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In Defense of Planning

Editor’s Statement

WHILE SOMEONE IN PLANNING SCHOOL MIGHT SAY this any year, this year, with unprecedented decisions being made regarding NYC’s built environment, from communities pushing back against Amazon in Long Island City to the ongoing NYCHA crisis, seemed like an especially good time to reassess what planning means for students and how it should play a role in NYC’s future. In our classes this semester, discussion moved away from relitigating the plans of the past, as we were urgently confronted with the plans of the present and the future. We read about urban renewal, but the Amazon-Cuomo soap opera was the topic du jour. We read about the utopian new town proposals of the Regional Planning Association of America (RPAA), while watching as Hudson Yards opened, probably fulfilling some tech bro’s idea of utopia. Across the city, despite perennial opposition from activists and progressive planners, it seemed like we were doomed to relive the same rezoning story yet another year. The difference is, these contemporary imaginaries belong not to planners and policy makers, but to the private sector, and its market libertarian cheerleaders.

Last December, during the early conversations about the theme for Urban Review, the initial impulse was to position this issue “Against Planning.” After all, with a cursory glance at the state of the profession, there didn’t seem to be much to celebrate. Pop urbanism constantly places the blame of current urban problems on big names like Robert Moses and Le Corbusier as signifiers for the folly of professional planning, repeating it to the point of cliché. Those against the current model of private-public partnerships and seeming unchained private development ruthlessly critique the operations of city planning agencies. Yet, even when confronted with this reality, the vast majority of us at Hunter who consider ourselves progressive went back to study urban planning and policy. It made more sense to call for articles that interrogated what these positive potentials of planning could be.

The articles in this issue are largely critical of the structures that shape our cities not because planning is bad, but because planning, often historicized as a static profession, actually has a rich, varied, and sometimes even radical potential. Critiques of policy and legislation like the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) program and the Urstadt Law challenge the processes through which urban change can be made. An investigation of participatory planning in the ULURP process allows us to assess whether self-proclaimed progressive tactics are effective in addressing spatial inequality or just a simulacrum of community planning of yore. Articles on the alternative value system of Everyday Urbanism and critiques of the fetishizing of private property rights open the opportunity of a realignment of the goals of planning against the status quo.

I hope that the articles in this issue will help us set aside the narratives that drive popular perceptions of what a planner has to be. The stories we tell ourselves about neat binary conflicts between Jane Jacobs and Robert Moses, good and evil, don’t have to shape the potential of the profession.
Interview with Samuel Stein

Author of Capital City: Gentrification and the Real Estate State

While it is true that change is inevitable in the general sense, there is nothing inevitable about the current reality of rampant gentrification. Rather, it is a phenomenon that is consciously engineered by a state beholden to the interests of propertied elites above everyday city residents. This is the central argument of Samuel Stein’s essential debut book Capital City: Gentrification and the Real Estate State. In Capital City, Stein, a Hunter alum and current faculty member, cogently details the rise of what he refers to as “the real estate state” from the emergence of inequality in industrialized cities from the 19th century to the ascendance of Donald Trump, the exploitative real estate developer-cum-president of the United States. Ending the book with a chapter entitled “Unmaking the Real Estate State,” Stein details the strategies planners, organizers and city residents alike can deploy to make real change. Urban Review editor Michael Nicholas sat down with Stein to discuss his experience at Hunter, Capital City, and where future planners can go from here.
URBAN REVIEW: Ok so firstly, I wanted to congratulate you on the success of the book. Do you have any insight to why you think it’s caught on as much as it has?

SAMUEL STEIN: I hope it’s caught on. I think what I’ve been trying to do is to make sometimes very complex and chaotic processes more legible and to put some human faces on what can be pure abstractions. So when I first proposed the book, it was going to be about “urban planning” and the contradictions of planning: the forces that make planning difficult under capitalism. My editor said, “ok we like the concept, talk about “planners” not “planning”, show that it’s people doing these things and making these decisions, working under conditions not of their own choosing and not just abstract forces.” So I think that the framing of the book shows the structural mechanisms, the people who work within those structures and the people who created these structures.

UR: How has your experience, specifically as a teacher, with students who aspire to be planners or work in other urban-adjacent professions shaped how you see the future of planning? Is it a finger on the pulse of what young people are thinking about the city?

SS: I teach undergraduate here at Hunter, so some folks from my class are going to try to go on and get a masters in urban planning and do that kind of work. Many others are not and so a lot of what I’m doing is to trying to get students’s curiosity and passions about the city channeled into a way of understanding the way things got to be the
way that they are, how they work and how they could work differently. I do see a lot of the same concerns I have about the direction that the city is going reflected in my students concerns. I also see a lot of pessimism in terms of political possibilities, which is something which we're conditioned into considering the failures of programs that are supposed to take on gentrification to actually take on gentrification. And we can think then, is that failure an accident or is it conditioned? Are these programs not supposed to be effective in that way or are they just failing over and over again. The fact that many students are coming in with the assumption that gentrification is unstoppable is distressing but also a reason to keep doing the work that we're all doing.

UR: What do you think is the role of planners who don't buy into the bipartisan consensus of land management? What do you advise them to pursue and where do you see their place?

SS: I've had a few people come to book talks and then talk to me afterwards or email me afterwards and say, "oh my god, I thought I was going to be a planner now I don't want to be". I want those people to pursue planning. I do, I don't want to leave it to people who believe in the bipartisan consensus of luxury development as the route to all public goods. I want people in the system to challenge it. It's really hard. Once you get in, your job is to work as the system is set up to work. The first thing is recognize the contradiction, and don't deny it. Recognize that there is the way you want it to be and the way that it is. Recognize what you say you're supposed to be doing and what your boss tells you to do because the mechanisms are such that they can obscure those contradictions. So the first thing is do get into planning, don't avoid it. The second thing is to be honest about the contradictions of capitalist urban planning. The third is to be organized, to not be isolated in your agency or workplace but to get active with the union, to get active with the Planners Network, get active with all the other different ways that planners can find each other who have different ideas about how the system should work. I think that planners should be involved in social movements, but in a careful way. What you don't want to be is the one who tells the movement why what they're demanding doesn't make sense or won't be well received by the government. You can think of it like a lawyer. A movement lawyer is there to help movements get out of trouble for doing illegal things, they are not there to tell people not to do illegal things. Similar with radical planners, you don’t want to tell the movement “don’t demand that it will never go anywhere.” You want to tell movement, “if you want to demand that, here's what that demand might look like,” or “here’s another place that did that thing that you can look to as a model.” If you want to be a resource to the movement, you want to be a participant in the movement as a resident and as a worker, but not necessarily as a representative of the system.

UR: How do you think your experience at Hunter shaped how you view the city and how planning works?

SS: I had a great experience at Hunter and I’m glad to be back teaching here again. Some of that is the institution, some of that is my professors, and some of it was my fellow students. I think being at a public institution instead of a private one is huge for urban planning scholars, I think there’s great education that happens at private schools, but to be studying the functions of government and community led development, it helps to be in a public institution that really is open to large number of people. The things that I read and did in classes at Hunter were extremely helpful because they problematized urban planning from the beginning, rather than presenting it as a perfect thing that operates in an imperfect world, which is often how the textbooks tend to present planning. And then my fellow students were really excellent in both the idealism that they brought, but also the working experience that they had, because all of us were working. So we could see how the ideas were playing out in our daily life but also how they weren't both as workers and as residents, all of us are tenants too.

UR: Is there any specific advice you’d like to impart on students at Hunter right now?

SS: We need you, don’t give up. Be honest about the contradictions that we’re facing, and try to be a resource to the movements other than a backstop to the planning system. Help the movements confront the mainstream of urban planning, even as you’re working within it.

Notes
1 Moskowitz, Peter. “Can New York Save Itself from out-of-control-rents?” Vice.
Interview with Edith Silberstein
Reflecting with a Hunter graduate of 1971

ONE OF THE FIRST BOOKS I remember receiving from my grandmother as a teenager was *The Life and Death of Great American Cities* by Jane Jacobs. I didn’t open it for a decade, but looking back, it was a way for her to introduce me to the part of her life I never saw — that of a city planner in Greenburgh, NY. When I told my grandmother I was applying to graduate school for urban planning at Hunter College, she was excited for me. As an aside, she mentioned how she graduated from the same program and matriculated mostly because Paul Davidoff had invited her to apply. At the time, he was trying to get the then brand new Urban Planning master’s program off the ground at CUNY.

**JAMES HULL:** How did you get interested in planning?

**EDITH SILBERSTEIN:** I began studying sociology at Smith College, but ended up leaving to raise a family after my junior year. I finished up the sociology degree at Sarah Lawrence between 1963-1967, going part-time. I knew Paul Davidoff socially in Larchmont and he had just begun the program at Hunter. At the time, there was a federal program that offered free master’s degrees to help towns do comprehensive master planning. Urban planning was one of the few fields outside of nursing and teaching that was accepting of women. I attended Hunter from 1967 to 1971 and worked as a town planner from 1971-1992.

**JH:** What was your relationship with Davidoff?

**ES:** I can’t remember exactly how I met Davidoff, but we knew each other through the town’s social circles, most of us in these circles were civically oriented and we had dinners together. Paul was very involved in local politics in Westchester. He was ahead of himself, a dreamer, and a radical for his time.

**JH:** What were the major challenges you faced during graduate school?

**ES:** There were many challenges. Women were expected to stay at home, become housewives, and raise families. That was boring to me. Your grandfather and I were
divorced and I was raising three kids, working part-time, and going to school part-time. Obviously these were the major challenges I faced personally while attending graduate school. The country was in the midst of Vietnam, so we had no exams or papers. That's not really a challenge.

