

Progressive Planning

The Magazine of Planners Network

Citizenship, Democracy and Public Space



Susana Kaiser

2007 march in Buenos Aires demanding justice for the killing of teacher Carlos Fuentalba, assassinated by security forces in 2006.

Also In This Issue:

**Why Urban Planners Once Again Need to Reject Unprovoked War
Filmmaker-Organizer Partnerships**

The Seventh Generation

"In our every deliberation, we must consider the impact of our decisions on the next seven generations."

-From the Great Law of the Iroquois Confederacy

An Attack on Iran Would Be a Global Disaster: Why Urban Planners Once Again Need to Reject Unprovoked War

by MICHAEL DUDLEY

As the United States was preparing for its military assault on Iraq in 2003, Planners Network issued a statement, "Urban Planners Oppose the War in Iraq" (Reprinted in PN 155). Among the considerations in this statement were concerns over the threat of destruction to physical infrastructure—especially because Iraq is the cradle of civilization—the certainty of widespread human misery and the injustice of imposing military force over a civilian population.

Five years later, we once again find ourselves contending with a barrage of official and media-promulgated calls to attack another nation. This time, it is Iran that is being demonized, both as a nuclear threat and for its alleged interference in the affairs of its neighbors. Under provisions of the United Nations Charter, nations may not openly threaten others with armed attack, but so intense has this rhetoric become that it is part of mainstream political discourse in the United States.

Under whatever pretext, the current administration appears to be determined to attack Iran. According to numerous journalists and analysts, preparations for such an attack have been underway for some time, and the forces necessary for the attack are all in place.

Concern over the imminence of the attack is such that on May 8, 2008, House Judiciary Chairman John Conyers, Jr. issued a statement calling on President George W. Bush to respect the provisions of the Constitution granting war-making powers only to

Congress, and threatening him with impeachment proceedings if he did not.

At the U.S. Conference of Mayors in Miami this June, a coalition of thirty mayors allied with CODEPINK, Global Exchange and Cities for Peace presented a "National Mayors' Resolution for Diplomacy with Iran." Citing the already terrible burden America's cities have borne from the current war in Iraq, the resolution called on the mayors to oppose further military action that would divert resources away from infrastructure, education and other domestic needs. While the bid was not successful, the motion's supporters hope to get 100 mayors on board to submit it to Congress in September.

While many observers are recognizing that the threat of yet another catastrophic war appears to be very real, there has not been the corresponding widespread public outcry that greeted the buildup to the Iraq War in 2003. It is as if there is an aura of disbelief—or more worryingly, resignation—surrounding the whole crisis.

The need for organized opposition to war is even more necessary now than it was in 2003, however, because this war may well be a nuclear one. Whether through the direct use of nuclear weapons by the United States or Israel, or through the destruction of operational nuclear facilities by other means, the plans as they are publicly known portend huge civilian casualties and widespread nuclear pollution.

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Progressive Planning is published quarterly by Planners Network, Inc., a non-profit corporation in the State of New York.

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Democratizing Tourism, Illuminating Power: *A People's Guide to Los Angeles*

by LAURA BARRACLOUGH and WENDY CHENG

Mainstream depictions of Los Angeles typically focus on Hollywood celebrities, sensationalized racial conflict, natural disasters and the supposedly culturally and intellectually nullifying effect of too much sunshine. These stereotypes and biases are reflected in the region's popular histories, tour guides and, often, scholarly depictions. But what of the Los Angeles that, for so many, is simply home, and has been for generations? What of the racial, political and economic struggles that have shaped the region's history and its people, and of the vibrant cultures forged as a result?

A People's Guide to Los Angeles (APGTLA) seeks to answer these questions. It highlights the actions of everyday people, especially people of color, workers, women and immigrants who have built and sustained the city. Originally the brainchild of APGTLA co-author Laura Pulido, the project has taken many forms over the years—from a poster to a website (www.pgta.org) and now a proposed coffee table book and field guide. Always a collaborative and popular project, APGTLA catalogs, in a format accessible to a general readership, over 100 sites of the city's formative struggles. Its larger

goal is to illuminate how power is produced and embedded in the landscape. As both an alternative tour guide and a meditation on how power operates through place, the project has significant implications for democracy, citizenship and public space.

An Alternative Tour Guide

Despite presumptions of neutrality, tour guides are inherently political. By directing people to some places and away from others, tour guides structure hierarchies of value through which people unfamiliar with a place are socialized into its



Mike Sergieff, 1983, from the Los Angeles Public Library's Herald-Examiner collection.

internal dynamics of power and inequality. Like guides to many places, tour guides of Los Angeles present a sanitized depiction of the city, devoid of its real struggles and conflicts except where they are sensationalized.

In our perusal of existing tour guides of Los Angeles, a curious geography emerged: the southern edges of city maps barely skirt Interstate 10, just south of downtown, and rarely venture east of the Los Angeles River. As a result, South Los Angeles and the Eastside are usually omitted entirely. These omissions erase not

only vast swaths of Los Angeles, but also the people who live there—historically black and Latino, though always multiethnic—and their complex histories of struggle and resistance. At best these are artificial and incomplete representations. At worst they are politically dangerous, obscuring histories of violence, exploitation and discrimination as well as wit, courage, determination and collaboration that have created our social reality.

APGTLA embraces these omitted histories. Entries include the site of the Chinese

Massacre of 1871; sacred sites of the Tongva; the largest urban garden in the U.S., bulldozed by the city and now a vacant lot; houses where residential discrimination cases played out; the former headquarters of the Black Panther Party; and a beach where an endangered butterfly has made a comeback.

Since sites of resistance are not likely to be preserved—and are often intentionally destroyed—many of the places we feature now have a different form or usage, with their extraordinary histories invisible even to those who use them and know them well. For example, many daily shoppers at The Plant, a shopping center in the San Fernando Valley, may not be aware that it was formerly the site of a General Motors (GM) factory. Neither do they know that, in the 1980s, a multiracial group of workers led a campaign to keep the plant open during Southern California's painful process of deindustrialization. ⇨

Wendy Cheng



FAR LEFT: Local 645 President Pete Beltran, left, Cesar Chavez and Maxine Waters, march with a multi-racial group of GM workers past the GM plant on Van Nuys Boulevard.

LEFT: The former GM factory site in Van Nuys is now a shopping center.

Although GM eventually left, the organizing work done around it formed the basis for the Labor/Community Strategy Center, which has since developed such projects as the Bus Riders' Union. Thus, although the landscape associated with this particular struggle has been transformed, its story lives on in multiple political projects, of which *APGTLA* is one.

A Meditation on Power, Place and Landscape

In narrating such struggles, we also hope to illuminate how power works through place. A focus on everyday landscapes is a fundamentally democratic way to begin critical conversations about the operation of power. All people, regardless of language, levels of literacy, citizenship status or age can observe inequalities between communities and the unequal distribution of resources in space. These observations can be (and often have been) the starting point for organized resistance to inequality.

Here, the visual element of *APGTLA* is crucial. Through their representations of ordinary places, photographs encourage viewers to deconstruct *all* landscapes with a more critical eye. They enable the reader to draw comparisons with their own intuitive experiences of space and place in a manner unmediated by text. They also contend with the problem of how to recognize and represent physical and social formations that have often been systematically eradicated.

Clearly these erasures inflict their own kind of trauma, and recuperating stories of struggle can be empowering. Recently, while out visiting sites, a young Chicano man at Ruben Salazar Park in East Los Angeles approached us and wanted to know why we were taking pictures. We explained the project, and that the park was a key site of the Chicano Moratorium against the war in Vietnam, the largest antiwar protest by a single ethnic group in the history of the United States. It became clear that he knew all about it already—it was, after all, the history

of his community. "But I thought nobody cared," he said. Then he introduced himself, and told us to let him know if he could help out, as he had some stories he could share.

A People's Guide to Los Angeles humbly recognizes and celebrates the stories that all people can tell, if we only ask. By sharing these stories on a large scale, *APGTLA* guides both tourists and locals to see the city in a new way. Our hope is that by encouraging people to visit places they might never otherwise go, following stories of ordinary people and extraordinary struggles, we can create a different and more humane political reality—one where stories of resistance become central to the dominant narrative of a place, and empowering seeds for present and future struggles.

Laura Barraclough, a native of Los Angeles, is an assistant professor in the Department of Anthropology and Sociology at Kalamazoo College in Michigan. Wendy Cheng, a resident of Los Angeles, is a photographer and doctoral candidate in the Department of American Studies & Ethnicity at the University of Southern California.

RIGHT: Salazar Park, a key site of the Chicano Moratorium against the war in Vietnam.



Wendy Cheng

Progressive Planning and Organizing: *Filmmaker-Organizer Partnerships*

by ALLISON LIRISH DEAN

Activists on the left are really into making videos these days. To say that picking up a camera to document grassroots and progressive movements has become as commonplace as picking up a phone is to exaggerate only slightly. The explosion of advocacy videos is reflected, for example, in the headline, “It’s Not a Movement without a Movie,” seen recently in the online journal of New York City politics, *City Limits*.

Ask any politically conscious documentarian why she makes films and one reply will be a desire to change the world. But even if you believe that media can accomplish this, it’s less clear how. To start, films with advocacy goals should be integrated into organizing work. But how can organizers and filmmakers work together to ensure good results?

This question doesn’t have a simple answer, but media makers who wish to distinguish themselves in a civic sphere “swimming in video,” as the *City Limits* piece puts it, need to consider it.

Why Use Video?

One reason to use video/film is the emotional immediacy of the medium. “It can be very difficult to get anything across without a coherent communication strategy

that involves video,” says Ellen Schneider, founder of Active Voice, a San Francisco-based non-profit that helps filmmakers integrate their films into communication strategies. Milly Hawk-Daniel, director of communications for PolicyLink, an Oakland-based think tank, agrees. “Film is useful for some audiences in building public will for change.”

But once you’ve identified your audience, which techniques best convey the message? And how can video be useful to urban planners concerned with social justice?

Isabel Hill understood video’s inherent strengths when she made *Brooklyn Matters*, a documentary that critically examines developer Forest City Ratner’s mega-plan for the Atlantic Yards site near downtown Brooklyn, New York. [See review on page 40 of this issue.]

“There was a real need for the visual—the misconceptions about this project were enormous,” explains Hill. During a key moment in the film, Ron Shiffman, founder of the Pratt Center for Community Development, describes how difficult it is for the public to comprehend the project’s scale based on the developer’s drawings. In order to experience it, Shiffman urges, viewers should visit Donald Trump’s Riverside South project on Manhattan’s Upper West Side. Hill

cuts to a shot of Trump’s towering skyscrapers as Shiffman asks us to envision these buildings with fifteen to twenty extra stories. The moment is tremendously effective.

Streetfilms is a web-based project that uses video to advocate for livable streets. Unlike *Brooklyn Matters*, an hour-long documentary, the average Streetfilms video runs three to four minutes. *One Way is the Wrong Way*, which can be seen at www.streetfilms.org, exposes a New York City Department of Transportation plan to convert several two-way streets in Park Slope, Brooklyn, into one-way streets. The video follows Graham Beck of Transportation Alternatives, a local advocacy group, as he uses a speed gun to prove cars move twice as fast on one-way streets as two-way streets. Viewers experience a dramatic difference between the one-way streets, which run through residential neighborhoods but feel like highways, and the two-way streets, which are populated with families and cyclists.

