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THE CONCEPT OF DEVELOPMENT is evolving along with humanity, and is no longer understood and referred to as merely a physical expression of society. While development in its built form is indicative of a particular period in time, documenting perhaps a socioeconomic movement or advancement in innovation, it leaves a small window for social interpretation, remaining limited. To the contrary, the interdisciplinary forms of development—healthy and comprehensive in practice and process—reveal a sense of liberty and offer greater opportunity, not only for communities within our own country, but for those halfway across the world.

Spring 2010 marks the fourteenth issue of the Urban Review—as well as a new decade charged with ambitious urban agendas, including smart policy and innovative ideas that aim to encourage and manage healthy global development patterns, focusing on and prioritizing social, economic, environmental and sustainability issues. This Spring’s theme, *In Whose Developing World*, seeks to address the ongoing debate of development through a macro and micro lens, and what it means for humanity, now and for the future.

Hunter’s Department of Urban Affairs and Planning is challenging students to do just that. They’re doing it too. Evidenced by the outstanding contributions in this issue, Hunter students are vigilant and eager to learn and experience development in a comprehensive, global context—from individual international studies in Brazil to the overwhelming interest in the Department’s first organized international studio abroad in India. Building on this momentum, this Spring faculty and students have taken a collaborative approach in setting new goals and objectives that aim to provide more resources for global urban affairs and planning opportunities, such as learning about efficient food systems in Cuba next Winter.

As we continue to learn about the dynamic relationship between human and physical development and how it varies by people and place, I ask how do we develop ourselves such that we best address the needs of our global society?

Terri Mills
Managing Editor
IT'S official: the 2016 Olympics will be hosted by Rio de Janeiro! This marks the first time that the games will take place in South America, and only the second time in Latin America since 1968 in Mexico City. This is indeed a momentous event, one that comes after several years of strategy, planning, and grandiose efforts by Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

For the host city, the Olympics provide not only a chance to shine on the global stage, it presents an opportunity to accelerate many projects intended to stimulate economic growth, including social programs and major infrastructure developments. President Lula claims that the Olympics will help build Brazil, and the city of Rio de Janeiro, by providing jobs for the poor, integrating civil society, and building a spirit of peace and cooperation through sport. Yet dense urban settlement, informal housing, and violent crime give rise to a number of social issues that present major urban challenges for such nascent plans. The 2016 Olympic Games will see the entire city transformed into an Olympic theater of sport. But as City officials promise a legacy of social and economic growth, can Rio residents really expect the benefits that the Olympics are intended to produce?

The master plan for the Rio Olympics includes 7 competition sites within 4 Olympic Zones spread throughout the city. The zones will be connected by large infrastructure and public transit projects including high performance transport trains, new and existing bus rapid transit (BRT) systems, and 150 kilometers of new highways paved over Rio's unique topography of mountains, lagoons, and beaches. The new infrastructure will support the construction of new hotels for the influx of tourists, the Olympic Village with the capacity to house over 17,500 athletes, and renovations to existing stadiums and arenas.
The Olympic Village is certainly not designed for a temporary population; it will provide much needed new and functional residential housing in Rio. Hundreds of communities, mostly the shanty towns, stand in the way of the proposed plan for the Village, and while Rio is in the midst of a housing crisis, many of these communities and residents are slated to be displaced.

Over a third of Rio’s 6 million inhabitants live in the crowded, hillside shanty towns known as favelas. Spread 700 strong throughout the city, they are complete informal settlements built on public land and are serviced by few, if any, roads. Despite their isolation, perched on Rio’s hill tops they are readily visible all over the city. Since the announcement of the Olympic Games, over 100 of Rio’s favelas have been slated to be razed, while others will be disrupted by police, and then some will actually be incorporated into the city. Residents who face eviction are promised new housing in comparable locations; however, the details of the new housing are vague, prompting suspicion from communities whom have historically been ignored by the Brazilian government.

For example, residents of the Vila Autódromo favela, located in the neighborhood of Barra da Tijuca, the site of the proposed Olympic Village, have been mobilizing to ensure its permanence since the announcement of City’s plans to displace the residents. Community members formed the Olympics Does Not Justify Removal Movement to guarantee their right to housing and decent living conditions. According to Altair Guimarães, president of the Vila Autódromo Residents’ Association, the Olympics is simply a pretext to remove the community. “There are condominiums with mansions near the community that will remain intact, showing the differences in attitudes according to social class.” However, what cannot go overlooked is that Olympic Games planning process is unlike most and includes adverse impacts on society as well as multiple benefits.

