Letter from the Editors

The way planners talk about the urban environment is often limited by the framing of a specific scale of reference. When discussing big ideas, it’s easy to propose big plans with a unitary solution to complex problems whose effects don’t appear at the regional level. And yet, a focus on only the local can replace any real systematic critique. We often talk about climate change as a global issue, abstracted from the localized impacts that sea level rise can have on a specific community. Transportation planning discourse is often framed around highway systems or train networks, without much thought into localized displacement.

The articles in this issue collectively deconstruct the scales at which planners can make judgements. Operating from a looser frame of reference allows us to deal with pressing issues more holistically. We see new forms of engaging in and with public streets, from street dance as protest to reimagining the Central Business District of Manhattan as accessible to all – and both articles push us as planners to rethink the function and form of public space in the context of political and social struggle. We explore a specific community garden not just as a community hub, but also as a place of resistance that reclaims underutilized private property for the public good and forces us to consider the true value of an urban commons.

Planners must continue to question these tendencies of simplification built into the discipline of urbanism. As one of the most powerful corporations in history threatens to claim 8.1 million square feet in Long Island City, our critique can’t be limited to the results of neighborhood studies. Our technical abilities as planners must confront the systems that shape the city, and we must go beyond simply recording urban change in GIS or on a zoning map.

Priya Mulgaonkar & Michael Nicholas
Editors-in-chief
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I’d love to hear more about your career trajectory. What drove you to expand upon your work as a practicing physician to advocate for broader health policy changes?

I practice primary care internal medicine very actively and still do part-time primary care in the South Bronx. These days, I mostly focus on policy, because I think like many physicians, I find that the frankly terrible health policy in the US is a major problem. We still have $30 million people with no health insurance at all. This has a direct impact on my practice; when we see such patients, the care we can provide is often very limited. I’ve always practiced at “safety-net institutions”, which can provide very basic care. For many of our low-income patients who can’t afford proper insurance, it is very difficult to get specialty care, or even to pay for the basic care we are providing since it’s frequently not free, and their health suffers as a result. Even our patients who do have health insurance still cannot pay for the services not covered. If you ask them about it, they often say they didn’t take medication because they can’t afford it, or they refuse to come in for follow up appointments because they are worried about the costs.
For any physicians interested in population health, there are two approaches: 1) provide health care directly, and 2) push for policies that can ensure people have access to healthcare.

What are some of the issues covered in your health policy course this semester?

We cover a lot of payment policy. We also cover NYC healthcare, with a focus on health and healthcare in different neighborhoods, as well the role of large academic health providers and role in health inequality in NYC. I’ve never taught urban studies students before, and have enjoyed the difference in perspective that I can learn from. There are very specific topics related to urban studies and health, especially around environmental health – we’re covering water issues in cities, not just Flint and pollution, but also general issues in providing clean water and air in urban environments. We’re also covering the opioid crisis and responses.

You helped found Physicians for a National Health Program in 1986. In your 30+ years of working for a single-payer health system, how has medical care in the US declined or improved?

Many of the problems persist. The Affordable Care Act (ACA) did reduce the number of uninsured, but again, we still have 30 million people uninsured well into ACA’s implementation. This policy has to be understood against the background of the general deterioration of health care in the US. I’ve done a fair amount of work on medical bankruptcy with now-Senator Elizabeth Warren – medical bills are a major cause of bankruptcy and impoverishment. The ways that health and poverty are linked – these are the kind of issues that I’ve been concerned with in my career.

What are the major barriers to advancing a single-payer health system in the US? Do you see any hope for a State-level single-payer plan here in New York?

The two major barriers in the US are 1) a private health insurance industry that is completely opposed to single-payer, and 2) “Big Pharma,” which has been a major opponent of national health insurance. Both groups have lobbied against it with tons of money. The main reason for their opposition is that in countries with nationalized health insurance, the national health program is able to engage in hard bargaining that can dramatically bring down prices in medication and services.

At the State level, we see the same opponents but also face some regulatory barriers. State’s need a set of federal waivers, some of which can only be granted by US Congress, and some by the Executive branch. We aren’t able to just have state-level single-payer, but instead, we have to be working at the national level. I think we need to be moving on parallel tracks. Just because there are barriers, doesn’t mean we shouldn’t fight for it.

Finally, what advice would you offer current policy and planning students at Hunter?

My main advice is that you need to believe that things can change. One advantage of being my age, you see a lot of change. I went to segregated schools as a kid. Some medical schools in the US as late as 1963, had never admitted a single black student. Before 1966, we had no Medicare or Medicaid, and half of our elderly population had no health insurance. You have to believe it is possible, and part of your job as a professional and as a citizen, to make it happen. Change is never easy, or fast, but it does happen. ◊
Taking Back the Streets: A Universally Designed Manhattan Central Business District

BY VICTORIA GARVEY

In the 1920s, public streets in American cities were not planned for automobiles. Despite the efforts of citizens and advocacy groups to fight back against the idea of dangerous, speeding vehicles cutting through their walkways, planners and transportation engineers rebuilt streets to accommodate personal cars through the first half of the 20th century and beyond, changing the landscape of the city and creating a ripple effect that would influence land use, pollution, sprawl and global planning practices in other countries. If certain historical, constructivist approaches reveal that citizens largely did not want public streets taken away from them, how did it happen? This analysis reveals that the dearth of transportation options (among other factors) slowly motivated individuals to use the automobile as their primary mode of transportation. Advocacy groups would later rail against the automobile again in the 21st century, but for different reasons.

Fig. 1: Sketch of Universally Designed CDB, provided by the author.
Today, transportation planners are responding to disparate city street designs in a multitude of ways. Perhaps the most comprehensive principle is universal design, which seeks to make public spaces such as streets, sidewalks, transit and buildings more accessible for a greater number of people. Many city street networks are not accessible for the disabled (permanently or temporarily, cognitively, sensorial or physically), elderly, and/or small children. This article seeks to explore the relationship between accessibility and universal design, and negotiate the focus on social justice with realistic planning constraints such as time, cost, and accountability. The goal in synthesizing this information gives way to a key question: what if New York adopted universally-designed and fully ADA-compliant streets? To support this thought experiment, several research principles will be used from Oslo, Norway (Lid 2016; Audirac 2008), Seoul, South Korea, Jakarta, Indonesia, and two cities in Turkey – Istanbul and Ankara.

What is “universal design?”

First, a working definition of universal design (UD) should be defined. Crews and Zavotka define the goals of UD as “to simplify life for everyone by making products, communications, and the built environment more usable by as many people as possible at little or no cost.” The insertion of the word “cost” is an interesting factor that will flow throughout this research, since UD is also often described as a “market” for people with “diverse abilities.” Since 1997, planners, academics and architects have slowly tried to incorporate UD in transportation infrastructure and city streets. It became a global initiative as various laws, rules and acts passed throughout the early 1990s to better address accessibility such as the Americans with Disabilities Act and the United Nations’ Standard Rules for the Equalization of Opportunity for Persons with Disabilities. Overall, UD and accessibility go hand in hand. However, UD asks planners and architects to do more than just integrate elevators or surfaces for people with physical disabilities. It encourages a built environment that is a truly equitable space, one that does not inherently exclude a group of people for the benefit of another group.

The seven principles of UD give broad guidelines for local government officials and workers to reconsider their own streets and infrastructure to become (1) equitable, (2) flexible, (3) simple and intuitive, and (4) to give perceptible information, (5) have a large tolerance for error, (6) allow passengers to exert low physical effort and (7) tailor size and space for individual approach and use. These guidelines offer a collectivist approach to ensure that people with physical, sensory or cognitive disabilities can experience the city in a way that is inclusive, reduces as much harm as possible, and is conducive to their lifestyle. There are many different factors to UD in a built space, and fortunately, there are examples in literature that explore these aspects of design: informational kiosks, walkable streets, and low-floor buses. These components will come together in an “ideal-scenario” plan for New York City, which incorporates each of these designs and recreates a section of Manhattan’s Central Business District.

Why use universal design?

Various frameworks for social justice in UD demonstrate a moral and rational imperative for cities to adapt more UD practices. Audirac believes UD to be more of a pedagogical tool than an enforceable outcome in the United States, which does little in real-life planning (2008). She concludes that UD can rectify all types of “socio-spatial exclusion” by offering freedom from the “fixed route, hub-and-spoke” systems that many American cities have adopted over the 20th century. This can be done by looking at UD in different scales: the laws (macro-level), influence the shared built environment of transportation and public streets (meso-level) and the individual’s needs (micro-levels). Lid expands on this notion of socio-spatial exclusion and includes it in the “right to the city” literature that Harvey borrowed from Lefebvre. For all people to participate publicly and politically, everyone must be able to use public space equally and therefore be seen. In the work of Lid, Meshur, Lo, and Uteng, the discussion of this inclusion vs. exclusion dichotomy makes the built environment a two-sided sphere. Because public spaces are a part of society in physical and symbolic ways, excluding certain mobility-challenged populations from the public realm creates problems. Methods like rational planning assume it is the individual’s limitations, not the built environment or transportation itself, that bars these persons from using it. This problem of planning for one main population and a few outliers creates a hostile environment, and leaves certain citizens to ask: for whom is the city and transportation?

Planning is often a highly bureaucratic procedure that can exclude citizens – intentionally or unintentionally – from the process. In theory, UD gives agency to citizens because its guidelines essentially force planners and officials to interact with and understand citizen needs. Often for elderly and disabled people, they become “unfamiliar with a facility need to identify their destination to order to devise a strategy for finding it,” which can make wayfinding difficult if the built environment does not have the amenities they need.
to make a space legible for themselves. The need and market for equitable space is stark – by 2030, nearly 1 in 5 of Americans will be over 65 years old.46 Planners can anticipate this future need for increased accessibility by using UD to mitigating current street and transportation design and implementing concrete solutions in cities now.

One way to explore how to use UD in current cities is to gather direct input from affected populations through ethnographic and qualitative research. Crowdsourcing this information is a departure from the more limited rational planning, which does not consider individual or group opinion in its data collection or analysis.37 In addition, local elected officials should collaborate with planners, architects, landscape architects and engineers to ensure that all constituent needs are being met.48 But there is an implicit irony here – if these constituents cannot make it to meetings or public hearings to contribute their opinions (which is largely how the public is invited to participate), how can they be represented? Such is the reason to look at global examples and learn to use them in other cities.

