Mitchell Silver is a 1993 graduate of the Urban Planning program at Hunter College, and his tremendous energy and enthusiasm for planning is easy to see. He completed his degree in two years, while also working for the Manhattan Borough President. Part of his honeymoon was spent reviewing the final report of his planning studio on Harlem. A year later, Mitchell came back to Hunter to co-teach a planning studio on East Harlem with Gene Birch, then the director of the department of Urban Affairs and Planning. Both projects won the AICP National Award, which complemented the many high profile planning jobs Silver has held in New York City, and Washington, DC. He currently holds two titles for the City of Raleigh, North Carolina as their Chief Planning and Economic Development Officer and Director of City Planning. In these roles he oversaw the Raleigh 2030 Plan, which was adopted in 2009 and seeks to guide the city through an anticipated growth of 250,000 residents.

On April 12, 2011 Mitchell was formally sworn in as the President of the American Planning Association at the APA National Conference in Boston. This is an historic precedent – Mitchell is the first graduate of Urban Planning at Hunter College. Mitchell’s trip back to Hunter this fall signifies great anticipation and a planning project in the works. A proud line of experienced planners, both graduates before and after Mitchell, are working in a range of positions around the world.

Hunter Urban Affairs and Planning has more than tripled in size since you graduated. My classmates want to know what advice you have for us? How is the landscape of planning changing? What should we be thinking about as we begin our careers, or continue to refine them?

The advice I have for students today is look ahead: you have chosen a fascinating career path at a time when the profession of planning is undergoing major changes. There are exciting and hard times ahead, and young planners are a big part of how the profession is adapting. The most important thing for any planner is to hold on to your sense of purpose – both of who you are and what you think planning is. Planning today needs to be a multidisciplinary role. You want to be the go-to person in the go-to profession that can tie in the different approaches needed to face the enormous political, environmental and economic challenges that we have ahead. If you don’t understand your sense of purpose, you will question yourself throughout your career.

Communicating is also key – simply knowing information or understanding how to do something is not enough – planners have to separate themselves from other professions by how they communicate. We will not move an idea forward without properly explaining the idea. It is not just public speaking that is important but how you engage your audience. Planning is a profession of garnering and communicating the support of the public because we speak a foreign language. Planners need to be able to speak in plain English, and to listen closely to what people say to find where our language needs interpretation.

Planning has always been a forward thinking profession. The new APA Development Plan addresses emerging trends that the profession will face. Changes in demographics, the rise of single plateaus, and the desire for new residential opportunities offer new challenges and opportunities for the profession. Mitchell Silver has been a leader in the profession and continues to inspire new planners to follow in his footsteps.

The Urban Review team is proud to present this issue of the Urban Review. This issue is produced in conjunction with a special alumni event honoring Hunter Urban Affairs and Planning Alum and APA President Mitch Silver, the first event in a series that will lead to UAP’s 50th Anniversary in 2015.

Within these pages is the most extensive edition of the Urban Review ever published. It includes articles written by both undergraduates and graduates in Urban Affairs and Planning. The Urban Review serves as a forum for ideas, a showcase for student projects and an opportunity for students to publish their written work. The range of subjects covered in this issue reflects what students are learning in the classroom as well as how they are applying these critical skills in the field.

The Urban Review is entirely student produced—from soliciting submissions, to securing funding for printing, to designing the finished product that you hold in your hands. This edition would not have been possible without the help of many dedicated students!

-Melanie Bower

Editors:
Melanie Bower - Content Editor
Dan Compitello - Production Manager
Alexandra Hanson - Outreach Editor
Andrea Katz - Design and Layout Editor

Editorial Team:
Melanie Bower, Andrew Gulnick, Alexandra Hanson, Erin McAuliff, Terri Mills, Oksana Mironova

Peer Review Committee:
Elike Addae, Melanie Bower, Dan Compitello, Erin Kehoe, Jamie Leggett, Erin McAuliff

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You moved from being a planner in the nation's first Capitol – New York City – to its current, Washington, DC. What was that transition like as a planner? What supported your decision to move to Raleigh after DC?

Overall, it has been a great transition. It took about a year to transition from Washington DC into the Raleigh area. Raleigh area is known for innovation, and it has been great for developing partnerships between elected officials, the business community and the public that are needed to make big changes. This region is truly becoming a world class metropolitan area. Once you’re here, you don’t want to leave.

Inward migration is a big issue here – there are many transplants from other parts of the country. Duke, North Carolina State University and Chapel Hill, and all the industries that are supported by the Research Triangle make this an exciting entrepreneurial community – we lead the world in patents created in many industries. There are smart people moving here, there are smart people living here, and there are smart people staying here. Time Magazine surprised me when they called it Raleigh as a City that stands out. I told them I get a lot of calls about the Raleigh 2030 plan, but few calls like this. It is not average to have a city mentioned like that and Raleigh is not an average City.

The City of Raleigh is implementing its 2030 Comprehensive Plan. How did Raleigh change while the plan was being created? What are the challenges facing the plan?

Before the plan started, I knew it was important to have a conversation with the public. In New York City, almost everyone wants to be part of the conversation, but that was not the case in Raleigh. We needed to lay the foundation for dialog. We needed to bring people together and talk about the region and to introduce ideas like walkability and sustainability.

Through the conversations we realized we had finite limitations. The community was receptive and they realized how the 2030 Comprehensive Plan could address their present needs and the growth we expect ahead. It was unanimously adopted in 2009. In terms of challenges – people are starting to realize that the Comprehensive Plan is not just going to sit on a shelf. It is a living document and it is motivating people. With the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan, Raleigh’s growth will be targeted within eight high density growth centers – these are incorporated into the new building code and also the regional transit links.

That gets us to another interesting data point – David Brooks cites the Pew Research Center, writing that “cities remain attractive to the young and that 45 percent of American between the ages of 18-34 would like to live in New York City”. New York can’t hold 38 Million people, except as tourists over the course of a year. Will these people look to other cities?

Young people are choosing the city they want to live in before they choose a job. That is very different than earlier generations. It is hard to predict what will happen to people who move to New York City – it is not like living anywhere else. For example my son moved to Raleigh at 25, and at 28 is buying his first house. That wouldn’t happen in New York – it takes longer before you can buy. But you can’t exchange the lifestyle in New York, no one can compete with that. I think younger generations are looking to other cities. Owning a house, lifestyle choices – more and more young people are choosing to leave cities where those options aren’t available. They are certainly moving south or west because of lifestyle changes.
Daniel H. Burnham was considered to be the preeminent architect and planner in America at the turn of the twentieth century. He established himself as a leader in the City Beautiful Movement and was commissioned to design master plans for many major cities across the country, including the McMillan Plan of Washington, D.C. in 1901. In 1904 and 1905, Burnham completed a renewal plan for Manila, the capital city of the Philippines, the newest overseas acquisition of the United States. Although the plan was only realized in parts, many of its planning concepts proved crucial in shaping the composition of Manila and its metropolitan area today.

Manila began as a small tribal settlement on the banks of the Pasig River near the mouth of Manila Bay. It took its name from a white-flowered mangrove, *Avicennia marina*, which grew in abundance along the marshy shores of the bay and was used to produce soap for regional trade. “Maynila”, or “place where the nila grows” became a proscribed Islamic community ruled by the Rajah Sulaman, a powerful Malay Sultan. In 1571, Spanish conquistador Manuel Lopez de Legazpi was searching for a suitable location for the capital of the Spanish East Indies and led his force of 280 Spaniards and 600 native Filipino allies to occupy the area.

Shortly thereafter, the Spanish constructed the walled city of Intramuros, serving as the political, military, and religious center of Manila. Because of its strategic location as Spain’s chief trading post, Intramuros was considered a valuable resource for both protecting its interests in the Far East, and continuing its growth as a world power.

Burnham's Manila plan was remarkable in its simplicity and its cognizance of Philippine conditions and traditions while still conveying the tone of the Americans at the cost of $20 million. This started another process of colonization and a pacification campaign, which the Filipinos resented for many years to come.

Believing in a mission of tutelage, the American colonial government believed that it was of great necessity to bring modern social and political institutions to the Philippines in order to introduce the Filipino people to democratic governance. The Americans believed that the Filipino people, if granted their independence, would resort to the Spanish legacy of oligarchic rule and resume a dictatorship. Furthermore, they also believed that their new colony’s physical facilities and cultural amenities required improvement, such as transportation systems, architecture, and urban planning. Strategic in its location, the Americans saw the Philippines as a valuable resource for both protecting its interests in the Far East, and continuing its growth as a world power.

At around the same time, Daniel Burnham was becoming revered as a practitioner of architecture and urban planning in the United States. His budding reputation caught the attention of W. Cameron Forbes, the newly appointed Commissioner of Commerce in the colonial government of the Philippines. In 1904, Forbes, along with Secretary of War William Howard Taft, selected Burnham as the chief architect to develop a new master plan for Manila. As a result of continual resistance from the Filipino nationalists, the American government was determined to assert its authority over its newest colony. The United States hoped that Daniel Burnham could conceive of a plan that would set an appropriate imperial, yet progressive tone.

As a moderately liberal Republican, Burnham identified with American progressivism. While believing ultimately in “the Philippines for the Filipinos,” he also believed that Filipinos needed a period of tutelage, in which the more “advanced” Americans could help affect a “progressive civilization” by instruction and example. He stated that “the United States, having overthrown the Spanish government...was under obligation to see that the government established in its place would represent all and do justice to none.” As an advocate of “progressive” planning in the United States - based on the political agenda of progressivism - and enlightened governmental reform and regulation of large business interests - he believed that the same kinds of urban programs should be implemented in territories.

Burnham’s Manila plan was remarkable in its simplicity and its cognizance of Philippine conditions and traditions while still conveying the tone of city Beautiful planning. Concise and straightforward, his plan accounted for Manila’s projected growth from 250,000 residents to 750,000 residents. It included technical recommendations for streets, parks, railroads, and public buildings. These recommendations echoed many of Burnham’s previous city plans. Burnham set ambitious objectives, including transforming the city into “the adequate expression of the destiny of the Filipino people as well as an enduring witness to the efficient services of America in the Philippine Islands.”

Burnham’s plan turned the original Spanish model of planning in Manila inside out by redefining the relationship of public buildings to the urban fabric. Rather than being cloistered in Intramuros as they had been under the Spanish, government buildings were placed in deliberately public and accessible spaces. The most immediate focus of the Manila plan was the creation of a grandiose public space for government buildings near the center of the city.

Directly facing Manila Bay and bordering Intramuros was Luneta Park. Luneta Park was to be widened, creating a landscaped center for buildings housing the capital and other departments of the national government. It would also be extended about one thousand feet into Manila Bay, allowing for beautiful public playgrounds and picnic grounds, flanked on either side by impressive governmental buildings. The extension aimed to form a natural starting point for a 250-foot wide continuous bay-front boulevard for infinite views of the ocean and sky.

This waterfront boulevard, named Dewey Boulevard to honor American naval admiral George Dewey, was intended to contain driveways, parkways, and perhaps even a bridge path for horse carriages. Construction of the intended twelve-mile long boulevard was authorized in 1909, and was pursued in connection with the improvement of the port of Manila. The waterfront boulevard element was one that Burnham would promote in several other plans, most notably for Lake Shore Drive in his plan for Chicago.

While the walled city of Intramuros retained some of the elegance that made Manila one of the most celebrated colonial cities of its day, the moat around it was stagnant and a perennial health hazard. In addition, the infrastructure in the areas outside of the walls was spectacularly inadequate. Burnham’s plan preserved Intramuros as an artifact of the Spanish period, with its walls and bastions pierced in places to form gateways, promote ventilation, and allow for efficient circulation of traffic. The moat was filled with sand and converted into a public park.