**JH:** Where was your first job?

**ES:** My first job was at Frederick P. Clark Associates. They were a planning consultancy. It began as an internship, moved to part-time, and then full-time. I was working on the non-urban renewal towns in New York – Southern Dutchess County, Fishkill, Beacon, and Hudson Valley. Mostly, we helped these towns with master planning, forecasting for population and physical improvements, and prepared for town board meetings. Beacon, specifically, was going through some tough times. The Nabisco factory had shut down, unemployment was rising. The ferry between Newburgh and Beacon stopped running. We argued that the town should focus on making itself into a thriving place that would be attractive for artistically-minded folks without requiring a long commute. Somewhere that people in Westchester and the city would go to on weekends. We had no idea Beacon would develop into the arts community it is today. You get lucky sometimes.

We also worked on historic preservation. We helped craft language to create a historic preservation zoning district for the village of Fishkill. The property owners got wind, and they tore down all of their beautiful historic homes before we could pass the legislation. People don't like to be told what they can and cannot do with their property. They'd rather destroy it than comply with a zoning code.

Finally, we tried to stop piecemeal development. We helped small villages and towns understand and implement the low income housing mandate. HUD was coming out with new mandates that set targets for low-income affordable housing construction. Nixon just put a moratorium on federal funds for public housing, so the onus fell on municipalities to meet these benchmarks. Obviously, we still have trouble with that today. Westchester County is still in violation of the Fair Housing Act.

**JH:** Second job?

**ES:** My second job was as town planning for the town of Greenburgh. I worked there from 1975-1992 and eventually became Commissioner. Anyone who wanted to develop anything in Greenburgh had to go through our office. The office prepared recommendations, planned for schools, transportation, commercial corridors, and wrote zoning ordinances. The office was tiny and constantly understaffed, so every planner there had to be able to become an expert in everything related to the built environment. Our primary role was to preside over planning board meetings, which were open to the public. Here, I think, are the limits of truly democratic planning. The public was able to comment and modify plans, but rarely stopped them from happening altogether.

**JH:** What was planning field like when you entered it?

**ES:** I found the field to be very open to women -- but it was always men in charge.

**JH:** What was the gender and race breakdown of your graduating class?

**ES:** The first class consisted of about eight or nine students. My professors were Don Sullivan, Peter Salins, and Paul Davidoff. No people of color, but three or four women. I thought this was very progressive for the time.

**JH:** What kind of planner did you see yourself as?

**ES:** I saw myself as a land use planner, but when you work for a small town, you end up doing everything. I wrote zoning ordinances. I prepared policy memos. Economic development policy, transportation policy...we needed to learn and execute everything.

**JH:** How did the planning field change throughout your career?

**ES:** We had no computers and drew maps by hand. I remember going to NYU because they had the first computer mainframe in the city. We had to go there to use their computers. I think the most pronounced change was that master planning has seemingly become obsolete. When I began my career the general thrust of the field was towards comprehensive, well-rounded planning. At some point, that goal went out the window and we were dealing with piecemeal planning for piecemeal problems. You focus on a single issue at the expense of all the others.

You don't actually and truly build better places without imagining the built environment as one whole built from many components.
What Planners Do
Rezoning of Gowanus and
Constraints of Neoliberal Urban Planning

During a recent public event hosted by the New York City Department of City Planning (DCP) on the proposed rezoning of Gowanus, Brooklyn in February 2019, community advocates took over the meeting and demanded that the City listen to their concerns, shouting “Fix our homes before you rezone.”¹ In a neighborhood where nearly 25% of the population lives in public housing, hundreds of millions of dollars are needed for capital improvements in New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) developments in Gowanus, in addition to the remediation of buildings from mold and lead.² Gowanus is particularly vulnerable to flooding and related impacts of climate change. The three NYCHA developments in the area were badly impacted by Superstorm Sandy in 2012, exacerbating decades of under-investment and neglect.³ As one of the most polluted bodies of water in the United States, the Gowanus Canal was designated a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Superfund site in 2010.⁴ Given the massive public investments planned for the remediation of the Gowanus Canal, there is interest among developers in the re-branding of Gowanus as a luxury waterfront neighborhood.⁵

In this essay, I evaluate the role of urban planners in facilitating community engagement processes, employing the DCP’s proposed rezoning of Gowanus, Brooklyn as a case study. In particular, I assess the challenges and opportunities for planners to create participatory, community-based planning processes in the current neoliberal context. As a result of my observations of community meetings and my discussions with a planner in the Brooklyn Office within DCP, I came to the conclusion that planners working for public agencies are limited in their ability to facilitate genuinely participatory planning processes in the existing urban development paradigm. Ultimately, within this framework, communities have limited power to determine how and whether development occurs. However, planners have the capacity to influence the extent to which community input is considered and can advocate within their agencies for inclusive planning practices that can lead to more equitable outcomes. The vocal opposition to the proposed rezoning of Gowanus, particularly from long-term residents and organizations affiliated with the Gowanus Neighborhood Coalition for Justice, demonstrates the urgent need to reimagine the role of urban planners today.

Case of Gowanus Rezoning

As part of Mayor Bill de Blasio’s Housing New York plan to create or preserve 300,000 units of affordable housing within 10 years, rezonings have been proposed for several neighborhoods throughout New York City, including Gowanus, Brooklyn.⁶ In anticipation of these rezonings, the Department of City Planning initiated a series of neighborhood planning studies called “Planning for Livability, Affordability, Community, Economic Opportunity and Sustainability.” Known as PLACES, these studies seek to “foster diverse, livable neighborhoods with mixed-income housing and supportive services,” according to DCP. In October 2016, DCP began the Gowanus Neighborhood Planning Study with the stated goals of stimulating a thriving local economy, creating opportunities for new housing with affordable housing, improving streetscapes, expanding resiliency and sustainability initiatives, and coordinating public investments in the area.⁷
Building off the Bridging Gowanus efforts, and facilitated by Councilmember Brad Lander throughout 2013–2015, DCP gathered community input through a variety of methods, both in-person and online with the PlanGowanus.com tool.8 DCP conducted targeted outreach to residents in the three NYCHA developments in the area and participated in public community events, such as the EXPO Gowanus festival hosted by the Gowanus Canal Conservancy. In addition, DCP hosted a series of open community meetings to hear from residents and stakeholders about their priorities, concerns, and visions for the future of Gowanus. DCP also created several Working Groups with local community leaders on specialized topics, including Industry and Economic Development, Housing, Sustainability and Resiliency, Public Realm, and Arts and Culture. For each of these categories, the Working Groups were tasked with creating recommendations for the draft neighborhood plan.

In late 2016, over 30 community-based organizations came together to form the Gowanus Neighborhood Coalition for Justice (GNCJ) in response to the proposed rezoning of the neighborhood.9 The GNCJ comprises organizations that are committed to racial, economic, and environmental justice, such as the Fifth Avenue Committee, Families United for Racial and Economic Equality, Gowanus Canal Conservancy, and the Park Slope Civic Council. While there is widespread agreement on the need for “long-overdue infrastructure investments and the environmental clean-up of the area,” many long-term residents and small business owners are concerned about displacement, as “... these changes also have the potential to unlock additional land value, creating stronger displacement pressures.”10 GNCJ has advocated for a rezoning plan that is centered on racial and economic justice, with a focus on protecting public housing, ensuring deep affordability for long-term residents, promoting environmental justice and climate resiliency, supporting local businesses, and uplifting cultural resources.

In January 2019, DCP released the Draft Zoning Proposal for the rezoning of Gowanus, Brooklyn, after over two years of community engagement, public forums, and meetings with community leaders affiliated with the GNCJ.11 A Draft Scope of Work has also been recently released, in preparation for initiating the city’s Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP).

Community Concerns about DCP’s Approach

Despite the Department of City Planning’s extensive community engagement process, many residents feel that the Draft Zoning Proposal fails to address their primary concerns about displacement, referring to the proposal as a “developer’s fantasy.”12 In recent community hearings, residents repeatedly expressed their anger and fears that this process was a “sham” and simply a way for DCP to say “… We had a lot of input from the public.”13 Advocates with the GNCJ challenged DCP to explain how the draft zoning proposal benefits long-term residents. GNCJ members also expressed outrage at DCP’s failure to guarantee that public and private investments go to improving public housing. One GNCJ member said, “I don’t think what we are planning here is really for the people in Gowanus...What is presented to us is in no way affordability or inclusion.”14

Karen Blondel, an organizer with the Fifth Avenue Committee and GNCJ member argued that draft zoning proposal fails to address concerns about equity and affordability, stating, “We cannot let this plan move forward in its incomplete state.”15 Despite GNCJ’s repeated calls for DCP to prioritize racial and economic equity in the proposed rezoning of Gowanus since 2016, DCP has failed to take seriously concerns about racial displacement. In response to a pointed question about whether DCP has conducted a racial equity assessment for the rezoning of Gowanus, Jonathan Keller, a planner with the Brooklyn DCP simply said, “It’s an ongoing conversation we’re having citywide.”16 DCP also uses the term “community amenities” to refer to infrastructure such as waterfront access, parks and open space, schools, and transit. This language communicates an impression of shared benefits across social groups and obscures existing inequalities based on race and class.17

In addition, many residents and organizations affiliated with GNCJ expressed concerns about the draft zoning proposal’s call to increase density in the neighborhood, with allowable heights of up to 22 stories in some sections of Gowanus.18 Residents and advocates cited concerns about the impacts of luxury development on neighborhood affordability, as well as the potential for increased density to exacerbate water quality issues from Combined Sewage Overflows into the Gowanus Canal.19 One resident challenged DCP to explain the rationale for the increased density, stating, “The height came up in all the meetings, so I want to know, what happened? Who sold out the neighborhood? Why is it that what the community decides – developers can override?”20

GNCJ members and residents also shared reservations about the potential for Mayor de Blasio’s Housing New
York plan to adequately provide housing that is affordable to existing residents. In a neighborhood that has already witnessed a 22% net decrease in rent stabilized housing stock from 2007 to 2014 prior to rezoning, compared to a decrease of only 6% citywide, residents have significant concerns about affordability. For NYCHA residents in Gowanus, who have a median income of $30,000, housing constructed through MIH would largely remain unaffordable, given that “The deepest affordability level available under Mandatory Inclusionary housing (MIH) only requires 20% of the rent restricted units to be affordable to households who earn below 40% of AMI—or $32,640 annually for a family of three...” 21 One resident critiqued MIH, calling it a “bad deal” and reminding fellow residents, “We have an alternative, which is to not rezone at all.” 22 He also referred to the need for advocates to pressure elected officials to change legislation.