**UD Best Practices from Around the World**

In developing countries and more developed countries, UD research provides layered solutions and best practices. Looking at UD from the perspective of orthopedic and visually-impaired populations, Meshur measured walkability in Ankara, Turkey and assessed building entrances, pedestrian roads, sidewalks, ramps and pavements.54 He found that many surfaces, even ones intended for accessibility such as ramps, were too slippery or had materials like cobblestone that were not conducive to wheelchairs or assistive walking tools like crutches.55 The main target of his research was to “eliminate… the problems which people with disabilities encounter in urban spaces.”56 In terms of public transportation, research done in Turkey and Norway found that GPS-based real-time information with computerized, ADA-compliant kiosks can combat fixed-route transportation and give more flexibility to passengers. In Korea, solutions such as low-floor designed buses with improvements to space have been implemented on the entire bus fleet.59 In Hwangbo’s research, he concluded that many wheelchair users did not ride the bus despite its compliance with accessible design because they were plopped in an awkward space and stuck out in a physical and emotional sense.50 The best accepted practice about UD is its ability to adapt – to solve the problem of the low-floor bus design, it is possible to create a transit system that prioritizes buses on the street and can widen them to accommodate more wheelchair users. Yet even with these best practices for guidance, perhaps the largest hurdle to jump in UD is convincing policymakers or government officials to implement these new designs or initiatives.

**Imagining A Universally Designed CBD in New York City**

In the examples and reasons given above, there is definitive need and demand for UD principles and infrastructure. To explore these ideas in an American setting, the author of this paper has created test plans for the Central Business District of Manhattan.

This proposal envisions 6th Ave to Park Ave (including Broadway and 5th Ave) between Times Square and Union Square to be transformed so that no personal motor vehicles are allowed. This change would be similar to the Green Line project, an endeavor to turn Broadway into a pedestrian and bike-only zone, but with a major emphasis on greener, gardens, and biodiversity. Radically, this plan bans car traffic in the 112-block zone except for paratransit or emergency services – paratransit would ideally work as an on-demand responsive network that allowed people to go directly to and from medical non-emergency appointments. Figures A and B illustrate this reimagined CBD:

- Two distinct intersections in which all major avenues and cross streets use Select Bus Service (SBS), and all side streets are pedestrian-, bike-, and scooter-friendly with bike paths, bike racks.
- Barrier-free curbs;
- Different textured paths to denote walking or bike and two-wheeler zones – two different bike paths would be allocated for relative speeds;
- Enhanced lighting and audio components for crossing and connecting to different buses; and
- ADA-compliant maps that show the BRT networks and how streets connect – more “fine-grained” and “legible” than regular transit maps.52

“Planning is often a highly bureaucratic procedure that can exclude citizens - intentionally or unintentionally - from the process.”
In this scenario, there are clear winners and losers. Freight delivery would suffer or become more complicated, but food delivery cyclists may have an easier time getting to and from apartment buildings. For-hire vehicle and taxi drivers would likely lose more fares in the CBD. Overall, the city would become more walkable for pedestrians and more user-friendly for people who use wheelchairs, canes, walkers, or crutches. More research would need to be done to understand the true mitigating effects of this plan, as well as consideration for demographics, community input and direction, and technical expertise. Rational planning techniques coupled with the notion that the street would be safer, more accessible, and more enjoyable to most non-motorists would enhance, not take away from, the UD aspect of this plan. Hopefully a plan like this could be implemented in a dense area like the Manhattan CBD and become an example to other boroughs.

**Conclusion**

Planners and citizens need to collaborate to make public spaces better for the public. Universal design offers guidelines to recreate space and help planners and architects think about the future in a flexible and useful way to accommodate a steadily aging population, persons with disabilities (whether they are readily seen or unseen), and even for the traveler who needs to wheel luggage onto public transportation. The literature suggests that UD can be implemented quickly, relatively cheaply, and with ease if the right public participation and government relationship can be met. Shifting public opinion away from automobiles can be difficult, but if more universal design principles can be implemented at the street level and promoted as new features, citizens might take notice, appreciate their value and consider a new transit system that accommodates them and their neighbors.

![Fig. 2: Sketch of Universally Designed CDB, provided by the author.](image-url)
Bushwick City Farm: Growing an Urban Commons

BY ARIELLE LAWSON

Walking north on Lewis Avenue across from NYCHA’s Sumner Houses in Bushwick you will pass a colorful, enclosed community garden with signs proclaiming “Save our Farm” and “Community over Condos.” Originally a decades-long vacant lot taken over by neighborhood residents and activists in 2011, the space was later given a temporary lease of use and now represents an ambitious project that includes raised garden beds, various plants, multiple play structures, a community pavilion, an aquaponics set-up, benches and seating throughout, and even chickens, ducks and cats – all managed by volunteers and supported by community donations. Centered around the motto “give-as-you-can, take-only-as-you-need,” Bushwick City Farms (BCF) models an “alternative” use of urban space in direct opposition to the increasingly privatized, pre-designed and restricted public spaces in the city. While the landowner’s renewed interest in commercially developing the land puts the future of the farm at risk, the roots put down in this shared community space shows the potential of reclaiming the urban commons as a strategic intervention in fighting for the future of our cities. It points to the potential of breaking down traditional conceptions of the “public” both socially and spatially and in turn opening up new spaces and infrastructures for experiments in alternatives ways of living and relating to each other, the environment and the city.
Using Bushwick City Farm (BCF) as a case study, this article explores the core dimensions, contradictions and negotiations surrounding space in the city—in this case the launching and sustaining of a community garden on privately-owned land—to better understand our right to public space and publicity (i.e. being in public). While recognizing its limitations and realities, I propose that the value of the BCF can best be understood as a model of an urban commons; through its physical design and development, ongoing activities, and the framing and enactment of its values, BCF models a practice of public space that activates the public sphere around a shared use of the city based on collective needs and common resources. Extending beyond its physical “public” claim to the land, BCF centers and facilitates a “use-value” of urban space that explicitly opens it up to non-traditional public functions — bringing what are often considered domestic, familial, or private activities (such as food sharing, childcare, birthday parties, etc.) into public space, and through its development fosters new relationships to production, value and sustainability in the city.

While these practices are not always radical or transformative in and of themselves, I hope to demonstrate their potential for radical transformation by analyzing particular elements of the physical, social and symbolic conditions and indicators of their “placed” dimensions in relationship to the larger socio-political and economic context of the city. Though not as overtly “political” or exceptional as grand squares or strategic sites of protest, these kinds of spaces of everyday life are critical to activating, articulating and modeling the practices and values of the right to the city.

**History and Development**

The current second iteration of the Farm is located in Bushwick at the corner of Stockton and Lewis. Originally founded a block over on Broadway, a small group of residents came together to begin clearing that vacant lot in 2008, representing what Jeffrey Hou would define as an “insurgent public space.” Removing the trash and refuse, they replaced it with wood chips, soil and eventually even animals and began to use it as a hub for the community to gather and redistribute resources -- volunteering, donating, hosting events, sharing food. As they say on their website, “The seed of self-sufficiency had been planted and since then, this unlikely lot in Bushwick has provided space for the cultivation of a living learning opportunity for all of us.”

They expanded to take over the current, and much bigger, location in 2011. The decades-long vacant lot provided room to expand and experiment. It also became the main focus and sole work place when the original location was closed in August 2013 at the request of the owner who wanted to build on the lot — demonstrating the temporal risk and ultimate power inequities of this project. True to the mission of the network, however, the current location continues serves as an “open space run by neighborhood volunteers that provide free food, clothing, and educational programs for the community.”

**Activities and Practices**

Founded on the “need in our community for a connection to nature, access to free and healthy food and educational opportunities, and a place to connect with other NYC/Bushwick citizens” Bushwick City Farm was created to serve active community needs, particularly in the context of neighborhood neglect, under-served amenities and abandoned lots. Though rooted in the context of the garden, the space is ultimately a vehicle to fulfill their broader mission: “to provide free food, clothing, and educational programs for the community.” Everything the farm produces is free of charge and distributed based on need. With their chickens, the farm is able to provide free organic eggs to 10–15 families each week, year round. Throughout the garden season BCF and local families harvest between 35-65 lbs of produce each week, available on a “take what you need” basis. Additionally the farm makes available vegetable seeds, seedlings, and ornamental potted plants to community members and organizations free of charge.

Besides re-distributing the material resources it produces directly, the farm provides other important resources to the local community—green space, benches, and other shared infrastructures (pizza oven, play space, fire pit, etc.) as well as programming and services including hands-on youth education, informal childcare network, shared learning and exchange, and community-building. It serves as a platform for hosting community events and ESL lessons and as a depository for people’s creative experiments/productions and art work. The activities from the garden overlap and integrate, as caring for the chickens becomes a lesson or gardening becomes childcare, for example. In a video about the garden, a young boy who has been visiting BCF for years says here he “learned how to plant, to take care of kids, to become a leader.” This highlight the important role of the space in centering relationships and creating space for sustaining shared life. The conditions of the garden itself — in requiring continued maintenance, the long-term investment and vision and the inherently place-based nature of the space — are critical factors to developing authentic and productive roots of an urban commons.
Design: A people-made space

Covering a 10,000 square foot area, the design of BCF has evolved over time. The current iteration of the space was developed through the collective participation of volunteers, including a core collective who primarily manages the space, and using mostly donated materials. The space includes a wide array of infrastructures and supports a wide variety of uses, including collectively managed garden beds, a wooden community pavilion built by local high schoolers through the Urban Workshop program, a coop and run area for the many chickens, ducks and other animals living at the farm, as well as a playground structure with swings, slides, and multiple seating areas. While providing green and open space for the community for recreation and social activities, BCF is also a site of production, piloting “new forms of responsible food production” with active composting for the neighborhood, an aquaponics system, and a green roof. The overlapping uses and infrastructures of the space leads to a hodgepodge of intermixing activities. The paved area in front of the community pavilion serves as a basketball court when not a gathering space, the sidewalk outside can be used as spill-over from the garden when more space is needed for events, and chicken coop can become the classroom for educational programming.

As a garden foremost, BCF’s development is inherently based on continual time, labor and maintenance. These conditions are fundamental to what a commons represents and for a successful public space. BCF’s garden represents a long-term investment in labor, energy, and capital. At the same time, what is critical to their long-term functioning is their capacity to produce infrastructures which sustain and solidify this labor, effort and momentum over time. It also points to the importance of having spaces that can be flexible and adaptable to support new or different community needs, in this case particularly in regards to play and childcare.

These diverse uses that constantly overlap and evolve reflect the active “use value” of the space in meeting the needs of and constantly being (re) produced by its users. Mirroring the conditions of Michael Rio’s observations in Emplacing Democratic Design, the farm demonstrates its potential as a “...generative space that incubates emergent forms of social and economic activity seldom observed in regulated land uses and sites” and “provides a location for creative praxis that can help instigate the formation of new political subjectivities.”  

