

Progressive Planning

The Magazine of Planners Network

The Invisible Cyclists



Photo by Allison Mannos

Also In This Issue:

2010 Just Metropolis Conference

Reports from Rio, Mexico City, New York and Youngstown, Ohio

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

Beyond Networking, Left Alternatives

by Tom Angotti

Shortly after the *Towards a Just Metropolis* conference in the Bay Area (see pp. 24 - 28), the U.S. Social Forum convened in Detroit. Between June 22 and 26 some 20,000 people got together there, nearly doubling the attendance at the first forum in Atlanta in 2007.

While architects, planners, and community activists seriously networked at the Bay Area confab, the Detroit gathering was a gigantic networking extravaganza in comparison. Billed as “a movement-building process” and not a conference, the U.S. Social Forum was filled with thousands of self-organized workshops, assemblies and plenaries.

To some extent this apparent chaos was intentional. In order to nurture political and social diversity, the structure was kept fairly basic and efforts to get people to commit to bigger political projects were minimized. Since the first World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil, that global enterprise, dedicated to the proposition that “Another World is Possible,” has had to deal with opportunistic moves by some well-funded political groups and organizations to impose homogenizing discipline and stifle the voices of the most excluded. The world forums confront even more serious barriers than the national and regional forums because deep language and cultural barriers often prevent basic communication, so English—the premiere language of the powerful—dominates.

The U.S. Social Forum is dedicated to building a “multi-racial, multi-sectoral, inter-generational, diverse, inclusive, internationalist movement.” It is a powerful but beginning attempt to start dialogues and networks at a national level while remaining conscious of the formidable role of the U.S. in promoting war and unequal development throughout the world.

But is this networking enough? At a recent report-back from Detroit held at the Brecht Forum in New York City (which I moderated), seasoned activist Rob Robinson of Take Back the Land expressed frustration that there were so many self-organized workshops on the same topics. Didn’t the organizers of these sessions talk to each other in advance? What does this say about the state of the progressive and left forces nationally? If people are not aware of individuals and groups in other cities and states that share the same concerns and have similar experiences, isn’t organizing for a national conference an ideal way to bring people together in a dialogue that covers common themes? Wouldn’t this kind of organizing promote common action and solidarity instead of reinforcing the isolation and fragmentation so common in our movements? In other words, what good is a national conversation if everyone’s in a different room? Will this ever lead to action?

Networks, from small groups like Planners Network to the much larger U.S. Social Forum, are really more complex than this, and **cont. on page 29**

Summer 2010 Issue Contents:

The Seventh Generation

Beyond Networking, Left Alternatives

by TOM ANGOTTI.....Page 2

Feature Articles

The Invisible Cyclists of Los Angeles

by OMARI FULLER AND EDGAR BELTRAN.....Page 4

The 2016 Olympics in Rio: A Community Plays Against the Real Estate Game

by THERESA WILLIAMSON.....Page 9

Mexico City Creates Charter for the Right to the City

by JILL WIGLE AND LORENA ZÁRATE.....Page 13

Social Currency: A Tool to Empower Migrant Workers

by ALFONSO MORALES.....Page 17

Progressive Planning Leader Pat Rosenthal and Common Wealth Inc. of Youngstown, Ohio
by PIERRE CLAVEL.....Page 20

Did You Miss the 2010 PN Conference?

by NORMA RANTISI.....Page 24

The Long Struggle for Community-Based Planning in New York City

by EVE BARON.....Page 30

Researching the “Just City”: A Study of Urban Revitalization in Toronto, Canada

by JED KILBOURN.....Page 33

The Community Land Trust Reader

Review by PIERRE CLAVEL.....Page 36

How to Join, Purchase Back Issues, etc.....Page 38

www.plannersnetwork.org

Planners Network
106 West Sibley Hall
Cornell University
Ithaca, NY 14853, USA
Ph: 607.254.8890
Fx: 612.626.0600
Email: info@plannersnetwork.org
Website: www.plannersnetwork.org

MAGAZINE EDITORS
Tom Angotti, Jason Blackman, Pierre Clavel,
Michael Dudley, Ann Forsyth, Chester
Hartman, Kara Heffernan, Clara Irazábal,
Marie Kennedy, Norma Rantisi, Amy Siciliano

MAGAZINE LAYOUT
Donovan Finn

E-NEWSLETTER EDITORS
Jason Blackman, Mandana Nouri-Nekoei

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

Copyright 2010 by Planners Network.

Reprinting and distribution of portions
of this magazine for non-commercial
purposes are encouraged. Reprints
for commercial purposes require
written permission from the publisher.
Progressive Planning is indexed in the
Alternative Press Index.

**PLANNERS NETWORK
STEERING COMMITTEE**
Tom Angotti, Nancy Campbell, Lee
Deuben, Ann Forsyth, Chester Hartman,
Stacy Harwood, Marie Kennedy, Josh
Lerner, Marilena Liguori, Richard
Milgrom, Marla Nelson, Libby Porter,
Norma Rantisi, Alex Schafran, Amy
Siciliano, DRU Williams-Clark

**PLANNERS NETWORK
ADVISORY COMMITTEE**
Chester Hartman (Chair) Teresa Cordova,
Dana R. Driskell, Ann Forsyth, Marie
Kennedy, Patricia Nolan, Ken Reardon,
Arturo Sanchez, Peg Seip, Ruth Yabes,
Ayse Yonder

GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS
Please see www.plannersnetwork.org

The Invisible Cyclists of Los Angeles

by *Omari Fuller and Edgar Beltran*

Night has fallen and you’re driving through a gritty urban center when you approach an intersection. Just as you turn right through the crosswalk a dark figure materializes before you. You slam on the brakes and stop just a foot or two away. Without pausing to acknowledge the near miss, the figure cruises to the far side of the street and disappears down the sidewalk in the murky glare of streetlights.

You’ve just glimpsed an invisible cyclist.

Thousands of working-class people use bicycles to traverse cities and towns across the U.S. every day. In the city of Los Angeles, this group of cyclists is as dedicated as any other, riding through the wet of winter and simmering heat of summer.

Yet you won’t see invisible cyclists at Los Angeles City Council meetings demanding bike lanes. You might not see them in the street either, as these cyclists tend to ride alone, often intermingled with pedestrians on the sidewalk, and without lights or reflective clothing. These cyclists are also often Latino immigrants, and nearly 20,000 of them in the L.A. metropolitan area use a bicycle as their main means of transportation to work

As we’ll explain in this article, this particular group has different needs than other cyclists, yet their interests receive little attention. This article will also examine a program called City of Lights, which aims to bring invisible cyclists out of the shadows using a combination of self-empowerment training and advocacy work. We found City of Lights to be a promising model for assessing the needs of an under-served group and pursuing a more equitable distribution of resources.

Profile of an Oppressed Group

Working-class immigrant Latino cyclists face a multitude of challenges that are more pronounced than those facing most other cyclists. These include

sub-standard bicycles and safety equipment, no knowledge of cyclist rights, more dangerous streets with fewer provisions for safe bicycling, increased danger of bicycle theft and robbery, police harassment, lack of health insurance, minimal publicly available data on the aforementioned conditions and no political representation. We will look at these challenges in detail to make a case for the need to address the particular oppression that this group faces.

We’ll rely on tenets from critical race theory (CRT) to help structure our arguments. A key CRT tenet considers racism to be endemic and pervasive in our society and institutions. We will note subversive effects that are specifically directed against Latino identity. CRT also uses personal narratives to amplify the other voices that challenge the dominant narratives in society. Throughout this article we’ll hear the voices of those closest to this struggle. CRT also recognizes that there are unique challenges presented by the intersection of a plurality of identities related to race, class, gender, citizenship status and innumerable other characteristics. As such, we must acknowledge the multiple identities of this group of cyclists and the oppression that members of this group must endure in the form of unfair treatment as a result of those identities.

Less Money = Less Choice + More Danger

Low-wage workers have limited transportation options, compelling them to bike. Since work may not be steady enough or income high enough to be able to afford a car, or perhaps even a monthly bus pass, some are effectively captive cyclists. Limited mobility means fewer accessible job opportunities, which perpetuates low-income status.

Many can only afford to live in older, less affluent neighborhoods. In Los Angeles, these neighborhoods have older and narrower streets with no space for bike lanes. As one cyclist in the majority-Latino neighborhood of MacArthur Park put it, “I don’t know

who put all those bike lanes in Santa Monica [a more affluent and less diverse neighboring city], but they did a good job, and we need that here!”

The dangerous biking conditions that result from crumbling pavement and no separation from car traffic in these older neighborhoods disproportionately affect low-income people of color. Their affordable, second-rate bicycles strain unreliably under these conditions. Bicycle helmets, which should be indispensable for hazardous urban riding, are seen as expensive and optional.

A further hazard is the high volume of truck traffic that low-income cyclists encounter when traveling to and from work in industrial areas. According to Allison Mannos, program coordinator at the Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition, accidents between cyclists and big-rigs are not uncommon. When injured, cyclists and their families, many of whom lack health insurance, may suffer the additional hardship of expensive medical bills.

Another infrastructure problem is the dearth of bicycle parking in high-crime neighborhoods where bikes are more likely to get stolen. Allison Mannos comments, “Even if not so many of them have a bike, at least 50 percent of them *had* a bike. So they’re still cyclists in the sense that many would ride if their bikes hadn’t been stolen.”

Biking while Immigrant

As immigrants, this population of cyclists experiences other challenges on top of those that arise from being low-wage workers. The many undocumented immigrants of L.A are legally barred from obtaining California driver’s licenses, limiting their transportation options by legal means on top of economic ones.

On the road, immigrant cyclists face more challenges when they have to deal with L.A. drivers. According to Adrian, a Latino student who is also active in the burgeoning Los Angeles bicycle movement, “Older Latino immigrants don’t know their rights. Due to language issues or being misinformed, they let cars push them to ride literally right next to the curb, almost pedal striking it.” (Pedal striking is bike lingo and refers to the dangerous situation arising when the pedal strikes something, which can cause the bike to swerve wildly and the cyclist to be thrown off the bike into traffic.) Thus, although the California Vehicle Code states that bicycles have all the rights and responsibilities of vehicle drivers, including full use of the roadway, ignorance of the law contributes to



immigrant cyclists being intimidated and forced into even greater danger at the margins in the gutter and on the sidewalk.

Biking while Latino

Does being Latino contribute to being stopped by police while biking? Although the Los Angeles Police Department doesn’t release data on police stops by race, we know that one of the few places they’ve set up stings to enforce a no-bikes-on-sidewalk law is in the MacArthur Park area where around 80 percent of residents are Latino. Also, adult cyclists are not required to wear a helmet, but comments like “I’ve been stopped by the cops three times for not wearing a helmet,” were common when we interviewed working-class Latino cyclists. In these instances, possible police targeting compounded by ignorance of the law leaves Latino cyclists vulnerable to mistreatment that other groups may not face.

There is little opportunity for this group to redress these and other oppressions due to their lack of representation in the civic arena. Limited English

language proficiency and a community-wide mistrust of the authorities help explain why it is uncharacteristic of this group to walk into City Hall and demand better police treatment or more resources for safe biking in their neighborhoods. Complicating any effort to make such demands is the absence of accident statistics or data on police stops and ticketing that might illustrate the degree to which heightened risks affect this particular group of cyclists. That is why, according to Allison Mannos, “Any data at all, quantitative or qualitative, that we can get on the experiences of this population is a good thing.”

Who Benefits? Who Loses?

Because they ride at the margins with little evidence of their plight and without a voice in the civic arena the public is oblivious to these invisible cyclists. Critical race theorists suggest that for every disadvantaged group, another group receives some advantage. We wonder who benefits from the challenges confronting invisible cyclists. One possibility is law enforcement, which increases its revenues and police power by ticketing and detaining members of this population on

questionable grounds. Motorists are another group of beneficiaries who gain in time and convenience what invisible cyclists lose in safety. In other neighborhoods of L.A. that have better amenities, residents and bicyclists may benefit from infrastructure improvements that should be shared with less affluent parts of the city.