Streetfilms’ most requested DVD is about Ciclovía, a weekly event in Bogotá, Colombia, in which over seventy miles of streets are closed to traffic, enabling residents to walk, bike and enjoy other activities. The video brings viewers into streets teeming with people having fun. “We have plenty of ⇨

stories of people saying our video is helping the push for Ciclovias in their cities,” says Clarence Eckerson, director of video production.

A successful web video can spread quickly. According to Eckerson, Streetfilms has had 600,000 unique viewings of videos on its site, and they get posted on other sites constantly. There are limitations to this format and method of distribution, however, because not everyone has internet access. Furthermore, web videos do not necessarily bring people together for discussion and debate as traditional screenings can.

Both Hill and Eckerson approach filmmaking with a professional understanding of the politics that surround the planning process. From 1999 to 2001, Eckerson was Chair of Brooklyn’s Transportation Alternatives Committee, and Hill previously worked for the New York City Department of City Planning. Hill attributes at least part of the success of her work to the different

perspective she brings, “that of a planner, someone deeply politically involved in the issues.”

Brooklyn Matters touched a nerve, so much so that after the first couple of screenings Hill found she didn’t need to market the film. “People came to me—small non-profits that were in the neighborhood, civic associations, churches... People knew that there were problems with the project and they were waiting for something to help them understand it.”

So Many Films, So Few Resources

Hill was so passionate about her subject that she financed *Brooklyn Matters* herself. And though Streetfilms is bankrolled by entrepreneur and activist Mark Gorton, for most filmmakers, financial support is problematic. Foundation grants are an option, but issues often unfold more quickly than the grant cycle. Isabel Hill, for example, shot and edited *Brooklyn Matters* in just four months. Funding sources have also tightened, though the need for

video in organizing campaigns has grown. From state arts councils to private foundations, scarce money is doled out in competitive stakes. In addition, some foundations support organizing but not film production, and few are willing to support projects that integrate the two.

One solution for filmmakers is to circumvent conventional funding mechanisms by partnering with organizations that want to use media and can help pay for it. In this arrangement, the organization gets to use the video in its work and can focus on organizing rather than making films.

Collaboration between filmmakers and organizers isn’t new. In the 1930s, the Film and Photo League (FPL) documented the era’s political movements and the resulting films were shown as part of organizing campaigns. In the 1960s, the Newsreel Group further developed the idea of film as an instrument for social change. By participating in the movements they sought to document,

Mayra Mendez



LEFT: Activists at a protest for A Day’s Work, A Day’s Pay.

RIGHT: Clarence Eckerson of Streetfilms filming Ciclovía -- 70 miles of streets closed to traffic -- in Bogotá, Columbia.

filmmakers blurred the boundary between filmmaker and organizer.

For both the FPL and Newsreel, pressures to ensure that these films were politically useful created certain tensions between film producers and organizers. While the relationship between politics and media has evolved since then, these tensions persist.

Organizations and Filmmakers, Together and Apart

The primary challenge filmmakers and organizers face in collaboration is negotiating their respective principles and priorities. Hammering out editorial issues from the start can minimize roadblocks.

Producing their own films is so appealing to organizations because it allows them to tailor their message. This customization is important in an age where balancing the distortions of the mainstream media is critical to building a movement.

For Corporate Accountability International, a Boston-based watchdog group, commissioning films is a considered element of its organizing strategy. *Making A Killing*, by Kelly Anderson and Tami Gold, helped it successfully push implementation of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, which sets global standards for marketing and promoting tobacco products. Anderson and Gold shot, directed and edited *Making a Killing*, but Corporate Accountability International had the final say over what and how information was presented. The primary audience of the film was journalists and international policymakers, so a lot was riding on how the story was told. “We want to present everything in a form that journalists can take and use,” says Communications Director Nick Guroff. “If you are not creating media that can be used by news organizations that is well fact-checked and upfront about its potential biases, then you’re wasting resources.”

For Kelly Anderson, who has made films for organizations as well as

independent documentaries aired on HBO and PBS, collaborating with Corporate Accountability International was a positive experience. The group understood that effective filmmaking requires outside expertise and money. The budget for *Making a Killing*, which the group was able to raise funds to support, was \$150,000 for a half-hour piece. Most importantly, says Anderson, Corporate Accountability International “knew who their audience was and what messages they needed to deliver, and were willing to let us figure out how to visualize that information.” Not that there weren’t disagreements, Anderson remembers, but in the end there was never any question about who had editorial control.

Ellen Schneider points out that sometimes an organization’s priorities fall more within the sphere of public relations—heightening visibility, raising funds or building a base. But organizationally-branded videos don’t have to be constrained by PR conventions. Schneider encourages organizations to see the value in talking about their work in a way that goes beyond simple marketing.

To filmmakers concerned that branded films won’t be perceived as journalism, Ellen Schneider says, “It should be clear to an audience who created the film and who paid for it, but when I see a film, what sticks with me is how the story was told, and whether or not it feels true. The more nuance and complexity the better, whether the film was made and paid for by an organization or not.”

Organizational branding can, however, be an obstacle to ⇒

Gil Penhalosa/Walk and Bike for Life



distribution—the practice violates PBS’s underwriting guidelines, for example, and can lock a film out of certain festivals.

Filmmaker Jonathan Skurnik is uncomfortable with the trade-offs associated with organizational financing, preferring collaborations with organizations where advocacy is an important goal, but where he maintains editorial control. In making *A Day’s Work, A Day’s Pay*, Skurnik and his partner Kathy Leichter followed two groups, Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) and Community Voices Heard (CVH), as they confronted the failings of welfare reform. CVH continues to use the film, but the groups did not have any financial or editorial input.

“With a sponsored film,” Skurnik says, “a big goal is how to make the organization appear in the best possible light. But with *A Day’s Work, A Day’s Pay*, that was not our goal. If the organizations made mistakes, those mistakes were there. We did not try to hide what a struggle it was.” Schneider says this candid approach can benefit an organization in the end by making a film more interesting.

Progressive filmmakers wishing to maintain their independence may have to prove they share the advocacy goals of their intended collaborators. ACORN and CVH initially resisted working with Skurnik, but he kept showing up at rallies and requesting meetings, eventually earning their trust. While his film was still in production, Skurnik’s team designed an outreach plan, the Workfare Media Initiative, and got \$200,000

in funding to implement it. This ensured that the film was integrated into an organizing campaign with substantial results.

Organizing Goals and the Call to Action

For Bruce Orenstein, founder and director of the Chicago Video Project, his sixteen years of organizing experience are the key to balancing the respective priorities of video and organizing. “Organizations may have the policy arguments, but it’s important to be able to translate that into a story, which isn’t easy to do,” says Orenstein. “At the same time,” he points out, “a lot of media people lack the content and the goals to frame a project effectively, and lots of products end up lacking an underlying purpose.”

“One thing that is really important in any film that’s designed to work with an advocacy goal is that there’s an explicit call to action,” says Orenstein, whose approach to filmmaking is modeled after his work as a community organizer. “You introduce the problem. You have testimony from people experiencing the issue directly. You then go into why the problem exists—why, for instance, the community doesn’t have affordable housing. Then you explain the political roadblocks to change, and then look at some models of how other communities have succeeded in solving the problem. Finally, you have a call to action.”

A call to action can be within a film, or happen *around* a film. A screening can be one component of a larger event where viewers sign postcards or petitions or commit to attending a

rally or volunteering. The Workfare Media Initiative ensured that opportunities for action accompanied every screening. This can be difficult, however, with films such as *Making a Killing*, which was often shown in disparate locations without the guiding presence of organizers.

Decisions about a film’s tone, the techniques employed to deliver the message and the balance between complexity and simplicity cannot be made without a clear understanding of the audience. *Making a Killing*, for example, needed to compel international policymakers. “We couldn’t produce something that was just meant to tug at the heartstrings,” says Guroff. “It also had to be grounded in peer-reviewed journals and scientific research.” Streetfilms toes a more heterogeneous line. “Our target audience is anyone who wants to listen, from traffic planners to the concerned mom who wants her kids to be safe,” says Eckerson. “We don’t want the traffic engineers to think, ‘This is silly,’ but we also want to avoid being overly technical.”

Orenstein notes that videos are but a starting point. “The root of a lot of the problems we are trying to solve is that one side has more power than the other—so change occurs when that balance of power is forced to shift. Videos are used to mobilize people, resources and allies. But they don’t create change in and of themselves.”

Allison Lirish Dean is a filmmaker, writer and urban planner. She is currently working on her second film, which investigates the politics of business improvement districts.

Building a Movement Against Gentrification

by MARNIE BRADY

Displacement of poor people of color, a major consequence of gentrification, is also the greatest obstacle to resisting the underlying policies that promote gentrification in the first place. Displacement disrupts social networks and disperses a neighborhood's organizing base. Yet in spite of this challenge, local organizing groups from many cities that comprise the national Right to the City Alliance are creating a movement against gentrification that is collective, visible and growing. This June, the Alliance came together on the streets of Miami to bring its struggle to the site of the fortieth convening of the U.S. Conference of Mayors (USCM). While the mayors led plenaries sponsored by corporate donors such as Wal-Mart, Microsoft and Home Depot, the Right to the City Alliance held its own People's State of the Cities Conference, which included a march on the mayors, a youth summit, a broad-based people's summit and two days of strategy sessions.

Marching on the Mayors

The U.S. Conference of Mayors began during the Great Depression as a response to urban uprisings. The mayors sought increased federal funding for cities, hoping better services would reduce dissent. This year, during the worst recession in decades, hundreds of mayors came together to pursue

an urban agenda, targeting the next U.S. president. Senator Barack Obama gave the keynote speech, and hundreds of grassroots leaders brought their own voices to the streets, inspiring and demanding change based on analysis and solutions from below.

Stepping off from Miami's Overtown neighborhood, a New Orleans style jazz funeral procession raised the rallying cry, "Right to the City is the Fight for the City!" Overtown, an historic African-American neighborhood located at the edge of the city's gentrifying downtown, is one of several Miami neighborhoods to demand the preservation of affordable housing, including central city mobile home parks.

Miami protesters were joined by representatives of more than thirty grassroots organizations from eight metropolitan areas in Right to the City's March on the Mayors. Asserting the primacy of democracy by and for people over profits, the processioners marched to the posh InterContinental Hotel where the nation's mayors gathered.

Denise Perry, director of Miami's Power U, explained, "We are marching to bury the neoliberal policies that destroy our cities, and at the same time we are celebrating that we are alive." Pallbearers carried coffins marked with the names of their cities alongside giant skeletons depicting privatization, top-



Marnie Brady

down decision-making, racism, deportation and gentrification. New Orleans residents formed the procession's traditional "second line," leading the step with the "To Be Continued" brass band. Among the marchers twirling umbrellas painted with messages such as "Environmental Justice!" and "Chinatown is Not for Sale!" were Chicago residents organizing for the right to public housing, LGBTQ youth of color from New York City leading a campaign to preserve cultural space and a public pier, day laborers fighting worker exploitation in Washington DC, immigrant youth leaders fighting displacement from university development in Los Angeles and tenants from Boston and Providence organizing for community participation in development decisions.

Even the fierce rain that eventually poured over the marchers had a role in the street performance.

The tropical storm served as a reminder of the plight of hundreds of thousands of New Orleans residents who continue to face the unnatural destruction wrought by neglected levees, and the accelerated privatization of community resources as the city has subsequently redeveloped. The Katrina Rita Ville Express, a FEMA trailer, followed the marchers in tow. The trailer, which tours the country, is meant to raise awareness of poor conditions, evictions, repressive policing and poisoning in Gulf Coast trailer parks.

