

# Progressive Planning

The Magazine of Planners Network

## NEW ORLEANS: THE ROAD HOME?



Photo by James Perry

### Also In This Issue:

**The PETRA Debate**

**Struggle of the Negev Bedouin**

**Barcelona's Neighborhood Federation**

# 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*

## Demanding Our Right to the City

*by Cuz Potter*

Reflecting on "The Right to the City Alliance: Time to Democratize Urban Governance" (*Progressive Planning*, Fall 2009), and after a careful reading of Alliance members' mission statements, I began to think about how our cities got to their current state and what we might demand the city of the future to be.

Every new life, thrust into the cold, announces itself with a cry and a demand. It demands a better world that supplies the warmth and security that fostered such miraculous growth and development. Now is such a time. A new life is beginning. And we demand a better world.

We are now witnessing the birth of a new age. As the parents of this new age, our decisions today and tomorrow will guide and shape its development and growth. To do so effectively, we must come face to face with our own strengths and weaknesses. This, in turn, can only be accomplished by understanding our own genealogy.

For centuries we have been moving to cities to fulfill our hearts' desires. During the first half of the twentieth century, our parents and grandparents built cities of production. Like children learning to master their environment to satisfy their immediate needs, our grandparents taught themselves how to turn nature to human ends. By applying scientific rationalization to the problem of **cont. on page 20**

## Fixing Unequal Cities

*by William W. Goldsmith and Edward J. Blakely*

Economic and political forces no longer combat poverty—they generate poverty! Our research on the plight of America's urban poor reveals the damaging divisions that isolate poor minority residents of cities from the middle-class suburban majority, and how the needs of the permanently poor have been unmet through alternating years of promises and neglect. Our remedy: a progressive turn away from thirty years of conservative policies.

The urban working class has been pushed out of industrial jobs through global economic restructuring, and the Wall Street meltdown has aggravated underemployment, depleted public services and sharpened racial and class inequalities. The current approach in the U.S. puts Americans out of work and lowers the standard of living for all, but especially for poor people in cities. Powerful interests have set rules that permit imports from foreign sweatshops, assist companies to move production offshore, reduce taxes and regulations on speculators and leave them free to move their assets abroad and encourage people to consume excessively at home.

In order to meet outside competition, metropolitan business elites demand that municipal leaders support the development of competitive cities, making them more attractive for investors and top managers and more efficient for production and commerce. Almost inevitably, as cities take steps along the global-competitive path, **cont. on page 22**

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**Errata:** An article in the Summer 2010 edition of PPM, 'The Long Struggle for Community-Based Planning in New York City' contained an error. The first subheading in the article should read "New York's Planning Context."

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# “The Road Home” Is a Road to Nowhere for Black New Orleanians

by James Perry

Days after Hurricane Katrina swept ashore in 2005, the federal levees failed, filling New Orleans with water. The combination of the near miss of the Hurricane and the levee collapse proved to be one of the greatest disasters ever faced by a metropolis. Katrina's wrath decimated nearly 200,000 units of housing in Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas. Officials scrambled to develop long- and short-term recovery efforts.

Louisiana organized around a unique difficulty. In many cases, insurance companies deemed the damage to homes to be the result of flood rather than wind damage. For various reasons, many homeowners either didn't have flood insurance or their flood policies were insufficient to cover their damages. As a result of these and other problematic procedures by insurance companies, hundreds of thousands of homeowners were unable to access the necessary funds to rebuild.

These catastrophes created massive loss and horrible suffering, but they also presented an incredible opportunity. In the wake of such loss, it was clear that federal, state and local governments would have to intervene, and that a significant and aggressive government housing

program would be essential to recovery. This need created an opportunity to craft a program that could succeed where earlier federal housing programs had failed, especially in the case of racial equality, where a new program could have helped repair rather than further enhance the racial inequities in New Orleans. Sadly, this was an opportunity unrealized.

Louisiana, through its Louisiana Recovery Authority (LRA), working with the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), created the Road Home program to assist Louisiana homeowners affected by Hurricanes Katrina and/or Rita in rebuilding their homes. Congress allocated more than \$11 billion in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding to the program. Since the program's inception, nearly 230,000 people have applied for assistance.

The program offered the possibility of returning all homeowners in New Orleans to their homes. Regrettably, a fatal flaw in the Road Home program caused it to fail thousands of New Orleans homeowners in their efforts to rebuild, and at the same time it enhanced racial housing disparities. Rather than a road

home, many black homeowners have found a road to despair and discrimination.

The program's failure relates to a fundamental flaw in its design: HUD and LRA created a recovery program that links housing assistance to the depressed values of black families' pre-storm segregated housing. Under the terms of the Road Home program, rebuilding grants are calculated based on the *lower* of two figures: the pre-storm market value of the home, or the cost to repair the storm damage to the home. Homes in New Orleans' black neighborhoods generally have lower appraisal values than homes in white neighborhoods, largely due to decades of racial discrimination in the Louisiana housing market that has caused and reinforced segregation in housing.

Here's a demonstration of the flaw. Consider two identical New Orleans homes, each with three bedrooms and two baths. Both homes are of brick construction and flooded with six feet of water during Hurricane Katrina. The only substantial difference is that the home in the white neighborhood is worth approximately \$150,000 while the home in the black neighborhood is worth approximately \$90,000.

The estimated repair cost for each of the homes is approximately \$150,000. The homeowner in the white neighborhood would receive \$150,000 in assistance while the black homeowner would receive only \$90,000. Shockingly, even though these homes are identical and have identical Katrina-related damage, the white homeowner would receive a full \$60,000 more than the black homeowner. The white homeowner would therefore have enough money to fully renovate his or her home, while the black homeowner would have only enough money to complete just over half of the home renovation.

It is estimated that in 2008 as many as 35,000 black New Orleanians received unequal grant payments under the flawed and discriminatory Road Home formula. Even the former executive director of the LRA, Paul Rainwater, agreed that African Americans were more likely to get payouts based on depressed home values. He attested to this at an August 2009 field hearing of the House Committee on Financial Services Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity. The data supports his conclusion. A 2008 analysis of Road Home grants by *PolicyLink* shows that homeowners in the Lower Ninth Ward, a predominantly black neighborhood, faced average shortfalls of over \$75,000—the difference between the available rebuilding resources and the cost of rebuilding each home. At the same time, homeowners in Lakeview—a predominantly white neighborhood—faced shortfalls of \$44,000 per home. The data

showed that as of 2008, as many as 35,000 black homeowners may have been negatively affected by the disparity.

Later that same year, attempts at negotiating a solution to the discriminatory impact of the program failed. The Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center, in partnership with the

National Fair Housing Alliance and five named plaintiffs, filed a class action lawsuit against the LRA and HUD over the Road Home program. Represented by the law firm of Cohen, Milstein, Sellers & Toll, the NAACP Legal Defense Fund and the Wilmer Hale law firm, the lawsuit alleges that the Road Home program violates both the Fair Housing Act of 1968



Photos by James Perry

and the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974. The Fair Housing Act requires housing programs to produce equitable results, regardless of their intent.

After two sluggish years, the lawsuit has finally begun to gain momentum. Ruling on a plaintiff's motion this summer, Judge Henry Kennedy said:

[HUD and the State of Louisiana] offered no legitimate reason for taking pre-storm home values into account in calculating [...] awards. The Court does not take lightly that some African-American homeowners received lower awards than they would have if their homes were in predominantly white neighborhoods. [I]t is regrettable that this effort to [rebuild the city] appears to have proceeded in a manner

that disadvantaged African-American homeowners who wish to repair their homes.

Judge Kennedy determined that the substantial statistical and anecdotal evidence showed that plaintiffs would likely be able to prove that HUD and LRA had designed and implemented a racially discriminatory program. Furthermore, a September 2010 ruling by a District of Columbia appellate court had the effect of freezing more than \$100 million in remaining Road Home funding until a non-discriminatory method for allocating awards could be attained. The parties are currently navigating litigation while simultaneously working to settle the case, however, until the disparity demonstrated in the case is resolved, black homeowners will continue to be left in the cold. Moreover, while many white homeowners are able to return their homes to a state in which they can begin to accrue value,

many black New Orleanians are left with blighted, unlivable, depreciating homes.

Throughout American history, discriminatory policies similar to the Road Home program have disadvantaged black residents in dramatic ways. For nearly three centuries from the early seventeenth century until the late nineteenth century, white Americans were able to purchase, sell, own and lease property—allowing for epic wealth creation—while black Americans were prohibited from having comparable property rights. Not only were black Americans generally restricted from owning property, for most of that period, black Americans were property themselves, governed by the rules of America's chattel slavery system. Even after slavery was abolished and former slaves gained property rights, the American court system failed to enforce black property rights until 1968.

Photo by James Perry



Despite this ugly beginning, the United States had an opportunity to make substantial progress in bridging the wealth gap created by slavery. Shortly after World War II, the American government created the Veterans Administration (VA) and Federal Housing Administration (FHA) home loan programs. Among other things, the programs were part of an effort to stimulate and grow the American economy. The loans provided inexpensive capital for home purchases, allowing working-class families to borrow money at reasonable rates with generous repayment terms. Homes



acquired via the loans accrued value, and as a result, American wealth grew significantly. The programs were so successful that many scholars see them as leading to the creation of both the modern American middle class and the modern American suburb. African-Americans, however, were generally excluded from participating in the loan programs, which has exponentially exacerbated the American racial wealth gap.

Today the wealth of white Americans is eleven times that of black Americans. Slavery and the discriminatory implementation of the federal home loan programs were American policy choices that created and later exacerbated the gap, and no program in any American community has been financially robust or aggressive enough to bridge the gap.

The Road Home program, as the largest housing program

to benefit any American state, was the best recent opportunity to lessen this gap. It was a chance to both ensure New Orleans' full recovery and make sure that all property owners had the same opportunity to accumulate wealth. To date, the program has failed, and with it, yet another generation of black New Orleanians has fallen

even further behind. A program that was aimed at recovery and rebuilding has hugely missed its mark and what had been a racial wealth gap has the potential to become a racial wealth chasm.

*James Perry is the executive director of the Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center ([www.gnofairhousing.org](http://www.gnofairhousing.org)).*



Photos by James Perry



**PREVIOUS PAGE, THIS PAGE AND LEFT: Hurricane and flood damage to homes in New Orleans after Katrina.**

# Selling Off Public Housing: *PETRA and the Neoliberal Agenda* *Alarm, Debate and Confusion over Obama* *Administration Public Housing Policy*

In July 2010 the House Financial Services Committee, supported by the Obama administration and Congressional Democrats, passed an historic housing bill, which included proposals originally known as PETRA (Preservation, Enhancement and Transformation of Rental Assistance). The stated purpose of the bill is to protect public housing, guarantee tenant participation in decision-making, promote uniformity and efficiency in rental assistance programs and increase choice for low-income people. The reform bill seeks to guarantee one-to-one replacement of demolished public housing units, a promise made—and never kept—by the HOPE VI program.

Despite initial pushback by public housing tenant and progressive advocacy groups, the bill left untouched the powers of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to authorize borrowing by local authorities to finance development. Authorities could mortgage their properties to help close the funding gap left by shortfalls in public funding. HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan has dismissed concerns by grassroots tenant and housing advocacy groups that mortgaging public housing is a risky step towards privatization.

While the debate goes on amid uncertain prospects in Congress, some local authorities are already cutting deals with banks and developers. They are also continuing to demolish and destroy low-income housing units while purportedly creating “mixed-income communities” and “ending segregation” of public housing projects from surrounding areas. They are mortgaging their properties and privatizing public housing.

Many housing advocates we usually agree with, including the National Low Income Housing Coalition and the National Housing Institute, echo these concerns but support the administration’s legislation. They say that there’s virtually no chance of getting money from Congress to renovate sorely deteriorated public housing and that the Republican alternative of outright privatization would be much worse.

In this issue we publish excerpts from the debate, almost all of which underline the danger of the administration’s approach and the law that would reinforce it. If and when the bill comes up before the full House and Senate, the fundamental question of privatization should again come to the fore.

We believe this is a watershed in neoliberal housing policy and all progressive planners need to weigh in. It is not an abstract question of doctrine. It will affect the lives of millions of low-income tenants across the nation at a time when homelessness and poverty are expanding. Its worst consequences may not be felt immediately but in the not-too-distant future, when local housing authorities can’t meet their mortgage payments and have to turn over their property to the banks. We should not listen to the compromisers in the Democratic Party who, after all, gave us HOPE VI during the Clinton administration, which resulted in the loss of 100,000 low-income apartments and took HUD a major step closer to the long-time conservative goal of privatizing public housing. We recall how that disastrous move was also pitched as necessary to save public housing.