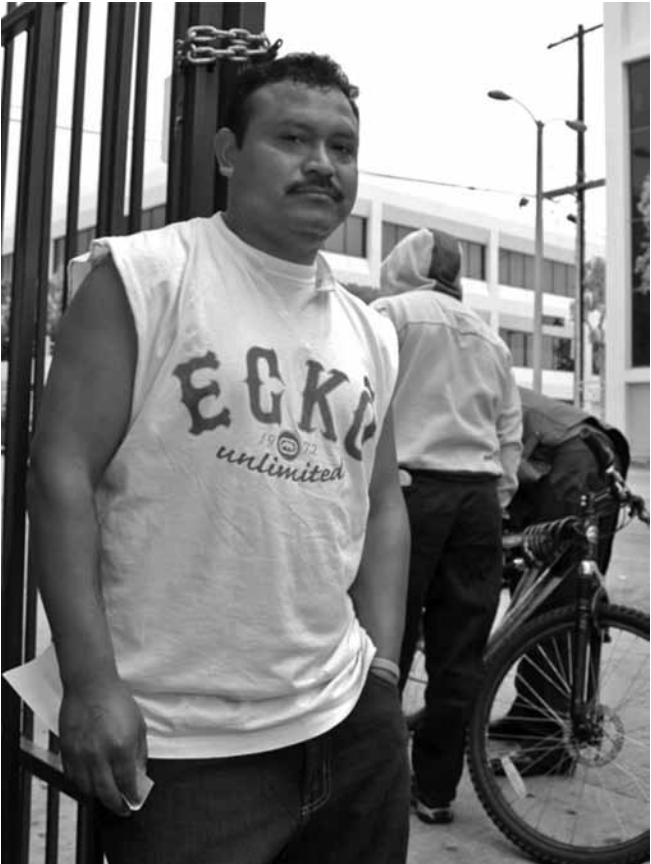
More work should be done to identify the beneficiaries in this scenario and to eliminate the incentives that perpetuate it. In the meantime, let’s consider the current efforts being taken on behalf of the invisible cyclists.

Illuminating the Shadows: Critical Race Theory and Advocacy

City of Lights is a program of the Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition that was created to reach out to working-class Latino immigrant cyclists who have limited English proficiency. The program is working to ameliorate the oppressions that affect this group through advocacy and education, in the form of community workshops on safety issues, legal rights and bike maintenance.

City of Lights bike safety workshops educate cyclists on the rules of the road and safe riding techniques, essential knowledge for the dangerous areas where these cyclists ride. The educational programming is reinforced with the provision of donated safety equipment such as lights, helmets, locks and bike maps to cyclists for whom the expense of such equipment would be too great. A bike maintenance workshop might stress the importance of maintaining the proper tire pressure, which not only helps prevent having a dangerous blow-out while riding in traffic, but can save cyclists money by avoiding the costs of tire repair or replacement and travel delays. These workshops are hands-on and designed to foster self-reliance, teaching cyclists how to maintain their bikes against the strain of riding on L.A. streets. Some workshop participants have expressed that their new bike maintenance skills could open a door to employment opportunities or business ownership, which could have a very positive effect on their income. Legal rights workshops are designed to curtail the number of unwarranted citations.

Data backs up the advocacy efforts of the City of Lights program. As Allison Mannos describes, existing cyclist data provides little information on Latino immigrant





cyclists, who may not feel comfortable responding to conventional bike surveys. City of Lights tries to rectify this by conducting their own surveys with questions that capture the difficulties and experiences of this group of cyclists. Quantitative data is of interest, but collecting personal narratives also affords invaluable insights. For example, asking cyclists about their riding experience in the U.S. and in their country of origin can reveal a person's economic, social and environmental motives for riding.

The next advocacy step is to raise general awareness of invisible cyclists. To that end City of Lights staff attend conferences to highlight their data findings and workshops in the low-income Latino immigrant cycling community. They also push the Los Angeles City Council and municipal departments to provide more bike lanes and bike parking where these cyclists live, work and ride and they communicate with law enforcement to request data on how often and why invisible cyclists are stopped and cited, potentially revealing and deterring oppressive police tactics.

By focusing on invisible cyclists and establishing their concerns as worthy of attention, the City of Lights efforts build on another tenet of critical race theory: centering and validating the experiences of marginalized people. According to Allison Mannos, the key is to rely on the narrated experiences of members of the specific group to identify their needs, rather than imposing on them external ideas about what their needs are. "When we talked to these cyclists," says Mannos, "we found out they aren't that into racing or wearing spandex, but they are interested in having a place where they can work on their bikes and see other people like them. Our priority now is to create spaces like that where they can build their own cycling community."

Bringing invisible cyclists together and out of the shadows should help address their numerous challenges and, hopefully, make your next encounter with them far less harrowing.

Omari Fuller and Edgar Beltran are master's candidates in the Department of Urban Planning at the UCLA School of Public Affairs.

All photographs accompanying this article are taken from the photographic ethnography Invisible Cyclists by Allison Mannos.

The 2016 Olympics in Rio: A Community Plays Against the Real Estate Game

by Theresa Williamson

When Rio de Janeiro won the bid for the 2016 Olympics in 2009, only cries of approval were heard from Brazilians. The government threw a huge party on Copacabana beach, in Brazil's densest neighborhood. According to Luis Inácio Lula da Silva (Lula), the popular Brazilian president and leader of the Brazilian Workers Party, "Brazil has left its second-class status behind and has joined the first class. Today we received respect." Lula said that "the same (people) who thought we wouldn't have the ability to govern will be surprised with our country's capacity to organize the Olympics." Lula's optimism is being fed by Brazil's booming economy. The World Bank predicts that by 2016, Brazil, where the largest offshore petroleum deposits in the world were recently discovered, will jump from having the tenth largest economy in the world to the fifth largest.

Lula failed to mention that part of the reason Rio won the bid is that there was no organized opposition on the ground. Several groups had expressed concern but were hopeful, as all of us were, that the Olympics would be properly used for public benefit, and thus supported the bid.

Erasing a Neighborhood for the Olympics

But now, as the government moves to clear at least one neighborhood and real estate speculation heats up in anticipation of the games, the chronic, ugly downside of the Olympics is again emerging and, along with it, the seeds of community protest.

Just west of Copacabana, in the area known as Barra da Tijuca, the community of Vila Autódromo is challenging the government's moves to take its land, apparently for nothing more than the establishment of a buffer zone around the planned Olympics facilities. It has brought its challenge to the International Olympics Committee (IOC), which has an established policy of holding the games only in cities where there is no significant local protest.

Barra da Tijuca, often referred to as Rio's Miami, was built on marshland over the last thirty years, with exclusive apartment blocks, luxury condos and malls designed to minimize contact with the city's poor. Rio's dynamic and youthful new mayor, Eduardo Paes, who was raised in Barra, enjoys good relations with Lula and

the governor of the state of Rio and supports the eviction of Vila Autódromo.

Vila Autódromo is at the edge of Barra, next to Jacarepaguá Lagoon. It was first settled over forty years ago by fishermen who lived subsistence lives kilometers away from the developed part of the city, and later by workers brought to the site to build the city's racetrack. Today it is a working-class neighborhood of some 4,000 residents.

When the first fishermen arrived, the lagoon was immaculate. Today it is filled with sewage and garbage from neighboring apartment blocks. The fishermen who remain complain that there is often no fish, only the occasional Tilapia, a fish that feasts on detritus. Yet residents remember when, in 1992, the city tried to remove them for the first time, alleging that Vila Autódromo posed "aesthetic and environmental damage" to the surrounding area. At that time, Barra had become a new destination for commercial, sports and residential facilities. The legal challenge claimed that the city's "new aesthetic" excluded the poor and in 1994 Vila Autódromo received title with the right to use the land for forty years. Still, on several subsequent occasions

municipal officials threatened the community with removal, including a proposed road widening for the Pan-American Games. The Olympics offered them yet another opportunity.

Only days after the announcement that Rio had been chosen to host the 2016 Olympic Games, the city's largest daily, *O Globo*, announced plans to remove Vila Autódromo to make way for Olympic venues. When I visited Vila Autódromo and neighboring communities right after this, I found residents were visibly frightened. Community leaders complained of panic attacks. One man spent yet another day building his home—a form of nonviolent resistance, if you will—and told me how he felt when the decision was made that Rio would get the Olympics: “I sincerely knew there would be complications for us. I’m Brazilian, I’d really like these Olympics to be held in Rio, but I was rooting for us not to win.

Because we would run this risk.” Then he repeated, “I’m Brazilian, I wanted so much for the Olympics to be held here. But because I knew we’d once again face pressure (to leave), I was rooting that we wouldn’t be chosen.”

This kind of personal conflict over the Olympics is widespread. On the one hand, investment from the event could bring benefits but, on the other hand, municipal officials can’t be trusted to make use of such an opportunity in a way that is fair. Government leaders never visited the community or sought community input. Community leaders were only invited to speak with the mayor after they led a demonstration with hundreds of protesters representing twenty communities outside City Hall in early March. Organizers describe these conversations as “one-way dialogues” in which the city states its intentions without much room for discussion. At the next meeting the city will present its resettlement plans and provide an opportunity

for the community to present an alternative plan for the area (though it took the city’s experts three years to prepare their plan).

Stable, Working-Class *Favela*

Vila Autódromo is a relatively stable, working-class neighborhood and many households are committed to staying. One resident told me, “There is nothing the city could offer me that would make it worth my while to leave. What I’d really like is for them to leave us alone, that everyone stays where they are, and that they sought to legalize and improve our situation so people could pay their taxes, and for something worthwhile. No politician has ever done anything for this community.”

“This is a dormitory community,” Altair Guimarães, president of the neighborhood association, tells me. Everyone’s at work or in school. Vila Autódromo is one of the 18 percent of Rio’s communities that

have remained peaceful (no drug or vigilante militias) through citizen action. As one resident explains, “This is a community where anyone can appear at all times of day and no one will question ‘who are you here to see.’ This is a family community, everyone knows each other, everyone lives well, whether near or distant neighbors.”

Little attention is paid to the quality of the housing that is to be demolished—unique houses designed slowly, over time, to suit individual needs of families. In the case of Vila Autódromo, the bulk of residents have successfully built high-quality homes in an expanding part of the city with access to jobs. They have also built businesses in Vila Autódromo and neighboring communities. They know their neighbors and, unlike other areas, do not have a problem with drug trafficking. Due to a historic class rift in Rio, known as the “Divided City,”

between the “*favelas* and asphalt” as the debate here is summarized, there is no comprehension on the part of the city’s elite that what constitutes “life in the *favela*” is not all bad. The cultural wealth, architectural innovation and strong sense of community in these spaces is entirely ignored when making plans to remove them—perhaps because the “elite” parts of the city are notoriously lacking in these attributes. Moreover, the ability of *favela* residents to participate effectively is severely underestimated.

The City Moves the Goalposts

The city’s actions indicate that they are interested in getting rid of Vila Autódromo even if it isn’t essential for the Olympics. In October of 2009, the mayor announced that the site would be used to build the Olympics Media Facility. But months later plans changed and the city decided to move several facilities to the port area the mayor seeks to revitalize.

When asked if this affects Vila Autódromo, municipal officials told me straight up: “No.” Now, the most recent map shows essentially nothing built in the area. Apparently, Vila Autódromo simply needs to be removed to create a “security perimeter” for the Olympic venues.

But if that is the case, why are luxury condos going up just as close—across the street in fact—with a “box seat” view of the Olympic venues? Why couldn’t the city simply provide residents with rent subsidies during the three weeks of the Games, as they have done in other cases? Or why not get rid of the “eyesore” by doing what residents request and upgrading this essentially lower middle-class, up-and-coming community, which has proved its ability to coexist peacefully with major events ranging from the Formula 1 to Rock in Rio? Why not be really creative and develop a model for all future Olympics bids to involve residents



LEFT: Olympics 2016 plan showing Vila Autódromo as open space

RIGHT: Vila Autódromo



Photo by Theresa Williamson

directly? Engage them as workers and welcoming agents and encourage small businesses to cater to tourists. Wouldn't this be a more just way of handling a community? Wouldn't this speak to the Olympics values of hope, excellence, respect, harmony and friendship, as well as to its new "Development through Sport" initiative, which is supposed to "put human beings first?"