Values and Relationships

While doing something as simple and “harmless” as providing free resources to the community, the BCF is also advancing a new set of values that stakes a claim to a legitimate, though not technically legal, use of space: “In a rapidly gentrifying neighborhood that is already bristling with luxury condos and massive housing developments, it would be a tragedy to lose the lush oasis BCF provides,” as they state on their website. In claiming a “public” management over private land and putting it towards the benefit of the community, the BCF is reclaiming a portion of the city by those who actively use, produce and need it. This blurs the boundaries between private ownership and right to the space as they are also blurred the boundaries between...
traditional public and private uses and activities. This is ultimately the radical potential that the space evokes, though the effectiveness of this claim to “legitimate” use of the land and its political power generated remains in limbo.

Limitations and Broader Context

Within a changing neighborhood and now currently facing the potential of an eviction, Bushwick City Farm also illustrates the precarity, limitations and contested nature of the urban commons. In particular, to occupy and improve a space is directly implicated in and actively negotiated in ongoing struggles around gentrification and displacement, particularly when led by predominantly, though not exclusively, younger, newer and white residents. Community gardens, which have a long history as insurgent public spaces in New York City, are constantly in negotiation and are contested as they navigate the real estate interests—sometimes benefiting as a recognized and marketable asset, boosting neighborhood property values, while simultaneously representing a threat and “underutilized” potential as it presents a drag on profits. This space is no different as it now faces increased development and gentrification. Though the value of creating insurgent spaces has been discussed, this reliance on creating an “alternative” community space is always precarious, especially when relying on the good will of a developer. Ultimately this notice of eviction is a test of the real power that this community space has created, and whether their claims to the legitimacy and social value of the space can hold up in the face of private property rights. This will continue to be a contested process, especially as the BCF calls for more institutionalized support, such a potential partnership with the City’s GreenThumb program. While not perfect, it could allow for the essential preservation of public land. This in turn is always an ongoing struggle as advocates work to both leverage the resources of the state and hold the city accountable to advance their vision of the public good while not being co-opted or drowned in bureaucracy.

Conclusion

Bushwick City Farm illuminates the complexities and negotiations of the everyday right to the city within their “placed” dimensions of the urban commons and how critical this struggle is to broader conversations about urban space, the public sphere and democracy.

Our public space can be an important arena in which ideas of the “public” are shaped and defined. As a case study, BCF provides a model of an urban commons that fundamentally advances a right to the city as a bold claim for democracy in the fullest sense of everyday life. Building on claims of the right to the city, it articulates and uplifts the potential of the city as an urban commons that centers a shared and collectively sustained “public” life. This reiterates Don Mitchell’s reflections:

“The right to the city is the right to urban life, to renewed centrality, to places of encounter and exchange, to life rhythms and time uses, enabling the full and complete usage of moments and places...the use-value that is necessary bedrock of urban life would be finally wrenched free from its domination by exchange-value. The right to the city implies the right to the uses of city spaces, the right to inhabit it...”

While activities such as sharing clothes, providing free food, and having weekly meals together are not necessarily radical in and of themselves, these uses of the BCF space opens up the potential for alternative values, relationships and practices that explicitly center use-value and community needs at its core and in public. In this way BCF models practices of collectivized social reproduction within the public space which break down traditional boundaries around the public and private (gendered) spheres and their corresponding “acceptable” spaces. In doing so, the space activates the potential for new kinds of practices, relationships and ultimately “publics” to exist, which are not traditionally given space.

Though obviously still functioning within larger oppressive systems, these actions assert and embody alternative values and practices that explicitly center use-value and needs, and bringing new forms of experimentation into the public sphere through activating shared urban space, in a way which is embodied through the activities themselves. Through this dimension of prefigurative politics, it expands the civic capacity and citizenship by offering new forms and practices of embodied participation and mutual aid within the public sphere by and through activating and appropriating a common space and resources.

As the increasing privatization of our public spaces is linked to the broader privatization of our democracy and political system as a whole, creating new spaces and kinds of “publicity” may correspondingly activate the “making” of the public which is at the heart of our democracy, facilitating collective action and the shared practices of everyday life. While always a contested process, ultimately it is “the making and mobilization of the public as an actively engaged citizenry is what enables a public space to remain public and continue to serve as a vehicle and building block of our participatory democracy.”

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Emergency Exit: A Photo Essay

BY ANDY LAWSON
The design of high-rise architecture in Japan is influenced by a history of fires, flooding, and earthquakes.

Traditional style as well as modern and post-modern industrial construction methods of the 21st century imbue every corner of each city with a specific flair all its own. Across Japan, the methods and standards of the Building Standard Act and Law Enforcement Order ensures compliance with any construction and maintenance projects. Much like many other sets of planning and design guidelines, simple directives to enforce high standards of public safety often result in distinguishing architectural features that give a region its charm.

Due to the frequency of both natural and manmade hazards throughout the country, a great stress has been put on guidelines for emergency egress for high rise buildings, specifically emergency exits and staircases. One would assume that this would lead to a ubiquitous style in the planning and construction of these staircases; however, due to the intersection of many strict requirements, we see the rise in use of external points of egress from floor to ground. This is due to lower requirements for outdoor emergency exits as compared to their indoor counterparts (see section 2 article 123 Structure of evacuation staircase and special evacuation staircases in the BSL).

These outdoor emergency exits provide an architectural feature unique to the island of Japan that twists and turns common ground-up or top down legibility of high rise buildings. Our eye, although still raised, is drawn diagonally across the structure. This playfully back and forth is only further enhanced by the materials and colors chosen to accentuate these buildings. Emergency Exit is a short photo series exploring the interaction of these features in the context of the larger urban landscape. ☠
Art for Justice: Street Dance Activism, Social Protest, and Public Space

BY BRENN HEMMINGS

Cities within democratic societies are often characterized as “melting pots”, places in which myriad cultures, values, and industries co-exist side by side. This coexistence is not without tension and ultimately allows cities to become sites for political engagement. Public spaces are frequently at the very center of this tension and political discussion. Unfortunately, participation within public spaces occurs directly as a result of access to capital and legislation. Art and protest provide avenues of civic engagement and political expression for citizens to demand social change (and accountability) from government officials. The coopting of space creates insurgent public space, which serves to empower citizens in their fight for public space and rights. As the arts and culture liaison for the Los Angeles chapter of Black Lives Matter, Shamell Bell utilizes street dance activism for civic capacity. Formed at the intersection of art and protest, street dance activism creates its own public spaces and challenges those spaces’ public spheres.
“Public” for Whom?

Public spaces and the public sphere inform levels of civic engagement and location-based privileges. Public spaces are sites accessible and open to all citizens. “Public spaces occupy an important…ideological position in democratic societies.” "75 The public sphere dictates the acceptable behaviors and conduct performed within public spaces. These spaces encourage open political demonstrations and social demonstrations by members of the public. Though seen as a pillar of democratic society, their locations and designated user activities, however, are highly debated.

The public sphere dictates the acceptable user behavior and conduct performed within public spaces. “The proliferation of and perhaps democratic control over places to meet, gather, and interact…are often seen as sufficient to the creation of a public sphere.” "76 Through this, the public sphere acts as the location of political deliberation and political participation.

Specifically defining public within these realms, proves to be fraught with complications. Through his focus on homeless populations, Don Mitchell brings attention to the important connection between the public and capital. Possession of capital entails political power, which directly influences what legislation is and subsequently enforced. People with money mold sites to their design and have the police power to enforce their beliefs on their locality. Individuals without capital are effectively disenfranchised in these larger conversations in public spaces and the public sphere.

In The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space, Don Mitchell writes about the different bodies and interests involved in maintaining (or dismantling) public spaces. As an overview, the city ultimately functions a work in which all its citizens participate to create. "77 Different publics exist to assist (and represent) different populations; these representations can sometimes conflict with each other. For example, advocates for the rights of homeless people within perceived public spaces often find themselves at odds with how private property owners wish public spaces to be used. Every citizen’s participation (and rights), however, fail to be equal as capital dictates how laws are created and enforced. The interests of private property owners usually dictate how public spaces are used, maintained, and designed. As a result, the spaces’ users find themselves subjected to their will.

The production of public space exists at the crux of its demise and its beginning. "78 The ongoing fight for public space proves the necessity and value of its existence. In “Making Public, Beyond Public Space,” Jeffrey Hou provides definitions for the kinds of public space: institutional public space and insurgent public space. The former are “by nature codified, regulated, and institutionally maintained”; as a result, they usually assume a broad sense of the public that are not involved in their own values) without the consent or input of the affected constituents. This disconnect is further compounded when the programmers are rarely the individuals who use their own designed spaces. When the users of the space are not involved in its design, they are forced to use the space as per the programmers’ designations.

On the other hand, insurgent public space occurs when citizens reappropriate, reclaim, or occupy a particular space to gather or express their opinions and engage in a variety of cultural activities. "80 Insurgent public spaces prescribe to the idea of public space being by the people for the people. These spaces also challenge the top-down planning approach employed by government or private interests. Within the realm of insurgent public space, “public” becomes an active body of citizens. "81 Since this space requires active citizen participation, citizens can program the space for themselves. Creators and initiators of insurgent public spaces suggest that the making of public space does not belong exclusively to institutions. To control how the space is used, citizens must be active and vigilant.

In designing public space for citi-
ity attracts attention and awareness to these particular causes. These can increase protest numbers, who can rally more people behind their causes. Larger protests garner more attention and can motivate institutional action.

Protests and the fight for public space share similarities to dance performances. “Protest, like performance, carefully chooses its stage and its repertoire of movements, which has an impact on audience perception.” Like protesters, dancers actively choose a location and an audience to increase their exposure and visibility, creating insurgent public space. To have the greatest impact, protesters and creators of insurgent public space specifically choose these spaces not designated by institutions. Ultimately, they coopt a certain space and create an atmosphere amenable in expressing their own ideas, hence demonstrating the motivations behind citizens’ movements.

**Identifying Street Dance Activism**

The general criteria used in examining protests and social movements used are the act, its participants or the organization involved in the act, the act’s purpose, and the location of the act. Special attention is given to how these protests engage or challenge public spaces and the public sphere. Through its creation of insurgent public space, street dance activism challenges the public sphere. Public space is the location of street dance activism demonstrations while the public sphere entails both the act and the reason behind the social movement. These components engage with the public and contribute to each other.

“Choreography, movement and gesture are not peripheral but central to the politics of protest.” In its demonstrations, street dance activism creates insurgent public space as a means to hold government entities accountable, engage artists in protesting, and create a dialogue between participants and onlookers.