With his earlier experience with the McMillan Plan as a model, Burnham also devised a composite scheme of both radial and diagonal arteries to be superimposed onto the existing irregular pattern of the city. Encouraged by the colonial government’s pacification campaign and its process of population re-concentration, Burnham’s proposed avenues cut through a very concentrated built environment. The radial street scheme divided the town into five sections, in which the rectangular gridiron prevailed, but also created a fan-shaped radiation system from the center. This promoted the idea that every section of the city “would look with deference toward the symbol of the Nation’s power,” and that traffic would be directed efficiently up to a point where diagonals would be introduced as continuous connections between sections.

The three large parks, considered “breathing space for the masses,” were accessible from the city center and each other via parkways. In addition, as many as nine smaller parks would be evenly distributed throughout the urban fabric of the city. These parks were designed to improve upon the moral tone of the neighborhoods they served. Each location was chosen with special regard to the

Daniel Burnham and The City of Manila, 1905: The City Beautiful in a Tropical Paradise

By Jim Diego
landscapes’ potential and each would provide facilities and venues for a plethora of outdoor events.

After Burnham submitted his plan in June of 1905, work began under the auspices of William E. Parsons, the American government’s consulting architect who was recommended for the job by Burnham. Parsons served in Manila from November 1905 until 1914, supervising the implementation of Burnham’s plan as well as directing the design of all public buildings and parks throughout the islands. Parsons bore the burden of interpreting Burnham’s plan, which, of course, as a broadly focused set of concepts, was necessarily tentative and subject to change and modification. Because of limited resources and reappropriated funding, many aspects of Burnham’s plan did not come to fruition. However, the waterfront parkway, a handful of governmental buildings and the Luneta extension were completed.

Aspects of the Manila plan, despite it not being fully conceived, were able to guide future public works for Manila. For instance, the 1931 zoning ordinance followed the basic framework of the Burnham plan, with an added layer of specific uses and specific uses. The ordinance, along with subsequent zoning changes, development controls, and building regulations, had a small but essential impact on the future shape of the city.

In 1935, the Philippines was granted the status of a commonwealth. The first Filipino to head the commonwealth’s government, Manuel Quezon, diverted funds initially directed for the Burnham plan to welfare, irrigation projects, a concern for the economic capability and potential of the new nation. Additionally, Quezon began the development of a large area of rural land north of Manila with the hopes of developing a new capital city well inland and protected from possible sea attacks from invaders.

A decade later, Manila was at the forefront of World War II, culminating in a battle that would completely devastate the city. Greater Manila was dissolved, and the capital moved to the Queen’s new city, aptly named after him (Quezon City). The Philippines finally declared its independence with foreign recognition.

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After the war, despite many buildings being heavily damaged beyond repair, Manila was able to rebuild quickly. Manila became geographically oriented, encompassing the conglomeration of sixteen gerrymandered cities known as Metro Manila, each with dynamic city centers of their own. With no real planning focus or guidance - not to mention complete governmental negligence to severely escalating poverty, leading to the development of widespread informal settlements - Manila swelled into a bustling and vibrant metropolis of over 10 million residents over the next four decades. What was to be envisioned as a city with “graceful tree-lined boulevards, properly manicured parks, and comfortable suburban alleys; and heavily congested roadways, thick with traffic not unlike many other major world cities. Still, these burdens of daily life add to the city’s encompassing, and ultimately alluring energy. As with many other international metropolitan areas, Manila has continued to experience urban problems. Burnham’s work, like most other planning, did not solve any problems for all time or all problems at any time. But his plans were a new beginning which influenced the development of the city, and continue to do so, in some capacity today.

The City Beautiful movement realized one of its greatest architectural successes, not on American, but on foreign colonial soil with the Manila Plan. The City Beautiful model also displays its generational failure to anticipate unpredictable factors. Socio-economic, cultural, and sustainable growth all played second fiddle to the tenets of the City Beautiful movement – neo-classical civic beauty. As conceiver and implementer, Burnham and Parsons still brought about successful and enduring improvements in Manila, because they took a genuine interest in the development of the capital city. They were not simply acting as imperialists superimposing a standard plan onto an unwilling municipality. Instead, they embraced what existed, analyzed what needed to be repaired or renewed, and worked cooperatively with the indigenous topography, climate, and transitioning government, to leave a lasting impact on Manila.

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From the late 19th century until 1945, West Haven, a small industrial district in the Bronx hummed as one of the City’s manufacturing and industrial transport centers. After WWII, West Haven became known for its diminished housing and abandoned warehouses bordered by the Bronx Men’s House of Detention (BMHOD) and Yankee Stadium at its north, industrial and commuter railroad yards to its east, and the Major Deegan Expressway at its western edge facing across the Harlem River to the Manhattan Valley (Figure 1). By the mid-1950s this once thriving industrial center formed the western edge of one of the poorest sections of New York City, one that would languish in blighted obscurity for almost 60 years.

Redevelopment at West Haven held little interest for City planners until 2006 when a major redevelopment initiative led by Related Companies, and driven by enlightened self-interest on the part of both the City and the developer, forged a public/private partnership to redevelop the western edge of West Haven along its shoreline. By executing a comprehensive Community Benefits Agreement (CBA), the Developer and a coalition of community organizations agreed to “… ensure that the Gateway Center at the Bronx Terminal Market (Gateway) proceeds and does so in a manner that is beneficial to the neighboring and surrounding community” and thereby overcomes obstacles of placement, environmental limitation and social stigma.

Today, Gateway, located in the community of my childhood and early youth, represents the new Bronx Tale of the successful integration of economic renaissance with contemporary sustainable urban redevelopment.

Community History: The Past Links to the Present

West Haven’s factories, stores, rail lines and public buildings expressed 19th century economic and social models of industry, transportation, civil authority and recreation. Early neighborhood social expressions in West Haven included beer halls, open green spaces such as Cedar (now Franz Sigel) Park, and entertainment venues such as the vaudeville theater known as the Bronx Opera House. Until World War II, the economic and social capital that was produced by these institutions made West Haven a community center for Bronx County as its rural paths yielded to paved roads and infrastructure to create lines on the land that defined the older urban core.

As social venues evolved, manufacturing infrastructure emerged. The western edge of West Haven remained partially submerged (Figure 2), until the completed
construction of the 149th Street Bridge in 1910 (later renamed the 145th Street Bridge) when the Cromwell Creek landfill project produced the articulation of Exterior Street, known today as Gateway. This industrial presence included factories, commercial laundries, gas and electric companies, and railroads, among others. The presence of this jail reflected the industrial presence in Queens, making West Haven “Long Island City’s spiritual descendant” as described by Robert Caro in his biography of Robert Moses.

The Gateway Project and its Components: Building on Strength

In 2004, the New York City Council unanimously agreed to support the redevelopment of the former Bronx Terminal Market, as a part of the City’s larger goal to re-establish social and economic capacity in older core neighborhoods. In this redevelopment, a combination of land rezoning and transfer, street closings and road reconstructions was followed by building demolition, renovation and new construction reviewed and approved through the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP). The Gateway Project redeveloped three commercial buildings and the BHIC, created of shoreline parks and community open spaces, upgraded transportation infrastructure, new pedestrian bridges and escalators, and a new train station for the Metro-North rail line. By 2009, BID had housed 957,700 gross square feet of retail space, adjacent to 2,835 spaces for parking. In addition, construction of a 250-room hotel in the area is expected to be completed by 2014. The construction at Gateway produced new commercial infrastructure, upgraded transportation modes, increased efficiency of movement for people and goods through the region, and generated additional revenue for the Bronx from new parking space added by the 149th Street Bridge and the 149th Street station. In addition to this redevelopment, a pattern of regional transportation and associated infrastructure built during the early to mid-20th century surrounds Gateway with the promise of renewed economic growth; a pattern that includes highways and access roads, city subways, interstate commutes and commercial rail. The restored link between the CSX freight line and the Oak Point Rail Yard, located in the East Bronx near Hunt’s Point, joined this western shore of the Bronx to New York City’s largest classification yard and restored West Haven’s status as a major urban freight intermodal transport corridor.

Community Acceptance: Nothing is Given To You

The physical redevelopment by the Related Companies after their purchase of the site did not, however, proceed successfully to date without expressions of community concern. One of the more controversial actions taken by the City was to designate the project a “revitalization zone” (RZ) for the purpose of enabling a variety of changes and impacts, including a reduction in the height of buildings on the property, which raised concerns for social equity and Community representatives voiced concern over their perceived exclusion from the development process. These concerns were addressed through collaboration between the Developer and BID, resulting in the revitalization of the area surrounding Gateway with the promise of renewed economic growth; a pattern that includes highways and access roads, city subways, interstate commutes and commercial rail. The restored link between the CSX freight line and the Oak Point Rail Yard, located in the East Bronx near Hunt’s Point, joined this western shore of the Bronx to New York City’s largest classification yard and restored West Haven’s status as a major urban freight intermodal transport corridor.

Adjacent Projects, Open Space and Post-Construction Environmental Impact

Gateway employs contemporary design models for land use, space planning and environmental development within an urban retail construction model. This new mixed-use development, a pattern of regional transportation and associated infrastructure built during the early to mid-20th century surrounds Gateway with the promise of renewed economic growth; a pattern that includes highways and access roads, city subways, interstate commutes and commercial rail. The restored link between the CSX freight line and the Oak Point Rail Yard, located in the East Bronx near Hunt’s Point, joined this western shore of the Bronx to New York City’s largest classification yard and restored West Haven’s status as a major urban freight intermodal transport corridor.

Conclusion: Drawing Strength from the Fire

Gateway opened in 2009, proudly emerging from the edge of West Haven along the Harlem River shore. This project – the second largest project of any kind in the Northeast United States to receive certification for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED silver certification) for both its core and shell – generated much needed local economic capacity, and its structure is a visible urban retail template – creating economic stimulus using urban entrepreneurial and constructive political strategy that symbolizes this City’s commitment to responsibly rebuild an aged older urban community on the foundation of its rich industrial history.
Havana’s Urban Agriculture: An Alternative Perspective

By Jesse Alter

Cuba has undergone an agricultural transformation whereby a new urban-organic model has emerged. This article will discuss organic food production in Havana and the role that agriculture has played in improving the economic and social conditions for many Cubans. I will focus on how government reform and policy has addressed Cuban food system challenges, particularly its food crisis, by creating urban agricultural programs through decentralization and financial incentives for farmer cooperative production, farmers’ markets and on-site stores. Such programs have proven to be largely successful, improving the health of many communities within the city of Havana.

In 1959, the Cubans, led by the efforts of marginalized rural farmers, successfully overthrew the U.S. backed Batista dictatorship. The Cuban revolution committed to self-sovereignty and supporting a just social system that would provide the basic right to education, healthcare, land and food. The Agrarian Reform Law (May, 1959) was one of the first pieces of legislation that put limits on landholdings and redistributed land to peasant families, sharecroppers, and landless farmers. As a result, more than 100,000 landless peasants became landowners overnight, many committed to maintaining crop diversification and integrated farming practices. Four years later, 80 percent of all landholdings and expropriated foreign territory was nationalized and converted into Cuban state-run farms.

Despite Cuba’s revolutionary commitment to self-sufficiency, it was not able to produce enough food to feed its people: 57 percent of all food calories were imported, including a full 80 percent of proteins and fats. More than 85 percent of Cuba’s trade was with the Soviet Union and European socialist countries. The Soviet Union’s willingness to purchase excessive amounts of sugar in the international marketplace enabled the Cuban government to purchase food elsewhere. But following the collapse of the Soviet Bloc, Cuba’s imports were reduced by 75 percent including most foodstuffs and nearly all agro-inputs. The average decrease in caloric intake for Cubans dropped 30 percent. Without access to agro-inputs and oil, Cuba’s agricultural system was faced with the insurmountable tasks of increasing food production at home while simultaneously encouraging the exportation of tobacco, sugar, citrus fruits, and coffee. Cuba was in a severe food crisis.