The only explanation for the lack of creativity, transparency and willingness to dialogue and compromise shown by the city on this issue is its desire to maximize real estate speculation in the area. And residents of the area who have put up with the pollution of the Jacarepaguá Lagoon for years will not benefit from the cleanup that is supposed to be part of the environmental legacy of the Games.

Public Defenders Take Action

Public defenders have taken legal action in support of Vila Autódromo's case. They also notified the IOC with a detailed 78-page document, including a technical overview, because they fear this community's removal would open the floodgates for forced evictions across the city. In fact, when the news media announced Vila Autódromo's impending removal in October of 2009, it was cited as first on a list of nine areas. Within a week the city had retracted the rest of the list, claiming that the intention is to remove only this community. According to activists, this is a way of weakening the joint response

that would have unfolded. When Vila Autódromo goes down, the precedent will be set, reversing decades of hard-won housing rights legislation.

The Olympics has provided a rare opportunity for the city to avoid the obligation for public comment while making evictions publicly acceptable to the middle class and the bulk of neighborhoods that wouldn't be affected. In fact, the mainstream media has treated efforts to fight evictions as practically traitorous.

What do residents want to see? As the public defender argues: "It is clear that residents do not want to be removed. On the contrary, they claim the right to upgrades and public investment." It would be fairly easy to upgrade the neighborhood, given support from the residents, wide roads and solid brick homes.

A technical team of engineers and architects assembled to study the situation asked, "Why are condominiums, shopping centers and other commercial developments being approved for the edges of the lagoon?" In fact, just across the street from the community, five luxury condos are going up. A billboard reads: "Place your dreams at the top of the podium. Three rooms in the region that'll grow most by 2016. And you'll get to see it all from your very own box seat."

It's Back to You, Lula!

Lula tells us that "this country deserves a chance." The question

now is what it will do with this chance. Build on the cultural wealth of this unique city or strengthen the market at any cost, measuring development through economic growth and a declining crime rate, regardless of whether the end result is cultural sterility? If the current approach goes forward, there is a serious risk that the cultural marvels Lula declares as having attracted interest from the IOC in the first place will be commodified, not humanized, by 2016.

As Lula put it, "These Olympics are retribution to the marvelous people of Rio de Janeiro that many times show up only in newspapers." But will all people gain retribution equally, or will Rio's rich end up with the lion's share?

Theresa Williamson holds a Ph.D. in City and Regional Planning from the University of Pennsylvania and is founder and executive director of Catalytic Communities (www.catcomm.org), a Rio de Janeiro-based NGO. Follow the latest news on Rio's mega events and related city politics as relayed by the city's community organizers at www.RioOnWatch.org.

Mexico City Creates Charter for the Right to the City

by Jill Wigle and Lorena Zárate

A new collective tool for social mobilization and democratic planning has been established in Mexico City. On July 13, 2010 Mayor Marcelo Ebrard of the Federal District of Mexico signed the *Mexico City Charter for the Right to the City*.

In a recent article in the *New Left Review*, Emir Sader argues that Latin America, once a "privileged territory for neoliberalism," has now become "the leading arena not only for resistance but for the construction of alternatives" to neoliberalism. One of these alternatives includes the Right to the City, a rights-based approach to urban life with strong roots in the Latin American region in general and in urban social movements in particular. Although it has a long history, the first World Social Forum in 2001 in Porto Alegre, Brazil, was a key moment in the articulation of and mobilization for the right to the city. A central component of the right to the city is the insistence on the social function of property to produce more inclusive and just cities, shifting away from the prevailing situation of cities as key sites for capital accumulation and deepening socio-spatial segregation and displacement through market-led development.

The Right to the City is a burgeoning political project, research agenda and policy initiative of international agencies (such as UN-HABITAT and UNESCO), non-governmental organizations and social networks (including the Habitat International Coalition, to which Planners Network belongs), activist alliances and even some governments (Brazil, for example).

In Mexico, the government of the Federal District joined this growing list of supporters with the signing of the *Mexico City Charter for the Right to the City* (see Figures 1 and 2). This was the culmination of a three-year advocacy process led by the Urban Popular Movement (*Movimiento Urbano Popular*, or MUP), with support from the Habitat International Coalition-Latin America (HIC-AL), the Mexico City Commission for Human Rights and the Coalition of Civil Society Organizations for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (*Espacio DESC*), all of whom

participated in drafting the charter. An estimated 3,500 citizens also participated in the elaboration of the charter through various events and consultations. The process for creating the charter reflects a key element of the right to the city—that it must include the right of people living in cities to participate in decisions that affect city life and the production of urban space. The implementation of the principles contained in the charter, however, will require a more sustained mobilization effort, underlining the importance of social movements in democratizing city planning and governance.

Advances in the Mexico City Charter

The Mexico City charter builds on the collective experience of similar initiatives, including Brazil's City Statute of 2001, the Montreal Charter of 2006 and the World Charter on the Right to the City, now being developed. But the Mexico City charter has several characteristics worth noting. First, the initiative was advanced by the urban social movement "from below" and adopted by a city-level government. The charter also underlines important political and policy differences between the Federal District and the national government. Finally, the charter seeks to go beyond realizing human rights *in* the city to also include a focus on realizing the collective right *to* the city (see table on page 14). The Mexico City Charter (2010) defines the right to the city as follows:

The right to the city is the equitable use (*usufructo equitativo*) of cities according to principles of sustainability, democracy, equity and social justice. It is a collective right of urban inhabitants that confers upon them the legitimate right to action and organization, based on respect of their differences, cultural expressions and practices, with the objective of exercising their right to self-determination and attaining an adequate standard of living. The right to the city is interdependent with other internationally-recognized human rights, including civil, political, economic, social, cultural and environmental rights as defined in international human rights treaties [authors' translation].

The charter identifies six fundamental principles that incorporate an amalgam of human rights and collective rights understood as being interdependent and indivisible to promoting the right to the city. The charter puts forward a territorial approach to rights and democracy (i.e., representative, distributive and participatory), a strategic direction especially relevant now that there is a Human Rights Program for the Federal District. The charter conceives of urban inhabitants as the “subject” of the rights outlined in the charter and describes government agencies and elected representatives as being “subject to” the obligations to respect, protect and fulfill these rights through the creation of new laws and urban policies and/or the enforcement of existing ones. Like Brazil’s groundbreaking City Statute, the Mexico City charter also establishes new rights at a collective level, such as the social function of property. This is a key component of the right to the city that entails fundamental urban reforms and the redistribution and regulation of urban land for the purpose of constructing a more just and inclusive city. The charter also incorporates at least two important principles addressing the right to the city as first articulated by French philosopher

Henri Lefebvre in the 1960s: 1) the right to participate in decisions affecting urban inhabitants and the production of urban space; and 2) the right to appropriate urban space in favor of its use value over exchange value. Notably, these components include legal rights, social and political claims and material conditions.

Planning and the Right to the City

The six key principles included in the Mexico City charter suggest a significant role for planning. The charter aspires to recapture the public and collective function of spatial planning. The article in the Fall 2009 *Progressive Planning* (No. 181) entitled “The Right to the City Alliance: Time to Democratize Urban Governance” highlighted the three principles that should guide the work of planners with regard to the right to the city: the right to participate, the right to security and the right to resist. While aimed at planners working in the United States, these principles will also be important for planners in Mexico City interested in pushing forward strategies and initiatives in support of the charter, though they will need to be adjusted to a different social, economic and political context.

David Harvey has written that “we individually and collectively make the city through our daily actions and our political, intellectual and economic engagements. But, in return, the city makes us.” This observation takes on a very concrete meaning in cities of the Global South such as Mexico City, where the majority of urban inhabitants must construct their own housing and urban services (e.g., water, sewage) through an arduous, incremental and insecure process, thereby appropriating space for housing and livelihoods and actively making the city in the process. At least 40 percent of the built-up

area of Mexico City is comprised of so-called “informal” housing. This represents direct participation in city-building, decision-making and active (albeit piecemeal) everyday resistance to “formal” planning at the same time (see “State Support for the Social Production of Housing?” in *Progressive Planning*, No. 175, Spring 2008).

In writing about Sao Paulo, James Holston has referred to this process as one of “insurgent citizenship” in which poorer residents build and defend their living space, construct a new city and “propose a city with

a different order of citizenship.” This process invokes Lefebvre’s assertion that the right to the city involves the ongoing appropriation of urban space for use rather than exchange, but it also reflects the socio-economic inequality that underpins informal settlement. Although urban planning cannot singularly resolve such deep-seated structural inequalities, it can play a prominent role in promoting the social function of property and facilitating the appropriation of urban space to fulfill important social rights such as housing and employment, and to better accommodate the diversity

Table: Key Strategic Principles of the Mexico City Charter for the Right to the City
Adapted and translated by authors from Carta de la Ciudad de México por el Derecho a la Ciudad (2010).

Vision	Strategic Focus	Content and Primary Objective(s)
1. A city of human rights	The full exercise of human rights in the city	Involves the realization of political, economic, social, cultural and environmental human rights without discrimination; ensures collective dignity and well-being in conditions of equality, equity, justice and solidarity To generate conditions for the development of a dignified quality of life for all in the city, at both individual and collective levels
2. A city for all: inclusive, equitable and of social solidarity	The social function of the city, land and property	Involves the distribution and regulation of urban land and space and the equitable use of common goods, services and opportunities offered by the city, prioritizing the collectively defined public interest To guarantee the right of all persons to a secure place where they can live in peace and dignity through the creation of legal instruments and participatory mechanisms that oppose speculation, urban segregation, exclusion, forced evictions and displacements
3. A politically active and socially responsible city	Democratic urban management	Involves citizen participation at the highest levels of decision-making, including the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of public policies, urban planning, budgeting and the control of urban processes To strengthen democracy through the creation of decision-making spaces and mechanisms of direct democracy, and the development of participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation of urban public management
4. A socially productive city	Democratic production of urban space and productive habitat	Involves the rescue and strengthening of the productive capacity of urban inhabitants, especially the working classes and urban poor, and the facilitation of the social production of habitat and the development of economic activities that contribute to a productive city of solidarity To facilitate the right to participate in the social production of habitat and to guarantee the productive insertion of all in the urban economy, including youth
5. A viable and environmentally sustainable city	Sustainable and responsible management of environmental, cultural and energy resources as common goods in the city	Involves the socially responsible use of resources and the enjoyment of a healthy environment that allows all people and communities to develop under equal conditions To guarantee improved environmental conditions and that urban development does not take place at the cost of rural communities, ecological reserves, other cities or future generations
6. An open, free, critical and enjoyable city	Democratic and equitable enjoyment of the city	Involves the strengthening of social solidarity and the rescue, expansion and improvement of public spaces To rescue and strengthen the cultural and recreational enjoyment of public spaces and the respect for cultural diversity in the city



TOP: Jamie Rello of the Urban Popular Movement speaks at the signing of the Mexico City Charter for the Right to the City, as Mexico City Mayor Marcelo Ebrard (at right, bended elbow) listens.

BOTTOM: Mayor Marcelo Ebrard signs the Mexico City Charter for the Right to the City in the presence of Alejandra Barrales, head of the Legislative Assembly of the Federal District (right) and Edgar Elias Azar of the Superior Tribunal of the Federal District (left).

of needs found within cities, including access to public goods and services. In the context of Mexico City, this involves the introduction of new planning practices at different spatial scales.

It also involves sorting out and taking a position on the contradictions contained in existing planning documents, including the principles of “sustainability, equity and competitiveness” underpinning the new urban development program in the Federal District.