The Los Angeles chapter of Black Lives Matter, which also includes one of the movement’s founders Shamell Bell, first used street dance activism in its protests outside of the Los Angeles Police Department and the Los Angeles mayor’s house. Bell formed the idea for street dance activism as she and fellow protesters were occupying space outside the Los Angeles Police Department headquarters following the killing of Ezell Ford. As the protest continued for more than two weeks into the winter, she noticed that participants were losing energy and enthusiasm. After calling a friend and hosting an impromptu dance class with the protesters, she noticed a positive change in both the participants’ and onlookers’ perception of the protest. This, she said, created an entry point for protesters to discuss their demands. Her doctoral research examines the intersection of performance, urban culture, and activism.

Ultimately, she believes that street dance activism can create a dialogue between the street dance community, activist community, and the academy. This dialogue can lead to a coalition of different publics protesting together. It is through this that Bell desires to hold governing institutions accountable for their actions, particularly their shortcomings or perpetuated inequities that negatively affect marginalized communities.

In September 2017, Bell taught street dance activism workshops at Arizona State University, in Phoenix, Arizona and her native California. Interviews conducted at her street dance activism workshops demonstrate a need and a desire for another type of protest. This activism advocates self-care in conjunction with resistance and team-building. Bell’s connection to higher education and Black Lives Matter establishes her as an academic within the public sphere. These identities legitimize her work because she shares membership (and understanding) in both worlds. They also aid her in creating dialogue between the two. Through her research, she understands what a public space’s public sphere is. As such, she seeks to challenge and change the relationship between the two. Struggles for rights and liberties create public space. Insurgent public space appeals to the spontaneous nature of public space. Spontaneity presents more challenges in preventing or deterring these particular uses of the space because it challenges hierarchical designs. As this space is created by the public for the public, its members choose and enforce what they deem as appropriate uses of the space. Insurgent public space challenges the coopted space’s design and its public sphere. It encourages citizens to become active in creating their own public space as opposed to just consuming the spaces created for them (and not by them).

As its founder, Ms. Bell views street dance activism as an alternative to traditional forms of protest as well as a way to engage artists within protests. Street dance activism presents new avenues of self-expression and involvement in protests. Dance, Shamell Bell remarks, is something that people enjoy doing. As for the movement’s impetus, Bell commented that dance has always been a way for disadvantaged communities to resist their current socioeconomic situation. Likewise, it brings people, regardless of backgrounds and levels of dance proficiency, together. Street dance activism incorporates varieties of dance such as contemporary choreography or black social dances (such as “the krump,” “the dougie,” and “the reject,” which all originate from black communities). As
a dancer, Bell believes that artists are interconnected with activism because art is activism. To her, street dance activism situates dance as grassroots political action from her perspectives as a scholar, dancer, and choreographer for the Black Lives Matter movement. This type of protest, Ms. Bell says, appeals to participants who may feel uncomfortable with traditional forms of protest or disheartened by social ills. Dance also serves to combat pervasive negativity.

Street dance activism shows the intersection between political activism and artistic expression. Though they are dance-centric, Bell uses her workshops to show attendees that activism can use any of their artistic talents for activism. Street dance activism encourages civic engagement because it involves a larger amount of people to creating public space and challenging its public sphere. By constantly creating its own public space and challenging the space’s public sphere, this activism also holds government entities accountable by protesting outside their own offices. Its spontaneity makes regulating its demonstrations more difficult. Outside of creating insurgent public space, street dance activists take advantage of institutional public spaces, such as nearby parks, to practice their routines, gain the attention of onlookers, and utilize institutional public spaces. Through Bell’s workshops, street dance activism also takes advantage of public space provided by college campuses.

Ultimately, Bell wants to use street dance activism to create a safe environment for protesting. By coopting a space, she and her fellow activists can prescribe their own desired behavior to the space’s public sphere. Street dance activists’ most visible and noticeable demonstrations occur when they create insurgent public space (such as outside Los Angeles Police Department headquarters and the Los Angeles mayor’s house). These demonstrations serve to engage larger numbers of people (and talents) within the realms of public space and public sphere.

**History and Evolution**

Though a relatively new form of political protest, street dance activism’s selection of location and audience were primarily influenced by two previous movements: disco and flash mobs.

Dance as a way to critique and demand social change is not a new concept. Within the last forty years, the use of dance to challenge societal norms gained attention from the disco movement. Street dance activism ‘queers’ the space of its demonstrations by challenging the space’s public sphere. In creating insurgent public space, street dance activism challenges the space’s prescribed activities. This creation and maintenance of public space comes from disco.

The disco ‘queered’ the dance floor by challenging established social dance formation norms like heterogeneous pairings. The disco dance floor functioned as an institutional public space because it was created and designed to challenge established forms of dance. Through challenging the traditional dancing couples on the dance floor, disco goers coopted the space (the dance floor), reappropriated its purpose and challenged heteronormative values. The disco’s break with couples being the tradition basis of social dance was among its innovations. At the disco, people were able to dance alone or groups while also being able to be paired.

These dance formations allowed for an increasing amount of space to exist between the dancing couples. This break allowed for the possibility of solo female dancers and the possibility for gay men to begin expressing themselves more freely on the dance floor. Through dance and by challenging the traditional social dance formation, disco created a space for less ‘traditional’ (gay and lesbian) individuals.

The spontaneity of street dance activism can be traced back to flash mobs. Flash mobs occur when group of people suddenly assemble in a public place, perform an unusual and seemingly pointless act for a brief time, then quickly disperse, often for the purposes of entertainment, satire, and artistic expression. These displays happen without prior notice to the place’s observing occupants. In the early 2000s, flash mobs were used largely for entertainment purposes, such as elaborate marriage proposals or Zumba classes. Since the 2010s and onwards, flash mobs have become used more for meaningful social protest, such bringing attention to damaging repercussions of conversion therapy or protesting the current ruling party’s political policies.

Influenced by dance’s capacity for social critique, street dance activism combines the coopting (and sometimes creation) of a public space by reappropriating the space’s ownership and changing its public sphere.”
Involvement in using public space encourages citizens to become politically active. In becoming politically active, they begin to create spaces for themselves and appropriate government and private entities institutional public spaces.

Through its creation of insurgent public space, street dance activism’s transgressive nature allows it to challenge the public sphere of institutional political public spaces. Street dance activism creates insurgent public space and challenges that space’s public sphere by appropriating ownership of that public space. Different types of protest effect different types of change. Multi-faceted problems, such as homelessness or systemic racism, cannot simply be solved by one piece of legislation or one type of protest.

Likewise, the continuing fight for public space and government responsiveness does not have one, unified answer. As an artist, academic, and activist, Bell uses street dance activism to further this fight. By involving separate groups in this fight, street dance activism gives activists another outlet to not only demand accountability and change from government, but also invites artists to collaborate in this effort. In fighting for these results, activists must involve different populations and utilize different approaches (academic and artistic) to produce lasting results.

True to Bell’s use of this type of political activism, street dance activism engages artists, academics, and protesters in the larger important conversations of systemic inequities embedded in American history that still victimize people of color. Street dance activism shows that these deep-rooted issues affect different members of society regardless of profession, socioeconomic status. Art unites people—a central component for institutional accountability and healing to begin. ◊

Música Ligera: Rock, Memory, & Urban Space in Post-Dictatorship Buenos Aires

BY CARLOS MANDEVILLE

Along the northern coast of Buenos Aires, one can find “La Parque de La Memoria,” a monument dedicated to the victims of the brutal Argentine dictatorship led by General Videla between the years 1976-1983. The space consists of modern, abstract sculptures of bodies, and a long, stone wall etched with the names of the 30,000 victims. It is built right next to Río de la Plata, the river where the dictatorship drowned thousands of political dissenters. Considered perhaps the darkest time period in Argentine history, the “Dirty War” forced individuals to come face to face with unprecedented death and tragedy. The “Junta Militar” reduced bodies to abstract forms and names to be left near the entity that swallowed them, a reduction that lived on in the production of culture during and following the dictatorship. The park and monument highlight the contentious relationship that Argentines—specifically citizens of the capitol Buenos Aires—have with the memory of the dictatorship. Cultural forms, specifically “rock nacional” which was a form of Argentine rock music that existed before, during, and after the dictatorship, echoed the struggle to cope with memories of the dictatorship. This essay examines how Buenos Aires, as a site of cultural production, required the creation of two divergent themes in post-dictatorship Rock Nacional: the struggle to remember and the struggle to forget.
The “Dirty” Past: Situating Rock Nacional in a Violent History

The roots of the “Dirty War” lie in the political volatility of Argentina as a whole which experienced nine different military coups between 1930 and 1976. As Fincherstein (2014) describes, “the Dirty War was not a real war but an illegal militarization of state repression… [it] did not feature two combatants but rather victims and perpetrators.” Around 30,000 people were estimated to have been killed during this time period, including many who “disappeared” and whose bodies were thrown from planes into the Río de la Plata. Young intellectuals with a propensity to dissent—including many in the rock scene—experienced the full force of this brutal regime.

The dictatorship severely repressed cultural production in order to prevent the possibility of political and social opposition. The formal name for this program was the Proceso de Reorganización Nacional, or more commonly: el Proceso. General Videla stated that the goal was to demand “the profound transformation of consciousness” for Argentine people. The military put a cultural blackout in place in order to censor all media and prevent public assembly that could lead to subversion or contradict good morals tied to national and catholic values. The Junta positioned the takeover as, “an obligation which surges from serene mediations about the irreparable consequences that the entire nation could have, a distinct attitude to that previously adopted.” Military commanders took roles in governing positions of newspapers, universities, radio stations, and art institutions to closely monitor and limit what could be taught and shown to the public. The goals, then, were to promote values that would align with those of the dictatorship—such as order, national identity, work, and honesty, so long as they aligned with Christian morals—while striking down opportunities for subversion. The limitation on cultural products created during the dictatorship and the threat of death fostered a political subjectivity based on fear. After this stage in Argentine history, rock nacional served to unite the nation under an accepted notion of national expression, and to recount memories developed during and after the “Dirty War”.