-- Tom Angotti and Marie Kennedy,  
*Progressive Planning* Editors

## **HUD’s Position**

From [hud.gov](http://hud.gov):

Having successfully worked to increase and preserve affordable housing in Chicago and New



York City using a combination of public and private resources, President Obama and Secretary Donovan know we can build a better system—one that harnesses the resources of the private market without compromising the important mission of publicly supported housing.

PETRA would bring this proven strategy for preserving affordable housing to the federal government by enabling federal housing programs to leverage \$7 billion in other capital in the first year—and as much as \$27 billion in the years to come—giving owners of affordable housing access to the resources they need to preserve this housing into the future. Just as importantly, PETRA embodies the Obama administration's commitment to more robust tenant protections and strong provisions that keep public housing publicly owned and affordable to the people who need it the most.

HUD Senior Housing Program Specialist Diane Yentel in a July letter to New York public housing leader Erik Crawford:

Bringing market investment to all of our rental programs will also bring market discipline that drives fundamental reforms. Only when our programs are truly open to private capital will we be able to attract the mix of incomes and uses and stakeholders necessary to create sustainable, vibrant communities.

### **Pass the Legislation Now**

While we are arguing over the potential loss of public housing

someday in the future if one part of PETRA were to become law, public housing agencies are already demolishing and selling off public housing under current law.

-- Sheila Crowley, National Low Income Housing Coalition, June 8, 2010

### **Give the Administration the Benefit of the Doubt**

What is interesting is how the criticism, at least publicly, has simmered. There was little fire and brimstone at the outset. In fact, the prospect of creating alternate funding streams to enhance efficiency, rehabilitation and preservation, was, and still is, appealing. A Democratic administration, with a highly regarded HUD secretary, is initially given the benefit of the doubt by many. But as housing advocates, policy analysts and tenant organizers have examined PETRA, they have found concerns that need to be aired.

-- Matthew Brian Hersh, *Shelterforce*, Spring 2010 issue

### **No More Congressional Funds for Public Housing?**

The problem—Congress has underfunded public housing through the years, creating a huge backlog of repairs and maintenance, and all Congress needs to do is provide more funding to remedy the situation. Instead of asking for more funding from Congress, HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan and the Obama

administration want to privatize the 1.2 million public housing units in a complicated scheme to transfer ownership of our public housing units to so-called affordable housing developers that will charge above-market rate rents being subsidized by the Section 8 program, believing that the new owners would then be able to tap into the equity of the properties to get loans from the private sector for the backlog of maintenance and repairs, as other property owners do in the market of privatized housing.

-- Lynda Carson, California Tenants Together, July 16, 2010

### **Why PETRA Is an Awful Proposal**

PETRA justifies every bit of the knee-jerk reaction to privatization as expensive, regressive, undemocratic and dangerous to the provision of public services.

*PETRA is Expensive:* Public housing today maintains and improves its own property with either a publicly employed staff under direct public supervision, or by contracting out specific maintenance work, generally on a bid basis to the lowest bidder, and, in any event, supervised directly by the public housing authority's own professional staff. Private profits are directly controlled by the public. Financing is through public bonding, available at the lower interest rates that government is able to pay. The inadequacies of present maintenance and improvements are the result of inadequate funding, not

incompetence, profit-seeking or greed. Increased tenant participation would be a big help, and is being extensively discussed and promoted by tenants' groups and advocates.

Under PETRA, a private owner would undertake all maintenance and improvement functions in whatever way it sees fit, to whatever standard it sees fit, with only minimal public supervision and no incentive to economize. Costs must be paid out of rents; if they are excessive, rents have to be increased, and the program provides justification for such increases if they are accompanied by increases in market value, which improvements generally produce. Financing is to be secured in the private market, that is, at commercial rates, rather than the lower rates government can obtain. Either tenants are faced with increased, and likely unaffordable, rents, or subsidies are provided out of the public treasury to meet the costs. Incentives go the wrong way: private desire for higher profits drives up costs, and there is no incentive to hold down occupant rents or comparable "market rents."

There is indeed the possibility under the proposal that HUD itself would bid on its own public housing when it is put up for sale, but it would have to operate it as Section 8 project-based housing. That means it would operate under market constraints, which would

include the ongoing temptation to increase rents and cherry-pick tenants or (and the proposal gives HUD discretion in the matter) release units from low-income requirements and rent them at market prices.

PETRA Is Regressive. Public housing today has eligibility requirements that limit occupancy to those of low income. It requires rents from tenants that are limited to a percentage of their income, regardless of the actual cost of operation. Rents are held down by public subsidies. While it is a constant struggle (and often a partially losing one) to secure subsidies adequate to the task, residents are not forced to cover deficits out of their own limited incomes; the rent-to-income ratios are held to a minimum. Such subsidies as there are inure to the benefit of the low-income residents.

The whole spirit of PETRA is to yoke the drive of the private sector to make a profit on the provision of housing for poor tenants. That creates an inherent conflict of interest: the more tenants pay, the more private landlords make. Along the way, banks are well taken care of. If a landlord can arrange for the replacement of low-income tenants by higher income tenants, and thus charge a higher rent, the landlord will do so, making public housing that much less progressive. The higher costs come from the need to make profits all along the way, by the new private owners,

their contractors and the banks profiting from their borrowing.

-- Peter Marcuse (The author acknowledges the excellent analyses of NESRI, the National Social and Economic Rights Initiative, and the Congressional testimony of Susie Shannon.)

### **Message to HUD from Human Rights Advocates: Reform Public Housing, Don't Privatize It**

While we commend your agency's response to the long-standing necessity of streamlining rental assistance programs, we remain concerned that a central element of PETRA will set into motion a process of public housing privatization. In particular, project-basing our public housing invites private entities in the financial sector to play a role that undermines public housing as a public good. This first step toward privatization is evident in at least three ways.

First, PETRA enables private financial institutions to acquire legal interests and rights in public assets.

Second, PETRA creates a risk of foreclosure and potential transfer of scarce affordable housing to banks and other financial institutions by shifting the status of public housing from public goods to real estate commodities.

Third, PETRA institutionalizes the profit motive, and perhaps even profiteering, into public goods. (Lenders do not function as

charities and will expect a healthy return on their investments.)

Consequently, PETRA's current configuration is fundamentally at odds with public housing's central premise: providing for precisely those people and communities whom the housing market persistently excludes. This proposal is particularly imprudent in light of the recent foreclosure crisis, which has demonstrated that markets alone will not address the basic needs and rights of people in the United States.

....while a number of residents, community organizations and advocates have specifically opposed mortgaging public housing units, HUD representatives have explicitly stated that mortgages are non-

negotiable....While mortgages are the single most controversial issue that has inspired passionate public debate and conflict, this is at the same time the single issue on which HUD has unilaterally closed negotiations.

-- National Economic and Social Rights Initiative, letter to HUD Secretary Donovan, July 2010

### **Banks and Developers**


The banks and developers make a fortune, with the taxpayers paying for it. The public loses its public housing property. The impoverished tenants lose their apartments, or have their rents go way up if they are forced into the private market. Homelessness increases. Government gets smaller. The

banks and developers win. It is a Bank Bonanza! The poor and the public lose.

And a precedent is set. The government can privatize any public property: schools, libraries, national parks, federal buildings—just as has begun to happen in California, where the right-wing governor has started to auction off state property and has even suggested selling off the Supreme Court building.

-- George Lakoff, *Alternet*, May 2010

*Many thanks to Sarit Platkin for assistance in research for this column.*



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# The Forgotten Struggle of the Negev Bedouin

*by Salena Tramel*

Down south in Israel's Negev Desert, the sounds of jets fill wide-open spaces. At least 80 percent of the land is used for military training purposes, including developing and testing weapons. The Negev also contains the largest petrochemical processing center in the Middle East and Israel's nuclear facilities. Bedouin communities who call the remaining land home are routinely displaced by force. For the Bedouins, the sound of homes collapsing under bulldozers often drowns out the sounds of jets.

For some, the notion of Bedouins conjures up orientalist images of the Arabian Nights: cloaked men on camels with several veiled wives in tow, elaborate tent cities in wastelands and tribal warfare. But this couldn't be farther from reality. One of the most marginalized ethnic groups in the Middle East, modern Bedouin communities battle governments for the right to remain on their lands, where a rich agrarian and pastoralist tradition has sustained them for generations. In Israel's Negev, both the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Israeli state's development agenda for the region pose a challenge to the political and economic rights of the Bedouin.

The Bedouin appeared in what is now Israel seven thousand years ago, making them the longest continuous residents of the region. An ethnic mix of descendents of Arab nomads, peasants from cultivated areas and sub-Saharan African slaves, the Negev Bedouin are constantly targeted for displacement by Israeli policies.

Before Israel achieved statehood in 1948, approximately 90,000 Bedouins lived in the Negev's rocky desert terrain. The vast majority of them were evicted when their lands were expropriated by the new state. Tens of thousands of Bedouins were forced to flee to neighboring Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, and what are now the occupied Palestinian territories of the West Bank and Gaza—reducing the Negev population to 11,000. Now, more than sixty

years later, the Bedouin in the Negev number 200,000, 25 percent of the mostly Jewish southern desert.

Many Bedouin struggle with their identities and their place in Israeli society. As if it's not complicated enough to be a Palestinian, an Israeli or a Bedouin—try being all three at the same time. "We are Palestinian somehow because we were here with our Palestinian brothers and sisters before the state," noted Khalil Alamour, a Bedouin leader. Alamour further added that his tribe, his Muslim faith and his Israeli citizenship are also integral to his identity. "We identify with justice," he concluded.

Today, Israeli Bedouins are in a Kafkaesque legal limbo, living in villages that do not appear on maps because mapping them would require providing public infrastructure such as water and garbage collection. Building schools is discouraged because of the "legitimacy" that schools provide in terms of establishing residency.

Approximately 70,000 Bedouins inhabit forty-five unmapped villages across the Negev (the rest live in designated townships). These Bedouin villagers have self-organized to form the Regional Council of Unrecognized Villages, a vehicle for joining together to fight for recognition by the state and for the provision of equal services.

Israel's destructive policies toward the Bedouin are based on demographic planning through land use control and appropriation. The state works to consistently increase Jewish settlement in the Negev at the expense of its other inhabitants. Public services and rights, like those to water and electricity, are often used as bargaining chips, rewarded to the Bedouin in exchange for the relinquishing of their rights to the land.

In 2005, the Jewish National Fund announced "Blueprint Negev," a \$600 million development initiative aimed at bringing at least 250,000 new

Jewish immigrants—mostly from English-speaking countries—to the desert where they could live in isolated suburban neighborhoods. The project, which is to be completed by 2013, disproportionately provides services and infrastructure to the new immigrants, ignoring the needs of people already living there.

The Jewish National Fund's "Ambassador Forest," a key component of Blueprint Negev, will cover large swaths of land that the Bedouin have inhabited for generations. Part of that land includes the village of Al Arakib, a 100-year-old Bedouin village that is already surrounded by the Ambassador Forest's first trees intended for Jewish suburbs.

Al Arakib, population 300, is one of the unrecognized villages. On the eve of Ramadan this August, the village made headlines when Israeli forces stormed it and demolished about forty homes—for the third time in less than a month. When the authorities had finished their job, families were left homeless under the blazing sun. With no other option than to begin from scratch, residents started rebuilding immediately, even while abstaining from food and water during the month-long Muslim daytime fast. To make matters worse, the village has been razed two times since.

Many Bedouin leaders realize that it is necessary to address the status of other villages facing the same fate as Al Arakib. Khalil Alamour's village, Al Sira, with a population of 450, has been tagged with demolition orders since 2006. Today, residents are doing everything in their power to save it. They have worked with the Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel (Adalah), met at the Israeli Court in Beersheba and appealed to a United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur. Alamour even traveled to



Photo by Samuel Frost



Photo by Samuel Frost



Photo by Samuel Frost



Photo by Salena Tramel

**RIGHT, TOP 3 PHOTOS: Tree-planting in the Bedouin village of Qasr Al Sir.**

**RIGHT, BOTTOM PHOTO: A typical unrecognized Bedouin village in the Negev.**



Geneva, where he presented Al Sira's case at a UN indigenous people's session.

"Al Sira has been here at least seven generations," explained Alamour. "We have the original deed to our land from 1921 that bears the British stamp." The 45-year-old father of seven was born in the village and attended school there in a Bedouin tent made of goat wool before moving on to Ben Gurion University. Upon completion of his studies, Alamour

returned to Al Sira to teach high school at a nearby recognized township. He has lived in the same concrete home for the past twenty-five years but worries that it could be gone overnight.

If Al Sira is indeed demolished, Alamour vows that his community will follow in the footsteps of Al Arakib and rebuild. "We will stay here," he said. "We have no other choice." But, Alamour continues to "dream of a better Negev." "The Negev is huge," he said, "and

the Bedouin only make up about 25 percent of the population. There is more than enough space in the vast desert for Jewish and Bedouin Israelis to coexist peacefully."