Pushing for the Charter—A Multi-Level Process

Although the MUP began advocating for the charter in 2007, the issues at stake go back further in time and involve the promotion of several important social policies. These policy changes were enabled by the reintroduction of local democracy in Mexico City in 1997, and more specifically, the support of elected representatives (including mayors) from the center-left Party of the Democratic Revolution (*Partido de la Revolución Democrática*, or PRD). The first of these initiatives was the Housing Improvement Program (*Programa de Mejoramiento de Vivienda*), first introduced in 1999 by the Mexico City government under pressure from social organizations and a number of housing NGOs. Since its inception, the program has provided numerous interest-free loans to improve housing conditions for lower-income households in the city. The program supported over 165,000 housing improvement interventions in informally-settled areas of the city between 2001 and 2009. And since 2007, the lot-level Housing Improvement Program has been complemented by the *Barrio* Improvement Program (*Programa de Mejoramiento Barrial*). By 2010, approximately \$31.2 million had been channelled by local government into community-scale improvements for around 530 projects in “marginalized” communities in the city, such as the introduction or upgrading of recreational and cultural facilities, sidewalks or other urban infrastructure, parks, community centers and public art projects. This initiative not only supports informal housing and the appropriation of urban space in the city for community and social purposes, but it does so through a decision-making process that involves the collective organization of residents at the neighborhood level to propose improvement projects as well as the participation of citizens in the eventual selection of the projects to be supported by the local government—a truncated but significant form of participatory budgeting at the city level.

The recent signing of the *Mexico City Charter for the Right to the City* builds on these programs and also proposes a more comprehensive set of interventions at different levels—the individual lot, neighborhood and city. Implicitly, the Right to the City Campaign waged by urban social movements represents the recognition of the limits of place-based urban policy. Although the Housing and *Barrio* Improvement Programs have helped to improve the material living conditions of lower-income residents, they have left unchallenged the market-led development ongoing in the rest of the city that is extending and solidifying elite residential and commercial enclaves and other processes of socio-spatial exclusion. Moreover, the charter aims to not only direct the production of urban space, but also open up decision-making in an effort to create “productive habitats” capable of providing secure livelihoods and a dignified standard of living.

At the signing of the *Charter for the Right to the City*, Mayor Marcelo Ebrard described it as “the document with the most ambitious goals of what [our] city should be.” He also announced that the charter will form the basis for the elaboration of a constitution for Mexico City within the next year, and committed to redesigning the way in which government is structured and functions to guarantee citizen participation in governing the city. Clearly, this would extend the social development processes described here and help to institutionalize the important social demands expressed in the charter. Still, ongoing advocacy and mobilization will be needed to continually push forward this process of realizing social, economic, political and cultural rights in the city, and above all, the right to construct and enjoy the city as a place of social transformation and citizenship.

Jill Wigle (jill_wigle@carleton.ca) is an assistant professor in the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies at Carleton University, Ottawa. Lorena Zárate (info@hic-al.org) is coordinator of the Habitat International Coalition Regional Office for Latin America (HIC-AL) based in Mexico City. HIC is an international network of more than 350 organizations, academics and activists working on housing and human settlement issues in 118 countries. HIC-AL was part of the committee that helped to draft the Mexico City Charter for the Right to the City. More information is available at www.hic-al.org (in Spanish) and www.hic-net.org (in English and French).

Social Currency: A Tool to Empower Migrant Workers

by Alfonso Morales

In a small town in the Southwest, a pilot program built around the creation of social currency shows that migrant workers facing environmental and health hazards can work together and break down the barriers to healthcare. Social currency is an alternative form of money that can, like real money, be exchanged for goods and services within communities. Families using social currency in the pilot program reaped both immediate benefits and long-term benefits, sustaining the supportive relationships they developed with each other during the pilot even after the pilot program concluded.

Anthony, New Mexico: A Community of Migrant Workers

The city of Anthony links Texas and New Mexico near the U.S.-Mexico border. Like many communities in the region, it is small, dependent on agriculture and predominantly Latino. The town’s immigrants, many hailing from Mexico, often work in vegetable packing plants and their families add to the migrant worker population.

Immigrants keep the U.S. agricultural industry afloat. In 2002 migrant workers accounted for 42 percent of the U.S. farm workforce. Agricultural workers are poorly paid and lack health benefits, which often leads to health problems. Poor nutrition, one contributing factor to poor health, is widespread in the migrant worker population. Many adults suffer from hypertension and obesity, while children suffer from anemia and upper respiratory problems. Such health problems resulting from poor nutrition often lead to pre- and post-natal death, poor dental health and poor physical and mental development in children. Environmental hazards related to working conditions make the situation worse. Immigrants in the

agricultural industry are exposed to hazardous chemicals and pesticides as well as unsafe drinking water, and they lack access to adequate bathroom facilities. Research links pesticide exposure to birth defects, leukemia and cancer. Therefore, besides workplace injustice, the most immediate concern for migrant workers is access to health services.

Health-related problems for migrant workers reduce their quality of life and inhibit their participation in the community. Individual health and social relationships suffer further as support networks shrink and social isolation grows. Workers take on subordinate roles in service relationships instead of being part of social networks and organizations of self-support. In short, health-related problems weave a web of difficulties that constrain life chances, erode self-esteem and impede immigrants’ integration into civic life.

Migrant workers, like many Latino immigrants in the U.S., face barriers to accessing health services, including language and cultural barriers and lack of education, transportation, insurance and financial means.

The Promotora Program Builds Social Currency

To confront the barriers to quality healthcare, *La Clinica de la Familia* has provided healthcare in southeastern New Mexico for more than thirty years, and for more than a decade, one of its programs, the *Promotora* (Health Promoter) program, has focused on working with migrant workers who face social, political, economic and health hardships on a daily basis. The *Promotora* program actively supports health promotion and political participation in order to ameliorate health and other problems and enable clients politically.

In 2002 I won a grant to support health access among migrant workers. Staff from the *Promotora* recruited migrant worker families to form a club based on the creation of social currency among members. Families paid their “club dues” in hours of service to each other and received “club benefits” in the form of cash payments to cover health-related expenses. For ten weeks, *Nuevos Amigos*, a group of non-related migrant worker families in and around the town of Anthony, participated in the social currency pilot program. During this period we collected qualitative and quantitative data that showed improvements to participant quality of life in terms of both healthcare and strengthened social networks. Follow-up interviews six months after the program ended testified to ongoing support between the families and improved confidence in navigating the organizational environment.

Early on, the *Promotora* organization understood that migrant workers have a strong work ethic, generally strong intra-family ties and an ongoing interest in experimenting, albeit cautiously, with ways to improve their lives. Most migrant workers, however, have little experience with engaging in community organizations or public life because they are focused on surviving. Still, they have hope for a future in which they can build or improve their homes, seize new economic opportunities and devote resources to their children. In short, despite their marginalization, migrant workers verbalize and practice self-reliance and tentatively engage social service organizations based on their needs, interests and desires to improve their situations.

One hope for improving migrant worker prospects lies at the intersection of their endeavors and aspirations and the practices and resources deployed by organizations that work with them. Organizations can be limited by self-interest, local, state and federal regulations and other demands that distract the organization’s attention. They must always balance the needs of the clients with their own survival. But the *Promotora* is one example of how an organization deploys discretion that enables its street-level bureaucrats to promote each person’s capabilities. The organizers (*promotoras*)

agreed to help form the *Nuevos Amigos* club and to empower the migrant workers.

Organizing Social Currency

To begin the pilot program, *Promotora* staff recruited participants and explained the social currency concept. Since the migrant worker families were not well acquainted with each other, an initial dinner meeting was provided in which families could meet each other, do some research-related intake and form the new club, which would meet every two weeks. In that initial meeting, participants identified each other’s needs and began supporting each other and reporting their hours to the *promotoras*, and eventually to one of their own who served as a liaison between the organizations.

The families quickly developed a mutual trust based on three factors: they trusted the individual *promotora* workers they already knew; they saw themselves in the same situation; and they readily understood the program as a social opportunity that came with economic benefits. Every two weeks the hours of support families invested in program was transformed into a reward paid directly to healthcare needs. Families identified “health” very broadly, as in the need for money to buy healthier food or to pay for health-related home necessities such as new windows, rent bills and utility bills. Perhaps the largest benefit was that the organization adjusted its own rules to support non-club members. This represents an important ability to understand and participate in civil society.

The assessment of this ten-week pilot program indicated how many hours club members accumulated and how they spent their benefits. Club members, adults and children, dedicated hours working to support each other by providing childcare and rides for doctor or grocery store visits, performing household repairs and attending club meetings. We saw clear changes in health-related aspects of migrant family lives and in the capacities of club members to run their own organization and get to know each other and interface with the community and the *promotoras*. Improved health-related quality of life was an immediate collective good that resulted

from the program, but participants also realized other collective benefits to participation, including social support, self-efficacy and improvements in overall quality of life. Observations and self reports indicate how children’s participation fostered intergenerational relationships and increased their self-confidence.

Social Currency and Capability Ethics

This pilot provides hope for migrant workers and similarly disenfranchised populations. But how does social currency, a form of community-based action, really work? Some studies suggest that community-directed interventions and community-based participatory research, approaches that *La Clinica de la Familia* uses, are effective in underserved and underrepresented target areas. The intervention described is of this family of interventions and is founded on the premise of “capability” ethics and asset-based community development, which mean that even the most marginalized people have capabilities that can be recognized, developed and shared with one another. The root of capability ethics is its focus on what someone is able to do or to be, rather than what resources they possess or how satisfied they are with their lives. What people are able to do or be, however, is dependent on organizational support and the socio-legal context. In this, the social currency approach united isolated individuals and oriented interaction simultaneously among individuals and the community.

Social currencies, which go by various names (Time Dollars, Ithaca Bucks, etc.), are designed to promote interdependence, self-reliance and solidarity, and as such, are applicable to many different contexts and populations. Social currency intentionally replaces the typical market logic of *caveat emptor* (“buyer beware”) with *e pluribus Unum* (“out of many, one”) by creating incentives for interdependence between people. The *Promotora* program successfully implements social currency to build social networks and place market forces in a subordinate role within the community. In Anthony, New Mexico, migrant workers improved their health-related circumstances by co-creating and participating in a social currency pilot program. The success of the program flies in the

face of scholars and policymakers who believe that migrant workers are shackled by their poverty and poor life chances and too inflexible to or incapable of incrementally improving their conditions. By working *with* migrant workers, not just *for* them, the *Promotora* program proved the truth of the adage, “Give a man a fish and he’ll eat for a day. Teach a man to fish, however, and he’ll eat for a lifetime,” Migrant workers were supported in co-producing improved homes, resilient households and supportive relationships with other migrant worker families. This pilot study is a prime example of how people of even the most minimal resources can work for themselves and also assist members of their community. Migrant workers can develop and foster social networks and are fully capable of helping themselves and supporting each other; all they need is the opportunity and the means to do so.

Alfonso Morales (morales1@wisc.edu) is an assistant professor of urban and regional planning at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The original research on the program is reported in the *Journal of Southern Rural Sociology*, 24:1, 92-112. Those interested in the *Promotora Program* can contact Sylvia Sapien at ssapien@lcdfmm.org or 575.526.1105.

Progressive Planning Leader Pat Rosenthal and Common Wealth Inc. of Youngstown, Ohio

by *Pierre Clavel*

Common Wealth Inc. is a Community Development Corporation (CDC) founded in Youngstown, Ohio, that began by supporting worker buyouts and cooperatives in the 1980s. Its story is largely that of Executive Director Pat Rosenthal, who turned to law school and organizing after three large steel mills closed and decimated Youngstown's economy in 1978.

Common Wealth exemplifies the way many CDCs changed in the 1980s and 1990s. CDCs built a lot of affordable housing, and many became landlords, but real estate development threatened to displace the original community development mission of creating jobs and actually involving local residents in improving their own neighborhoods and their own lives. In contrast, Common Wealth excelled as a CDC for its ability, over two-and-a-half decades, to navigate its dilemmas and survive with many of its original goals intact.

Rosenthal was the key to preserving the CDC's mission. She had begun organizing by helping incorporate a worker-owned housecleaning cooperative. In 1986 Rosenthal and her allies started the CDC along with the Common Wealth Revolving Loan Fund to support both worker-owned and -managed start-ups and the retention and growth of existing companies. In 1988 Common Wealth incorporated a community land trust to rehab houses in the city's South Side, while training local youth in construction trades.