The production of rock nacional raises questions about the way violence shapes memory, and subsequently the cultural products that are derived from historically harmful spaces. Ros (2012) offers an informative summary of theory on collective memory, highlighting how it is, “marked by the tension between the individual and the social dimension.” While memories develop through the lens of the individual as they are based on unique life experiences, they exist within a network of social relations, culture, and institutions. In this context, “literal memory,” or memory that recounts
painful events in detail to emphasize their uniqueness, informs “exemplary memory” which utilizes specific experiences to inform related situations. Music, then, takes the form of exemplary memory in that it can relate a specific memory or idea to a context or history. Musician Andrés Calamaro described Rock Nacional as, “an inheritance of crisis, blood, one of the worst in the world.” Within the confines of a city, music associated with shared spaces reveals the nuances and pains of living during challenging moments in history. This is why the site of Buenos Aires is central to this specific (re)production of collective memory. It is the physicality of the space, one which existed before, during, and after the dictatorship in a similar form, that people associate memory with. Walking between La Casa Rosada (the central office of the President) and the Congreso de la Nación Argentina along the Avenida de Mayo in the modern day can trigger anxious memories of walking along this same path during the dictatorship. Likewise, a song tied to fear, memory, and identity recreates the specificity of physical places in mental spaces.

The Furious City: Buenos Aires as the Site of Rock Nacional

Buenos Aires is a dense, centrally-designed city with a strict and beautiful radial street plan. Key streets originate from the central Plaza de Mayo where La Casa Rosada is located, while the rest of the city mostly takes the form of a clear grid system. The key streets—like Avenida 9 de Julio, the widest street in the city center and host to the famous obelisk—serve as monuments to the powers that have shaped the built environment. At the street level, the city center hosts a massive number of people, and dense commercial frontage fills most of the inner-city. Elsewhere, from large Avenidas that take huge numbers of bodies and vehicles towards and away from the city center, more intimate streetscapes fill the urban landscape. This city space hosts a diverse set of people and interactions because of the variety of spaces in which interaction can occur.

During the dictatorship, the hyper-policing of diverse street life challenged the “city-as-archive” model because it reshaped movement within Buenos Aires to follow the ideals of the military. Mbembe (2002) describes the archive as having a physical, architectural dimension in which discrimination and selection privileges certain documents according to a certain “status.” He highlights the paradox that, “the power of the state rests on its ability to consume time, that is, to abolish the archive and anaesthetize the past.” The commodification of memory removes the distinction between the victim and the perpetrator. In this framework, Buenos Aires serves as the physical dimension in which bodies become documents that are sorted according to status. The dictatorship, moreover, showed a clear desire to rewrite the country’s past through the restructuring of the national self. This restructuring entailed the manipulation of the individual’s psyche and memory to reflect positively upon the actions of the Junta.

Rao (2008) addresses this connection between the city and the archive. The author first discusses how archives have a historical connection to memory, particularly the production of collective memory. After showing how the city works as a form of media through the reproduction of ‘socio-spatial forms’ that establish “place,” Rao clarifies role that different actors play in creating an archive through the deliberate preservation of particular memories. This particularity, expressed through authoritative narratives, makes it so that, “the built environment becomes an archive in which the silencing of multiple pasts and diversity is effectively achieved.” The analogical relationship described here between the archive and the city connects notions of power, memory, and history to the built environments in which they are experienced and produced. Both Rao and Mbembe offer a framework to look at the ways in which political forces manipulate history and memory through the management of the archive of urban space. These conceptions of urban space define cultural production as both a contestation and an articulation of the urban environment. Rock Nacional allows access to the specific archive that is Buenos Aires through narratives and vivid images of memory within the city.

The hit song, “En La Ciudad de La Furia” by Soda Stereo expresses the grit and confusion of living in post-dictatorship Buenos Aires, an insight which helps situate us in the city. Musically, the song opens with an eerie interplay between a keyboard melody that walks a fine line of discontinuity and a guitar that creates a discordant ambience. The steady delivery of the bass and drums serves as the canvass for the jangly lead guitar riff which echoes dissonantly as a result of the reverb singer-songwriter Gustavo Cerati is known for utilizing. The rhythm section emphasizes the steady, dark rhythm of the city as a whole while the minor key guitar riff and the deep deliver of Cerati’s lyrics elicit a feeling of confusion and placelessness, “entre la niebla” of the city (within the fog). Soda Stereo reproduces the chaotic nature of the city in the instrumental breaks which are filled with noisy guitar slides and sounds reminiscent of automobiles.

The lyrics of the song play off of the scene set by the hectic, dark atmosphere established by the music. Cerati forces the terrestrial listener in this furious city to look up and imagine the city from the sky with his opening line,
“Me veras volar por la ciudad de la furia” (You will see me fly through the city of fury). The singer expresses the anonymity he experiences in the city with the following lines which translate roughly to “where no one knows who I am and I am a part of everyone.” This invokes the collective experience of inhabiting urban space, especially one marked with the fear established by a brutal military regime. During the chorus of the song, Cerati turns to personify the city by asking Buenos Aires if it will let him sleep between her legs at dawn. The chorus also discusses the process of memory and coping when Cerati belts that the city, “Sabrás ocultarme bien y desaparecer” (Will know how to hide me well and disappear). The use of the term “desaparecer” in the context of Buenos Aires rock music brings with it the memory of fear associated with the uncertainty that you or a loved one could disappear during the dictatorship. Seen in relation to the line, “solo encuentro en la oscuridad lo que me une con la ciudad de la furia” (Only in the darkness I find what unites me with the city), Cerati reiterates the commonality that all citizens of Buenos Aires hold: the dark, shared past of violence that the city retells through the built environment that reproduces a collective memory.

**Remembering the Dictatorship Through the Music of Charly Garcia and Soda Stereo**

Rock nacional in the post-dictatorship period furthermore began to reflect the different ways that Argentines thought about violence, memory, and ignorance. The differing methods through which memory was conceived become evident in the desire to both confront and avoid discussing the dictatorship through music. The music itself which historically was deeply tied to a burgeoning sense of nationalism began to reflect and mimic, as it did in its early days, the music of foreign sources. In 1986, Charly Garcia described how rock nacional post-dictatorship, “switches from a demanding interested public, that in some way shares an idea with the musician, to another without position…it’s like consuming without questioning.”

Rock nacional went through a crisis because the dictatorship reduced listeners and participants in the movement to mere consumers. This development required a reaction, a reclamation that re-centered the music of Rock Nacional in the context of the recent past.

Garcia, perhaps the boldest artist in rock nacional, unwove lingering conceptions of the dictatorship in the song “Demoliendo Hoteles.” Wilson (2006) underlines how after the end of el Proceso and the return of artistic liberties Garcia was able to return to using the first person in his lyrics, which worked as the processes by which a narrator could reassure their position as a witness. “Demoliendo Hoteles,” clocks in at just over two minutes, takes the form of a basic punk song right out of the vein of the Clash or The Ramones with its muted strumming of the guitar during the verse that plays over a fast, steady drum beat. What is clear from the start through the fast paced, aggressively performed music is the desire for rebellion and reaction against the violence experienced in Buenos Aires. The vocal delivery reflects this as Garcia essentially shouts the words during the verse in a rhythmic manner to emphasize his list of grievances. During the chorus, his vocal delivery becomes more melodic as the song explodes with the guitar strumming opening up for the hook and the background singers emphasizing the phrase, “demoliendo hoteles”. The liberation of the guitar and background singers contrasts heavily with the verse to produce a catchy song that, above all, would be heard by a wide audience in Argentina.

The lyrics directly address General Videla, the atrocities committed by the dictatorship, and the anxieties it produced. Using the form of “Yo que” (I who) to lead most lines, Garcia emphasized that he—and those who identify with the song—was “sin poder” or powerless, without liberties (but not for want of trying), and surrounded by death. His delivery is angry, but sincere because he wants the listener to never forget what it was like to live under Videla’s oppressive regime. The chorus focuses on the image of him demolishing hotels while other people put up posters. Garcia contrasts his desire for rebellion, action, and structural change (“demoliendo hoteles”) with the ineffectiveness of putting up political posters—serving as a common mechanism to spread propaganda through the city—which cannot contribute to a substantial social change. Also, the physicality of removing structures such as a hotel from the city space emphasizes the extent of his anger developed from his memories of the city’s violent past. The first line of the second verse reinforces this notion as he states, “Yo fui educado con odio y odiaba la humanidad” (I was educated with hate and hated humanity). He makes clear how the normalization of hate...a song tied to fear, memory, and identity recreates the specificities of physical places in mental spaces.”
has lasting psychological effects which reproduce notions of violence and aggression in future generations. He, therefore, powerfully advocates in this song for a confrontation with this dark past in order to develop a movement that will work against the violence and hate produced during the dictatorship.

While some artists advocated for direct engagement with challenging memories of Buenos Aires’ history, others chose to embrace the post-dictatorship period as a time to disengage with the struggles they faced. Much of the music of Soda Stereo during the 80s focused more on creating soundscapes where the body can forget the violence committed against it. Take, for example, their most famous song and perhaps the most famous song in rock nacional: “De Música Ligera.”

Stemming from a rather simplistic chord progression that is legendary for the way Cerati hops between the middle G and D chords, this song maintains the basic instrumentation and song structure used by most rock groups, including the likes of Charly Garcia. The studio version opens with the aforementioned guitar riff as the drums and bass weave themselves into the song. As Cerati sings the verses, he opens space for his voice by muting his guitar strumming and letting an organ maintain the chord progression, so that the chorus seems even more monumental when it comes in. The purpose of “De Música Ligera” is to grant people psychological, emotional, and corporal relief from the struggles faced in everyday life and, in the context of the post-dictatorship period, the memory of violence and fear held by Argentines. As stated in the song’s chorus, “De aquel amor de música ligera/nada nos libra/nada más queda” (For the love of light music/nothing liberates us/nothing is left). It is ambiguous, but it raises questions about the purpose of music as a liberating force when there is nothing left to hold on to. This song encapsulates the fervor, respite, and desire that post-dictatorship Argentina was thriving for simply through its performance, particularly in the space of a packed concert venue.

The live performance of this song as the finale to the band’s farewell concert in Buenos Aires underlined its importance for the people and crystalized its place as the ultimate anthem of rock nacional. This performance opens with a very self-aware declaration by Cerati that, “tengo una buena canción para cantar” (I have a good song to sing), a statement which could not be criticized as the over 100,000 fans in the stadium bellowed out the chorus in response. The live feed of this concert emphasized the entirely physical experience of the music as thousands of fans at a time jumped up and down in unison which made the mass of people seem like an active ocean. As each body began to dissolve into the mass of people, the unity expressed here reinvigorated the individual body. Certeau says in “Spatial Practices” that, “The ordinary practitioners of the city live ‘down below,’ below the thresholds at which visibility begins.” Visibility and invisibility work hand and hand in this scenario to highlight the social whole. While individuals sacrifice their visibility in the mass of the audience, they ascribe to a larger visibility of the whole which works more effectively to highlight a specific culture and ideology within that space. This is a productive process that, though unable to remedy the past, makes possible the creation of new memories that can alleviate the fears and anxieties produced during the dictatorship. This song, on some level, achieved everything that the dictatorship could not: the unification of a national body around ideas of community and pleasure without violence and the promotion of national pride without propaganda. As a result of this and the work of artists like Charly Garcia, rock nacional, through the creation of a unified, specifically Argentine genre, liberates, on some level, the City of Buenos Aires and its inhabitants from the devastating past of the “Dirty War.”