During the 1990s (Cuba’s Special Period in Time of Peace), the Cuban government enforced severe economic austerity measures that forced farmers to substantially reduce their usage of imported technologies that required excessive amounts of capital and oil. At the height of Cuba’s food crisis, the U.S. passed the Torricelli bill (1992) which barred all shipments of food and medical supplies from overseas subsidiaries of U.S. companies. Several years later, the US embargo was tightened by the Helms-Burton Act (1996) restricting all foreign companies that do business with the U.S. to trade with Cuba. Since Cuba could no longer access foreign assistance and international food aid the country needed to maximize its most valuable resource: the human workforce. The Cuban people were in need of a solution that addressed their severe food shortage without relying on the automobile to transport goods and imports from foreign countries.

During the 1990s, food production became the most important priority for the country and President Fidel Castro announced plans to cultivate every acre of vacant land. In May of 1993, a group of Cuban professors and researchers founded the Formative Group of the Cuban Organic Farming Association (ACAO) to promote organic alternatives. The organic farming advocates strongly believed that organic production would lead to the use of low-inputs resulting in less costs, remediate the land and save the environment. In addition, the Organic Farming Association encouraged the government to promote research and provide technical training to all Cubans willing to produce food. A new ideologically approach to agriculture was founded dependent upon the intellectual capital of the Cuban citizenry, especially from the small-scale farmers who maintained their long family and community traditions of low-input production.

In response to ACAO, the Cuban government invested a tremendous amount of resources in agro-technology and education; amended land use laws and tenure; and changed financial structures to streamline the efficient production and distribution of food. The Cuban government recognized the poor management of state-run farms in which state control had become too indirect, inflexible, and not sufficiently democratic. Under socialism, ownership is in the hands of the “associated producers” either directly in cooperatives or indirectly through the state. Where management by the state proved too indirect, inflexible, and not sufficiently democratic, new forms of ownership were adopted. For example, when private land sat idle for more than six months, the government made plans to turn the vacant land over to those wishing to cultivate it. Since there were no landlords to resist change, the state had the power to divide land and labor according to the social need of the country including the production of food.

In September 1993, the Cuban government enacted the Basic Unit of Cooperative Production (UBPC), a new agrarian reform law that broke up state-run farms into small cooperatives. The transfer of land management from state-run farms to worker cooperatives was integral to maximizing the social capital of the Cuban people. Also important was the opening of farmers markets (1994), especially in populated cities such as Havana, because it allowed for the direct sale between producer and consumer. The government’s efforts to decentralize food production and allow for farmer markets helped popularize the organic food movement in Cuba.

As a result of governmental reforms and policies, urban farmers transformed Havana into an important model for organic agriculture. Cuba’s Ministry of Agriculture implemented a key urban agricultural program based on the following principles: 1) access to land for worker cooperatives, 2) research and development, 3) organized points of sale for growers and 4) new marketing schemes. The program was a great success. From 1997-2005, the annual production of vegetables in Havana soared from 20.7 to 272 thousands of metric tons.

This amounts to an almost 15 fold increase in vegetable production over an eight year period that supplies Havana residents on average with more than 340 grams per capita per day. Agro-ecology and organic agriculture play a critical role in increasing food production and maximizing the use of the land.

Agro-ecology and Organic agriculture in Havana

Organic agriculture in Cuba is based upon the farmer’s understanding of agro-ecology, a complex agro-ecosystem made up of ecological interactions,
and synergisms between biotic and abiotic components—mechanisms by which soil fertility enhancement, biological pest control, and higher productivity can be achieved in other words, agro-ecology requires farmers to discover the most efficient combination of plant and animal life to match the environmental landscape of each farm. To be successful, farmers must be intimately familiar with each batch of soil so they know where organic mate-
rial and pest controls should be added. By using the agro-ecological model, farmers produce food without causing externalities such as harm to themselves or degradation to the environment.

During my travels to Havana, I read a sign reflective of this philosophy as I entered a home garden called Patio Felicidad: “He who works the land has an important responsibility (ranging from preparation to harvest) to respect the lives of everything.”

In a meeting with Cary Cruz, an expert at FANJ (Fundacion Antonio Núñez Jiménez de la Naturaleza y el Hombre), she spoke about the need to integrate agro-ecology and sustainability within the urban landscape to reduce food insecurity and improve the quality of life for urban dwellers. She explained that agro-ecological practices are critical to rebuilding Cuba’s local food system and reversing the decline in agricultural biodiversity.

Worker Cooperatives and Employment

During the Special Period, new types of cooperatives were strengthened that brought together pre-existing private farms. To participate in the national food supply, cooperatives had to demonstrate their ability to produce food at lower costs than their counterparts in the state sector. This led to the creation of worker cooperatives, which allowed workers to take control of their jobs and improve their living conditions. Today, worker cooperatives are a significant part of Cuba’s agricultural sector, and they are responsible for producing a large portion of the country’s food.

Collectively, the CCs and CPA have incomes that are well above the national average. The current perception of the peasant farmer is directly related to the surge in urban-organic farming and the sophisticated level of education and business savvy required. The Cuban tradition of men growing food is the norm, however, this is changing with the rapid ex-
tension of urban gardening into households. Currently, the social and economic environment of urban farming has experienced a significant increase in the number of women and young work-
ners into the labor force including the addi-
tion of technicians, researchers, engineers, and teachers. The continued incorporation of younger people and women into the agricultural sector and research institutes will be vital to sustaining the longevity of organic agriculture in Cuba.

Collectively, the CCs, CPA, and some individually owned private farms have helped preserve a large portion of Cuba’s farming traditions, experiences, and culture. For Cuba this is of great importance for the permanent shift toward sustainable and agro-ecological production. Organic agriculture depends upon small-farming traditions and intensive levels of training and care to achieve high yields. In addition, the ur-
ban agricultural workforce has grown from 9,000 in 1999 to 44,000 in 2006. Many well-
educated and highly qualified profession-
als are working side-by-side with farmers to encourage the production, distribution, and consumption of healthy produce. Thus, urban agriculture has increased employ-
ment in Havana at the rate of 20 jobs per hectare. According to Fernando Funes, more and more Cubans are interested in food production including the 800,000 workers for land from the Ministry of Ag-
iculture last year. There is a cultural shift occurring in Cuba toward increasing the efficiency of labor production and becoming more self-sufficient in a short time period.

Currently, urban farmers in both the CCs and CPA have incomes that are well above the national average. The current perception of the peasant farmer is directly related to the surge in urban-organic farming and the sophisticated level of education and business savvy required. The Cuban tradition of men growing food is the norm, however, this is changing with the rapid extension of urban gardening into households. Currently, the social and economic environment of urban farming has experienced a significant increase in the number of women and young work-
ers into the labor force including the addi-
tion of technicians, researchers, engineers, and teachers. The continued incorporation of younger people and women into the agricultural sector and research institutes will be vital to sustaining the longevity of organic agriculture in Cuba.

Conclusion

Despite the surge of urban agriculture in Havana, Cuba’s food system continues to depend on imports; approximately 80% of its food staples such as rice, beans, grain, wheat, and meat products from various countries including China, Canada, Vietnam, U.S., Brazil, Venezue-
la, and Argentina. But still, Havana’s urban agriculture program has risen to the top of the nation’s political agenda—a salient ex-
ample of how a city is capable of increasing the efficiency of labor production and benefiting from the benefits of agro-ecology and organic food production has become institutionalized and strength-
ened by the Ministry of Agriculture and the worker cooperatives. The market vendor indicated that the prices were in-
deed relatively expen-
sive for community residents for the same reasons the Vedado Farmer’s Market prices were high. In contrast to the relatively high price paid for produce in Cuba’s farming traditions, experiences, and culture. For Cuba this is of great importance for the permanent shift toward sustainable and agro-ecological production. Organic agriculture depends upon small-farming traditions and intensive levels of training and care to achieve high yields. In addition, the ur-
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occurring in Cuba toward increasing the

efficiency of labor production and becom-
ing more self-sufficient in a short time period.

Miguel Salines, the Founder of Nama’s ur-
ban agricultural project, he spoke towards the changing mentality of the typical Cu-
ban worker by succinctly stating, “In Cuba, if you don’t work—you don’t eat.”

Today, there are 370,000 urban farmers in Cuba with thousands of special-
ists, technicians, researchers, teachers, and Ministry officials who are actively impro-
vancing and transforming Cuba’s landscape into an agro-ecological production model for sustainability. Since the beginning of the Special Period, the training and education of Cubans in agro-ecology has been a pri-
ority of the Ministry of Agriculture. Due to the Revolution’s commitment to education Cuba has a high literacy rate and a large number of Cubans with advanced degrees: scientists, engineers, and teachers. This has enabled the growth and dissemination of information on agro-ecology resulting in many positive impacts. Furthermore, efforts have been made to teach organic farming techniques to elementary school and se-
ondary school students but also the elderly. Parents, students, and teachers are working together on community gardens through-
out Havana and also throughout Cuba. In response to the food crisis, Cubans have produced an abundance of produce for their own families and a number of on-site markets for produce can be found throughout each community.

Points of Sale and Affordability of Produce

In Havana, there are over 1200 points of sale for residents to buy produce including farmers markets, mobile stands, and on-site marketplaces. The prices of produce differ for each type of vendor. For example, the more affluent Vedado Farmers Market is a supply and de-
mand marketplace where vendors deter-
mine their own price for produce. Most of the produce and meat sold at this farmers market is relatively expensive due to the high cost for transportation from neighbor-
ing municipalities, storage costs, a manda-
tory 5% tax on produce sold, and rent pay-
ments for the use of a stall.

There is also a large network of small government-run and military-run marketplaces where the government sets the price of produce. When I visited several of these markets located every few blocks in Central Havana, a densely populated and mixed income area, the market vend-
ket vendor indicated that the prices were in-
deed relatively expen-
sive for community residents for the same reasons the Vedado Farmer’s Market prices were high. In contrast to the relatively high price paid for produce in Cuba’s farming traditions, experiences, and culture. For Cuba this is of great importance for the permanent shift toward sustainable and agro-ecological production. Organic agriculture depends upon small-farming traditions and intensive levels of training and care to achieve high yields. In addition, the ur-
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municipalities situated on the periphery of Havana. These municipalities are where the vast majority of Havana’s produce is grown because there is greater access to vacant or fallow land. Peri-urban farmers who sell from their on-farm store are not required to pay rent nor the 5% tax to the government. back to the government for the cost of transportation to the city; the price of produce at the on-farm store is more af-
fordable for local consumers. Specifically, by selling on-site it saves the peri-urban farmers from the intensive work of a market harvest, risk of unsold produce, and time away from the field.

During the Special Period, new types of cooperatives were strengthened that brought together pre-existing private farms. To participate in the national urban agricultural program, urban farmers reor-
ganized themselves into cooperatives to address the labor intensiveness of organic agriculture and to optimize their land’s capacity to produce. A Credit and Services Cooperative (CSS) is in charge of facilitating the merging of privately owned farms—with or without a jointly held area—into a cooperative. An Agricultural Cooperative Productive (CPA) consists of a small group of farmers that collectively own a single plot of land. In an interview with Fernando Funes, President of the Grupo de Agricultura Organica (GAO, formerly known as ACAO), he explained why the CSS is much more efficient and productive than the CPA for two reasons: 1) the longstanding history of CSS since the Revolution took power in 1959 and 2) the economic incent-
ives to produce food are much greater be-
cause the CSS can readily sell their crop at demand/supply farmers markets. In Cuba, the state maintains the property rights to the land and the worker cooperatives own the rights to produc-
tion. Most worker cooperatives, especially the CPAs, are obligated to sell their crop back to the government at a predetermined prices set much lower than market-rate. All crops harvested in excess can be sold at the on-farm store or nearby demand/supply farmers market. The opportunity for worker cooperatives to sell excess crops at a higher price creates positive work incen-
tives for farmers to increase production. In addition, it deters them from using costly inputs and to maximize readily available alternative tech-
nology (wind and solar) while employing organic farming techniques.