Committed Allies

Rosenthal had committed allies. Law associate and mentor Staughton Lynd had been instrumental in the Youngstown Ecumenical Coalition's attempt to achieve a worker buyout of one of the mills, and he helped organize Common Wealth's effort to



Photo by Jim Converse

support cooperative ownership and also served on its board. Bishop James W. Malone, as head of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Youngstown, committed matching funds and supported proposals submitted to the national Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD), including a five-year grant that funded Common Wealth from 1988 to 1993 and the loan loss reserve. John Logue, a political science professor at Kent State, focused on employee ownership and served as a unifying board member of Common Wealth from 1986 until his death in 2009.

In 1987 Rosenthal got the support and involvement of two newcomers to the city. One was Brian Corbin, who Malone hired as the social action director for

the diocese and who was tasked with creating jobs. The other was Jim Converse, a sociologist who had worked at several universities and non-profits. Converse and Rosenthal, who complemented each other professionally, also became a couple and eventually married, while at the same time providing essential leadership to the organization.

Common Wealth moved ahead through trial and error. Its effort to use the loan fund to establish employee-owned and -managed businesses encountered obstacles. The community land trust failed to provide significant jobs and training, and residents were unable to generate equity or function collectively. Rosenthal and Converse could not sustain the employee self-management and buyout model they initially envisioned for the loan fund.

Common Wealth's Housing Achievements

What Common Wealth was able to do, increasingly in the 1990s, was develop affordable housing. Converse and Rosenthal took the lead generating housing projects as they managed public hearings and conducted opening negotiations for two projects beginning in 1995 and 1996 in the land trust's South Side neighborhood. Later there were other project opportunities in surrounding towns like Campbell, and by 1999 Rosenthal was able to project over 300 units of new housing under construction or completed.

This expansion was possible because of Mark Whipkey, who started working for Common Wealth in 1991 and played a major role in planning and packaging these projects. Rosenthal described Whipkey's functions as a different "layer" of capacity, one she and Converse could not have provided. Theirs was representation, advocacy and political bridge-building. But it was Whipkey who drove the development team professionals, plans and applications so that projects could go forward profitably. He also managed the construction so that projects stayed within budgets and timelines, making it possible rebudget construction contingencies to cover developer fees instead of going to construction cost overruns. Eventually there were nine projects and several hundred units yielding a stream of discretionary income.

Staying Focused on the Big Picture

One key to Common Wealth's emergence as a major player in Youngstown and the region in the 1990s was that its leadership never projected a narrowness of concern. The original mission came from the shared experience and memory of the failed steel buyout attempt at the end of the 1970s. It was never just housing. And when it was housing, it was a concern with how housing sat within the structure of business in the community.

In retrospect, a key move was Common Wealth's decision to take the lead by inserting itself in Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) hearings. CRA was the result of a 1970s federal law requiring banks to invest in low-income communities if they wanted to expand services or acquire small community-oriented banks. Many took notice when Rosenthal and Converse, with a coalition of advocates, questioned local bank practices. As a result of a protest filed by the coalition, an attempted bank merger was denied by the Federal Reserve Board and Converse, in part because of his research into bank practices, got the attention of city and county politicians and planners. Common Wealth soon was a player in city efforts to attract federal and state housing funds. Beginning in 1988, Converse and Rosenthal presented a policy paper that influenced the city's first Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) document, which brought funds into the city and provided Common Wealth and other non-profits with additional funding. City government attitudes changed: non-profits became partners with the city in many areas of policy.

Common Wealth Goes Regional

With Whipkey involved, Common Wealth was able to hire and contract with additional staff to make projects go forward. Rosenthal and Converse were then able to go in other directions. Starting in 1995, but most importantly after 1999, they launched an effort at regional organizing. In 1995, Corbin made contact with Mary Gonzales, and eventually Greg Galluzzo, of the Gamaliel Foundation. Gamaliel supported community organizing at the regional scale. The logic, articulated by Gamaliel advisor

and Minnesota legislator and law professor Myron Orfield, was that the problems of the inner city had been exacerbated by the out-migration of middle-class populations to suburban and rural parts of city hinterlands, and that there was a joint interest in preservation of inner-city institutions and neighborhoods. Gamaliel challenged Common Wealth and area congregations to raise funds to employ a professional organizer who would work with inner-city and suburban churches on joint solutions to city problems.

By 1998 Rosenthal and Converse had become informal associates of Gamaliel, earning invitations to conferences and organizer retreats. Common Wealth worked with local clergy and lay leaders to form ACTION (Alliance for Congregational Transformation Influencing Our Neighborhoods) and raised funds to hire an organizer. This helped advance the cause of a regional approach to community development. Common Wealth provided office space and served as fiscal agent. ACTION organized twenty Youngstown and suburban churches around issues of crime and corruption, education and a grocery store reopening. Common Wealth then worked with Father Ed Noga of St. Patrick’s Church and ACTION to raise funds to hire Myron Orfield for a critical study and two day-trips to Youngstown that spurred suburban churches to support further discussion of these regional concerns. Rosenthal later characterized the interaction as “inspiring.” Orfield had organized an institute to do analyses of regional finances and problems, and the coalition raised \$50,000 more to fund an analysis and report on regional dynamics impacting Youngstown. This was presented at a meeting at Youngstown State University in October 2001 and covered by news media in more than a dozen articles and reports.

Formal arrangements for regional cooperation were limited as some of the area churches pulled out of the regional coalition due to impatience with the “metro-equity” focus favored by Common Wealth. The coalition was weakened, but the core of communities and organizers was substantial and Common Wealth had new allies. Rosenthal and Converse had been energized, and there were statewide results. Gamaliel sponsored an Ohio

Metro-Equity Task Force in 2006, and there was the creation of Greater Ohio, listing offices in Columbus, Cincinnati, Cleveland and Youngstown, with Converse as Mahoning Valley Director.

Succession Crisis

By 2006-07 Rosenthal and Converse had decisions to make about the future of Common Wealth. They were facing, or thought they were facing, the beginnings of the effects of age. Both were now over 60. They had health problems in 2003, were feeling fragile and wondering how to continue. At the end of 2005 they sought a grant for \$25,000 from the state that would provide administrative funding to free up some time. The state grant required them to enact a succession plan. This might have been routine, but some Common Wealth board members saw it as a chance to change direction. As Rosenthal thought later, they would have argued that “affordable housing is what got us to where we are, so let’s make that our core mission.” Corbin had hoped for an infusion of new energy to expand the finance role Whipkey represented, moving Common Wealth to a new level with new capacities to finance business start-ups as well as housing. But Rosenthal and Converse bridled at what they saw as a restriction of Common Wealth’s mission and sought board re-affirmation of the broader goals of the organization. They prevailed. By the end of 2007 Whipkey had resigned and Corbin, who had advocated the housing focus, left the board. Rosenthal, characteristically, mended fences. Whipkey agreed to continue as a consultant and Corbin was appointed to the Common Wealth Revolving Loan Fund board. Elena Colmenares-Whipkey moved into the position of manager of housing development and assets.

Moving into Food Deserts

By 2008 an alternative direction was charted around a constellation of initiatives focused on food, including production, processing and marketing. As Common Wealth worked with inner city churches in 1997, the problems associated with the loss of supermarket service as the city population and income declined and neighborhoods became what activists later called “food deserts” became visible. Common

Wealth had found new energy in 2003 and 2004 by helping to start and manage a farmers market in its neighborhood; Converse had started markets in other communities. Later, the organization was inspired to expand by the work of Milwaukee activist and MacArthur Fellow Will Allen, who was doing innovative work in food production and cooperative marketing, and found enthusiastic support in Youngstown and in the region, where new food production technologies were appearing.

Thus the organizing mission that Common Wealth began with had new life. Whipkey’s large-scale housing development initiatives now provided a cash flow to support at least some of this organizing work, and the prospect of new grants seemed promising. At least one CDC had avoided the narrowing of mission that many in the movement feared.

Lessons Learned

What can we learn from the experiences of Rosenthal and Common Wealth?

First of all, Common Wealth’s evolution unfolded over a relatively long time. It took twenty-nine years from Rosenthal’s start in 1981 to the present—the majority of Rosenthal’s working life. In part this was because she worked carefully, getting buy-in and maintaining mutual respect inside and outside the organization.

Was Rosenthal a “progressive planner?” Perhaps not a “planner.” Her training was law, and before that she had worked as a mental health professional. Her entrance to law school was motivated by a desire to get past one-on-one counseling to systemic solutions to social problems. Lynd was as good as it gets as a mentor in that regard. When asked if she “had a plan” guiding Common Wealth’s course, she immediately denied it. It was all “seat of the pants,” she said. I am not convinced. For one thing, it was not Rosenthal alone. Converse was her intellectual and political partner, and together they added up. It was Converse who brought in the land trust model, and who elaborated the

food program as a regional system, connecting producers, wholesalers, marketers and consumers. Converse connected Common Wealth to national networks in this emerging central concern of the community development movement. Partners with these complementary skills and instincts are common in successful planning operations. Typically the planning director handles the “politics” while the staff provides the first cut, not the definitive initiatives.

I think Rosenthal had an internal gyroscope that allowed her to see the road in front of her and led her to collective solutions to social issues rather than individualistic ones. There were certainly redistributive themes in all of Common Wealth’s projects. There was sadness when South Side residents were unable to stick with the land trust model. Above all the decision to mobilize the Common Wealth board around a broader program, eventually expressed in the food initiatives, reflected that tendency.

Pierre Clavel is a professor of city and regional planning at Cornell University and is the author of Activists in City Hall, forthcoming from Cornell University Press, September 2010. This story is the result of recent interviews by the author in Youngstown.

Did You Miss the 2010 PN Conference?

by Norma Rantisi

Towards a Just Metropolis: From Crisis to Possibilities, the joint conference of Planners Network (PN), Architects/Designers/Planners for Social Responsibility (ADPSR) and the Association for Community Design (ACD), June 16-20, 2010.

Planners Network conferences usually excel because they mix exciting discussions and debates with accessibility and fun. This year's conference was no exception. A host of inspiring speakers set the tone for the conference at the

inaugural event. Carl Anthony, founder and former executive director of the environmental justice organization Urban Habitat, spoke about the challenges and opportunities of forging a multicultural alliances to fight social and environmental injustices in the city. He was followed by Rahul Srivastava and Matias Echanove, who spoke live from Mumbai via Skype. Srivastava and Echanove are two members of URBZ, a non-profit that designs adaptable structures and develops web tools for urban communities and practitioners. They talked about the importance of local knowledge in the design of work and live spaces and the role of the web as a medium for tapping into and disseminating local knowledge. Introducing the final

Photo by Molly Johnson



speaker, conference organizer and PN Steering Committee member Alex Schafran delivered a provocative speech about the need to rethink the curriculum of planning programs to allow for more reflexive, engaged and participatory ties to the community at large. The final speaker, Maria Poblet from Causa Justa :: Just Cause and the Right to the City Alliance, provided examples of the struggles—and successes—of citizens who are fighting for basic housing rights in the San Francisco and Oakland areas. The second day of the conference was filled up with ten mobile workshops that

