

# planners network disorientation guide

your how-to manual for a progressive planning education  
2004-05



## **PLANNERS NETWORK STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES**

The Planners Network is an association of professionals, activists, academics, and students involved in physical, social, economic, and environmental planning in urban and rural areas, who promote fundamental change in our political and economic systems.

We believe that planning should be a tool for allocating resources and developing the environment to eliminate the great inequalities of wealth and power in our society, rather than to maintain and justify the status quo. We are committed to opposing racial, economic, and environmental injustice and discrimination by gender and sexual orientation. We believe that planning should be used to assure adequate food, clothing, housing, medical care, jobs, safe working conditions, and a healthful environment. We advocate public responsibility for meeting these needs, because the private market has proven incapable of doing so.

We seek to be an effective political and social force, working with other progressive organizations to inform public opinion and public policy and to provide assistance to those seeking to understand, control, and change the forces which affect their lives.

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# I. INTRODUCTION

## WELCOME TO THE DISORIENTATION GUIDE Your How-To Manual for a Progressive Planning Education

Planners Network 2004-2005

*Marisa Cravens*

The language of urban planning is full of socially conscientious terminology: sustainability, diversification, community action, ecologically sound, consensus-building, anti-poverty. It is this language and this type of thinking that draws most planners to the field, and as a result, planning students tend to be a forward-looking lot, with a particular consciousness of human societies and their infrastructure as dynamic, evolving systems. For many, a planning education is a chance to learn how to put into practice the ideals that they already possess. These instincts are often challenged at graduate school, where the presentation of an “objective” and ostensibly depoliticized planning process potentially undermines our prior understanding and knowledge.

Welcome to the Planners Network *Disorientation Guide*. Planners Network is a 30-year-old, international network of professionals, academics, activists and students who share a commitment to progressive urban and rural planning and to help keep each other informed and on track. As we learn more about the history of planning and social structures, it becomes apparent that planners are constantly innovating, recycling old ideas once thought lost, pushing and mutating old boundaries and breaking ground for new forms of human interaction. Planning education has been evolving alongside this. Less about possessing a vision of utopia, postmodern planning has in some ways transformed from the capital-intense, singular vision of a great thinker to the cultivated ability of truly listening to and assessing the needs of a community and its environment. There are now as many ways of acting “urban planning” as there are planners. Plenty of non-planners are having their say, too.

Planners Network believes that planning should be a tool for allocating resources to eliminate the great inequalities of wealth and power in our society, rather than to maintain and justify the status quo. We recognize that no one idea or person is going to solve all society’s problems, and choose to support each other’s work as a community. We are committed to opposing racial, economic, and environmental injustice

and discrimination by gender and sexual orientation. We hope that this guide will help you to identify issues that you can address as a planner and help you maintain the spirit and stamina to stay true to your own idea of what a planner’s role should be. In the first section, we identify planning paradigms and the social and ethical issues that planners meet in their work. In the second section, we take a critical look at our education and hopefully give you some ideas about yours. We also introduce you to some of the work of current progressive planners. Finally, we tell you more about Planners Network and how we work as an organization, and give you an idea of what kind of activities PN members are engaged in right now. We do not pretend to have the answers: we just want to make you keep asking the right questions.

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## PLANNERS NETWORK FROM THE BEGINNING

*By Tom Angotti*

In 1975, Chester Hartman typed a letter to about 300 planners and activists, including members of the recently defunct Planners for Equal Opportunity. This was the first PN newsletter, run off on a mimeograph machine and mailed out.

*This is the first mailing of a new communications/action network of leftist planners in the U.S. and Canada. At the first level, the idea simply is to put the few hundred North American "radical planners" in regular touch with one another, to share ideas and experiences, discuss their work and lives, develop some sense of community and mutual support.*

These were heady times. The newsletter exchanges debated radical and socialist alternatives to mainstream urban planning. The Vietnam War was over, the last major anti-colonial struggles were being won in Africa, and détente between the U.S. and the Soviet Union brought optimism about peace and alternatives for social justice. In Europe, the welfare state was strong. In the U.S., the civil rights movement had killed Jim Crow and affirmative action was very much alive. Many Networkers celebrated the end of the federal urban renewal program, which they had fought as the first "advocacy planners."

The PN newsletters, usually published bi-monthly, contained notes from members about their work, news about conferences, publications, and other resources. Chester Hartman did most of the work, and received small individual grants and member contributions.

The first move toward making PN an organization came at the 1979 conference on progressive planning at Cornell University. The first PN conference was held in 1981 at the National 4-H Center outside Washington, DC. A formal statement of principles was adopted, several working groups were set up and a steering committee formed. In 1985 PN issued a "Call for Social Responsibility in the Planning and Building Professions" that spoke out against nuclear weapons, cutbacks in social spending, the aggressive U.S. foreign policy, and for economic and racial justice at home.

Another conference was held in 1986, and since 1994 conferences have been held almost every year, with venues in Washington, DC, East St. Louis, Brooklyn, Pomona, Toronto, Lowell, Amherst, and New York City. PN conferences are planned with the involvement of local communities and encourage participatory workshops.

Throughout the course of PN's history, members have organized local activities such as forums, conferences and campaigns. In 1975, Networkers in New York City started a forum series that continues today. There have also been local activities in Boston, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Toronto. Today chapters are forming in many other U.S. and Canadian cities.

In 1995, Chester Hartman turned over the newsletter and coordination of PN to a new Steering Committee. The newsletter and membership list moved to Pratt Institute in Brooklyn. A website and listserv were started. The bi-monthly newsletter gradually expanded to contain more and more articles and features. In 2002, the printed newsletter was converted to *Progressive Planning*, a quarterly magazine under the direction of an editorial board and volunteer staff. Shortly after launching the magazine, we realized the need to bring back the networking that happened with the newsletter, and launched the PN e-newsletter for members.

In the three decades since PN's founding, the political spectrum has moved radically to the right. The left and progressive movements in North America have become more diverse, and so has PN's membership base. Today PNers work in a broad array of disciplines, focusing on issues of race, gender, sexual orientation, and environmental justice as they relate to the physical, economic and social environment of cities and rural areas. The constant objective throughout PN's history has been to advocate that planning be used to eliminate inequalities and promote peace and racial, economic and environmental justice.

[Portions of this article were published in the Planners Network Newsletter and *Progressive Planning* Magazine.]

## A LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY

### Some Events Influencing the Development of Planning in the US

*To be expanded beyond the U.S. next year - submissions welcome!*

*Compiled by Cynthia Golembeski*

- 1790 - The first U.S. Census is conducted.
- 1858 - Construction starts on New York's Central Park.
- 1867 - New York State passes first major tenement house law on physical conditions of housing.
- 1867 - San Francisco enacts first land use zoning restricting the location of obnoxious uses.
- 1872 - Friedrich Engels' seminal work, *The Housing Question*, is published.
- 1877 - First mass strike held as US rail workers strike against wage reduction.
- 1889 - Chicago's Hull House founded, becomes leading US social settlement house, providing space and resources for health, education, and recreation in poor, immigrant neighborhood.
- 1890 - Jacob Riis publishes *How the Other Half Lives*, a study of New York tenements houses.
- 1894 - The National Municipal League forms to promote municipal reform.
- 1900 - Ebenezer Howard's *Garden Cities of Tomorrow* is published.
- 1903 - President Theodore Roosevelt appoints a Public Lands Commission to propose rules for orderly land development and management.
- 1907 - Connecticut creates the first official, permanent town planning board, for Hartford.
- 1907 - The Russell Sage Foundation begins the first comprehensive city survey in Pittsburgh, PA.
- 1909 - Wisconsin passes first state enabling act for planning.
- 1909 - The first national planning conference is held in Washington, D.C.
- 1909 - Los Angeles institutes the first major use of zoning to direct future development.
- 1909 - Daniel Burnham's Plan of Chicago published as the first metropolitan plan in the US.
- 1911 - Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire in New York kills 146 young immigrant women, as the only exit is blocked and doors are locked. The fire helps pass building code and labor law reforms.
- 1913 - New Jersey becomes the first state to institute mandatory referral of subdivision plots, the beginning of modern subdivision control.
- 1914 - Newark, New Jersey hires first full-time municipally employed planner.
- 1915 - Congress passes the Federal-Aid Road Act, which is the first federal-aid highway act.
- 1915 - Patrick Geddes, mentor of Lewis Mumford, publishes *Cities in Evolution*.
- 1916 - First comprehensive US zoning resolution adopted by New York City Board of Estimate.
- 1921 - The Committee on the Regional Plan of New York is founded.
- 1922 - *Pennsylvania Coal Co. v. Mahon*. The first decision to hold that a land use restriction could constitute a taking of property.
- 1926 - Supreme Court validates Euclid, Ohio zoning ordinance, in *Village of Euclid v. Ambler*, recognizing zoning as an appropriate extension of the community's authority to pass laws.
- 1926 - New York is the first state to provide a public subsidy for housing.
- 1929 - Stock market crash ushers in Great Depression and fosters ideas of national public planning.
- 1932 - Lewis Mumford publishes *The Culture of Cities*.
- 1933 - Home Owners Loan Corporation established to protect homeowners from foreclosure losses.
- 1933 - National Resources Planning Board is formed as a national planning effort, leading to the Tennessee Valley Authority economic development program.
- 1933 - Ohio passes the first state public housing act.
- 1934 - National Housing Act establishes FSLIC for insuring savings deposits and FHA for insuring individual home mortgages.
- 1935 - Greenbelt towns are begun, the first federally constructed new towns to be built in peacetime.
- 1937 - US Housing Act of 1937 is first major federal legislative commitment to public housing.
- 1947 - The U.S. Housing and Home Financial Administration is formed (HHFA).
- 1947 - Levittown is the first large-scale residential subdivision to open, in Long Island, NY.
- 1954 - In *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Supreme Court upholds school integration.
- 1955 - Rosa Parks is arrested after refusing to give up her seat to a white passenger on a city bus. The Montgomery Improvement Association organizes a bus boycott, lasting over a year.
- 1956 - Supreme Court affirms District Court's decision that segregation on buses is unconstitutional, and the Montgomery buses are desegregated.
- 1956 - Congress passes multi-billion dollar Federal Aid Highway Act to create interstate highway system linking state capitals and major cities.
- 1960 - Kevin Lynch's *Image of the City* is published.
- 1961 - Jane Jacobs' *Death and Life of Great American Cities* is published.
- 1962 - *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson is published.
- 1962 - Herbert Gans' *The Urban Villagers*, a study of community life in a Boston West End Italian-