Worker Cooperatives and Employment

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ganized themselves into cooperatives to address the labor intensiveness of organic agriculture and to optimize their land’s capacity to produce. A Credit and Services Cooperative (CSS) is in charge of facilitating the merging of privately owned farms—with or without a jointly held area—into a cooperative. An Agricultural Cooperative Productive (CPA) consists of a small group of farmers that collectively own a single plot of land. In an interview with Fernando Funes, President of the Grupo de Agricultura Organica (GAO, formerly known as ACAO), he explained why the CSS is much more efficient and productive than the CPA for two reasons: 1) the longstanding history of CSS since the Revolution took power in 1959 and 2) the economic incent-
ives to produce food are much greater be-
When the bus let us off on the side of the road it was starting to get dark and I was beginning to get nervous. To be clear—I am not scared of the dark. As a New Yorker, I am also not entirely used to it. I find it comforting to think that even the darkest of New York’s dark alleys have some form of eclectic illumination from a nearby bodega or an overhead street lamp. But the road I happened to be standing on was deep in rural Peru and there was no sign of anything remotely electrified. The sun had already sunk as my boyfriend and I dug our flashlights out of our backpacks and tried to orient ourselves. I studied the directions that Sabine had given me over the phone: “Tell the driver to let you off at Sachahuasi, then walk up the path on the hill for about 15 minutes until you reach the farm.” I had assumed that the vague directions would make sense upon arrival. And while there was indeed a path, it appeared to me that it led straight into the jungle. In the gathering darkness, we switched on our flashlights and headed up the hill.

What is Fair Trade?

The path to this farm in Peru started in a Trader Joe’s in Brooklyn. I had been buying Trader Joe’s Fair Trade coffee for several months, willingly paying an extra dollar or two for coffee labeled “fair trade.” But I began to wonder where that extra money was going. On some naïve level, I assumed that it was winding up in the pocket of some impoverished coffee grower. However, as I began to explore the meaning of Fair Trade, it became clear that this was not always the case. The coffee industry is highly concentrated, with just four major companies controlling between 50% and 70% of the market. Although these companies profit extensively, the majority of the world’s coffee farmers live in poverty, struggling to break even. In Peru, the 130,000 families that grow coffee typically require about 80 cents per pound to recoup their losses. They usually receive half that, sometimes even less. Unable to hire laborers during harvest season, many growers are forced to take their children out of school so that they can assist with work in the fields.

In basic terms Fair Trade is a labeling system designed to provide consumers with information about the conditions of production of a particular item. When you buy coffee, chocolate or any other product with a Fair Trade label on it, it means that the company which made the product has paid a Fair Trade organization for the right to use their label. The Fair Trade Labeling Organization (FLC) sets Fair Trade standards and ensures they are enforced. Typically, this means workers earn a decent wage, child labor is prohibited, working conditions are safe, etc. For food commodities like coffee and cocoa, FLO guarantees that producers were paid a minimum ‘Fair Trade’ price for their product. This offers producers protection from volatile commodities markets—in the case of coffee, this floor price of $1.35-$1.65 per pound can be twice as high as the value determined by commodities markets. Fair Trade labeling is used primarily for food products—the supply chains of products such as electronics or clothing are too complex for Fair Trade standards. Fair Trade coffee comprises the majority of Fair Trade sales, worldwide.

Over the past decade, consumers have become increasingly aware of injustices surrounding coffee, causing Fair Trade to evolve from a fringe movement to a full-fledged cause. Almost 90% of the world’s coffee is grown in impoverished countries in the global south for export to developed countries. The coffee industry is highly concentrated, with just four major companies controlling between 50% and 70% of the market. Although these companies profit extensively, the majority of the world’s coffee farmers live in poverty, struggling to break even. In Peru, the 130,000 families that grow coffee typically require about 80 cents per pound to recoup their losses. They usually receive half that, sometimes even less. Unable to hire laborers during harvest season, many growers are forced to take their children out of school so that they can assist with work in the fields.

In Peru, many growers have abandoned growing coffee in favor of cultivating coca, the plant used to make cocaine. Coca thrives in the same conditions as coffee and it can be 13 times as lucrative. Peru is the world’s second largest producer of coca (35,000 hectares), but while this crop is lucrative, its cultivation brings violence and crime into the communities where it is grown. In some Latin American countries, farmers have given up on growing coffee altogether, abandoning their fields and migrating to cities. In short, struggle and suffering are part of the reality of growing coffee.

Organizations such as the UN, the World Bank and Oxfam have praised Fair Trade, arguing that paying farmers a fair price for their coffee is a strategy for poverty alleviation and path to empowerment. Consumers are increasingly aware of Fair Trade and in recent years both Dunkin’ Donuts and Starbucks have committed to purchasing certified Fair Trade coffee. Although it represents less than 3% of total coffee sales, Fair Trade imports into the US have been growing at about 33% a year, and it is the fastest growing segment of the coffee market.

Yet for all this fanfare, there is remarkably little research on the actual benefits that farmers receive from Fair Trade. There are plenty of “impact stories”—those touching narratives that you might read on a bar of Fair Trade chocolate. Impact stories usually profile a grower and describe how their life has improved since they began participating in Fair Trade. Journalist Michel Polan has dubbed these stories “supermarket pastoral” brief vignettes that provide a snapshot of how food is produced but often veil the true complexity of where it actually comes from.

It was my desire to lift this veil that led to me to live and work on a farm in Peru. I found the farm through WWOOF—the Worldwide Opportunities on Organic Farms, an organization that links organic farmers with volunteers. The time I spent on the farm was a work exchange. In return for room and board, I was expected to help with any and all farm tasks.

I had done a decent amount of research before disembarking for the farm, providing me with some academic context for my adventure. There are only a handful of studies that have systematically assessed Fair Trade. One such study found that while Fair Trade growers in Roncon, Mexico ultimately received more cash for each pound of coffee they sold, they also had higher inputs of capital than conventional growers. In the end, the study concluded that Fair Trade growers had an annual average household net loss of $379 compared to conventional grower’s loss of $450. Another study found that when market prices of coffee were low, members of a Fair Trade cooperative in Nicaragua earned more than farmers who did not participate in Fair Trade networks. Additionally, the role of coffee cooperatives complicates the issue of Fair Trade. Cooperatives are common in Latin America, in both Fair Trade and traditional networks of buying and selling. Cooperatives act as middlemen, buying coffee from smallholdings farmers and selling it to exporters or roasters. Since the majority of the world’s coffee growers are smallholding farmers, growing on less than 10 hectares of land, cooperatives can help farmers pool their resources and manage economies of scale. But remember that extra two bucks I was shelling out for Fair Trade beans? That extra cash ultimately goes to the Fair Trade cooperative, not directly to the growers. In many cases, cooperatives buy and sell both Fair Trade and conventional coffee and pool the proceeds into a single payment to farmers. In cooperatives where Fair Trade price benefits are retained at the association level, growers may be entirely unaware...
of Fair Trade price premiums, and in large associations, the Fair Trade premium “may be so small as to be meaningless if it were actually divided among all producers.”

**A literal take on field work**

Sachahuare, the farm where we stayed, is owned by a married couple—Roberto, a native Peruvian and Sabine, a Belgian with a degree in agronomics. It is deep in the jungle of Peru—the nearest town is so small it rarely appears on maps. Their main crops were cocoa, coffee and mangoes. Like most rural farms in Peru, there was no running water. Electricity was a handful of bare bulbs powered by solar panels and the stove wasn’t much more than a firepit.

Moreover, it was simple but sufficient. Sabine and Roberto practice biodynamic farming. Unlike traditional farming, which emphasizes yields, biodynamics sees farming as processes of interconnected ecological activities that can enrich the land, rather than just take from it. This meant that all activities on the farm were done with careful consideration. Weeds were pulled by hand, since herbicides couldn’t be used. Similarly, ‘best management’ meant hacking at ant nests with machetes, since pesticides were also not used. Planting and harvesting was aligned with phases of the moon. Coffee bushes were grown under the shade canopy of larger trees which protected the plant’s delicate berries and also provided habitats for toucans and other local fauna.

Roberto and Sabine were faithful stewards of the land, and being an organic, pesticide free farm was a point of pride. But I was surprised to learn that many farmers in rural Peru adhere to organic standards—not for ethical reasons, but because chemical pesticides and fertilizers are too expensive to afford.

During my time on the farm, I also learned that the challenges of rural life are not limited to the difficulties of making a living from the land. For example, there is no such thing as public transportation in rural Peru. Combis, private minivans, ply the main routes between towns, making mobility a challenge, especially for schoolchildren. Schools can be 5 or 10 miles from home and if a combi doesn’t show up, or is already full of passengers, kids often skip school altogether rather than walk.

When asked what they see as the problems for farmers in the area, Sabine explained that the construction of a massive natural gas pipeline nearby was luring farmers off the land at an alarming rate. “Everyone who can, leaves” said Roberto. “They go to the cities, they get jobs working on the natural gas pipeline. No one wants to farm the land!” But the fact is that the planet needs more farmers like Roberto and Sabine. The UN recently recognized that agronomical methods, like those used as Sachahuare, are key to poverty alleviation and climate change mitigation. Without farms like Sachahuare, we won’t be able to produce enough food for our planet’s growing population without doing significant damage to the environment.

There is no Fair Trade cooperative near Sachahuare, which means that Roberto and Sabine aren’t able to sell their coffee or coca as Fair Trade products, even though they would meet the standards. Instead they sell their products to the nearby cooperative, which usually compensates them fairly. When I asked them if they thought Fair Trade was a good strategy for helping farmers earn more, they weren’t certain. Farming is hard work and pays little. Roberto seemed certain that as long as there were decent paying jobs elsewhere, farmers would continue to slowly leave the land.

As for me, my journey ended up back where I started. I continue to buy Fair Trade coffee from Trader Joe’s, not because I have embraced the ideology, but because there are few alternatives. It seems to me a more responsible consumer. While this certainly an important goal, as planners we must be mindful of the global reach of our food supplies. To focus on the local overlooks the many ways in which we are connected to producers in the developing world. Fair Trade may have flaws, but helps understand the limitation of local food and it is an important step toward creating a more just food system. I buy sustainably sourced chocolate we are re-embedding non-monetary, social values into the marketplace. But the problem with this perception is that it doesn’t do justice to the actual labor involved in earning a living from the land. Being a farmer—in America, in Peru or anywhere else—is physically and economically challenging. And I’m not about to claim that spending a few weeks on a farm was nearly enough to make me appreciate the reality of farming in the developing world. But if we are to study and understand Fair Trade, as researchers we first need to understand our subjects. For me, spending time on a farm was a sort of informal ethnographic study, a way of gaining a glimpse of an insider’s perspective.