“Rock nacional in the post-dictatorship period furthermore began to reflect the different ways that Argentines thought about violence, memory, and ignorance.”
The effects of climate change are not apportioned according to political borders. Hence, it’s self-evident that environmental planning should not stop at county, state, or country lines. Many large-scale attempts at regional cooperation have either been proposed or implemented, but as the climate crisis becomes more urgent, it is important to interrogate whether or not these plans actually address those most vulnerable to the crisis. For the purposes of this paper, I will be comparing the goals and effects of The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, which has facilitated a “cap-and-trade” regulation of carbon emission among 10 northeastern US states, with the increasing need for buyout programs among coastal communities within some of those states directly affected by sea level rise. This juxtaposition is meant to raise the question of not why we are planning regionally, but for whom we are planning. Although there is no question that there is a desperate need to reduce emissions, carbon trading as a method of incentivizing it has shown to be ineffective on the scale needed to meaningfully mitigate carbon pollution. While its supporters claim that it may ameliorate the worst excesses of the region’s top emitters, it ultimately serves the interests of those same emitters, and not those who will first feel the effects of climate change. In planning for the future it is important to not only reduce the causes, but also provide adaptive solutions for the effects.
“Although there is no question that there is a desperate need to reduce emissions, carbon trading as a method of incentivizing it has shown to be ineffective on the scale needed to meaningfully mitigate carbon pollution.”

‘Cap-and-trade’ is a system by which carbon-emitting companies have a set cap on the amount of greenhouse gases they can emit, and furthermore, they can buy and sell these allowances on a trading market. The logic behind cap-and-trade programs is that a quantifiable cost can be placed on the ecological consequences of emissions. Proponents argue that market-based mechanisms are the best way to reducing emissions, because of the cost of exceeding the cap supposedly provides disincentive to pollute. Founded in 2009, the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) was the first of such market based cap-and-trade programs to be mandatory in the United States. In the RGGI, carbon allowances are first auctioned off in quarterly allowance auctions, and then are able to be traded on the secondary market. By putting a price on carbon emissions, the initiative intends to use the money generated on the primary auction market to offset the consequences that these emissions will generate by being released into the atmosphere.

Reports have extolled the benefits of the RGGI with data showing reductions in overall emissions in participating states. However, there are a few discrepancies within such reports that contest RGGI’s success. A cheerleading Acadia Center blog post reports the data that shows declining emissions, but has a few caveats. Firstly, it cites a Duke study that concluded that only about a half of total post-2009 emissions in the region are directly due to the RGGI. This study brings up other causes that are not usually mentioned alongside the supposed successes of cap-and-trade programs such as the recession, other environmental programs, and the drop in natural gas prices. Other studies have even showed that the generous attribution of emission reduction to the RGGI in such studies is further overestimated because it fails to take “leakage” of emitters into areas outside of the region into account, which brings up a larger point about the effectiveness of market-based programs on the regional scale. Secondly, the Acadia Center blog post noted that “with annual emissions falling below the RGGI cap in each of the program’s first eight years, there is an excess of allowances in circulation, leading to low allowance prices.” If one is to judge such a supply-side intervention by its own standards, the low demand for allowances would suggest an inefficiency in the system that would not be able to achieve any desired effect.

In a larger critique of market-based climate change interventions, Naomi Klein dissects the motives and impacts of cap-and-trade programs in her 2014 book, *This Changes Everything*. As an example of the failures of the system, she notes the examples of coolant factories in India and China: “By installing relatively inexpensive equipment to destroy the [greenhouse gas HFC-23]… rather than venting it into the air, these factories - most of which produce gases used for air conditioning and cooling – have generated millions of dollars in emissions credits every year.” By the monetization of emissions credits she adds that, “in some cases, companies can earn twice as much by destroying an unintentional by-product as they can from making their primary product.” It’s actually possible to profit as a emitter from reducing emissions and selling off your allowances. While supporters of the RGGI love to bring up how income has been generated for the member states, the potential for new private profit through systemic loopholes is rarely brought up. In fact, Klein concludes that not only has this type of regulation generated a new industry, but it has also actively prevented other more effective measures from materializing. In her analysis of green organizations’ participation in the United States Climate Action Partnership (USCAP), a similarly market-based solution to climate change, she concludes, “They chose a stunningly convoluted approach to tackling climate change, one that would have blocked far more effective strategies, specifically because it was more appealing big emitters”.

Other equity assessments have been very critical of cap-and-trade programs. In a USC study of the California Global Warming Solutions Act, a cap-and-trade emissions program in California, shared the alarming find-
ings that in-state GHG emissions have increased, on average, among several industry sectors since the advent of cap-and-trade. In particular, the electrical industry GHG reductions were largely due to reductions in imported electricity (and in the GHG-intensity of those imports) while in-state GHG emissions actually rose.

This is another example of how on a regional scale, the net emissions reduction may not be actually improving under a market-based system because energy (and the emissions it comes with) does not necessarily have to be produced within the boundaries of the program. Additionally, the same study raises concerns of climate justice: “The neighborhoods near the top-emitting facilities that increased emissions were poorer and had a higher share of people of color than neighborhoods near top-emitting facilities that decreased their emissions.” Within these programs it seems clear that the beneficiaries are not the residents, who are exposed to emissions.

Issues of climate justice — the unequal ways that climate change-related risks threaten marginalized communities — are obviously not attributed to cap-and-trade programs alone. However, the inequities created by regional programs such as these are consistent with larger analyses of climate inequities. Christian Parenti offers a framework through which to view these issues of climate justice in his book Tropic of Chaos - the “politics of the armed lifeboat”. In his investigation, Parenti noted how climate change affects geography asymmetrically. That is, that under increasingly severe global conditions, certain people will be left behind as the wealthiest nations and people are in the “armed lifeboat”, an exclusionary resilience for a few. To combat inequalities on the regional scale, the special should be of primary concern. The highest priority should be helping those who are immediately vulnerable.

One policy solution that can have a direct impact in improving the resiliency of poor communities on the coastline is managed retreat. Managed retreat involves the permanent evacuation of coastal zones that place residents of the area at risk due to flooding or storm surge – often compounded by sea level rise. According to a spokesperson for the New York State Governor’s Office of Storm Recovery:

“Managed retreat is the strategy that most effectively mitigates the risk of catastrophic flooding. By removing man-made impediments and restoring the wetlands, we are recreating the best coastal buffer that nature can offer. This is all the more important in the face of imminent sea level rise and the new reality of increasingly frequent storms.”

a spokesperson for the New York State Governor’s Office of Storm Recovery commented for a story in The Nation.

However, relocating residents from their homes can be complicated. A resident of Oakwood Beach, NY, a community that has undergone buyout programs in recent, expressed one of the main concerns about leaving in an article in The New Republic,

“One of the biggest concerns was that the land was going to be redeveloped, it was a lower middle class neighborhood, and everybody was pretty much at the same level of wealth, or lack of wealth. If their homes were going to be given to a rich person, or if they were going to be knocked down so that some developer could build a mansion or a luxury condo, they were not leaving.”

Fortunately, in this specific case, funding for buyouts from the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program prohibits further development on the land to be retreated from leaving it to be open space forever on.

Despite the relative success of the Oakville buyout, it is important to note that this particular buyout was both a direct reaction to damage sustained by Hurricane Sandy, and extensive organizing on the part of the community, which is not a model that can be replicated everywhere. Certain other factors compound complications with the combination of federal and state level coordination. In New York, concerns about home values of the surrounding region limited the application of buyout programs to where desired participation rate was at or near 100%.

Also while working at the state or city level, municipalities are often reluctant to pursue retreat programs because it their lowers tax base. As CUNY professor Ashley Dawson wrote in his book Extreme Cities, “The name of New York City’s post-Sandy recovery program – Build it Back – clearly states the dominant position on coastal retreat.”

“...the inequities created by regional programs such as these are consistent with larger analyses of climate inequities.”
Managed retreat is a specific intervention in which regional cooperation should be implemented to help people in instances local government is largely unable to deal with. For every success like the Oakville buyout, there are numerous other communities across the country that are unable to obtain the same funding or cooperation. For example in the planned retreat of Newtok, Alaska, case studies have shown that, “Even with community willingness and some federal support, the lack of clear pathways, guidance, or a federal mandate has stymied implementation of the relocation effort.” In this case federal funding was not available to this community because they were not affected by a specific disaster, even though the slow erosion of the area will eventually render the area uninhabitable. In a paper published in Nature Climate Change, an analysis of 27 cases of strategic retreat further concluded that the cooperation and agreement between residents and governments was the most important factor in successful relocation.

