

# PROGRESSIVE PLANNING

The Magazine of Planners Network

## Special Issue on Marxism, Socialism and Planning

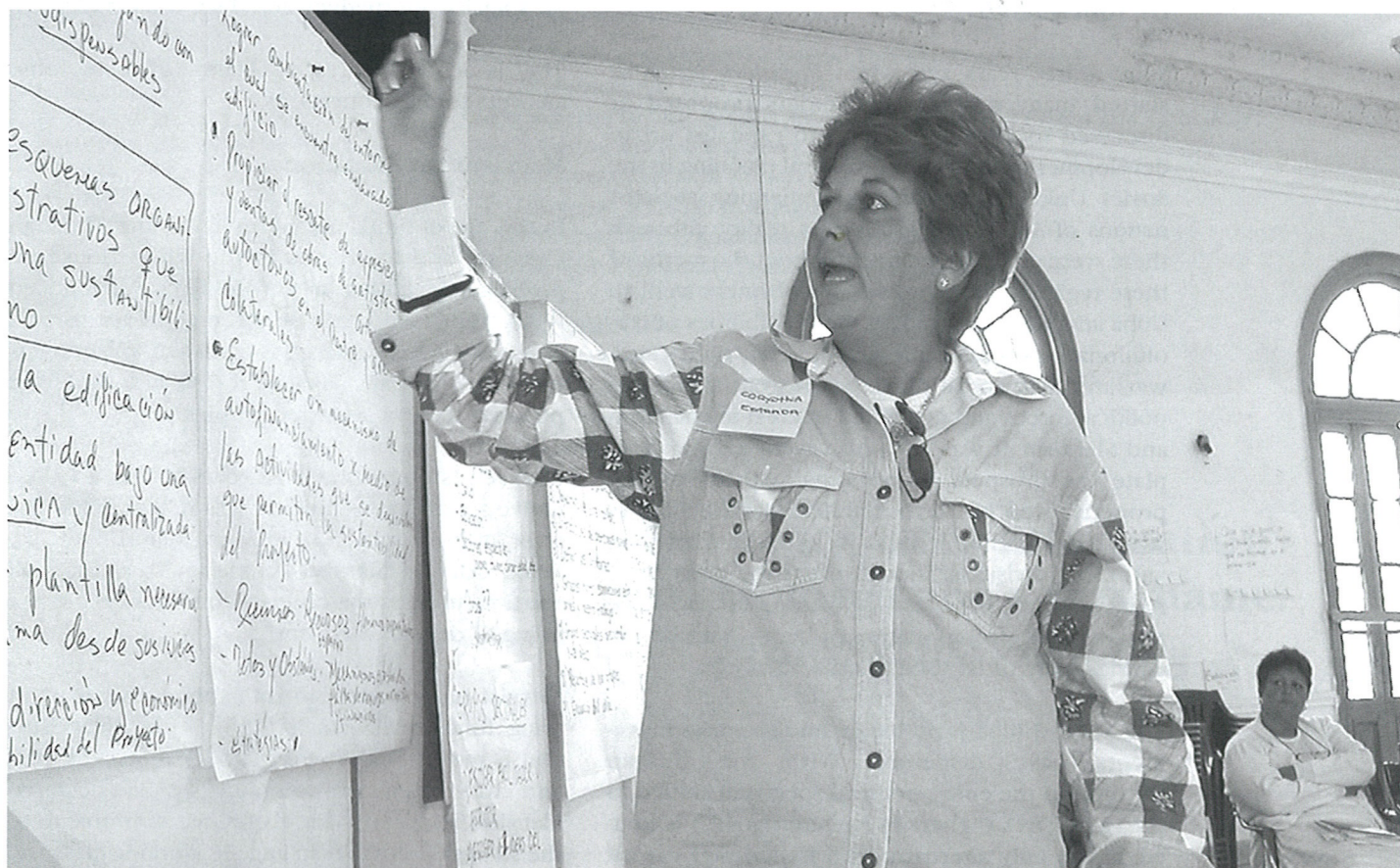


Photo by Marie Kennedy

Corithia Estrada Prad of the Concejo Popular, Havana.

## On the Practical Relevance of Marxist Thought

By Renee Toback

Progressives and socialists get very different press today than we did thirty years ago. What is unchanged from thirty years ago, however, is the status of "socialism" in the United States and the usefulness of Marxist analysis.

When I received the first issue of *Planners Network* thirty years ago, I was a graduate student at the University of Iowa and the newsletter was a few typewritten pages. Idealistic students and professors studied Mao and the contradictions of capitalist development. Activists struggled; "poor people" had movements and advocacy planners. It was a heady time and optimism was in the air.

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### INSIDE:

NEW NAME!

SOCIALISM  
AND CITIES

PLANNING  
IN CUBA

MARXIST THEORY  
AND PRACTICE

MORE...



# The SEVENTH GENERATION

*"In our every deliberation, we must consider the impact of our decisions on the next seven generations."  
- From the Great Law of the Iroquois Confederacy*

## The Socialist City, Still

By Tom Angotti

Some thirty years ago when *Planners Network* started, many progressive planners proposed or discussed socialist alternatives to capitalist urban development and planning. Central planning in the Soviet Union, China and the emerging socialist nations of Africa and Asia was a reality, although there were differing judgments about the merits of these regimes. Many progressive planners went to Cuba and were inspired by the possibilities of revolutionary power. In the US, the civil rights, anti-war and new social movements were significant political forces and generated interest in socialism and Marxism. It was not unusual then to contemplate the prospect of planning without private property, even in North America. Marxist analysis was more commonly used to look at urban class and racial divisions. Though often the main theoreticians were European—North Americans have always had a strong pragmatist bent—Marxist categories were often used in urban analysis.

The Soviet Union is no longer and the mass movements have dispersed. With the Reagan Revolution, the entire political spectrum shifted to the right. TINA ("There Is No Alternative") is touted as the only alternative. US free-market capital rules a global empire. The US model of sprawled, segregated urban development is spreading across the globe. The failed socialist alternatives are criticized for being utopian. Progressive planners in North America take part in the debates about New Urbanism, smart growth, equity planning, environmental justice and other major issues. But there's virtual silence when it comes to the themes of socialism and Marxism.

Is Marxism relevant today as a theoretical or practical reference for progressive planners? What does dialectical and historical materialism have to offer in explaining urban phenomena and charting the course for progressive planners that deal with issues such as displacement, environmental justice, transportation equity, housing equity and participatory democracy? What can we learn from the

history of socialist cities? In charting alternatives to capitalist urban development, is there a place for socialist alternatives, and if so, what is it?

This issue of *Progressive Planning* offers some answers to these questions.

### Marxism Isn't Religion

In this age of fundamentalism led by the Christian Coalition and its friends in the White House, all problems, including urban problems, are reduced to the supposed battle between good versus evil. The unregulated "market" is good and "planning" is evil. This simplistic dualism results in a simplistic public discourse about urban planning.

Marxism is commonly treated as simply an alternative set of dogma. I never was religious and distrust all holy texts. So did Marx, who didn't like being called a Marxist. People use scriptures all the time to bless the cruelest atrocities. So I'm not going to defend "Marxism."

Marxist fundamentalism isn't the answer to right wing fundamentalism. Yet this is the "Marxism" that is most often taught in Political Science 101, and too often propounded by self-declared Marxists. Those who simply reduce all problems to the struggle between an angelic working-class and demonic capitalist-class (or vice versa) belong in Bible School or on a throne. Dialectical and historical materialism, the basic methodology of Marxist thought and action, rejects the use of simplistic dualisms, abstractions divorced from practice, and static social and economic categories.

Morris Zeitlin points out in this issue, in terms understandable to those not familiar with Marxist theory, how important methodology is to both our political and professional practice. Our all-American pragmatism pushes us too quickly to "get things done" without evaluating the underlying class and social forces we're working with. Pragmatism is no doubt one of the occupational hazards of all practicing professions, but it can create serious problems when it's used to shape political strategies. In her article, [Cont. on page 11]

## PROGRESSIVE PLANNING

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### 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.

# PROGRESSIVE PLANNING

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on the magazine's new name:  
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## GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS

*Progressive Planning* seeks articles that describe and analyze progressive physical, social, economic and environmental planning in urban and rural areas. Articles may be up to 2,000 words. They should be addressed to PN's broad audience of professionals, activists, students and academics, and be straightforward and jargon-free. Following a journalistic style, the first paragraph should summarize the main ideas in the article. A few suggested readings may be mentioned in the text, but do not submit footnotes or a bibliography. The editors may make minor style changes, but any substantial rewriting or changes will be checked with the author. A photograph or illustration may be included. Submissions on disk or by email are greatly appreciated. Send to the Editor at [tangotti@hunter.cuny.edu](mailto:tangotti@hunter.cuny.edu) or Planners Network, c/o Hunter College Dept of Urban Planning, 695 Park Ave., New York, NY 10021. Fax: 212-772-5593. Deadlines are January 1, April 1, July 1 and October 1.

### UPCOMING SPECIAL ISSUES [Articles welcome]:

The Active City: Changing Urban Form, Promoting Physical Activity  
2004 Elections and Convention Cities -- New York City and Boston  
Planning, Food Production and Consumption



## Looking at Participatory Planning in Cuba... through an Art Deco Window

By Marie Kennedy, Lorna Rivera and Chris Tilly

Last January we sat with about thirty Cubans in a community arts center in Boyeros, on the outskirts of Havana, Cuba. The group included artists, teachers, social workers, government officials, architects, engineers and health professionals, all working in Boyeros. We were leading a three-day participatory planning workshop to

ety of socialism has featured both large-scale planning (physical, economic, social) and massive popular participation through active mass organizations and frequent mobilizations. Participatory planning, however, has remained more elusive. Experiments in participatory planning finally began to emerge and then multiply in the late 1980s and 1990s, spurred by the disappearance of Soviet influence and by the economic crisis that paralyzed standard planning methodologies predicated on plentiful resources. Given the country's high level of collective consciousness and organization, participatory planning would seem like a natural approach for planning in Cuba. Nonetheless, serious obstacles to participatory planning remain, including the veneration of "expertise," which took us by surprise at the end of the first day of our workshop. Our January workshop can serve as a useful window through which to look back at the uneven history of participatory planning in Cuba, and forward to future possibilities.