- American community, raises serious questions about urban renewal programs.
- 1964 - The Civil Rights Act outlaws discrimination based on race, creed, and national origin in places of public accommodation.
- 1964 - President Lyndon Johnson declares war on poverty and urges congressional authorization of many social programs.
- 1964 - Planners for Equal Opportunity is founded.
- 1965 - Paul Davidoff publishes "Advocacy and Pluralism in Planning" which popularizes the notion of "advocacy planning."
- 1966 - The Black Panthers write their Ten Point Program, calling for adequate housing, jobs, education and an end to police brutality.
- 1966 - Mississippians build a tent city under President Johnson's window to protest housing conditions.
- 1966 - National Historic Preservation Act is passed, establishing National Register of Historic Places and protecting preservation-worthy sites and properties threatened by federal activities.
- 1966 - Housing and urban policy achieve cabinet status with the creation of Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Robert Weaver becomes HUD's first Secretary and the first African American cabinet member.
- 1967 - Racial riots in Newark, Detroit, and elsewhere.
- 1968 - Student protest escalates with sit-ins at Columbia University. Members of Students for a Democratic Society join Harlem residents in a protest against the school's plan to build a gymnasium in a Harlem park.
- 1968 - Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr. are assassinated.
- 1968 - Ralph Abernathy leads The Poor People's Campaign in Washington DC after King's assassination. The campaign calls for reforms in welfare, employment and housing policies.
- 1968 - President Johnson signs the Civil Rights Act of 1968, prohibiting discrimination in the sale, rental, and financing of housing.
- 1969 - In *Gatreaux vs. CHA*, a federal judge orders Chicago to build public housing outside the black ghetto. Chicago declines to build any further public housing.
- 1969 - National Environmental Policy Act requires an environmental impact statement for every federal or federally-aided state or local major action that might significantly harm the environment.
- 1969 - Police raid a gay bar in Greenwich Village, NYC, resulting in the Stonewall uprising, a milestone in the Gay Liberation Movement.
- 1970 - The Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) is founded.
- 1970 - The first Earth Day takes place on January 1.
- 1971 - AIP adopts a Code of Ethics for professional planners.
- 1972 - Demolition of St. Louis' Pruitt-Igoe Project symbolizes nationwide move away from massive, isolating, high-rise structures to less dispersed low-rise public housing.
- 1973 - President Richard Nixon ends the federal urban renewal program.
- 1975 - *Planners Network* is founded.
- 1975 - The Project for Public Spaces (PPS) is founded to continue the work of William H. Whyte on the design and management of public spaces.
- 1976 - Oregon voters approve a statewide ballot measure to create urban growth boundaries around Portland and other urban areas.
- 1978 - United Nations creates HABITAT to address global housing and urban development problems.
- 1980 - Grassroots organizers bring national attention to Love Canal, New York, where industrial dumping caused severe health hazards.
- 1980 - Ronald Reagan is elected president, beginning the "Reagan Revolution" against poor people that dismantles social programs, including federal financing of new subsidized housing.
- 1980 - Congress passes Superfund Bill, to establish liability for hazardous waste discharge.
- 1980 - The Associated Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP) is established to represent the academic branch of the planning profession.
- 1983 - New Jersey Supreme Court rules that all 567 state municipalities must plan to accommodate their "fair share" of affordable housing.
- 1988 - Fair Housing Act amended to prohibit housing discrimination on basis of race, color, religion, sex, disability, family status, or national origin.
- 1990 - First national People of Color Summit on Environmental Justice held in Washington, DC.
- 1990 - The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is signed into law, requiring the government and businesses to accommodate the disabled.
- 1993 - The Enterprise Zone/Empowerment Community (EZ/EC) proposal passes Congress, offering tax incentives, wage tax credits, special deductions, and low-interest financing to a limited number of impoverished urban and rural communities.
- 1994 - Represented by the NAACP, several groups bring a successful lawsuit against Los Angeles MTA, charging them with violating Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act by establishing a separate and unequal mass transit system.
- 1999 - World Trade Organization (WTO) meets in Seattle and is greeted by anti-global protestors.
- 2001 - First World Social Forum brings together members of alternative globalization movement.
- 2003 - The biggest public demonstrations in history protest the war in Iraq.



## II. POLITICS AND PLANNING

### The Processes that Shape our Space

*By Amy Siciliano*

Recently, I viewed a photo exhibit by Canadian landscape photographer Edward Burtynsky. Through larger than life images of abandoned mines, lonesome railway lines, and mundane rural homesteads nestled at the foothills of industry, Burtynsky surveys our historic and often tragic relationship between industry and the physical landscape. But in my mind, the real value of Burtynsky's photographs is their ability to do more than just detail this historical condition. His work manages somehow to capture the fluidity of the space, enabling his viewers to make the conceptual leap from seeing these particular landscapes merely as "things" in space, to reflecting on the multitude of processes that went into shaping them. Likewise, planning to shape and order things and people in space might seem, at first glance, decidedly apolitical. However, as the authors of this section demonstrate, planning, once operationalized, is implicitly political and increasingly being dictated by the political ideology of neoliberalism. Kanishka Goonewardena asks: "If planners made the economy in the first place, why can't they break it and remake it?" Both Marisa Cravens and Alex Schafran show how progressive planners on the ground can and do respond to neoliberal hegemony. Planners have played a fundamental role in structuring our global capitalist system, and so they are equally capable of creating social and physical structures firmly rooted in social equity rather than neoclassical economics.

## PLANNING AND NEOLIBERALISM

*By Kanishka Goonewardena*

Progressive planning and the ideology of neoliberalism are mortal enemies. Indeed, today the marriage that was arranged between planning and neoliberalism in 1990s by the rich and the powerful seems to be in some serious trouble. We can be sure that conservative forces will rally to save this unholy union, so that neoliberalism and its beneficiaries may continue to prosper. Yet many people who have suffered from neoliberalism masquerading as planning, including ordinary folks who have not been to planning schools, are beginning to stand up for their interests in a myriad of urban social struggles around the world. In so doing, they are wresting the practice of planning away from the yoke of market fundamentalism, while shielding it from bureaucratic elitism taking it in the direction of radical democracy. A new relationship now suggests itself: between planning and people.

How could planners serve real people instead of abstract laws governing the "free market?" To broach this question in any depth, it will be useful to recall what neoliberalism is, and how it still influences, not to say incapacitates, planning. Neoliberalism is the dominant political-economic ideology of our time—the ideology of corporate globalization, which in turn is a code word for the universalization of capitalism. In short, it is the ideology of global capitalism. Its inviolate moral principle is remarkably lucid, but rarely acknowledged and hardly ever questioned: *maximum profit at any cost*. What this categorical imperative amounts to in the real world of planners is also clear: a

political-economic environment within which a handful of private interests are permitted to control social life in order to maximize their personal profit.

Planners confront neoliberalism not only in such practice but also in theory. Many courses we encounter in planning schools now revolve around the assumptions and abstractions of neoclassical economics; so we have all been blessed by a religious faith in the infallible virtues of the unregulated market. But unregulated capitalism is a myth. Capitalist markets have never been free—especially when sanctioned by *laissez-faire* rhetoric. On capitalism and markets, it will be foolish to ignore the outstanding French historian Fernand Braudel's considered judgment: "Capitalism only triumphs when it becomes identified with the state, when it is the state." Without "big government," in other words, capitalism would not exist. That is why Max Weber coins the term "political capitalism" in his classic work *General Economic History*. That is also why economic historian Karl Polanyi demonstrates that "*laissez-faire* was planned; planning was not."

The rhetoric of neoliberalism is one thing; its reality is something else. The 19<sup>th</sup> century theory of neoliberalism (neoclassical economics) romanticizes free markets; its 21<sup>st</sup> century practice (globalization) reveals a world economy rigged in favor of the ruling classes and multinational corporations, at the terrible expense of the masses, the wretched of the earth. Since neoliberalism became hegemonic in 1980s, the world

has become more hellish for many, and even more heavenly for a few. The relevant statistics, as Mike Davis notes, would have stunned even the authors of *The Communist Manifesto*: “In the late 1990s . . . America’s 400 richest families increased their net worth by almost a billion dollars apiece, while the pie slice of the bottom 40 percent of the population plummeted 80 percent. . . . Globally, the Wealth Decade of the 1990s translated into negative income trends for 80 African and Latin American countries, while 200 masters of the universe, led by Bill Gates . . . amassed personal fortunes equivalent to the total income of the world’s 2.5 billion poorest people.”

The current symptoms and trends of neoliberalism, however, are not unprecedented. In fact, they remind us of the imperialist oligopolies that ruled the world economy around the turn of the previous century, during the long wave of capitalist expansion from 1893 to 1914, before it ended up in a structural crisis that precipitated the First World War. That crisis is instructive today because it proves that capitalism without planning is not sustainable. Unless the free-wheeling adventures of global capital are brought under political control and subjected to the demands of social justice, there is every reason to expect that neoliberalism as we know it is destined towards a systemic crisis of global proportions. About that, we can be certain; it has happened before and it will happen again. The only uncertainty is this: will the current stage in the development of capitalism come to an end in a social catastrophe or an ecological disaster? For my part, I hope—being a very hopeful person on these matters—that the crisis will be mostly social.