The Bedouins have few options in terms of rebuilding or relocation. Scattered throughout the desert are seven reservation-like towns sanctioned by the Israeli government. Since the towns are allotted the lowest municipal budgets in Israel, people living there have some of the lowest socio-economic indicators in the country. "This is not the proper way to develop a rural population," said Ra'ed Al-Mickawi, the energetic young director of the Negev-based NGO, Bustan. "The towns are kind of like hostels," he continued. "They are not good for much more than sleeping."

Bustan promotes sustainable development for Bedouin and Jewish communities in the Negev. The word "bustan" means fruit-yielding orchard in both Arabic

Photo by Samuel Frost



Photo by Samuel Frost



**LEFT AND RIGHT:** Scenes from life in the Bedouin village of Qasr Al Sir.

and Hebrew—and is symbolic of what the organization, focused on environmental justice, hopes to achieve. “We offer a model of development that is built on bottom-up solutions and works for economic empowerment and equality,” Al-Mickawi explained.

Bustan’s mission is to garner the best of traditional wisdom and merge that with the benefits of renewable technologies. One example of this work is the Children’s Power Project, which provides solar powered equipment to ill children in unrecognized villages without access to electricity. This equipment is used to refrigerate medications, power oxygen machines and heat the homes of premature babies. The project brings attention to and, hopefully, action around, the unequal provision of services and its health impact on Israel’s Bedouin citizens. At the same time, it also promotes renewable energy as an alternative to the more standard electricity grids and diesel generators.

Bustan is also in the process of building a “Green Center” in the desert. This space is both a showcase for sustainable rural development and a meeting place for Bedouin Israelis, Jewish Israelis and international volunteers to strategize and work together. Among other things, the center includes a rooftop garden, an outdoor grey water-fed nursery, wind turbines and space for the community to gather for events. Bustan hopes to replicate this model in other villages and provide ways for youth to be a main part of the planning of their villages.

“The state has been seeing Bedouin settlement as a problem,” said Al-Mickawi, “but we see this as an opportunity that can be a platform for sustainable development both in Israel and worldwide.” The idea, according to Al-Mickawi, is to challenge both Bedouins and the state by pushing them to think outside the box in terms of alternative solutions. “We can learn from each other by finding the balance between what a

modern state has to offer and what can be learned from traditional rural development.” After sixty-two years of impasse, he stressed, it is now time to communicate.

“These recent demolitions in Al-Arakib underscore the urgency of rethinking development in the Negev for all its inhabitants, and, especially, of recognizing the resource rights and human rights of Palestinian citizens of Israel such as the Negev Bedouin,” said Nikhil Aziz, executive director of Grassroots International, a Boston-based organization that supports resource rights and sustainable development in the Middle East and around the world.

Meanwhile, the people of Al-Arakib continue rebuilding, and those of Al Sira and the other unrecognized communities of the Negev remain steadfast, harnessing their collective energy to oppose displacement.

*Salena Tramel is the program coordinator for the Middle East and Haiti at Grassroots International and an independent writer. To learn more about the work of Grassroots International in the Middle East and other parts of the world, visit [www.grassrootsonline.org](http://www.grassrootsonline.org).*

Photo by Samuel Frost



# The Evolution of the *Movimentos de Vecinos* in Barcelona

by Tom Angotti and Nico Calavita

This year Barcelona's *La Federació de Associacions de Vecinos de Barcelona* (FAVB), or Federation of Neighborhood Associations, celebrated its fortieth anniversary, making it perhaps the oldest surviving citywide coalition in a major metropolis. But the most important aspect of this milestone for our readers is not the coalition's impressive size or duration but its long history of progressive and left politics focused on local and global issues. From anti-fascism in the final years of the Franco dictatorship to today's diverse battles against large-scale development projects, for environmental quality and in defense of human rights, there is much to be celebrated on FAVB's anniversary even as it now faces the challenges associated with the transition to a new generation of leadership.



FAVB today includes ninety-five neighborhood and eight block associations. The federation is a player in legislative reforms while it opposes the newest generation of megaprojects, including a tunnel, aquarium and luxury hotel. While the federation backs local neighborhood issues, it has not been shy about taking positions on citywide and national policy. For example, in addition to struggling for the right to housing and democratic participation, FAVB also supports women's reproductive rights. According to activist Lourdes Ponce ("Pitusa"), "We won't be entirely content until equal rights are recognized." FAVB opposes the U.S. war in Iraq and supports the right to housing. On some issues its stance is explicitly anti-capitalist.

As a featured speaker and participant in a series of public discussions on urban issues organized for the FAVB anniversary commemoration, Tom Angotti had the opportunity to visit *Nou Barris*, one of the most combative working-class neighborhoods in Barcelona. Here a major housing project was planned with neighborhood engagement, then built, after a long fight against a city-sponsored urban removal plan. A major plaza was designed with local participation after a city proposal was rejected. Local associations also fought for new and better services, including a major cultural and recreational center for youth.

One of the most impressive and telling innovations in *Nou Barris* is its annual Soup Festival (*Festival de las Sopas*). This isn't just a culinary event but a conscious effort to celebrate the neighborhood's exceptional cultural diversity and reject anti-immigrant and anti-Islamic prejudices infecting Spanish society. Recipes in the book of soups published by the association are by immigrants from Africa, Latin America, Asia, Oceania and other parts of Europe, as well as by native Barcelonans. The Soup Festival is

a prime example of the continuing vitality of Barcelona's progressive neighborhood-based movements.

While the veterans of neighborhood struggles speak proudly of their accomplishments, many acknowledge that the calls by younger generations for change have to be heeded. Some associations have mellowed and lost their radical roots and are clearly in need of revival. In the case of others, there is new energy from the younger environmental and neighborhood activists and a strong commitment to continuing the political focus on peace and human rights. Most importantly, several younger activists such as Marc Andreu, an editor of FAVB's magazine, have been keeping alive the history of the movement even as they report on its current status.

### **FAVB's Origins and the Right to the City**

Until the end of Franquismo in 1975, urban movements in Spain had to operate in an environment where speaking out could lead to imprisonment, or worse. At the same time, when the dictatorship began to crumble, urban movements served as a concrete and highly visible target for the opposition. The repressive nature of the Franco regime weakened during its final years, possibly due in part to the political mobilizations by urban social movements, workers, students and movements for regional autonomy, all of which functioned as a loose network. Surreptitiously backed by a significant portion of the press, the Barcelona social movement quickly became an alternative forum for the discussion of urban and political affairs.

The urban social movements in Spain used direct action and protest tactics, had a grassroots orientation and kept a certain distance from political parties, which were clandestine until the mid-1970s. The neighborhood associations arose in response to everyday problems specific to particular neighborhoods, including traffic, unpaved streets and water supply, which made life more difficult for working people. At the end of the 1960s, the urban social movements grew quickly, in parallel with the rapid urbanization and densification of the city, making visible the shortages of public facilities and the neglect of urban space in the new and old urban peripheries.

The initial forms of protest included the collection of signature, assemblies, expositions, gatherings around sport or music events and symbolic inaugurations. The habitual response of the city administration was silence. As problems persisted, more militant forms of struggle ensued, even in a context where basic freedoms were not guaranteed. Organizing was difficult, but, as historian Manuel Naya pointed out in his 1996 chapter "The Neighborhood Associations," it

meant much more: getting the authorities to give us a set of traffic lights meant forty days of barricades and stopping cars coming into the district where four or five fatal accidents had taken place. And that meant clashes with the police. Demanding mains for the shacks in Torre Baro' meant cutting off the motorways into Barcelona everyday, with everything that involved. It was a difficult time.

**LEFT: Carrer, The Magazine of FAVB, 40th Anniversary Issue**

**RIGHT: A Public Plaza in Nou Barris**



Photo by Tom Angotti

Other forms of struggle included the occupation of public spaces, human barriers, sequestering buses and rent strikes.

### **Shaping Planning for the Benefit of the Neighborhoods**

By the late 1960s, the city sought to update Barcelona's 1953 master plan. The new *Comarcal Plan*, initially approved in 1974 and finalized in 1976, was an exceptionally advanced plan, in part the result of a new group of architects, planners and engineers who reconnected to urban planning ideas in democratic countries, especially Italy. Two elements in the new plan stand out: it reduced allowable densities from a potential of nine million people to four and half million and reclaimed land for public use by designating various parcels for parks, plazas, schools and other public facilities. About half of the land designated for public use under the previous plan had been used for speculative housing projects.

The new Barcelona mayor attempted to establish a dialogue with the neighborhood associations and made regular visits to the poorest neighborhoods. When the new plan was unveiled a few months after his inauguration, however, it was attacked by the *Asociaciones* because they felt that not enough areas had been designated for public use and because new thoroughfares were proposed that would cut through some of the historic neighborhoods, such as *Gracia*, and affect thousands of homes. The 1974 plan became the vehicle through which the citizen movements were consolidated, strengthening their resolve to stop further deterioration of their city.

The plan gave rise to such passionate conflicts that the central government decided to send in a hard-line mayor. The neighborhood groups, with the support of professional associations, including architects, rose to the occasion and took to the streets. They demanded the elimination of roads that cut through their neighborhoods and the redesignation to public use areas that had been changed to private use, such as the *España Industrial*, a huge complex of abandoned textile factories. As a result of the actions of the *Asociaciones*, the thoroughfares were eliminated, but many of the

other objections were not met and the master plan was approved in the summer of 1976. Realizing that their chances of success would be nil with the current mayor, the *Asociaciones* turned their energies towards a campaign to force his removal, demanding his resignation from the king, the minister of internal administration, and the governor of Barcelona. In December 1976 the mayor resigned and a new "conciliatory" mayor took his place. The battle for the plan continued through the courts, and some of the worst excesses of the plan were changed by executive action, including the *España Industrial* site, which was redesignated as parkland, raising the ire of the owner, who went so far as to call for a coup d'état.

Barcelona's new mayor, who held office during the transition from Franquismo, opened up a space for dialogue with the associations. He decided to acquire the areas designated for public use. A series of favorable circumstances—the fear of property owners that a left government would seize their property, an economic recession that lowered land prices and additional funds from the central government—allowed for a greater than expected amount of land to be secured for the public.

### **Cooptation?**

Despite the strong insistence of the *Asociaciones* on municipal elections, they did not take place until four years after Franco's death. The left won, and a socialist, Narcis Serra, was elected mayor of Barcelona. Many of the members of the *Asociaciones* and the professional organizations that supported them were elected to City Council or entered the new administration. The two main tasks of the newly elected government were to reform its public administration and respond to calls for redevelopment of the city. A new planning director, Oriol Bohigas, quickly responded to the demands of the neighborhoods by seizing the opportunity offered by the newly acquired land. Bohigas was the catalyst that brought together a large number of young architects who had entered the profession during the 1970s to design almost two hundred parks, plazas, schools and other public facilities. Because of the recent approval of the master plan,



Bohigas did not have to spend time to prepare a new plan, but could devote his energies to implementing it. In a few years, most of the needed public facilities had been built.

At this time the urban social movements in Barcelona and other Spanish cities lost much of their momentum, power and membership. There are several reasons for this sudden change. First, the movements lost their most important *raison d'être* with the completion of many of the needed projects. Second, the demands of the *Asociaciones* had been part of a larger political opposition to the Franco regime. Now, with the democratization of the political system in general and a socialist administration in particular—composed to a large extent of former members or sympathizers of the *Asociaciones de Vecinos*—opposition withered. Throughout Spain, urban political movements came practically to a standstill.

One of the hopes of the *Asociaciones*, that the new administration would install a more participatory form of democracy, remained unfulfilled. The president of the FAVB, Carles Prieto, told a reporter in 1982: “The political parties of the governing coalition have abandoned the *Asociaciones de Vecinos*.” Since then, the FAVB has been critical of all the left administrations that continued to govern the city, but ironically, it continues to operate in offices and with funds provided by those same administrations.

The neighborhood movement was a powerful critic of the iconic 1992 Barcelona Olympics, which were very successful in improving the city’s infrastructure and redeveloping many areas. The FAVB lamented the lack of citizen involvement in the affairs of the city and was particularly sharp in its criticism of how the Olympics was an affair between only the “prince” (as in the Renaissance, the prince being Mayor Maragall in charge of the preparation for the Olympics) and the “architects of the prince.”

That sense of alienation of the neighborhoods from city hall continued under Maragall’s successors, as the city pursued with relentless energy its

encouragement of tourism and construction of hotels, some of them in questionable locations. While Barcelona has been successful at marketing the city as a destination for tourists and global cultural events, many of its inhabitants feel that the city is not theirs anymore. Tourists and international investors seem to matter more than the residents and the communities where they live and work. While the continuing presence of the neighborhood movements remains a key factor in local politics, many infrastructure and quality-of-life improvements are a result not of demands for community-based planning and development, but gentrification pressures and the city’s desire to market itself as an urban innovator and hip tourist destination. Still, a new generation of community activists is attempting to redefine livability as they fight against the exclusion of new immigrants from public space and housing opportunities, advocate for better bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and in general reformulate the agenda in the long-term struggle for the right to the city.