These oversights and concerns raise fundamental questions about the Department of City Planning’s participatory planning process, including: For whom is DCP planning? How is “public benefit” understood? How will DCP ensure that long-term residents benefit from the environmental remediation and anticipated community amenities associated with the proposed rezoning of Gowanus? Given the fact that power-holders have the final say on whether to accept or reject community input, DCP’s process appears to fall within the realm of “Placation” on Arnstein’s “Ladder of Citizen Participation.” 23 Legacy refers to the “crisis of participatory planning” to describe cases in which participation is used “...only intermittently by government and, when used, serves to mask pro-growth logics and build legitimacy for these decisions.” 24

**Constraints of Neoliberal Urbanism**

In order to contextualize the proposed rezoning of Gowanus, it is necessary to examine the political paradigm in which planning in New York City exists, namely neoliberalism. Beginning in the 1970s, neoliberalism has become the hegemonic logic in governments at all levels throughout the United States and many parts of the globe, including New York City. While neoliberalism is uniquely expressed based on geography, this ideological project is centered on the principles of market rationality, deregulation, privatization, and individualism. 25 This framework privileges the free market and calls for a “dismantling of key elements of the public sector.” 26 Scholars have also raised the contradictions of neoliberal urban planning, as state intervention is required for the expansion of market-oriented development. 27 Neoliberalism, therefore, requires a “complex re-working of relations between state and market.” 28

Planners in capitalist democracies must maintain the appearance of open, participatory planning processes, while ensuring that capital ultimately controls planning decisions. As Samuel Stein writes in *Capital City: Gentrification and the Real Estate State*, “The people must have their say, but their options must be limited.” 29 In a neoliberal paradigm, planners must navigate conflicting roles as they struggle “...between social equity ideology and [the] reality of capitalist urban development.” 30 A fundamental tension exists for planners in this context: “While participation and bottom-up approaches are encouraged and regulated in contemporary urban societies, their effectiveness is limited by public decision-makers whose principles may be a result of pressure from market forces.” 31

In the case of New York City, planners are limited by the strong mayor-council governance structure in which the Mayor has significant influence over many City agencies, including the Department of City Planning. Under Mayor Bill de Blasio, the Housing New York Plan is one of his key policy priorities and was the “centerpiece of his agenda” during his 2017 re-election campaign. 32 Given the political significance of the Housing New York Plan, it would be difficult for a planner at the Department of City Planning to openly challenge the basic premise of the plan and to critically evaluate whether it is exacerbating inequality.

Although planners with DCP have openly acknowledged that zoning is just one policy tool and that broader comprehensive planning is needed, they appear unwilling to question the logic of the free market. DCP often refers to “leveraging growth” that is coming to the neighborhood, whether they rezone or not. Angotti suggests that inferring the inevitability of gentrification is a way for the City’s planners to “...sell the rezonings” by claiming, “...MIH is the best way to get at least some affordable housing.” 33 This market-oriented approach to development and the belief in the private market’s capacity to solve the housing crisis are central tenets of neoliberal urbanism.
Re-thinking the Role of Urban Planners

Despite the challenging role that planners are in, they can influence the trajectory of planning in New York City and can advocate within their agencies for inclusive planning practices that can achieve more equitable outcomes. In order to regain public faith in the planning process in New York City, DCP will need to adequately address questions about the impacts of zoning on race and displacement. It is important for planners to recognize the power that they do have, as they “...help predict, evaluate, analyze, and make decisions about infrastructure matters that can have major effects.” 34 Planners must consider social equity factors and long-term trends, beyond the shortsightedness and narrow scopes often imposed by election cycles.

Given the long-standing legacies of racial discrimination in housing and land use decisions throughout New York City’s history, “social equity interventions” are required to proactively correct past harm. These interventions can include a wide range of policies and practices, including “…planned and resourced action[s] to correct a social wrong and improve the situation of a traditionally discriminated-against group.” 35 DCP must prioritize equitable development that meets the needs of all New Yorkers, starting with those who are most marginalized. Mechanisms must be in place to address the deepening racial and economic inequities in Gowanus and surrounding neighborhoods, which planners have a responsibility to properly evaluate.

We need to re-think the role of planners and establish new frameworks for challenging the interests of capital. Planners who are concerned with racial and economic justice today can take inspiration from the legacy of advocacy and equity planners, such as Planners for Equal Opportunity, Planner’s Underground, Architects’ Renewal Committee of Harlem, and the Planners Network, who sought to contest dominant planning frameworks and organizing for immediate state action to address them and imagining alternatives for a liberated society.” 39 Organized communities have the power to shift what is considered possible over time.

With the growing influence of the real estate industry, “…planners today find themselves at the unchecked mercy of global finance, for whom real estate is now valued at some $217 trillion.” 38 In order for planners to achieve equity goals, organized communities must serve as counterweights to the drive to inflate land values. Urban social movements “...can take the lead in diagnosing the problems with capitalist city planning, organizing for immediate state action to address them and imagining alternatives for a liberated society.” 39


28 Tuna Tasan-Kok and Guy Baeten, Contradictions of Neoliberal Planning (Dordrecht: Springer, 2012), 207.


The Case for Repealing the Urstadt Law

NEW YORK CITY FACES A SERIES OF URGENT and intertwined crises, but perhaps none more urgent than affordable housing. After paying for necessities, residents today have less money than 10 years ago, while median rents have increased by an average of four percent in that span. The city’s lack of affordability has increased homelessness, which is at its highest level since the Great Depression. As of October 2018, 114,659 NYC Students (one out of every 10) lived in temporary housing during the last school year. That’s larger than the population of Albany, the very place where state government perpetuates this crisis.

At the heart of the matter is the insidious Urstadt Law. Passed in 1971 and named after Charles Urstadt, Housing Commissioner to Republican Governor Nelson Rockefeller, the law places power over rent control and rent stabilization in the hands of the state government. The law typifies Albany’s undemocratic power, where legislators who represent upstate regions - some less populous than stretches of Queens Boulevard - hold dominion over the lives of New York City tenants. The law created the current conditions for New York City’s housing crises by simultaneously deregulating New York City’s housing market and stripping New York City of any power to respond. Repeal of the Urstadt Law would allow local bodies of government throughout the state to retake control over their rent laws. Doing so would enact a vision of basic democracy. Even better, any repeal should be linked to the fight for statewide Universal Rent Control.

The Urstadt Law, part of Governor Rockefeller’s rent de-regulation legislation package, barred New York City from passing legislation “more stringent or restrictive than those presently in effect” on issues pertaining to rent or evictions. Through the decades, a New York State government largely funded by the real estate industry strengthened the law and continued to chip away at rent protections.

Broadly speaking, rent regulations extend into two categories: rent control and rent stabilization. Rent control refers to the protections given to tenants who have continuously lived in their unit since July 1, 1971 in a building constructed before 1947. In the 1950s, nearly 2,000,000 units in NYC were rent-controlled. As of 2017, the number has gone down to 27,000 and continues to shrink. Rent stabilization refers to protections given to tenants in buildings of six or more units constructed before 1974. Roughly 50% of apartments in NYC are protected by rent stabilization. Rent increases on these units are subject to the decisions of the Rent Guidelines Board (RGB), a group exclusively appointed by the Mayor of New York City. In 2015, the RGB voted to freeze rents on one-year leases for rent stabilized apartments, a move praised by tenants’ advocates and bitterly opposed by the real estate industry. In 2017, the freeze ended. Rent controls like this could be more robust (and last longer) if the Urstadt Law didn’t exist, as it undermines further RGB activity that could be challenged in court by Albany.

The Urstadt Law stripped “home rule” from New York City’s ability to set rent policy, along with every municipality in the state. Defined in the State Constitution’s Article IX, home rule includes the “rights, powers, privileges and immunities granted to” local governments. Simply put, the Urstadt Law places a paternal and unwavering power over rent laws in the hands of Albany, stripping local bodies of their democratic ability to self-govern. In 2003, the law was strengthened even
further. Shortly after midnight on the day he announced would be the last day of the legislative session, Senate Majority Leader Joe Bruno introduced a bill. It included amendments that reinforced Urstadt by explicitly preventing the New York City Council from taking on rent or eviction laws; it also further destroyed rent protections. These new changes included the end of preferential rent offers to rent-stabilized tenants as a requirement and vacancy decontrol, which deregulates units when tenants leave and apartments turn over. It still exists and encourages landlords to harass and evict tenants to qualify. It was a state power grab, a gift to the real estate industry and a continuation of racial-capitalist state policy by Senator Bruno, who once complained to Newsday about “Blacks and Hispanics” having “their hands out...fighting for welfare” (he “stood by what he said”). Bruno would later be convicted of federal corruption charges.