Jessie McDonald, a founding member of Mothers on the Move in the South Bronx, said that her mayor never makes time to learn about the issues facing the people in her community, which has the highest rate of asthma in the country. "So we came here to find [New York City Mayor] Bloomberg, to surprise him and to say to him, 'If you're really concerned about

the environment, then why don't you speak with the people in your city facing these issues?'" Robert Robinson, an organizer for Picture the Homeless, hoped to issue a people's subpoena to Bloomberg to appear at a future tribunal on his failure to end homelessness in New York City — despite the number of abandoned properties throughout the city. Although the USCM's \$1,650+ ticket price prevented McDonald and Robinson from entering the conference and finding Bloomberg, they were energized to return to their city and raise their voices together.

The People's Summit

In addition to the street protest, the Right to the City Alliance organized a People's Summit that took place the day before the march at Miami Dade University. Gihan Perera, director of the Miami Workers' Center, opened the packed summit with these words: "The planet is suffering war

Marnie Brady



PREVIOUS PAGE: The Right to the City Alliance leads a New Orleans style funeral march to the 2008 US Conference of Mayors in Miami

LEFT: The "To Be Continued" brass band plays second-line at the Right to the City funeral march to the US Conference of Mayors

and empire, and the planet itself is starting to die... While the mayors meet only a few blocks away, we are here to practice democracy and build a social movement based on our power." Jaron Brown, an organizer with POWER in San Francisco, was the first speaker of the summit plenary. He set out to define the concept of neoliberalism used throughout the alternative conference: "Neoliberalism takes from the poor and gives to the rich, privatizing resources from the public to allow for corporate control... We're here today because we wholeheartedly reject that future."

Willie "J.R." Fleming, with the Coalition to Protect Public Housing in Chicago, reflected on Brown's statement that his city was the birthplace of modern neoliberal ideology: "The neoliberal experiments that came out of the University of Chicago were applied in Chile [during the Pinochet dictatorship] and are the same things being practiced now by our mayors in our communities, and not just with effects at a local level, but at a global level."

"Black and brown people are now realizing we're being affected by the same racist policies: immigrants have been displaced three, four times; we're forced to move off our land; and then this gets repeated

The Right to the City Alliance will launch its "People's Urban Agenda" as part of multi-city coordinated actions on August 29, 2008, the third anniversary of Hurricane Katrina. The agenda will reflect the declarations made by representatives attending the People's State of the Cities Conference in Miami. For more information about the alliance, visit www.righttothecity.org. For more information about tour sites of the Katrina Rita Ville Express, visit www.krvexpress.org.

in the city," explained Rodrigo Paredes Cebellos, an organizer with the Chicago Pilsen Alliance.

Ursula Price of Safe Streets in New Orleans remarked, "We've been beaten, tazed and maced for stating our case for public housing." Whether mayors use the police to protect what Price called "dysfunctional institutions" or facilitate corporate land grabs through zoning policy, participants in the People's State

of the Cities Conference made clear that the so-called market-driven ideology of neoliberalism relies heavily on enforcement by local government powers. Together, conference participants

aim to put into action the growing potential power of the urban world majority to overturn even the most entrenched and repressive conditions directly affecting their lives. They plan to continue to organize in their own cities, making more and more visible their united claim for the collective right to the city.

Marnie Brady is a PhD. student in sociology at The Graduate Center, City University of New York.

An Attack on Iran Would Be a Global Disaster: Why Urban Planners Once Again Need to Reject Unprovoked War

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The Pentagon has drawn up plans to strike over a thousand sites in Iran, many of them related to its nuclear industry. To do so, it intends to use so-called "bunker-buster" bombs that would scatter vast clouds of intensely radioactive sand across much of Central Asia. Many of Iran's nuclear facilities are in or near urban areas, including

Tehran, a modern cosmopolitan city with a population of over 12 million people, and Esfahan, a UNESCO World Heritage city with a population of over 3 million people. As well, the attack will seek to eliminate persons with expert knowledge in the field of nuclear fission, so universities will surely be targeted.

The number of projected civilian deaths in populated areas would be astronomical. The organization Physicians for Social Responsibility warned in its May 2006 fact sheet "Medical Consequences of a Nuclear Attack on Iran" that within two days of an attack on nuclear facilities at Esfahan and Natanz, nearly 3 million people could ⇒

succumb to blast effects and lethal levels of radiation, and more than 10 million people in Afghanistan, Pakistan and India would likely suffer or die from radiation-induced illnesses in the months and years to come. Keep in mind this projection is based on the bombing of just two nuclear sites.

Clearly, the human scale of the death and misery that would follow an attack on Iran is hardly imaginable. But the resulting chaos would not be limited to physical destruction and genetic ruin within the targeted region. An attack on Iran could also threaten the entire global economy.

If attacked, Iran would be quite capable of shutting down not just its own oil exports, but blocking the Strait of Hormuz to all oil traffic from other countries in the region. Oil prices could then, according to some estimates, top \$200 a barrel, prompting Canadian journalist Gwynne Dyer to warn that this could in effect mean the “end of the present economic era.” Our current woes with the mortgage crisis and recession will be nothing compared to the economic devastation that could result.

Yet, for all the horrific consequences of such an attack, the rhetoric surrounding Iran has taken on apocalyptic importance that is completely unwarranted. The public is being told that the only choice is to bomb Iran now, or face a nuclear Iran in the future, one which would not hesitate to destroy Israel. The widespread assumption

of genocidal intentions on the part of President Ahmadinejad, however, is quite unfounded. He never said he would “wipe Israel off the map,” instead, his statement translates as “the regime occupying Jerusalem must vanish from the page of time” — much in the same way as did the old Soviet regime. On top of this are repeated official and media assertions of Iran’s nuclear capabilities—despite U.S. intelligence reports denying Iranian nuclear weapons development since at least 2003.

In other words, Americans are once again being led into a war based on falsehoods, which are being accepted by the media as conventional wisdom. Such passivity would have terminal consequences.

If nuclear weapons were used, millions would die. If radioactive fallout from conventionally-bombed nuclear facilities spreads across the Middle East and Central Asia, we would see an ecological crisis of unprecedented scale, and millions of environmental refugees. If energy prices skyrocket in the wake of the attack as they are expected to, every aspect of the modern city with which we are concerned—from food delivery to home heating to construction to transportation—would be seriously affected.

Given the extreme nature of the threatened action, the increasingly bellicose rhetoric surrounding it and the profound consequences that would befall cities both in the Middle East and around the world

if Iran is attacked, it is once again time for civil society—including professional bodies, associations and activists—to reject the threat of illegal, unjustifiable and unilateral war. As was the case in 2003, I believe this movement must include urban planners.

I call on Planners Network to support and join with the coalition of mayors, CODEPINK, Global Exchange and Cities for Peace in formally articulating its opposition and insist that the United States engage in diplomacy, not war, in its dealings with Iran.

Passionate as we are about the health of human communities, the future of the city and the preservation of the natural world, we cannot remain silent when all these are so casually threatened with destruction and contamination.

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Young Planners Network (YPN) 2008 Conference Recap!

by ANDREW WILLIAMS-CLARK and ALISSA KRONOVET

In April, the Young Planners Network (YPN) inaugural conference brought together over 130 young planners and adult allies from New York, New Orleans, Chicago, the Bay Area, Denver, Boston, Seattle, St. Louis and Toronto to learn and share strategies for increasing youth participation in urban planning.

The conference opened on Thursday April 3, 2008, with a reception hosted by the Brooklyn Center for the Urban Environment. Here, the original New Orleans sixteen were reunited and new relationships were forged. Friday featured a variety of issue-based mobile workshops around New York City, including an environmental justice canoe trip down the Bronx River and a walking tour of Brooklyn youth-created community murals.

On Saturday, the Academy of Urban Planning (AUP) hosted presentations, workshops and panel discussions on a variety of topics, such as the Katrina Leadership Project in New Orleans; Youth-Led Action Research in Stockton, California; the Health Disparities Research and Advocacy Project in the South Bronx; an Alternative Vision of Development in Toronto; and an Edible Charrette on Affordable Housing in Boston. YPN and AUP also welcomed keynote speakers Cornell Carney of the Katrina Leadership Project (www.lorainccc.edu/katrina) and Roger Hart, director of the Children's Environments Research Group (www.cerg1.org). In the evening, attendees were treated to a

celebration of youth expression in film and poetry at St. Ann's Warehouse in DUMBO (Down Under the Manhattan Bridge Overpass).

On Sunday morning, young planners and adult allies worked together and apart to identify goals for the upcoming year and plan a course of action to achieve them. Consensus was reached that YPN would focus on institutionalization, expansion, communications, supporting youth actions and integrating new power bases. Youth and adults volunteered to work in committees charged with advancing each of these themes.

As one young planner, Deszeray Williams, from Emeryville, California, said, "I think this conference was a great opportunity for youth and adults to express their thoughts, and problems in the community that they want to change. It was a chance to share ideas in a

talented way, not only for youth to understand but for adults also. I had a great time with everyone that I met. I really felt that I was a big part of this conference. I would like to give thanks to the people who made this happen for the youth."

Stay tuned for more articles on youth participation in planning, written in collaboration between young planners and their adult allies, in upcoming issues of *Progressive Planning*. In the meantime, check www.youngplannersnetwork.org for updates on this exciting new movement to "create a place at the table for youth in planning."

Andrew Williams-Clark, a member of the YPN steering committee, is an assistant planner at the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP). Alissa Kronovet, co-founder and member of the YPN steering committee, recently received her master's degree in city planning from UC Berkeley.



Citizenship, Democracy and Public Space

by CLARA IRAZÁBAL

Public spaces are privileged sites for the enactment and contestation of various stances on democracy and citizenship in the public sphere. Indeed, the *public sphere*, as the intangible realm for the expression, reproduction and recreation of a society's culture and polity, usually encompasses divergent political visions and nurtures acute social confrontations that get played out in the more tangible *public space*.

Taking to the streets is a response to issues international and domestic in nature. Alain Touraine calls it a 'grand refuse' in reference to the reaction of the masses in social movements to the oppressive economic conditions resultant from global neoliberalism. A 'grand refuse,' however, can be more than a reaction, and can catalyze a vision for alternative socio-political projects.

When oppressive conditions are challenged in unprecedented ways, social groups reconstitute citizenship by reterritorialization and appropriation of public space. New geographies of race, class, political consciousness and political affiliation can transform power, knowledge, subjectivities and ultimately, space. Significantly, the process goes both ways—transformations of space can cause transformations of power, knowledge and subjectivities.

Many studies explore the dynamics of democracy and citizenship from sociological and political science perspectives. Very few of them, however, explicitly scrutinize the development of democracy and citizenship in *physical* urban space, which empirically grounds these critical debates. The examination of the case studies in this issue of

Progressive Planning help interrogate the fate of the linkage between public spaces and the constructions of citizenship and democracy, critically scrutinizing the various re-workings of identity, ethnicity and other traditions of belonging. Conditions of citizenship and democracy are explored through the array of possibilities of events that can take place in public space, which range from life-making to history-making events, and all the shades in-between. Extraordinary events can unsettle the historically developed relationship between place and meaning, prompting collective re-imagining of communities and nations and thus transforming notions of citizenship and democracy.

