



El Mall: The Spatial and Class Politics of Shopping Malls in Latin America

By Arlene Dávila

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While becoming less relevant in the United States, shopping malls are booming throughout urban Latin America. But what does this mean on the ground? Are shopping malls a sign of the region's "coming of age"? *El Mall* is the first book to answer these questions and explore how malls and consumption are shaping the conversation about class and social inequality in Latin America.

Through original and insightful ethnography, Dávila shows that class in the neoliberal city is increasingly defined by the shopping habits of ordinary people. Moving from the global operations of the shopping mall industry to the experience of shopping in places like Bogotá, Colombia, *El Mall* is an indispensable book for scholars and students interested in consumerism and neoliberal politics in Latin America and the world.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Overall, Dávila treats the mall as a microcosm of wider changes in governance, economics and social relations... nuanced."

(Environment and Urbanization)

From the Inside Flap

"In peeling back the shiny surfaces of high finance, branding, and mall spaces themselves, *El Mall* delves into the ways that space, history, and politics create powerful and specific social and cultural loci, where neoliberal practices and urban planning work together to amplify power struggles and exacerbate inequalities. If you think about malls, or consumers, or Latin America, you need this book."—Elizabeth Chin, author of *Purchasing Power: Black Kids and American Consumer Culture*

"This compelling work provides a key contribution to the relatively unexplored field of Latin American Consumption Studies. Unlike traditional accounts in consumer culture analysis, which often portray Latin America as either a space of resistance or a replication of external forces, *El Mall's* powerful ethnographic account moves through different analytical layers—from the political economy and the politics of commercial expertise to the interplays of everyday life, consumption, and identity in contemporary Colombia. An important book for anyone wanting to understand the complexities of Latin American consumer culture."—Tomás Ariztía, Associate Professor of Sociology, Universidad Diego Portales, Santiago, Chile

"*El Mall* raises questions about the politics of space, illuminating how malls consolidate inequalities through national neoliberal capitalist logics and class imagery via consumption."—Patricia Zavella, author of *I'm Neither Here nor There: Mexicans' Quotidian Struggles with Migration and Poverty*

"*El Mall* shows why the Latin American shopping mall has become a designed and designing space par excellence, where Latin American sociality is being profoundly reconfigured beyond the particularities of political and economic regimes. It emerges from these engaging pages as a trans/national heterogeneous assemblage of land, culture, planning, finance, speculation, consumption, labor, identity, security, and fashion—a culture-producing machine that while central to neoliberal globalization cannot be easily reduced to it. Ethnographically and theoretically rich, this book will be of great interest to undergraduate and graduate students not only in anthropology, geography, and sociology but also in interdisciplinary fields such as Latin American studies and urban studies, planning, and design."—Arturo Escobar, Kenan Distinguished Professor of Anthropology, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

About the Author

Arlene Dávila is Professor of Anthropology and Social and Cultural Analysis at New York University. She is the author of numerous books, including *Barrio Dreams* (UC Press, 2004) and *Latinos Inc.* (UC Press, 2001, 2012).

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