The result of this continued deregulation has left New York City with a broken and confusing system of rent regulations that ultimately favors the real estate industry and landlords. “We have a rent regulation system that makes no sense at all...It’s a patchwork quilt that no one understands,” says TenantsPAC Treasurer Michael McKee. From 1970 to 2008, New York City lost over 500,000 rent-regulated units. The dual forces of the law’s deregulation and ability to prevent responsive legislation has created a vicious, unending cycle of gentrification. It’s also perhaps largely responsible for the city’s affordability crisis.
Arguments in favor of the law are uniformly made the loudest by two groups: the Rent Stabilization Association (RSA), the lobbying arm of NYC’s landlords, and the Real Estate Board of New York (REBNY), the trade lobbying arm for the real estate industry. They take two forms. First, they argue that rent control or rent stabilization would starve landlords of crucial revenue needed to make major capital improvements. Put plainly, that’s bullshit. Stabilizing the amount of rent landlords can charge wouldn’t decrease the amount of money any tenant pays to their landlord in the short term. It would simply regulate the increases they’re allowed to charge now and in the near future.

Secondly, real estate interests argue that NYC is unable to manage itself. According to journalist and recent State Senate candidate Ross Barkan, a lot of it dates back to the 1970s, when New York City was on the verge of fiscal ruin.9 One cannot divorce the Urstadt Law from the era’s broader turn towards neoliberal policies at the state and federal levels during the fiscal crisis of the 1970s, which placed power in private hands in nearly every sector, creating vast income inequality. The paradox at play exposes the contradictions within the capitalist neoliberal framework: in order to give the real estate class power, that power needs to be concentrated in the State. The State takes power from the City, but the form of that power is to deregulate; they essentially claim power to regulate, in order to then deny themselves that power.

It’s also important to remember that the New York City fiscal crisis of the 1970’s was preceded by racial and class insurgencies. Prior to 1971, social movements in New York City fought for civil rights and the black power movement clashed with government. Black communities in Harlem and Brooklyn rioted in 1964 when police killed James Powell, a 15-year-old African American. As with urban insurgencies nationally, movements to assert control over New York neighborhoods were met with resistance from government. In this light, the Urstadt Law and its deregulations should be seen as a way to politically manage communities of color, and structuring traditions of New Jim Crow, whereby the real estate industry marginalizes lives of color. The line from blockbusting, to the Federal Housing Administration’s racist redlining policies, to Urban Renewal slum clearance, through to Urstadt is clear. The confluence of these forces has thus not only created a more unequal city, but a whiter one. Between 2000 and 2016, the share of New Yorkers identifying as black decreased10 and today, Hispanics and Asians are the most likely to be severely rent burdened.11 The Urstadt Law is a tactic of racial capitalism. Minorities, people of color and those not identifying as “white” are priced out and displaced from the communities they created.

The Urstadt Law has created a crisis where tenants are subject to the corruption of Albany. The fact that deregulation was tied to strengthening Urstadt makes it clear that local control could have theoretically stopped it. The true power that Urstadt strips is from people. Creating a legal framework to neuter activists from organizing in their neighborhoods and demanding change from local bodies is an insidious and surely intended result of the law.

Repealing Urstadt would mean taking power out of the hands of Albany and bringing it closer to home in our communities and letting local representatives who live in our communities have power. Perhaps now is the right time to try, too.

For the first time since the 1930’s, Democrats have full control over all three branches of state government. While they’ve had control of the Assembly for decades, some members in the past would switch parties and caucus with whoever suited their interests at the time—undermining the Democrats’ ability to govern as a true majority. Naturally, campaign donations from the real estate industry were at the heart of this party-switching phenomenon, preventing any meaningful bill that protects tenants. In 2008, Democrats gained a one-seat majority in the Senate and political insiders were hopeful that, if nothing else, rent laws would be reversed.

“The Urstadt Law is a tactic of racial capitalism. Minorities, people of color and those not identifying as “white” are priced out and displaced from the communities they created.”

However, almost immediately after the Assembly passed a bill repealing vacancy decontrol and the Senate was set to vote on it, Democratic Senators Pedro Espada and Hiram Monserrate defected and threw control of the chamber to the G.O.P. (both Espada and Monserrate would later go to prison on corruption charges). Democrats eventually regained control, but the price was making the corrupt and conservative Espada majority Senate leader; it effectively killed any chance for strengthening tenants’ rights.12 In 2012, it was just as bad. One of the biggest benefactors of donations from the real estate industry, Senator Jeff Klein, broke away from the Democratic Party to create the Independent Democratic Caucus. This once again ceded control to the G.O.P. Albany continued to ignore the affordability crisis. Later on, Democratic Speaker of
the State Assembly Sheldon Silver was arrested on federal corruption charges resulting from a probe that alleged he took $700,000 from real estate developers in exchange for tax breaks.

This November, Mr. Klein was defeated by upstart candidate Alessandra Biaggi. Additionally, five more of his IDC counterparts lost their primaries, ending the IDC for good. Tenants groups are skeptical, but hopeful that new rent regulations could be passed and signed by the Governor. Many Democratic elected officials support the repeal of Urstadt and a vision of Universal Rent Control (URC), which would extend protections to those all over the state, not just NYC residents. But what would URC look like?

Planners and advocates should be rallying behind the URC plan established by Housing Justice for All (HJA), a campaign led by the Upstate Downstate Housing Alliance. Supported by the Legal Aid Society, New York Communities for Change, Democratic Socialists of America chapters in NYC, Hudson Valley and Nassau County, Tenants PAC and many others, the platform includes rolling back the damage done by de-regulation tied to Urstadt and much more. HJA’s platform also seeks to bring rent control increases in line with the RGB system in NY. It is comprehensive and focused on justice.

However, Universal Rent Control still functions within a capitalist system under what Samuel Stein calls the “Real Estate State.” Regulating rent should be the very beginning of a broad socialist effort to de-commodify land, an inherently speculative “fictitious form of capital that derives from expectations of future rents” as David Harvey defines it. Repealing Urstadt in a world post-URC could also allow local bodies all over the city and state to (legally) experiment with approaches like community land trusts to all of their land and lend strength to co-operative housing movements all over. Such reforms are part of an unfolding process toward socialist housing. The goal doesn’t have to be cheap rent. The goal could be no rent for anyone, anywhere. Capitalism requires the constant extraction of surplus value and endless growth. As Matt Taibbi famously described of Goldman Sachs, we too should see the real estate industry as a “great vampire squid wrapped around the face of humanity, relentlessly jamming its blood funnel into anything that smells like money.”

The brutal problems of capitalism can’t ultimately be resolved by capitalist reforms. It’s time to vigorously pursue agendas that appropriate public space into the commons. As planning students, our peers should not only be those in the university system, but also the tenants struggling to live, and those fighting in our streets for a more just society.

As Samuel Stein states in Capital City, “the planner’s job is to turn social demands into physical space - whose demands they follow depends entirely on whose command they obey.” Planners of Hunter: if we find ourselves in the halls of power, whose command will we obey? If we continue to fight, what will we become?

Notes
13 David Harvey, Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution (New York, Verso, 2012), 28.
Everyday Urbanism
The Applicability of Everyday Urbanism in Coney Island, Jamaica, and Tribeca

IF THE COLLECTIVE HAND WRINGING over the billions of taxpayer dollars spent on the Hudson Yards development is any indication of planners’ ambivalence over its role in facilitating projects with questionable public benefits, Everyday Urbanism offers an opportunity for planners to incorporate an explicitly bottom-up stance into their practice. Operating in this understanding of and approach to the city, Everyday Urbanism encourages all manner of urbanists to get curious about the city as it actually exists. Everyday Urbanism is a sensibility, rather than a prescriptive set of practices or design guidelines. While difficult to define, careful and close observation of the community is at the center of this practice. Often, adherents design radically non-normative interventions that support existing uses and needs in a community. The flexible nature of Everyday Urbanism makes it an effective instrument in a planner’s toolkit to address inequalities in any neighborhood or aspect of the urban built environment.

Everyday Urbanism is not a prescriptive set of practices and norms. Margaret Crawford, a professor of architecture at UC Berkeley and early advocate of Everyday Urbanism, traces its theoretical origins back to French thinkers of diverse disciplines – Henri Lefebvre, Guy Debord, and Michel de Certeau. According to Crawford, Lefebvre, a Marxist philosopher and sociologist, outlined particularly influential concepts for Everyday Urbanists regarding the “duality” between the quotidian, or recognizably evergreen patterns of everyday human life, and the modern, or new behavior and patterns arising from technological advancements. The radical attention and legitimization of the everyday by Lefebvre and others came as a response to what they considered the “oppressive,” massive state-sponsored reconstruction efforts in Europe following World War II. But instead of seeking a complete overhaul of the oppressive society like Lefebvre and Debord, Crawford says that Everyday Urbanists “acknowledge fragmentation and incompleteness as inevitable conditions of postmodern life…[their] solutions are modest and small in scale—micro-utopias, perhaps, contained in a sidewalk, a bus bench, or a minipark.” Everyday Urbanism is both a clear departure from the master plans of the postwar era and a response to the limitations of the increasingly privatized and decentralized neoliberal state.