Photo by Nicholas Dykstra



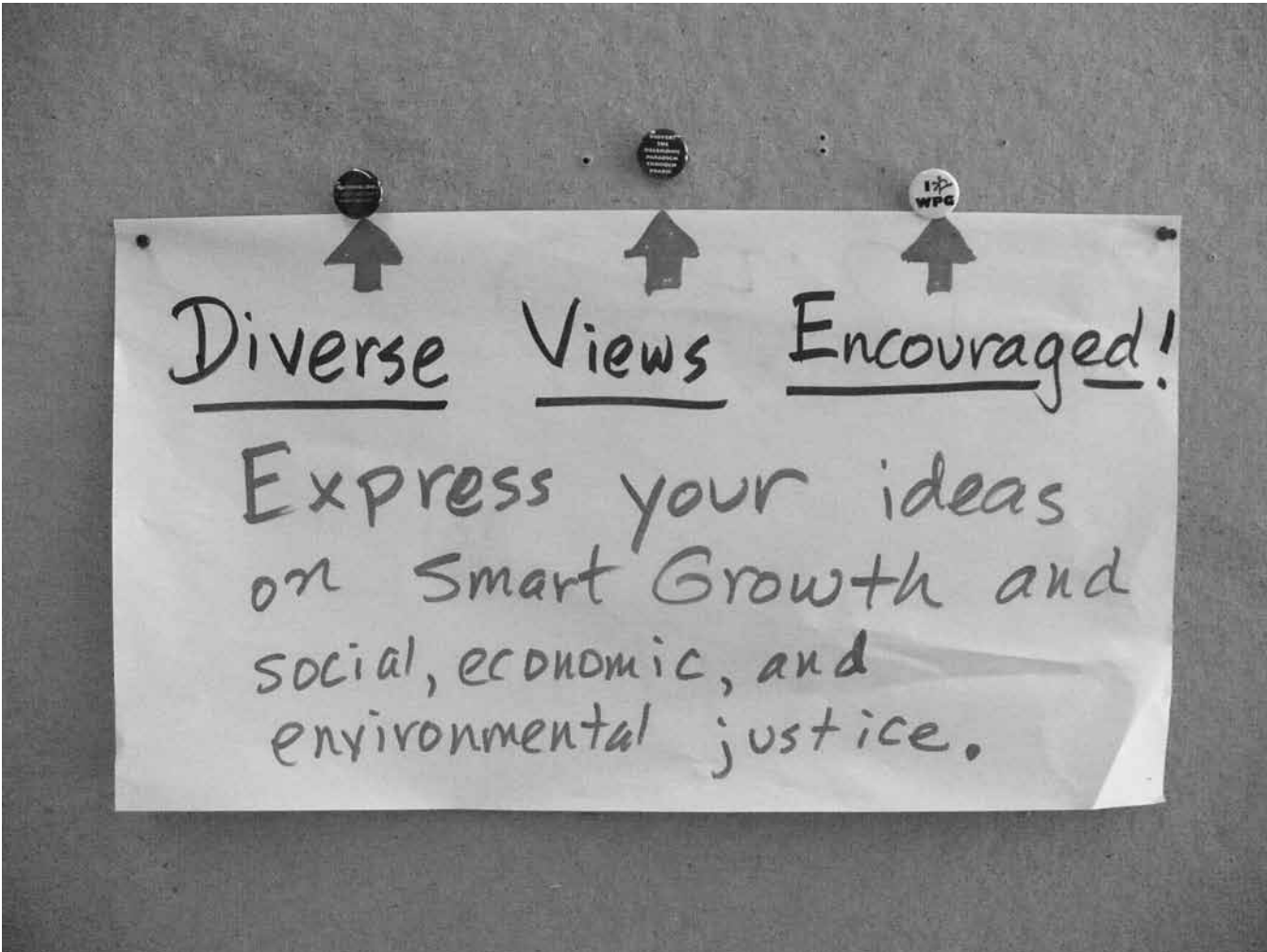
Photo by Thomas McGurk



TOP: Saturday lunch panel session 'Justice, Equity and Rights in the City,' with (from left to right) Peter Marcuse, Martha Matsuoka, James Holston, Teresa Caldeira and Ed Soja

BOTTOM: Maria Poblet, Causa Justa/Just Cause and Right to the City Alliance at the conference opening event.

Photo by Molly Johnson



took participants on tours of the Oakland Urban Villages Project, the East Bay Greenway, Bayview-Hunters Point, Silicon Valley and the Oakland Army Base, among other local sites. That evening, a roundtable organized by Miriam Chion, a local conference committee member and representative of the Association for Bay Area Governments, provided insight into the challenges of bringing together stakeholders with differing resources and agendas—planners, community leaders, citizens—to discuss and formulate planning strategies. The focus of the panel was on the struggle for urban and regional sustainability in the eastern

neighborhoods of San Francisco. Panelists included Amit Ghosh (former Chief of Comprehensive Planning), Lisa Feldstein (former Planning Commissioner), Ada Chan (former Mission Anti-Displacement Coalition leader) and Oscar Grande (community leader and activist).

Two whole days were then devoted to workshops, panels

and paper presentations, over eighty in total. Topics ranged from community economic development to food security to smart growth to sustainable transportation to eco-design. One lunchtime session involved a conversation about the views of Jane Jacobs with the authors and editors of two new books about Jacobs, *What We See: Advancing the Observations of Jane*

THIS PAGE: Murals and art in the Mission District of San Francisco.

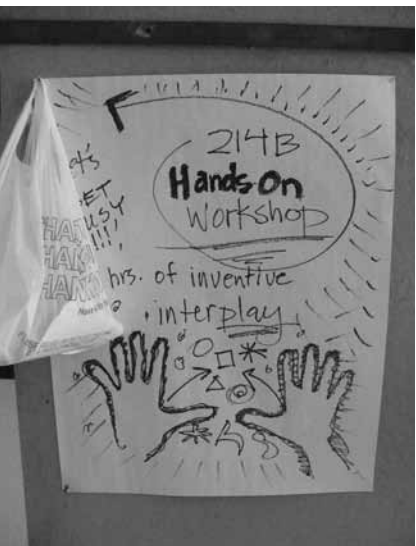


LEFT: Architect Michael Pyatok discusses designing for culturally diverse, lower income communities

MIDDLE ROW, LEFT: Session on 'Confronting Crises' with presenters (from left to right) Marshall Feldman, Chester Hartman and Peter Marcuse

MIDDLE ROW, RIGHT: Alex Schafran, conference organizer, welcoming everyone on opening night

BOTTOM, LEFT: Eve Baron (center) discusses community planning in New York City



Jacobs and The Battle for Gotham: New York in the Shadow of Robert Moses and Jane Jacobs. Another lunchtime program consisted of a panel discussion on the theme of “Justice, Equity and Rights in the City: A Conversation about Contemporary Urban Idea(l)s” featuring Teresa P.R. Caldeira, Peter Marcuse, James Holston, Martha Matsuoka and Ed Soja. The panelists expressed hope in contemporary struggles for land and housing rights and environmental justice but also cautioned for the need to define justice in terms of a substantive form of equality, one that acknowledges and challenges systemic discrimination, rather than equity in the abstract.

The conference was capped with a three-hour wandering tour of the city. Throughout the conference, film screenings, art exhibitions, lively music and tasty food provided lots of occasions for socializing.

Many thanks to the local organizing committee for

making the conference such a successful event, attended by 450 people, including members from as far as the Netherlands, Greece and Taiwan. Also, thanks to the Department of City and Regional Planning and the College of Environmental Design at the University of California, Berkeley for hosting many of the activities. If you are interested in learning more about the Just Metropolis conference or would

like to be kept abreast of post-conference developments, visit the conference site at www.justmetropolis.org.

Norma Rantisi is an editor of Progressive Planning Magazine and co-chair of the Planners Network Steering Committee.



Photo by Nicholas Dykstra



Photo by Thomas McGurk

TOP: Mobile workshop: Responding to the Foreclosure Crisis - The Oakland Land Trust

BOTTOM: Mobile workshop: Ecocity Builders' Urban Village

Angotti, 7th Generation, cont'd from page 2

while the loose organization that characterizes them may appear to be a liability, it can also be a necessary and useful tool for building alternatives. Still, networks can be counterproductive if the networkers lose sight of their political role and detach from action. Many networks arose in recent decades in the wake of the collapse of major left organizations and parties. Planners Network filled the gap left by Planners for Equal Opportunity. The World Social Forum arose as the socialist and communist parties, and the socialist camp, faded away, helping to implant the notion that there are other alternatives to global capitalism. Conscious of the mistakes made by the old left, particularly a blindness to participatory democracy, networkers have sought to restrain the forces from within our own ranks that seek to impose new, stifling orthodoxies. Given the historic role of racism and xenophobia in the U.S., networks also have a responsibility to insure that leadership by progressive people of color not be displaced.

But there are some serious problems when networks become the main or only format for action. We need to realize that networks exist both as a sign of our collective weakness and because there are no serious alternatives. In the U.S., we have well-funded efforts by the Democratic Party to convince us that *they* are the only “practical” organized alternative.

They treat our networks the same way the Republican Party treats the Tea Party, as an escape valve, a mine for new ideas and a font for votes when an election comes around. They have a vested interest in guaranteeing that we won't grow or threaten their own hegemony. The monopoly of the two parties and their corporate media outlets stifles serious political alternatives—not only third parties but any independent political organization. In this nation known for its pragmatism, the Democrats constantly remind us how important it is to line up for the next piece of watered-down legislation while they turn their backs on grassroots demands for fundamental changes that guarantee basic human rights—to housing, to healthcare, to the city—and an end to corporate control over our lives. This is further reinforced by the foundations and charities that fund “social change” initiatives, many of them with openly progressive aims, that orchestrate and limit protest to extract short-term concessions and at the same time turn away from the solidarity needed to bring about wider and more fundamental change.

At the global level the limitations of networks are even more striking. Too many existing networks depend on funding from wealthy northern countries and are dominated by educated elites who easily navigate global institutions and speak the languages of the dominant cultures. Even when

they are personally committed to radical change, the elites are drawn into the interminable establishment conferences dedicated to poverty-reduction (every funding recipient now has to have a “pro-poor” growth policy), global sustainability, food security, indigenous rights and more. Instead of supporting political power for the historically oppressed, their institutions and funders support networks that drain human and financial resources from the grassroots efforts that seek a deep social and political transformation.

In the end, networking and communication is neither progressive nor backward in and of itself. Rob Robinson's take on the U.S. Social Forum provoked controversy and a much-needed discussion about the real politics behind our propensity to network. This is worth some added discussion in Planners Network.

The Long Struggle for Community-Based Planning in New York City

by *Eve Baron*

Some 100 community-based plans have emerged from decades of activism in the largest city in the U.S. Community advocates have also spurred major reforms in the way the city plans. But planning in the city is still largely controlled by a strong mayor. Recent efforts by the Campaign for Community-Based Planning to level the playing field have managed to put reform on the agenda, but prospects for a breakthrough in the short run are limited.

New York's Planning Context: Top-Down and Unequal

New York is a dense, post-industrial city with nearly 300 diverse neighborhoods. The city shows strong patterns of unequal development and inequitable distribution of urban amenities and burdens. Income disparity is pronounced: median household income in the wealthiest census tract is over \$188,000, while in the poorest it is just over \$9,000.

New York's neighborhoods have shown remarkable resilience in the face of waves of disinvestment in the 1970s, neglect in the 1980s and reinvestment that bypassed community control and often resulted in the displacement of long-time residents. Community-based organizations were often the only thing that kept neighborhoods afloat by stepping in where the government should otherwise have been by providing social and legal services, building housing, combating drug epidemics and taking over schools.

New York has what is known as a strong mayoral system which results in strong mayoral control over land use decisions. Seven of the thirteen city planning commissioners who make up the City Planning Commission are appointed by the mayor—one of whom is also the commissioner of the New York City Department of City Planning

(DCP). The commission has the definitive vote on all planning decisions and the DCP plays a critical role by providing advice and recommendations to the commission.

The result of this structure is that there is strong mayoral control over what goes into the public approval pipeline and over what it looks like when it comes out of the pipeline. Still, there are checks and balances built into the system. Borough officials have a say as do community boards, the fifty-nine local self-governing entities whose members are appointed by a borough-wide elected official, but their recommendations are only advisory and not determinative. New York City's legislature, the City Council, also has a vote that counts, but the council rarely votes against the mayor given how much power the mayor wields over capital and expense budget items in their districts.

Advances for Community-Based Planning

Despite this unlevel playing field for planning decisions, or maybe because of it, there is actually a great deal of community-based planning going on in New York City. There are nearly 100 documented community-based plans, including plans for open space, waterfront access, alternative development and comprehensive neighborhood development.

In 1989-1991, the city adopted two important planning tools in response to strong pressure from community groups to decentralize decision-making. One was Fair Share, a tool strongly supported by environmental justice advocates to provide a greater local voice in the siting of unwanted land uses and to more equitably share the burdens of city services across rich and poor neighborhoods. The city now must disclose its needs to site polluting facilities

(such as bus depots, sanitation garages and power generation facilities) and allow communities to propose alternative sites if they so choose. Fair Share, at least on paper, was very good news for communities with excessive environmental burdens.

