have liked to see more speakers who were interested in environmental, sustainability, and water resource issues. I feel like that Rio Grande Valley has some catching up to do in comparison to other cities like San Antonio and Austin, and I have some ideas that would be easily implemented.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short summaries of each topic in the agenda would have been helpful to decide which workshop to attend</td>
<td>Rojas workshop every time</td>
<td>What were needs that came out of the Dialogo? What is the potential role of TAMU/different organizations in future activities?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would like to know if anyone/entity put forward a program on educational resources from the previous Dialogo that had been identified as needed? Did it succeed? What could they change to improve?</td>
<td>Much information, not a lot of time to digest</td>
<td>What are available resources vs needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote informal interaction within the conference</td>
<td>How can activities be structured, coordinated, funded? Who is going to pay attention/ the “competition”?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More informal mingling of students, residents, professors, managers etc</td>
<td>Health issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshops should be all in the same room</td>
<td>Extension involvement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyed Hamdi’s keynote talk on participation because it addressed complex social issues in concrete experiential terms</td>
<td>Field trip to learn about environmental issues of affordable housing projects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eye opening to see “enlightened” city planning officials and other engaged in public-social space</td>
<td>Involve more research and projects from other colleges with TAMU and other universities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presenters were experts</td>
<td>Important to discuss social, community and urban development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too little time per topic, did not get much out of it more than an overview</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 38: Evaluation Feedback and Comments
Lessons Learned

As previously mentioned, Dialogos are events spearheaded by the Latinos and Planning Division of the national American Planning Association. Over the course of the last 10 years, Dialogos have been hosted across the country in an effort to increase awareness among the Latino community of issues affecting predominantly dominated Latino communities.

In the end, the biggest lesson learned from the Dialogo on the Border was the power of approaching planning from a humanist dimension. It was only after people were able to relate to issues of self-motivation, validation, and civic pride that we experience as shift in how openly engaged the Dialogo participants were. A number of variable can be attributed for this engagement: the diversity of people, the topics of discussion, the structure of the workshops, and the formatting of the presentation sequencing. Moving from a rigid, and more structured format of presentation to move lose and collaborative workshops allowed people to ease into the comfort of the dialogue.

The Dialogo on the Border showed us the value in gaining the audience’s trust, even when one is challenged with sensitive or even controversial topics. What was important from the “outsider’s” perspective was to ensure to the local participants that we were there to listen.

There is synergy and overlap for all five themes that rose from the dialogue. (1) The human experience, (2) cultural legacy, (3) placemaking, (4) public-private partnerships, (5) and economic revitalization all argue for an urban planning approach that is just and resilient.

Moving Forward

Webinar: Multimedia Engagement

Moving forward from the conference format of the 2008 and 2013 Dialogos, students at both Texas A&M University and the University of California Berkeley saw an opportunity to increase participation and collaboration through a web conferencing structure. During the fall of 2013, the Dialogo Webinar was hosted at the partnering universities. Practicing planners, educators, and community activist phoned in from across the country to engage in conversation related to topics of planning for Latino communities.
The webinar was a multimedia engagement process that required participants to have access to a phone for voice connection and web access for posting questions to a shared blog. These questions were streamed live during the webinar and were used to frame the discussion. The webinar was a means of allowing people to converse with other planners or planning educators about how to engage and plan for the Latino population in the United States.

Cristina Odenborg, a Master of Urban Planning student, was instrumental in the organization of the webinar. It was through this and all other Dialogo events that there has seen an increased participation by students in the APA. The lessons of the Dialogos were taken further to a different platform for conversation at the 2014 National APA conference held in Atlanta, Georgia where the work of the faculty and students of both Texas A&M University and University of California Berkeley was presented.

Planning Pedagogy

One of the greatest impact of the Dialogo on the Border was on planning pedagogy in understanding the importance for academics to engage communities at the local level. The Dialogo helped give clarity to the role of education and academia. We must teach students to engage the constituents of the communities they are working to improve. In addition to local Brownsville planners, the involvement of University of Texas at Brownsville, Texas Southmost College, and Brownsville Veterans High School students showed that young people can engage in the planning process. Students from different fields learned from each other as they brought different perspectives to the same problems. The synergy the Dialogo resulted in a more open conversation. Learning from this methods of discussion and problem solving, each discipline demonstrated an ability to take on a respectful approach to listen to the needs of others.