### A Brief History of Community Planning in Cuba

Every socialist country has had to manage a set of tensions surrounding popular participation: How to balance local initiative with a set of national priorities? How to reconcile goals of equality with opportunities for communities to shape their own development? How to facilitate widespread participation without opening the door for internal and external foes of the revolution? Cuba, along with the other countries of the former Soviet bloc, resolved these tensions by leaning toward centralization and top-down planning. But over time, Cuba has incorporated more decentralization, consultation with ever larger numbers of people and channels for bottom-up influence.

On the whole, the Cuban state tends to operate in the advocacy rather than transformative planning paradigm—that is, it acts for the people rather than empowering the people to act for themselves. Many good things have happened as a result: excellent schools; a health care system that is the envy of much of the world; and widespread distribution of benefits like adequate and affordable housing. But there have also been negative results: slum clearance and the dispersal of resi-

dents with no regard to the social networks destroyed in the process; universal policies applied regardless of cultural and historical differences; mandated "color- and gender-blind" equality that doesn't touch the complex roots of racism and sexism.

Mass organizations such as the network of neighborhood-based Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDRs) and the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC) also operate in a top-down manner, primarily mobilizing people for campaigns in order to carry out centrally determined objectives. Rarely have these organizations employed methods to empower their membership to craft the program of action.

In 1976 *Poder Popular* (Popular Power) was introduced, creating 169 local government authorities. For the first time, individual citizens were allowed to nominate candidates for public office and elect representatives—by direct secret ballot—to a government body, the municipal councils. As with the mass organizations, however, the primary role of the municipal councils, which lack budgetary control, has been to carry out decisions made centrally and to communicate between their constituents and the central organs of the state.

In the last decade-and-a-half, several factors have influenced the development of participatory democracy in Cuba: the economic crisis that resulted from the collapse of the Soviet bloc; the reforms of the 1990s to confront that crisis; and renewed US hostility toward Cuba. In general, the reforms have provided openings for more participation in local decision-making and to some extent have geographically decentralized power within a system that is still highly centralized.

At the beginning of the "Special Period" (as the period of economic crisis from 1989 through the 1990s was termed), Popular Power was augmented by the establishment of neighborhood-based and elected Popular Councils. These councils are made up of volunteer delegates elected in each neighborhood and representatives of the main economic, social and service institutions, such as the CDRs and the FMC. These neighborhood-based councils support the work of their delegate to the Municipal Council, working closely with residents to identify and advocate for local issues. In 1992, constitutional reforms also established a more direct electoral system for the National Assembly, although candidates for the Assembly are still nominated through a process largely controlled by the Cuban Communist Party.

Meanwhile, new institutions were promoting par-

ticipatory community development strategies. The first government-linked source of such activity was the *Grupo para el Desarrollo Integral de la Capital* (GDIC, Group for the Comprehensive Development of the Capital). In 1988, the GDIC was created and charged with improving life in Havana. GDIC immediately established Neighborhood Transformation Workshops in three neighborhoods, focusing primarily on physical improvements. With the onset of the Special Period and the related scarcity of building materials, attention shifted to the social needs of communities. The goal of the workshops became the integration of social and physical planning with broad participation in decision-making. Staff of the workshops was broadened to include sociologists and community organizers in addition to architects and engineers.

A major campaign to develop effective participatory community planning methods was launched. Marie, along with planner/activists Merri Ansara and Mel King, facilitated an early two-week seminar with about forty staff mem-

**The work with women and youth in Atarés could provide a model for even the most progressive of U.S. community-based organizations.**

bers from the twelve workshops operating in 1993. They found that the main barriers to participatory planning were essentially two sides of the same coin: residents expected to have their needs met on the basis of decisions made by experts and professionals who were educated to fix problems for people. But in the Special Period, experts could no longer fix things, given the sudden and drastic reduction of resources. Marie introduced her seminar by saying: "You're going to love this, because it gets you off the hook. Your role will be to help people to set priorities and design strategies, not to solve problems for them."

Because of the basic values of Cuba's socialist political culture (social justice, equality, freedom), many of the workshops (of which there are now twenty) have far outstripped similar efforts in the US to put decision-making power in the hands of those most affected by the problems being addressed. For example, the work with women and youth in Atarés could provide a model for ⇒

Photo by Marie Kennedy



help this group identify ways that the 1930s Art Deco arts center, currently under renovation, could be used to spark broader community development.

As the first day drew to a close, we felt good about the day's work. We had turned the Cubans loose in a small group exercise that used art to explore community problems and possible solutions. When the small groups presented their skits, poems and drawings, they yielded laughter along with acute insights on life in Boyeros. Following time-honored popular education principles, we kept the focus on the Boyeros community and left our Boston planning experiences off the table. But when it came to evaluating the day's work, the recurring comment was, "We would like the compañeros from Boston to tell us how they do planning at home."

Since shortly after its 1959 revolution, Cuba's vari-



even the most progressive of US community-based organizations.

Another well-spring of bottom-up participation is the Havana-based Martin Luther King Center, founded in 1987 by Cuban evangelical Baptists who supported the revolution. Fueled in part by international donations from groups like Pastors for Peace, the Center has trained thousands in popular education techniques, and currently works with nine local groups in Havana and the neighboring province of Matanzas. Projects focus on what the Center calls socio-cultural community transformation, for example, organizing dance troupes, baseball teams, community newspapers and groups to advocate for women's issues.

**Perhaps the greatest strength brought to community-based planning is the collective spirit that Cuba has cultivated.**

The examples of the GDIC and the MLK Center have spilled over to some Popular Councils and other sectors and the Boyeros Workshop is another outgrowth. But while sociologist Miren Uriarte reports that hundreds of other participatory community development projects are currently underway, bottom-up participation remains the exception rather than the rule.

#### **The Boyeros Workshop: A Window on Participatory Planning Today**

We ended up in the high-ceilinged, airy Art Deco meeting room in Boyeros through a collaboration between Common Ground, a US-Cuba solidarity and exchange organization; Alberto Faya, the municipal coordinator of the Cuban Writers' and Artists' Union (UNEAC) in Boyeros; and architect/planner Gina Rey, former director of the GDIC. Also helping to pull together the meeting were Juan Puentes, director of the art gallery located in the Center, and Carmen Monteagudo of the Center for Exchange and Reference on Community Initiatives (CIERIC), a Cuban NGO linked to UNEAC that supports arts-based community work.

Faya's energetic organizing brought more than forty people to the workshop over the three half-day sessions, twenty-five to thirty each day. Based on discussion with Faya and Rey, we set our main goals as helping to build the group (only a dozen of this group had met together before) and to

teach participatory techniques by example. We did lots of small group work, including groups defined by sector (teachers, artists) and mixed groups. We also used plenary presentations, report-backs and discussions. We incorporated arts-based activities (such as role-playing and a wall-sized participatory mural depicting the community people would like to see), both to link the activities to the arts-based development strategy and simply to keep the sessions lively. We used daily evaluations (primarily via post-its distributed to participants) to guide planning for the following day's activities. For instance, we set up the mural in response to a request that there be graphic illustration of the workshop's ideas. And yes, we did end up talking about our own planning work in Boston.

The three days spotlighted some of the strengths that Cuban socialism brings to community-based planning and also some of the obstacles. Perhaps the greatest strength is the collective spirit that Cuba has cultivated through decades of education, exhortation and collective activity. The prospect of planning for Boyeros was daunting, given the fact that the area is diverse, dispersed and largely rural, and especially given the continuing resource constraints of the Special Period. But the workshop participants eagerly tackled the work, generating creative ideas for using the arts to bring people in the community together to improve their lives. An initial brainstorm on this topic came up with suggestions including the promotion of arts-based tourism (though opinions differed on whether tourism would be a positive); using the arts in mental health therapy and smoking prevention; artisan fairs; street theater; concerts; and special activities directed at youth and seniors, including a *discotemba* (*temba* is Cuban slang for an old person). The group's seriousness in searching for solutions to problems facing all parts of the community was indeed impressive.

A second strength was the organizational base that participants brought to the undertaking. Cubans are highly organized—as students, workers, farmers, women, neighborhood residents. For instance, young people with artistic talents receive state-sponsored training and then a salary, and become members of UNEAC. The workshop participants were connected to each other and to a broader set of people in the community through well-established organizations, and in many cases were there as official representatives of these organizations. We exploited this fact on the second day of the workshop, when we first mixed up people from different sectors in small groups to brainstorm links between the arts and their com-

munity work, and then regrouped them by sector to choose one of the brainstormed ideas and suggest an implementation strategy.

Another very encouraging sign was the active participation of Popular Power—the local government—in this explicitly bottom-up workshop. Corinthia Estrada, a Popular Council representative, summarized the government group's strategy suggestions. To our surprise, she identified the main obstacle as bureaucracy, and declared that the challenge was to "break with the organizational and administrative systems that prevent the sustainability of this community art project." The group suggested that the entire art center be placed under one administration (it is currently divided). "Put the artists in charge!" Estrada concluded.

Finally, groups already active in participatory planning and popular education brought energy and ideas to the workshop. We have already mentioned that Gina Rey, the founding director of Havana's GDIC, was one of the collaborators. The Writers' and Artists' Union has also launched a community work initiative, and that initiative's head, Rogelio Rivero, gave a presentation as part of the workshop. CIERIC, the NGO co-sponsoring the meeting, is a new and interesting type of animal for Cuba. As an NGO, it has flexibility and the ability to raise money from abroad (in CIERIC's case, primarily from the European Union). But unlike the MLK Center, it also has direct ties to an official mass organization, the Writers' and Artists' Union.