Past Olympic Games have proven that the benefits of operating as the host city are frequently unrealized, and often times, unintentional side effects transpire. For example, the ’76 games in Montreal blanketed the city with debt that took 30 years to pay off. Terrorism plagued the ‘72 games in Munich and the ‘96 games in Atlanta. Ten days before the 1968 games in Mexico City, the hard-lined military massacred over 300 protesting university students in a paradoxical effort to ensure order. More recently in Vancouver, homeless rates rose sharply as real estate speculators evicted tenants in anticipation for higher profits from 2010 Olympic tourism.

There is no doubt that City officials in Rio will have a lot on their hands in the years leading to 2016. Gang warfare between drug cartels, largely confined to the favelas, poses huge security issues on top of the existing housing crisis. Yet, the Olympics present great opportunity for President Lula to showcase Brazil’s economic growth and international influence. In short, the Olympic Games will reaffirm the government’s international reputation as a leader among emerging nations. And as the world closely watches the Olympic Games in Rio, urban leaders will continue watching, even after the fireworks are over.
ON most mornings, my forty-minute subway ride
to work in Lower Manhattan from my home in Queens
is drama-free—and I usually spend the first half mostly
asleep on the 7 train until I have to transfer to the 6 train
at Grand Central. The only frustrations I have to deal
with are typical delays due to the cacophony of morning
rush. Yet, in most parts of the world, the public transit
system is exponentially more chaotic, and in some ways,
even deadly. Journalist and National Geographic Traveler
contributing editor Carl Hoffman articulates this by tak-
ing readers through an adventurous journey through the
world’s most harrowing forms of mass transit in his new
book, The Lunatic Express: Discovering the World ...via
Its Most Dangerous Buses, Boats, Trains and Planes,
just released in March. His book transports readers from
continent to continent exploring the realities and the dan-
gers that people in various parts of the world face just to
going to work and for basic travel purposes because there
is little to no other choice in modes of transportation.

In America, we are quite lucky, perhaps spoiled, to be able
to go through our daily lives where a plane crash is rare,,
ferries and ships almost never sink, and buses and trains are
supported by the necessary infrastructure to ensure proper
safety measures and to run on timely schedules (for the most
part). Yet, many people in this highly developed nation of
ours turn a blind eye and really never truly think about the
rest of the world—specifically the localities that Hoffman
highlights—who at times, has to put their life in jeopardy
by taking substandard deathtraps to just travel somewhere.

Hoffman provides a fluid and captivating narrative, lyrically
inundating the senses and revealing a careful examination
of the emotional relationship one associates with exotic
locales so disconnected from what we perceive to be the
“norm.” The readers can empathize with his genuine story
of how travelling became so much of a high that he ended
up losing touch with himself and what was important in
his real life. Like in many other stories, he agrees with
wanting to experience in travelling more leaves
people to take for granted what they already have:
“Travel was only worthwhile when your eyes
were fresh, when it surprised you and amazed
you and made you think about yourself in a
new way. You couldn’t travel forever. When you
stopped seeing, when you lost your curiosity
and openness to the world it was time to return
to your starting point and see where you stood.”

It is through the simple, yet foreign
transportation adventures, that Hoffman sheds
light on the nature of human relationships...

From the outset, Hoffman engages readers through the
lens of a world traveler, rather than a typical tourist. He
explores localities around the world untouched by the
luxuries that cater to the tourism industry. In that, he is
drawn to seek out forms of transportation that experience
tragedy on a regular scale: airlines, such as the national car-
rriers of Cuba, Afghanistan, and Brazil, with faulty safety
records; ferries and ships in Indonesia and Bangladesh that
capsize with frightening regularity; and dilapidated buses
in South America and Africa that ride through hazardous
terrain and conflict-ridden war-zones, just to name a few.
TRAVELER: EXPRESS

Photo credit: Terri Mills

Photo credit: Heidi Exline

Photo credit: Heidi Exline

Photo credit: Heidi Exline
FEATURED IDEAS

IN WHOSE DEVELOP
ING WORLD?

A Photo Essay by Heidi Exline
Exline’s photos depict various forms of the built environment, which capture a strong sense of movement and human emotion. Concrete symbols reflect a sharp evolution of culture and commerce—both of which do more than evoke nostalgia and provide a basis for present day lifestyles, they articulate phemononal growth and its impact on surrounding localities.
THE data in Professor Sanjay Kumar Singh’s article, “Future Mobility in India,” predicts India’s CO2 emissions to increase to 93.25 million metric tons in 2020. That will be 73.45 more metric tons than the past CO2 levels in 2001. In the era of climate-change awareness and discourse, developed cities with heavy auto based-images like Los Angeles and Detroit are working toward reducing CO2 emissions through more efficient mass transit options such as rail and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). Meanwhile, in India—a country with a well-laid rail network—city and regional governments are investing heavily in road expansion. Singh believes that by 2020, 91.7% of India’s traffic volume will be from roads.