Most demonstrations in public space do not cause radical transformations, and many of them go mostly unnoticed. But there are a few that cause reformist or radical transformations, and sometimes it is the cumulative effect of several that results in significant change. Taking to the streets, however, cannot be romanticized as a panacea for grievances and enactment of just laws and policies. On the contrary, street politics is often the last resort after all other formal procedures of claim-making for the disenfranchised prove ineffective. We do not want to be overly celebratory of street politics. Although often they have measurable impact, public demonstrations are sometimes the last resort in an ongoing struggle against inequality. Their effectiveness in ameliorating injustice varies with the leveraging power demonstrating groups have vis-à-vis power holders, the sincere commitment the latter have to issues of social justice and democracy and the actual material and non-material resources available to respond to people's claims. Paradoxically, sometimes achieving ⇨

Citizenship, Democracy



ABOVE: Cuatro suyos march, Lima, Peru.

and Public Space

some positive results, however partial, can void a social movement of its power and may result in the abandonment of the public space as a fruitful and dynamic arena of the political public sphere.

More than the attainment of an ideal of radical democracy, we should be interested in the *radicalization of democracy*. This radicalization of democracy entails different trajectories for each city and country in a context-specific search for a just city/nation. The collective imagining and mapping of such tailored trajectories in public space and all other open venues of the public sphere, and the actual traversing of those paths, are what can ultimately help achieve the best conditions possible for full citizenship. In this venture, public space can be both a springboard for mobilization and an indicator of the sincere commitment to democracy on the part of the ones that create, maintain, regulate and use these spaces.

As phoenixes, some new regimes of democracy and citizenship seem to be regenerating or arising anew from the ashes and through fire: youthful, vital and colorful, with a sense of mission and their pains and joys, their blood and sweat pulsating in their urban public spaces. People participating in a myriad of extraordinary events give shape to these new

regimes of democracy and citizenship, figuratively exclaiming in unison “¡SI SE PUEDE!” —Yes we can!

The essays in this issue reassert the vitality and vibrancy of public space politics in a world that is experiencing a significant decrease in opportunities for expression in public space. These examples can help us envision a progressive politics that translates into planning theory, education and practice grounded in a sophisticated understanding of citizenship and a challenge to neoliberal urbanism. This should invite planners and policymakers to critically problematize their roles so as to effectively mobilize, give room and acknowledge the types of citizenship practices that empower individuals and societies.

[These comments and the contributions contained herein related to Lima, Mexico City, São Paulo and Buenos Aires build on the book *Ordinary Places, Extraordinary Events: Citizenship, Democracy and Public Space in Latin America* (ed., Clara Irazábal. Routledge, 2008).]

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Upcoming Progressive Planning Themes:

- **Aspects of Planning in Canada**
- **Immigration**
- **Racial integration**
- **Peter Marcuse and Progressive Planning**

If you are interested in submitting articles, please email editor@plannersnetwork.org

Playing Out Democracy in MacArthur Park: *Spatial Struggles in the Everyday Use of Public Space*

by KELLY MAIN

MacArthur Park is one of downtown Los Angeles' largest and most historic public spaces. Located just a few miles west of City Hall and the corporate centers on Bunker Hill, the neighborhood in which the park is located is the poorest in Southern California and the densest west of Manhattan. The park is also at the center of a thriving Central American community, the residents of which began arriving during the political upheavals in El Salvador and Guatemala in the 1980s.

In March 2006, MacArthur Park was a focal point for one of the largest immigration rallies in the U.S. In response to anti-immigrant legislation being debated by the U.S. Congress, many of the marchers demanded full rights and legalization for immigrants. One year later, on May 1, 2007, a march commemorating the 2006 rally and reasserting immigrant rights was again held in downtown Los Angeles. The march ended in MacArthur Park, where participants, as well as members of the press, were chased down by Los Angeles Police Department officers and struck with rubber bullets and batons. The police action, dubbed the "May Day Melee," received national attention and sparked an investigation into the department's behavior.

As a location for large-scale protests and rallies, local communities use MacArthur Park as a place to directly and visibly assert their rights, both political and spatial. In their everyday use of the park, community members also assert these rights, but in much less visible ways, at least to outsiders. Through daily activities such as soccer and vending, and through periodic celebrations, neighbors exercise their control of this community space. One of the most powerful assertions of local rights is through an unofficial soccer league, which serves more than 1,000 children and hosts activities every day in the park.

Local Histories

MacArthur Park, originally named Westlake Park, is located in the Westlake neighborhood, one of the first

suburbs of Los Angeles. Spurred by the Pacific Electric streetcar system, the area began to develop in the late 1800s and quickly became one of the wealthiest neighborhoods in the city. The park was designed in the tradition of the "pleasure grounds" of the time. A small homage to Central Park and Frederick Law Olmsted, the park was landscaped to reflect a "naturalistic" and rustic sensibility.

Westlake Park's popularity increased and, by the 1920s, the park became a magnet for luxury hotels and apartments, such as the Park Plaza Hotel, still standing at the western edge of the park. Weekly concerts were featured in the park's bandstand. A Victorian boathouse was built at the east end of the lake, and boating on the lake became a popular Los Angeles pastime.

The economic "decline" of the park is reported to have begun just after World War II with the middle-class exodus to the suburbs. Jewish immigrants began to move into the neighborhood (hence the regionally famous Langer's delicatessen located in the corner of the park), followed by refugees fleeing wars in El Salvador and Guatemala in the 1980s.

Crime has been a serious problem in the surrounding neighborhood and the park. In 1994 there were 140 homicides in the Rampart Division, the police district that includes MacArthur Park. Police officers now patrol the park twenty-four hours a day, every day, and surveillance cameras have been installed. The *New York Times* (4/17/05) reported that by 2004, homicides in the Rampart District had dropped to 27 and, according to a more recent *Los Angeles Times* article (6/17/07), violent crimes in the area had dropped by 50 percent.

The Westlake Community and MacArthur Park Today

Today, the Westlake neighborhood is 78 percent Latino. Depending on how neighborhood ⇨

boundaries are drawn, 65 to 70 percent of the area's population is foreign-born, and fewer than half (46 percent) are citizens. Recently, local residents and business owners submitted a petition with 500 signatures to have the neighborhood surrounding the park designated as "Central American Town."

Central American identity is just one of several identities associated with the area. The nearby Pico-Union district has become at least partially associated with Los Angeles' burgeoning Mexican community hailing from the southern state of Oaxaca. In an attempt to link public spaces with the assertion of cultural and national identity, a Oaxacan group collected up to 2,000 signatures requesting that the City of Los Angeles rename nearby Normandie Park after former Mexican President Benito Juarez, a Zapotec Indian from the state of Oaxaca. MacArthur Park's visitors reflect the identity of the larger neighborhood often represented in newspaper articles and other popular literature: immigrant, Latino and Central American and Mexican.

Playing Out Democracy: Soccer in MacArthur Park

One of the most prominent activities in MacArthur Park is soccer. The unofficial yet highly organized soccer league, serving over a thousand children, holds

practices every weekday and games every weekend on two unofficial fields in the northern half of the park. According to Daniel Morales, the chief organizer of the soccer league, historic preservationists want to see the park return to its more historic role as a passive space with beautiful landscaping and without soccer fields. The preservationists argue that the park's historic designation prevents any "new activities," such as soccer, from being added to the park.

The soccer fields are located on what was once the lake bottom on the north side of the park. When the park was bisected by Wilshire Boulevard, the lake in the north half was drained, leaving a large grassy area. There are almost no trees directly adjacent to the fields, making for good views from the nearby grassy areas. The lack of trees means that viewers are exposed to the sun, and on summer days it can become quite warm on the field. Any grass in the field area has been worn away by use, exposing earth and resulting in a great deal of dust on windy days. The surface of the fields has been a major source of contention between the soccer league and forces opposing it. The league has asked for a proper surface, but according to the park manager and league organizer, those who would like to see the league gone want to see the dust taken care of and the area landscaped with grass. According to city officials, maintaining real grass for the fields,

Kelly Main



LEFT: View of MacArthur Park from Wilshire Boulevard, looking north over the westernmost soccer field.

given their level of use, would be quite expensive. Thus, while still not officially sanctioning the soccer fields, the city approved funding in 2006 to put artificial turf over the fields.

In my research of the park, spanning a three-year period, it was clear that the soccer games are a major source of social interaction. On weekends, league games continue throughout the day. Just to the east of the two fields it is common to see games being played in small groups and many individuals and small groups working on their soccer skills. Throughout the year, 200 to 500 people watch the games at any given moment. The groups who gather around the fields are made up of family members who have children in the games as well as individuals and small groups standing on the sidelines. A grassy area that slopes up on the south side of the fields is a perfect place for a shaded but still excellent view. A great variety of social groupings occur there as well, including both men and women. Families greet other families with children on the same team. Men gather in small groups, watching the game and chatting about the players.

Park benches dot the circumference of the two unofficial fields. Daniel Morales brings portable goals and a tent, which he uses to operate the league. The tent is a hub of activity throughout the day, as coaches

and players check in to find out about schedules and other organization matters. Particularly on weekends, it is quite common to see mothers or fathers approaching the tent to sign up their children, both girls and boys.

In the summer of 2006, the first Soccerfest was held at MacArthur Park. Sponsored by Assembly Speaker Fabian Nuñez, the event was, according to Speaker Nuñez's staff, meant to reinforce the importance of soccer to the community and to the park at a time when the appropriateness of the soccer fields and the league was being debated, officially and unofficially, by city politicians. It was an assertion of both ethnic and political identity for the Latino population of the park and the neighborhood. Several Spanish-speaking television stations covered the event and one station sponsored it. Semi-professional teams played several exhibition games on the soccer fields, and the league played tournament games. Several politicians made presentations and awarded trophies to the winners. A grant was given to the league organizer to continue running the league. (Previously, the city had assisted the league, unofficially providing funds and staff from the park's community center. Currently, this funding has been suspended.) Over the course of the day there were an estimated one thousand onlookers at the soccer fields. ⇨

RIGHT: Marchers fill Wilshire Boulevard and the pathways in MacArthur Park, March 2006.



Juan Gabriel Mesa

The debate about the league continues among politicians, city staffers and the community, but not in any official public forum. The city is looking for other sites for the league. In what appears to be a nod to the significance of the league to the community and the lack of other locations for play, the city has allowed the league to continue using the park. In the meantime, over a thousand children play soccer in what Mr. Morales and many community members consider to be the best gang prevention program the neighborhood has. And despite claims that police surveillance has “cleaned up the park,” many park goers assert that the soccer league and the people it brings to the park are primarily responsible for the safer conditions.

Conclusions

It can be argued that many, if not most, local planning practitioners faced with how to address troubled public spaces or how to design new successful ones approach this challenge through urban design. More recently, some planning practitioners have become concerned with the social environment of public spaces and how social elements might affect sense of place—although it is arguable that most planners are primarily focused upon the activities that should be prohibited more than on the activities that might be encouraged or permitted.

My research suggests that local planning practice might benefit from several changes in approach to designing and

regulating public spaces, particularly in urban settings. Giving greater consideration to the types of uses that are allowed or prohibited in public spaces might allow for more meaningful environments for users. Because the cultural communities that make up urban neighborhoods and their needs for public space can rapidly change, planners must be vigilant in their outreach to these communities. Community-based design efforts that concentrate upon physical design may be missing some of the most important elements of a democratically developed public space.