A report by the Lincoln Land Institute in conjunction with RPA titled “Buy in for Buy-Outs examines some of the successful elements of the existing relocation programs. Two buyout programs it focuses on in the NY Metro area are the New York Rising Buyout and Acquisition Programs (NY Rising) – which handled the Oakville Beach buyout and The New Jersey Blue Acres Program. Elements of both add semi-regional elements of planning to alleviate pressure of dealing with retreat programs for municipalities. “A notable aspect of the NY Rising Program is that the 25 percent nonfederal match normally passed on to individual municipalities is paid at the state level, thereby reducing the burden of buyout participation on local municipal finances. This helps to make buyouts more financially viable for municipalities, since they need to accommodate only the loss in tax revenue.” It isn’t impossible to fathom that instead of resources being put into a regional greenhouse gas body, a coastal risk body could exist to directly address populations in need outside of the framework of the existing state and federal avenues, which is a real need. If environmental planning is to be done at the regional scale, it has to be used to address the spatial inequalities caused by climate change. Regional programs like cap-and-trade allow the carbon sector to grow without either addressing root causes of climate change or protecting those who are most vulnerable. Instead limits to carbon emissions should be naturally federal and mandated, since the impact of emissions is not regionally determined and regional market based emissions solutions have been shown to be of dubious effectiveness. With the comparison of the non-effect of the RGGI and the potential opportunity for successful regional planning for coastal retreat, it is clear that regional planning efforts would be more effective if focused on developing adaptation measures to protect those who will most immediately feel the effects of climate change.
Off the Grid: Neighborhood-scale Resilient Power for All New Yorkers

BY PRIYA MULGAONKAR

As climate change progresses, New York must confront its continued reliance on polluting, fossil-fuel generated infrastructure. America’s first ever electricity generation and distribution infrastructure is decaying, and NYC’s grid is increasingly vulnerable to disruption from climate change and increasing peak demand. Residents who live in close proximity to electricity generation infrastructure face the highest consequences of diesel-and gas-generated power plants, including pollution that impacts public health and contributes to the greenhouse gas effect. Community-scale microgrids can address long-standing inequities faced by low-income communities and communities of color while creating investment in economically-sound, climate-resilient, and environmentally sustainable sources of power generation to ease the strained existing grid.
Peak demand, the maximum rate of consumption from the centralized electricity grid, places additional strain on this aging infrastructure and becomes increasingly costly to meet. In New York, the rate of energy consumption reaches its maximum during hot summer months, when air conditioners are blasting across the five boroughs and additional power generation from “peaker” plants is required. Despite gains in energy efficiency, peak demand continues to climb even as the city’s energy demand is declining overall.\textsuperscript{142,143} Peak demand may only comprise 15 percent of total annual demand and take up about 7 days of the year, yet it can cost customers up to $840 per kW annually.\textsuperscript{144} According to the State estimates, reducing peak demand by its top 100 hours could reduce electricity costs by $1.7 billion annually.\textsuperscript{145}

Peak demand is of particular concern in New York City, one of the most energy-intensive cities in the world, and is only worsening as time goes on. The peak load within Con Edison’s service territory in NYC and Westchester County approaches 14 GW of demand in the summer months – roughly a quarter of the peak demand for the entire state of California.\textsuperscript{146} New York City’s peak demand has consequences for the rest of the state. New York City consumes 60 percent of the state energy supply, yet only generates 40 percent, requiring massive transmission infrastructure which, like the rest of the energy system, is declining rapidly.\textsuperscript{147}

Within the next five years, 30 percent of the city’s steam and combustion turbines will exceed retirement age, accounting for 2,860 megawatts (MW) in lost energy supply—roughly ½ of the energy NYC consumes at peak demand in summer months.\textsuperscript{148,149} In 2015, the State estimated that over $30 billion is required to upgrade New York’s aging electric transmission and distribution infrastructure – and that investment would only meet current energy demand projections.\textsuperscript{150} To make matters worse, once these plants are decommissioned, there are currently not enough projects in development to replace this lost energy supply, threatening a potential energy shortage as early as 2021.\textsuperscript{151}

Additionally, New York City’s electricity generation and distribution infrastructure is highly vulnerable to storm surge and flooding (Fig 1). Risks associated with flooding are assessed using FEMAs definition of a 100-year floodplain, which estimated to have a 1% chance of flooding annually.\textsuperscript{152} 88 percent of the city’s steam generating capacity, 53 percent of incity electric generation capacity, 37 percent of transmission substation capacity, and 12 percent of large distribution substation capacity lie within the 100-year floodplain.\textsuperscript{153} As climate change progresses, sea level rise projections show that these numbers could grow to 97 percent of in-city electric generation capacity, 63 percent of transmission substation capacity, and 18 percent of large distribution substation capacity.\textsuperscript{154}

Since Superstorm Sandy in 2012, Con Edison has spent nearly $1 billion to raise, waterproof or wall off vulnerable equipment to separate distribution networks to allow for remote shutoff when floodwaters rise.\textsuperscript{155,156}

New York’s outdated approach to addressing peak demand has consequences beyond high costs and unreliability. Nearly half of New York’s electricity supply is derived from fuel oil or natural gas burning turbines, both of which have negative impacts on public health and the climate. Fossil fuel-generated power plants are a major source of carbon dioxide (CO\textsubscript{2}), a major driver of climate change; electricity use alone accounted for 25.6 percent of NYC’s greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in 2015.\textsuperscript{157} Dirty power generation also produces health-hazardous compounds including sulfur dioxide (SO\textsubscript{2}), nitrogen oxides (NO\textsubscript{x}), fine particulate matter

\textsuperscript{156} Map 1: Vulnerability of New York City’s Electrical Generation to Storms
(PM$_{2.5}$), polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), and volatile organic compounds (VOCs). Exposure to air pollutants from energy generation are linked with increased risks of respiratory diseases, including asthma; cardiovascular diseases; and potentially central nervous system diseases and pregnancy complications. NO$_x$ pollution alone costs NYC an estimated $62$ million annually. Despite the city’s best efforts, current strategies employed to limit NO$_x$ emissions from aging peaker plants may have little benefit. A secondary pollutant, ozone occurs when NO$_x$ and VOCs react in the presence of sunlight. Ozone pollution alone is linked with 400 premature deaths, 850 asthma hospitalizations, and 500 asthma-related visits to the emergency room asthma every year.

Communities of color face the brunt of the consequences of these emissions. Not surprisingly, the most polluting peaker power plants are sited in historically overburdened communities – low-income communities and communities of color living near heavy and light manufacturing zones. Across the US, African-American children are 4 times more likely to be hospitalized for asthma-related symptoms, and over 7 times more likely to die from asthma than white children; Hispanic communities are 60 percent more likely to visit the hospital for asthma compared to non-Hispanic whites. These same communities often deal with multiple environmental burdens, including highways, waste facilities, and a lack of open space.

The same communities at most risk of pollution-related illness are also face disproportionate risks to climate change impacts such as storm surge and extreme heat. Superstorm Sandy’s devastation in New York was not evenly felt; storm surge affected 10 percent of NYCHA’s developments, causing power outages at 400 buildings (comprising 35,000 units) and leaving 386 buildings without heat and hot water for several days. Tens of millions of gallons of water had to be pumped from electrical and gas meter rooms, boiler rooms and other critical infrastructure as contaminated water infiltrated basements and destroyed boilers, electrical panels, and underground electrical conduits. All in all, Sandy caused over $3$ billion in damage to NYCHA properties alone. An analysis of FEMA registrants that took place just a year after Sandy hit revealed that of the 500,000 households that registered for FEMA assistance, 68 percent were low-income. In New York City, 52 percent of renters who applied for assistance were people of color.

Given the multiple and compounding risks posed by climate change, interventions that increase resiliency in communities most vulnerable to climate impacts should be prioritized. One such solution is to bring power off the grid entirely – and into the hands of communities that have long dealt with environmental racism.

A microgrid consists of interconnected loads and distributed energy resources within specific electrical boundaries, and can connect or separate from the main electrical grid. They can enhance grid reliability by more effectively balancing supply and demand of energy using high-tech approaches, including — smart meters, demand response, and energy storage. Many microgrids use renewable and clean energy resources, energy storage, technology to rapidly isolate from the main grid, and the real-time control systems. All in all, microgrids are part of a systems-wide approach to reduce reliance on centralized, inefficient, and costly generation and transmission infrastructure.

Renewable-generated microgrids may also contribute to climate resiliency by helping decentralize the power system; in the event of a severe weather event, this creates redundancies that can potentially allow for separation from the grid and supply of energy until the main grid is operational. Microgrids can also increase the resiliency of the energy system as a whole, by allowing for critical facilities included in the system to “island” during times of emergency, or even when the grid is strained during peak demand.

If sited with equity in mind, microgrids can help address the specific vulnerabilities of low-income communities, communities of color, and heat vulnerable neighborhoods. By providing power to critical facilities (hospitals, elder care facilities, etc.) during an emergency, microgrids can protect vulnerable populations like hospital patients, elderly citizens and low income residents that may not be able to evacuate an area until the power is restored.

The magnitude of the benefits would depend on the scaling up of microgrids across the city. Microgrids can significantly reduce a community’s carbon footprint. For example, NYU’s microgrid saves an estimated 44,000 tons per year of CO2 emissions; NY Presbyterian Hospital cuts 27,000 tons per year; and Cornell’s microgrid cuts down 50,000 tons per year.

To maximize the environmental and climate benefits of microgrid technology, less polluting renewable energy should be prioritized to power these microgrids. And to truly achieve an equitable transition to a renewable energy economy, climate-vulnerable neighborhoods, environmental justice communities, and low-income people should be prioritized for the siting of microgrids.
Freeways and the automobile have strongly shaped the way Los Angelenos live, work, and commute. Yet the development of the Southern California freeway system has a history of displacement and large-scale urban clearance in which these freeways segregated land use by creating physical barricades throughout the region. This is especially true of the east side of the city, where today six freeways create a concrete barrier separating these communities from Downtown and West Los Angeles. Through a housing shortage, federal housing policies, redlining, and restrictive covenants, the Mexican-American community in Los Angeles was pushed to live and forced to stay in the neighborhoods of East Los Angeles, unable to move elsewhere while other immigrant groups fled. As six freeways were constructed in East L.A., no freeways were built in white, more affluent parts of the city such as Beverly Hills due to successful revolts and protests in these areas. East Los Angeles neighborhoods did not hold the power or wealth to resist freeways overwhelming their side of the city, and the repercussions of this are still visible today.
Los Angeles has not always been considered the automobile mecca of the United States; it was first developed as a sprawled, decentralized city because of the streetcar. This rail system, known as the Pacific Electric (PE) Railway, was the main source of transportation for residents between 1880 and 1930. It allowed communities to develop outside of the downtown central district of Los Angeles, reaching other cities throughout the region such as Long Beach, Watts, Venice, Santa Monica, Hollywood, and Glendale.

However with the rise of the automobile in the 1920s and the following decades, the PE streetcar slowly diminished. Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company, Union Oil, the Southern California Rock and Gravel Company, and several other business interests encouraged the expansion of the automobile as Southern California’s primary mode of transportation. Beginning with the Great Depression in 1929 as economic growth declined, the PE streetcar was slowly pushed out as the automobile took over. By 1937, a report released by the Automobile Club of Southern California was first to propose an expansive freeway system plan along with announcing the automobile as the primary mode of transportation in Southern California. The region’s departure from the streetcar as the main transportation mode set Los Angeles’ heavy and long-lasting addiction to the automobile in motion.