The Shore Theater – located on the corner of Stillwell and Surf Avenues – is a microcosm for the greater Coney Island. The deterioration of its interior due to 35 years of vacancy is not immediately apparent from the outside, due to the solid renovation methods used at the beginning of the century. Scaffolding wraps around the outside of the building, making it seem as if renovation is under way. The Shore Theater recently received a landmark designation, securing it a spot in the new, revitalized Coney Island of the future. It has been mentioned in numerous redevelopment plans for Coney Island written by multiple developers, non-profits, the local development corporation, the community board, and the city. However, the scaffolding is misleading: it is not the result of one or the many redevelopment plans. It went up in 2007 in preparation for steam cleaning the exterior of the building. But as a result of non-payment by the owner, the exterior did not get cleaned and the scaffolding never got taken down.

The theater spurs nostalgia for a constructed, idyllic New York of the past. A simpler era before the failures of technocratic planning, suburbanization, budget cuts and gentrification. Of course, nostalgia is a fabricated reality – New York has never been perfect. Like much of New York City’s history, rise, decline, abandonment and potential resurrection are all encompassed in the story of the Shore Theater. This historical narrative parallels the experience of Coney Island as a whole. After years of neglect, Coney Island has become the focus of attention due to the release of a Strategic Plan in 2005 and a Comprehensive Rezoning Plan in 2007. By tracing the historical development of one building in Coney Island, I hope to provide a richer understanding of Coney Island’s heritage and its relationship to New York City. Further, I will contextualize the current redevelopment scheme in a longer history of public and private plans for the neighborhood. At the turn of the 20th Century, Coney Island did not have the best reputa-
tion. Coney Island was part of the town of Gravesend, where politics were controlled by John Y. McKane, a crooked politician with a connection to Tammany Hall. The Tammany hold on power was broken when Gravesend was annexed by Brooklyn in 1894.

Three competing real estate developers set out to improve the image of Coney Island — reimagined as a family-friendly resort — and to make a lot of money in the process. Between 1897 and 1904, they bought vacant brothels, burned-out lots of land, and forced out the immigrant business owners. The three amusement parks that they built — Steeplechase, Luna Park and Dreamland — continue to define Coney Island. If it wasn’t for the collective memory of the grand old days of Coney — reinforced by books like Coney Island's 19th Century and by the Museum of the City of New York’s display of the same name and design of the new Luna Park — the current redevelopment plan for Coney Island would not be such a contentious and emotional issue.

Grandeiose in design and scale, the turn-of-the-century parks drew on the latest mechanical innovations, the Columbian Exposition in Chicago and on the City Beautiful movement. The three parks offered a welcome escape during the dangerous and fire-prone summer season, especially in the years immediately following the 1912 fire, which destroyed 100,000 people per day in the summer season. Yet in spite of their popularity, the parks were destined to be ephemeral. Building materials of wood and plaster, combined with a marginal understanding of the danger of electricity made the parks dangerous and prone to fire. In the early 1900s, the frequency of fires, is surprising to find any older buildings in the Coney Island amusement area. Dreamland, the oldest of the three parks only lasted seven years, when it was spectacularly plaster and wood construction fell victim to fire in 1911.

During these decades, Coney Island as a whole continued to attract millions of visitors each summer, with its free beach and cheap amusements.

During the post-war era, New York City began to show signs of financial distress due to suburbanization and economic disinvestment. The highways that cut through the new suburbs also made it possible for further- afield recreational destinations like Jones Beach accessible. The 1920s dreams for a transformed Coney Island faded. Loew’s, a local theater company, took over the old Luna Park, and the new Strand Theater opened across the street. With the extension of the subway to Coney Island, this became a feasible goal. The theater was built on the site of the private Culver depot, which had been left abandoned when the expansion of the subway system. In Delirious New York, Rem Koolhaas describes Coney Island at the junction of the 19th and 20th centuries.

The transformation of disused industrial uses to modern mixed-use buildings continues to be a common theme in New York City planning today. Moreover, the construction of buildings like the Shore Theater represented the unwavering post-war optimism of the 1920s. In the 1930s, the theater was built on the site of the old Culver depot, which had been left abandoned. In 1948, when the city did not grant the owner of the theater the zoning change required for the construction of residential high-rises, he held a strategic and peaceful “demolition party.” Guests were invited to throw bricks at the park’s famed glass exterior, which was nominated for a Landmark Designation. He then had his men blow up the Sheepscotch Park back to the city in 1968.

With the three main amusement areas gone, Coney Island struggled on. The beach, boardwalks, beaches, and scat-tered amusements continued to attract an influx of patrons, albeit seasonally. The Strand Theater, which was closed down in 1949, was a testing ground for architectural and planning ideas which later defined the development of early 20th century Manhattan.

As an amusement park, Coney Island will not reach the status of Six Flags or Disneyland, nor should it aim to. The history, nostalgia, and a touch of grittiness are its drawing points. As long as bad development practices — as the Shore Theater case study demonstrates — are allowed to continue, the redevelopment plans both geographically and conceptually, and because the main- tenance of Coney Island’s “character and culture” is one of the driving goals behind the two plans. It was initially nominated for landmark status in 1996, and finally received the designation from the Landmark Pres-ervation Commission in 2010.

Unfortunately for the theater and for Coney Island, Mr. Bullard’s properties became a site for his power battles with the City of New York and then mayor, Rudy Gi- uliani. Through the years, Bullard proposed a number of grand plans for his lots in Coney Island, which housed the Shore Theater, the Playland arcade, and the now gone Thun- derbolt rollercoaster. The plans included a new theme park or casinos and hotels. The relationship between City Hall and Bullard was one of lawsuits and countersuits. In 2000, the City even demolished the Thun-derbolt on Bullard’s lot, although a federal court ruled that the theater had no justifica- tion for tearing down the rollercoaster. For the Shore Theater, the struggle over power and space and time have amounted to water dam- age and deterioration due to lack of mainte- nance. For Coney Island’s residents, the struggle between the city and a succession of developers with lofty plans has amount- ed to a succession of empty lots stretching all along Surf Avenue.

The city’s Strategic Plan of 2005 and Rezoning Plan of 2007 are compliment- ary efforts by the city to address the blight that has gripped the neighborhood since the 1970s. The Shore Theater is central to the redevelopment plans both geographically and conceptually, and because the maintainance of Coney Island’s “character and culture” is one of the driving goals behind the two plans. It was initially nominated for landmark status in 1996, and finally received the designation from the Landmark Preservation Commission in 2010.

The future of Coney Island seems a little bit brighter now that the Shore Theater cannot legally be torn down. Since there is such a space a population of historic buildings in Coney Island, there has been some speculation that the city might broker a deal with Bullard to take over the building. For now, there are no publically known revitalization plans for the building.

While the landmark designation has ensured the Shore Theater’s space in the future Coney Island, a number of other buildings from the same time period — all nominated and denied landmark status — were torn down this past winter. Among them were the Bank of Coney Island, Hen- demon Music Hall and the Shore Hotel, all owned by Joe Sitt, of Thor Equities. The city’s plan for Coney Island has been criti- cized by various non-profits, including Save the New York Landscape Architec- ture, for selectively preserving one historic structure, while allowing the destruction of another.

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Moreover, the construction of buildings like the Shore Theater represented the unwavering post-war optimism of the 1920s – a decade of rapid economic growth and conspicuous con- sumption – which characterized not only Coney Island but the city as a whole. The Brooklyn Daily Eagle reported in January of 1925, “$2,000,000 Theater and Office Building Reflects Transformation of Coney Island.” The May 20, 1926 edition of the same newspaper also reported that the theater will be the first of its kind in the resort and the forebears of similar structures in the movement to make Coney Island an all-year amusement resort.

Two features of the building set it apart from the entertainment establishments of Coney Island’s past. First, it was constructed out of limestone and brick rather than plaster and wood. This made the building fireproof and permanent. Second, it contained the Renaissance Revival façade, along with its additional non-ammusement uses, further signified the stability and seriousness of the theater, especially when juxtaposed with the glittery lights and splatter spires of Luna Park. The Coney Island Theater Building also had office space on its top floors, intended to attract organizations related to the enter- tainment industry.

When the building was opened in 1925, it was leased and maintained by the Loew’s Corporation, and was renamed the Loew’s Coney Island Theater. The theat- er was a successful endeavor, featuring weekly variety spectacles and live vaudeville entertainment. Retail spaces on the ground floor featured a Mednik’s restaurant and two cigar shops, while construction companies and a local draft board leased the offices upstairs. De- spite the Depression, the Theater proved to be a success through the 30s and 40s.
In New York City, community boards provide the basic means of community input in the public planning process. Established by New York City’s charter, each community board represents a specific district and acts as a liaison between city agencies and citizens in decisions that pertain to their geographical boundaries. Although technically advisory, community boards often have political sway, as city council members often act on guidance from community boards.

Many of the city’s agencies seek input from community boards when implementing projects, but relying on community boards as a means for public involvement can be problematic. First, community boards are systematically under-funded, which undermines their ability to effectively evaluate plans and represent community interests within the municipal planning process. In a July 2010 article in the Gotham Gazette, Hunter College Professor Tom Angotti points out that the average board has an annual budget under $2,000,000 and the combined funding for community boards makes up less than 0.2 percent of the city budget. Community Boards can barely afford a skeleton staff, much less specialized training or the services of a professional planner who could help assess the potential impact of proposed projects. Second, under the current City Charter, community board members are not directly accountable to their districts, residents do not elect who represents them on the community board. Instead, the elected borough president unilaterally appoints half of each board and selects the other half from a list of nominees by that district’s city council member. While board members have to live in New York City and either reside, work, or have a significant interest in their district, there is no official mechanism to ensure fair representation of community districts by board members.

These systemic problems with community boards have not received much attention in the media, but they are especially important given the recent flurry of bike lane implementations in New York City. The city’s streetscape has changed substantially over the past four years. In this short period of time, New York City’s Department of Transportation (NYC DOT) has nearly doubled the city’s on-street bike network using a 1997 Master Bicycle Plan as its guide. During those same three years, the number of daily cyclist commuters increased by 109 percent. Emboldened by Mayor Bloomberg’s 2007 PlanNYC strategic plan, the NYC DOT has pledged to install 50 bicycle lane miles each year so as to reach the goal of 1,800 bicycle lane miles by 2030. These rapid streetscape changes have alarmed some citizens and spurred accusations that the NYC DOT hasn’t adequately involved the public in its decisions to install bicycle lanes. Norman Stessel, a vocal bike lane opponent who was once deputy mayor, called NYC DOT’s public review process “tainted with opacity” in an October 2010 letter sent to City Hall. Stessel has since sued the city to have the Prospect Park West bike lane removed, charging that the city misled residents about its benefits. James Vacca, chairperson of the New York City Council’s Transportation Committee, held a public hearing in December 2010 on bicycle lanes under the auspices of assessing Local Law 90, which requires community notification and input when DOT implements major transportation projects. During the oversight hearing, Brooklyn council member Lev Fidler complained that the DOT needed to do a better job of consulting with communities before implementing bike lanes. Fidler then asked for the NYC DOT Commissioner’s support for his bill that would require a public hearing with an affected Community Board 90 days before putting in any bike lane. The Commissioner declared herself in “violent agreement” with Fidler—in no small part because NYC DOT already does this Community Board outreach on a regular basis.

NYC DOT’s standard process of public outreach has been to notify citizens of a proposed bicycle lane through letters and presentations to community boards. The community board (or boards) then votes to approve or disapprove the plan. Although technically advisory, community boards often have political sway, making it in NYC DOT’s interest to accommodate their concerns in project planning and implementation. NYC DOT representatives also consult with borough officials and the district manager of the community board during the project conception phase “to get a pulse of the community,” according to the agency’s Bicycle Program Director, Hayes Loid. The NYC DOT has communicated with and solicited input from community boards on its street improvement projects under Commissioner Janette Sadik-Khan. The fact that some citizens and politicians still feel surprised by bike lane implementations could be more indicative of systemic faults in the community board structure rather than the actions of a specific agency.