In MacArthur Park, the struggle is over local control of this public space to achieve a felt community need—the need for a safe place for children to participate in a culturally valued activity, in this case soccer. By affecting these small everyday negotiations over the use of public space, we planners, though we may not be conscious of it, can either help or harm. What may appear to be small, everyday negotiations over public space can actually reflect struggles for political and spatial justice. The annual rallies held in MacArthur Park reflect enormous national political struggles and take place there because of the everyday association with the park by the very groups most affected by the national struggle.

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Kelly Main



LEFT: Balloons envelop a vendor in MacArthur Park. Food and toy vendors are very popular on weekends.

Human Rights Activists and the Struggle for Urban Territories in Buenos Aires

by SUSANA KAISER

Since their irruption into the public sphere in 1977 in the midst of a military dictatorship, the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo (mothers of *desaparecidos*) pioneered the redefinition of the word public, which is at the core of the struggle for human rights in Argentina. By turning motherhood into a public activity, the group was crucial in resetting the boundaries of political spaces in Buenos Aires. By conquering and remapping urban territories, both physical and metaphorical, it shaped the style and the scope of human rights activism. Over the last three decades, and during distinct and changing political environments, the creative, strong and disruptive public presence of the group's activists has played a key role in shaping public opinion and policies regarding memory, accountability, social justice and democratization. This public presence has been marked by numerous actions, including the Mothers' communication strategies denouncing state terrorism and demanding accountability; *escraches* (demonstrations) organized by H.I.J.O.S (organization of children of *desaparecidos* formed in 1995), an innovative challenge to impunity and political amnesia; and street demonstrations (2001-2002) with tactics that included *cacerolazos* (banging saucepans) and *piquetes* (blocking of roads and streets) to demand the major restructuring of political institutions and the economy. The streets of Buenos Aires, thus, have become sites where denunciation, debate and negotiation take place.

Moreover, taking to the streets is aimed at conquering and remapping cultural, political and ideological zones. Since memory is encoded in places, the struggle for urban territories is also a means of enacting memory and writing history. Focusing on the relationship between physical space and event, I examine the symbolism of urban spaces in Buenos Aires as transformed and reconfigured by human rights activists—as spaces of changing and conflicting meaning.

Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo

When the Mothers first got together, their task was to communicate that their children were vanishing. Since their beginnings, they created a style aimed at shocking and galvanizing a paralyzed society. This style was marked by a powerful presence in public spaces and the establishment of the Plaza de Mayo (*la Plaza*) and the streets as their territory. Their assertive struggle for urban territories relied on marches, mobilizations and the use of symbols and symbolic spaces. The Mothers took over the square facing the government house, a landmark of Argentina's political life, and marked this space with a new historical meaning. At the peak of the terror, their weekly marches became a reminder of the repression in this "liberated" territory.

The Mothers adopted street theater techniques, staging demonstrations on any occasion where witnesses could observe them and turning squares and streets into stages for these performances. If authorities asked one Mother for her ID, all the Mothers would hand in theirs; if one Mother was taken to the police station, dozens of Mothers would declare themselves jailed. When President Alfonsín cancelled a meeting, they staged a sit-in, turning the government house into an overnight encampment. They brought their children with them into the streets using large posters, each of a life-size silhouette symbolizing a *desaparecido*. These posters were mounted on walls throughout the city or on cardboard and, in the case of the latter, made to "march" in demonstrations. Giant photos were also used to decorate the Plaza. The Mothers were extremely creative in using graffiti to mark public territories. On occasions, they decorated the sites where military parades took place, painting street surfaces with their symbols, which resulted in images of soldiers marching over asphalt with painted accusations against them, ⇨

such as boots interposed with white scarves (the Mothers' symbol). Ironically, the streets as spaces for honoring the military turned into spaces for denouncing their crimes.

Hence, the Mothers' activism has transformed and symbolically given new meaning to the urban landscape. Their street presence, their taking over of the Plaza, their marking of recuperated or liberated spaces and their visually compelling performances established guidelines that other activists would adapt.

H.I.J.O.S.

The acronym H.I.J.O.S. stands for *Hijos por la Identidad y la Justicia contra el Olvido y el Silencio* (Daughters and Sons for Identity and Justice against Forgetting and Silence). The group achieved notoriety for its *escraches* — campaigns of public condemnation aimed at exposing the identities of hundreds of torturers and assassins benefiting from impunity laws. Marchers invade the neighborhoods where torturers live carrying banners and chanting slogans such as “*Alerta, Alerta, Alerta los vecinos, que al lado de su casa está viviendo un asesino*” (Alert! Alert! Alert all neighbors, there's an assassin living next door to you!). The group informs about atrocities committed by their targets, handing out fact sheets about them that include a photo, name, address, human

rights violation(s) committed and current occupation. Demonstrations end in front of the torturers' homes with a brief “ceremony” — speeches, street theater and music. Marchers then “mark” the location by spraying slogans on sidewalks and walls. Red paint—symbolizing blood—is usually splattered on building walls.

This symbolically powerful tactic of bringing back the past into the public sphere compels society to define its position toward human rights violations and campaigns for justice. H.I.J.O.S. developed its strategies within a political and cultural environment of legalized impunity. Hundreds of torturers and assassins were left free to roam public places and invited as guests on television talk shows. They had become “democratic” politicians and were even depicted as kind parents of children they appropriated after disappearing their biological parents. But only a few faces were known. *Escraches* tore off the shield of anonymity behind which hundreds of torturers hid. Through these acts, H.I.J.O.S., contested denial and ignorance by making people realize that those guilty of atrocities might be a kind neighbor or the father of a son or daughter's friend.

The goal of the *escraches* was to curtail access to social spaces that torturers and assassins had gained. This constituted a metaphorical repossession of the streets, freeing them from the presence of criminals. Once the

Susana Kaiser



LEFT: Plaza de Mayo: the white scarf, symbol of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo.

community has recognized them, criminals become restricted to the areas where they can circulate without being harassed and therefore become prisoners in their own homes. *Escraches* target military officers and their accomplices. Since the dictatorship introduced the neoliberal economic policies that were implemented in the 1990s, H.I.J.O.S. have organized *escraches* around those labeled “economic genocidal agents,” connecting state terrorism and more current economic situations. Thus, H.I.J.O.S. has made a point of exposing and shaming members of those sectors that condoned, collaborated with and benefited from the repression.

H.I.J.O.S. also developed follow-up “memory activities” to ensure that the momentum gained from the *escrache* does not fizzle out. One tactic is the “mobile *escrache*” in which activists revisit the residences of several criminals within a three-hour span, traveling from one to another by bike, car or chartered bus. Another activity is to return to the neighborhood following an *escrache*. The “post-*escrache* day” takes place in a public place where H.I.J.O.S. shows photos taken during the *escrache*, broadcasts from the site and organizes screenings and performances. The *escrache* thus becomes an ongoing event, with participation from the community, which reaffirms the boundaries of these re-conquered territories and broadens the territory of protest. No longer limited to the criminals’ residence, it includes parks or squares as new spaces to discuss and redefine the past.

Until the nullification of the impunity laws in 2003, and the consequent revitalized expectations for justice, H.I.J.O.S. should be credited with limiting the criminals’ social and spatial freedoms. The group’s *escraches* trapped torturers and assassins by building metaphorical jails in neighborhoods throughout Argentina.

Twenty-First Century: The New *Escraches*, *Piquetes* and *Cacerolazos*

At the turn of this century, the streets of Buenos Aires became the site of massive demonstrations triggered by a new political crisis. Citizens made headlines with their *cacerolazos*, taking to the streets armored with saucepans that they loudly banged while calling for the ousting of those in office: “¡Que se vayan todos y que no quede ni uno solo!” (Throw them all out!).

Such was the anger and frustration with the political class. During the turmoil of December 2001, though demonstrators were brutally repressed, the president was forced to resign.

Those were times characterized by an array of struggles for basic human rights. People organized to ask for jobs, food and shelter, and to protest authorities’ moratorium on bank savings withdrawals. Various social actors developed strategies to demand democratization. The **caceroleros** were accompanied by the **piqueteros**, who blocked streets and points of access to the city. Demonstrators chanted a slogan conveying the concept of a unified coalition: “**Piquete y cacerola: la lucha es una sola**” (Blocking and saucepan: there’s only one struggle). **Cacerolazos** and **piquetes**, strategies involving the temporary ownership of territories with the purpose of confronting the enemy, be it a corrupt government or unemployment, became other means to transform urban spaces.

The movement of *ahorristas* (holders of frozen savings deposits) adopted various tactics for occupying public spaces. For instance, people unable to go on vacation brought their chairs and coolers and sat outside the bank, as the alternative to picnics at the beach. While these protests were localized in the financial district, the *ahorristas* also borrowed from the *piqueteros*, blocking streets in other areas of the city and expanding their territory of disruption.

Neighborhood assemblies brought together large sectors of the community to analyze the crisis and make political decisions. Citizens discussed issues ranging from Argentina’s foreign debt to unemployment, including the high fees of privatized public services. During 2002, the gatherings of the massive inter-neighborhood association in Parque Centenario, located in the geographic center of Buenos Aires, turned the park into the “legislative chamber” for an experiment in grassroots democracy.

A new breed of *escraches*, modeled after that of the H.I.J.O.S., was adopted by other organizations. These *escraches* have been directed against politicians, businessmen or anyone in a position of power considered responsible for a crisis. The target can be a former minister, the director of a bank or someone blamed for layoffs. Some *escraches* have condemned official economic policies, as those directed ⇒

at delegations of the International Monetary Fund upon their arrival at the airport. There have also been *escraches* against the media in which those shunned by it reacted against it for ignoring their role as key protagonists. The slogans painted on walls and chanted during these *escraches* summarized the perception that the media distort what happens in the streets, as illustrated by the blunt statement: “*Nos mean y los medios dicen que llueve*” (They urinate on us and the media say that it’s raining).

In Summary

Although the political environment is constantly changing, a strong street presence is the quintessential characteristic of human rights activism in Argentina. We talk of street demands, streets as spaces for deliberation, streets as arenas to denounce injustices and administer popular justice. Both the Mothers and H.I.J.O.S. defined a new style of demonstration, part of a project to reshape the uses of public places of the city. Over the years, activists have been learning from different struggles and techniques, borrowing, adapting and innovating. We can identify common traits, including the performative connotations of these demonstrations, often highlighted by the presence of musicians or actors. In a bustling metropolis, activists need to compete for the public’s attention.

The struggle for urban territories still takes place in a city rich in locations where people can demonstrate, from wide avenues to squares, such as the Plaza de

Mayo, a site that is a heritage from the colonial days when the “*plaza mayor*” was the town’s heart. But we cannot ignore an ongoing process of curtailment and privatization of the public space. The fencing off of squares, increasingly common, limits the hours that citizens can use them, and new malls and shopping centers shield people from street protests.

There are significant differences between the dictatorship and civilian rule. Activists’ loud street chants keep challenging those who discourage criticism, erode justice, and even try to limit what can be dreamt. When night falls, legions of *cartoneros* (those collecting paper and cardboard) start their nightly ritual of digging into the rubbish. Entire families turn the streets into their workspace, a large recycling plant. They hope to survive by collecting, classifying and selling what others discard. It is hard to think of another situation that symbolizes so well the cycle of exclusion. Demonstrators keep roaming the streets to expose their conditions and fight for their rights. The urban spaces of Buenos Aires continue to be re-signified by ongoing protests. Activists seem convinced that the streets continue to be one of most relevant political spaces, the logical and appropriate setting to exercise their political life.

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Susana Kaiser



LEFT: An H.I.J.O.S. *escrache* against Oscar Hermelo, November 29, 2007.