In Chennai—the capital of Tamil Nadu and fifth populous, most urbanized city in India—auto rickshaws, or three wheeler carts, similar to a tricycle, contribute the most sound and air pollution to the streetscape. Motorbikes come in at a close second. Because both forms of vehicular transit are relatively low to the street—as opposed to the regular automobile or even buses—pedestrians of both human and animal variety are particularly subject to the exhaust fumes of these vehicles. Bikes and auto rickshaws have two-stroke engines, engines that burn oil, diesel, in the combustion chamber. These engines exude more hydrocarbons, carbon monoxide, and airborne particulate matter, which in Chennai, is more than seven times the prescribed limits of the World Health Organization. However, the reality of the Chennai streetscape, (which
may or may not be read as a microcosm for the issue of climate change within the context of the developing/developed world), is somewhat of a paradox: the two-stroke auto rickshaws and motorbikes are more green than any car on the Chennai road, and infinitely more ‘sustainable’ than any hybrid vehicle you will find on the I-95 American interstate. How is this possible? Simply scientific: it is due to the sheer number of humans each auto rickshaw and bike transports.

At first glance, the brightly painted auto rickshaws that overcrowd the roads may be described from a foreigner’s eye as cute, much like the Volkswagen Bug. In its design, the auto rickshaw has a small, curved cabin resembling something between a 19th century horse-drawn coach and an insect-like bumper car. The auto has front and back windshields and two benches inside, one for the driver and a slightly larger one in back, with a little ledge behind the bench for personal belongings. There are no doors; air passes through either side of the vehicle. One may pull down small canvas flaps in the event of inclement weather or to shield the thick polluted street dust and exhaust. Autos operate not by a steering wheel but by handlebars; the dashboard is usually reserved for radios, city maps, and small iconic deities. They are designed to hold the driver and two passengers, though most can comfortably accommodate three. However, in Chennai and particularly in more rural areas, it is more common to see four or five and up to six or seven people. The same holds true of motorbikes, where almost every bike has two passengers, but three or four is not uncommon. Even the traditional bicycle provides innovative solutions for transporting more than one person.

In America, a car (the most spacious mode of personal transportation) is typically occupied by one person. This is why auto-congested cities like L.A. offer road incentives for those who carpool. A carpool, or a vehicle with more than one person, is granted the privilege to drive on a separate lane, as thus is theoretically, less congested lane. Chennai is widely known as the Detroit of India, contributing to over 40% of India, thus a great number of American automobile companies are located in Chennai. Perhaps this is why Chennaites seem to mimic American driving patterns: cars usually have no more than two people, and one is often a personal driver. The patterns are also largely socioeconomic related as these minimally populated cars are often on the IT (Information Technology) Corridor, a toll road that connects major economic industry locations of the city. Due to the lower auto population level, the IT Corridor is less congested, noisy, but may contribute to more air pollution per person than other public roads. As the automotive production capital of India, Chennai has great reasons to continue building roads like the IT Corridor to support continued auto consumption and economic growth for its own residents. Yet, such patterns of development will most likely help fulfill Singh’s prophecy on India’s forecasted CO2 emission increase. Despite the dismal reality of large highway infrastructure projects like the new six-lane extension project for Old Mahabalipuram Road, there are some suggestions that the Indian government is recognizing and giving incentive to the more efficient forms of transportation options of the county. For example, the Automotive Research Association of India has been looking at electrical, battery, and solar-powered vehicle options for over 5 years now. Meanwhile, organizations like the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy are pushing for the New Delhi government to remove the ban on cycle rickshaws, and create a separate lane for these vehicles.

Perhaps the largest threat to India’s transportation crises is the lingering status symbol of the car and the ability of international companies (not only automotive) to market them as objects of class, mobility, and thus freedom. As journalist and automotive expert Murad Ali Baig suggests, India’s post-economic liberalization is no longer an atmosphere of Gandhian simplicity and humbleness; being able to cruise down the IT Corridor in a comfortable, air conditioned car at 6pm on Monday evening is what most Chennaites dream of. So while pollution and traffic remains high, at present India may be more environmentally friendly than its future transportation patterns hold.
THE ABSENCE OF PRESENCE...

leaves us with nothing. or does it?  