The Dialogo on the Border took students and researchers out of the classroom and into the heart of the community in Brownsville. From this process, those involved were able to think more critically about the processes that define planning, from the theory of planning in the classroom to the implementation processes applied by practicing professionals. One of the greatest take aways from this process what to begin to think critically about why we make rules. The questions that should be asked are: why do we create regulations if no one can abide? and who are we creating regulations for? If planners can think critically about their role in the field and the role of the community, then building the 21st century city will be a process framed by a dialogue for sustainable development.

Regulations need to be created based on the needs, values, and aspirations of the community those regulations are supposed to serve. From the Dialogos we learned that communities on
a border area may have different needs than those in other locations. In addition to the power of political constraints that policy and regulations have, planners must be aware of the impact of larger urban infrastructure and the built development might have at the community level. In the case of the border, the presence of a wall and/or the isolation of communities have an impact on the self-perception of communities. How can we as planners promote community placemaking while addressing the need for security and control?

The dialogos have focused on addressing the need for a more interdisciplinary approach to development: planners, architects, political leaders and community actors in general, need to “dialogue” in order to understand community concerns and to produce comprehensive solutions to current problems. In the case of the Dialogo on the Border, we learned that in order to address an issue, both sides need to be heard. Many times this duality can be in the form of disciplines, geographical references, or socioeconomic background. Many times, though the points of view may be different, the end goals are the same.
Appendix A: Conference Poster

**Dialogo on the Border**

April 19-20th, 2013
Brownsville, Tx

**Keynote Speakers:**
- Nabeel Hamdi
  Oxford Brookes University
- James Rojas
  Latino Urban Forum
- Stan Marek
  Marek Brothers Co. Inc.

**Join the Discussion:** Dialogo on the Border is an open conference engaging professionals from diverse backgrounds in a dialogo (Spanish for “dialogue”) seeking solutions for the myriad challenges confronting border regions, while building a diverse national network of supportive individuals committed to resolving border issues.

**Sponsored by:**
- Texas A&M University
  College of Architecture
- Dwight Look College of Engineering
- Map and GIS Library

**Registration:**
http://www.arch.tamu.edu/diversity/dialogo

For information contact: Jan McCoy 979/458/0539 jmccoy@arch.tamu.edu

*Scholarships available
APHA AIA continuing education credits available
Appendix B: Dialogo on the Border Schedule

**Schedule: Friday 19 Apr**

**Morning Session**

7:45am-9:00am. **Check-in/Registration** (Location: Central Plaza)

8:00am-9:00am. **Breakfast Social** (Location: Central Plaza)

9:00am-9:30am. **Introduction: What is a Dialogo?** (Location: E-104)
   Cedilla Giusti, Ph.D. | Texas A&M University, College of Architecture
   Tony Martinez | City of Brownsville, Mayor
   Marti Flores, Ph.D. | Texas Southmost College
   Rodolfo Quillantan | Mexican Consulate
   Vicky Carrasco | American Planning Association: Latinos and Planning Division

9:30am-10:15am. **Keynote Session** (Location: E-104)
   Stan Marek | Marek Brothers Company, Inc.

10:15am-10:30am. **Break** (Location: Central Plaza)

10:30am-11:30am. **Panel Discussion** (Location: E-104)
   **Moderator:** Vicky Carrasco, American Planning Association: Latinos and Planning Division
   Gregory Martinic, AIA, ACSA, NCARB, IDA, IFI, IDEC | Univ of Houston, Coll. of Arch
   Ziad Qureshi | Iowa State University, College of Design
   Edelmiro Escamilla, Ph.D. | Texas A&M University, College of Architecture
   Sarah DeYoung, Ph.D. | Texas A&M University, College of Architecture
   David Bierling, Ph.D. | Texas Transportation Institute

11:30am-12:00pm. **Dialogo: Open discussion** (Location: E-104)

12:00pm-1:00pm. **Lunch Session** (Location: Central Plaza)
   Blanca Juarez | Starr County Colonia Ombudsperson
Afternoon Session

1:00 p.m.-1:30 p.m. **Seminars** (Location: E-104)