The other reform was in Section 197-a of the New York City Charter. This section allows communities to produce their own comprehensive plans and have them go through an official adoption process on the way to becoming city policy. It was hailed as a victory for self-determined community growth and development, especially in the large and growing number of neighborhoods that had already undertaken community plans on their own.

Thus, "197-a plans" were hailed and intensely sought after, as many community activists saw the potential to decentralize planning and encourage active participation. There are now twelve officially adopted 197-a plans and others in the pipeline, most from environmentally burdened and low-income neighborhoods like Greenpoint, Williamsburg, Red Hook and Sunset Park in Brooklyn; the South Bronx; and East and West Harlem.

But 197-a planning has not been the strong tool that communities had hoped for. The record of implementation is not good. The plans take years to create and there is no dedicated funding for them. They also have no legally binding connection to the budget or to land use decisions. And they must be sponsored by the community board, whose 50-member appointed volunteer delegation does not necessarily reflect the full diversity of a neighborhood.

So, what could have been a tool to empower communities and reconstruct the city's planning process from the bottom up has become a missed opportunity. Community plans cannot get traction or compete with the plans of developers and as a result they have failed in many cases to guide neighborhood development. Moreover, in some cases the City Planning Commission has rezoned neighborhoods in blatant contradiction of adopted 197-a plans.

There have been a few small successes from 197-a plans and, since communities have so few other real planning tools, the focus for many advocates has been to reform the planning process.

The Campaign for Community-Based Planning

To support reform of the planning process, the Campaign for Community-Based Planning was created in 2001. Members of the campaign include the community groups that have been through the 197-a planning process, the groups that have helped them, elected officials who believe in community-based planning and good government groups and academics who seek transparency and accountability in planning. The task force that spearheaded the campaign has done the organizing, created an internal governance structure and leadership roles, got limited funding (now depleted) and developed an agenda and policy recommendations. The goals of the campaign are: a citywide planning framework that spells out growth targets and benchmarks; the provision of planning expertise for communities that isn't controlled by the mayor; community plans that reflect diverse community interests; and implementation of community planning recommendations.

The campaign has measured success in inches, not miles. It has facilitated some limited planning assistance for community boards and brought some attention to making boards representative and more reflective of neighborhood demographics. It has been successful in getting some elected officials to realize the city's failure to listen to its neighborhoods. Community-based planning shows up in all the campaign rhetoric. For example, the two main Democratic Party candidates for mayor in the last election incorporated many elements of the campaign's program in their platforms (but Michael Bloomberg, who won by less than 5 percent, has steadfastly ignored the campaign).

The campaign has its work cut out for it as it strives to give community-based plans teeth and create a citywide planning framework that rests on

a solid foundation of community-based plans. Not only is foundation money drying up, community-based advocacy groups tend to be preoccupied with other, more urgent tasks, including their own survival. Also, accomplishing these goals requires a redistribution of power within city government, no simple feat under the best of circumstances. It is difficult to envision how to keep the fight going in the long run without a shift in tactics. It appears that to maintain the broad coalition for community-based planning over the long term, advocates will need to take advantage of new opportunities and use flexible tactics to continue mobilizing support.

Although the mayor appointed a commission to review the charter this year and gave it the mandate to “give city government a top-to-bottom overhaul,” and although there was potential to address land use and planning issues in the context of this mandate, the only issue that is likely to be on the ballot as a referendum item this year is term limits (something voters addressed twice already). Yet the lull in the

economy, which has reduced development pressures, gives communities time to plan, reflect and strategize. And the election of several new, more activist-based city council members bears hope for planning reform that will finally give communities a shot at plans that work for them, not against them.

Eve Baron teaches at the Pratt Institute Graduate Center for Planning and the Environment. This article is adapted from a presentation at the 2010 Towards a Just Metropolis Conference.

Researching the “Just City”: A Study of Urban Revitalization in Toronto, Canada

by Jed Kilbourn

How can you take an abstract idea like the “just city” and apply it to a real-world urban revitalization project? It may be nice to have a theory about how to make cities more just, but what does it take to actually do it?

These questions are the basis of a research project I am completing as part of the Master in Environmental Studies program in planning at York University, Toronto.

The starting point for my research was to understand the relationship between the built form of cities and the ideas that produce it. For example, Hausmann’s redesign of Paris in the late nineteenth century reflected a particular ideology and sensibility of how a city ought to be designed. Hausmann’s Paris represents one of the first examples of what later became known as “slum clearance”—projects designed to fix the disease-ridden and overcrowded neighborhoods that later typified the industrial city.

My research revolves around two central questions. The first question, and perhaps the more difficult of the two, asks how social justice can be determined, while the second question asks how elements of social justice are present in the implementation of a particular revitalization project.


Toronto’s Tower Neighborhoods

To explore these questions I chose to focus on a project called Tower Renewal. Tower Renewal attempts to revitalize Toronto’s towers, a type of housing development popular during the city’s postwar economic boom. In addition to the typical post-war suburban bungalow, between the 1950s and the 1980s multi-story tower apartment buildings were built throughout the city at an incredible rate—nearly 30,000 apartment units in 1968 alone, for example. The development of these tower neighborhoods gave Toronto a unique urban form.

Initially, the tower neighborhoods were considered the most modern and sophisticated housing in Toronto. They were designed for young, upwardly mobile tenants, similar to that of the condo boom that is currently sweeping Toronto and other North American cities. Apartments were designed with amenities like swimming pools and tennis courts and were often planned to provide their tenants with easy access to highways and transportation. They epitomized the modernist ideal of “towers in the park” (the buildings themselves often have a 10 percent footprint on a lot that is primarily a sea of grass).


Since these early glory days, the tower neighborhoods have become synonymous with issues like poverty and crime. Buildings have been poorly maintained and residents have little access to basic amenities. This phenomenon is illustrated in recent research by the Centre for Urban and Community Studies (CUCS) at the University of Toronto, which examines thirty years worth of household income data for Toronto. The research shows an increase in wealth in the downtown area, with a corresponding increase in poverty in the inner suburbs, but relatively little change in the zone between the two. Dubbed “The Three Cities within Toronto,” the research identifies three trends: income inequality, social polarization and spatial segregation.


The trends shown by the “Three Cities” research echo trends elsewhere in North America, frequently referred to as the “decline of the middle class.” The decline of the towers mirrors the decrease in Toronto (and Canada, more broadly) of well-paid, unionized manufacturing jobs, contributing, in part, to the first two trends of income inequality and social polarization. The “Three Cities” inhabit geographically distinct parts of Toronto, creating the third trend of spatial segregation. The wealthier city #1 closely adheres to Toronto’s subway system outside of the downtown core. The rest of the city, represented by city #2, which had little change in income, and city #3 which



Department of International Development, Community, and Environment

www.clarku.edu/idce





Explore an M.A. in Community Development and Planning at Clark University

Students in the Community Development and Planning Program learn alternative ways of thinking and transforming communities to achieve greater equity and social justice.

The Community Development and Planning program provides current and future community development practitioners, activists, and scholars with a strong foundation—based on theory, skill development, and practice—to take on the challenges of urban revitalization in the United States. Our program links theory to practice through insightful participation of practitioners in seminars, high quality internships, and studio and practicum courses that allow students to learn directly from residents and community-based organizations about their resources, priorities, and strategies.

IDCE Department of International Development, Community, and Environment
950 Main Street, Worcester, MA 01610
phone: 508-793-7205 • fax: 508-793-8820 • email: idce@clarku.edu

showed a decline in income, relies on a bus network that connects well with the subway, but not the rest of the city. Consequently, the cost of housing in city #3, including the tower neighborhoods, is more affordable than in the downtown core, and its towers are home to many of Toronto’s economically marginalized groups, including a vast number of newcomers to Canada.

Toronto’s Tower Renewal

In an effort to reverse the decline of the once-exalted towers, the City of Toronto created the Tower Renewal Office in 2008. Housed in City Hall, the staff was assembled from a number of different divisions in the city, though predominantly the City Planning Division and the Economic Development & Culture Division. The initial proposal for the project, published by the City of Toronto as the “Mayor’s Tower Renewal Opportunities Book” (the “Opportunities Book”), had a number of key points, including:

- *Retrofit existing buildings for energy efficiency.* The towers are some of the most energy-inefficient buildings in Toronto. The proposal is to add external cladding to the buildings, a technique found in many northern European countries.
- *Infill development.* Because many of the tower neighborhoods are far from basic services, the proposal incorporates the addition of services such as farmers markets, community services and settlement agencies at the base of the towers.
- *Community improvements.* Community improvements incorporate ideas of connecting the neighborhoods to the services that they need (recreation centers, childcare, healthcare, etc.). Unfortunately, many of these communities are not well connected and are often not walkable, a situation which was made clear by walkability studies done jointly by Paul Hess of the University of Toronto and Jane Farrow of Jane’s Walk.
- *Transit City.* Many of the tower neighborhoods are in areas poorly served by public transit. Transit City is a City of Toronto initiative to develop light rail infrastructure and connect the inner suburbs with the rest of the city. The proposal highlights the importance of the transit connections made by Transit City.

Tower Renewal has been applauded for its attempt to revitalize communities that are impoverished and struggling. At the same time, there are some, like myself, who are enthusiastic supporters of the project but are concerned about questions of social justice. Sometimes a blueprint for the built environment suffers because of the process used to implement it. For example, Hausmann’s vision of a beautiful Paris came at a steep cost to the people who were displaced when it was actually built. The nature of such costs can be better understood with the help of the just city concept.

Ideas of a Just City

Harvard Professor Susan Fainstein, in a discussion of planning for a just city, suggests that a planning process needs “sensitivity toward process and discourse as well ... but never divorced from recognition of the political-economic structure and spatial form in which we find ourselves and those to which we wish to move.” (See the review of Fainstein’s book in *Progressive Planning* Issue No. 183).

What I particularly like about Fainstein’s approach is her refusal to divorce planning from political-economic structure. This is no surprise to political economists, though articulations of justice (entering at least their second millennium in Western thought) seem to be somehow removed from the political and economic structures in which they find themselves. The challenge in any articulation of justice and its relationship to the city is that the context within which we find ourselves (whether we call it late twentieth century capitalism, a post-Fordist regime, post-industrial capitalism or neoliberal capitalism) is largely unjust (at least from a traditionally Marxist perspective), and I am left struggling with the question of what we do while we wait for a more just society.

Fainstein’s work resonates because it is an approach I call “pragmatic utopianism.” It is one of many responses to the rational planning of the mid-twentieth century. I also believe that the creation of just cities involves active conversations with communities in order to determine what is considered just for them. This defines justice in terms of the context in which it occurs. According to Fainstein, “Democracy is desirable,

but not always.” In contemporary planning practice, democratic principles, as evidenced by community consultations or design charrettes, are commonly lauded as the only just way of engaging communities. They may be the most common, though they are not necessarily the most just.

The Just City and Tower Renewal

My research, still in progress, looks at the way that social justice either is or is not built into the process of implementing Tower Renewal. I chose Tower Renewal for this because the primary document for the project, the “Opportunities Book,” articulates issues of equity like equal access to transportation, social services and economic development. Without using the term *social justice*, the book transparently, but implicitly, incorporates views of social justice. Even though it is not explicitly stated, the question I have is, “What does social justice look like in a project that clearly, if not explicitly, articulates socially just goals?”

Tower Renewal is an attempt to address a multitude of issues faced by the tower neighborhoods. Despite its ambitious vision and implied just city goals, one challenge faced by the project is that, by not having social justice as a specific goal, in the process of bringing planning ideas to an already built city, social justice can easily be dismissed or forgotten, which could make the tower neighborhoods vulnerable to large-scale injustice. Also, the process of implementing the project, while seemingly democratic, could reinforce existing inequalities.

We need more research that openly discusses and explicitly articulates concepts of social justice in the context of urban planning. This kind of research can help us take small steps toward bringing noble and significant ideas to fruition in the built environment. Our true test as planners, then, becomes not how just the cities we imagine can be, but how we build justice with the people who inhabit them.

Jed Kilbourn is a student in the Master in Environmental Studies program in planning at York University, Toronto.