But some of the weaknesses of Cuban planning—weaknesses shared with planning in the United States and other countries—were also on display. The cult of expertise shaped our interaction with the Boyeros group. The large turnout was due, in part, to the expectation that the *académicos norteamericanos* would bring answers with them. The tug-of-war over whether we would discuss Boston reflected the differing assumptions that we and they brought to the meeting. When evaluations of the first day revealed that many wanted us to talk about our work in Boston, we carefully explained that we thought it most important to learn from the circumstances of Boyeros. But when second-day evaluations included at least as many requests for us to share Boston experiences, we finally broke down and did it. After we told about organizing around welfare, homelessness and the living wage, the first response was, "Ah, so there is an economic crisis in the United States as well." A fruitful exchange resulted, and we concluded that refusing to talk about our experiences had flowed from an overly rigid interpretation of popular education methodology. In avoiding the cult of the

expert perhaps we had fallen into the cult of the community.

A related issue was participants' habituation to a particular style of teaching—lecturing rather than popular education. We were asked repeatedly, "Tell us your techniques," and had to reply repeatedly, "These *are* our techniques. We prefer to demonstrate them rather than talk about them."



Photo by Marie Kennedy

The Cubans in the workshop were deeply immersed in an approach based on service rather than organizing, perceiving their role as serving people rather than mobilizing or empowering them. This was obvious from the outset in who was invited to the workshop. The room was full of people-serving professionals. Artists, teachers, doctors and social workers were there; housewives, industrial workers, students and farmers were not. The representatives of the mass organizations, such as the women's federation, were paid staff members who defined themselves as social workers. In discussions of disadvantaged populations, these professionals sometimes slipped into stereotyping and blaming the victim, as when a social worker acting out a cigar-puffing, willfully unemployed, unwed pregnant teen drew guffaws from the assembly. ⇒



Reflecting on how all of this limited the discussion, we devoted a portion of the final day to an exercise on "who's not in the room." We facilitated a brainstorm of social categories not represented in the room, followed by a vote to choose

ing industrial workers proposed that the workers help with the rehabilitation of the arts center and the production of art materials, and that the artists help decorate the factories to make them more pleasant work environments.

### Cuban Socialism and Participatory Planning

In summary, thanks to the strengths in the Cuban planning tradition and in spite of its weaknesses, we and the other participants counted the workshop a success. Everybody came away energized and with new ideas. A sizable planning group for the arts center project was solidified, expanding well beyond the small core of artists that had met previously. And the outputs of the meeting, carefully typed up from flip charts and post-its and circulated among all participants, constitute a rich lode of possible priorities and strategies for the planning group to mine.

This kind of experience is being repeated all over Havana, and increasingly in other parts of Cuba. In the best cases, such as the Atarés Neighborhood Transformation Workshop, community-based planning has become institutionalized and is taking on one tough issue after another. But even these best cases are limited by the fact that decision-making above the local level is still tightly controlled. And in too many neighborhoods, officials use the rhetoric of participation while maintaining traditional, top-down planning practice.

Despite the difficulties, we came away convinced of two things. First, participatory planning has much to offer to Cuban socialism. And second, Cuban socialism, with its long collective tradition and strong infrastructure of mass organizations, has much to offer to participatory planning.

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### Toback [Cont. from page 1]

The exuberance of the 1970s is long gone, replaced by the gloomy specter of apathy and depression. But we must recognize that both are impostors. In many ways, thirty years later, we are light years ahead of where we were!

In the 1970s, the left was easily dismissed as a "youth movement." McCarthyism had decimated the left and progressive activism was dismissed as a "generational conflict." Mainstream planners as well as influential developers and their political partners dismissed socialism as an idealistic fantasy bound to end in disaster. Today, socialism is considered to be a "failure" and has lost its status in intellectual and academic discourse. But we have numerous respected Marxist and socialist leaders inside and outside the academy. We have and are experienced activists now with perspective and wisdom gained through years of work. We no longer believe we are inventing the wheel; we know we're in this for the long haul and that the new day will not dawn tomorrow.

We also focus on concrete policy alternatives and implementation of particular projects rather than broad societal reconstruction. While there is a qualitative difference in the dynamic of today's discussions of alternatives to capitalist development, that discussion remains vital.

### The Circuit of Capital

Marxist analysis is as useful today as it ever was!

One of the most basic Marxist tenets is the circuit of capital. The general formula for economic interaction in a non-capitalist society is C-M-C. People produce commodities (C) for use. They exchange them for money (M) in order to trade for other commodities (C) that they do not produce but wish to consume. This is the general understanding of the use of money in society and the rationale for labor. One produces and trades to satisfy individual desires for material things. Money is a convenient token, easily stored and a standard measure of value.

While the vast majority of people see the exchange of goods in the marketplace as an efficient way of meeting human needs, the Capitalist has an entirely different agenda. Capitalists are in it not to satisfy human needs but to accumulate capital for themselves. Marx describes how capitalism distorts the experience of the market and in the process conceals the reality of capitalism. He illustrates the Capitalist circuit of capital, M-C-M' (not the C-M-C of non-capitalist society).

The dynamic of capitalist society is the use of money (M) to produce commodities (C) in order to *acquire more money* (M'). Thus in M-C-M' the goal is to accumulate assets. The purpose of the market is not to trade products but to amass wealth as capital to better compete in the marketplace. The success of a capitalist enterprise is measured not by the production of useful items but by the ability to increase capital, thereby gaining greater ability to accumulate money and capital. The engine of capitalist prosperity is expansion, innovation, and growth.

This framework is directly applicable to understanding "hot" urban issues and questions of social planning. The contradictions of workplace reform and the rights of workers clearly illustrate the contradictions of capitalism and the value of a dialectical approach. Mainstream economics tells us that the goal of the economy is production for the enhancement of human well-being and human happiness. It also tells us that the pursuit of profit is the path by which the "invisible hand" guides individual self-interest to the satisfaction of human needs. Simply stated, mainstream economics tells

**Marx describes how capitalism distorts the experience of the market and in the process conceals the reality of capitalism.**

us that the production of commodities is directed by the demand for those commodities. They make it appear as if the circuit of C-M-C dominates. Individuals get what they want by producing what others want and engaging in trade.

When we look at the world of work under capitalism, we see overwork accompanied by unemployment, environmental destruction, disease and occupational injury. Even among those who succeed in the marketplace, we see functional impairment caused by stress, sleep deprivation and overwork. When we ask, "Why?" the obvious response only leaves us more confused. Overwork and stress are an inevitable result of the struggle to succeed, the conflict between work and family life. The requirement to work harder, longer and "smarter" drains leisure from our lives. So the question then is, how is it that the market mechanism produces misery in pursuit of the social good?

The answer lies at the root of capitalist pro- ➞

Photo by Marie Kennedy



the five most important (the results included farm workers, industrial workers and young people who were neither working nor in school). Then we formed five breakout groups corresponding to these categories, instructing them to role play members of the category discussing how they would like to relate to the arts in general and the art center in particular.

The results were fascinating and ultimately quite powerful. Despite their deference to our expertise, the participants were unable or unwilling to do the role-play, and instead talked about these groups in the third person. Thinking empathetically about what those absent might want was a stretch. One art teacher told us later, "That was the hardest part of the entire workshop!" But stretch they did. For example, the farm workers' group suggested bringing arts activities out into the countryside; linking the arts center to the annual agricultural fair that takes place a short distance away; promoting the revitalization of rural cultural traditions such as folk music, wearing the *guayabera* and cooking traditional foods; and bringing a representative of farm workers onto the planning group. The people represent-



duction and its guiding force, the market. The capitalist market does not exist to trade commodities; it is the *sine qua non* of social existence. Production of commodities is incidental to accumulation, which is the central theme of capitalist society, M-C-M'. Dialectical Marxist analysis shows that the commodities produced and the external effects of production—stress, overwork, unemployment, poverty in the material and spiritual sense—are all part of the drive to accumulate, expand and grow.

#### People Before Profit

Therefore the popular cry of "people before profit" is an attack on the central dynamic of capitalist society. We hear this demand frequently in campaigns for environmental justice, transportation and housing equity and many other current struggles.

Housing displacement of the poor from "revitalized" urban neighborhoods is a 1990s issue and a clear illustration of the effects of the circuit of capital. The failure of housing development for the poor may be dismissed by urban orthodoxy as the result of individual greed or intractable social

units are increasingly an element of the economic past. Aided by the public sector in amassing large tracts of land for redevelopment, housing and neighborhood development is more and more a corporate enterprise. As housing becomes profitable, it becomes a source of capital accumulation for corporations, and neighborhoods redeveloped on this model sprout chain stores and franchise restaurants.

The contradictions of successful redevelopment in poor and minority areas give rise not mainly to a call for housing subsidies but for control over the market. Activists trace displacement to the private and unfettered ownership of land. Cooperative housing, which often seemed unworkably idealistic thirty years ago, has become a viable option. At the moment it is largely restricted to alternative private ownership of luxury coops and condominiums. But the mixture of collective and individual ownership is a model for more ambitious, imaginative and socially conscious alternatives to the private property owner/renter dynamic. Union and community sponsored coops are alternative prototypes. More socially progressive forms of collective ownership and control such as limited-equity coops and mutual housing can limit the marketability of housing.

The strength of single-issue movements like the housing movement means building enclaves of alternative practice. It does not make Marxist analysis irrelevant or require abandonment of socialist thought. We approach the body politic from a position of concrete alternatives rather than a broad theory of social restructuring. The critique of private property is implicit in the nooks and crannies of the broad social consensus that "There Is No Alternative."