Now, if a global crisis is very much on the world-historical agenda, what can planners do in the meantime, here and now? Many have already addressed aspects of this question in terms of social justice, with due respect to issues such as class, gender, sexuality and race. I trust that we must reflect deeply—and make recommendations—concerning the nature of our political agency in the face of neoliberal ideology. I engage neoliberal ideology not because it is true, but because it is the most influential political-economic ideology in the world today; because it severely constrains not only what planners *do*, but also what they *think* they can do. In order to liberate planning *practice* from the boundaries erected by the political-economic realities of neoliberalism, then, it will be necessary also to emancipate planning *thought* from the shackles of neoliberal ideology. Planners cannot hope to be radical unless *every* manifestation of this ideology is sharply contested and defeated.

For now, let me consider just one aspect of it: neoliberalism’s *reification of the economy*. Here the

word reification refers to the transformation of human properties, relations and actions—in short, human subjectivity—into an objective thing that is independent of subjective human agency. The conception of the economy in neoclassical economics in fact provides the best example of reification. How? We know that it is the people who make the economy by constituting it. As a social construction, that is, the economy does not exist independently of the subjective agents who produce and reproduce it. Yet, if we look at our mainstream economics textbooks, then the economy suddenly appears as a fully autonomous entity, governed by its own objective laws. This *concept* of the economy admits no trace of human agency, and it is of course impervious to politics. In addition, the subjects who constructed the economy to begin with and now purged of any agency are deemed to behave “rationally” (“rational fools,” as Amartya Sen once put it) in accordance with the objective laws of the supposedly self-regulating market. In this scenario, the economy returns as an alien force to haunt the very people who created it. Here—in the reification of the economy—we have a special case of what Marx called alienation.

*Neoliberalism severely constrains not only what planners do, but also what they think they can do.*

When I was a graduate student about ten years ago, a neoliberal planning professor told me that a planner developing real estate must obey the objective laws of the market just as a civil engineer building a bridge obeys the objective laws of gravity. That analogy was fundamentally flawed. My professor was right about the engineer, but wrong about the planner. The laws of gravity are of course not produced socially and politically, and the engineer cannot alter them—in that sense gravity is quite objective. By contrast, as Polanyi explains in his book *The Great Transformation*, the self-regulating market *was* produced politically and socially—subjectively—in fact by planners of various descriptions. As such, it is neither natural nor objective. If planners made the economy in the first place, why can’t they break it and remake it? They must, because neoliberalism legitimates a historical condition under which the economy subjugates human life to its own autonomous laws, often with inhuman consequences. Radical-democratic planning strives for exactly the reverse: to guide the economy according to human purposes, by doing justice to the desires of those who will otherwise suffer from an economy of their own making.

[Based on a Talk delivered at the Canadian Association of Planning Students (CAPS) Conference, *Pushing the Boundaries: Planning’s Radical Projects*, Toronto, Canada, February 13-16, 2001



## ANTI-NEOLIBERAL PLANNING WITH A HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK

*By Marisa Cravens*

Fueled by the storms of the civil rights era, progressive and advocacy planning arose in response to urban renewal and other government-mandated inequalities. Decades later, the infusion of human rights into planning is one response to the twin specters of neoliberalism and neocolonialism affecting planning today. Increasingly used by indigenous groups and social movements to lay claim to civil rights, education, shelter, cultural autonomy and self-determination, a firm grounding in human rights is an excellent planning tool. Human rights thinking is used in India to protest the construction of dams, in Africa to advocate for better health care, in the US to protect the rights of workers. It is a mechanism for empowerment and can provide a universal, non-neoliberal value framework within which to develop as a planner, whether working internationally or within one's own locality.

The language of human rights was born after WWII and flourished in the 1990s, occupying a central place in national and global public policy. In the United States, political discourse on human rights has been constrained to a focus on civil and political rights: the right to vote, to organize, to free speech and freedom from discrimination. This favoring is reflected in the types of international treaties and covenants the US will ratify, often avoiding those that create obligations towards those rights more closely related to the planning field: economic, social, and cultural rights, such as housing, education, a living wage, or a traditional way of life. Economic, social, and cultural rights, "unsanctioned" by official policy, have been in turn picked up by progressive planners, NGOs and social justice movements. Encouraged by examples from other nations, who use even the promise of economic, social and cultural rights to challenge neo-colonial forms of international development, American rights-based organizations are on the rise. These include the Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign, Kensington Welfare Rights Union, Physicians for Human Rights, Food First! and the Center for Constitutional Rights. Recognizing the larger scope of human rights applicability, science and technology workers have increasingly used human rights as a shorthand for measuring the impact of their work on the world.

While this turn to human rights has been extremely important and valuable, an enormous gap exists between the aspirations of theory and its performance in

practice. Also, the cultural implication of the concept of "universal rights" is widely contested. Progressive planners are uniquely educated and positioned to respond to both these dilemmas and to expand the boundaries of human rights-based practices. While legal groups can use International Law to try to hold governments accountable for failing to meet human rights standards, planners and planning organizations can positively enact policies and projects to meet the same standards. By using human rights as a framework for decision-making; progressive planning can build the social and physical structures that begin to repair the damage of massive human rights violations. A strong understanding of human rights also provides an excellent standard by which to evaluate planning projects and proposals. Does the project address the economic, social and cultural rights of all that it influences? If a development is infringing on others' rights, how can it be altered? This perspective can reveal hidden costs that must be factored into development.

As with planning, human rights work can serve a narrow interest and alienate communities if not intrinsically tied to the efforts of local organizations. Although the field is highly developed and, in some universities, is an academic field of study in and of itself, human rights is meant to be accessible. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is available in 250 languages, electronically, and in small pamphlets for easy distribution and portability. It is a tool for social movements as well as a tool for planners: uniting both ends of the development spectrum.

What does all this mean for students? Consider seeking internships and fellowships through human rights organizations. Many human rights organizations have a development focus and can help you identify activist groups working for rights related to your specialized area of research, whether it be disaster relief, clean water, or jobs with justice.

And consider how the theoretical framework plays out in your everyday life. For instance, as you exercise your right to an education, U.S. students can thank (or dispute) Art. XII in the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man: "Every person has the right to an education, which should be based on the principles of liberty, morality, and human solidarity."

*The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is available at <http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>*

## INFILTRATION FROM THE NORTH

### Canadians Tackle Planning in America

*By Alex Schafran*

It was the way she said “sore-y” when she slid past me on the way to the bathroom that finally triggered it. We were sitting around a small table in a crowded and noisy burger joint under the 1/9 train just below 125<sup>th</sup> street. A group of us had just come back from hearing Jane Jacobs speak at City College. An essay by Hans Blumenfeld was sitting in my backpack. I had only been a planner (make that planning student) for a few months, and I realized I was surrounded by Canadians.

No matter where I went “oot” in New York planning circles, I would run into young, progressive and talented planners who were working to make change in New York City. I knew that there had been a long tradition of Americans like Jacobs and Blumenfeld heading north – were we now seeing a reverse migration? Was there some sort of Canadian conspiracy “aboot”?

As a confirmed Canadiophile, I felt compelled to investigate. Why were all these smart Canadians coming to New York to study and practice? Was is something particular to the world of planning, or was it just a desire for better pizza and a 24-hour subway? Just what were the differences between planning in the US and Canada?

To shed some light on the question, I assembled a crack team of Canadian planners working in New York City: Micaela Birmingham, Director of the Planning Center at the Municipal Arts Society; Lauren Talbot of the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority; Marnie McGregor of MoveNY, and Jema Cabrias of the New York Industrial Retention Network.

One common theme emerged from our discussions. Overwhelmingly, they noted that planning is much more accepted and valued in governmental circles up North. “I would say that strategic planning is certainly more valued and done on a regular basis in Canada,” said McGregor. “When I left the City of Toronto they

were preparing a city-wide Official Plan to guide development for the next 30 years. Every municipality [in Ontario] is required by the Province to do this kind of plan, which outlines community priorities and needs, with specific regulations around public input. I think that American planners could learn a lot from this model, and could advocate local and state governments to take a more proactive role in creating long-term planning policies.”

*Overwhelmingly, they noted that planning is much more accepted and valued in governmental circles up North.*

On the flip side, the community-based, non-governmental planning sector is much less developed in Canada. “Although there are many progressive planners in Canada, the structure is definitely top-down planning,” noted Gropper. “Canadians still have a lot of faith in their government, and continue to rely on them to develop progressive policies and provide effective services,” says McGregor. “Government at all levels is shrinking but the non-profit sector is slow to get off the ground, mostly due to lack of funding- Canada doesn’t have very many rich philanthropists like the Rockefellers- that would allow them to take on the role of holding government accountable for its actions.”

And that is precisely what attracted our Canadian comrades to the Gran Manzana. “I came to New York to learn more about the non-profit sector. In particular, I wanted to learn sophisticated advocacy techniques,” says McGregor. How ironic. Our weak governmental planning spawns a strong community-based planning sector, which attracts talented Canadians who are looking to learn techniques to upgrade their non-governmental advocacy efforts. Perhaps it is time to send our public sector planners up north for an education in how government can plan progressively. That would only be a fair exchange, eh?

# III. EDUCATION OR INDOCTRINATION?

## Shaping Your Own Progressive Planning Education

*By Marisa Cravens*

When it comes down to it, your education reflects personal and often difficult choices. As illustrated by the following articles from Barbara Rahder and Jon LaChance, planning education is itself evolving. For progressive planning students, linking education with activism isn't easy. A good friend of mine, a planning graduate student and an activist, really set the bar for unifying her academics and her activism. She did everything that a time-strapped, fully loaded graduate student could do. She won a summer internship to study agricultural collectives in South America, came back to the US and organized a campaign to have local stores carry fair trade products. Her work became both a project for a course on community organizing and the basis for her Masters thesis. So what happened? Her teachers berated her for spending too much time on activism and not being a sufficiently rigorous academic. Her activist peers called on her to spend more time organizing. And her mentor told her that her campaign-although completely successful-was too academic and thus not "organizing" in the true sense of the word.