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## Potter, cont'd from page 47

scarcity, they built cities filled with machines and factories capable not only of meeting the basic needs of the masses, but also of generating a surplus that promised unprecedented luxury. This abundance, however, was monopolized by the few with the power to organize society as a whole, leading to struggle over the right to the goods generated by our urban hives of productivity.

We, the children of production, grew up amidst this abundance. Like teenagers, we rebelled against the scarcity-induced cultural confinement of our parents and fought against their one-dimensionality to express our own multifaceted identities. As the cities of production migrated south and east, we transformed our cities into centers of consumption where the spectacle of abundance has bedazzled us with the promise of fulfilling new and old desires. By uniquely combining the novelty and innovation inherent in productive surplus, we taught ourselves to embrace our desires and to cultivate self-expression. The cities we built, however, were designed to satisfy the desires of only a privileged few and excluded the desires of many. The struggle for the right to goods was superseded by the struggle for the right to recognition of each individual's unique desires.

But we overindulged ourselves. In seeking to live our lives through the somnambulant pursuit of manufactured desires, we have suddenly come face-to-face with the fact that our transient pleasures were based on the crumbling foundation of a Ponzi scheme. As the new age is born and the children of consumption with it, it is time for us to shoulder the responsibilities of adulthood, to sacrifice our universally petty, individual ambitions to build the cities of tomorrow, the cities that will house our children and their children.

This will not come without struggle. The old order has grown sclerotic. The elaborate but delicate skeleton of the global neoliberal economy grew brittle, shattering like the bubbles it created. But still, members of the global elite are trying to

tack back together the shards and preserve their monopoly on desire. Instead, the new age cries out for the distribution of desire; a better world demands the flowering of cities built in accordance with our hearts' desires. The struggle for the right to goods and the right to recognition must now contribute to the struggle for the right to the city.

We demand the right to a city in which the fullness of humanity that awaits expression in every individual is freed to grow and develop.

We demand the right to a city in which the right to public space supplants the right to property.

We demand the right to a city in which flexibility is directed not toward the ease with which unneeded workers can be cast out into the cold but toward the way in which individuals use their time.

We demand the right to a city in which we define our own desires rather than chasing the dreams of others.

We demand the right to a city in which the state is subordinated to society, not society to the state.

We demand the right to a city in which every individual is differing.

We demand the right to a city in which housing is not used as a source of personal wealth, but as a source of hearth-like warmth.

We demand the right to a city in which we spend more time with family and friends than co-workers.

We demand the right to a city in which work is done for honor, dignity and community, not to stay one step ahead of the bill collector.

We demand the right to a city in which people are compensated for their contribution to society, whether through production, creation, participation or education, not for their proximity to power.

We demand the right to a city in which the few do not have the resources to dominate the many.

We demand the right to a city in which stress is generated by the fear of taking a lover's hand for the first time or encountering the meaning of existence outside one's rain-streaked window rather than by questioning the viability of that very existence.

We demand the right to a city in which the staccato beat of the workplace is subordinated to the polyrhythmic pulse of lives lived fully.

We demand the right to a city in which policy is inspired by poetry and informed by science.

We demand the right to a city in which the struggle for existence comes to an end and the celebration of existing begins.

We demand the right to a city in which productive knowledge is not held captive by lawyers and CEOs, but rather freed for distributed design and manufacturing.

We demand the right to a city in which security means having a home to return to rather than having surveillance cameras and fences to keep others out.

The form of the cities of this new age are evident in the organizing strategies of resistance groups, in the coordination of open source software development, in the potentialities of robotics and transportation technologies, in flexible production techniques, in the emphasis on design, in green industrial parks and buildings. We have the tools we need to build better cities, and we have learned to invent the new ones that will surely be necessary. We must now put them to work in building cities that foster the fullness of humanity that awaits its flowering in every child. If we do not, desire will remain in the hands of the few and we will build our cities and our selves for them.

*Cuz Potter recently received his doctorate from Columbia University's Urban Planning Department. His dissertation is entitled "Boxed In: How Intermodalism Enabled Destructive Interport Competition." He is co-editor of Searching for the Just City.*

## **Congrats to Phoenix Press for Green Power Award**

The editors are proud to announce that Phoenix Press, which prints *Progressive Planning Magazine*, was one of only two organizations to receive the 2010 Green Power Leadership Award from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for the on-site generation of green power. The award recognizes EPA Green Power Partners who distinguish themselves using on-site renewable energy applications, such as solar photovoltaic (PV) or wind energy projects. This year, the company installed a 100-kilowatt (kW) wind turbine on the plant property, making Phoenix Press the first printer in America providing its clients with printing that uses on-site wind power coming from its own large-scale wind turbine. Phoenix Press is currently generating more than 160 thousand kilowatt-hours (kWh) of wind power annually, which is enough green power to meet more than 30 percent of the organization's electricity use.

## Goldsmith and Blakely, cont'd from page 2

they trip over snags that grow from the ordinary inequalities of the labor market. As executive and professional salaries rise, ordinary workers earn less, and cities, unlike well-off suburbs, do not serve their ordinary neighborhoods well. The rules of competition make it more difficult to promote inclusion.

In every U.S. metropolis one can see a pair of opposed interests, separate societies, one rich and the other poor, one suburban and the other urban, one white and the other minority. City halls cannot fund the public services needed by the unemployed or poorly paid workforce. Fiscal shortcomings make the city less attractive for re-investors, aggravating a cycle of self-reinforcing decline.

When the recession hit middle-class families with job losses and mortgage collapses, it hit already poor black and Latino families much harder, creating hidden, separate societies of misery. As the sociologist Robert Wagmiller has shown, joblessness among black men reached fantastically high levels in some neighborhoods years ago. In 1970 more than half of the African-American men in 223 neighborhoods with a combined population of 690,000 in our largest fifty metropolitan areas were jobless. By 2000 similar joblessness occurred in more than 2,000 neighborhoods with a population in excess of 6 million. Nationally, black and Latino jobless rates are nearly three times as high as white jobless rates, with the highest concentrations in inner-city neighborhoods.

Our policies have created a vicious circle of high city poverty rates, low reading and math scores, high rates of school dropouts, low graduation and college attendance rates and high unemployment, a drastic combination that guarantees more poverty, lower tax receipts and diminished public services. White students make up less than 10 percent of the enrollment in the giant public school districts of New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Miami, Houston and Dallas. Nationwide, 55 percent of young black men drop out of school before getting a high school

diploma—this in a society in which adults without high school diplomas in full-time, year-round jobs in 2008 had median earnings of barely \$24,000.

Topping it off, some twenty years of a racially biased drug war has stuffed prisons full of African Americans and Latinos. On release, these Americans are not prepared for jobs and they are kept out of the labor force by new forms of discrimination aimed at people with the wrong address or unusual social skills.

The Obama administration, stymied by Congress, has moved timidly on economic policy and urban policy. To reduce inequality and help cities, it should do more. It should increase demand and provide more options for black and Latino men to find work and support families. It should provide family stipends, fund childcare and other programs to improve black and Latino employment skills and reduce stiff sentencing for non-violent offenders. Cities should attract strong teachers to the schools that need them most and repair the schools. Transfer programs like food stamps, WIC, transit subsidies and housing opportunities need to be expanded. In the longer run, we need to recruit and train more teachers, invest broadly in city housing and transit in mixed-income, mixed-race communities and help minorities and immigrants to enter and survive in a changed job market. These efforts will insure a stronger, safer and more equal America.

*William W. Goldsmith is professor of city and regional planning at Cornell University. Edward J. Blakely was New Orleans recovery czar after Hurricane Katrina. The 2nd edition of their book Separate Societies: Poverty and Inequality in U.S. Cities, was published in June*

# Land Value, Land Rent and Progressive Housing Policy

*by Stephen E. Barton*

Land value is created by the larger society, not the private owner of housing. The rent tenants pay to private landlords pays for *both* the building and the land, or location, so the land rent exacts payment from tenants for value the tenants have helped to create. Understanding the social nature of land value and land rent can strengthen our arguments for progressive housing policies.

Many progressive policies, such as inclusionary zoning, rent controls and non-profit housing development, have in common that they help shield lower income people from the exaction of land rent. Policy analysis drawing on the concept of land rent refutes much of the market-based critique of progressive housing policies on its own terms, since standard economic theory accepts that land rent can be regulated or taxed without harmful effects on the production and maintenance of housing. The progressive agenda should explicitly call for recapture of socially created land value to fund alternative forms of ownership, such as community land trusts and nonprofit housing corporations, which remove residential land from the market.

The current American economic structure is designed to enable businesses to convert socially created value into private profits, and the collectively created value of urban life is no exception. Residential real estate is a form of property that combines buildings and land. When people rent an apartment, part of their payment supports construction, operation and maintenance of the building (building rent) and part is for access to that location (land rent). While the owners (or the owners' employees) are responsible for operating and maintaining buildings, the value of the land is a creation of the entire community and the owners are paid for the land value generated by the society around them. Tenants contribute to making the city a better and more interesting place and in so doing they increase land values, which increases the rent they have to pay to continue to live there.

A recent study conducted by the Berkeley Rent Stabilization Program found that the high rents in the San Francisco Bay Area, where the median monthly rent is approximately \$1,200 compared with an average of less than \$700 for all U.S. cities, cannot be explained by higher quality, higher operating costs or higher construction costs. The higher rents are simply land rent.

Land rent is a form of "economic rent," meaning unearned business revenue that is over and above the price that would be sufficient to produce, operate and maintain housing in a perfectly competitive market. This rent is based on ownership of scarce resources, in contrast with profits that are earned through production of additional goods. While these concepts are a standard part of neoclassical economic analysis, conventional public economic discourse avoids mention of them since they could help reveal that excess profits and exploitation are a routine part of our current economic system.

Idealized free market discourse draws its persuasive power from implied moral claims and explicit policy claims that are clearly false when land rent or other forms of economic rent are significant factors. The first and most important implied moral claim is that business revenue is normally earned through production of goods and services. Business revenue from land rent clearly violates this claim. The landowners are paid not for what they have produced but for what urban society has collectively produced.

A closely related policy claim is that price increases that generate economic rents will be temporary until increased production brings prices back down to the necessary minimum. In most areas with high housing costs, however, economic rent is a long-term feature of the housing market. In the Bay Area rents have increased faster than the average rent for all U.S. cities since the late 1950s.



A second related policy claim is that if housing prices remain high this is because government is interfering with the free market through land use regulations, so that the solution is removal of regulatory barriers to housing development. Neoclassical economic theory concedes that taxes or regulations that affect only economic rent will not have harmful effects on the production of desired goods and services such as housing, but conventional economic rhetoric tries to bury this point by pretending that land rent can be eliminated.

In reality, land rent is a long-term structural feature of many successful urban areas. Residential buildings are easy to build, but land suitable for multi-family residential development can be extremely difficult to “produce,” particularly within the already densely developed urban centers around the San Francisco Bay. Three quarters of the area within fifty miles of downtown San Francisco is either water or steep hills, and major public investments in rail transit have reinforced the value of central locations. There was a serious proposal in the 1950s to fill in most of the Bay to allow for development. This would have provided a market-oriented solution—by removing the Bay—adding hundreds of square miles of new land and lowering the value of the surrounding land. (This dystopian vision led to creation of the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission.)

Many suburban communities restrict development of multi-family housing, denying lower income tenants access to all areas of the metropolis. These discriminatory barriers should be removed; if people are good enough to work in a community they should be free to live there as well. The best available evidence, however, is that in California highly restrictive land use regulation is found mostly in scattered, upper-income suburban cities and has little effect on overall rent levels because development takes place in other nearby cities instead.

A clear understanding that land rent is a permanent feature of many regional housing markets leads directly to an understanding of the need for progressive local housing policies that help shield low-income people from the market, create long-lasting organizations that can help build the movement

for social justice and provide working examples of alternative ways of organizing society. Progressive housing policies typically include regulation of the existing rental housing market, requirements or incentives for new development to include some housing at below-market rates and alternative forms of ownership. All of these programs help reduce or redistribute land rent, and they can be made more effective if the redistribution is systematically considered as part of their purpose.

Rent control is widely disapproved of by conventional economists on the grounds that price regulations will reduce the quality and quantity of the controlled housing stock. This assumes a perfectly competitive market in which land rent does not exist. Economist Lee Friedman has pointed out that in the presence of land rent, “rent control could, in theory, affect only economic rents and cause no supply inefficiency even in the long run.” Neil Mayer points out that in tight markets where low-income tenants have few alternatives, the market does not provide substantially lower rents for units with poor maintenance and that rent controls can improve maintenance through the threat of rent reductions for violations of the housing code.