The process of appointing community board members, rather than holding elections, may lend itself toward creating community boards in which members are more aligned with the interests of elected officials than those of the district residents they represent. When Community Board 10 of Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, voted against new bike lanes last June, Helen Klein of The Brooklyn Paper quoted CB 10 member Allen Boroskin explaining his position in words that echo those of Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz. “The city is bent on taking away driving lanes for cars. We are not going to be able to live with this comfortably.” It’s ironic that the same city council members who grandstanded about the need for better public outreach on bike lane implementation stood silent during their biggest opportunity to introduce institutional improvements to community participation just months earlier. The problems plaguing Community Boards could have been addressed when Mayor Bloomberg created a commission to review the city charter and recommend improvements. Amendments to the city charter could have granted CBs more funding and staff to increase their effectiveness within the municipal planning process. City charter amendments could have also mandated some or all CB members be directly elected by district residents to ensure fair representation of community interests. Despite recommendations for community board reform from Borough President Scott Stringer and community advocacy groups, the mayor-appointed community members chose not to examine the structure of community boards in their review process. And when Speaker Christine Quinn testified before the New York City Charter Revision Commission on behalf of the entire City Council in June of 2010, her testimony did not once mention community boards—much less the need for institutional public-participation improvements. The implicit decision to overlook community board reform was a lost opportunity to bring lasting, meaningful public involvement improvements to not only decisions about bicycle lanes, but about every proposed municipal project impacting a community district. Mandating additional public hearings on already overburdened community boards is less a means of furthering public participation than a political tactic to slow down controversia streetscape changes. As planners, we should advocate for true public participation reform. In the meantime, city agencies, politicians, and community boards should be held accountable to the interests of the public—not politicians.
Shades of Green

Bike Lanes and Gentrification in New York

By Sam Stein

PLANNING in a GENTRIFICATION CONTEXT

Gentrification and class/race displacement are prominent features of New York City’s changing physical and demographic landscape, shaping its economy, housing market and built environment. All city-wide policies being implemented today – whether or not they are aimed at affecting this reality – are occurring within the context of gentrification.

The Department of Transportation’s (DOT) bicycle infrastructure program is one such city-wide policy. Recent streetscape improvements have coincided with a precipitous rise in rents and the return of upper middle-class residents to formerly working-class neighborhoods. Efforts to make New York City’s streets safer and more multi-modal have been attacked by critics as causing and perpetuating gentrification. This criticism reflects a misunderstanding of the dynamics that cause and perpetuate gentrification, but it points to a broader problem with the city’s implementation of its bicycle network: bicycle planning in New York City currently reflects and amplifies city-wide transportation injustices. A retooling of the program around the needs of working class cyclists, however, could produce dramatically different results.

BACKGROUND: What We Talk About When We Talk About Gentrification

Gentrification is often theorized using “production” and “consumption” explanations for neighborhood change. Production theories look at the creation of “rent gaps,” “value gaps” or “functional gaps” in urban housing markets. These “gap theories” postulate that gentrification occurs when landlords observe a significant difference between the income they earn from their properties when occupied by low income tenants or small businesses, versus the income they could be generating if they rented to richer tenants, sold the building to real estate speculators, or converted their spaces to more lucrative uses. These changes are sometimes encouraged by local government through zoning and land use changes, relaxation of laws protecting tenants, and capital investments targeted at people wealthier than the current neighborhood residents. Consumption theories of gentrification look at why upper income people become attracted to particular neighborhoods over wealthier urban and suburban alternatives. Generally, these theories speak of the unique appeals of inner city urban spaces, including attractive architecture and lively streetscapes, shorter commutes, cosmopolitan politics, and the availability of arts, entertainment and specialized retail. For some, the availability of bicycle infrastructure and safe streets is one such motivation for choosing to live in a gentrifying neighborhood.

Today, cities like New York are competing with other “global cities” around the world to attract international capital and investment. One of the explicit goals of Mayor Bloomberg’s PlanNYC2030 is to compete with global cities like Chicago, Los Angeles, London and Shanghai on the basis of livability. Common capital attraction strategies include reasoning to enable high-end development, developing entertainment districts, encouraging high-end consumption markets (artisanal food and alcohol, and specialty retail), and creating recreational open spaces. Another key strategy for creating capital-friendly urban environments is reducing traffic congestion, and promoting forward-looking environmental consciousness by encouraging alternative modes of transportation. In this sense, DOT’s work, while much broader in scope and intention, fits into a larger, city-wide competitive strategy to attract and retain global capital.

The rise of New York’s young professionals and artists—generally able-bodied people with liberal attitudes towards the environment, fewer savings to spend on cars and gasoline, and without long-term attachments to New York City’s streets—helped spur the rise of cycling in the city. But building bicycle infrastructure in gentrifying neighborhoods has created long-term impediments towards extending the network and building broader community support. Long-term residents are alienated by capital investments that appear to arrive only after their neighborhood has been gentrified. This can be especially true in neighborhoods where residents have long biked, but have not seen street improvements targeting their needs until now. Gentrification can also displace low-income workers and recent immigrants, who often rely on cycling as a free mode of transit and sometimes ride as a part of their jobs. Key potential beneficiaries of DOT’s streetscape improvements are therefore missing from the neighborhoods where much of the building is taking place. As a result, there is a contradiction between where DOT is choosing to build bike infrastructure, and where the need is highest.

PUBLIC PERCEPTION: Class and the Backlash

In public forums and press accounts, opposition to the proliferation of bike lanes and streetscape changes has grown. Some members of the public have equated the creation of bike lanes with their fears of losing control over their neighborhoods. The backlash against bicyclists can be seen as a sort of perfect storm of class relations. As the city is gentrifying and many long-time New Yorkers fear for the stability of their neighborhoods, many perceive cyclists to belong to one of two “threatening” classes: people who are richer than them (white yuppies in spandex); and people who are poorer than them (commercial cyclists, immigrants, people of color and punks). The self-identified middle-class is furious with the city for seeming to help everyone around them, while supposedly ignoring outer borough car and transit-oriented needs. Participants in the backlash are acting out of a fear of losing control over their “authentic urban spaces” to gentrification, while also reflecting their anger and resentment towards people of color and social outsiders, whom they imagine the city prioritizes before the white middle-class. Many middle-class car owners in New York see the automobile as a symbol of their rise out of the working-class, and may resent DOT’s efforts to slow traffic and reduce free on-street parking. Outer borough residents’ displeasure at DOT’s focus on lower Manhattan also reflects long-simmering resentments over the public transit system’s central business district orientation. Recent cuts to bus service have been particularly hard on those outer borough residents who live further from subway lines. These bus riders are witnessing simultaneous cuts to the bus network on which they rely, and an expansion of a cycling network that feels alien to their needs.

This framing of cyclists and city agencies ignores many inconvenient truths: bike ridership is representative of all strata of New York society; street infrastructure improvements often improve safety and public
BIKE LANE AND REAL ESTATE: DOT does not create bicycle infrastructure in order to raise property values. Building owners and developers, however, have learned that the city’s streetscape improvements can create more attractive spaces, and the presence of bicycle infrastructure near a development can be a selling point for affluent young newcomers. New luxury towers in such neighborhoods as the Lower East Side, Williamsburg and Downtown Brooklyn tout bicycle-friendly buildings, and the presence of nearby cycling infrastructure in advertisements geared towards “hipsters.” Meanwhile, Times Square experienced the largest retail rent hikes in the city—over 71 percent—coinciding with DOT’s installation of a pedestrian plaza in Times Square. The Hudson River Park Trust has observed that the presence of the extended bike riverside lane has increased neighboring property values by approximately 20 percent. Richard Florida, an advocate for the so-called “creative class,” has publicly commended DOT’s bicycle infrastructure improvements as a tool to attract young, highly paid professionals into the city. These examples show that bicycle infrastructure can serve elite interests, and correspond with neighborhoods’ overall gentrification. By no means, however, should this correlation be interpreted as sole causation, or as inevitable. Streets like Bedford Avenue in Brooklyn have received a great deal of attention from DOT’s Bicycle Program, and yet these infrastructure improvements have not brought on the immediate gentrification of south Brooklyn neighborhoods. The class implications of bicycle infrastructure are therefore highly contingent on their siting and design.

CONSIDERING ALTERNATIVES: Urban Design for Whom? DOT is tasked with designing infrastructure that benefits all New Yorkers. At the same time, the agency recognizes that its bicycle and street redesign programs play a large part in the city’s strategy to attract global capital. At a recent forum on cycling and real estate strategies, DOT Commissioner Janette Sadik-Khan reminded her audience that “capital can locate anywhere, so it’s extremely important that we create safe, attractive spaces where people want to be.”

The siting and design of street changes often implies the type of user the city expects to benefit from a project. Today, New York City’s bicycle network is most built-out around the locus of gentrification: downtown Manhattan and northwestern Brooklyn. There are a number of good reasons for this choice: these areas are two of the biggest employment centers in the city; they are home to cycling-friendly community boards; and they are the site of many transit interconnections. Focusing on these areas, however, reinforces the impression that gentrification follows bike planning, and vice versa. This choice also results in a failure to provide needed infrastructure in high-cycling, low-infrastructure neighborhoods like Flushing, Queens and Pelham Bay, Bronx. Cycling infrastructure built for working class and immigrant riders might take various forms. These could include, but are not limited to: connecting working-class residential neighborhoods to local job centers, rather than the downtown central business district; making travel to the subway safer and faster, especially in areas suffering from bus cutbacks; creating connections between nearby neighborhoods that are not adequately served by mass transit (such as connecting northwest Queens to the South Bronx); providing bike-share in neighborhoods where owning a bicycle is impractical or unaffordable; and creating lanes that mirror the routes taken by commercial cyclists in the outer boroughs. These modest steps would demonstrate a real commitment on the part of DOT to addressing the city’s transportation injustices.

CONCLUSION: Infrastructure for the Undererved

In recent years, gentrification and class displacement have changed New York for the richer and the whiter. Like all city-wide policies, DOT’s bicycle project is occurring in this polarizing political context. This inescapable fact colors both DOT’s program and the public’s reaction to it. By focusing construction on the most intense flashpoints of gentrification—lower Manhattan and northwest Brooklyn—the bicycle network reflects and reproduces the city’s transportation injustices, in terms of class, race, and geographic isolation. This fact does not prove that bike lanes cause gentrification, instead it points to the imperative for needs-based infrastructure construction. High need areas, where working class people bicycle every day under increasingly dangerous conditions, have not received the same level of attention as the city. DOT and other city agencies need to reframe their priorities in order to serve those most vulnerable to gentrification, rather than those who profit from it.

This piece was built from works written in Professor Tom Angotti’s 2010-2011 Studio on bicycle planning. The ideas contained here were developed in close consultation with Jennifer Harris Hernandez and Sungwoon Yoo, and in conjunction with the other members of the studio (Max Applebaum, Andrew Camp; Conor Clark; Joseph Delia, Sungwoon Yoo, Brian Paul, Scott McNenly. Eva Tracca Uddal- helv, and Matt Wallace). All conclusions and any errors, however, should be attributed solely to the author.
surrounding provinces, Chinese citizens flocked to these foreign zones, which offered services unavailable in the countryside. By the start of the twentieth century, Shanghai was remodeled in the image of a Western city. A city celebrated as the 'Paris of the East,' it was renowned for its fascination, and was chastised for its neon lights, dance halls, jazz bands, and anything-goes attitude.

Shanghai was not the only city influenced by western-style planning. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Chinese students who had studied western planning in the United States and Europe were returning home. Influenced by western ideas, they sought to make China a progressive nation, and cities from Shanghai to Guangzhou watched their ancient walls torn down, narrow alleys change into boulevards and nickels and dimes become taxi stations. However, these urban reforms quickly languished with the Japanese invasion of China in 1937.