Sometimes the best careers will overlap into non-traditional areas of planning work and research, as shown in Alex Schafran's interview with organizer-turned-planner Ken Reardon and in Grace Han and Cynthia Golembeski's piece on the Sustainable South Bronx. This diversity feeds the field and helps it grow. The aforementioned student graduated and immediately went into a terrific job on the cutting edge of fair trade policymaking. The moral of this story? Even if you make all the best choices for yourself and your career, you will still encounter resistance. You will need to have faith in yourself in order to stick to your guns. But guess what? Breaking new ground is what progressive planning is all about.

## CRACKS IN THE FOUNDATION OF TRADITIONAL PLANNING

*By Barbara Rahder*

Who is a "real" planner? What makes one person a "real" planner and another person not a "real" planner? How is this decided and by whom? What are the common expectations of students entering planning programs (or possibly staying away from planning programs)? In traditional planning these questions are typically answered in the form of a set of myths that undermine the capacity of planners to engage with significant problems. These key assumptions or myths are:

1. planning is a rational process of decision-making;
2. planning is about providing for the public interest/public good; and
3. planning is, first and foremost, about the use of land or space.

These underlying assumptions have direct implications for the role of the planner and, consequently, for planning education.

**First**—and this is what I want to emphasize most—if planning is a rational process of decision-making, it follows that planners can be trained to be objective and rational. They can learn how to construct planning processes that will lead to rational decisions, an idea

embedded not only in rational comprehensive planning theory but also in much, though not all, of some popular versions of communicative action theory. It follows that planners can control the process, and therefore decisions, about the future. Finally, this makes "real" planners the experts at planning.

**Second**, if planning is about providing for the public interest or the public good, this implies that: 1) the public interest can be known; 2) planners can be trained to identify the public interest; 3) planners can explain to others what is in the public interest; and therefore 4) "real" planners are experts at knowing and using the public interest as the guiding principle in practice.

**Third**, if planning is, above all, concerned with the use of land or space, then "real" planners are land use planners.

These assumptions about planning and the role of planners are embedded in the history of the planning profession. Professions, by their nature, are self-protective entities meant not only to uphold certain standards of performance, but also to protect, promote and define those who are on the inside against those who are on the outside. Professional organizations are a means of legitimating and controlling access to self-

identified areas of specialized knowledge and skill. The planning profession sets the boundaries on who is and who is not a “real” planner, at least in part, as a means of legitimizing an area of expertise we can call our own.

Students assume, quite rightfully, that planning education is about acquiring the skills and knowledge to be a professional planner. In fact, the Canadian Institute of Planners (CIP) requires planning programs in Canada to demonstrate how they will do this in order to certify these as professionally recognized planning programs. Every five to ten years, each planning program undergoes an intensive review by CIP to make sure it is meeting its requirements. It is not difficult to satisfy these requirements—all of the accredited planning programs in Canada do this regularly. We offer courses in planning history and theory, in local government and planning law. We provide methods and computer courses. We run studios and workshops so that students have an opportunity to apply their new skills and knowledge in a hands-on way.

What is not so easy to address is the common belief of students that planning education should provide them with a clear and incontrovertible body of knowledge, and a set of marketable technical skills, that will allow them to go forth and become experts at shaping our common future. Students’ apprehensions about what they are learning—or more likely about what they are not learning—is legendary. In both traditional and innovative planning programs, students commonly express a great deal of anxiety and/or disappointment about not being taught the answers to the problems of planning. It may be worse, however, for those who think they have learned the answers, since they will most likely be bitterly disappointed when they go out into the world and discover that nothing appears to work according to plan.

So, what is the problem here? Are planning programs failing to provide adequate education? Are planning students’ expectations unrealistic? Has the planning profession failed to adequately delineate the skills and knowledge needed to become a planner? The answers to all of these questions may well be yes, but the problem is actually much bigger than this. I think we have tended to cling too long to outmoded notions of technical rationality— notions that even in their heyday served the interests of the few rather than the many diverse interests of the so-called public.

### **Problems with Traditional Concepts of Planning**

One of the easiest ways to describe what is wrong is by way of analogy. It seems to me that we have built the

foundations of the planning profession on a floodplain. Viewing planning as a purely technical enterprise probably seemed quite rational and reasonable, at least to the engineers and architects—virtually all white males—who were asserting their dominion over urban form and land use in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

*Students’ apprehension about what they are learning—or more likely about what they are not learning—is legendary.*

While the flood waters rose to threatening levels in the 1960s and 1970s, the foundations of rationalist planning remained firm, however tilted. Despite practical and theoretical critiques from women; from low-income and ethno-racial communities; from urban activists, ecologists and left-wing academics, the notion that planning served some monolithic public interest in a fair and unbiased manner appeared to weather the storm. In the lets-make-a-deal 1980s and the privatization frenzy of the 1990s, there appeared to be little left of these old controversies other than a few high-water marks on the walls of the academy.

But here we are at the beginning of the twenty-first century, and there are definite cracks showing in the foundation. Our water is sometimes undrinkable—yet if planners were rational, wouldn’t we set limits on the production and use of toxic chemicals and restrict the size and location of factory farms so that the runoff wouldn’t get into our drinking water? Air pollution is causing unprecedented increases in childhood asthma—if planners were rational, wouldn’t we restrict the use of cars and trucks rather than create more suburbs, more expressways and hence more traffic? We are a tremendously prosperous society with more people than ever before, including increasing numbers of children, homeless on the street—if planners were rational, wouldn’t we make sure that everyone had adequate shelter?

I have no doubt that we could solve these problems. But I am just as sure that these issues cannot be addressed by rationalist modes of physical land use planning alone or by planners who continue to see themselves as professionals with unbiased technical expertise. The myths of rationalism, a singular public interest, and the separation of space from society are just no longer viable foundations for our profession.

[This article originally appeared in the *Progressive Planning* Special Issue on Education, Summer 2002.]

## THE NEED FOR TECHNO-PROGRESSIVE PLANNERS

*By Jonathan Lachance*

The era of the techno-progressive planner is here, even for the Luddites among us who would hold up the shield of social planning to protect us from learning how to read a spreadsheet or download data for a GIS map. Planning students pursuing careers in social planning may perceive that technical approaches to the field—e.g., zoning and design—and technological tools such as GIS add an unnecessary element of abstraction to our work. Some of us would argue that data sets and drawings should be left to the apolitical technocrats, and that progressive planners need to focus on grassroots efforts and human interaction. While history offers many examples of conflict between social planners and technical planners, taking a technical or technological approach to defining and solving planning problems need not be antithetical to community-based progressive planning. In fact, planning students should realize that by developing technical skills in tandem with community organizing skills, we will be better equipped to develop and communicate planning goals and empower the neighbors with whom we work.

We should shed the idea that planning is split neatly between “soft” skills that focus on community involvement and consensus-building and technical “hard” skills like GIS and data analysis and recognize that progressive planning will benefit from a melding of the two. This is not to suggest that community processes should play second fiddle to technical or technology-based modes of decision making. Rather, progressive planners can use technology as a means of empowering their clients and communities (see *Progressive Planning*, May/June 2000, for examples). We should also be equipped to take advantage the technology at our immediate disposal – if we have access to specialized design software, we owe it to our

clients to become adept at using these technologies to convey their vision. Also, we should be on the lookout for ways to empower our communities through sharing technical know-how with them.

Each planning student must find the right balance between social and technical skills. Students with social work or similar backgrounds may decide to bulk up on their technical skills, while those with a more business-focused background might need to pick up more social planning coursework. Ultimately, planning students should learn the technical skills that will best enable them to advance their social planning goals.

Progressive planning students should also experiment with using technical skills to solve, or at least illustrate, particular planning problems of interest to them. GIS epitomizes the social planning-friendly technical planning tool. For example, if a planner wants to make the case that there is a need for more food retail businesses in a neighborhood, they can use GIS software to create maps that illustrate the location of existent grocery stores (or the lack thereof) in relation to where people live.

Progressive planners must learn to use technical skills and technology to advance their social agendas and empower the neighbors for whom they work. Learning these skills will enable us to present well-rounded visions and strong arguments, and to effectively interpret the information presented by technocrats. We must also realize that the technical environment in which we plan will change at least as quickly as the legal and economic environment. By learning technical skills as soon as possible, progressive planners will be much better equipped to take advantage of new technologies as they develop.