*Renee Toback is an economist active in her federal workers union and in the anti-sweatshop movement. She is a member of Economy Connection ([www.urpe.org](http://www.urpe.org)), which provides speakers and resources on political economy.*

**"Successful" redevelopment efforts are central to the destruction of low-income neighborhoods and tied directly to the circuit of capital.**

problems. But "successful" redevelopment efforts are central to the destruction of low-income neighborhoods, and they are tied directly to the circuit of capital.

Despite the traditionally peripheral location of landlords in the accumulation of capital, housing is increasingly drawn into the corporate dynamic. Individual landlords who own one or two housing

### Progressive Planning UPCOMING SPECIAL ISSUES

(Articles welcome)

**The Active City: Changing Urban Form, Promoting Physical Activity  
2004 Elections and Convention Cities -- New York City and Boston  
Planning, Food Production and Consumption**

See page 2 of this issue for submission guidelines.

### 7th Generation [Cont. from page 2]

Renee Toback goes through a few basics of Marxist economics and shows their importance by linking them with current political challenges facing the progressive movements.

#### Class and Race

In the US the most perilous tripwire for Marxism has been the question of race. Too often class oppression is understood in a static way as separate from racism. Too many socialists, especially those with roots in organized labor, have failed to see racism as fundamental to the birth and expansion of US capitalism and fully entwined with class oppression. This is the only modern capitalist country that was founded on slavery. Large sectors of the white working-class continue to support racial apartheid. How can we understand the urban problems of segregation, inequality, suburban exclusion and urban rebellions without connecting racism with the growth of capitalism? How else can we understand North America's suburban culture, the equation of public space with violence and danger and the readiness to kill people of color and bomb their cities in military exploits around the world to salvage the sprawled, gas-guzzling metropolis?

If there is any struggle that is central to the issue of labor's political power in the US, it's the struggle for racial equality. Indeed, the reason for the historic political weakness of workers, unionized and otherwise, has been the division of the working-class along racial lines from the time of slavery and Jim Crow until today. The same dialectical optic that is needed to get at the connection between race and class needs to be applied to the questions of inequality of women, immigrants, gays/lesbians/transgendered, people with disabilities, and the elderly. This isn't strictly a matter of separate identities. It is the class struggle, never a "pure" struggle and always mediated by social identities and specific environmental conditions. Readers may find similar views in Andy Merrifield's new book, *Dialectical Urbanism*, reviewed in this issue by Arturo Sanchez.

#### Urban Poverty and Displacement

While constantly in need of updating, the basic foundations of Marxist urbanism still seem to be valid. In the nineteenth century Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels wrote extensively about the miserable living conditions faced by the industrial working-class in Europe's large cities. They maintained that the accumulation of capital in large cities was accompanied by the accumulation of

misery—the formation of separate working-class neighborhoods with inadequate housing in an unhealthy environment. Today, conditions have improved vastly in the developed nations of Europe, North America and East Asia (less than 20 percent of the world's population) in part due to a century-and-a-half of working-class organizing, in part due to the enormous expropriation of wealth from poor nations by the rich. As capitalism has become increasingly global, the extreme conditions of inequality once observed in Birmingham now apply everywhere. The hundreds of global metropolises where finance capital is headquartered are miniature reproductions

**The commodification of land and housing makes planning in the public interest a difficult if not impossible task.**

of London and New York City, with ghettos and gold coasts, opulence and suffering, native elites and struggling immigrants. The metropolitan revolution is a by-product of the global rule of monopoly capital, not an outgrowth of local urban development. Outside the world's metropolitan regions the majority of the population lives under conditions of increasing marginality, with their traditional sources of food and income priced out of the market by transnational corporations.

Since capital now rules the globe, the urban mess belongs to capitalism, which continues to reproduce it everywhere it goes. Oil and auto monopolies give us sprawled metropolitan regions that consume inordinate amounts of energy, extend the journey to work, create public health crises, pollute the air and contribute to the global environmental crisis. Capitalism's urban environmental crises of the nineteenth century were nothing compared to today's global warming, ozone alerts and epidemics of cancer, heart disease and obesity, all tied to the structure and process of urban development.

In a series of brilliant essays written in 1872-1873 and published as *The Housing Question*, Friedrich Engels picked up on perhaps the fundamental problem with the capitalist city. Unbridled real estate development, he said, forced working people out of their centrally-located neighborhoods so the property could be redeveloped for profit. Today, as global capital reaches cities every- ➔



where with lightning speed, the process of urban redevelopment has accelerated. Displacement has become part of our everyday life, at home and at work. The commodification of land and housing makes planning in the public interest a difficult if not impossible task. Master plans and land use regulations are market-driven and growth is always good. In the latest phase of capitalist development, everything has been transformed into a commodity, including water, clean air and the human body. Towns and neighborhoods are branded, public places are privatized, nothing is left outside the capitalist circuit.

### Lessons From The Socialist City

For most of the twentieth century, billions of people throughout the world lived in cities where capitalist growth was not the driving force. In the Soviet Union, China before Deng, and scores of less developed countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America that in myriad and diverse ways set out to develop cities and economies based on social cooperation rather than competition, there were many experiences worth looking at. In attempts to build socialist cities there were many successes and failures, but too often urbanists and planners in the West hear only about the failures, if anything. A balanced assessment of these experiences can offer us many important lessons.

In socialist cities, housing, public transportation, health care and education were offered at virtually no cost to the users. There were experiments with cooperative living. Tenants were rarely evicted. Private vehicular traffic, and all the environmental and public health problems that come with it, was minimal. There was no CBD enclave as we know it, and residential segregation by class and race was relatively limited.

In the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, planners created over a thousand new towns following comprehensive master plans. Unlike the West, planned cities were actually built (of course, usually not as they were planned), and comprehensive planning was the rule, not the exception.

We also know the serious problems with socialist city planning. Some of these were the same old problems that came with capitalism, aggravated by insensitive technocrats in power. Urban residents were the objects of top-down urban planning and had little say in shaping or changing their neighborhoods. Old neighborhoods were summarily wiped out by planners and replaced by planned communities, though unlike capitalist cities displaced people usually got free housing in new buildings in exchange. Many new problems emerged in the

socialist cities. Stability of tenure became stagnation and lack of mobility. Elimination of the capitalist housing crisis gave way to a socialist housing crisis where government planners simply did not divert enough resources away from production, which itself became inefficient, and when they did they were unable to meet the rapidly changing needs of individuals and households with serially-produced industrial housing.

The housing crisis was perhaps the main social problem underlying the collapse of the Soviet system and was intimately related to structural deficiencies in production, a lack of real democracy and the growth of inequalities. The Soviet system collapsed from its own inertia, but it was pushed into oblivion by a much stronger, better organized and more powerful force—the US and its Cold War allies. Savage, unregulated capitalism swiftly filled the void left by the Soviet collapse and in a short decade reduced much of the old Soviet Union to Third World status. With the collapse of the social welfare system, life expectancy dipped sharply, mortality rates spiked and the big cities sprouted CBDs, traffic jams and smog, ghettos and gold coasts.

To many who saw no hope or inspiration for a democratic socialism in the Soviet Union, its collapse wasn't mourned. But to everyone who at any time dared to dream of alternatives, of a Utopia, this was an historic setback. Now we have TINA: There Is No Alternative. Accept the inexorable march of capitalist development, let the "market" decide, and planners get out of the way.

The two articles in this issue about Cuba (Kennedy, Rivera and Tilly; and Hamberg) illustrate the many urban innovations in one socialist country still trying to hold on to the social welfare gains they made over almost four decades. The approach of these authors is balanced as they reveal the dilemmas and contradictions faced by communities and professionals in Cuba. We can see here how socialism is no utopia but a real struggle to end exploitative relations among people and improve the quality-of-life for all.

### Community Versus Class Struggle?

Catalonian urbanist Manuel Castells was one of the first Marxists to analyze contemporary urbanization and community struggles, starting with his classic work, *The Urban Question*. Castells, however, expressed a more sophisticated version of dualist thinking with his critique of community struggles, which he saw as divorced from class struggle. To be sure, there are enough reactionary and exclusionary community-based organizations around to lend credence to this theory. But we also have a good

share of reactionary and exclusionary labor unions. Many struggles to improve community life—from the suburban fights against Wal-Marts to central city fights against displacement and gentrification—lead people to confront corporate control over their lives. Some are militant and consciously anti-capitalist, many are not. The same can be said for union struggles. There's nothing innate to community struggles that make them any more prone to narrowness, bigotry or conservatism. We need only look at the community movements in Latin America for examples of highly organized, class-conscious community movements. And in this age of hyper-consumerism, capital is being confronted more and more at the point of consumption, not just the point of production.

### Keep Utopia Alive

Practicing urban planners face a real ethical dilemma. Are we simply stuck with serving developers ("the market") or can we serve broader interests and help diminish inequities? Don't try to answer this question in the abstract. First develop a relationship with social movements that are struggling to develop both the theory and practice of alternative forms of urban living that don't rely on capitalism's drive for profits. There is no shortage of community-based organizations struggling for a more open, democratic society, building new relations of cooperation and solidarity among people. There are little pieces of utopia: progressive local development corporations, non-profit and employee-owned enterprises, community land trusts, co-operative and

mutual housing, consumer and credit co-ops, and so forth. All have severe limitations in an economy and society built around corporate greed. But they are a testing ground for an alternative society. And as Derek Chisholm argues in this issue, progressive planners need to make a personal commitment to put their progressive ideas into practice.

In her article, Jan Roelofs underlines the importance of utopias to progressive urban planning and gives us a useful sketch of history and theory. We should keep in mind the classical critique by Friedrich Engels of utopian thinkers of his day. The problem, he said, was that they divorced their ideal communities from the real on-going political struggles. They tried to create socialist enclaves by turning their backs on the revolutionary struggles and the working-class as a whole. Too many Marxists have taken this critique out of context and adopted the simplistic dualism of reform versus revolution. History shows that the two can and must be understood as a dynamic relationship.