Since there is no one way to practice Everyday Urbanism’s principles of careful observation, inclusive and democratic participation in formal and informal spaces, and context-specific interventions, examples are particularly necessary to understand this concept and attitude. Some of the highest-profile examples include the Parking Day initiative and practitioners like James Rojas. Crawford’s own work demonstrates that Everyday Urbanism is radically non-normative, observing the ways that different groups in Los Angeles transform the public space of the street, from African Americans taking to the streets in 1992 following the Rodney King and Latasha Harlin trials, to the garage sales and street vendors in Latinx neighborhoods. Everyday Urbanism, the defining collection of works edited by Crawford and others, gives a taste of the vast array of directions this paradigm can take, from John Leighton Chase’s careful attention to trash and people who interact with it in the alley next to his apartment in Venice, California, to the WiMBY! (Welcome into My Backyard!) project in the largely immigrant neighborhood of Hoogvliet in Rotterdam, where “parasites” (free-standing, multi-purpose buildings) were built on school grounds to address the need for extra classrooms and space for students’
Jamaica Avenue in Queens | Photo by Michael Van Itallie
specialized activities. While these projects might seem small in their ambitions, the respect and direct engagement with people and neighborhoods baked is a model for planners.

In this article, we apply the Everyday Urbanism approach to three very different New York City neighborhoods, Coney Island; Jamaica, Queens; and Tribeca, focusing on elements ranging from park access to street signage. The experience of observing and proposing interventions that embrace the existing people and uses of these neighborhoods provided us with a vital roadmap for how to incorporate a bottom-up sensibility and open curiosity as future planners, no matter the neighborhood or focus.

**Coney Island**

Coney Island’s iconic image as a dreamland and place of amusement overshadows an underserved year-round population. Following the devastation of Hurricane Sandy, the community has struggled with obtaining services and the burden of rebuilding. The fragmentation of Coney Island as both a seasonal destination and a year-round community has deeply buried the needs of the neighborhood.

Part of Community District 13 in Brooklyn, Coney Island’s Statement of Needs for Fiscal Year 2019 indicate that performing and cultural arts programs have been cut from schools and that many community centers have not reopened after the storm. The lack of community centers has resulted in a deficit of workforce training for youth populations, leaving few resources for an incredibly vulnerable population, needing places to go, autonomy to participate in activities that are meaningful for them, and job training. It also notes community desire for a local business improvement district. The goal is for the BID to enrich the year-round commercial district, invite new stores, and address community needs locally. Regardless of consensus on whether a BID would be helpful or harmful, the initiative illustrates commercial needs related to drawing business, accessing desired goods and services, and streetscaping that aren’t being met.

Historically, Coney Island has a rich tradition of sign painting. While for many it is connected to the boardwalk or sideshow, hand painted signs are a dominant part of the visual landscape in Coney Island on and off the boardwalk. Mermaid Avenue, the main commercial strip for residents, is covered with handmade signage and many are in need of updating due to damage and wear.

Tying unique attributes of the neighborhood to overlooked needs led to an idea for an organization that would connect established community sign painters with youth interested in artistic expression, work experience, and impacting the visual landscape of their neighborhood. The organization would address the lacuna of creative outlets for a school district deprived of arts programming. Young adults would work with established sign painters to have direct impact on their surrounding community and be able to connect with business owners in a meaningful and creative way while gaining work experience. Community driven design would reshape the streetscape and participants would help visually revitalize business strips, bring fresh landscaping to their community and thematically connect the boardwalk with year-round businesses.

Though the stores on Mermaid Ave are private, signage on their exteriors has a direct impact on pedestrian and motorist landscapes. This coalition would give local youth a direct path to influencing the aesthetics of their neighborhood, not just for themselves or business owners, but their fellow community members. Coney Island has a historical link to hand painted signs, and this program would further strengthen that connection while giving power to shape the neighborhood landscape to those who inhabit it.

**Jamaica**

Jamaica Avenue in Jamaica, Queens is a vibrant and thriving shopping strip, with sidewalks filled with pedestrians and hardly any vacant storefronts. A satellite Central Business District -- much like Flushing, Queens, Fordham Road in the Bronx or the Brooklyn College area of Flatbush, Brooklyn -- Downtown Jamaica has long been a key civic, transportation, commercial, and entertainment center for the residents of its surrounding neighborhoods.

The project examined the everyday use of public space on Jamaica Ave between 162nd and 165th St—the heart of the area’s commercial strip—and proposed a number of design interventions based on my observations. Using the principles of Everyday Urbanism as my guide, I identified a couple prosaic, but still significant, needs that had been overlooked or ignored in planning interventions to this point.

First, the limited portion of public space reserved for pedestrians and bus riders belies the importance of these users to the strip’s economic and cultural vibrancy, as well as the simple fact that they are statistically the area’s most prevalent users. Pedestrian traffic is clearly what fuels
Jamaica Avenue, and yet the sidewalks are narrow, there are repeated pinch-points caused by shop displays or street vendors reducing the encroaching into the walking path, and there are numerous intersections that lack pedestrian crosswalks. Furthermore, despite eight bus routes running along this stretch of Jamaica Ave carrying tens of thousands of riders daily, just one of the five bus stops has a bench or shelter.

Second, while technically illegal, and therefore not accounted for in official plans, both street vending and street hails by black cars are integral elements of the strip’s economy and character, clearly valued by its users, and therefore deserving of accommodation in the design of the area’s streetscape. These un-sanctioned, yet prevalent uses only exacerbate the deficiencies of the strip for pedestrians and bus riders, as vendors congest the sidewalk, and black cars make pickups and dropoffs in the curbside bus lane, delaying service.

Attempting to address these needs, I came up with a streetscape design change that would add crosswalks at intersections where there were currently none, create large sidewalk extensions at every corner to make space for bus stops and street vendors, restrict traffic to prohibit all private, non-commercial vehicles on the strip, and designate curb space for deliveries and pickups/dropoffs. The central element of the plan is a series of large sidewalk extensions at every sidewalk corner that would extend nearly the width of a travel lane, leaving two lanes of traffic at the corners. The sidewalk extensions would then taper off, forming a curbside area in the interior of the block, where trucks and cabs/black cars could make pickups and drop-offs. These curb extensions would be used for sheltered bus stops in some areas, and be left empty for use by street vendors in other areas. The traffic restrictions, and designated pick-up/drop-off zones would minimize conflicts between buses and other vehicles, improving service for the street’s tens of thousands of daily bus riders.

By prioritizing the needs of Jamaica Ave’s most important and prevalent users -- pedestrians and bus riders -- and accounting for the needs of two officially unsanctioned, but valued uses -- street vending and black car street hails -- this streetscape plan serves the everyday users of the strip far better than the status quo.
Tribeca

A public park is one of the most universally understood areas in a city—a place open for everyone's use and enjoyment. Yet, a space designed by the city and shaped by residents can send clear, if not explicit, signals about who is and is not welcome in a park. In the exclusive neighborhood of Tribeca, Washington Market Park evolved from a vacant lot designated for urban renewal in the 1960s to a beautiful community asset with three playgrounds and plenty of open space and seating. In December 2018, I employed the principles and methods of Everyday Urbanism to observe Washington Market Park and the surrounding area and designed simple interventions to increase the accessibility of the wealthy New York enclave's public asset for commuter students.

The Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC), a City of New York (CUNY) school, directly adjoins Washington Market Park. The school is so embedded within Washington Market Park - BMCC's main entrance walkway divides the park's larger green open space and playgrounds and the smaller area containing basketball and tennis courts - that you would be forgiven for mistaking the courts as part of the BMCC campus.

Every day BMCC students stream past the park but rarely go inside, even though there are stairs at the northwest corner of the park that lead directly to the campus' front doors. This is unsurprising once you consider the fence surrounding the park only opens on two corners of the park, neither of which is useful for students rushing to and from the subway stations on Chambers Street. One's impulse is to cut through the park to get to campus efficiently and enjoy quiet greenery after walking past several construction sites.

The sheer volume of students walking to and from class outside this stretch of the park at any given moment makes it difficult not to interpret the fences as a symbolic and literal barrier preventing entry into the park.

Washington Market Park's fencing along Chambers Street is especially troubling when considered in light of the difference in demographics between the neighborhood and the BMCC students. Tribeca is located in Manhattan Community District 1, an extremely white and wealthy area compared to the rest of the city, with over 70% residents identifying as white and only 8.8% of residents with Washington Market Park in Tribeca | Photo by Wally Gobetz
incomes below the city's poverty threshold, compared to 20.3% city wide.\textsuperscript{7} In contrast, less than 12% of students are white, according to the school's 2016 enrollment statistics.\textsuperscript{8} BMCC is a commuter school, and the majority of students (71%) lived outside of the borough of Manhattan at the start of this school year.\textsuperscript{9}

A new entrance to Washington Market Park on Chambers Street and a small coffee and snack stand are simple interventions to welcome BMCC students into the park, inspired by Phoebe Wall Wilson's "neighborhood place."\textsuperscript{10} Once inside of the park, this micro-commercial element would provide a clear signal that students are welcome to enjoy and linger in the park. These design modifications are small, but they challenge Tribeca residents to look beyond the immediate concerns and priorities of their families and treat the park as a truly public asset, open to all.