## MEDIA AND EDUCATION RESOURCE LIST

*If you aren't convinced yet that progressive planning is fun and exciting, just take a look at our media resources. This is an uncensored, no-holds-barred look at what some PN members REALLY think planning is all about. Not all these titles could be considered progressive. Some are fairly conservative. All of them have influenced us as planners. Many university libraries, particularly those with large endowments, are responsive to student requests for suggested purchases. If yours does not carry an item that you are interested in, see if they will order it for their collection. Do you have some favorites not on the list? Let us know for the next issue of this guide!*

### BOOKS

#### Tracing the Evolution of Planning

*Cities in Evolution* / 1915 / Patrick Geddes  
*The Culture of Cities* / 1932 / Lewis Mumford  
*The Federal Bulldozer* / 1964 / Martin Anderson  
*Garden Cities of Tomorrow* / 1900 / Ebenezer Howard  
*The Housing Question* / 1872 / Friedrich Engel  
*How East New York Became a Ghetto* / 2003 / Walter Thabit  
*How the Other Half Lives* / 1890 / Jacob Riis  
*Image of the City* / 1960 / Kevin Lynch  
*The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City* / 1996 / Neil Smith  
*Redesigning the American Dream* / 1984 / Dolores Hayden  
*Silent Spring* / 1962 / Rachel Carson  
*The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* / 1980 / William H. Whyte  
*Urban Political Movements: The Search for Power by Minority Groups in American Cities* / 1974 / Norman and Susan Fainstein  
*The Urban Villagers* / 1962 / Herbert Gans

#### Design

*Architect or Bee? The Human/Technology Relationship* / 1980 / Mike Cooley  
*Chambers for a Memory Palace* / 1994 / Charles Moore and D. Lyndon  
*The Nature of Order* / 2002/ *A Pattern Language* / 1977 / Chris Alexander  
*The New Civic Art: Elements of Town Planning* / 2003 / Andrés Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk and Robert Alminana

#### Social Analysis

*The Age of Revolution* / 1962 / EJ Hobsbawm  
*All that Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* / 1988 / Marshall Berman  
*The Death and Life of Great American Cities* / 1961 / Jane Jacobs  
*Ecocities* / 2001 / Richard Register  
*The Next American Metropolis* / 1993 / Peter Calthorpe  
*Rise of the Network Society* / 2000 / Manuel Castells

#### Space: The Final Frontier

*Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* / 1989/ Edward W. Soja  
*The Production of Space* / 1991/ *The Urban Revolution* / 2003/ Henri Lefebvre  
*The Social Logic of Space* / 1989/ Julienne Hanson and Bill Hillier  
*Space is the Machine* / 1999/ Bill Hillier  
*Spaces of Hope* / 2000/ David Harvey

#### Welcome to Nowhere!

*Asphalt Nation* / 1997 / Jane Holtz Kay  
*Crabgrass Frontier* / 1987 / Kenneth Jackson  
*Edge City: Life on the New Frontier* / 1992 / Joel Garreau  
*Geography of Nowhere* / 1994 / *Home From Nowhere* /1998 / James Howard Kunstler



*Suburban Nation: The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream* / 2001 / Andres Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, and Jeff Speck.

### **Truer than Fiction**

*Invisible Cities* / 1978 / Italo Calvino

*Native Son* / 1940 / Richard Wright

*The Street* / 1998 / Ann Petry

### **Activism & Community Organizing**

*Advocacy for Social Justice: a Global Action and Reflection Guide* / 2001 / David Cohen, Rosa de la Vega, Gabrielle Watson (eds).

*Democracy in Action: Community Organizing and Urban Change* / 2004 / Kristina Smock

*Social Justice and the City* / 1992 / David Harvey

### **Planning and Oppression**

*Nickel and Dimed* / 2002 / Barbara Ehrenreich

*The Colonizer and the Colonized* / 1965 / Albert Memmi

*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* / 1970 / Paulo Friere

*The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy* / 1987 / William Julius Wilson

*When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor* / 1996 / William Julius Wilson

*The Wretched of the Earth* / 1965 / Franz Fanon

### **Technical Planning Theory**

*Cities for Citizens* / 1998 / Michael Douglass & John Friedmann (eds.)

*The City Reader* / 2003 / Richard LeGates and Frederic Stout

*The Deliberative Practitioner* / 1999 / John Forester

*Planning in the Public Domain: From Knowledge to Action* / 1987 / *Empowerment* / 1992 / John Friedmann

*Urban Development: The Logic of Making Plans* / 2001 / Lew Hopkins

### **Culture and Planning**

*Bridging Troubled Waters: Conflict Management from the Heart* / 2002 / *Bridging Cultural Waters* / 2003 / Michelle LeBaron

*Geographical Identities of Ethnic America: Race, Space, and Place* / 2001 / Kate A. Berry, Martha L. Henderson

*The 'hood Comes First: Race, Space, and Place in Rap and Hip-hop* / 2002 / Murray Forman.

*Towards Cosmopolis: Planning for Multicultural Cities* / 1998 / *Cosmopolis II: Mongrel Cities in the 21st Century* / Leonie Sandercock

*Yes Yes Y'all: The Experience Music Project Oral History of Hip-hop's First Decade* / 2002 / Jim Fricke, Charlie Ahearn.

### **'Hoods**

*How East New York Became a Ghetto* / 2003 / Walter Thabit

*The Old Neighborhood: What we Lost in the Great Suburban Migration, 1966-1999* / 1999 / Ray Suarez

*The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* / 1994 / Dolores Hayden

*Root Shock: How Tearing Up City Neighborhoods Hurts America, and What We Can Do About It* / 2004 / Mindy Thompson Fullilove

*Streets of Hope: The Fall and Rise of an Urban Neighborhood* / 1994 / Peter Medoff and Holly Sklar

### **Sex and the City**

*Mapping Desire: Geographies of Sexualities* / 1995 / David Bell and Gill Valentine

*Queer Sites: Gay Urban Histories Since 1600* / 1999 / David Higgs

*Queers in Space: Communities, Public Places, Sites of Resistance* / 1997 / Gordon Brent Ingram, Anne-Marie Bouthillette, Yolanda Retter

*Sexual Politics and Sexual Communities* / 1998 / John D'Emilio

**F\*\*K N.Y.**

*The Power Broker* / 1975 / Robert Caro

*The Assassination of New York* / 2004 / Robert Fitch

**F\*\*K L.A.**

*City of Quartz* / 1992 / *Ecology of Fear* / 1999 / Mike Davis

**F\*\*K London?**

*Town Planning in London* / 1982 / Donald Olsen

**Seminal Progressive Planning Articles**

Sherry Arnstein, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation" (*JAIP*, 35:4, 1969).

Paul Davidoff, "Advocacy and Pluralism in Planning" (*JAIP*, 31:4, 1965).

Patsy Healey, "Planning through debate: The communicative turn in planning theory" (*Town Planning Review*, 63:2, 1992).

Norm Krumholz, "A Retrospective View of Equity Planning: Cleveland, 1969-1979" (*JAIP*, 48:2, 1982).

Peter Marcuse, "The Myth of the Benevolent State" (*Social Policy*, 8, 1978)

Various, "The Spaces of Neoliberalism" Special Issue (*Antipode*, 34:3, 2002).

**MOVIES**

**Reflections on the City**

*Force of Evil* / 1948

*The Third Man* / 1949

*Citizen Kane* / 1941

*City of God* / Brazil / 2002

*Chinatown* / 1974

*Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* / 1988

**Snapshots of Space and Time**

*Cinema Paradiso* / Italy / 1989 / a great portrayal of social capital.

*La Ciudad* / 1988 / all about immigrant workers in NYC.

*La Haine (Hate)* / France / 1995 / racism and the ghettos of Paris.

*The Milagro Beanfield War* / 1988

*El Norte* / Mexico / 1983 / journey to America.

*Le Mani sulla Città* / Italy & USA / 1963 / *Hands Across the City*.

*Once Upon A Time in the West (C'era una volta il West)* / Italy / the evolution of an American frontier.

*Over the Edge* / 1979 / planning without children has consequences..

*Shower/Xiao* / China / 1999 / modernization and generations in Beijing.

*Rivers and Tides* / German / 2001 / documentary about Andy Goldsworthy and the interpretation of place.

**Science Fiction**

*Alphaville* / France / 1965

*Bladerunner* / 1982

*Chungking Express* / Hong Kong / 1994 / a reflection of lonely souls in the postmodern metropolis.

*Metropolis* / 1927/ silent film from the 20s by Fritz Lang

**John Sayles**

*City of Hope* / 1991

*Silver City* / 2004

*Sunshine State* / 2002

**Our Hero, the Planner**

*IKIRU* / Japan / 1957

**Our Hero, Not the Planner**

*Dog Town and Z-Boys* / 2001

*Local Hero* / Scotland / 1983 / a company man changes sides.

Style Wars / 1983 / graffiti artists take on the Transit Authority.  
La Muerte de un burócrata (Death of a Bureaucrat) / Cuba / 1966

### **Gentrification**

Batteries Not Included / 1987 / ha ha! It's by Disney!  
Flag Wars / 2003  
Delivered Vacant / 1992  
Everyday People / 2004  
Survival of a Small City / 1986  
Terminal Bar / 2003 / gentrification of Times Square, from the Van Alen Institute.

### **Suburban Pleasures**

American Beauty / 1999  
Blue Vinyl / 2002 / exposes the environmental and health dangers of PVC plastic.  
Building the American Dream / Levittown, NY  
Edward Scissorhands / 1990  
Lawn & Order / 1994 / documentary about the American obsession over front lawns.  
Pleasantville / 1998  
The Truman Show / 1998

### **New Day Documentary Films**

Downside Up / 2002 / the MassMOCA museum and how it revitalized a dying community.  
Holding Ground: The Rebirth of Dudley Street / 1996 / that's in Boston, west coasters.  
Home Economics: A Documentary of Suburbia / an ethnographic look at suburban sprawl in LA.  
Homes and Hands: Community Land Trusts in Action / 1998  
Tango 73: A Bus Rider's Diary / a wry look at bus transportation in the San Francisco Bay Area.  
Los Trabajadores/The Workers / day laborers in Texas.  
Taken for a Ride / 1996 / traces the demise of streetcars and the birth of the urban freeway system.

### **Other Documentaries**

Beyond Organic: The Vision of Fairview Gardens / 2000 / an urban holdout and the struggle to keep it intact.  
The Boys of 2nd Street Park / 2003 / A group of boys who grew up in 1950s Brighton Beach and where they are today.  
Catching Out / 2003 / Life riding the freight trains.  
Dark Days / 2000 / documentary about homeless people living in NY Amtrak tunnels  
La loi de la .....Ville / Canada / 1979  
Roger and Me / 1989 / up close and personal with plant closings, by you-know-who.