Strong rent controls meet constitutional standards when they allow increases for increased operating costs and at least a partial inflationary adjustment for net operating income. This is roughly equivalent to preventing future increases in economic rent. However, regulating thousands of different landlords locks into place a permanent political conflict between well-organized and well-financed landlord organizations and more numerous but usually poorly organized and financed tenants. Strong rent controls were abolished in Massachusetts and California, surviving for a long period of time only in New York City and some nearby cities in New Jersey.

California continues to allow moderate rent stabilization systems in which units are decontrolled on vacancy and then recontrolled again at the new market rent. Moderate rent stabilization systems protect all tenants from displacement and unjust evictions and can provide economic benefits to long-term tenants. The dot-com bubble of 1999-2001 created

an upward spike in Bay Area rents that would have displaced far more tenants than it did if rent regulation had not been in place in San Francisco, San Jose, Oakland, Berkeley and East Palo Alto. Moderate rent regulation does little to hold down land rents overall, however, since most tenants move within a few years.

Metropolitan areas with high land rent are characterized by tight housing markets and a severe shortage of units affordable to low-income tenants. Subsidies for new construction or rehabilitation of existing housing for the benefit of low-income people are essential but need to be accompanied by forms of social ownership that permanently remove land rent from the cost of housing so that the housing will not revert to market rents or prices. Social housing ownership can take different forms: nonprofit housing corporations, community land trusts that lease the underlying land to people who buy the house or apartment above it, resident-owned corporations such as limited-equity cooperatives or mutual housing associations.

Social ownership creates long-lasting organizations with an interest in developing more affordable housing and in other social equity issues important to the residents. Rent controls and rental subsidies are both subject to being reduced in scope or even abolished if there are political changes. In contrast, non-profit-owned land and housing is constitutionally protected as a form of private property. Subsidies for new development could be cut off, but most of the organizations and their affordable housing would survive. (Social ownership reduces the need for ongoing rental subsidies but does not replace them because there are many people with incomes too low even to pay the operating costs of their housing after land rent is removed from their rents or share payments.)

Changes in land use that allow developers to build at higher densities generate unearned increases in land values. Nico Calavita and Alan Mallach have described the density bonus programs and inclusionary zoning requirements that many state and local governments use to tap into these increased land values in order to provide below-market rate housing. The case for tapping into increased land values is

particularly strong when the increases in land value clearly result from public investment and publicly created plans and accompanying changes in land use regulations, as in the creation of transit-oriented development corridors.

Valuable as these programs are, they miss the extraordinary levels of land rents in the already existing rental housing stock, especially in coastal California and the Boston-New York-Washington D.C. corridor. Currently the total annual rent paid by tenants in the high rent areas of coastal California totals over \$48 billion: \$15.6 billion in the Bay Area, \$26.6 billion in the Los Angeles area and \$6.3 billion in the San Diego area. At least one-quarter and probably one-third of this amount, \$12 to \$15 billion a year, is land rent. Taxes on this unearned revenue from land rent, even if limited to future increases, would provide an equitable and economically efficient means for state and local government to support housing programs to mitigate the harm done to low-income tenants by high land rents.

Joseph Schumpeter pointed out that over the long run economic efficiency is much less important than creativity and innovation. Most of the critiques of progressive housing policies claim that these policies are inefficient, something an analysis of land rent can often refute. But what really matters is finding the policies that best support the creativity of American cities. We need to find ways of managing the urban economy that more fully value the contributions of the writers, researchers, artists, craftspeople, teachers, nurses, attendants to the disabled, gardeners, workers in neighborhood restaurants and retail shops and the many others who are only sometimes financially successful but who together make cities great places to live. One of the ways to do this is to identify strategies for recapturing land rent—a privatized form of our socially created wealth—and reinvest those resources in making housing decent and permanently affordable for all the diverse people of urban America.

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# Bottom-Up Planning in Chicago: *Donna Ducharme and the Fight to Save Manufacturing in the 1980s and 1990s*

by *Pierre Clavel*

The story of Chicago during and even after the Harold Washington administration is, in part, a story of the difference planners can make in designing and implementing a progressive agenda through bottom-up planning. An example is Donna Ducharme's leadership in a campaign to save manufacturing jobs in the city.

When Harold Washington campaigned for—and won—the job of mayor of Chicago in 1983, the city was polarized and overwhelmed by the prospect of a black mayor who promised to end the “machine as we know it.” There followed a two-year period of “Council Wars,”—with Washington on one side and the all-white majority on the other side—where nothing much seemed to get done. Later assessments, however, saw this as a time of preparation and learning to be followed by serious accomplishments and a reformed government in the year prior to Washington's sudden death in November 1987, after a decisive re-election victory.

Beneath the surface of public attention, neighborhood activists ensconced in the city's Department of Economic Development and allies in other parts of the administration were putting in place changes in city policy, especially in the economic development field. A goal of “jobs not real estate” had emerged during the 1983 campaign—having been articulated in a 1982 meeting of community development activists and formulated as the “platform” of the Community Workshop on Economic Development (CWED). One of these activists, Kari Moe, who had recently returned from doing a master's degree in city planning at MIT, became the executive director of CWED and then took the assignment of issues director for the Washington campaign. With Moe playing a key role, dozens of community activists and their allies developed

the “jobs goal” as a new approach to economic development policy that favored neighborhoods and small factories, and more generally, industrial retention. One of the architects of the jobs goal, Robert Mier, became commissioner of economic development and hired a number of community and labor activists who implemented many jobs-oriented initiatives.

Planned Manufacturing Districts (PMDs). One of the examples of the city's efforts to preserve jobs—in this case, manufacturing jobs—was led by Donna Ducharme, another MIT graduate. Ducharme led the implementation of the jobs vs. real estate idea by helping invent and promote the “planned manufacturing district,” or PMD. Ducharme's experience illustrates the way social movement, politics and administration interacted during the Washington mayoralty.

Ducharme had been hired in 1982 as the community development director for an expanded YMCA program north of the Loop in downtown Chicago. She had made the connection (it was her MIT thesis project) between unemployed youth in the area and the array of older manufacturing establishments in the nearby Clybourn Corridor northwest of the Loop. She created the Local Economic and Employment Development (LEED) Council, a planning group that included area youth and other residents, but also a number of manufacturers. The council's work was focused initially on countering the threat of the displacement of manufacturing establishments and jobs by upscale residential and commercial development, beginning with a project called River North. It was the first time such a diverse group had come together. Certainly businessmen had organized in the past, as had manufacturers, and there had been organizing among unemployed youth—but bringing them all together around a common goal was entirely new.

Eventually the LEED Council focused on the idea of the PMD, a zoning device that would protect factories and jobs against the influx of wealthy residents and upscale office and commercial development. This concern had been stimulated by a request to change the zoning of an industrial parcel to residential and commercial use. The LEED Council began to organize to fight as this and other proposals came forward, threatening to raise land costs from an average \$6 per square foot to \$12-\$40 and to force longtime area employers and jobs out of business or out of town.

Advocates of the conversion process argued for the enhanced tax revenues accruing to the city, while opponents argued against the costs associated with job losses in terms of income loss, additional welfare costs and greater social disorganization. Ducharme's organizing process went through a series of phases. The first phase, at the ward level, was entirely among the area's businesses and residents. They discovered they opposed the zoning changes and that, though they represented disparate social groups, they had a common interest. The second phase was that as the demands for changes increased within the ward, the LEED Council undertook a frustrating search for support in the city government. Failing to get consensus (the Department of Planning and Development (DPD) was attracted to the zoning changes), they were able to get a small foothold in the research division of the Department of Economic Development (DED), which supported a study on the effects of industrial displacement. Finally, in 1985, with the study in hand and the requests for zoning changes piling up, the council reached a sympathetic political figure in Alderman Marty Oberman. Oberman declared a moratorium on the zoning changes until a solution could be developed. With Oberman's support, the LEED Council got significant political attention. The attitude of the DED changed, the Chicago Department of Law got involved and a PMD was invented for the Clybourn Corridor area.

This was nowhere near the end of the process for Ducharme, however. First, Oberman left the City Council and was replaced by Alderman Edwin Eisendrath, so the education process had to start all over again. But in the end Eisendrath bought the idea. He had a public relations (PR) background and convinced one of the local manufacturers, Finkl & Sons, a steel

company, to hire a PR firm to help publicize its interests. It did so, and this added to the momentum behind the PMD proposal.

By 1986 and 1987, industrial displacement was threatening jobs and getting notice in other parts of the city, and Ducharme began to get requests to speak to other groups and to the idea of the PMD as a general piece of city legislation. In the fall of 1987 the problem had reached a crisis point over the River Lofts mixed-use commercial and residential development on an abandoned industrial property on Goose Island, a proposed PMD. Proponents of the project were vigorous. The *Chicago Tribune* editorialized in a September 28, 1987 piece:

Mr. Washington has let his economic planners embark on a zany crusade to snuff out commercial and residential growth in areas that they—these insulated City Hall planners—have decreed should be reserved for manufacturing. Investors who want to convert abandoned old factory buildings into job-producing, tax-producing commercial complexes are told no, take your money to some other city. And don't think they won't, if Chicago continues this perverse ideological nonsense.

In November, the city dropped its opposition to the River Lofts proposal, having exacted a set of conditions from the developer, including support for a more general PMD ordinance. Although slow to support the PMD proposal, there had been so much debate within city hall, and such development of the coalition of manufacturers, labor unions and neighborhood organizations supporting the larger PMD proposal that Washington came out in support within a few days. This seemed to cement the PMD policy.

In November of 1987 Washington died, having only recently thrown his support behind the idea. Ducharme had been angered by Washington's slowness to support the PMD—she thought they could have had the first PMD much earlier with his support. Later, however, she came to believe that the delay and the extended period of organizing had actually resulted in a great deal more grassroots support, which helped to protect the idea when the Washington coalition began

to fall apart under interim Mayor Eugene Sawyer. In fact, Planning Commissioner Hollander and others had become strong supporters of the PMD concept in 1988. Charles Finkl of Finkl & Sons, quoted in a *New York Times* story on December 10, 1987, captured the situation well: "It's one thing to lose basic industries to international forces beyond our control. But it's another thing to force healthy industries out of the city through unwise and piecemeal zoning policies."

In effect, the long process of discussion within the administration in 1987 and 1988 resulted in a significant alteration in policy: toward support for selected growth coalition projects like River Lofts, and also more general support for inner-city industrial retention. Where once there had been simply the growth regime, opposed (ineffectually) by simple neighborhood advocacy, now there was a more differentiated view with the potential to serve two constituencies. Later, when Richard M. Daley came into office, having attacked the PMD as stopping progress, grassroots support convinced him to retreat from that position, and the City Council approved two more PMDs in 1990.

It is an interesting question where the current Daley administration stands with regard to the PMDs or the manufacturing retention goal generally. Richard M. Daley has supported the efforts of real estate developers to gentrify parts of the city, but he has also paid at least some heed to the idea of saving manufacturing jobs. In 1993 he appointed Donna Ducharme deputy planning commissioner under Valerie Jarrett, now a White House advisor to Barack Obama. Joel Rast, in his book *Remaking Chicago* (1999), described Ducharme's work there. As she had when pressing for the PMD a decade earlier, Ducharme began organizing among the city's manufacturers in a series of industrial corridors that had been defined by the DPD. She convened a task force that defined issue areas and invited industrial development organizations to submit strategic plans to be funded at a level of between \$1 million and \$1.5 million. One of the plans, by the Greater Southwest Development Corporation, went beyond infrastructure and vacant land studies to propose "improving networking among area firms and improving the skills of the area workforce," and, Rast reports, "nearly 50 percent of

companies expressed interest in common warehousing and cooperative purchasing of raw materials or finished goods."

Ducharme's tenure lasted only two years, ending after Jarrett moved out of the planning commissioner job in 1995. Daley's mayoralty is a far cry from Washington's, but it is fair to claim that Washington's community development activists made at least some permanent impact.

One can reflect on Ducharme's experience, especially as it relates to the ideal, widely held among progressive planners, that planning, even by official planning agencies, can be "bottom up." Elements of Ducharme's success included her own persistence and the time she gave to the effort; a level of intellectual back-up; and, despite the inertia she encountered in Washington's city hall, she had pockets of support there as well.