Contributions are as follows: Abby Rider - Introduction and Tribeca; Mike Van Itallie - Jamaica; Erica Saunders - Coney Island.

Notes
4 Margaret Crawford, “Blurring the Boundaries: Public Space and Private Life,” in Chase et al., Everyday Urbanism, 22-35.
5 Chase et al., Everyday Urbanism.
10 Phoebe Wall Wilson, "A Day in the Life of a Neighborhood," in Chase et al., Everyday Urbanism, 126.
Challenging the Divine Right of Private Property
The Fight for Rent Control and the Right to the City

THE TOPIC OF RENT CONTROL IS BACK with a fiery passion. With the escalation of the housing affordability crisis, where no minimum wage worker can afford a two bedroom apartment anywhere in the US, housing activists and organizations are challenging the legal and dominant public narrative that has blocked and undermined previous rent control regulations and demands for the last few decades. Recent legislative challenges and ongoing organizing efforts from coast to coast have been fiercely contested, with real estate money effectively killing the most recent midterm ballot measure in California, yet the groundswell of local support continues to grow all across the country.

This article investigates this resurging call for increased rent regulations—so called rent control —within a broader theoretical and political perspective. While rent control is usually framed (and critiqued) within narrow economic terms of supply and demand of housing, by contextualizing it within the current tenant organizing and movement building efforts, I present a holistic and positive framework for understanding rent control as a strategic intervention on a larger set of power dynamics. Poised at a critical intersection of ideology and narrative, rent control is a lightning rod for debate—illuminating often invisibilized fault lines undergirding the mythologization of homeownership within our society.

Rent control raises political questions, not just economic questions. While there are practical aspects of implementation that really matter, one of the biggest fights is on a narrative level in advancing the right to have it in the first place, which challenges core assumptions of the “free market” and its corresponding structural conditions that have cemented and accelerated racial and economic inequities. Particularly as it confronts and opposes the logic — in this case what I’m calling the “divine right”— of private property, this makes it particularly significant for the larger call for the right to the city. As a grassroots movement for tenant power, I argue that the fight for rent control points to and articulates a foundation of basic democratic ideals and values that could provide a much more inclusive and equitable basis for the American Dream.

Framing the debate

While rent control is a loose term, it primarily refers to some kind of price ceiling or additional conditions that applies to landlords renting residential properties to tenants. I use it here inclusive of the term “rent stabilization” as a shorthand for laws that regulate rent increases to prevent property owners from unfairly raising rents. Emerging during the early half of the 20th century in major metropolitan areas experiencing extreme housing shortages, most notably in New York City, price controls were also enacted at the Federal level during the Second World War to prevent inflation. Now typically associated with a “wonky mess of rules and exceptions,” rent regulations have been “de-fanged, placed at the bottom of a crowded toolbox of other policies.” But with increasing inequity, gentrification and displacement pressures, tenant activists and affordable housing advocates are re-asserting the topic as a political and representational question and connecting back to its more militant and radical history.

Today, only four states and DC have some form of residential rent control, while thirty-seven prohibit or prevent it outright. There are a range of responses that are critical of rent control both as it has been enacted and in regards to the increasing calls for it. While many reject it on
Brooklyn March against Gentrification, Racism and Police Violence, 2017 | Photo by Arielle Lawson
the basis that it impedes the rights of property owners and even challenge its outright legality, others have questioned its effectiveness in promoting affordability and whether it actually compounds the shortage of affordable housing. Economists have reached “a rare consensus: rent control creates many more problems than it solves.” Critics have said these policies can lead to the deterioration of existing housing, that the benefits don’t reach those that most need it, and that it can be costly and hard to enforce. In the long run it “decreases affordability, fuels gentrification, and creates negative spillovers on the surrounding neighborhood.”

While there are legitimate limitations to rent control itself, these arguments and those who make them often miss the larger context in which the debates of rent control are taking place, and particularly the important tenant organizing and movement building work that’s involved. Proponents of rent control point to it as an “easy and off-the-shelf policy tool” that can provide an immediate check on skyrocketing rents and a challenge to the dominance of landlord interests, thus a key tool to preserve and promote housing affordability and stemming the impacts of gentrification and displacement. Beyond just a cap on dramatic rent increases (in many cases annual raises in rent are still allowed), the idea is that this regulation provides some form of accountability, stability and ultimately recognition of the rights of tenants.

While traditional economic arguments address scarcity, the organizing efforts of those on the frontline of the fight for rent control are firmly situated in addressing the larger context of economic and racial inequality that is perpetuated through the housing system. Rather than just a “supply and demand” question, the fight for rent control brings up fundamental questions about the equitable distribution of needed resources, and even more directly, questions about control, access, wealth and rights. Even in New York City, with its infamous housing market and growing homeless population, there’s enough housing to meet everyone’s needs if all of the “warehoused” and empty units were made available. But this would require the right to housing as a home over and above the right to real estate speculation. In this sense, rent control—as articulated by housing advocates and activists—is a part of a larger political demand which directly confronts the primacy of private property rights and the “unearned increment” of rent and gentrification.

**The Bigger Picture: What is Housing For?**

To really understand the affordable housing crisis we have to understand the role and contradictions of housing within our larger economic, political and even global context. As Aalbers et al. and many others have pointed out, housing has played a huge role in the ongoing development of the capitalist economy, particularly as a driver of speculative growth. This drive for profit, however, comes at a social price. As Madden and Marcuse state clearly in their book *In Defense of Housing*, “There is a conflict between housing as lived, social space and housing as an instrument for profit-making — a conflict between housing as home and as real estate.”

This contradictory role of housing means that one segment of the population reaps returns from real estate while the other pays the price, reinforcing existing class divisions: “it is of immense significance that in many capitalist societies residential property is the largest individual wealth/asset class although at the same time many – in some countries most – households own no residential property whatsoever.” The resulting inequity is striking: the median homeowner is 46 times wealthier than the median renter, with comparative net worths of $5,000 versus $230,000 in 2016. Additionally this wealth inequality falls along racial lines, with renters much more likely to be people of color than homeowners. While the renter population grows — in New York City renters now make up nearly two thirds of the city’s population—the exchange of increasing rent combined with stagnating wages represents a massive transfer of wealth every month from those with the least resources to those with the most and raises larger political and representational questions.

Yet the myth of speculative homeownership keeps this seemingly “divine right” of property naturalized and idealized even as the split widens. We’ve been sold “homeownership” as a fundamental unit, precondition, and goal of our country and idealized as the “American Dream,” but this hides its foundation as an inherently exclusionary right based on a flawed, inconsistent premise: “Real estate has been a key mechanism by which the nation’s vast economic and racial wealth gaps have been solidified” even as, of course, “except for the two percent of the US...
population who are Native American, we all live on what is ultimately stolen land.” While flows of global capital are now reaching perhaps new levels, real estate — and more fundamentally private property — has long been one of the most impactful tools of wealth accumulation, expansion and particularly exclusion.

As the most recent foreclosure crisis demonstrated, homeownership is also not necessarily the “solution” to this problem. Not only will it never be accessible to everyone, but increasing financialization makes our homes precarious and distorts their social and collective value. It also continues to perpetuate and solidify huge economic and racial inequities. This is true even for Black homeowners who have their home consistently undervalued — cumulative losses totaling $156 billion — from racial bias in the housing market.”

There are deeply entrenched structural inequities in homeownership and private property that reflect and reinforce the larger societal inequities and point to fundamental contradictions and limitations of connecting it with social values of citizenship and the American Dream.

The Right to the City: Challenging the Divine Right of Private Property

The rights of private property and the associated power imbalance between landlords and tenants are so deeply embedded and naturalized in our society that they go largely undisputed, but there are important dimensions to this that should be critically examined. As activists and scholars have pointed out for a long time now, these same tensions and contradictions of housing are also reflected at the scale of the city in terms of both its use (or “home”) value and its profit-making (“real estate”) value: there is a core conflict in the city between its potential as a commons — collectively produced and shared by all of its users — and as an exclusionary site of private property and real estate interests. The demand for the right to the
city counters the narrative and logic of property rights and argues that all of those who participate in the city should benefit from it, not just those who own property.

Margaret Kohn's work on the “urban common-wealth” provides an important theoretical basis to clarify these fundamental tensions and contradictions within the city. She writes about the city as: “a concentration of value created by past generations and current residents which everyone has a stake in.” 19 In this sense, the city is a collectively-produced space shared by its users, which reiterates the core premise of the right to the city. Thus, when people lose access to the urban commons, they are effectively dispossessed of something to which they have a rightful claim. This social right is directly antithetical to the logic of private property, which is based on exclusion and privatization rather than a generative, shared commons. As she notes, “From the perspective of private property, a right to the city is incomprehensible in so far as no one can assert a conventional property right to the city. This paradox forces us to think about the city through the lens of social rather than private property.” 20 As a whole, its value is ultimately a shared product, so it can not be entirely broken up into individual parcels: “a sidewalk loses its usefulness for transportation if each person has exclusive control over a small section.”

At the same time, while everyone can, in theory, use the sidewalk and other public goods, property owners are able to effectively capture and privatize the social value of the city through increasing real estate prices. They also often have disproportionate use of and (at least informally) substantial control rights over these broader forms of “neighborhood capital” that should belong to everyone. Gentrification can be a very clear example of this “unearned increment” in “the way that the return on everyone. Gentrification can be a very clear example of informal substantial control rights over these broader social property, property owners lose their usefulness for transportation if each person has exclusive control over a small section.”