### **Disorienting Films, courtesy the Van Alen Institute**

Fool Throttle / 2004 / an animated short of two men in a comedic fight for motor scooter dominance.  
Good Kid / 2004 / short yet inspirational journey following a young man to simple pleasures.  
Occupation of the Ground / 2003 / shot entirely from the rooftops of Brussels.  
The Roof Man / 2003 / focusing on a man whose hobby and work is to be closer to the sky.  
Souls of New York / 2002 / meet the obscurely famous in NYC, featuring the Verrazano Bridge Cable-Walkers

City of Lost Children / France / 1995

### **And For those Nostalgic for the Good ol' Days**

The Prelinger Archives; old, downloadable planning hyperbole, including "The Dynamic American City" and "The City", narr. Lewis Mumford. <http://www.archive.org/movies/movieslisting-browse.php?collection=prelinger>

*Additional Films are available in an extensive database compiled at the University of Texas.*

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## HOW PLANNERS CAN BE ACTIVISTS FOR CHANGE

### The Sustainable South Bronx Project

*By Cynthia Golembeski and Grace Han*

Sustainable South Bronx in New York City was founded as “a community organization dedicated to implementing sustainable environmental and economic development projects informed by the needs of the community and the values of Environmental Justice for all.”

When planners attempt urban revitalization projects or the regeneration of swaths of land that suffer from environmental duress, they are forced to consider different approaches, to think holistically, and to set priorities. Transportation, land use, economic development and public space have become concepts that planners toss around while often falling short in terms of using planning projects as a key tool for advocacy in mobilizing and organizing communities. How can we combine our skills and expertise with the local knowledge of educators, small business owners, artists, civil servants and residents so as to advocate for responsible, progressive planning tied to the ideals of social justice?

The Sustainable South Bronx project is an example of proactive, innovative planning that culminated from a collaborative process celebrating visionary ideals while honoring the leadership and expertise that lie within the community. Connecting citizens with different backgrounds, educations and values around such vital planning issues as parks and greenways can prove to be a powerful opportunity for advocacy and organizing. Marjora Carter, Executive Director of the Sustainable South Bronx, grew up in the community and has been consistently committed to environmental justice and to improving the lives of the residents in the South Bronx. She is dedicated to planning sustainable development projects informed by a participatory planning process and social justice values.

The South Bronx is a low-income community of color that is approximately 70% Latino, and 30% African American, with roughly 40% of its residents living below the poverty level. In 2002, the unemployment rate was 15.1%, or almost twice the city-wide average. The area nestled between the Bruckner Expressway, Sheridan Expressway, Major Deegan Expressway and the Cross-Bronx Expressway is commonly referred to as Hunts Point. Hunts Point has significantly higher rates of

asthma than the average for New York City, with almost one in four children diagnosed with asthma. This is seven times the national average. Environmental degradation and air pollution ravage the neighborhood, while power plants and debris line the waterfront.



There are real and perceived barriers to building a sustainable community in the South Bronx. Environmental impediments compromise the health of those that live and work in the community, regarding such areas as pedestrian safety and air quality. Throughout the history of the South Bronx, there has been a lack or neglect of dedicated open and community space, combined with significant obstacles to waterfront access. In addition, the neighborhood has received limited investment over time while perceptions of violence and crime have increased.

Not to be completely fatalistic, however, the South Bronx has been building a broad base of support from various political, civil, social and religious institutions, and has been organizing itself as an active and vocal community. Advocates for social justice and change come from a diverse set of disciplines and occupations, and planners work with these different factions to help create more livable and healthy places and spaces. Marjora Carter has spearheaded many community-based initiatives that have incurred positive change and capitalized on community assets and strengths. Carter's vision includes working to implement projects that counteract the perception and realities of the history of environmental racism facing the Bronx.

It is this proactive stance that has led to major waterfront redevelopment and the establishment of the Hunts Point River Side Park. In 2000, Carter was a project director at The Point Community Development Corporation. Carter remembers saying to herself, “Oh my God, that’s a river!” as she walked along Edgewater Road and peered out into the Bronx River. Her immediate reaction was, “Well, if we’ve got a river we’ve got to make use of it.” Neighborhood volunteers participated in site clean-up efforts and raised awareness and funds through community concerts. A \$10,000 seed grant played a part in the development process of the Hunts Point River Side Park, which has introduced many in the community to the political process and helped them assume control over their own neighborhood.

One of the more exciting projects that Sustainable South Bronx has recently been involved with is the development of a greenway, a narrow pedestrian/bike path with options for pocket parks along the route. There has been proposed and planned greenway development in the South Bronx, which will help beautify the area and make it easier for residents to incorporate exercise into their daily lives. Aside from building the greenway movement in the South Bronx, the community has aligned itself with efforts to create an East Coast Greenway, eventually making it possible to bike from Maine to Miami.

Carter and residents have also proposed a river market that will sell fresh produce and other groceries and serve to train and employ local residents. In addition, Sustainable South Bronx has enthusiastically incorporated green roofs into current and future development projects. Green roofs help alleviate the urban heat island effect, which stems from the

additional heating of the air over a city as the result of the replacement of vegetated surfaces with those composed of asphalt, concrete, rooftops and other artificial materials.



Most notably, participatory planning efforts have culminated in the development of a comprehensive community plan that is being implemented over time. Sustainable South Bronx is a dedicated organization that thoroughly addresses and implements policy and planning issues in such areas as land use, energy, transportation, water, waste and sustainable development in the South Bronx. The fact that over 150 people attended a public hearing to support the proposed community plan for the South Bronx demonstrates the power of effective progressive planning. The plan’s inclusion in official scoping documents for major projects not only signals a victory for the South Bronx, but for activist planners everywhere who are committed to participatory planning that advocates for positive social change.

## WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR PLANNERS WHO WANT TO WORK FROM WITHIN A PROGRESSIVE POLITICAL FRAMEWORK?

You may end up becoming more of a strategist than you ever imagined. Although sometimes the act of planning is an end in and of itself, most of the time what you are seeking is implementation of the plans created by the communities with whom you work. That means that you have to lobby, persuade, cajole, shame, jostle, court and sometimes fight with any number of government agencies and funders. My advice, I guess, is not to let the need to strategize obscure the vision in the plans.

*Eve Baron*

*Senior Planner, Municipal Arts Society  
New York, NY*

First, keep a sense of humor. Second, progressive planning is about politics and ethics, not specific techniques, but whatever techniques you use, do them well. Planning’s power largely comes from the management of information, so sloppy quantitative analysis or insensitive neighborhood organizing can both cause problems even if done with good intentions.

*Ann Forsyth*

*Director, Metropolitan Design Center, University of  
Minnesota  
Minneapolis, MN*

The term “progress” implies that a community’s needs are being advanced. The indigenous planning paradigm challenges us to consider whether that advance helps to sustain their cultural integrity. From a political framework it boils down to the empowerment and legitimization of indigenous leadership. That is, home-grown folks making decisions for and about themselves.

*Ted Jojola*

*Professor, University of New Mexico*

*Albuquerque, NM*

The only sane way to function in a politics is to deal with only with facts and data. Even in the most extreme political atmosphere, facts and current data are movers! No one can argue with current data and statistics.... basically what you are doing is forcing individuals or entities to make decisions using facts.

*Celene Elm*

*GIS/Indigenous Planning Director*

*Oneida Nation, Oneida, WI*

The biggest challenge to working within an existing progressive organization is finding paying work, which is quite limited. Start by volunteering, showing the community that you are truly committed and not a flash-in-the-pan progressive planner. On the other hand, we desperately need progressive planners working in the for-profit and public sector. Find a project or an agency with decent leadership that is capable of becoming more progressive, and be that voice. I know it sounds daunting, especially for a young planner, but trust me, it can be done.

*Alex Schafran*

*Student and Community Activist, Hunter College*

*New York, NY*

Keep one foot firmly planted in the world you want to live in, and the other foot grounded in the world you actually live in now. Recognize the realities of how planning (and the rest of life) currently operates and work with this reality to effect positive social change now - because it matters for people now (and because we all need to pay the bills!) At the same time, imagine the world as you want it to be, and try to guide your everyday actions towards this long-term progressive goal - because the most powerful social change requires systemic change.

*Josh Lerner*

*Student and Community Activist, University of Toronto*

*Toronto, Canada*

There are a variety of opportunities for progressive planners to work in non-profits. These include community-based organizations that work on housing and commercial development, environmental advocacy

groups, funding intermediaries, liberal foundations and political groups. The job market is idiosyncratic, but it is there. Jobs are advertised through Planners Network, in *Planning Magazine* and on various websites.

*Susan Fainstein*

*Professor, Columbia University*

*New York, NY*

Planners need to recognize that decision makers (elected and appointed) will always require the best available information upon which to base decisions. A trained planner should be looked at by decision makers as a primary source for this "best available information." As planners we need to constantly improve our ability to connect the big picture issues to the immediate situation under discussion or review. The ability to show how things relate, fit together or don't fit together, is valuable and necessary to decision makers who are short on time, under pressure to approve/deny projects, and aggressively lobbied by pro and con elements. To be progressive the planner has to actively engage in the political process: understand the issues and players. Form relationships with a broad cross-sector of the community - blue collar to professionals, housewives to socialites. As much as you are analyzing and providing information for the use of decision makers, that information needs to come from the concerns, issues and aspirations of the community at large.

*Scott A.K. Derrickson*

*Planner, Hawaii Office of State Planning*

*Honolulu, HI*

In deciding what kind of job to look for and to take, look carefully at what the firm or organization you are about to go with has done in the past and has on its agenda. Don't take a job where you can foresee the inevitability of conflict of principles. On any given assignment, remember that the interests of our client must be balanced against your professional ethical responsibilities as a planner, and be up front in discussing the possibilities of a conflict between the two if that likelihood appears.

*Peter Marcuse*

*Professor, Columbia University*

*New York, NY*

The skills you learn as a planner entail a deep understanding of social networks, economics, politics and space and, most importantly, the ability to look at a place and see the change that is possible within it. That to me is revolutionary. You believe you are capable of making that change. Planning to me is a slow revolution.