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*Related writings by Angotti include: Metropolis 2000, Chapter One (Revised) at <http://urban.hunter.cuny.edu/~angotti>; "The Housing Question: Progressive Agenda and Socialist Program," Science & Society (Spring 1990); "The Housing Question: Engels and After," Monthly Review (October, 1977).*

## Get On the PN Roster 2003

In 1998 PN published its last PN Roster. We plan to develop a new roster in 2003. We are exploring options for a password protected version on the web but there will possibly be a print version. For those of you who remember the old rosters, they were terrific networking resources. We will use the PN address list as the basis for the roster but it is much better to have more information about each member, particularly a brief bio. Remember, PN is a network and it is only as strong as its members.

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# Sound Theory and Political Savvy

By Morris Zeitlin

Progressive planners are practical utopians. We do what we are forced to do to earn a living but are inspired by what we could and should do. This contradiction can be a source of both stress and strength in the daunting and bewildering time in which we live—a time of transition from an obsolescing social order to a higher yet dimly visible one on the horizon. To understand the often confounding events and changes, and our perplexed selves, we need to understand the current times in the context of history.

## Pragmatism Rules

The ideology dominating our social environment makes it difficult to do this. The pragmatist outlook restricts vision to the here and now, to thinking and doing what is practical within the existing social order. It regards social innovation as an impractical idealistic utopia. From childhood to maturity, the media targets our minds to make us obedient subjects, obscuring our understanding of history lest it threaten the social order of the ruling class it defends.

Pragmatism focuses on particulars and limits the scope of our vision. It can help to relieve traffic

In this light, the Marxist study of history discovered its motive force: the struggle between ruling and ruled classes driving society from lower to higher social orders, from antiquity up to our time. Just as capitalism emerged out of feudalism's insoluble inner contradictions, capitalism's insoluble inner contradictions lead to its decline, ultimately to be replaced with a cooperative social order, socialism—the next higher stage in human history—by the working class capitalism exploits.

This, in a nutshell, is what Marxism is. To master the reasoned exposition of its principles requires much further study, but that effort will be rewarded with profound intellectual growth.

## Which Side Are We On?

To which social class do we planners belong? Clearly, we don't own the means of production or engage in trade. Therefore we belong to the class that earns its living by selling its physical and mental labor to the classes—and the institutions they control—that do own the means. In other words, we are part of the working-class.

Many of us, however, come from the middle-class, with its typical ideological ambivalence, or from its neighbor, the upper-income working-class. The schools we've attended in the course of our professional training imbued us with the pragmatist ideology of the ruling class. That is why many of us tend to be ambivalent about politics and experience a great deal of anxiety about our work, problems that can be remedied by mastering Marxist theory and committing ourselves to the interests of the working class. Whether we want to or not, we are involved in the class struggle. Personal integrity and peace of mind demand that we clearly see which side we're on and live, think and act accordingly.

This brings us to the contradictions in our daily work. The upper-classes who employ us assign us to untangle the discords and conflicts created by their system of private ownership of the means of production and commodified land. The tangles threaten breakdowns in the cities and their system of market-driven capital accumulation. They need us to do that *but no more* than that, lest doing more lead to more extensive demands from the working-class for political changes they fear even more.

Here lies the conflict between the humanitarian aspirations of progressive planners to make cities serve the people and the pragmatic chains capitalism shackles them with. Our humanism leads us to holistic perceptions of the world, the nation, the city, the neighborhood and the people in the global community. Holistic Marxist theory teaches us that the crises of American cities are local manifestations of the general crisis of capitalism, modified by the particularities of local, regional and national geography, politics and economics.

## What Can We Do?

How can we cope with the vexing dualities in our jobs? This calls for ongoing deliberation in the pages of *PN Magazine*, but here are a few thoughts to kick off the debate.

Progressive workers can best overcome the conflict between job demands and political wisdom through committed activity in labor unions, people's organizations and progressive politics. In our privileged positions as planners in establishment offices, we can sometimes influence policies and pass on information useful to working-class organizations.

The history of progressive planning has helped us learn the limitations of focusing on single and local issues. Today the horizons between local and global, and particular and general, grow increasingly blurred. Neighborhood struggles disconnected from the bigger working-class struggles yield limited good. Indeed, they often end in disorganization when City Hall dishes out a few favors or battles are lost. To expect local officials to heal the many ills of poor neighborhoods diverts people's attention away from the origins of their problems—ruling class national policies.

Even the big gains some planners have achieved

within rare reform-minded city governments do not warrant belief in the would-be political powers of progressive planners. Reforms that are granted by the powers-that-be when they are hard-pressed in a crisis are soon withdrawn when the crisis is over. Only reforms wrested by sustained class struggle have proven lasting.

We need a broad astute class approach in our work that illuminates the urban terrain, articulates people's needs and possibilities and debunks the cunning of officialdom and its accommodating media. We need to invent shrewd strategies and tactics. As an integrated part of the general class struggle we will find our own full strength.

Some, viewing the present statically, may hesitate, saying that labor and popular movements do not foster a broad progressive coalition. Marxism, however, teaches us to see the undercurrent of changes going on, and to press for a reversal of the current retreat before the onslaught of reaction towards a counteroffensive for social progress. Witness the recent anti-war demonstrations that brought out millions of people.

Capitalism appears to be reaching its zenith. It spread globally to exploit all it can and now has nowhere else to expand to survive. By the logic of its own system, it will stagnate and shrivel. The more brutally it tries to delay its doom, the greater the resistance it will incur. In these times we need to make the most we can while in retreat, honing our professional abilities, improving our organizational means and skills and seizing arising possibilities, emboldened by the sanity of Marxist ideological and political savvy.

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**Marxism is a dynamic philosophy that searches for relations within and between wholes.**

snarls but its blindness to general conditions is sure to choke highways. It is a static philosophy validating what is but preventing any forward thinking. Out of sync with nature's and society's laws of motion, it is alien to the scientific objectivity and comprehensive scope planners need.

Marxism, on the other hand, is a dynamic philosophy. Based on a dialectical analysis of history, it searches for relations within and between wholes. In the words of Marxist philosopher Bertell Ollman, "It uncovers relations among what is, and what should be and what can be done about it all." It allows us to knit together into a comprehensive whole what pragmatist thinking and analysis "con-sign to separate mental compartments."

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## Socialists and Cities: *Disurbanists, Garden Cities and City Planning*

By Joan Roelofs

Socialist theory has had much to say about cities, especially if we consider the broad range of socialisms.

One version of socialist theory, the Marxist, became dominant while the others were consigned to the dustbin. However, out of compost and worse grow many healthy new plants.

One way to look at varieties of socialism is to place them on a continuum with, at one end, those that emphasize *outcomes* (e.g., utopian, communitarian, Fabian) and at the other end, those that emphasize *agency* (e.g., syndicalist, Marxist-Leninist).

### Utopian Communities

Marx and Engels labeled early nineteenth century socialist theorists like Henri Saint-Simon, Charles Fourier and Robert Owen as “utopian,” and this characterization has persisted, leading to dismissal, ridicule and general ignorance of their doctrines. Yet not only are these traditions rich in very sane

the type of mechanization that existed merely to produce cheap goods for export and high profits. They rejected the growing capitalist industrialization because it exploited workers and destroyed nature, aesthetic values, and community.

The utopians welcomed “appropriate” technology. Mass production techniques were deemed to destroy the quality of work life; craftsmanship, on the other hand, could provide satisfaction and provide abundance for all. Poverty would be conquered through the elimination of waste (including middlemen, capitalists, governments and various other parasites) and by collective consumption. Rotation in work and companionship would make necessary labor a pleasing experience. Fourier’s ideal diet—based on peas, beans, vegetables, fruit and small animals, including farmed fish—would eliminate the capital-, labor-, and land-intensive operations of growing wheat and raising cattle. There would be no need for chemicals, as soil fertility would be insured by composted manures and nitrogen released by growing legumes.

The decentralized communitarian settlements were to include all the positive attributes of cities without the isolation, extreme division of labor, filth and energy wasted in the useless or harmful activities that characterized contemporary urban life. Individuals would participate in a variety of tasks (based on personal preferences), and only those tasks necessary for a civilized existence. The culturally-based sexual division of labor would be ended, as provision for all needs would occur in a seamless manner. It has been said of Fourier that his vision “feminized” the world. Housework, cooking, gardening, loving, fooling around, child care, education, the arts and small craft enterprises were the major occupations in his society. Yet there was nothing austere or anti-intellectual about Fourier’s ideal. The two centerpieces of his educational system were to be gastronomy and opera, the latter because its creation and production required many human talents and skills, including management of complex enterprises.

Communitarian settlements such as the Oneida Community and Brook Farm in the United States embraced urban cultural forms such as theater and

scientific experimentation. Furthermore, they had many ecological advantages: collective consumption; avoidance of unnecessary consumption of non-renewable resources; and a permanent location, which required careful nurturing. Nevertheless, the US communitarian movement declined in part after the Civil War because it couldn’t produce goods as cheaply as assembly-line production. It didn’t matter that the communities internalized social services, health care, or stewardship of the land.

### Utopias and the Environment

William Morris’ description of an anarchist utopia, *News from Nowhere* (1890), written as a response to the “technocratic” *Looking Backward* (1888) of Edward Bellamy, was hardly an urban story. Nevertheless, it influenced British socialist thought and the city planning tradition. Morris made vivid the advantages of a steady state economy and the pleasures to be derived from useful work. All that was necessary for life could be produced in a leisurely manner. If creativity makes one human, he showed that it did not require massive projects. However, in *A Factory as It Might Be*, he allowed that “machines of the most ingenious and best-approved kinds will be used when necessary, but will be used simply to save human labor.” Human passion and body rhythms such as naptime would be liberated.