A Photo Essay By Terri Mills
PHOTOS taken in Delhi, Chennai and Mudurai capture moments of time where chaotic spaces represent society’s degrees of becoming. In the midst of unforeseen rates of change, urban landscapes that at times appear to be absent of human vitality are in fact quite the opposite: built on human presence.
GLEAMING pieces of urban mosaic layer upon old stories of a rich history and cultural traditions, representing a surge in prosperity and the reification of a modern culture. The ability to sustain a unique social identity is uncertain.
On December 3, 2009, the New York State Supreme Court Appellate Division shocked New York City’s planning and policy-making world by delivering a 3-2 decision against the Empire State Development Corporation’s (ESDC) use of eminent domain on behalf of Columbia University’s Expansion Project in West Harlem.

In sum, the court has ruled that the state, the city, and Columbia University formulated a questionable planning process to acquire private property for the proposed Columbia Expansion Project. In Judge Catterson’s words, ESDC’s plans to impose “blight is mere sophistry, which later was utilized by ESDC to justify the employment of eminent domain…the record overwhelmingly establishes that the true beneficiary of the plan to redevelop Manhattanville is not the community, but rather Columbia University.”

Only a week earlier, the New York State Court of Appeals had ruled in favor of ESDC’s role in the Atlantic Yards project in Brooklyn, with the judges specifically writing that the rules of eminent domain should be left to the legislature, not the courts. As the Columbia case now heads to the very same Court of Appeals, the stage is set for a ruling that may have major consequences for future development and planning in New York City.

Columbia’s pursuit of a new campus in the far west side of Harlem dates back to 2003, when the university first unveiled its $6.38 billion dollar plan for the 17 acre industrial neighborhood of Manhattanville. While Columbia owned slightly more than half of the planned campus footprint at the time, the plan called for a complete redevelopment of the site as a biotechnology campus. Presenting the Expansion as a fait accompli, although typically part of the planning process, helped Columbia successfully acquire more than 90% of the property in the footprint by 2008. Many local business owners who would have preferred to stay in the community were pressured into selling for fear of eminent domain.

By September 2008, when ESDC held its public hearing on the use of eminent domain for the project, a self storage business and two gas stations were still resisting relocation. Unfortunately for Columbia, the owner of the self-storage business “Tuck-it-Away Inc.” is Nicholas Sprayregen, an entrepreneur who has vowed to fight all the way to the Supreme Court and has hired renowned civil rights attorney Norman Siegel to lead his case.

The ruling in Mr. Sprayregen’s December victory against ESDC is remarkable in the assessment of the Columbia project as a thoughtless land acquisition, which lacks the inclusion of a civic renewal program, something that the community has been hoping for quite some time. According to the majority opinion written by Judge James Catterson,
the ESDC and New York City’s Economic Development Corporation (EDC) supported Columbia University’s plans to blight its Manhattanville properties by vacating tenants and failing to perform basic maintenance. ESDC then used private consultants who had previously been a client of Columbia’s to conduct the environmental evaluation of Manhattanville’s conditions. And at the same time these conversations were occurring, the City was publically encouraging Community Board 9 to compose its alternative community plan for development in the neighborhood, a plan that was later dismissed by ESDC and the City for not meeting the needs of the proposed campus or the infrastructure to sustain it.

This ruling exposes the City’s priorities and questionable economic values that underlie the operations of New York’s planning agencies. While community activists have supported these charges, the court’s ruling and the scathing language of Judge Catterson’s brief adds legitimacy to this critique.

This case holds promise to restore democracy to New York City Planning within communities citywide who have been adversely affected by large-scale development projects. The Columbia case singles out the ESDC as an ineffectual organization.

Indeed, ESDC’s use of power in both Atlantic Yards and Columbia’s Expansion has prompted State Assemblyman Richard Brodsky (D) and State Senator Bill Perkins (D) to push for major reform for New York’s eminent domain laws. In January New York Times article, Kathryn S. Wylde, the chief executive of the Partnership for New York City, a private business lobby, expressed alarm that the Columbia ruling “is the first thing that’s happened in New York that suggests the threat of change in our eminent domain law…I think it’s very frightening.”

Ms. Wylde’s fear is largely due to Judge Catterson’s detailed critique of the Columbia Expansion planning process, a critique that threatens the legitimacy of New York City’s large-scale development processes. In distinguishing his ruling from the Supreme Court’s 2005 Kelo vs. City of New London (which upheld the rights of states to use eminent domain for private development), Judge Catterson cites the lack of an objective, transparent planning process in the public interest as the key difference between the two cases.