*Marisa Cravens*

*Community Organizer*

*Portland, OR*



Progressive political frameworks rarely exist within the USA. Therefore, planners must take on the work of creating progressive political frameworks that focus greater attention on organizing and providing information for coalition building, rather than spending the predominate portion of their time working within the existing electoral political structures. Planners interested in working within such progressive political

frameworks must be savvy, courageous and constantly reflective about the impact of their actions on individuals, groups and environs for whom they desire inclusiveness, empowerment and justice.

*Jeffrey Lowe*

*Professor, Jackson State University  
Jackson, MS*

## PLANNING IS ORGANIZING

### An Interview with PN Member Ken Reardon

*By Alex Schafran*

Like many planners, I came to the field after spending time as a community organizer. Much of what attracted me to planning was its practical application to organizing, as well as the holistic approach to communities that I found lacking from academic policy, sociology or design programs. At the same time, I was fearful that planning school and the planning profession would take me away from organizing and direct community involvement.

As I entered planning school, a lot of question regarding the relationship between planning and organizing, and between *planners and organizers*, were left unanswered. In order to better understand this relationship, I turned to Ken Reardon, Associate Professor of Planning at Cornell, former (and current) community organizer, PN steering committee member and bowtie aficionado. Ken and his students are actively involved in organizing a community-based organization in Liberty, New York, and he is working on a study on the role colleges and universities are playing in enhancing the organizational capacity of community-based planning and development organizations.

**PLANNERS NETWORK:** As an organizer, what made you get into planning?

**KEN REARDON:** As my community organizing career developed the groups I was working with began to take on more and more complex policy issues. They were working on such issues as utility rate reform, property tax equity and the cost of pharmaceuticals. As time went on I felt the need to develop better analytical skills for policy-making. After looking at a variety of graduate social science programs I decided to pursue a masters degree in city and regional planning. I did so after learning about the work that Paul Davidoff was

doing as part of the Metropolitan Action Institute on exclusionary zoning issues. I decided to enroll at Hunter College because of its advocacy planning history and its location in "The Big Apple."

**PN:** Do you still see yourself as an organizer?

**KR:** Since I am not devoting my full energies to building citizen organizations I no longer describe myself as an organizer. I would like to think that I am following in the steps of Patrick Geddes, who called for the recruitment and training of university militants who would undertake research, teaching and technical assistance activities designed to enhance the participatory planning knowledge and skills of grassroots organizations.

**PN:** How do you teach organizing planning? Do you have a name for the organizing-based planning?

**KR:** I am working with community leaders, planning students and municipal planning officials to enhance their empowerment planning knowledge and skills. This approach to equity planning integrates the key theories and methods of participatory action research, direct action organizing and popular education into a single approach to social change that seeks to promote more equitable forms of metropolitan development by influencing public and private investment decisions.

**PN:** How can a planning student become an organizer planner?

**KR:** In every region there is someone working to empower people, someone who has broken the mold of the traditional planner. Find out who they are – join PN, come to a conference, do some legwork – and volunteer.

## IV. ALLIES AND ACTION

### Working Collectively Through Planners Network

#### What does Planners Network do?

For three decades, Planners Network has been a voice for progressive professionals and activists concerned with urban, rural and regional planning and social justice. PN members have a wide range of interests – including environmental justice, community economic development, housing and globalization. And they come from a variety of backgrounds – community organizers, social justice activists, professional planners, academics and students. But what all PNers have in common is a commitment to work toward greater equity and fundamental change in how decisions are made in our global society.

#### Progressive Planning Magazine

Since 1975, PN has been publishing a newsletter for its members. In 2002, the bi-monthly newsletter grew into a 48-page quarterly magazine. *Progressive Planning: The Magazine of Planners Network* seeks to be a means for networking among members, a source of innovative ideas and a forum for controversial policy questions neglected in mainstream planning circles. We have a volunteer Editorial Board and a few paid assistants. The magazine continues to receive high acclaim but is still a work in progress.

#### Website

Our award-winning website can be found at <http://www.plannersnetwork.org>. Redesigned in 2004, the website includes the *Progressive Planning* magazine archives and online member-driven databases of PN news, member updates, events, publications, organizations, jobs and fellowships/grants. The website also includes contact information for local chapters and PN university representatives.

#### E-Newsletter

After the magazine switched to a quarterly format, PN started publishing a monthly electronic newsletter to update members on more time-sensitive information. The newsletter compiles news and resources submitted to the website and magazine.

#### Email Listservs

PN maintains two email listservs for online communication. PN-NET is a general list for members to post and respond to queries, list job postings and share resources and event announcements. It is also frequently used as a research tool. PN Students is a new listserv for progressive planning students to exchange ideas and experiences, share work and study opportunities, and discuss university organizing. Some PN chapters have also set up local listservs.

#### PN Conferences

The PN conference has been held annually almost every summer since 1994. These gatherings combine speakers and workshops with exchanges involving local communities. PN conferences engage in discussions that help inform political strategies at the local, national and international levels. Recent conferences have been held in Holyoke, MA; Toronto; East St. Louis; New York City; and Pomona, CA. The 2005 conference will be in Minneapolis.

#### PN Presence at Professional Conferences

PN gives progressive ideas a voice in the mainstream planning profession by organizing sessions at annual conferences of the American Planning Association, the Canadian Institute of Planners, and the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning.

#### Local Organizing

In many cities, members have organized PN chapters and planning activist groups to network and take action at the local level. A local chapter is an independent group that promotes the PN principles of social, economic and environmental justice at the local level. Several local chapters and planning activist groups have shared their experiences elsewhere in the guide.

#### Planning Education

PN students and professors advocate for more progressive planning education at their schools and nationwide. This Disorientation Guide is our new attempt to engage students in reshaping professional planning education.

## How to Get Involved in Planners Network

There is a constant need for progressives to work together and speak in a collective voice to oppose forces that threaten to increase the injustices and inequities in our world. PN's hundreds of members receive and contribute to the *Progressive Planning* magazine, communicate with on-line listservs and an e-newsletter, take part in annual conferences and organize locally in PN chapters. Whether face-to-face, in print or online, PNers are part of a network that shares progressive ideas and experiences. Here's how you can get involved.

### Become a Member

Members receive the quarterly magazine and monthly e-newsletters, get discounts on PN conferences and help support the organization. The student fee is \$25 US or \$35 CA a year and you can sign up on the website.

### Join the Email Listservs

The listservs are free ways to receive information and network with PN members and other progressive planners. To join PN-NET, send an email to [majordomo@list.pratt.edu](mailto:majordomo@list.pratt.edu) with the line "subscribe pn-net" (without the quotes) in the body of the message. To subscribe to PNStudents, send an email to [PNstudents-subscribe@topica.com](mailto:PNstudents-subscribe@topica.com).

### Participate in the Conference

The PN annual conference is an opportunity to meet progressive planners and planning students from around the world. Sign up as a participant, or even better, help organize a conference session or community workshop about a planning issue important to you.

### Contribute to the Website and Magazine

Anyone can submit news or information to the website through online forms. After being reviewed by a website administrator, submissions are posted online and included in the e-newsletter. *Progressive Planning* magazine also welcomes articles from students. Articles may be up to 2,000 words long, and should be straightforward and in jargon-free language. Not every article is accepted for publication, but the editors work with authors to revise submissions.

### Become a PN Student Representative

Help introduce other students to PN and progressive planning by serving as a PN representative at your university. Representatives encourage students and faculty to join and participate in PN, respond to local inquiries about PN and hold an info session about PN each fall. Student representatives receive a \$10 membership discount and their contact information is listed on the PN website.

### Join or Start a Local Chapter

Get involved locally by contributing to a PN chapter or activist planning group in your community. Chapters enable people interested in progressive planning to come together at the local level and organize around common interests, while linking to a larger network. Chapters have organized panel discussions, workshops, film screenings and other events; produced articles and publications; engaged in critical projects related to local planning issues; and worked with faculty to develop more progressive curriculum.

If you're interesting in forming a new chapter, first try to contact other students, professors and practitioners who might be interested, to establish a core organizing group of at least a few people. If there is enough local interest, you can then schedule an open meeting to officially establish the chapter and order free PN magazines and promotional materials. After registering your chapter, PN can contribute up to \$500 in funding for chapter events.

### Help Prepare the Next Disorientation Guide

If you have ideas for how to improve this guide, help us produce the 2005 edition. Students are invited to contribute articles, and assist with layout, design, administration, funding, promotion and distribution.

### Start Your Own Initiative!

PN is driven by the ideas and initiative of its members. If you'd like to start a new project or activity, just let us know. Past ideas have included preparing a progressive guide of planning schools for prospective students, supporting curriculum reform at planning schools, organizing a student workshop or symposium and starting a summer internship program.

Please see the Planners Network website—<http://www.plannersnetwork.org>--for more information about the organization and how to get involved. If you have questions, contact [students@plannersnetwork.org](mailto:students@plannersnetwork.org).