British socialism generally emphasized, perhaps more than other varieties, capitalism’s destruction of the environment, and the wasteful, unhealthy mass consumption it fostered, especially through advertising. Liberal reforms, beginning in the 1830s, created some restrictions on child labor in mines and factories. Yet the persistent misery of workers, including rural labor, and the shock created by the Irish famine, led many people (of all classes) to socialism. By mid-century, urban squalor in Great Britain contrasted starkly with the emerging Victorian splendor of crystal palaces and bourgeois prosperity. Detailed testimony can be found in two works by Friedrich Engels: *The Condition of the Working Classes in England* (1845) and *The Housing Question* (1872). Charles Booth’s surveys, published as *Life and Labor of the People in London* (1886-1903) shocked middle-class people out of complacency and recruited some to socialism.

Unlike capitalists, many socialists argued that “free trade” (enforced by imperialism) worsened British living standards by destroying its agricultural base, flooding the country with shoddy imports and deskilling native craftspeople. In addition, they assumed that their competitive advantage would

soon be lost as industrialism spread. Socialists and anarchists, such as Robert Blatchford (a leader of the Independent Labor Party) and Prince Peter Kropotkin, believed that Britain would soon be forced to produce its own food, and that this was both feasible and highly desirable. Thus, they rejected the role of the city as imperial capital.

In addition, British socialists disdained the fleshpots of cities, and created clubs to lure workers into the fresh air, bicycling through the countryside and/or making their own music. Nevertheless, the socialists were not *all* puritanical, for the movement included liberators of sexual desire, such as Edward Carpenter, a sandal maker, vegetarian, and gay, and a member of Morris’s Socialist League. The rejection of oppressive nineteenth century dress and the slavery to superfluous household goods were significant issues. Blatchford’s *Merrie England* (1899) satirizes the condition of the working-classes after a century of industrial revolution. He describes the cheap, degraded and ugly nature of food, dress and home, and admonishes:

Instead of making the most of your room you will persist in crowding your house with hideous and unnecessary furniture. Furniture is one of your household gods. You are a victim to your furniture, and your wife is a slave. Did it ever occur to you that your only use for the bulk of your household goods is to clean them?

### Garden Cities

Ebenezer Howard, author of *Garden Cities of Tomorrow* (1898), was a towering influence on city planning worldwide, but he was only a semi-socialist. He was a follower of Henry George (who proposed taxing away urban land value increases) and wished to combine the advantages of town and country, as well as those of capitalism and socialism. Howard proposed reconstructing blighted Britain by creating new self-contained cities. Community facilities and public transportation were to be within walking distance of all residences. Some housing was to have cooperative kitchens. Along the city’s perimeter would be the workplaces: factories, farms, asylums, etc., linked by a circular intra- and inter-city railway system. All land would be owned by the municipality, which would regulate privately-owned industries and retailers.

The design if not the economics of Howard’s vision was to become reality. Two privately-financed (Welwyn and Letchworth), and many post-World War II government-financed, “new towns” were built in Britain somewhat according to his model. Outside of Britain, Howard inspired the creation ⇒

**Owens and Fourier rejected the growing capitalist industrialization because it exploited workers and destroyed nature, aesthetic values, and community.**

ideas, they are the source of many concepts deemed original to Marxism. One might reasonably charge that the utopian socialists didn’t want cities at all, and that even Marxism is lukewarm about cities (in the *Communist Manifesto* Marx and Engels state that socialism would “end the separation between town and country”).

Robert Owen, a Scot, and Charles Fourier, a Frenchman, were communitarian theorists of the nineteenth century who believed that human settlements should be self-sustaining communities that combined agriculture and manufacturing and provided for the material, educational, recreational and social needs of their inhabitants. While Owen and Fourier did not reject technology, culture, or trade, they also, like the Luddites, did not embrace



of "Garden Cities," and planning generally, especially in France, the United States (e.g., Garden City and Forest Hills Gardens, New York) and pre-Soviet Russia. Lewis Mumford's decentralist bioregional vision of small communities reflects Howard's influence.

Today the entrance to Welwyn Garden City is a railroad station/shopping mall named The Howard Centre. Howard would enjoy its architecture of "Crystal Palace" genre, but the shops within are chain stores such as Marks and Spencer, and many of the town's residents commute to work, albeit by the handy railroad. During weekdays the lovely

*Decay of Capitalist Civilization* (1923), asserted that "under capitalism it is impossible to create an interest in production that is not also an interest in decay and destruction." They contrasted this situation with the independent producers of the pre-capitalist age, who "raised their own crops and made their wares largely for their own use." They found "domination of nature" of no net benefit to workers. As Georgists, they indicted capitalism for exploiting not only workers but also the land and its natural resources.

Beatrice Webb had studied the trade union and co-operative movements and appreciated their role in the protection of workers and consumers. She did not believe, however, that a socialist society could be based on these voluntary associations; only government would concern itself with future generations, or provide for public health, education and the disadvantaged. Consequently, the Webbs' *Constitution for a Socialist Commonwealth of Great Britain* (1920) proposed a bicameral parliament: one house was to protect the environment for the present and future generations. Nevertheless, they believed that municipal government would be most important in a socialist Britain by extending collective provision to all of life's necessities, including collective farms. The Webbs were so enamored with cities as the central unit in a future socialist society that they spent their honeymoon traveling around Britain collecting data for their massive study of local government. The Fabians are correctly identified with bureaucracy and expertise, but they did not promote large, faceless, unaccountable bureaucracies. Paid, full-time, elected city councils would oversee the socialized industries, in contrast to the slumlords and contractors then happily serving as "unpaid" local "representatives."

The Webbs imagined that all social classes would eventually see the superiority of socialism and a peaceful transition would occur. Remaining inequalities would be trivial as all would enjoy a national minimum of civilized existence. The plan was doomed for many reasons. In addition to capitalism's wiles, the Fabian cultural offerings were not very attractive to the working-class. Middle-class British socialists disseminated a version of "socialist realism" in an attempt to lure the working-class away from music halls, gambling, seaside postcards, traveling carnivals, and assorted kitsch. The socialist citizen was to enjoy the pleasures of social reform activism, bicycling, hiking, gardening, amateur dramatics, folk dancing, crafts, music making, rowing (no motor boats) and similar pursuits.

The *outcome-oriented* socialists saw capitalism as one among many causes of social problems; its

elimination would benefit a diverse group of *misérables*. Their task was to continue the radical thrust of the French Revolution by getting rid of archaic and rotten social institutions in order to promote freedom, equality and happiness, while reversing environmental degradation. The socialist city would restore community, and provide adequate time for friendship, culture, recreation and fine healthy dining.

### Socialism and US Cities

US socialists were among the *agency-oriented* socialists of the early 1900s. They were influenced by Marxism, Fabianism, Ebenezer Howard, and Edward Bellamy. Electoral victories in cities produced socialist mayors and city councils; the largest city to have a socialist government was Milwaukee. Although this phenomenon has been derided as "sewer socialism," these city governments were impressive in many ways. First, there was universal agreement that their governing was honest and efficient, in contrast to most US cities. Secondly, municipal ownership and operation of public services is no mean feat, as we might realize in an age of privatization. Low costs and customer satisfaction validate socialist enterprise generally. Third, these cities extended the range of what were considered to be public services. Perhaps the Fabian tactic of "creeping socialism" was at work. Milwaukee provided a municipal program of workers compensation and unemployment insurance, and dental and medical care for public schoolchildren. Such developments were threatening to capitalism, and urban reform was absorbed into the Progressive movement to become technocratic incrementalism under the auspices of John D. Rockefeller's University of Chicago. New electoral systems supposedly directed at corruption, such as at-large and nonpartisan elections, helped to disenfranchise local socialist parties.

The New Deal "new towns" for the unemployed, organized by the US government's Resettlement Administration, reflected socialist planning ideals. Perhaps the most famous of them, Jersey Homesteads, had many socialist residents as well. However, once the crisis was passed, the towns either disappeared or turned into ordinary suburbs. Paradoxically, today's co-housing communities (in Denmark and elsewhere), and even US gated communities, both almost entirely composed of middle-class people, embody some of the communitarian ideal.

Other notable attempts at socialist (or communist) cities in the capitalist world are post-World War II Bologna, Italy, and Porto Alegre, Brazil.

Contemporary social democratic city planning in Sweden, Denmark, Finland, and the Netherlands provides other models, with significant ecological as well as social goals.

### Soviet Cities and the Disurbanists

Is there an ideal Marxist city? The early, utopian phase of the Russian Revolution produced two urban models, both intended to end the separation of town and country. Soviet planners of the 1920s were influenced by theories of energy economics, biotic communities, modern architecture, Charles Fourier, and Ebenezer Howard. The prospect of constructing a new civilization stirred the imaginations of visionaries throughout the world. Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright created designs for the young Soviet Union.

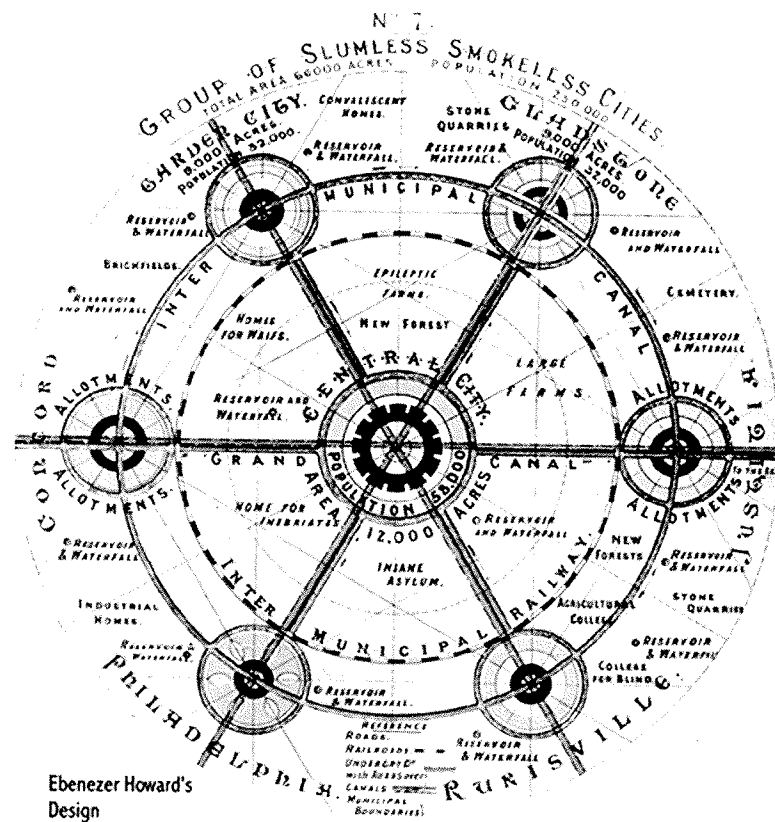
One Soviet group, the *disurbanists*, believed it desirable to abolish traditional cities forthwith, and distribute population throughout the country in agro-industrial communal centers. Moisei Ginzburg proposed a Green City to decentralize Moscow. The disurbanists differed from the nineteenth century

**New electoral systems supposedly directed at corruption helped to disenfranchise local socialist parties.**

utopians in their enthusiasm for industrial technology in both manufacturing and agriculture; they embraced automobiles and tractors. There would, however, be much collective consumption. People might live in small cottages, and central facilities would be used for dining and recreation.