Ducharme's persistence speaks for itself. She had been working at the New City YMCA since at least the late 1970s, and with the LEED Council since its creation in 1982, so that was six years prior to the first PMD in 1988. The intellectual and institutional support may be less obvious. Ducharme saw the way to the PMD doing her thesis at MIT in 1982, working with Bennett Harrison and others. Harrison and Barry Bluestone had recently published the *Deindustrialization of America*, which provided an important early conceptualization of the threats to manufacturing in the United States, and so the PMD idea was a nice complement to that. In Chicago, Robert Mier was involved in similar ideas, had worked with Harrison in New York and brought in Ann Markusen to take the research lead in the city's Task Force on Steel and Southeast Chicago. Markusen's 500-page analysis lent further credence to the idea that manufacturing could be saved. Also working in the DED under Mier was Robert Giloth who, after Moe, directed that department's R & D division, and published the report *Business Loss or Balanced Growth: Industrial Displacement in Chicago* (1986), which was important in building support for the PMD concept.

*Pierre Clavel is on the editorial board of Progressive Planning, is a professor of city and regional planning at Cornell University and is the author of Activists in City Hall (2010), from which parts of this article are excerpted.*



# CicLAvia: Open Streets for a Day in America's Car Capital

By Jason Neville

When Stephen Villavaso told me that he and a group of people were planning a *ciclovía* here in Los Angeles, an event that would create a temporary public space from Hollywood to downtown to East L.A., I told him he should start a bit smaller, perhaps a one-mile segment. Something more manageable to start with, then over time, make it something bigger. "Take it from me. I'm a professional planner. I know what I'm talking about." He nodded politely and said, "Yeah...I don't think we want to do something that unambitious."

It's a good thing he didn't listen to me.

Sunday October 10, 2010 just might go down as the day that Angelenos got their first true glimpse of a better future. On that day an estimated 100,000 people took advantage of the temporary closure of 7.5 miles of streets, from East Hollywood, through Koreatown, MacArthur Park and downtown to Boyle Heights, exceeding even the most wildly optimistic expectations for the inaugural *ciclovía*. Cyclists, rollerbladers, skateboarders, stroller-pushers, *vendedores de helados* (ice cream vendors), families and pets spent the better part of the day doing something all too rare in Los Angeles: enjoying the company of each other and experiencing the city quietly, civilly and safely.

"I was always confident that it would work," said civil engineer and CicLAvia co-organizer Villavaso. "But the night before the event, I was nervous. I couldn't sleep. I kept asking myself: What was the next day going to be like? How many people will come? Did we choose the right route? How will people react?"

The answers to his questions came soon enough. The morning of CicLAvia, as he rode his bike from downtown towards MacArthur Park, he was the

only person on 7<sup>th</sup> Street, breathing the fresh air and enjoying the stillness of the morning in the quiet heart of the sixth largest metropolis in the world. Suddenly, a guy on rollerblades, carrying a soccer ball and grinning, came skating in the opposite direction: the first sighting of another participant! Then people started flooding in, eventually filling the streets with enough people to fill Yankee Stadium—twice over.

## Getting There Wasn't Easy

Although closing 7.5 miles of Los Angeles's 6,449 miles of streets to cars for just a couple of hours may seem like a small task, it was no easy feat. It took two years to plan for the event: getting permits, developing outreach materials, planning the route and raising the money to pay the city for the closure. The total cost of the event was \$280,000, raised from private donations, foundations and grants. Funds went to pay for police at crossing points, barricades, "no parking" signs along the route and cleanup after the event.

In addition to the logistical work, there was also a tremendous amount of consciousness-raising that was fundamental to the event's success. CicLAvia volunteer coordinator Joe Linton elaborated: "It wasn't easy for Angelenos to imagine something they'd never seen, and what it would actually be like. Everyone just assumed it was a race of some kind with a 'start' and 'finish.' We would describe CicLAvia over and over, but the next question would still be: 'Which place does the race end?'"

No one involved in CicLAvia—organizers, local residents, city officials—knew quite what to expect. As Villavaso said, "Many public officials in L.A. didn't think that Los Angeles could handle this... even Angelenos didn't know Los Angeles could handle this. We took a risk on it, and it paid off. The success was extraordinary."

## Local Economic Development

Although every business (and residence) along the route was notified of the event via door hangers and postcards, some businesses took full advantage of the opportunity to do business with the thousands of thirsty, hungry participants. According to organizers and business owners, one of the primary reasons for this is because business owners associate street closures with single-purpose events, such as marathons and public protests, which exclude the residents and businesses along the route. In contrast to these other events, CicLAvia was intended to benefit the local businesses as well as the participants. Many businesses did extraordinarily well that day. Downtown bars and cafés were full, and some restaurants even offered ‘bike take-out,’ delivering to folks hanging out in front of the restaurants on their bikes.

Sandi Romero, owner of Mama’s Hot Tamales across from MacArthur Park, said that she nearly ran out of

food. “Like other business owners, we didn’t know what to expect. The area around MacArthur Park is closed for events frequently, but often those closures don’t translate to any additional business for us. But at CicLAvia we did three times as much sales than a normal Sunday,” she said. “On normal business days people are often discouraged about the lack of parking in the area. We didn’t have any of those problems [at CicLAvia].”

The exploding gourmet food truck industry, able to mobilize when large crowds gather, had a presence on the route, particularly at one end of the route in Hollenbeck Park in Boyle Heights. However, while the food trucks arrived from other parts of the city to serve up smoothies and barbecue to the participants gathered in the park, some of the nearby eateries had few customers. Organizers said that they hope that, as the event grows in size and frequency, more local businesses will see the event as an opportunity.

## Grassroots Planning for Public Space in Los Angeles

Los Angeles is one of the nation’s most park-poor cities. Small public spaces that make urban life more enjoyable are nearly non-existent. Several large public open spaces are either recently completed or under construction, such as the 32-acre Cornfields Park, the Spring Street Neighborhood Park, the South Los Angeles Wetland Park, the new downtown Civic Park, Vista Hermosa Park and several new parks and park acquisitions made as a part of the Los Angeles River Revitalization effort. While these formal efforts are finally bringing much-needed parks to Los Angeles, grassroots efforts such as CicLAvia are creating

Photo by Travis Gohr



**LEFT:** A rare opportunity to sit down in the middle of downtown LA during CicLAvia

**NEAR RIGHT:** CicLAvia in Little Tokyo

**FAR RIGHT:** A “Ghost Rider” participates in CicLAvia

temporary open spaces that help Angelenos imagine what it would be like to live in a Los Angeles with more opportunities for public life.

CicLAvia was held about a month after the citywide Park[ing] Day L.A. event, where parking spaces are turned into parks for a day. The event has become increasingly popular in Los Angeles—which has parking spaces to spare—and has helped build momentum for creating new, more imaginative, forms of public space. Last month, one of the Park[ing] Day sites on the CicLAvia route used the Park[ing] Day L.A. event to illustrate the two projects' focus on creating vibrant temporary public spaces.

"It's a way to communicate to our fellow Angelenos that the world doesn't come to a fiery end if you take over a parking space or a street for a day," said Valerie Watson, an urban designer and Park[ing] Day L.A. organizer who participated in CicLAvia. "It was so delightful to see so many smiling faces at the downtown Park[ing] Day L.A. and CicLAvia. When given viable opportunities to enact public spaces, people will enthusiastically use them."

### **...and the Next CicLAvia?**

Those who participated—and many who missed it—are asking, "So when's the next CicLAvia?"

The first CicLAvia was a learning experience for organizers, participants and city officials. Organizers say that the goal is to make CicLAvia logistically and financially sustainable and easier to replicate, especially by

cutting down on the \$280,000 cost. "One of the beautiful things about CicLAvia is that it can be done without constructing any new infrastructure," said Colleen Corcoran, graphic designer and CicLAvia co-organizer.

The strong participation from residents, the lack of any incidents and the boon to local businesses will make it easier to have recurring CicLAvias. Organizers say they are targeting the next CicLAvia for April 2011 and would like to begin hosting events four to six times in 2011 and monthly in 2012.

As a grand experiment in public space, CicLAvia has unambiguously demonstrated the latent demand for public space in Los Angeles. It has accelerated the citywide conversation on public space, not merely by making a bold proposal, but by making a bold gesture that instantly sparked the city's imagination in a way that formal planning projects rarely do. The excitement of CicLAvia in large part comes from the implicit sense that even temporary changes can be transformative.

"There's an expanding generation of designers, artists, planners, engineers, small business owners and entrepreneurs in Los Angeles who have more progressive and experimental ideas about public spaces and cities than previous generations," said Corcoran. "It's been hard work for the past two years. But CicLAvia's success really showed the latent demand for public space, in an undeniable way. Things are definitely going to get better in Los Angeles."

*Jason Neville is an urban planner in Los Angeles and was a mobile bike repair volunteer at CicLAvia 2010.*

Photo by Waltarrrr (via Flickr)



Photo by Waltarrrr (via Flickr)



# SAVE THE DATE

## Planners Network 2011 Conference Memphis, Tennessee May 18-21, 2011

The students, faculty, and staff of the University of Memphis Graduate Division of City and Regional Planning welcome the opportunity to serve as the host for the 2011 Planners Network National Conference. While the main conference events will take place on May 18-21, 2011 in the newly-constructed University Center on the UM Main Campus, the conference will offer participants the opportunity to visit innovative resident-led change efforts throughout the Greater Memphis Region including communities in Tennessee, Arkansas, and Mississippi. The conference will also give PNers the opportunity to visit the National Civil Rights Museum, the STAX Museum of American Soul Music, and yes – Graceland! (Although rumor has it that Elvis has become a vegetarian, an engaged Buddhist, and a resident of one of Memphis' New Urbanist communities!)

The 2011 conference will focus on alternative approaches to building vibrant and equitable regional economies during a period of economic challenge. As a large mid-sized city facing formidable economic challenges including ongoing suburbanization, heightening residential segregation, escalating foreclosures, and serious municipal and county budgetary problems, Memphis appears to be an ideal site to discuss progressive policy, planning, and design strategies for expanding business and employment opportunities for poor and working class residents. Among the preliminary list of conference tracks are: innovative housing policies, job generation strategies, minority business development, urban food systems, arts/culture-led development, labor rights and movements, and public education for change. Those interested in participating in the conference by submitting a paper, organizing a panel, sharing a practice/policy story, or designing a poster of recent work should visit

the UM Planning Website after November 15<sup>th</sup> to access additional conference information, including the Call for Papers, Panels, Presentations, and Poster Sessions at [www.planning.memphis.edu](http://www.planning.memphis.edu)

Among the conference highlights will be the showing of the award-winning I Am a Man documentary that chronicles the historic 1968 sanitation workers struggle that brought Dr. Martin Luther King to Memphis. Participants in that epic struggle for labor justice will be on hand to discuss the meaning of their sacrifice; they will be joined by representatives of Southern Labor who will discuss the current state of labor organizing, especially among undocumented workers, in the South. Another special event of the conference will be a visit to the STAX Museum of American Soul Music where Otis Redding, Booker T and the MGs, Sam and Dave, The Staples Singers, and Rufus and Carla Thomas pioneered the Memphis Sound in a fully integrated company that was unheard of during its time. As part of the Museum visit, participants will have the opportunity to hear students from the STAX Music Academy perform and to learn about an exciting culture-based redevelopment strategy, called the Memphis Music Magnet, from representatives of the Soulsville Foundation and the Memphis Music Foundation. The preliminary conference schedule will offer participants the opportunity to sign-up for one of ten proposed mobile tours exploring: The Mississippi River, Elvis and Graceland, Beale Street, New Urbanism, Regional Greenways (by bike), The I-269 corridor, Urban Food Systems, Hope VI Housing, Historic Presentation, and Faith-Based Development.

For those interested in joining the Planning Committee for the 2011 Planners Network National Conference in Memphis, please contact Ken Reardon at: [kreardon@memphis.edu](mailto:kreardon@memphis.edu) or 901-678-2610.

**For those needing additional reasons to participate in the 2011 Planners Network National Conference in Memphis, we offer the following Top Ten Reasons to Visit the Bluff City in May 2011.**

1. Elvis Lives!
2. BBQ (wet or dry) rocks!
3. Home of SUN, STAX, Hi-Tone Records and Production Studios!
4. The Mississippi Riverfront at sunset!
5. Gateway to the Delta!
6. Our local music scene – Blues, Soul, Gospel, Country, Jazz, Pop, Hip-Hop, Rock-a-billy, and more!
7. The contributions of Mother Jones, Ida B. Wells, Benjamin Hooks and Dr. King to our city!
8. Our unique and varied architecture visible in our 22 historic districts!
9. The variety and intensity of our community-based planning and design movement!
10. Our people!