## LOCAL ORGANIZING RESOURCES AND ACTIONS

### Organizing On Campus! Off Campus!

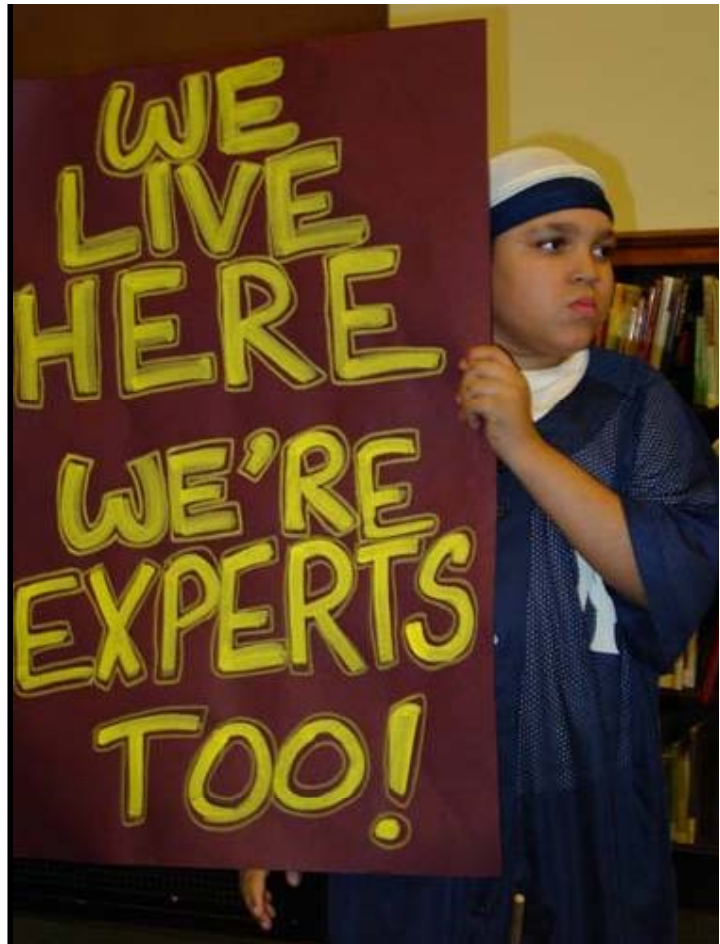
There are many ways to put your university dollars to work for social justice. And many ways to put your personal resources to work, too. Below are some sources and tools that you can rely on for organizing efforts, as well as ideas for local activities based on specific actions that PN'ers have done in the past.

#### Sources and Resources

1. Free YahooGroups/Topica listservs
2. Your department's photocopier
3. Free university webspace
4. Partner organizations
5. Alumni
6. Community centers/meeting houses
7. Links with area activists
8. Municipal/town hall libraries (often mainly for the staff)
9. Municipal/local archives
10. Community centers for space and networking
11. Community gardens and kitchens for shared harvests, cooking and eating ....and good ol' PN itself.

#### Planning Actions

1. Art Attack!  
(<http://publicspace.ca/artattack.htm>)
2. Critical walking/bike tour
3. Incidental Park Zones  
(<http://www.contemporaryartforum.ca/Pages/artistspages/marriott.html>)
4. Newspaper articles
5. Community workshops
6. Participatory policy making/budgeting
7. "City Repair" events--[www.cityrepair.org](http://www.cityrepair.org)--also check out the Village Building Convergence
8. Permaculture demonstrations
9. Urban gardening/agricultural tours
10. Popular planning education events: helping communities to understand what planning is
11. Quiz night or games nights with planning & social justice themes
12. Mediation role-playing games
13. Public debates
14. Touring or volunteering with a community organization
15. Regular sponsorship/fundraising for a specific or rotating community group/cause
16. Community mapping
17. Festivals



18. Student/Researcher study & support groups.
19. Political lobbying: letter writing/emailing/phone calling your local bureaucrats.
20. Fair Trade lobbying your coffee supply stores.
21. Movie night
22. Shadow planning: make a map/diagram/discussion of what the ideal city/community would be in 100 or 200 years, and then work backwards, showing the steps to get there.

## PROFILES OF LOCAL CHAPTERS AND PLANNING ACTIVIST GROUPS

### MICHIGAN

The University of Michigan Chapter of the Planners Network began meeting in October 2003. We started when Professor Joe Grengs gave a talk about the history of Planners Network and the importance of carrying on the tradition of progressive planning. He explained the connection that planners had to the civil rights movement through Planners for Equal Opportunity in the 1960s, the work of people like Chester Hartman and Walter Thabit, and his own link to the tradition from Cornell's Pierre Clavel, Bill Goldsmith, John Forester and Ken Reardon. After the talk, 42 students signed up to start our own new tradition. We are mostly graduate students in Urban Planning. We decided to focus our first year on developing a group identity. This has been challenging because our members have many different conceptions of planning and the role of planners. However, resolving our differences has been part of the fun, and we see our diverse viewpoints as a strength in helping us create exciting activities and projects for the future. To help us develop an identity beyond our department, we sponsored a public debate between the Ann Arbor mayor and real estate developers about a proposed greenbelt initiative, which was later approved in a municipal election. We also showed the movie *The Sunshine State*, followed by a group discussion about its planning-related issues. Another event we sponsored was a discussion about the social costs of gentrification. The discussion was led by several planning students, an Ann Arbor city planner, and PN members Margi Dewar and Joe Grengs, and it has been our most successful so far in attracting people outside of our membership. We are also now actively involved with our urban planning program's Open House for new students. Finally, we began a group weblog, at <http://www.theotherleading.com/pn>, to facilitate group discussion and keep each other informed. We encourage other PN members to check it out and contribute.

<http://www.theotherleading.com/pn>

### NEW MEXICO

The Planners Network student organization at the University of New Mexico was officially formed in August, 2003. A group of 10 interested students met to develop our own Statement of Principles, which we adapted from the national Planners Network statement. Our faculty adviser is Dr. Claudia Isaac and Dr. Teresa Cordova has also provided us much support.

Considering we are still in the organizational development stage, we have done quite a bit this semester. Our kick-off event was a party (what else?). We've also hosted a series of educational events for the public. We had a film showing about the effects of gentrification on low-income communities in San Francisco. This is an election season for Albuquerque and we co-sponsored a District 6 City Council Candidate forum with a local community-based organization, SouthWest Organizing Project, which 6 of 7 candidates attended. We organized a complementary panel discussion during conference of the New Mexico Chapter of the APA. Our discussion centered on how professional planners act as allies to community-based organizations or how they engage as activists in their own right. Three local planners participated and quite a few planning students attended. Finally, we co-sponsored a speaking event with our faculty about the proposed unification of the Albuquerque and Bernalillo County governments. After this event we developed talking points about the proposed unification and have distributed them electronically, at events and in a paid ad in our local newspaper.

We're excited about the future of our Planners Network Chapter. The Community and Regional Planning program at UNM offers a strong hands-on community based education and attracts many progressive students. For this reason we think that PN will continue to grow here. We envision it as a statewide organization that includes students and non-students alike.

### MONTREAL

The Montreal Chapter of Planners Network began organizing at Concordia in the fall of 2003. In its first year the chapter regularly screened films (our favorites were *645 Wellington* and *Bus Riders Union*) and hosted two free public events. The first event, entitled "The Politics of Planning" brought PNER Sam Boskey to deliver a critical analysis of his experience as a member of the City of Montreal's Urban Development Committee. Building on the networks and exposure gained from this event, the chapter went on to organize a public forum from which to debate the hotly contested issue of pedestrianization in the city. Entitled "Pedestrianizing Montréal: *C'est une bonne idée?*" The forum was hosted by the regional branch of Canada's public broadcasting network, the CBC. Because Montreal has limited experience with pedestrianization initiatives the debate is being currently dominated by car-free interest groups. Thus, our primary goal for this event was to generate a lively debate on the idea of

pedestrianization, a word specifically chosen to merge the activist-orientated debate on car-free cities with a more inclusive concept that would leave room at the outset for other, less segregating initiatives. Our panel was a mix of two academics, municipal and regional government officials, a community organizer for a local car-free initiative and an architect. Being the first public debate in Montreal to bring together such a diversity of perspectives, the event drew a full house of curious and concerned citizens and the question and answer period that followed was both lengthy and lively. In the fall Planners Network Montreal is planning to further this debate on pedestrianization and engage in more outreach and activist-orientated activities.

## TORONTO: PLANNING ACTION

Planning Action is a non-profit planning activist organization formed in Toronto in 2001. The group was organized following the Planners Network conference in Toronto in the summer of 2000 by a few graduate students who had helped to coordinate the PN event. Planning Action was founded with the intention of being a more explicitly activist organization to engage with local issues. It built on the role of PN in Toronto, which had been functioning as more of an information and resource network for progressive planners, as well as on the important work of other Toronto groups like Women Plan Toronto. Initially to be called "Planning Aid," the name was changed from "aid" to "action" during early discussions in order to signal a less paternalistic and more activist orientation. Our mission statement is: "We are a group of urban planners, architects and activists who work with diverse communities of Toronto struggling against economic, cultural, and ecological injustice to open spaces for people to imagine, transform, and enjoy the city." Since 2001, we have been involved in a range of activities: critical planning projects, popular education and community involvement. The first projects were public critiques of Toronto's new Official Plan and Waterfront Revitalization Plan. Small workgroups of Planning Action members collectively wrote and delivered testimony on both plans at public hearings and distributed versions of the testimony as pamphlets and handouts. We argued that the City's plans represented the narrow interests of property owners, developers and multinational corporations, while failing to ensure affordable housing.

In 2003, Planning Action began organizing regular public forums on critical planning issues. After the success of the first forum, "Claim the City: Planning, Politics and Participatory Democracy," new workgroups formed to organize events on spatial justice, social justice and car-free neighborhoods, and the effect of international trade agreements on Toronto planning. Planning Action designed and facilitated a participatory workshop on community mapping at the 2003 Toronto Social Forum. Later that year, Planning Action and Planners Network organized a series of "disorientation" events in Toronto and at nearby professional planning programs, to introduce new students and interested community members to progressive planning.

Planning Action holds open monthly meetings to discuss and decide upon issues of concern to the membership, using a consensus decision-making process. The group's commitment to radically democratic and socially just practices within its own operation has been one of the greatest challenges so far. We have also had many successes. The waterfront testimony helped persuade a key City Councilor to change his vote. The community mapping workshop became integrated into the University of Toronto planning curriculum. The Canadian Institute of Planners welcomed a PA and PN session on activist planning at its national conference. PA members have learned new ways of practicing and promoting more radically democratic and socially just planning. In the process, Planning Action has developed into a supportive network and public voice for activist planners in Toronto.

<http://www.planningaction.org>





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