The fight for rent control, then, can help challenge the legitimacy and intrinsic, self-affirming, “divine right” of property as an unquestioned social good as part of a larger ideological shift towards viewing housing as a human right: “rent regulation not only protects tenants, it also serves to re-embed housing in society as a social good rather than just as an asset to be speculated on.” 23

The narrative of property rights also has deeper implications for equity and democracy in our cities as they at time come up against our basic human rights. Our very right to be, to exist, is often predicated on private property. As those experiencing homelessness know too well, even the basic humans act of sleeping or “loitering” can be illegal and criminalized. If you are dependent on only public space and have no “place” to go, your very right to existence can be threatened. As Don Mitchell summarizes, “Property rights are necessarily exclusive: the possession of a property right allows its possessor to exclude unwanted people from access...the right to housing needs to be disassociated from the right to property and returned to the right to inhabit.” 24 Rent control in this sense is a struggle for democracy and the right to the city, which are fundamentally oppositional and a counterpoint to the divine rights of property. As a society, is it so outrageous or radical to say that a basic right to a home should take priority over the right to extract unearned increments and profit from that home?

**Rent Control Now**

With the current swirl of debates, it is important to clarify what rent control means in this context, and how it’s being leveraged as part of a larger movement for tenants rights and housing for all. The debate around rent control represents and illuminates important dimensions of the relationships between landlords and tenants and also key aspects of the divisions within the larger fight for affordable housing. The rent control debate can’t be divorced from the larger patterns and structures of increasing inequality and the broader struggles of resistance.

Ultimately the real debate about rent control is not just economics, it’s deeply political. Though not a perfect solution to the housing affordability crisis, rent control is an immediate response that could play a direct role in mitigating displacement and asserting the rights of tenants. As the grassroots tenant movement grows, it brings a broader awareness of “social property” and importance of tenants as a political group with issues of representation, participation and decision-making power. Challenging our capitalist housing system, this points to a more equitable basis for the American Dream.
This growing articulation of rent control as a political demand is connected directly to deeper issues of inequality and larger political mobilizations and horizons: “The rent regulation campaigns in New York and Chicago are pushing the movement across the urban-rural divide and building a political class out of tenancy.” 25 As part of a grassroots movement for tenant power, the fight for rent control is also a call for political representation and housing democracy — leveling the playing field between tenants and landlords and resituating the fundamental rights to the city and housing above the rights of private property and real estate. As the Haas Institute points out, fighting for rent control can open up bigger political horizons and possibilities: “By providing a baseline for housing stability, it creates an opportunity for us to ask a different question, to imagine the possibilities that come with a more equitable society.” 26

Notes

13 Joint Center for Housing Studies. “America’s Rental Housing 2017.” (Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University, 2018), 24
15 Joint Center for Housing Studies. “America’s Rental Housing 2017.” (Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University, 2018), 24

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20 Kohn, Margaret. The Death and Life of the Urban Commonwealth,
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Privatize or Perish
NYCHA and Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD)

THE RENTAL ASSISTANCE DEMONSTRATION program was enacted under the Obama administration to address the dearth of funding for traditional public housing across the United States. Billed as a cost-neutral program, RAD promises to update the funding structure of public housing by leveraging private money it currently cannot access. Modern financing tools for affordable housing such as Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTCs) are coupled with a more streamlined federal subsidy paid directly to private management for operation and capital expenses. Under private management, public housing can also be mortgaged to further borrow funds for capital repairs. The program has bipartisan support with proponents citing the unlikelihood of the federal government to ever fully fund traditional public housing. Others, including the Government Accountability Office (GAO) - which audits and evaluates federal spending - are skeptical of both its rollout and necessity in the face of alternatives. The New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) began utilizing this program in 2016 with the Ocean Bay (Bayside) Houses and in 2018, announced plans to enter a third of its housing stock into the program. The authority hopes to capitalize on the program's track record of infusing developments with critical repairs and stable operating funds. Yet, RAD's financing structure might make it ineffective for New York City.

NYCHA would not effectively address the funding gap on its housing stock without HUD breaking its cost-neutral promise and substantially increasing its subsidy contract. Failure to do so could materialize some of the concerns housing analysts have raised about long-term stability. Furthermore, the institution of federal public housing is not one beyond saving. In fact, the institutional framework of federal public housing during the 20th century provides a far more legible scale than decentralized public/private affordable housing.

Project-based subsidy contracts would increase housing costs in expensive markets like New York. Before RAD was passed, both Housing Choice Vouchers and Project Based Vouchers were negotiated differently across markets using the Fair Market Rent metric. As of 2018, Fair Market Rent for a one-bedroom apartment in New York City was $1,599 per month. RAD promises to package current public housing funding into one new “Housing Assistance Payment” that combines both operating and capital funds into one direct payment to a private landlord. If cost-neutral, however, this new voucher will be set at the level of public housing subsidies. It remains uncertain, then, how projects can stay fiscally solvent under the project-based subsidy contract without a serious increase in the subsidy amount. Furthermore, NYCHA's Permanent Affordability Commitment Together (PACT) protections guarantee that residents will continue to pay only up to 30% of their income on rent, leaving an apparent funding shortfall even after conversion.

Thus far, traditional public housing has done more with less money than all Section 8 programs. For comparison, HUD allocated $33.77 billion for both Housing Choice Voucher and Project Based Voucher payments in FY 2018 while traditional Public Housing was expected to be funded at $2.6 billion. Before a Congressional Omnibus bill raised HUD’s budget for the first time in years, public housing - however adequately - has housed some of the poorest New Yorkers with less than one-half of the money per-unit that is spent through Section 8 programs. This might be at the expense of capital repairs, but NYCHAs capital deficit is cumulative, as conditions worsen the longer a reasonable fix is put off. The Regional Plan Association estimates the
capital backlog increases by $700 million each year. Capital repair estimates do not include city and state-built NYCHA developments that receive no federal funding. Since State subsidies for these developments have also been slashed, they comprise the majority of proposed RAD conversions.

In 2015, NYCHA estimated that its capital loss since 2001 was $1.16 billion due to consistently being funded at only 90 percent of need. Neglect on necessary work has caused the effective degradation in NYCHA’s properties to balloon to recent estimates in the $10s of billions. Notwithstanding the magnitude NYCHA’s capital shortfall, The Center for Budget and Policy Priorities found it more fiscally responsible to repair and maintain current public housing stock than to facilitate a transfer to any Section 8 program. Though policy consensus is unfriendly to visible investment in public housing, NYCHA historically has a proven track record of delivering adequate housing and has taken necessary steps to adapt fiscal management in the face of underfunding. These steps to bring NYCHA into the black show promise at providing an alternative to RAD.

It is also uncertain how effective RAD is at raising private capital. GAO contradicts HUD’s claims that RAD projects had attracted significant private investment, recalculating their 17:1 stated ratio to $1.23 of private money for every $1 of public money. GAO exposed in its report that cash from LIHTCs were being counted by HUD as private funding. This finding is significant considering RAD was promoted as the answer for government’s inability to properly finance public housing. While LIHTCs depend on private investors to raise capital for projects, the overestimation of private willingness to invest in public housing through RAD means substantial public subsidy is needed to offset risk. New York City’s first RAD conversion, the Ocean Bay Apartments in Far Rockaway, utilized public funding for over half of the $560 million it raised for the conversion process. RAD’s inability to inject substantial private funding into public housing causes concern over long-term financial stability.

RAD also relies on the assumption that private funding is largely cut off from public housing, but proponents fail to mention the ways policy has been updated since the 20th century to let public housing authorities utilize bond markets and further debt service. In fact, NYCHA has extensively utilized some of this capital thought to be off limits for public housing. PHAs nationally can access bond markets as a result of reforms in the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998. Several times since then, NYCHA raised millions in selling federal bonds, including
$600 million raised under the Bloomberg Administration in 2006. NYCHA also accessed state bonds under Bloomberg, raising hundreds of millions for capital repairs. NextGeneration NYCHA highlights its successes in bond issuances while maintaining that this funding cannot fully address the capital shortfall. Yet, these measures should not be discounted when weighing RADs necessity. The question, then, is if this fundraising is truly insubstantial with a balanced budget.

NYCHA balanced its budget for the first time in years thanks to creative austerity measures taken under the de Blasio administration. Many of the Mayor’s cost-cutting and revenue raising measures proposed three years ago in NextGen NYCHA are reflected in the balanced budget of 2018. The authority improved its rent collection ability even as housing conditions deteriorated and the city found creative ways of indirectly subsidizing its operations. Other cost-cutting initiatives provide a roadmap for keeping the authority’s budget balanced.

Mayor de Blasio showed his commitment to keeping NYCHA fiscally sound by forgiving payments the authority makes for policing, but the City could also forgive payments made to the Department of Environmental Protection and the Department of Sanitation for their services as a roundabout subsidy. As NYCHA is reliant mostly on federal funding for its budget, the city has largely helped it through one-off capital expenditures but precedents exist to give the city a more direct line to NYCHA’s budget. For one, the attention of NYCHA’s lead paint removal scandal has lead the U.S. Attorney’s Office to make the city pay billions for repairs at NYCHA over the next few years. This deal marks the most significant investment at the city level and breaks the pattern of total federal reliance. As NYCHA is reliant mostly on federal funding for its budget, the city has largely helped it through one-off capital expenditures but precedents exist to give the city a more direct line to NYCHA’s budget. For one, the attention of NYCHA’s lead paint removal scandal has lead the U.S. Attorney’s Office to make the city pay billions for repairs at NYCHA over the next few years. This deal marks the most significant investment at the city level and breaks the pattern of total federal reliance.