**For those needing to convince their boss, spouse, or department chair to fund their participation in the 2011 Planners Network National Conference in Memphis, we offer the following Planners' Top Ten Reasons to Visit the Bluff City in May 2011.**

1. Recent adoption of a new form-based code to guide local land use decisions
2. Site of a \$100 million transformation of one of the South's largest public parks, Shelby Farms, being led by UPENN's James Coner
3. An extensive urban food security movement featuring those involved in community-supported agriculture, community gardens, farmers markets, and local foods policy-making
4. Election of a reform mayor who led the Sustainable Shelby planning process
5. Appointment of the city's first Pedestrian and Bi-Cycle Transportation Coordinator (a newly minted graduate of the UM planning program) along with the city's commitment to create 100 miles of bike lanes and supportive facilities
6. Organization of the Memphis Regional Design Center mobilizing planners, architects, and engineers to promote excellence in urban design as part of an economic development strategy
7. Establishment of the Mid-Sized Cities Policy Research Center at the University of Memphis to address the lack of attention given these communities where the majority of Americans live and work
8. Growing regional planning efforts focused on connecting local greenway systems, expanding the logistics industry, and promoting more compact forms of development
9. Opportunities to examine the city's extensive HOPE VI, anti-foreclosure, downtown living, and New Urbanist design, and sports and arts led-redevelopment efforts
10. Current city/county consolidation effort to achieve improved governmental services at lower costs

# ***Unlearning the Colonial Culture of Planning***

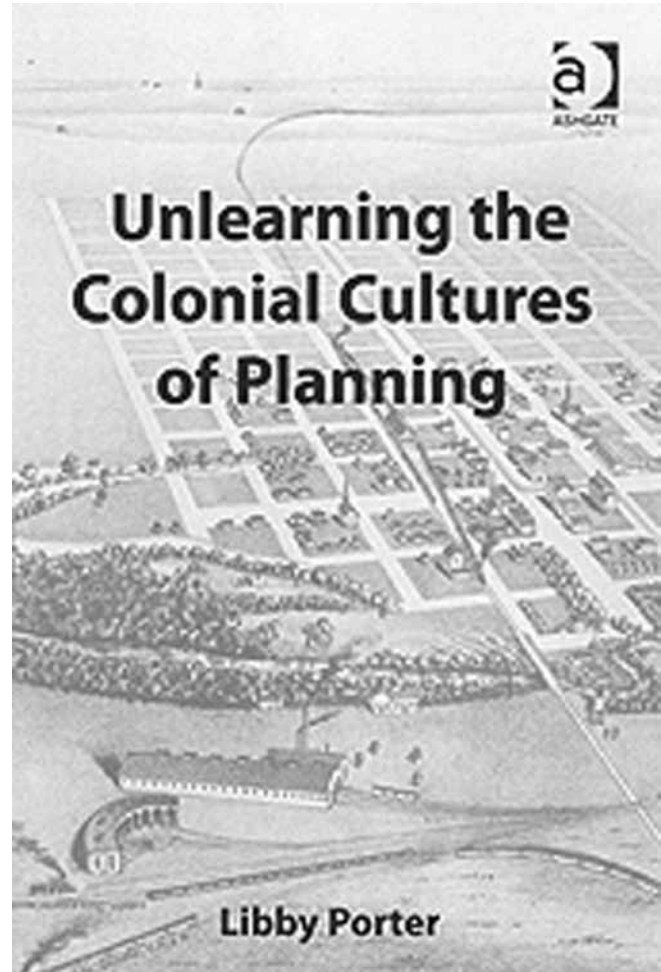
*Review by Eeva Berglund*

***Unlearning the Colonial Culture of Planning***  
by Libby Porter  
Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2010.

Modern planning, writes Libby Porter in this important new book, is not so much a European product as it is a colonial product. And, it contains a far-reaching if subtle repertoire of practices which we would identify, if only we could see them, as ethically and politically suspect.

Neither natural resource management nor the overseeing of metropolitan development are politically or ethically neutral pursuits. This much is generally accepted, with many administrators as well as campaigners and researchers viewing politics as integral to planning. To date, however, culture—which is maybe a relative of politics but not the same thing—has been barely visible in the planning literature. Where culture has been recognized, it has been associated not with planners but with the peculiarities of local stakeholders, not least indigenous peoples. And yet, Porter convincingly argues, planning institutions themselves are undoubtedly cultural creatures. They are historically specific products of the need for all humans to organize collective survival by employing creativity and invention. More disquieting is her argument that planning was complicit with colonialism, that it took shape within the cultural frameworks which made land annexation and violent occupation by white settlers seem not just acceptable but necessary, and that it still carries within it insidious yet unacknowledged traces of that thinking. Planning, in short, has inbuilt oppressive implications for indigenous peoples. It is time, Porter says, for planning to “unlearn” the privilege and the power that the momentous colonial endeavor bequeathed.

Speaking now as an anthropologist, I was delighted to find a planning expert who approaches culture not as a luxury or a matter of superficial choice, but



as fundamental to the human condition and thus as a key ingredient of any plans for a livable future. Planning never was, and never could have been, empty of culture. Porter shows us why.

She tells a story of how settlers made “places not yet home” meaningful as well as “improved” them. They made them financially profitable with the help of new, colonial practices that were often experimental and not always successful, but that became officially established as rules of land use, later planning. But the processes of fencing, squatting, cultivating the earth and even laying out whole new towns on supposedly empty lands also produced ways

to discriminate between people. In other words, dividing up land was always also about ways to establish, highlight and police differences between people. In this unhappy cultural project, planning, Porter insists, was given shape.

Focused on the settler colonies of the 'New World', *Unlearning the Colonial Cultures of Planning* is written for an academic audience. The book includes ample case study material to shore up its sophisticated and, at times, surprising argument. It looks at the histories of land use regulation in Britain's settler colonies of Aotearoa-New Zealand, Canada, the U.S. and Australia. As a white Australian with experience as a planning practitioner and academic, Porter has much to offer, specifically in relation to Australian planning, including some examples of meaningful and heartening recent change. Despite differences, the former British colonies went through broadly similar processes of territorial dispossession as the new arrivals ignored local populations, disregarded established territorial arrangements and imposed themselves, their buildings and their ideas on existing landscapes in the firm conviction that they were justified. Porter makes settlers' cultural commitments to particular ways of exploiting and managing land starkly apparent, using the sharp differences between colonizers and colonized to make her analytical points. I would go even further. Porter's insights about how these commitments influenced planning probably apply in places where colonialism is thought to be irrelevant, like Finland, where I have done research, or where its nature is thought to be completely different, like Palestine. This book makes possible a totally new kind of scrutiny and critique of sites like.

This is because Porter's main theoretical contribution is so novel, even radical. Her argument is that all these activities contributed to a tacit and yet enormously formative sense of planning as part of a civilizing process. Most importantly, those who carried it out imagined it as a product of the imperial or metropolitan center, London, from where its benign influence would eventually embrace the planet. And yet, Porter argues, like so many other supposedly European inventions, the roots of this so-called metropolitan rationality lay in the colonies,

characterized as they were by confusion and violence as well as stringent efforts to impose new order and keep control.

The professionalization of planning came later than the administering of colonial settler society that Porter refers to, but her argument still stands: its colonial formation has left a deep and troubling imprint on planning itself; planners routinely identify indigenous peoples and other Others as problematic because *they* (and not planning) are seen as cultural; planning still underestimates the cultural bias that informs its own concepts and work; moves towards 'inclusive' or 'communicative' planning are insufficient to redress the situation. The argument is shored up with Porter's own empirical data from Australia, archival material and a range of academic research. Much of this comes from post-colonial studies and other scholarly pursuits that try to incorporate the colonial relations of domination and oppression into a more complete yet insistently many-sided and complex account of world history. Unsurprisingly, the book has an ethical undercurrent throughout that reaches its peak in the final few pages.

Porter's take is nuanced and also generous to those whose actions contributed (and still contribute) to the pain and tragedy she describes. Anyone unaware of the kinds of self-delusions and acts of violence and humiliation dressed up in bureaucratic necessity that colonialism entailed will find sobering accounts of these. Equally, the book reminds us of the variety of encounters, resistances and counter-strategies as well as conciliatory and explicitly negotiated relationships among colonial populations. New relations and novel cultural practices were created through these encounters, between different peoples and between people and environments. Whatever else they were, as Porter highlights, these relations were cultural.

We get a picture of the various ways in which the British, and later the independent 'New World' states, negotiated land claims with indigenous peoples, and also how these early encounters still shape current conditions. The book's examples include a number of recent acknowledgments of indigenous title to land. For instance, the Waitangi treaty in Aotearoa-



New Zealand, though in existence since 1840, has only really enabled Maori challenges against the state since 1975. Unsurprisingly, many examples concern conflicts over natural resource management. In such cases, states tend to recognize nature only for its exchange value, as in Australia's Nyah State Forest, a case study from Porter's primary research, or in Canada's Clayoquot Sound or Aoraki/Mount Cook in Aotearoa, New Zealand, also mentioned in the book. These represent examples of indigenous resurgence. Porter argues, however, that they still reproduce colonial cultural frameworks that curtail indigenous flourishing, not least by concealing their own cultural biases and the political interests they bolster.

Porter's treatment of land law and the European tradition of property ownership are similarly fine-grained. John Locke, such a convenient scapegoat for generations of environmentalists and land-rights campaigners, has many pages devoted to him. Yes, Porter's concern is the "colonial process of producing space for a certain ends, to favor certain people (their cultural lifeways and economic systems)," and yes, she notes that "land use planning was the principal instrument of state control of land, and therefore of state rule and economic growth, in those territories." But, she does not end there, showing how planning and new cultural sensibilities emerged together but in contradictory ways. Colonists developed new ideas, technical innovations and moral imperatives; privately held land, state property and a planetary consciousness were features of life that took shape not just in thought but also in action. At the same time, Locke's revolutionary ideas, rooted in ethical principles quite inimical to the egotistical interpretations to which many of them were put, bolstered colonial dispossession.

The book also considers the limitations of inclusive and deliberative planning, offering inspiration for rethinking some cherished tenets of progressive planning. Once we see that planning is "neither empty nor colorless" and appreciate where it gets much of its ideological content, we understand that planners can no more act as therapists or innocent brokers of 'inclusion' than they can be scientifically neutral technocrats. Furthermore, when indigenous claims unsettle even progressive planning models

with demands for special status or concepts that are alien to administrators, the necessary transformative work required must first come from within planning itself.

One set of ideas to which planning and environmental thought of any kind returns to over and over again is the relationship between nature and society or culture. Some sociologists and philosophers, notably Henri Lefebvre, began to ask questions about these concepts, particularly in relation to space. Then, scarcely three decades ago (sometimes inspired by Lefebvre), more scholars began to venture headlong into this thorny intellectual territory to try and overcome what Porter refers to as the "gulf-like division of natures from cultures." This work soon generated exciting intellectual debates as well as influential reconceptualizations of key concepts like nature and science, for instance in the work of Bruno Latour who became a kind of mascot for this approach. This work was soon linked to pragmatic and often highly politicized issues around natural resources, medical care, conflicts over land, technologies and ecological destruction.

Since such conflicts have touched indigenous peoples disproportionately, it is no surprise that the conceptual tools developed by the new research trends have found their way into Porter's account. Interestingly, there are now many people, notably among academics, who consider the nature-culture debate either over or no longer interesting. However, reading Porter one understands that the troublesome pair continues to create problems. The extended discussion of a core case study, Gariwerd or the Grampians, an Australian national park, guides the reader through the theoretical tools at the same time as demonstrating the ongoing separation—in minds and policies as well as in material outcomes—of a realm of nature from culture. Although this theoretical debate may baffle those who are unfamiliar with it, anyone looking for examples of the real-world relevance of more recent academic analysis will find Porter's take illuminating.

Her historical overview is enough to persuade us that the philosophically pivotal if imprecise

nature-culture dualism was clearly at play in the primitivism-civilization axis that animated early settlers and colonial governments. It also had a role in the obsession with modern mapping and naming that sealed the breathtaking scale of theft. Nature-culture is still at play in the demarcation of some land and some people as more natural than others. Porter does not, however, simply add to the voluminous literature on this conundrum, but draws on the more productive elements of it to show how this ontological schema still influences the ways that land, natural resources (an awkward concept traceable to that same, problematic philosophical legacy!) and people are managed through planning institutions. Perhaps I read too much into it, but it even hints at the possibility that the schema allows those of us most privileged in the global division of resources to consider that "we're worth it."

The sharp analysis offered in the book is not, however, flippant or judgmental. The prose is gracious throughout, pointing merely to where

current disavowals of culture and convention wreak ethical, political and, increasingly, ecological havoc. To treat planning as cultural yet avoid judgment is a huge and important step toward opening it up for critical investigation.

Now I muse on the possibility that one could treat dominant economic ideology and practice as cultural. Might it even be done, as Porter has done for planning, in a spirit of constructive rather than angry critique?