The *urbanists*, inspired by modernist architecture and Le Corbusier, proposed new cities of 50,000 people. Industrial workers and farmers would live in high-rise housing and have short commutes on public transportation. Whatever their spatial orientation, the Soviet planners agreed that communal households would replace families, to free women from domestic slavery, and to provide more workers for the public sector. Some thought this should occur gradually, so that small kitchens shared by families might co-exist with the communal dining rooms, and small mechanical washing machines would be available to wash underwear (maybe because the planners knew that the laundries always lost socks!). Sooner or later, marriage would be abolished and children raised collectively.

This intense collectivization was intended to be liberating. In N.A. Miliutin's *Sotsgorod: The* ⇒



Ebenezer Howard's famous diagram of the Garden City.

streets are deserted. During a 1999 visit I saw few adult pedestrians, but spied a truck delivering internet-ordered frozen groceries. Howard's vision did not take into account the vast changes that automobiles and two-career families were to produce. Currently, many urbanists in Britain consider the Garden City idea just another form of sprawl.

The Fabian socialists, in their early years, were concerned mainly with the maldistribution of wealth under capitalism, and many tolerated British imperialism. After World War I, they became more critical of the industrial process itself. Sidney and Beatrice Webb produced two great works. One, *The*



*Problem of Building Socialist Cities*, all adults were to inhabit an individual residential cell so that “the intimate relationships of people will become their own private affair independent of any direct property considerations.” The individual units have necessary equipment only to end man’s “enslavement by his possessions.” Bauhaus principles of built-ins and design for efficiency and hygiene were highly regarded by the Soviet avant-garde. Fresh air and natural daylight would prevail and:

“Every kind of cornice, fretwork, open shelf, etc. must be avoided as a source of dust and infection (contamination). . . . The same holds true for the various rags with which our inhabitants do so love to ‘prettify’ their dwelling, turning it into such a dusty accumulation of useless trash.”

The room would be used for sleeping and bathing, and also for study, conversations with friends, intellectual projects, etc. Books would be available by adapting the American system of organizing libraries, including interlibrary loan. “Every citizen should have the possibility of requesting for himself any book in the country. This system would cut down tremendously on the number of books which have to be printed and at the same time would allow anyone who wished to receive any book.” There would be collective provision for fun and games (including chess and billiards) although workout gyms were forbidden: people should exercise outdoors, and ice skate or ski in the winter. Culture palaces, cafés, and sports facilities (e.g., tennis, volleyball) would be available in nearby parks, along with sailing, rowing and motor boats [!].

While the elaborate structures with individual rooms were not constructed, Le Corbusier-style apartment blocks incorporating services and shops, situated in parks, public transportation, and “culture palaces” were common in Soviet cities. In the 1960s, a communal apartment building was “purpose built,” designed by architect Nathan Osterman. Although it had self-selected residents, it was rumored that they did not live happily ever after.

Contemporary Marxist theorists, such as Manuel Castells, David Harvey, and Henri Lefebvre, mostly critique the capitalist city but do not provide concrete suggestions for building a truly socialist city. Some who believe that socialist cities must be the product of working-class struggles see their germ in the *barrios* (villages) created by displaced peasants inside of Mexico City and other cities of the South. There the “informal economy” includes co-operatives engaged in major appliance repair and the recycling of junk into useful objects. One could posit a socialist aim in producing pseudo brand name items, which retain not only the use value, but also the snob value, while eliminating long supply lines and the super-profits of remote corporations.

What do theory and history suggest about the possibility of a socialist (and ecological) city—even if everyone were willing? The answer depends on one’s concepts of socialism and ecology. From a personal perspective, the prospects look smoggy. Cities have been parasitic on the countryside and/or the less developed (less denatured) nations. While social integration can be achieved within cities, judging by the urban experience of the Global South, they remain functionally segregated, bastions of technocratic rationality, reinforcing the alienating division of labor. There may also be intractable inequalities among cities, leading to a permanent class of those from the “boondocks.” Self-sufficiency on the communitarian or garden city plan, or a place where one, without too much commuting, could “hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening and criticize after dinner” (Karl Marx, *The German Ideology*) might look much more like the decentralized settlements of the utopians.

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More details on page 37 of this issue of Progressive Planning.

## No Es Fácil (It’s Not Easy): The Dilemmas of Cuban Housing and Urban Policies

By Jill Hamberg

What does revolutionary Cuba’s experience with housing and urban policies offer for progressive planners in developed or developing countries? Lots of dilemmas. It’s not always easy, or *no es fácil*—an often-used expression during Cuba’s economic crisis of the 1990s—to balance competing principles and beliefs about broad objectives, such as egalitarian and equitable development, with specific housing-related goals.

### MYTHS ABOUT CUBAN HOUSING AND URBAN POLICIES

To begin with, let’s look at several myths and stereotypes about Cuban housing and urban policies.

**Myth:** The government nationalized all housing and continues to own it.

**Reality:** In the years soon after the revolution, tenants were made into homeowners, and today the vast majority of Cuban households own the place where they live.

**Myth:** The government builds all housing.

**Reality:** Two-thirds to three-quarters of all units created since the revolution were “self-built,” not state-built. “Created units” include subdivisions of, or additions to, existing units as well as conversions from non-residential uses.

**Myth:** The government controls urban growth by strictly regulating where people live by an internal passport system.

**Reality:** People are free to live where they want, except for some limited regulation on migration to and within Havana in the last few years based on housing availability. Urban development is largely fostered through economic and other policies.

**Myth:** Cuba has pursued a largely pro-rural and anti-urban strategy.

**Reality:** Except for some anti-urban rhetoric in the late 1960s, policy has been decidedly pro-urban.

### Major Policies from 1959 to 1990

In the years right after the revolution, evictions were halted, most rents were reduced, and urban land speculation was largely controlled. Through the 1960 Urban Reform Law two things happened. First, tenants became homeowners by amortizing the purchase price of their units through rents. Landlords were able to keep their own and one sec-

ond home; all but the wealthiest received full compensation and pensions. Secondly, future state-built housing would be offered as long-term “leaseholding,” with rents set at 10 percent of family income (although private renting was prohibited). In addition, vacant units confiscated from emigrants were distributed to people in need, and the Cuban lottery was transformed into a short-lived vehicle for financing new housing. The largest and worst shantytowns were cleared and replaced with new communities. Finally, rural areas received assistance, including the first of what would later become over 400 new rural towns.

Urban and regional planning was designed to: Promote balanced regional growth by de-emphasizing Havana and directing resources to other areas, including specific growth poles, as part of a comprehensive development strategy; Diminish urban-rural differences by improving living conditions in the countryside and concentrating the rural population in small settlements; Foster the development of a settlement network with a hierarchy of urban and rural settlements of different sizes and functions; and Ensure rational land use in towns and cities through comprehensive urban planning.

This strategy was largely successful. Havana, which had one-fifth of the country’s population in 1959, continued to grow, but at a much slower rate. Most development occurred in provincial capitals and smaller cities. Rural areas were slowly “urbanized.” But there were also unintended consequences. The relative neglect of Havana led to building deterioration and eventually collapses. In the absence of functioning land values and with relatively plentiful and cheap fuel until the early 1990s, major new industries, institutions and housing located on the outskirts of urban areas, preserving existing downtowns but leading to a form of “socialist sprawl.”

The 1984 (and 1988) Housing Laws converted leaseholders into homeowners, legalized most illegal and ambiguous tenure situations of self-builders and others, permitted private rentals, fostered self-building by both individuals and newly permitted housing cooperatives (which never got off the ground) and allowed free-market buying and selling of land and housing (which was quickly restricted). These laws also updated existing legislation reg- ➔



ulating housing management, succession, house swaps, maintenance, repair and evictions, and it established the National Housing Institute.

### The Status of Housing in 1990

When Cuba's economic crisis hit in the early 1990s, housing was its most significant unmet need. Nearly 85 percent of Cubans were homeowners, although with some limitations on rights of ownership. They could bequeath and exchange their units, but sell only under limited circumstances, and they could rent out rooms at free-market rents. After years of intentional neglect of Havana, the late 1980s witnessed a big upsurge in building in the capital.

Housing conditions had improved significantly since 1959 and, compared with the rest of Latin America, were not that bad. But Cuba still had shantytowns, both new ones and expanding pre-revolutionary ones. Despite some rehabilitation, most

address the crisis were successful in reviving the economy, but today it is still not back to 1989 levels. These measures included a cautious expansion of self-employment; the growth of foreign investment through joint ventures, including real estate; the legalization of dollars which created a dual currency situation; and some decentralization in public administration through the creation of the "Peoples Councils" (*Consejos Populares*) [see article on page 4]. Bicycles became the most common way to compensate for the drastic drop in bus service. The crisis itself and some of the policies designed to address it led to growing inequality among Cubans.