1:00 p.m.-1:15 p.m. Seminar 1: Mapping Social Justice: Using GIS to Support Decision-Making in the U.S.-Mexico Borderland
   Miriam Olivares | Texas A&M University Libraries, Map & GIS Library

1:15 p.m.-1:30 p.m. Seminar 2: Enhancing the Public Decision-Making Process
   John Jacob, Ph.D. | Texas Sea Grant at Texas A&M

1:30 p.m.-3:30 p.m. **Concurrent Workshops**
   GIS and vTable Technology for Public-Participation
   vTable leaders: John Jacob, Miriam Olivares, and Stephany Caraballo

Workshop 1: Space and Security (Location: E-112)
   Steven Land Tilloston, AIA | Kell Munoz Architects, Partner

Workshop 2: Sustainable Competitive Advantage: A Widening Gap in the Construction Industry (Location: E-106)
   Edelmir Escamilla, Ph.D. | Texas A&M University, College of Architecture

Workshop 3: Collaboration among Municipalities, Community-Based Organizations, and Academia (Location: E-104)
   Ramiro Rodriguez | City of Brownsville Planning Department
   Murad Abusalah, Ph.D. | University of Texas at Brownsville-Texas Southmost College, Government-Architecture Program
   Erick Diaz | University of Texas at Brownsville-Texas Southmost College, Government-Architecture Program

Workshop 4: Participatory Practices, Partnerships and Governance (Location: E-108)
   Professor Nabeel Hamid | Oxford Brookes University

3:30 p.m.-3:45 p.m. **Coffee Break** (Location: Central Plaza)
   Light snacks provided

3:45 p.m.-5:00 p.m. **Dialogo: Round Table Presentations** (Location: Central Plaza)

5:00 p.m.-6:00 p.m. **Tour City of Brownsville** (Location: Central Plaza)
   Anthony Knopp, Ph.D. | University of Texas at Brownsville, Coll. of Liberal Arts

7:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m. **Reception** (Location: Homewood Suite Hotel)
Schedule: Saturday 20 Apr

Morning Session

8:00 a.m.-9:00 a.m.  Breakfast Social (Location: Central Plaza)

9:00 a.m.-10:00 a.m. Keynote Session (Location: E-104)
   Professor Nabeel Hamdi | Oxford Brookes University

10:00 a.m.-10:30 a.m. Historic Speaker (Location: E-104)
   Manuel Medrano, Ed.D. | University of Texas at Brownsville, Coll. of Liberal Arts
   Los del Valle, Oral History Project

10:30 a.m.-10:45 a.m. Coffee Break (Location: Central Plaza)
   Light snacks provided

10:45 a.m.-11:45 a.m. Panel Discussion (Location: E-104)
   Moderator: Cecilia Giusti, Ph.D. | Texas A&M University, Coll. of Architecture
   Gabriella Campagnol, Ph.D. | Texas A&M University, College of Architecture
   Cheryl La Barge | City of Harlingen, Downtown Manager
   Nick Mitchell | Community Development Corporation of Brownsville, Director
   Ramiro Gonzalez | City of Brownsville, Planning Department
   Murad Abusalim, Ph.D. | University of Texas at Brownsville-Texas
   Southmost College, Government, Architecture Program

11:45 a.m.-12:15 p.m. Dialog: Open Discussion (Location: E-104)

12:15 p.m.-1:15 p.m. Lunch Session (Location: Central Plaza)
   Rose Gowen, M.D. | City of Brownsville, Commissioner At-Large
   Healthy Communities
Dialogo on the Border

Regional and Intergovernmental Planning Division
& Latinos and Planning Division Present

Dialogo on the Border: A Unique Experience

Live Webinar on Tuesday, October 29, 2013
11 AM to 12:30 PM (Pacific Time)

Hear about trends, issues and solutions from experts from the Texas/Mexico Border.

Focus will be on lessons learned by planning practitioners, demographic realities, perceptions about poverty and isolation in border towns, and development strategies in the planning of border areas and using the arts and cultural expressions in the planning process.

Register here (after October 1):

For more information: www.planning.org/divisions/latinos
Or contact Veronica Soto at: veronica.r.soto@gmail.com


Giusti, C. and M. Olivares (*). 2012. Latinos, Planning, and Incremental Construction, Pp. 98-110. in Rios,