Citing the brief filed by Justice Kennedy in Kelo, Judge Catterson asserts that eminent domain can only be used if the planning process is conducted in a manner that ensures against “impermissible favoritism.” The plan must be an objective attempt to eradicate blight and must be chosen from a variety of competing alternatives. ESDC’s plan for the Columbia Expansion is an invalid use of eminent domain.

If the NY Supreme Court’s ruling is upheld at the Court of Appeals next month, a major blow will be struck against the power of New York’s planning bureaucracies and the top-down, privately driven, mega-project planning that the City continues to support. Even if the ruling is overturned, ESDC’s victory may be short lived as the case has succeeded in drawing considerable public and legislative attention.

It’s time for New York to engage in real city planning—to analyze the whole picture, understand current conditions and the history that led us there, engage the local community, question our normative assumptions, and compare a variety of alternatives.

To learn more about Columbia University’s expansion plan you can find Brian Paul’s paper “Columbia’s Manhattanville Expansion: Community Planning Confronts Institutional Elitism,” at www.hunter.cuny.edu/ccpd/publications. The paper was presented at the 2010 annual conference of the Urban Affairs Association.
IMAGINE: Black asphalt brought to life by an open tent with 4 orchid paintings for sale, 3 children pouring over a large sheet of paper and drawing all over, 50 unique vendors, 2 street performers, a shrink and his patient with a puppet on his hand, a bride and a groom walking, 70 skaters dashing around and an extremely curious young boy hiding inside a painted cardboard box, all in the street—a space “à la Prévert” perhaps, or, maybe just an unconventional type of street event called “Williamsburg Walks”. Initiated as a partnership between the New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT), Neighbors Allied for Good Growth and the L Magazine, the event is now in its third year of reclaiming the streets from cars and offering an alternative to stale street fairs, and I am thrilled to be part of the process.

By in large, New York City street fairs have become yet another dot on the map of the “Geography of Nowhere”. Stripped from their symbolic and cultural character and function, street fairs have been turned into money making machines. According to a study published by the Center for Urban Future in 2006, only 3 large production companies organize more than 200 fairs and hire “their regulars”. In 2005, a mere 20 [street] vendors held 46 percent of all food permits. Stroll down, shop, eat, you have absolutely no sense that you are in New York City—one of the most diverse cities in the world—let alone in one particular neighborhood.

Williamsburg Walks seeks to break this droning pattern. The goal is to revitalize the festive use of streets and offer additional recreational spaces to neighborhoods with limited open space and parks,
and to encourage community pride. Unlike typical street fairs, Williamsburg Walks’ operations and concessions are far from Faustian. The role of the NYCDOT is to serve as the primary stakeholder and to handle the administrative hurdles such as obtaining permits and coordinating with multiple city agencies; and the community organizer partner plays an active role with local groups to plan the ideal programming and activities that they would like to promote and experience. It’s working.

Williamsburg Walks is providing a much needed socio-cultural experience for local community members, a refreshing alternative to stale street fairs. The event has grown from 3 in 2008, to approximately 19 as it approaches its third season. Williamsburg Walks is located on virgin territory along Bedford Avenue in Brooklyn. Both the location and the concept were original, and thus the event is bumping against conventional ways of activating streets. For example, Williamsburg Walks offers a chance for local merchants to maximize the sidewalk spaces at no extra cost. Retailers are able to display their goods and products, cafes and restaurants place tables outside and benefit from the increased foot traffic. However not all retailers express interest in this progressive activation of street vitality.

After two years of communicating the concept and raising awareness, Williamsburg Walks is still struggling to obtain the collaboration of a group of merchants who operate in the age of “where are my customers going to park”, despite a majority of the customers being pedestrians. And of course it would not be New York without the residents who complained that the event made the street feel too crowded or noisy. Despite some resistance to change, Williamsburg Walks is growing and attracting new opportunities to celebrate the community: It offers the kind of public space locals deserve with open spaces for kids to play, parents to socialize, elders to sit, and especially artists to show their talents and visitors to relish these local flavors. In doing so, Williamsburg Walks, like all the other Weekend Walks, is a catalyst for creative ideas and civic dialogue on how to reclaim the street from cars and funnel cakes.

New York City street fairs have become yet another dot on the map of the “Geography of Nowhere”. Stripped from their symbolic and cultural character and function, street fairs have—like everything else—been turned into money making machines.
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