Taken together, these alternative funding options have the potential to keep NYCHA in the black, even with current federal funding levels.

With many conflicting estimates of NYCHA’s capital needs, how much is really needed to put the Authority on the right tack? New York City is uniquely positioned to tackle the crisis at NYCHA in a way other cities around the country are not. Mayor de Blasio’s ambitious housing plan aims to create or preserve 300,000 units of affordable housing through private development and refinancing extant programs. Comptroller Scott Stringer’s alternative housing proposal suggested creating a dedicated fund for affordable housing through reforming the real estate tax code. Revenue gained from property tax in the city jumped from $13.2 billion in 2008 to $21.5 billion in 2018, four times the rate of inflation. The City can capitalize on creative strategies to subsidize NYCHA while socializing its historic tax revenues. Even if the city remains aggressive in its tenant protections for RAD conversions, establishing the precedent of privatization is too uncertain for public housing’s future. It is not necessary, at least not in New York City which has always run public housing differently than the rest of the country.

Notes
5 NYCHA. “PACT: New York City’s Rental Assistance Demonstration Program”. N.d.
8 Regional Plan Association. “NYCHA’s Crisis: A Matter for All New Yorkers”.
12 GAO. 2018. 16-17.
13 Oscar Perry Abello. “NYC is Testing Public-Private Housing Partnership with HUD Program”. NextCity. 14 July 2017
16 NextGeneration NYCHA. p55.
19 The city’s program for building and operating public housing was large, but those projects, until federalized, were mostly middle class with higher rents, different from NYCHAs character today. See Nicholas D Bloom. Public Housing that Worked. 2008. p178-79.
20 New York City Comptroller. NYC For All: The Housing We Need. Nov 2018.
The Participatory Planning Paradox
How Participatory Planning in New York City Upholds the Status Quo

AFTER YEARS OF FALSE STARTS, the Gowanus neighborhood in Brooklyn is poised for a massive rezoning, potentially transforming one of the last manufacturing hubs in New York City into a special mixed-use district. In January of 2019, a draft zoning proposal was released based largely on a June 2018 Department of City Planning Report entitled Gowanus: A Framework for a Sustainable, Inclusive and Mixed Use Neighborhood. The framework, according to the Department of City Planning website, was drafted after a years-long “listen and learn” engagement process and represents the culmination of “100s of hours of public outreach and community meetings to solicit input that have been held since the Gowanus PLACES Study launched in October 2016”.1 The 118-page report includes 6 pages describing the public outreach efforts and highlighting the “collaborative” nature of the planning process.2 Throughout the framework, placed along the page margins, are curated recommendations suggested by community residents, culled from the many outreach events held by the Department of City Planning and partner agencies. “Need more affordable housing and market rate housing along the canal,” reads one.3 “Better integration of low-income housing with the rest of the neighborhood,” reads another.4 Presumably, these comments are just a few of hundreds collected that, in theory, will go on to shape the final outcome of the rezoning process. However, while some suggestions might well be taken into consideration by decision makers, in the aggregate, these kind of engagement efforts largely amount to little more than performance; acts of due diligence on the part of city planners to show that they are listening to community needs and will act accordingly. In truth, however, this is almost never the case, especially when it comes to representing the needs of low income and other marginalized people. Samuel Stein’s 2019 book Capital City: Gentrification and the Real Estate State grapples with this reality and describes the inherent tension between the image of planners as arbiters of social good, working in the overall public interest, and planners as servants to the interests of real estate capital. “Planners operate in a system that must appear open to the public, while simultaneously guaranteeing that ultimate power resides in the hands of propertied elites,” Stein writes. “It can be a really shitty job.”5 It is this fundamental truth that is so often obfuscated by participatory planning efforts in New York City. It is politically impossible to implement a planning action without first going through a public engagement process, but, frequently this process amounts to little more than a checkbox to tick on an agenda that has already been written. The performative nature of public engagement practices, those which Hunter College Professor Emeritus Tom Angotti describe as “more form than substance, more theater than politics” represent the fetishization of public participation as a practice, while simultaneously guaranteeing the maintenance of the status quo.6

Sherry Arnstein succinctly describes this reality in her oft-cited article “A Ladder of Citizen Participation”. Arnstein aptly notes that “[p]articipation of the governed in their government is, in theory, the cornerstone of
ULURP applications that are voted down at the community board or borough president level can be approved through the ULURP process. This was the case for the controversial East New York rezoning, the first of Mayor de Blasio’s rezoning proposals in service of his Housing New York plan. Community Board 5, representing affected communities in the rezoning area, fundamentally rejected the plan after a year’s-long community engagement effort on the part of the Department of City Planning. The community board cited concerns about housing affordability levels, displacement, increased gentrification, and plans for economic development. In spite of community board pushback, the plan was approved in 2016.

Further, the baked-in ULURP “clock” that puts set time limits on the public review period incentivizes back-door deals between developers and city agencies. As Angotti notes in a 2010 report addressed to the City Charter Commission:

“The charter provisions on land use were intended to create an orderly, transparent process for reviewing land use changes. The ULURP clock was instituted to guarantee a finite, predictable time limit and avoid endless postponements and delays. The process was organized so that the CPC, borough presidents, community boards and city council would have enough time to receive input from the public at formal hearings, time for internal deliberations, and time for decision making. The ULURP process from the date of certification until the final vote takes no more than about seven months. It is orderly and predictable. But it is not conducive to genuine public input, serious deliberation, or decision making in the public interest. The reason is rather simple. Over the years, input, deliberation and decision making have shifted more and more to the pre-ULURP period. They occur before applications are certified as complete; in other words, before the ULURP clock starts ticking.”

Angotti’s critique has played out publicly in recent months as controversy surrounding the Inwood neighborhood zoning have begun to surface. According to a 2019 Gothamist article, community organizations were systematically shut out of formal meetings with city agencies while developers had regular access to city officials months before the official public review process began on the proposed rezoning of the Inwood neighborhood in Manhattan. Author Jake Shore writes: “when the de Blasio administration carried out its rezoning of Inwood earlier this year, local residents strenuously protested, even occupying Councilmember Ydanis Rodriguez’s office to warn that allowing taller construction could displace existing tenants. But at the same time as neighborhood
advocates were complaining that city officials were turning a blind eye to their concerns about the plan, it turns out, for-profit developers had regular communications access to the city-controlled agency that led the rezoning efforts — and many of their requests were later incorporated into the city’s final plan.” The article goes on to state “advocates allege that the Inwood rezoning process felt like major decisions were already made before the plan even went up for public review...executives and lobbyists for [the developer] were able to hash out specific zoning codes and share studies with the EDC before the rezoning entered into ULURP in January 2018, according to emails.” ¹³ This practice is not the exception but rather the rule when it comes to formal decision making in the city, as Tara Kelly, VP of Policy and Programs at the Municipal Art Society of New York explains: “the City may spend years preparing for a given action, including generous outreach to property owners. Unfortunately, the broader community is often the last to know.” ¹⁴ Here, we see again, the outsized influence of property owners, even within a supposedly democratic public review process. As Angotti summarizes, “ironically, the system consciously set up to make the decision making process public and transparent has encouraged decision making in private and without transparency.” ¹⁵

Ultimately, the participatory planning process fails because it is largely prescriptive, requiring participants to conform to the structures, locations, practices and channels deemed fit by the city planning agencies. They aim to smooth out the democratic process and mask conflict by making participants feel good, even if they have no real power. But the planning process should be contentious, rather than consensus driven; it is through conflict that power might be redistributed. Stein hammers this point home in final chapter of Capital City, “for decades, municipalities have regularly hosted participatory planning sessions where residents are invited to play with maps of their neighborhood and tell planners where they want things like bus stops and libraries to go. There’s nothing wrong with these in principle, but, as geographer John Carr...notes, even more elaborately planned participatory processes tend to ‘render political decisions apparently apolitical’. Further, Stein notes “...more and more community organizers are boycotting participatory planning sessions altogether,
refusing to give cover to processes designed to make them feel good about losing.” 16 If we accept that planners in capitalist cities are above all beholden to the interests of private real estate, than the participatory planning process as it exists is not much more than a placation tool. As such, as sociologist Frances Fox Piven argues in her essay “Whom Does the Advocate Planner Serve?”, efforts on the part of community groups, especially those representing low-income and poor people, in the formalized public participation process might be better spent elsewhere: “involving local groups in elaborate planning procedures is to guide them into a narrowly circumscribed form of political action, and precisely that form for which they are least equipped... the absorbing and elaborate planning procedures which follow may be effective in dampening any impulse towards disruptive action which has always been the main political recourse of the very poor.” 17

Urban inequality will not be resolved through a state sanctioned community visioning session. The public participation process as it exists saps valuable energy from groups with few resources and yields little reward. That energy, Piven argues, would be better channeled into organizing “disruptive action” --protests, demonstrations, rallies and other forms of direct action--that change the political climate to which planners and city agencies must respond. As students enrolled in a program rooted in the principles of advocacy planning, we must be particularly vigilant in how we tackle the urban inequality that defines our time. Our work should not function within the confines of the status quo, but rather we must work to shift the overall paradigm.

Notes

* emphasis added

2 Ibid. p. 5
3 Ibid. p. 48
4 Ibid. p. 51
8 Ibid.
9 Angotti, p. 1
11 Angotti, p. 5
13 Ibid
14 Ibid.
15 Angotti, p. 7
16 Stein, pp. 189-90