The Power of Cultural and Political Intersections at Lima's Historic Center

by MIRIAM CHION and WILEY LUDEÑA URQUIZO

The Historic Center of Lima has provided a stage for the economic and social life of Peruvian society over many centuries. From the Taulichusco dominion of the fifteenth century to the colonial center to the modern financial center, followed by the intense informal metropolitan center of the twentieth century to the recent transformation into a cultural center of political power, the Historic Center has displayed the concentration and transformation of power relations in Peru. This story describes how the municipal government implemented major physical improvements to the Historic Center, which was then appropriated by local leaders to stage cultural-political events of national and international significance. The relationship between physical transformation and the cultural-political process can inform alternative approaches to urban planning beyond the dominant technocratic paradigm.

During most of the twentieth century, the Historic Center received the largest share of investments in infrastructure and real estate. Most national and international financial institutions and a diverse range of commercial establishments also concentrated there. In the 1960s, a huge wave of migration from the countryside quintupled the population of metropolitan Lima, leaving it with more than 3 million inhabitants. This growth resulted in the rapid proliferation of street vendors and the subsequent exodus of the main financial businesses and government and educational institutions from the Historic Center. The Historic Center was thus transformed into a popular *mestizo* Andean center with a dynamic informal economy.

By the late 1980s, the city and the country suffered high levels of political violence and economic crisis. As a result, the Historic Center's main formal and informal economic activities severely contracted. Random bomb explosions, shootings, seizures of institutional buildings and blocked streets and plazas

virtually paralyzed the Historic Center. In the mid-1990s, these conditions changed dramatically. Robust macroeconomic growth, the result of a decrease in politically motivated violence, implementation of drastic economic policies and the privatization of major state companies, helped support the municipal program to rehabilitate the Historic Center. This dramatic growth, however, did not necessarily improve the quality of life of low- or middle-income people. Furthermore, the corruption, violence and political repression of the Fujimori administration created new social tensions.

It is within the context of these national social tensions and the demise of the Historic Center as the city's economic epicenter that local actors came together to recreate a vital locus of cultural events and political demonstrations at the Historic Center. Despite its long trumpeted demise as the city center, the Historic Center acquired a new urban vitality and a new function locally and internationally. The municipal government played a key role designing and implementing major physical improvements to buildings, streets and plazas. These long-awaited physical improvements dramatically changed the face of the Historic Center, but even more dramatic was its appropriation by community, government, cultural and intellectual leaders to stage prominent political demonstrations charged with strong cultural symbolism and historical references. These events mobilized large sectors of the population locally, nationally and internationally to challenge government repression, violence and abuse of power.

Municipal Rehabilitation of Lima's Historic Center

The rehabilitation of the Historic Center was not a new policy on the agenda of municipal governments in Peru; public space improvement had been a traditional populist practice ⇨

preceding elections. It was only at the end of the twentieth century, however, that municipal efforts moved beyond superficial and cosmetic repairs or mere planning to include the implementation of major improvements—to buildings, plazas, streets, traffic and the organization of commerce. Mayor Alberto Andrade's wide popular support and access to international funding made these improvements possible.

Rehabilitation of plazas with the greatest symbolic value for the city and the nation was the first task to be accomplished by the municipal government. Among these were Plaza Mayor, one of the most important national public spaces; Plaza San Martín, a key venue for political gatherings; and Parque Universitario, central to student life. The remodeling and historic preservation of streets and major thoroughfares followed soon after. Decorative lamp posts, benches, waste bins and banners added new vitality to the streets. A unique historic preservation effort was the "Adopt a Balcony" program, which successfully saved from destruction one of the key features of Lima's traditional colonial architecture—its enclosed and finely carved wooden balconies. In addition, financial institutions and other businesses emulated municipal efforts and sponsored historic preservation projects of churches and monasteries, such as Santo Domingo, La Merced, San Francisco and San Pedro. Many of these entities also rehabilitated *casonas*, or old residences, for commercial, cultural and retail purposes in the form of offices, exclusive galleries and restaurants.

Unlike previous mayors, Mayor Andrade decided to live at the Historic Center, a statement about its importance to local residents. Still, most public space improvements catered to local visitors and foreign tourists. A few upscale cafes and bookstores opened in an attempt to create a quaint place for an upper middle-class and intellectual clientele, but they had limited success. What was unplanned and unexpected was the appropriation of the rehabilitated Historic Center by local leaders to stage political demands against the central government's increasing corruption, repression and political violence. The ability of local leaders to stage political demonstrations charged with cultural references at

the Historic Center, and then project and replicate those at the national and international levels, was unprecedented and crucial to addressing social and political tensions in the country.

The Collective Takeover of Public Space

The many streets and plazas of the Historic Center became the gathering places for thousands of students, artists, workers, and mothers, the main stage for popular participation in the political life of the country. Never before had the Historic Center experienced this scale of political activity or had its public spaces projected such a strong sense of civic activism. Cultural workers and artists were at the forefront of this political process, helping design many politically charged marches, sit-ins and performances. The following stories are examples of some of these cultural-political events.

The largest public gathering to make use of the Historic Center's cultural representation was the *Marcha de los Cuatro Suyos*, or March of the Four *Suyos* (a Quechua term referring to the major regions into which Peru was divided during Inca times), which took place during the national independence celebrations of 2000. This was a national political demonstration to protest against the Fujimori regime and its attempt to cling to power. On the eve of the national day, thousands of people gather at Paseo de la República, dwarfing the official events organized by the government at Plaza Mayor. While Plaza Mayor was guarded like a military fort with limited access to the general public, Paseo de la República was a stage and a spontaneous gathering of people flowing in and out. About 40,000 people came from each of the four *Suyos* and another 250,000 people from the city of Lima. This demonstration turned the previously fragmented opposition to the Fujimori regime into one consolidated front. The *Marcha de los Cuatro Suyos* demonstrated to national and international audiences that, in addition to registering high figures at the polls, the democratic opposition could mobilize huge masses in the streets

RIGHT: Lava la Bandera, -- washing and displaying of the Peruvian flag in Lima's Plaza Mayor.

and plazas. On this day, by gathering people from all corners of the country, Paseo de la República turned into a space for a national gathering.

The *Muro de la Vergüenza*, or Wall of Shame, was a powerful political event organized by artist Roxana Cuba in protest against government corruption. It was originally installed at the Plaza San Martín and later relocated in front of the Palace of Justice. This wall was a 15-meter long cloth with a gallery of photographs of prominent political figures, from Vladimiro Montesinos, Fujimori's closest advisor, to Congresswoman Martha Chávez, Cardinal Cipriani and Ambassador Francisco Tudela. The wall emulated the traditional Chinese *dazibao*, a hand-written wall journal in a public space, and provided an alternative to the co-opted media for expressing the rejection of the regime in power. These walls were replicated in many cities around the country between 2000 and 2002.

The Plaza Mayor was not just a plaza for the Historic Center or metropolitan Lima; it became a Plaza Mayor

for the people in the small towns in the highlands. In September 1997, sixty municipal authorities from Huancavelica, one of the poorest provinces in the highlands, led by Pico Salas, the mayor of the City of Huancavelica, marched to the presidential palace on Plaza Mayor to demand a more equitable allocation of central government resources for its neglected province. After an eight-day journey, they arrived at Plaza Mayor dressed in traditional, colorful attire and riding horses, welcomed by local musicians and dancers. People from various communities had joined them during their journey, so by the time they arrived in Lima the procession numbered more than 1,500 people. This march had a huge symbolic impact and delivered a powerful political message that brought national attention to the agenda of these neglected municipal governments. Thus, Plaza Mayor served as an ideal stage for national and international media coverage, helping empower the Huancavelica authorities and their people.

As the general dissatisfaction with the Fujimori regime intensified, political demonstrations grew in →



Victor Palomino, El Peruano

number and size and directly targeted the corruption of the central government. The *Lava la Bandera*, or the “Washing the Flag”, is an example of one of these demonstrations. This ritual consisted of washing dozens of flags with “Bolívar” soap in red washtubs and then hanging them to dry on a line around the entire Plaza Mayor. Every Friday between noon and 3:00 P.M., the display of the long line of flags around the plaza created an unexpectedly vibrant image and brought increasing numbers of people from various social groups in front of the presidential palace. The protesters demanded a major overhaul of government operations through the re-appropriation of a symbol that had been hijacked by an authoritarian ruler. In 2000, twenty-seven cities around the country and several cities abroad replicated the washing the flag ritual and added military and religious uniforms to the public laundry basket. Public flag washing turned the plaza into an extension of the family house patio and challenged the representational value of government power. Such a powerful act allowed citizens to re-appropriate their public spaces and demand a rethinking of the relationship between citizen and city, private and public, arts and politics.

Power at the Historic Center

The merging of arts, culture and politics at the Historic Center was crucial in building public participation to challenge the government corruption and control over the media. Local governments and development and planning practitioners played a major role providing a stage for cultural-political activities. But, more importantly, they acknowledged the cultural dimension and value of the architecture and public spaces at the Historic Center. In addition, cultural-political activities were not only locally expressed in subtle and powerful popular imagery, they were also projected and replicated through multiple networks across international boundaries. The powerful messages delivered by the people in the streets and plazas of the Historic Center directly influenced the ensuing major political upheavals that led to President Fujimori’s resignation and major transformations in the accountability of the central government. For the first time in the nation’s history, a concerted campaign to bring former government and military officials to justice was under way. In

November 2000, the Peruvian Congress dismissed President Fujimori after he slipped out of the country and sought asylum in Japan. By 2007, Fujimori was extradited to Peru and charged with two cases of human rights violations and alleged torture and unlawful detentions. The trial is ongoing.

After several years of massive and successful political expressions, the municipal government imposed restrictions on political demonstrations at the Historic Center. This action could be diminishing the role of the Historic Center as a space of social convergence and a symbol of a collective memory shared in a democratic process. Instead of a place in which history is created, the Historic Center could be shifting towards a museum in which to observe history. Neither approach necessarily excludes the other, but these are the social tensions embedded in this locus of multiple and overlapping interests and voices that urban planners must address if we are working towards the creation of just cities. Unless planners pay attention to the links between the physical, cultural and political domains, they will become less and less relevant to the development process.

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Physical Space, a Condition of the Public Sphere: *Extraordinary Events in the Zócalo of Mexico City*

by SERGIO TAMAYO and XÓCHITL CRUZ-GUZMÁN

Mexico City is among the largest cities in the world. It is a cosmopolitan city, home to the federal powers and the main node of international exchange in the country. With millions of domestic migrants, the population of the metropolitan area reached 18.7 million in 2003. Mexico City is also a marker both of modern industrialism and of some problematic conditions of postmodern urbanism—e.g., spatial fragmentation and social polarization. The city has been the scene of strong confrontations between groups with distinct social and political projects and utopias. The main plaza of the capital, the Zócalo, has become a symbolic space where major social movements have literally found “common ground.” The citizenry that do not have access to formal institutional channels use the public space of the Zócalo to express themselves. These appropriations of public space deepen the connections between physical space, social practices and political conflict. One significant characteristic of the Zócalo is that it provides material representation to the three great societal powers since the time of the Spanish colony: religion (the Catholic Church); politics (the National Palace and the palace of the local government); and economics (commercial centers and great hotels).