Planners Network on the Web

Currently available at www.plannersnetwork.org:

The latest E-Newsletter

Downloadable student Disorientation Guide

Job Postings

The latest Individual Membership Directory from February 2008

Local PN Chapter details

Information on Young Planners Network

Over 200 articles from *Planners Network Magazine* and *Progressive Planning* from 1997 to the present

PDF’s of issues since 2002 (PN members only)

13 Case Studies and Working Papers

Planners Network issue statements

Planners Network History

The Community Land Trust Reader

Review by Pierre Clavel

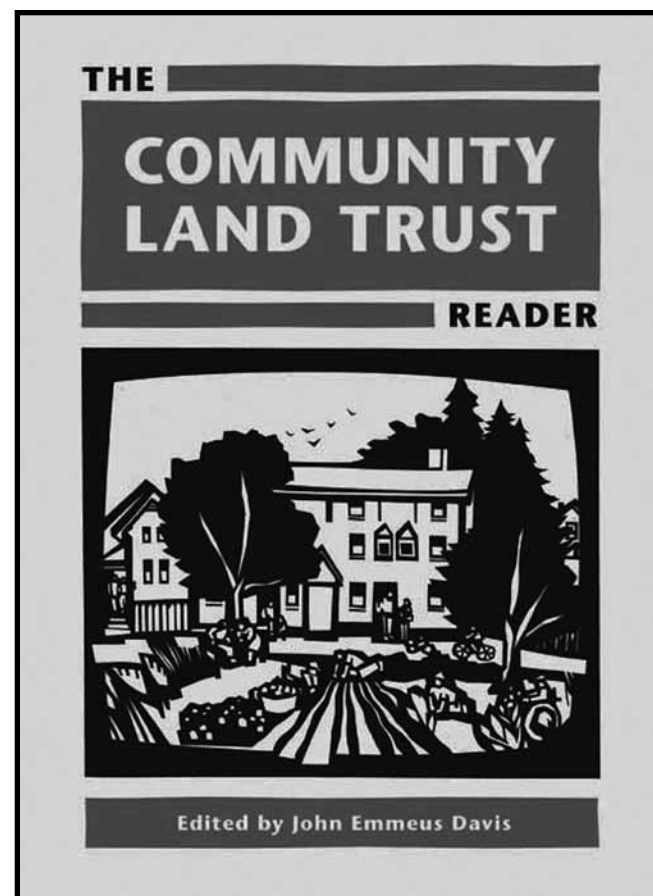
The Community Land Trust Reader.
Edited by John Emmeus Davis
Cambridge, MA: Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 2010.
600 pp., \$35.00 hard cover.

One of the keynote speakers at the *Towards a Just Metropolis* conference this past June in Berkeley asked us for a big, overarching idea to move us forward. If there were such an idea in the conference sessions that followed, getting the United States off its dependency on speculative gain, an idea underlying several sessions, might be it.

If so, this new *Reader* will prove a great resource. It recounts the history of the idea to eliminate the speculative gain from land, back at least to Henry George in the nineteenth century. It describes and documents, in enough detail to counter any argument, the emergence of the movement and institutions underlying the community land trust (CLT), a device that provides for collective ownership and control of land and security of housing tenure.

The chief authority, and person responsible for collecting this history and assemblage of concepts and practices, is John Emmeus Davis, now a principal in Burlington Associates, a consulting collective in Burlington, Vermont. Before co-founding Burlington Associates in 1993, Davis had been housing director in Burlington under mayors Bernie Sanders and Peter Clavelle. Before that he had been an activist and organizer in Tennessee and Cincinnati, did a Ph.D. at Cornell, published the impressive book *Contested Ground* and then took a position at the Institute for Community Economics (ICE) in Greenfield, Massachusetts where he worked in support of CLTs in several places, including the then-fledgling efforts in Burlington.

The CLT movement today is flourishing. Davis reports 240 land trusts now in operation. In 1980, when Chuck Matthei, a charismatic organizer, took the directorship



of ICE there was substantial experience with CLTs and several start-ups were in operation, but less than a half dozen functioning organizations met the three criteria CLT organizers had painstakingly evolved: 1) they were to be “trusts” committed to preserving the viability of land tenure for the inhabitants; 2) they were to be community entities, rather than enclaves of like-minded people; and 3) they were to be committed to the poorest members of the community.

Matthei found fertile ground and gradually more groups emerged. When he organized the *CLT Handbook* in 1982, there were still only a handful of CLTs. There was the experience of Robert Swann and Slater King’s “New Communities” project emerging from the Albany (Georgia) Movement of the 1960s—though it was soon to be forced to sell all

of its 5,000 acres of land. And there were promising start-ups in Maine, East Tennessee and Cincinnati. But by the end of the decade ICE had built up its staff to twenty-one members and had organized three national conferences—Atlanta in 1987, Stony Point, New York, in 1988 and Burlington, Vermont, in 1990. Matthei left ICE to form Equity Trust, Inc. in 1990, but the technical assistance function was now being provided by a number of others. ICE organized its last (of nine) national conferences in 2003, but there were 100 CLTs by the mid-1990s and there soon emerged regional coalitions, a national network, more annual conferences, a National Land Trust Academy, support from the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy and eventually this new *Reader*.

The *Reader* touches all the bases. Davis begins with his authoritative “Origins and Evolution of the Community Land Trust in the United States,” forty-five large, very readable pages that summarize and also transcend the selections that follow—one might buy the book for this alone. But the selections that follow provide the CLT history and ideals from their sources.

Part One, “Precursors,” includes selections from Henry George, Ebenezer Howard’s “Garden Cities of Tomorrow,” notes from “Gandhi Today: A Report on Mahatma Gandhi’s Successors” and a selection from the 1972 Ralph Borsodi and Bob Swann publication, *The Community Land Trust* (1972), summarizing the experience until that time.

Part Two is “Prophets and Pioneers.” It includes selections from writings or interviews of Arthur E. Morgan, Ralph Borsodi, Robert Swann, Charles Sherrod and Marie Cirillo.

Part Three is “Definitions and Purposes.” Here there are more key statements from *The Community Land Trust* and *The Community Land Trust Handbook* (1982). We have the definition of a CLT inserted in the Federal Register when Davis and Tim McKenzie, working out of Burlington City Hall, got then-Congressman Bernie Sanders to insert it in the 1992 housing legislation; and statements by Swann (1992), Matthei (2000) and Davis (2006).

In the last half of the book, Davis moves on to more applied topics, though this *Reader* is far from a how-

to-do-it handbook. Part Four is “Affordable Housing” and includes themes like “Subsidy Recapture,” “Deed Restrictions vs. Ground Leases,” the interesting issue of city hall involvements and several other pieces.

Part Five is “Beyond Housing” and includes topics like “regional integration,” the “theory and practices of land reform,” the question of partnerships between community and conservation land trusts and “preserving farms for farmers.”

Part Six is “Beyond the United States,” with chapters on England, Australia and Scotland.

Part Seven is “Beyond the Horizon” and features chapters on general topics by Anne Shlay, Tim McKenzie, Davis and Rick Jacobus, Peter Barnes, David Morris and James Libby.

Throughout the *Reader* it is noteworthy how Davis has managed to achieve several goals at once. Most appealing to many will be the way he has represented people, providing just enough of their lives and struggles to give the book a level of humanity not usually found in books of this size (600 pages). With this volume we know a little more about Henry George and Ebenezer Howard, Ralph Borsodi, Arthur Morgan, Robert Swann, Chuck Matthei, Kirby White, Tim Mckenzie, Lucy Poulin, Marie Cirillo, Brenda Torpy, Julie Orvis and others.

We also see in the *Reader* the values that made this set of legal devices and institutions something people would commit their lives to. We see this in Ralph Borsodi, Robert Swann and Slater King, Charles Sherrod and others in the Albany Movement. But we also see this perhaps above all in Chuck Matthei, at one crucial time the central figure taking their dreams and their difficulties and crafting final touches on the CLT model. On one occasion (page 282), after invoking many of these names, Matthei noted an old labor poster by Jim Dombrowski of the 1930s Republic Steel Strike where workers were gunned down by Pinkertons: “Remember well the dead. Acquaint yourselves with their names.”

The Community Land Trust Reader, put together in Davis’ sure hands, does that.

Join Planners Network

an important voice for
progressive planning, social
equity, and environmental justice

Back Issues

Back issues of Progressive Planning are available (in print).

Visit our web site for a full description of the issues and details of how to order.

\$10 - Single issue
\$8 - Each for more than one

Order at
www.plannersnetwork.org

Or send a check to:
Planners Network,
106 West Sibley Hall
Cornell University
Ithaca, NY 14853, USA

Join the Conversation, Join the PN LISTSERV

You'll find new ideas, debates, and news of jobs and events on our lively Listserv. *Be part of it.*

Free to members and non-members.

To join send an email to majordomo@list.pratt.edu with "**subscribe pn-net**" (without the quotes) in the body of the message (not the subject line).

You'll be sent instructions on how to use the list.

How to Advertise

Reach progressive planners around the world by placing an ad in the magazine.

Reasonable rates, big impact.

Check the website for rates, closing dates, sizes and other details. www.plannersnetwork.org

Join the Progressive Planners Network
and Receive all these Valuable Benefits!

- 4 Quarterly Issues of Progressive Planning Magazine
- The monthly "Members Only" e-newsletter – filled with job openings, events and conference calendar, member updates, online resources, and more
- Full and Free Access to over 10 years of online PN archives
- News about PN events
- Discount for the annual PN Conference

USA		Canada	
\$25	Students and income under \$25,000	\$25	Students and income under \$30,000
\$35	Income between \$25,000 and \$50,000	\$35	Income between \$30,000 and \$60,000
\$50	Income over \$50,000	\$50	Income over \$60,000
\$100	Sustaining Members	\$100	Sustaining Members
\$1,000	Lifetime Members	\$1,000	Lifetime Members
\$50/yr	For organizations and libraries	\$50/yr	For organizations and libraries
International Members: Please send US funds only.		For Canadian orders mail form to: Carla Klassen, Dept. of Geography, Room 5047, 100 St. George St., University of Toronto, M5S 3G3	

The Progressive Planning Reader

The indispensable selection of 47 articles from Progressive Planning about:
Politics and Planning • Urban Design • Planning Education
Race, Gender and Diversity • Community Planning • Sustainability, Environment and Health
Globalization and International Issues •Transportation and Information • Regional Planning

Articles by: Tom Angotti, Gail Dubrow, Ann Forsyth, Ted Jojola, Marie Kennedy, Norman Krumholz, Peter Marcuse, Michael Pyatok, Barbara Rahder, Ken Reardon, Janet Smith, Leonardo Vazquez...and many more.

Number of Copies	Price (in US dollars)
Fewer than 5 copies	\$12 per copy, postage paid
5 - 15 copies	\$8 per copy, postage paid
15+ copies	\$4 per copy, postage paid
Box of 30 copies	\$100 per box
(Price includes postage and handling)	

Table of Contents and order information at www.plannersnetwork.org.
Or send a check to:
Planners Network, 106 West Sibley Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853, USA



Your Information

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State/Province _____ Zip/Postal Code _____
Country _____ Email (for queries) _____
Current member _____ Renewing member _____

Mail completed form to: Planners Network, 106 West Sibley Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853, USA;
Fax order to: (612) 626-0600

Payment

☐ **PayPal at www.plannersnetwork.org**
This is simple, saves us money, and you don't have to send in this form!
Note what you are buying in the "payment for" box.

☐ **Or check enclosed** (payable to Planners Network)

☐ **Or credit card:** Visa _____ Mastercard _____
Card number _____
Name on card _____ Expiration date _____
Signature _____
Phone (for queries) _____

In This Issue:

- The Invisible Cyclists of Los Angeles
- The 2016 Olympics in Rio
- Mexico City's Right to the City Charter
- Community Planning in New York City

Also...

- Pierre Clavel Profiles Pat Rosenthal
- Pierre Clavel Reviews *The Community Land Trust Reader*
- Tom Angotti on Networking and the US Social Forum

Time to Renew?

Please check the date on your mailing label and if it is past, this will be your last issue unless we receive your annual dues **RIGHT AWAY!** See inside back cover for minimum dues amounts. And while you're at it send us an UPDATE on what you're doing.

MOVING? Please send us your new address.