**L.A. Demographics in the 20th Century**

Los Angeles has long been represented as a multi-ethnic and diverse city, and today East Los Angeles is home to the second largest concentration of a Mexican-origin population worldwide. Yet, Mexican-Americans as well as other immigrant communities have lived through a history of displacement and relocation throughout the city. During the 1920s and 1930s, a new Civic Center and Union Station were being developed in Downtown Los Angeles which resulted in increased property values in the area. These new developments created a housing affordability issue and caused many immigrant communities, predominantly Mexican and Chinese families who had previously resided around Downtown, to flee to East Los Angeles in search of cheaper rents. This displacement shaped Boyle Heights and other neighborhoods in East Los Angeles to be historically diverse and well-known for their racial and ethnic diversity, with a long history of working-class activism. East Los Angeles had become a “port of entry” for many immigrant groups coming to the United States. Previous to World War II, Boyle Heights was home to a large number of Jewish, Japanese-American, Mexican-American, African-American, and European immigrants, earning the name “Ellis Island of the West Coast”.

**An Overview of the Federal Housing Policies**

In the years following the Great Depression and World War II, several federal housing policies under President Franklin Delano Roosevelt shaped how and where Americans chose to live. These policies incentivized home-ownership and subsequently the decentralization of cities, eventually creating a nationwide urban crisis. In 1933, President Roosevelt signed into law the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC), creating a national policy with the intent to save homeowners from foreclosure and protect homeownership. Appraisers under the HOLC policy divided neighborhoods into sections and developed a rating system with the letters A, B, C, and D to grade each neighborhood based on if it was “dense, mixed, or aging”. Lower graded neighborhoods, typically ones with a large minority population, were seen as undesirable. Banks used these appraisal grades when analyzing risks in lending money for loans and mortgages on houses. This practice, called redlining, forced minority communities to reside in certain, low-graded neighborhoods as they were unable to purchase homes to move elsewhere. The Federal Housing Authority (FHA), established with the National Housing Act in 1934, also had an impact on homeownership and decentralization throughout the United States. The FHA streamlined loan procedures, eliminated second mortgages, and lowered interest rates, making home-buying easier and more accessible.

As the impacts of the HOLC and FHA policies set in, more families were able to purchase homes and move out to further suburbs, leaving many immigrant and minority groups in the inner cities. East Los Angeles immigrant communities were severely affected by the housing shortage. The effects of the FHA and HOLC housing policies limited their ability to buy homes, especially in white communities because of multiple exclusionary policies. Restrictive covenants, racial segregation, and redlining practices all discouraged Mexican-Americans and other minority and immigrant groups from purchasing homes in certain neighborhoods, leaving them to reside in areas such as Boyle Heights in East Los Angeles. Boyle Heights was a specifically redlined neighborhood, which the HOLC described as “thoroughly blighted and thereby accorded a low D grade.” The loosening of the racially restrictive housing covenants and redlining policies allowed Jewish
and other European immigrants, now classified as a “type of white,” to move away to more affluent, white neighborhoods in the western suburbs of Los Angeles. The exodus of these immigrant communities left Boyle Heights and other neighborhoods in East Los Angeles predominantly Mexican with the poorest concentration of housing in the country. By the 1950’s, most ethnic white minority groups had moved away to other parts of Los Angeles, causing the neighborhoods of East Los Angeles to no longer be the diverse areas they had been in past decades.  

**Housing and Highway Policies Collide**

Simultaneously as Mexican-American families were forced to reside in neighborhoods of East Los Angeles, these areas were planned for freeway development. In Southern California, the wartime migration following World War II resulted in a higher demand for more and better highways as a response to economic expansion and population density. The Joint Fact Finding Committee on Highways, Streets, and Bridges, formed as a response to the growing demand for freeways, passed the Collier Burns Highway Act in 1947. This new piece of legislation severely increased freeway construction in Los Angeles and “inaugurated the city’s age of the freeway.” Even with the housing shortage threatening certain Los Angeles neighborhoods, freeway construction became the superior issue over saving homes from destruction, leaving many families with nowhere to go. In 1948, 210 families were moved by the State of California and the City of Los Angeles to federally owned trailers or were forced to relocate their homes. The state claimed this was their “best effort to route the [Santa Ana] freeway with the least amount of disturbance,” although it obviously disrupted hundreds of families residing in the area. There were clear connections being made between the blighted and redlined neighborhoods and where freeway construction was occurring in East Los Angeles. Nationwide between 1956 and 1966 approximately 37,000 housing units were destroyed by highway construction per year. By 1958 highway funding was the largest source of federal aid to states nationwide, which only increased decentralization in cities and America’s prioritization of the automobile. As highway construction brought jobs and created a more prosperous economy across the country, in Los Angeles it also created destruction and built literal barriers between the low-income and minority neighborhoods of East Los Angeles and the more affluent West Los Angeles and Downtown area.

**Responses to the Freeway: Protests and Resignations**

As the racial demographics of East Los Angeles changed with the exodus of white families to the suburbs, these neighborhoods were left as seemingly weak and easy targets for multiple urban renewal projects. Social reformers at the time “identified virtually every working-class neighborhood near downtown and the Los Angeles River as a target for rehabilitation.” Also, because of the poor, working-class communities that resided in Boyle Heights and other neighborhoods, officials did not see them as a threat to protest against the freeway development in their neighborhoods. In contrast, predominantly white and affluent neighborhoods such as Beverly Hills were able to organize successfully and halt development because their constituents had more resources and power in their communities. Often, these protests were lead by newspaper editors, city councilmen, state assemblymen and other leaders in the community, while members of the public also organized meetings, protests, and petitions. This trend continued until 1953 which marked the first formal protest of freeway development in East Los Angeles against the Golden State 5 Freeway. Multiple groups such as the Brooklyn Avenue Business Men’s Association, the Eastside Citizen Committee Against the Freeway, and the Anti-Golden State Freeway Committee, along with a few community-elected officials, organized and supported rallies, protests, and meetings. Some support also came from the Jewish community who had previously called East Los Angeles home. In 1957 near the end of the Jewish exodus from Boyle Heights, Joseph Kovner, an editor of the *Eastside Sun* newspaper and a board member of the Eastside Jewish Community Center, spoke out about the freeway developments asking, “how do you stop the freeways from continuing to butcher our towns?” Yet, these protests severely lacked in scale and drama, and despite these efforts all proposed freeways were constructed through East Los Angeles.

Construction of freeways throughout Los Angeles lasted from 1944 up until 1972. Boyle Heights and other East Los Angeles neighborhoods had low
property values which were easier set for destruction than other industrialized and wealthier areas of the city.\textsuperscript{213} Also, because of the large immigrant, non-English speaking Mexican communities in these areas, many families did not want trouble and instead allotted to “play by the rules [of America]: to speak English, encourage their children to succeed in school, obey the law, and avoid its discipline”.\textsuperscript{214}

**Construction and Aftermath**

The Urban Land Institute (ULI), a national organization for real estate developers, entrepreneurs, and builders, released recommendations for cities to coordinate highway construction with slum clearance, which Los Angeles followed as they developed their freeway system.\textsuperscript{215} Schools, churches, and most notably Hollenbeck Park in Boyle Heights were not spared by the construction of Los Angeles freeways, even though the Division of Highways held a rule that “parks should be avoided whenever possible”\textsuperscript{216} and freeways should be in the “most direct and practical location.”\textsuperscript{217} There is no clear design reason found as to why one of the nation’s largest freeway interchanges was constructed through East Los Angeles instead of in northern or western parts of the city other than the fact that land was much cheaper, people were easier to displace, and less political backlash would take place in East Los Angeles.\textsuperscript{218} These neighborhoods were unnecessarily destroyed while in other parts of the city freeways were rerouted around large landmarks, such as the Hollywood Bowl and the Hollywood Presbyterian Church, in order to avoid destruction.\textsuperscript{219} From the 1958 Master Plan for Los Angeles Freeways, only sixty-one percent of originally planned freeways were built throughout the entire Los Angeles area, while one-hundred percent of all planned freeways were built in East Los Angeles.\textsuperscript{220} Many of the originally planned freeways not built were meant to run through predominantly white neighborhoods, such as the case in Beverly Hills.\textsuperscript{221}

In East Los Angeles the freeways created actual concrete barriers between neighborhoods, isolating low-income communities from the rest of the city. Freeways running through Boyle Heights and the rest of East Los Angeles became a source of identity for the Mexican-American community living here as they dominated the landscape.\textsuperscript{222} Jane Jacobs argued that building highways and expressways through cities create what she called “border vacancies” that separate public, social space throughout neighborhoods, impeding their ability to grow.\textsuperscript{223} This is exactly what occurred in East Los Angeles with the development of the East L.A. Interchange that resulted in segregating the area from the rest of Los Angeles. Looking back at the 1958 Master Plan of Freeways, the monstrous interchange is actually three times bigger than had been originally planned, and covers over 135 acres of land.\textsuperscript{224} The East Los Angeles Interchange has been granted the nickname of the “Spaghetti Bowl” as it represents such a massive tangle of freeways.\textsuperscript{225} Being surrounded by freeways and automobiles has led to many health and respiratory issues for the population of East L.A.\textsuperscript{226} A 2003 study conducted by the California Air Resource Board concluded that children who attend the Soto Street Elementary School, which is located right next to the East Los Angeles Interchange in Boyle Heights, were breathing in some of the United States’s highest levels of microscopic pollutants found in the air, which in turn could cause respiratory, cardiac, and other serious illnesses.\textsuperscript{227} Researchers also found there to be a higher carcinogenic risk for populations living near freeways, increasing East Los Angeles residents’ chance of developing cancer and other deadly diseases.\textsuperscript{228} Rightly so, East L.A. has been named one of the state’s most polluted communities, raising the question of environmental justice.\textsuperscript{229}

Overall during the decades of freeway construction throughout Los Angeles, 527 miles of freeways were built resulting in the displacement of over a quarter-million people.\textsuperscript{230} Led by the Division of Highways, the construction of the entire Los Angeles freeway system during this time period marked the largest public works project in the history of the city.\textsuperscript{231} Although protests did occur as a response to the development of the freeway system, they were widely unsuccessful and did not stop the freeways from barraging through the neighborhoods of East Los Angeles. Only one example of a successful freeway revolt exists in Los Angeles and it occurred in the very wealthy, predominantly white city of Beverly Hills. The struggle of Mexican-Americans to fight freeway development in their neighborhoods in East Los Angeles represents a class divide, while the barriers created by freeways represents a literal divide. Some would argue that with the expansion of the automobile, the construction of the freeways in Los Angeles was a symbol of progression because at the time the city was severely lacking in an integrated freeway system after the fall of the streetcar. Yet, the negative ramifications of Southern California’s dependence on the automobile and the construction of the freeways have been severe, with no end to this dangerous addiction in sight. In the years following the construction of the Los Angeles freeway system, the city had been promoted as the “ultimate suburban metropolis”, often being celebrated for its decentralized urban landscape.\textsuperscript{232} The matter of this reputation and idea of progress being for better or for worse is still up for discussion.
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