Mexico City hosted two extraordinary events in 2000 and 2001 that impacted the country’s democratic life: the presidential electoral campaign and the public mobilization of the Zapatista Army for National Liberation (EZLN). The Zócalo was transformed for these two great occasions of political contention, each of which represented a distinct political and social appropriation of ordinary space. Electoral campaigns in Mexico are conceived within the tradition of representative democracy. In 2000, the mobilization of society and citizen groups and the ensuing political confrontation that resulted led to political battles that undid the hegemony of the previous political regime of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which lasted seventy-one years. Similarly, in the case of the Zapatista

march, indigenous Mexicans not only were able to achieve national and international visibility, they were also able to communicate their demands with a certain degree of effectiveness. These appropriations of space were an attempt to achieve strategic positioning within the national public sphere, both politically as well as spatially. In this way, we emphasize the role of physical space as a condition of the public sphere. Political appropriations of the Zócalo illustrate the connections among public space, citizen practices and experiences.

The Electoral Struggle

For most of the twentieth century, the PRI monopolized Mexican politics. On July 2, 2000, Mexicans surprised the world by ending the PRI rule. Nevertheless, the electoral campaign favored an ideologically conservative project personified by Vicente Fox, the National Action Party (PAN) candidate. The electoral campaign was not easy. Electoral activity became a declaration of war, and verbal violence was propagated electronically.

On June 24, 2000, the Zócalo was the scene of the closing ceremonies of the PAN electoral campaign. Multitudes walked down to the main plaza. Roads became urban nodes and people congregated around many of the landmarks and postmodern buildings along the route. The architecture of the central plaza added to this sensational and exciting event. Blue and white flags, PAN’s symbolic colors, adorned the surrounding terraces. The concentration, a ritualized political act, became a multimedia spectacle that was at times devoid of any political essence. In the Zócalo, the spatial distribution of both participants and material objects reflected the type of act that PAN had planned. The stage was semi-enclosed and semi-covered. It gave its back to the government offices of the Federal District, which was occupied by leftist opponents. Off to the right was the National Palace, the location where Fox wished to govern given his political victory. ⇨

The crowd focused on the stage, anxious to see its leader. The event was a citizen celebration, but social class differences were readily visible. People who stood under the stage were reflective of a mixture of social classes, mainly the popular and lower middle classes who were attracted by Fox's charisma. Most were dark complexioned. In contrast, on stage sat organizers, guests and personnel who were mainly of the upper and the upper middle classes. The ethnic and socio-economic differences were so well known that one woman said to her companion while pointing to the stage, "Wow! There are only pure white people." Her tone was somewhere between envy and submission.

The way in which the speeches were presented and the response of supporters during the electoral campaign was symptomatic of the political and civic culture that each political party and each political rally represented. Through such culture we come to know the essence of the collective behavior and the meaning and application that is given to public space. When Fox finally approached the podium it had grown dark, making the lights and lasers on the giant screens and the advertising spectacle of the event all the more astonishing. He offered a politically superfluous speech, though he was certain of political victory. He elevated his voice to say: "I will demolish the wall [of PRI's political hegemony] today, today, today!" The masses were fixed on his speech and chanted "Viva Mexico!" There was great excitement. At the end, people refused to leave. Many women were hysterical. Young people shouted and danced as if they were Fox's fan club. Those present idealized him as strong and steadfast, an idol. It was, without a doubt, a total media production, and marked a radically different use of the public-political space of the Zócalo than that of the Zapatistas.

The March for Dignity

On December 1, 2000, barely five months after the PAN political rally, Vicente Fox would for the first time take control of the country. Both the mass media and citizens were joyous in anticipation of the democratic change that was expected to occur. That same day, in the Lacandona Forest of Chiapas, Subcomandante Marcos, the leader of the movement for indigenous rights, made a much less ostentatious declaration to

the media. The EZLN, represented by twenty-three commanders of highest rank of the Clandestine Committee of the Indigenous Revolution (CCRI), was prepared to march into Mexico City to promote the approval of the initiative for peace. The announcement sparked heated discussions around the country and the ensuing debate clarified the political positions of many groups, opening the wounds of class and ethnorracial struggle in Mexico.

The march related back to the First Declaration of January 1, 1994, in the Chiapaneca city of San Cristóbal de las Casas, where the EZLN declared its presence before a stunned world. At that time, the (neo) Zapatistas (inspired by Emiliano Zapata, the Mexican revolutionary of the early twentieth century) declared war on the federal government and the national army, vowing to initiate a march towards Mexico City. Seven years after the armed uprising, the question was whether the Zapatistas, warriors against globalization and neoliberalism, would arrive physically and symbolically in the capital. In the selection of places to hold rallies, we see how space became an essential aspect of the Zapatista struggle and that different spaces were chosen for different reasons: civic and commercial significance; historical significance in the life of the revolutionary Emiliano Zapata; nearness to traditional sites of domination of the indigenous population; predominance of the indigenous population; or representative of numerous traditions of social struggle.

The Zapatista march began as a symbol of national and indigenous dignity. The march lasted thirty-six days and covered 3,000 kilometers. It traversed twelve states where thirty-three political rallies were held, and it gathered 3,000 people in private vehicles and rented buses to follow the delegation along highways and travel with it across the plains, valleys and mountains of Mexico. This was a long and winding procession that resembled an enormous serpent. Fox's allies talked about the situation in aggressive terms. "To march armed, with covered faces, seizing highways without doing anything to them is an affront to the people of Mexico," said PAN political representatives. According to them, the Zapatistas "deserve[d] capital punishment."

One important strategy that the rebels used was to establish relations with organizations, intellectuals and international politicians whose honesty and sincerity were unquestionable. This allowed the EZLN to extend its public sphere to include that of its supporters. The marchers also made several stops along the way to Mexico City in order to allow for the display of symbolic ties to civil society. The Zapatistas used the mass media to influence public opinion and celebrated demonstrations with political and intellectual figures. The Zapatista strategy constituted a type of political appropriation of the national territory as public space.

Upon arrival in Mexico City, the Zapatistas were received by different types of groups: student and youth associations, community and farmer groups, workers, popular organizations and civil associations. The twenty-three commanders along with Subcomandante Marcos, sporting his characteristic smoking pipe and black knitted ski mask, were elevated on the platform of an uncovered trailer and traveled the streets and avenues.

At the beginning, representatives of ethnic groups passed out containers of incense and copal in a ritual indigenous ceremony. Marcos' message was neither belligerent, nor did he claim to monopolize the truth. "We do not come to tell you what to do nor to guide you to any side. We come to ask you, humbly, respectfully, to help us. That you do not allow the sun to rise without that flag that waves imposing in the center of the plaza holding a worthy place for those of us whose color is the color of this land," he said as the 200,000 spectators cheered.

The Physical Space as a Condition of the Public Space

The public space in Mexico City, where residents and citizens discuss, rejoice, lament, walk and hold an affinity for their historical patrimony, is constantly experiencing transformations. The extraordinary events of the electoral activities and the presence of the Zapatistas in the city deepened the symbolic and political character of its urban space.

As we have seen here, political parties and social movements use space in both material and symbolic

terms to achieve their political strategies. Today, political associations continue to value the political use of urban space. For its part, the EZLN has conferred a central role to the appropriation of space as part of its political project, combining forms of mobilization with autonomic structures of self-government and territorial control.

The public sphere of the Zócalo was formed by different groups in constant tension and crystallized in concrete places. In the symbolic appropriation of the city by indigenous Mexicans, an enormous network of places was constructed for the discussion of rumor, gossip and public agendas, including residential districts, factories, work centers, plazas, patios, farms, community houses, bars and street corners. Of course, it is important to recognize that none of these locations is naturally a space for public debate. Instead, social actors have fashioned those places for discursive exchange.

In the two cases described, physical space was a condition of the public sphere. Space was an indispensable tool for exercising citizen rights. Some geographers and city planners have criticized the ambiguity of the term 'public' and blame social scientists for manipulating the term 'space' when discussing the public sphere. Alternatively, scholars of the public sphere have criticized certain positions in urban studies that reduce the concept of the public sphere or public space to very practical notions of open urban space for everyday use.

City planners and urbanists have to recognize the complexity and ambivalence of urban public spaces. Spaces are transformed by the individual and collective action of residents and citizens. Space reevaluates both everyday appropriations and extraordinary public demonstrations. Spaces, like the city, are both scenarios of different performances and objects of demand and social transformation.

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Claiming Public Space: *São Paulo's Trianon Terrace*

by ZEULER R. LIMA and VERA M. PALLAMIN

Paulista Avenue is one of the most important urban symbols of metropolitan São Paulo, extending for almost three kilometers over the crest between the city's two major river valleys. Midway along the avenue is Trianon Terrace, the plaza under the wide-spanning elevated concrete structure of the Museum of Art of São Paulo (MASP). Italian-Brazilian architect Lina Bo Bardi redesigned this plaza as part of her project for the museum between 1957 and 1968. By recreating the open space and city outlook that had existed since the development of the avenue, Bardi embraced the historical tradition of Trianon Terrace as a collective place for social encounter.

The genealogy of Trianon Terrace as an urban collective space overlaps with the history of transformation of Paulista Avenue and the city's development as a whole. The terrace, one for the most significant collective public spaces in São Paulo, has been continuously reconstituted by formal and informal uses and cultural and political practices that reveal different conceptions of urban life. It offers an emblematic example of how urban spaces are related to the exercise of democracy, the redefinition of cultural recognition and the role of citizenship in contemporary societies.

Source: Museu Paulista, Universidade de São Paulo



An Affluent History

São Paulo was a small town until the 1870s, when it became the economic center for the growing coffee trade in Brazil, situated between the plantations in the hinterland and the Port of Santos. Its population grew several times, reaching over 570,000 inhabitants by the end of the 1920s. The city attracted immigrants and international capital, which spurred industrialization and led to São Paulo becoming the national financial and commercial leader. New urban developments included both working-class neighborhoods as well as luxury districts such as Paulista Avenue, created in 1891 by developer and agronomist Joaquim Eugênio de Lima.

Twenty years after the opening of the avenue, it became the main thoroughfare in the most affluent neighborhood of São Paulo, a boulevard lined with large villas built in different architectural styles. In 1911, the city commissioned prominent architect Ramos de Azevedo to design an underground restaurant and ballroom covered by a public plaza, which was named Trianon Terrace. The project occupied a strategic site with a wide outlook sloping down toward the valley leading to the historic center of São Paulo. This privileged topographic situation in the middle of Paulista Avenue had been reserved as a green area and the vista preserved by a city ordinance dating back to the development of the avenue. The whole structure was conceived as a terraced building semi-buried into the site to allow for uses and access at different levels. The terrace gained new life when British landscape architect Barry Parker redesigned the surrounding area and created a wooded park across the street in 1918.

Economic Collapse and Political Demonstrations

For over twenty years, until the Great Depression affected the capitalist world, the park and terrace complex were among the main public spaces for

the staging of the social, cultural and political life of the agricultural and commercial elites of São Paulo. The Wall Street Crash of 1929 caused dire problems for the Brazilian coffee monoculture. This event reverberated in São Paulo's economy, deeply altering the social life of the city. Many of the families that resided along Paulista Avenue lost their fortunes and had to sell their properties to an emerging group of traders and industrialists that grew in the shadow of the coffee market.

In the beginning of the 1930s, the avenue became a strategic place for political demonstrations, particularly those associated with the Constitutional Revolution of 1932, the separatist movement that opposed Getúlio Vargas's coup against the election of a São Paulo native candidate, Júlio Prestes, and proposed the secession of the state from the rest of the country. This was the largest military conflict in Brazil in the twentieth century, resulting in physical destruction to the city and several casualties. The uprisings lasted three months until federal troupes interrupted them, guaranteeing Vargas's place in power and paving the way for what turned into his dictatorship that lasted from 1937 to 1945.