The next four decades witnessed a period of war, confusion, and revolutionary communism. In the midst of a war against Japan, the country was also embroiled in its own civil war between the nationalist government, under Chiang Kai-shek, and the Communists led by Mao Zedong. Ultimately, the nationalist government was defeated by Mao, and on October 1, 1949, Mao founded the People's Republic of China.

The Anti-Urban City

One might argue that Mao had an anti-urban perspective of cities, in cities but an alternative view promoted regional economic growth, trade and technological progress. In line with Maoist economic theory, Mao believed that state control of industry would help jumpstart economic development, with the ultimate goal being to eradicate all private ownership of means of production. Accordingly, during this era focused on heavy industry, and Chinese cities across the northeast, and some in inland provinces, became dotted with oil refineries, coal mines, steel mills, and automobile factories. To power the newly constructed factories, millions of peasants migrated from the countryside to work in cities. Nevertheless, the Chinese Communist Party (CCCP) did not equate industrialization with urbanization and tied to achieve, "industrialization without a high level of urbanization." The goal was to achieve industrialization on a nationwide scale, without incurring the costs of urbanization—housing, sewage, and streets. Moreover, there was a suspicious attitude perceived towards large cities. Chinese urban policy was characterized by the belief that metropolises were "concentrations of corrupt bourgeoisie" and the cause of "unhealthy, urban life.

Large coastal cities, such as Shanghai and Tianjin, which had been developed by foreign trading interests, were particularly disdained by Mao and party officials. Throughout the 1950s, coastal cities were drained of resources and retreated into the shadows, not to emerge again until the early 1990s. The focus shifted to inland cities, in particular Beijing, which was designated China's capital soon after Mao's inauguration.

The Post-Mao City

With Deng Xiaoping's ascent to power and the opening up of the economy in 1978, the socio-economic policies put in place by Mao were reversed. The retreat of politics and the promotion of consumerism fostered the reawakening of the individual and leisure time. As Chinese citizens began to take advantage of their ability to purchase consumer goods, there was a revival in commercial and business districts, a direct contrast to the Maoist city. Shopping, the new form of leisure, has provided both the revenue and demand needed to expand the economy and reshape the built environment.

However, even after the implementation of an open economy, Shanghai and Tianjin both lagged behind the new Special Economic Zones, which included the Pearl River Delta (between Guangzhou and Hong Kong) and the Lufang Yangtze. In the mid-1980s, economists recognized the importance of revitalizing Shanghai and Tianjin if China were to be competitive in the global economy. In 1990, Pudong, outside Shanghai, was designated a Special Economic Zone, symbolizing the opening of Shanghai into the outside world. The former mayor of Shanghai once noted that Pudong had not become a Special Economic Zone, the urban revitalization projects would have taken up to a hundred years to complete.

The development of Pudong into a Special Economic Zone is just one example of how shifts in ideology have radically transformed the built environment. By the beginning of the 21st century, the once sleepy Special Economic Zone had transformed into a vibrant new urban landscape. Pudong is now home to some of the most modern skyscrapers and commercial buildings in the world.

Conclusion

Selling the City

The transformation of China's built environment has been unmistakably influenced by the West. This stems in part from the legacy of the Cultural Revolution. As one man remarked, "In the Cultural Revolution, we were told everything was old, and bad. And people who were born afterwards got a very Western education, so they had a lot of foreign influences." Starbucks, McDonalds, Walmart, and IKEA are now ubiquitous throughout China, as they have become associated with worldwide taste and "bourgeoisie-ness." Correspondingly, international architects have flooded China, redesigning buildings in a distinctly western style in Beijing, some of the more memorable housing development names include Latte Town, Yuppies International Garden, and Top Aristocrat.

In all aspects of urban life and space, China is using the emergence of this new capitalist market to not just sell goods and services but to sell an individual lifestyle. The new apparel in these privately owned developments indicate China's new emphasis on individual choice and private leisure time.

The Anti-Urban City

As a result of a shared ideology with the Soviet Union, Soviet planners visited China to recommend best planning practices. Under Mao, Beijing's symmetrical buildings were erected, blending neoclassicism with Chinese decorative motifs, and Stalinist architecture.

Mao's ideal vision for a city was one in which each district was self-sufficient. Although an urban country entirely of self-sufficient districts was never fully achieved, walk-up crowded apartments continued to be built. Resembling a miniature walled city, each dwelling offered its residents work, places of living, and access to social services. You could virtually, "be born, grow up, get married, live and die in a dwelling without ever needing to leave it. Within the gated walls of the dwelling, the building was arranged in identical rows of three to five-story brick and concrete structures, which gave rise to a sprawling and homogenous landscape, deemed the "spatial expression of egalitarianism" and the solution to eradicating urban class structure.

The physical form of the danwei allowed for strict control of social life and inside these compounds, the demarcation between "private time" and "public time" effective evaporated. These cities could only be entered through a limited number of entry points, and most had locks and were guarded by security personnel. As a result, residents lived under the close scrutiny of neighbors and employers and were limited in their social autonomy.

Quality of Life in The Maoist City

Policies aimed at creating world-class cities in China can be seen as part of China's concerted effort to improve overall standard of living, create an urban middle class, and attract foreign investment. Nowhere are these policies more pronounced than in China's urban development policies. No-where are these policies more pronounced than in China's urban development policies.
Mapping Technologies and the Informal World

By Charles David

By 2015, there will be at least 500 cities whose population will be over one million. It is estimated that by 2050, the world population will reach 10 billion, with growth occurring in urban areas in developing countries, particularly in slums. Most likely, one would not be able to talk of urban informal settlements on a city -- if included -- slums have been decimated with the color green, like parks. The relationship between the urban city and the informal slum is tumultuous. Issues such as land tenure and taxes keep the debate impounded on how informal areas are to be treated and incorporated to the city. Innovative mapping techniques like Geographic Information System (GIS) and access to portable technology is altering both the way informal settlements are mapped, and how they are understood in relation to their surrounding environments.

In recent times, slums and other informal settlements are finding their way into the cartographic discourse for the first time. One of the driving forces behind this is the widespread availability of satellite images that Google Earth pulls from space. Inclusion on a map -- albeit Google Earth -- is a testament that these communities can no longer be ignored. Slums are formally established, unplanned, and unclassified. As a result, there is a very limited understanding of the 200,000 slums worldwide and the billion strong living in them. According to UNHABITAT, 80 cities out of 120 recognize that they do not possess monitoring systems to track changes in the spatial dimension of the city. Even more trying is that countries maintain different standards and information, quite often colored by political considerations, complicating the process of recognition by local authorities. Since most residents of slums don’t pay property taxes and pirate much of their services like electricity and cable, many politicians are only interested in their slum constituency when collecting votes during election time. Because of this, slums have become accustomed to being ignored by the state, and are largely self-serving communities.

In Cape Town, South Africa, GIS has been used as a fundamental tool to upgrade and empower community participation in informal settlements. Because GIS is a flexible platform for design, allowing users to incorporate spatial data as well as qualitative data, it allows local authorities to discuss the interaction between the city’s spatial elements and social opportunities. The goals of using GIS for informal settlements include: long-term sustainability; quality of life improvements in regard to physical risks like hurricanes and earthquakes; physical/spatial integration into surrounding formal settlements; and environmental health.

Residents of slum communities in Cape Town are being taught the benefits of GIS influenced planning in order to assess the tenuous relationship between the formal and informal world. Mapping Technologies and the Informal World is an exemplary step on how we can move forward. Tracking population change in slums is a perplexing task. Amy P. Wesolowski and Nathan Eagle attempt to compile data about population movement in the slum of Kibera, Kenya, in “Parameterizing the Dynamics of Slums.” In order to get a better idea about population change, the two researchers monitored cell phone activity from 2008 to 2009 in Kibera. The number of cell phone subscribers in the developing world is booming. Africa has 380 million subscribers (more than North America). Tracking cell phone movement is an innovative idea for demographic research in communities where the overwhelming majority is off the grid.

By monitoring the movements of cell phone users, the authors were able to track the population moving in and out of Kibera. The results of their research show that the population of Kibera is transient: 50% of the inhabitants move in and out of the slum each month. This data could inform future policy in two ways: information about most heavily trafficked areas can determine what improvements are most needed and most efficient, information about overall population mobility can provide insight as to why the communities in Kibera are so transient.

Kibera is the home to another innovative mapping project. This past year, the first complete map of Kibera was created by a group of young volunteers using Open Street Map and data from GIS platforms. Hundreds of thousands of people live in Kibera. Even though there are some concrete structures in the area, the vast majority of dwellings are made of corrugated metal and mud. Because of the overwhelming lack of permanent structures, the map of Kibera is constantly evolving, with resident volunteers making edits as they notice changes in the neighborhood. The map promotes hospitals, schools, food kiosks, and restaurants.

Mapping technology is being used in Latin American informal settlements as well. More than one million people -- a sixth of the city’s population -- live in Rio de Janeiro’s favelas, and have been largely ignored by the municipal government for over 100 years. The favelas lack access to city services like public transportation, sanitation, and electricity. Portable technology like cell phones, cameras, and laptops, are having a positive impact in the favelas. Instead of being monitored like the cell phone users in Kibera, these communities are putting themselves on the map. Brazilian reporters are using small video cameras, laptops, and open source software to profile life in the favelas. Viva Favela, a state department-affiliated Alliance of Youth Movement, gathers the multimedia reports and displays them on Google Maps, bringing world attention to life in favelas. Community schools have been established in many neighborhoods, acquainting favela residents with web based technologies. By having a voice on the web, the residents of favelas are able to communicate with the rest of the world despite the history of exclusion by the municipal government.

The Viva Favela program illustrates why web technologies are crucial to the inclusion of informal areas into the formal fabric of the city.

In Rio, GIS could be a key instrument for long term sustainability in informal settlements. It is being used to assess physical risks like hurricanes and earthquakes, for physical/spatial integration into surrounding formal settlements, and for the promotion of environmental health. Because informal settlements are likely to be built on whatever land is left over after formal development, the land itself is often prone to natural disasters like floods, mud slides, and erosions. In Rio, where many favelas are located on hill sides deemed unsafe for formal development, frequent catastrophic floods sweep away village neighborhoods, killing hundreds. GIS application in these areas could be crucial for natural disaster mitigation, or at least could be a useful tool for informing the residents of their dangers.

According to Mike Davis, author of Planet of Slums, “The urban future does not lie in Chicago or L.A., and it will not be shaped according to the schools of thought named after them. Rather, the future lies in cities like Cairo, Rio de Janeiro, Istanbul, and Bombay. The informal development of slums has far surpassed formal development in the Third World. Yet, these areas of rapid population growth continue to be invisible. Most governments do not report on slum conditions and trends. Therefore, it is up to the slum communities to empower themselves by making themselves visible to the rest of the world. As our society moves forward in the future, becoming better acquainted with the expanding informal world will be crucial to world harmony and sustainability. Innovative mapping techniques like Geographic Information System (GIS), portable technology, and the expanding access to computers are just a few of the tools that can create positive change in the lives of people living in informal areas. Better spatial understanding of the rapidly transforming informal world can be used to empower slum communities to improve their environments.”
When I reflect on my love for New York City, I think about all that’s unique and stimulating – the things that keep me inspired and make me feel like I’m on the edge of something new. The cultural dynamism, the history, the architecture, the art, the energy, and the diversity of the people who call it home. It’s a place where you can see the past, present, and future all in the same space. It’s a place where anything can happen. It’s a place where I can be myself.

The city is a melting pot of cultures and ideas, and it’s always changing. It’s a place where you can find art in the most unexpected places. It’s a place where you can see the world come together and celebrate its differences. It’s a place where you can find inspiration and challenge yourself to be better. It’s a place where you can find community and belonging. It’s a place where you can find yourself.