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# *What We See: Advancing the Observations of Jane Jacobs*

*Review by Anusha Venkataraman*

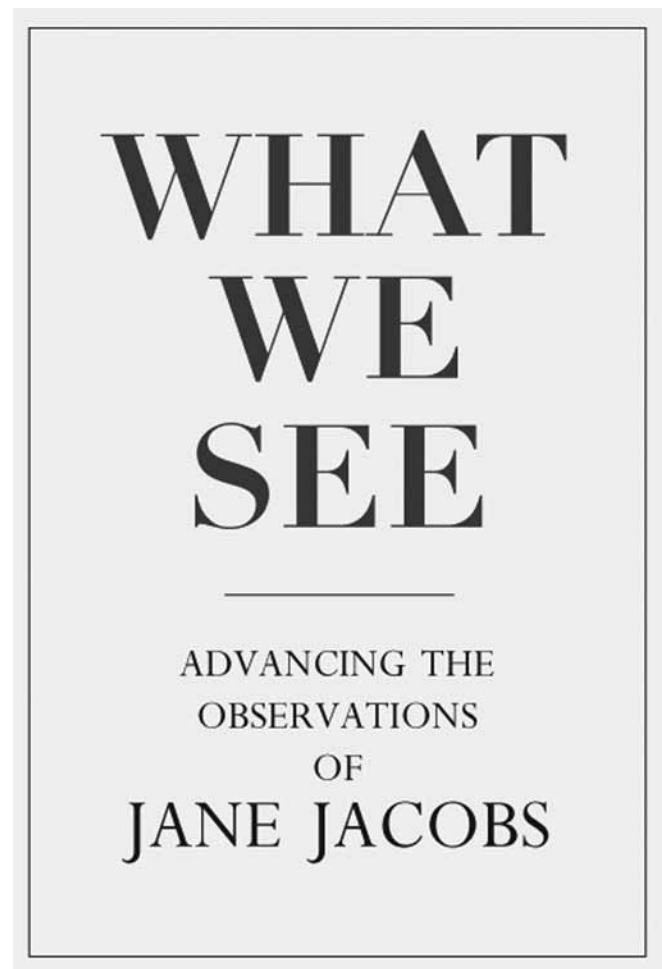
*What We See: Advancing the Observations of Jane Jacobs*

Edited by Lynne Elizabeth and Stephen Goldsmith  
New Village Press, 2010.

No urban planner today can avoid being exposed, directly and indirectly, to the ideas, writings and legacy of Jane Jacobs. Especially in New York City, where Jacobs emerged as a journalist and activist in the 1960s, her name has become a franchise. While many of her ideas have inspired positive changes, “Jane Jacobs” has become a brand, a flag waved by legions of would-be “urbanists,” many of whom have never read any of her works.

Such is the fate of any public intellectual. *What We See: Advancing the Observations of Jane Jacobs*, published by New Village Press (2010) and edited by Lynne Elizabeth and Stephen Goldsmith, reaches beyond the platitudes about Jacobs’ work. It features stories of her ideals played out in specific places and spaces by the people she has inspired and those who share an affinity with the spirit (and not just letter) of her work.

Jane Jacobs passed away in 2006 at the age of 89. As an outspoken and proactive thinker, writer and leader, Jacobs was the quintessential public intellectual, and perhaps the most famous one that has graced the field of urban planning. As Mary Rowe observes in the epilogue to *What We See*, Jacobs was fierce and unpredictable, but never reached her thoughts quickly or easily. Jacobs’ ideas were cultivated over a lifetime and her trajectory of interests and output of work reflects this predisposition—and uncommon ability—to shift, change and refine one’s ideas in both practice



and articulation. In her lifetime, Jacobs moved beyond critique (most famously of Robert Moses’ grand plans for New York City’s neighborhoods) to thoughtful prescription. Beginning as an outsider to planning and urban development, Jacobs applied herself to envisioning alternative futures based on the healthy, sustainable and socially enriching ways real people live real lives in real cities.

Most of the contributors to the book are practitioners who have applied Jacobs' ideas in their work, many of them without realizing it until later. This group of writers is satisfyingly diverse in background and mode of practice. They are developers, activists, academics, researchers, writers, entrepreneurs and everything in between. Each contributor seeks to recognize Jacobs' values and ideas in their work; most importantly, each practices "seeing" the city as part of acting in the city. Therefore, this book is an important contribution to the discourse around what and who a progressive planner is.

Jacobs has, deservedly, become the "patron saint" of progressive planning—anointed, revered, almost untouchable. Celebratory and reflective, *What We See* revels in Jacobs' godlike status while trying to bring a sense of realness to an intellectual celebrity. Though not an academic compilation—the articles are refreshingly readable—the book could benefit from a more critical eye, or a glimpse through Jane's "cat's-eyed frames," to echo Michael Sorkin's words in the foreword to the book. Jacobs was a fallible figure, and just like any other human being, had flaws in thinking and practice that are not adequately explored in *What We See*. If you are looking for insight into some of these critiques—notably that Jacobs did not adequately address race and class (especially in regards to gentrification), that her prescriptions easily lend themselves to formulaic applications and that she did not fully appreciate the regional interdependency of urban neighborhoods and the suburbs that surround them—you will not find them in this volume.

Each section of *What We See* is devoted to one broad area of Jacobs' thinking. The first section, "Vitality of the Neighborhood," examines Jacobs' observations on what imbues a neighborhood with liveliness, diversity and dynamism. Architectural theorist Nan Ellin evaluates Jacobs' vision as not only the ability to see, but also to imagine and envision alternative futures. More significantly, however, in this section the contributors delve into the *limits* of planning: what it is, isn't and ought to be. Nabeel Hamdi asserts that "practice...is about making the ordinary special, and the special more widely accessible—expanding the boundaries of understanding and possibility with vision and common sense."

Jacobs was certainly a "practitioner" in this sense, disturbing the stasis of academia and business-as-usual bureaucratic planning. Playwright/activist Deanne Taylor is, like Jacobs, a "citizen-governor" who "stand[s] in the path of the utopian bulldozers and cranes that would plunder the land and sky and diminish community wealth for the benefit of a few, all in the name of 'growth.'" Journalist Ray Suarez echoes one of Jacobs' less-cited observations: to embrace the vitality of the street also means, in daily life and professional practice alike, to embrace risk, difference and even disorder. Economist Sanford Ikeda, in a closer read than many of the articles offer, eloquently asserts that "a living city is always becoming...[and at] most you can alter the direction of its becoming." Unplanning and inefficiency are virtues, and the limits of planning are to be accepted and even celebrated, not least of all by planners themselves.

The section titled "The Virtues of Seeing" offers a more delicate and nuanced excursion into some of Jacobs' better-known ideas—particularly those behind the catchphrases "ballet of the street" and "eyes on the street." The fine art of seeing (to paraphrase the title of Rob Cowan's article) is also about storytelling. The myths and narratives that shape our understanding of who we are and what we are capable of are discussed by Arlene Goldbard and affirmed in the story of Alexie Torres-Fleming about personal and community transformation in the South Bronx. Mindy Fullilove, author of *Rootshock*, offers one of the best articles of the compilation—simultaneously historical, personal, theoretical and political.

"Cities, Villages, Streets" opens a place-centric approach to Jacobs' ideas. A few of the articles are tedious in their specificity, though interesting in that they are written by politicians—who do not often contribute to books and engage in this sort of discourse. "The Village Inside" is a gem. The authors, Mathias Echanove and Rahul Srivastava, apply the ideas of Jacobs and others in the context of contemporary India, questioning the way we conceive of the urban-rural divide and presenting the idea of the "user-generated city" that lives, breathes and grows out of direct citizen actions, as small and innocuous as they might be.

“The Organized Complexity of Planning” deals with Jacob’s distinction between the perceptions of disorganized and organized complexity. Each of the contributors in this section approaches the city, as Jacobs did, as a complex system of interrelated and interdependent pieces—in their practices as progressive planners, architects and designers. James Stockard tells a story of personal development that will feel familiar to many planners. It is a story about taking on a profession with such a troubling history in a way that holds much promise for effecting change—if approached in the spirit of listening, learning, teaching and questioning. Robert Sirman reflects on the process of developing a community-based art center, while architect Peter Zlonicky finds signs of Jacobs’ influence on urban revitalization policies in Germany’s cities. Jaime Lerner, former mayor of Curitiba, Brazil, outlines a theory of action in the face of uncertainty, limited resources and the insecurities that can prevent us from taking risks.

The next section, “Design for Nature, Design for People” begins with chapters on topics ranging from biomimicry (Janine Benyus) to ecologically-derived infrastructure (Hillary Brown) and varying approaches to economic regionalism (Roberta Gratz and Richard Register). The end of this section features some of the most interesting articles in the compilation, such as Jan Gehl’s “For You Jane,” an optimistic and breezy yet comprehensive overview of Jacobs-inspired city planning policies implemented in diverse cities across the world. Similarly, New York City Department of Transportation Commissioner Janette Sadik-Khan recounts Jacobs’ on-the-ground battles in New York City alongside the gains for pedestrians and bicyclists that have been won on those same streets.

“Economic Instincts” is full of heavy-hitters that update Jacobs’ insights, drawn primarily from *The Economy of Cities*, for a twenty-first century economy. Saskia Sassen looks at the historical transition of the city of Chicago from a manufacturing to a knowledge-based economy, testing Jacobs’ hypothesis that the diverse skills tailored to one urban economic system can be grafted onto another that uses that same set of knowledge and experience, a process that Susan Witt’s article on import replacement echoes. Ron Shiffman puts a personal

touch to this trajectory, recounting his visits to real “Places” of economic production and efforts to create jobs and economies that are environmentally sustainable and responsive to human need.

Though this book is overstuffed with good material—including a study guide—the question remains: Was Jane Jacobs a planner? Chester Hartman, founder of Planners Network, seems to think so. For him, Jacobs was the model advocacy planner, more concerned with promoting the interests of those people forgotten by the traditional planning profession than with gaining academic recognition. In truth, the question does not matter: read alongside Jacobs’ works, this book points towards a contextualization and deeper understanding of her legacy, in planning and fields beyond. Jane Jacobs, as public intellectual, would appreciate a volume that tries its best to unearth the foundations of our theory and practice as community-builders, and provide many paths for envisioning and moving forward towards a “radical replanning” of our cities.

*Anusha Venkataram is a planner, writer, artist and activist currently working as the Green Light District arts & education manager at El Puente, a Brooklyn-based Latino arts and culture organization undertaking a neighborhood-wide sustainability initiative.*

# 2011 Planners Network Disorientation Guide

## Call for Participation • Proposal Deadline: December 15, 2010

Carla Klassen, Molly Johnson, Yuseph Katiya and Amy Siciliano have started the exciting task of updating the *Disorientation Guide*. For those unfamiliar with the guide, it reflects many of the issues and challenges each generation of would-be planners encounters as they begin in the field. The *Disorientation Guide*, (available at: <http://plannersnetwork.org/publications/disorientation.html>) is one of PN's most popular resources. In fact, many of us were introduced to Planners Network through the guide. It has been used in the classroom as well as in communities, both as a resource and an organizing tool. Importantly, it acts as a counterweight to the planning status quo.

We have an expected publication date of Fall 2011 and are actively looking for contributions. This is a great opportunity to get your ideas and actions in wider circulation while also contributing to progressive planning education.

Similar to the 2004-2005 version, the 2011 edition will reflect the diversity of PN voices and include a variety of articles, resources and practical tools. We are particularly interested in making the 2011 edition more interactive and multimedia-friendly. Possible content/topic ideas might include:

- A photo-essay, graphic story or short video of a planning-related project you are working on;
- An article on bridging the planning vs. community activism divide;
- A reflection on the particularities of planning in your town/region/country;
- Urban greenwashing: what does urban sustainability mean to progressive planners?;
- Diversity in the classroom/in the field;
- Why I went to planning school after being a....;
- Why I dropped out of planning school to become a....;
- The most influential planning course I took and why;
- Progressive planning for practitioners: how do you survive at your job?;
- The life, death and rebirth of a PN chapter: A short essay on your PN Chapter (history, events, accomplishments, plans for future challenges, etc....);
- An annotated list of progressive planning resources. This may include books, films, websites, blogs, organizations, etc....;
- Top ten planning issues facing cities in the next 100 years and why;
- Short interviews with community activists, educators and/or planning practitioners; or
- Other ideas?

We welcome collaborative submissions and are especially interested in hearing about issues, people and places underrepresented in planning literature. Final submissions will be due mid-February and will range from 500-1500 words, or 1-2 pages of images, depending on the topic of your proposal. To get a sense of the range of submissions and the style of writing, take a look at the previous *Disorientation Guide*.

Please send a short proposal (2-3 sentences/50-100 words) outlining your idea to [disorientationguide2011@gmail.com](mailto:disorientationguide2011@gmail.com). We will accept proposals until December 15, 2010.

Finally, if you would like to help us with copyediting, layout, web design (who wants to design the cover?) and/or general brainstorming, please get in touch. If you have any questions on the project do not hesitate to contact us at the email address above.

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