Cultural Rebirth

With the end of Vargas's repressive government, Brazil entered a period of democratization that lasted until 1964, yielding to the internationalization of the country's economy. President Juscelino Kubitschek was responsible for an intensive nation-building and modernization plan during his mandate (1955-1960), facilitating the booming growth of São Paulo as a leading industrial and cultural center. Paulista Avenue became the favored place for the creation of a business district for national and foreign companies, and many banks, some new and some relocated from the historic city center, settled there.

The original Trianon Terrace, containing the ballroom and restaurant built in the 1910s, did not survive the intense urban modernization and social transformation of the avenue. ⇒

LEFT: São Paulo's Paulista Avenue in the early 20th century.

Street lanes and sidewalks were widened and the old ballroom was demolished by the city in 1951. The site remained vacant for several years and was disputed by different groups who wanted to develop it for cultural purposes. An affluent group related to the arts, the Mattarazzo family, had unsuccessfully tried to gain control of the site for the construction of a pavilion for the Biennial Foundation in the early 1950s. Their contender magnate Assis Chateaubriand, who owned *Empresas e Diários Associados* (Associate Press Corporation), the largest press conglomerate in the country, used his power in the press to work out a political deal with the city and state governments to obtain permission to build MASP on the strategic lot. Finally, in 1957, the administrators of the museum succeeded in transferring the museum from its temporary downtown facilities into a permanent building along Paulista Avenue. The Italian journalist and art dealer Pietro Maria Bardi, museum director from its creation in 1947, was invited by Chateaubriand to conceive of an art museum that would project him and the city onto

the international stage. Architect Lina Bo Bardi, the museum director's wife, was closely involved with the project.

The museum location is witness to the political skills of Chateaubriand and the Bardi's. Lina Bo Bardi suggested using the site on Paulista Avenue after studying other possibilities around the city, proposing a striking project that returned the public space of Trianon Terrace to the city. The use of the terrace as the mediation between the activities promoted by MASP and the city was one of the major innovations of Bardi's design. The whole ensemble is separated into three parts: a semi-buried block with public facilities; the urban terrace framed by the building; and the museum lifted from the ground. The elevated volume responds to the zoning restriction requiring that the view from the site remain completely open to the city. The terrace is commonly known as the "Span of MASP" among São Paulo residents, claiming a unique overlap between architecture and city, and between place and history.

Source: Instituto Lina Bo e Pietro Maria Bardi



LEFT: Trianon Terrace site after demolition and during the construction of the foundations for the new Museum of Art of São Paulo in the early 1960s.

RIGHT: Musical event at Trianon Terrace, under the span of the Museum of Art of São Paulo in the 1980s.

Lina Bo Bardi's project created a prominent landmark and offered a new public space to the city, which worked in tandem with the cultural purpose of the museum. With strong references to Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's Crown Hall, Bardi's proposal integrated the previous typology of Trianon Terrace, shaping the base of the museum as a semi-buried block containing auditoria, library, exhibition halls and a restaurant, and the transparent block with the permanent collection hanging from the two long pre-stressed concrete piers. This unusual form defined a new image and a new space of collective reference in the city and helped project the image of the museum and the city abroad.

The long design and construction process coincided with radical changes to the political life of the country. The process started during a time of great economic and cultural optimism in the 1950s and ended with the museum's official inauguration in 1969, the year that marked the beginning of the harshest period of the military regime, established with the coup of 1964 and not ending until 1989. The democratic ideal that motivated the creation of the museum spaces was

at odds with the political practices that followed its opening. Lina Bo Bardi referred to the terrace as a space of freedom in reaction to the censorship imposed during the military regime. The presence of the museum in the city was a significant reminder of the values missing in the public sphere during that period.

Once More, a Stage for Dissent

After the new museum opened in 1968, Trianon Terrace became a highly visible place and a strong political reference to the citizens of São Paulo. It also became an important iconic space and a player in the country's social and political processes. The cultural and artistic activities promoted by the museum in the 1970s, such as exhibitions, concerts, cinema, conferences and art history programs, attracted growing audiences. Still, those activities were often submitted to censorship mechanisms lasting until the repressive regime started its gradual demise in the 1980s.

The end of the military government left behind a profound economic and social crisis in the ⇨



Source: Instituto Lina Bo e Pietro Maria Bardi

country and in the city, affecting Paulista Avenue and the museum in different ways. Trianon Terrace soon became an important forum of demonstration and political dissent. Traditional public uses of the open spaces of Paulista Avenue gradually gave way to protests against the military regime, such as the widespread movements for direct presidential elections, *Diretas Já*, in 1984.

Since that time, the museum terrace and Paulista Avenue have become one of the main stages for dissent in the public and political life of the city, especially in the early 1990s. The city, in agreement with the museum administration, rented out the terrace for several shows and fairs. The population of São Paulo also started to use the plaza as a departure point for political demonstrations.

Private Impasse, Public Reinvention

In the last decade, open collective spaces in São Paulo have become increasingly defensive and privatized, with surveillance systems and

private security guards. Although Paulista Avenue remains a unique place of social diversity in the city—actors ranging from street vendors to business people to soccer celebrities to political demonstrators all use the space—it has been reshaped to respond to local metropolitan developments and struggles to establish an image with international, and now global, appeal.

As part of this, the museum's role has undergone significant transformations. After Lina Bo Bardi passed away and Pietro Maria Bardi resigned as museum director in the early 1990s, the new museum administration proposed drastic changes to the building's spatial layout and privatized and restricted access to certain activities and areas of the museum. Under the guide of not wanting to risk overload on the concrete structure that sustains the terrace, the museum administration prohibited its use by large audiences. This coincided with attempts by local CEOs to legally control mass political and cultural events on Paulista Avenue.

Vera M. Pallamin, 2003



Despite the layout changes and restrictions on public use, the museum and the terrace underneath it have not lost their symbolic place in the social imaginary of São Paulo. On the contrary, the convergence between MASP and the avenue still enjoys a privileged position without equivalent in the urban life of the metropolis. It continues to be the primary urban reference for different social groups claiming cultural recognition and political dissent.

The open space Lina Bo Bardi incorporated in her design for the MASP is a good example of how designers imagine and represent collective spaces, and how they are socially produced, confirmed or rejected by different social groups. Despite a century of transformations, this urban void continues to be reinvented and reclaimed, remaining one of the extraordinary symbolic venues of public life in São Paulo.

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LEFT: Meeting point for the Gay Pride Parade along Paulista Avenue in 2003.

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Media Review: **Brooklyn Matters** *A Film by Isabel Hill*

by **EVE BARON**

EDITORS' NOTE: This edition marks a new feature of Progressive Planning Magazine: new and noteworthy, or old and notable, works that the editors would like to share with readers. The criteria for inclusion are loose—only that the work has particular relevance for progressive planning.

The Vanderbilt Yards is a 13-acre railroad cut close to dense downtown Brooklyn that runs like a wide seam between two mid- to low-density residential Brooklyn neighborhoods: Prospect Heights and Fort Greene. The yards are actively used by the municipal transportation authority as a rail line and storage depot. The areas immediately adjacent to the railroad yards have mirrored the rise and fall of the neighborhood's fortunes—at one point suffering vacancy, abandonment and loss of population, but more recently blossoming as a result of community-led revitalization, public subsidies and private market activity. The yards themselves, with the public transit authority as steward, remain the predominant, perhaps only, feature of decay.

In December of 2004, glossy announcements heralded the news of "Atlantic Yards," a private residential and commercial development proposal for the

Vanderbilt Yards that prominently featured a basketball arena—the construction of which was to be paid for by payments in lieu of taxes. Thirteen acres in New York City is huge; nonetheless, the developer made a claim to the state that in order to complete the project he needed to acquire

time and again in multiple instances are nearly impossible to prove in a court of law seem to be in full swing.

Opposition to the project was swift and took numerous forms: an alternative plan; several lawsuits; Brooklyn coalitions



additional private properties around the yards. Enter eminent domain. Enter big-name starchitect Frank Gehry. Enter state override of all city review and regulatory process. Enter one of the biggest developments in contemporary New York City history ever to be constructed—all without meaningful community input and review and all without a single vote of any local elected official. Boondoggle, collusion, sweetheart deals, planners blight—all the enemies of good planning that

supported by regional and national good government groups; organized grassroots review of the environmental impact statement; along with a general and vocal outcry of foul. Yet the developer had made pacts with organizations—both existing ones, like ACORN, and newly-franchised ones—to help build a case that to oppose the project was to oppose both affordable housing for the poor and jobs for the chronically unemployed, and it had also

received requisite approvals at the eleventh hour of the outgoing Pataki administration.

Atlantic Yards is a Brooklyn story to which there is yet no conclusion. Isabel Hill, a city planner and member of Planners Network who also created *Made in Brooklyn*, about the connection between manufacturing and stable neighborhoods in Brooklyn, last year produced a compelling documentary about the Atlantic Yards project.

Never heavy-handed, with a gentle voice narrating throughout, Ms. Hill's film carefully unwinds the threads of the Atlantic Yards story. A resident and long-time observer of Brooklyn, Ms. Hill uses film footage to highlight for viewers those attributes of the neighborhoods the project is poised to undermine: the scale, the neighborliness, the individual labors exerted in bringing the neighborhoods back from the brink in the 1970s and 1980s. She does so with a combination of footage of the neighborhood, juxtaposed with shots of prior disappointing Brooklyn developments built by

Forest City Ratner (the Atlantic Yards developer) and interviews with vocal critics of the projects (such as Planners Network's own Tom Angotti).

What *Brooklyn Matters* succeeds in doing is what film does best: telling a story. The Atlantic Yards story has pathos, drama, good guys and bad guys and a leitmotif of inequity. As an advocacy tool, the film viscerally provokes a gut reaction: this project is bad news, and something is rotten. Ms. Hill uses footage of public hearings and interviews to bring out the ways in which the developer has used race and class differences to promote the project. Part of the issue for opponents of the Atlantic Yards project has been that none of those who approved the project live anywhere near it. As an advocacy tool the film has brought more and more people into a closer familiarity with all that will be lost if the project is built, as well as the complete divorce of the public from the expenditure of public subsidies.

Many have seen the film, but more should. Norman Oder, the journalist behind the watchdog

blog Atlantic Yards Report writes: "I think it [*Brooklyn Matters*] has provided an effective introduction to the project—or, more accurately, a prosecutorial case—for those without the time or energy to wade through the copious and complicated record. And it provides a sense of the emotional stakes—moments often tough to convey in print."

To learn more about the film and find out where it's next playing, visit <http://www.brooklynmatters.com>. To order a copy, contact Building History Productions, 190 Route 17M, P.O. Box 1084, Harriman, NY, 10926. Phone: 800.343.5540. Fax: 845-774-2945. Email: karen@transitmedia.net.

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All images left and below courtesy of Brooklyn Matters.



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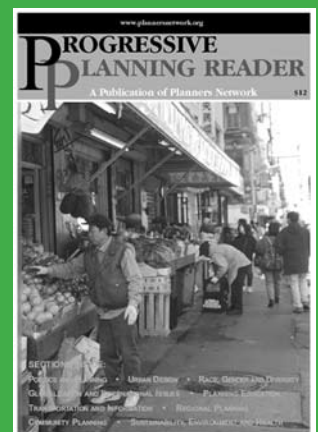
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