I love New York City because it’s a place where you can find anything you’re looking for. It’s a place where you can find the best food, the best art, the best music, the best theater, the best architecture, the best history, the best culture, the best people. It’s a place where you can find everything you need and more.

In conclusion, New York City is a place where you can find anything you’re looking for. It’s a place where you can find everything you need and more. It’s a place where you can find yourself. It’s a place where you can find inspiration. It’s a place where you can find community. It’s a place where you can find beauty. It’s a place where you can find life. It’s a place where you can find love.

By Ellen Frankel
of the community to each other, to the waterfront and to the transit center at the Ferry Terminal. The Plan proposes creating a safer crossing on Bay Street where it meets Richmond Terrace. It suggests the creation of a pedestrian plaza with wide steps, seating spaces, and room to host a farmers market. The Plan includes a proposal for an outdoor amphitheater for performers, traffic calming on Wall Street and Central Ave, and a pedestrian mall on Stuyvesant Street between Wall Street and Schuyler Street. These street improvements would transform the streets of St. George into people-friendly public spaces to serve as destinations in themselves.

The Plan proposes public displays of both temporary and permanent art, incorporating arts in streetscape elements, events that encourage participation, collaborations between artists and schools, and use of community gardens where artists can display their work. Implementing these elements would establish a permanent presence of art that could be adapted by the community to bolster the unique identity of St. George.

### Implementation

Establishing the St. George Sustainable Cultural District would require the dedication of a committed group of people to achieve consensus on a strategic plan and incorporate an “Art Hill Cultural Development Corporation” as a way to provide basic resources and convene the planning process for this distinct entity through an incubation period. After the incubation period is over, the newly formed board would employ a staff person to raise funds and implement the Plan. The board is a key resource to ensure the success of the district that must represent the stakeholders in St. George.

Our Plan, which is in the form of a 120-page illustrated report, was presented in December at the Staten Island Museum to a crowd of about 100 people – all interested in making St. George a destination for arts and culture. Since that time, the momentum has continued. We presented four proposals to the NYC Department of Transportation, who is interested in the public plaza feature, and three meetings under the leadership of COCAI have taken place to create a leadership organization for bringing elements of Art Hill to life.

### History of Food Systems (Neglect) in the Planning Field

Historically, the issue of food has received little attention from the urban planning field. The founders of the discipline did not see the built environment as a significant issue in urban life. The guide outlines multiple methods by which urban planners can contribute to the development of community food security. There are opportunities today to create permanent cultural infrastructure that will serve as a beacon to the creative communities of New York City, and in the process develop a vibrant neighborhood in downtown Staten Island. Art Hill is a proposal and an opportunity that will help an up and coming arts community come out on top of developers. Staten Island will prove that, just like other boroughs in New York City, it can attract artists, create a renowned Arts District, and develop a cultural aura at the city, the national, and the international level. Facilitating the formalization of a district-wide identity and distinction is an important asset to the city, and an essential obligation in order to ensure that New York continues to be an extraordinary and unique epicenter of life and culture.

### Conclusion

Our Plan presents the Plan that our Fall 2010 Studio created, under Professor Pablo Vengoechea and the Council for the St. George Sustainable Cultural District, to create a cultural and arts district in St. George. Our team worked tirelessly on the Plan, and I think I can speak for all of us when I say that the experience was both extremely challenging and incredibly rewarding. This article is a brief presentation of the plan, within the context of some of the broader issues that we considered.

### References

- **By Alexandra Hanson**

### Cooking Up Community Food Security

The Roll of Urban Planners in the Community Food Assessment Process

In recent years, the urban planning profession has come to recognize food as an important component of the health and wellbeing of communities. As such, food systems require the same attention as traditionally recognized planning disciplines such as housing, transportation, and land use. However, as food systems have received insufficient attention until very recently, little has been said about their unique attributes and impacts on communities. The Plan proposes public displays of both temporary and permanent art, incorporating arts in streetscape elements, events that encourage participation, collaborations between artists and schools, and use of community gardens where artists can display their work. Implementing these elements would establish a permanent presence of art that could be adapted by the community to bolster the unique identity of St. George.

Our Plan, which is in the form of a 120-page illustrated report, was presented in December at the Staten Island Museum to a crowd of about 100 people – all interested in making St. George a destination for arts and culture. Since that time, the momentum has continued. We presented four proposals to the NYC Department of Transportation, who is interested in the public plaza feature, and three meetings under the leadership of COCAI have taken place to create a leadership organization for bringing elements of Art Hill to life.

### History of Food Systems (Neglect) in the Planning Field

Historically, the issue of food has received little attention from the urban planning field. The founders of the profession sought to shape urban society by designing the city’s physical world. In the late nineteenth century, Daniel Burnham’s City Beautiful cut radiating boulevards through the center of Chicago, while Le Corbusier envisioned grand towers in the park with his Broadcard City. However, they and many other early urban planners failed to address the very basic human need of food and over the past century the urban planning community has remained largely silent on the issue.

However, during the 1990s, food began to gain traction as an important issue, with a handful of planning educators. Until that point, food was seen largely as a rural issue in the context of farming. Yet even so, the discipline’s view of farmland preservation focused much more on protecting open space, containing sprawl, and controlling the pace of development than the protection of viable agricultural industries and communities.

Since a 2000 publication by Pothukuchi and Kaufman that identified food as a “stranger” to the planning field, the attention to food systems by the planning profession has grown significantly. In 2004, the Journal of Planning Education and Research published its first-ever special edition addressing food issues in the planning field. In May of 2007, the American Planning Association adopted its Policy Guide on Community and Regional Food Planning, which recognizes food as a significant issue in urban life.

The guide outlines multiple methods by which urban planners can contribute to the...
The development of community food security calls for engagement across fields, with a variety of actors and stakeholders. CFAs present an excellent opportunity for both professional and informal urban planners to employ their skills and work with individuals outside of the planning field to enhance community food security. CFAs are an important first step in planning for community food security, not just because of the knowledge they create, but also because of their potential to build capacity within communities to enact change in their food systems. However, CFAs alone will not solve the food security challenges facing communities across the country. The success of an assessment does not lie solely in the comprehensive nature of the document it produces. Instead, the success of a CFA is tied to whether the process can serve as a catalyst for change in the community’s food system. Planners can both contribute to and learn from the CFA process, empowering both community and planning professionals to develop food systems that reflect the needs of their communities.
A Student Film That Analyzes Neighborhood Politics and Affordable Housing

By Erin McAuliff

Brian Paul, a fellow at Hunter’s Center for Community Planning and Development, met Megan Sperry and Daniel Phelps during a Media and Community Advocacy class in the spring of 2010. Megan and Daniel are both MFA candidates in Hunter’s Integrated Media Arts program, and together they are co-producers of the upcoming documentary, The Domino Effect.

Their creative union was first made possible by random pairing in Hunter’s multi-disciplinary class. By profession, Brian is an activist urban planner and public policy journalist. He never set out to make a full-length documentary, but when grouped with Phelps and Sperry, he says everything fell into place. Earlier that year, Brian had researched and written extensively about rezoning in Brooklyn.

At his suggestion, the group decided to take advantage of a proposed rezoning of the Domino Sugar Factory to further explore the issue in a short project. But according to Brian, the project quickly snowballed. It was all luck. These were supposed to be 20-minute quicks and dirty one-offs. But we soon realized this was more than just a student film. The documentary, which focuses on the approved rezoning and redevelopment of the Domino Sugar Factory in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, has become a passion project for all three.

The Domino Sugar Factory was once a symbol of industrial prosperity in a working-class neighborhood. The New Domino Project, which will convert the factory into a 2,200 unit “village by the sea,” is slated to begin construction at the end of 2011. While plans will preserve historical components of the façade, including the iconic Domino sign, the main building and two new bookended towers will be converted into housing at a price point mostly out of the reach of original residents from the surrounding Brooklyn neighborhoods of Williamsburg and Greenpoint.

Change has filtered through the neighborhood, slowly reaching the water’s edge. The factory, which sits on the waterfront to the north of the Williamsburg Bridge, is not the first local building targeted for development as a consequence of rezoning (and vice versa). It is this larger picture and the subsequent ramifications of development which Brian, Megan, and Daniel seem to be focusing on in their film. In 2005, rezoning left the neighborhood with a glut of newly built luxury housing. Much of the recent development is out of place in a community more accustomed to side-by-side townhouses and modest apartment buildings. Still, even more worrisome than the aesthetic disparity, is the fact that many units remain vacant due to the faltering economy. Williamsburg itself can claim the highest number of stalled construction projects in New York City.

However, in the face of distressing prospects of other recent developments, community leaders and activists generally ended up campaigning in favor of the rezoning. These local dynamics are what originally drew the Hunter students to the issue as a full-length documentary. “At first we were local politics confusing,” said Brian, and it caused them to further dissect the interests of the local stakeholders. There were residents standing up at the Community Board meeting and demanding. 660 units are 660 hopes for people like me! But we knew that this plan was basically just an extension of the 2005 rezoning, and we knew that model didn’t work, so what was going on here?”

In the end, promised sections of affordable housing won over community housing advocates and local politicians alike, all of whom are concerned about relocating displaced long-time residents in a rapidly gentrifying neighborhood. But Brian, Megan, and Daniel want to know “what if these small concessions to retain affordable housing are not enough? And furthermore, what if they are part of a larger system that actually spurs gentrification?” The Domino Effect posits that as long as the city links affordable housing with the market-based economy, partnering developers will continue to gentrify neighborhoods beyond affordable, while their major affordable investments remain in areas already segregated from the rest of Brooklyn.

The issue is up for debate, but the producers of The Domino Effect have so far made a convincing argument that as a city we need to reassess how we do business.

What stands most impressive in talking to the three producers, was how well they honed in on some fundamental issues within the community itself, perhaps an effectual result of a class which paired planners and filmmakers. In talking to local residents, politicians, and activists, the documentarians have realized that everyone conceives the problem on a different scale, sometimes accepting the forces creating the problem as separate from the symptoms. A community may witness gentrification and development, but it does not always recognize the prevailing structures that create the environment. Therefore, while current real estate and business interests might be responsible for the woes of the neighborhood, residents are more likely to first acknowledge the symptoms. Locals note the strain of the L and G trains as they carry more and more new residents and, slowly, communities recognize friend and family have been pushed out or local businesses can’t keep up with the rents.

But, at this point it is hard to point fingers at the institutions now offering the solutions. In this case, the developer’s promise of 30% affordable apartments–the 660 units, the 660 hopes.

As Jane Jacobs said, “Although city planning lacks tactics for building cities that can work like cities, it does possess plenty of tactics. They are aimed at carrying out strategic lucanices. Unfortunately, they are effective.” And that is why housing non-profits and politicians find themselves between a rock and a hard place, unable to turn down a seemingly generous compromise fully backed by the city and the Mayor’s agenda. It’s not an untractable offer, either, when you consider the public plaza, the grassy knoll, 147,000 square feet of community space, and a waterfront finally open to the public’s use. As was also the case with Atlantic Yards, we have seen community leaders all over Brooklyn bargaining with developers to receive community benefits.

But are we responsible citizens when developers’ interests come first, and “community benefits” are left on the table as a negotiating chip? Brian, Megan, and Daniel have concluded that we might be bargaining away all we have left and it isn’t necessarily our only option. Affordable housing needs in New York are very real and as professionals with a responsibility to our community we may need to hold ourselves accountable and realize the fight doesn’t stop at thirty percent.

The Domino Effect will be released late summer/early fall 2011. You can find the film’s website at www.thedominoefffectmovie.com.