Housing production largely ground to a halt as crucial inputs disappeared. But new non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and public agencies started experimenting with appropriate technology, and soon construction picked up again. The following covers major policies in the 1990s and early 2000s, highlighting some of the dilemmas and debates.

### New State-Built Construction

For the first decades after the Cuban revolution, the Construction Ministry built most housing, but it was given much lower priority than economic development and community facilities. Prefabricated and semi-prefabricated building was emphasized because it was thought to be faster. Four- and five-story structures and occasional high-rises in larger cities were given priority in an often unsuccessful attempt to increase density and preserve agricultural land. In most cities, new housing was built in outlying vacant areas, with some inner city infill starting in the 1980s.

Construction labor shortages, especially in Havana, led in 1970 to the creation of the *microbrigades*, which in their original incarnation consisted of thirty-three employees from the same workplace who built housing for their fellow workers. Apartments were allocated by worker's assemblies to those with the greatest housing need and "merit." Although organized by public agencies, the microbrigades represented a unique form of "collective self-help." Building volunteers continued to receive their regular salaries, but they and others in the workplace worked longer hours than usual. This "sweat equity" was reflected in lower rents.

But aside from problems of quality, microbrigades presented several dilemmas. The right to form microbrigades until the mid-1980s was restricted to key economic sectors, leaving people with low priority jobs with few ways to aspire to a state-built unit. It allowed some families to "undouble," but had little effect on existing slums, which continued to deteriorate. Although not all units were allocated to

those who actually participated in building, it was generally understood that those with the greatest need would volunteer and be given first dibs on apartments. Because housing developments were in outlying areas, the journey to work often increased substantially. And did it make sense to have doctors and teachers spending several years as low-skilled construction workers when their professional expertise was desperately needed? By the early 1980s, microbrigades were largely limited to Havana and building lagged.

In the late 1980s urban building boom, new variations on the microbrigades were initiated. One consisted of brigades (called *social microbrigades*) of community residents who built infill structures or rehabilitated slums in their own neighborhoods. Members were given leave from their regular jobs, but continued to receive the same salary. Another was workplace-based brigades—made of a few workers each from different workplaces—that built infill housing closer to their workplaces. And finally, there were brigades of residents of homeless shelters. But housing brigade members were often pulled off housing jobs to help state brigades complete higher priority community facilities, leaving thousands of units under construction when the Special Period began, and many still haven't been finished.

Despite an impressive number of units built, there were problems with housing programs. Quality suffered from unskilled (microbrigade) or unmotivated (Construction Ministry) labor. Materials shortages were exacerbated by endless delays in delivery, inadequate storage and occasional theft, which in turn stretched out the construction process interminably. In some cases, completed units remained unoccupied because electric, water or sewer hookups were delayed. In response, the agriculture, sugar, defense and interior ministries started to build housing for their own workers and small farmers in the 1980s, and by 2000, the Construction Ministry was down to building only about a quarter of all new publicly created units—and that included microbrigade units.

### Appropriate Technology

In response to severe materials shortages, a Cuban version of appropriate technology, called *bajo consumo* (low-energy consumption), was developed. This minimized the use of imported materials or materials that required the use of imported energy resources (e.g., cement, metal, transportation of materials, cranes) or scarce materials like wood. Alternatives included the use of local materials (such as clay bricks, stone walls); soil cement

blocks; bricks and roof tiles; wood substitutes (e.g., bamboo, by-products of sugar, rice); vaulted roofs; and the on-site manufacture of elements. In addition, several prefab systems were adapted to use less cement, metal, etc.

Appropriate technology is hotly debated among Cuban architects and planners. Since most units are one or two stories, some argue that the low density will increase infrastructure and transportation costs. There is also concern among some about the quality and durability of *bajo consumo* technologies. Indeed, it is hardly used in Havana, but widespread elsewhere.

### Design and Site Planning

The building design and site planning of new developments have also been subject to stiff criticism from Cuban planners. Monotonous site plans using enormous superblocks, with excessive unlandscaped land between buildings and almost identical building types, unwittingly contributed to a negative image of what "socialist" planning means. After some late-1980s developments around Havana—most notably Las Arboledas and Villa Panamericana—demonstrated that attractive designs could be achieved even with semi-prefabricated elements, by the 1990s a sort of Cuban New Urbanism emerged that featured buildings facing the street, more varied designs, a better relationship to existing terrain and more diverse facades and building shapes. For instance, these elements are present in the eastern provincial capital of Bayamo, where adjoining lots are assigned to different agencies that each design their own buildings within general guidelines. Infill buildings have even been added to existing superblocks. And after years of a one-size-fits-all approach—which was seen as egalitarian—projects that address the needs of the elderly and disabled are underway.

The mid-1990s climate of experimentation led to an innovative combination of existing approaches and new elements in a locally generated program in the eastern province of Las Tunas. It has since spread to other provinces in eastern Cuba and was being considered for national implementation before a series of hurricanes and tropical storms in the early 2000s destroyed or damaged tens of thousands of units that are still getting top priority for repair or replacement. The People's Housing Construction Movement (*Movimiento Popular de la Construcción de Viviendas - MPCV*) focuses on the use of local materials and innovative technologies. There is some self-building for unskilled work (leading to discounts in sales price to residents) while skilled labor comes from the local construction departments of several ministries. Materials are distributed to work sites when they are ⇨

***After years of intentional neglect of Havana, the late 1980s witnessed a big upsurge in building in the capital.***

inner city slums remained. And an increasing number of families lived in homeless shelters or in condemned—but still occupied—dwellings. In rural areas, there had been a sharp drop in the number of thatched roof huts (*bohíos*) and substantial improvement in basic services, but there were still some units with dirt floors and lacking infrastructure.

Housing was free or very cheap for most households. Credit was available for part of the cost of self-building and repairs. The purchase price of new state-built units was heavily subsidized, and buyers were given low-interest fifteen-year loans, but such heavy subsidies, as well as severe materials shortages, meant that the government built less housing, and usually allocated it to high priority areas and workers in key industries. Moreover, self-building and repairs were potentially quite expensive if done on one's own. Private renting, although not widespread among Cubans, could also be costly.

### The 1990s Crisis and Its Impact on Housing

By 1993 the economic crisis—known in Cuba as the "Special Period"—resulted in the contraction of the economy by one-third and the reduction of imports by 75 percent. Food, transportation, employment and energy shortages rapidly replaced housing as the most pressing issues. Measures to

ready to be used—a Cuban version of “just-in-time” production. Construction is community-based rather than workplace-based. All new units replace existing ones, and there is involvement and assistance from other members of the community. Building is incremental, with no pre-set completion deadlines to meet (which often leads to poor quality); residents can live in the new units even if they are not totally completed. So far the focus has been on new single-family construction in rural settlements, houses near main roads and in outlying areas of towns and cities. Each participating ministry is assigned a town, neighborhood or stretch of highway to assist (a sort of Cuban “adopt-a-highway” program).

### Self-Building

Some two-thirds to three-quarters of all housing units in Cuba are created through the efforts of residents, although official figures on completions are somewhat lower. Officially recognized self-building continued during the Special Period, often with alternative technologies. But work on many units or additions was halted or severely slowed because of lack of materials at reasonable prices and the need to devote family income to

**Some two-thirds to three-quarters of all housing units in Cuba are created through the efforts of residents.**

essentials such as food. Illegal construction of different sorts (including remodeling, shantytowns, additions and subdivisions) continued and possibly increased because of lax building and zoning enforcement.

Habitat-Cuba, a housing-related NGO that began in the early 1990s, initiated the Community Architect Program in Holguin province using the participatory design methodology of Argentine architect Rodolfo Livingston for working with residents who are building or remodeling their own units. The program spread throughout the country and was officially transferred to the National Housing Institute (INV) in 2000. The method was also used for participatory planning at the block and subdivision level. However, by the early 2000s, community architects started devoting less time to design because of new self-building restrictions and more time on documents legalizing self-building and appraisals for exchanges and inheritance.

New regulations issued in fall 2000 more strictly regulated self-building and imposed higher fines

and other penalties for violations. These mostly responded to overbuilding by the “new rich” with dubious sources of income and materials, and to disorderly illegal building, such as shantytowns. The new regulations more tightly control self-building by requiring that the right to buy subsidized materials for construction and repair be determined by community-based commissions. Priority is given to emergency repairs and completing units already started. Building permits are conditioned on demonstrating legal access to sufficient materials to complete a project. The net effect has been that officially programmed new self-building was set at 10 percent of its 2000 level. There has been considerable debate on many aspects of the regulations among architects, planners and officials in charge of implementing them.

### Upgrading Versus Shantytown Clearance

Despite the difficulties of the Special Period, there has been some new emphasis on maintenance, repair and rehabilitation of multi-family buildings. For instance, *Plan Cayo Hueso* was a major effort in the Havana neighborhood of Cayo Hueso. Government ministries were assigned to repair facades and do structural work, while residents were sold materials for interiors. The method, which had varying degrees of success, expanded to other Havana neighborhoods and other selected cities around the island, and served as a partial model for the MPCV in Las Tunas.

The previous policy regarding shantytowns was clearance, either when relocation housing became available elsewhere or by new construction on-site. Because there were few resources, however, little was done, and residents were even discouraged from improving their dwellings since they were eventually slated for elimination. During the 1990s, new and existing shantytowns grew. Policy shifted to clearing only those shantytowns or individual houses in dangerous or inappropriate locations (e.g., in flood plains or under power lines). The rest are to be improved.

The main form of inner city slums consists of rooms with shared cooking and sanitary services. By the late 1990s projects for rehabilitation or replacement were under way. Individual buildings were mostly targeted, but sometimes also in conjunction with surrounding buildings, or the block or neighborhood, especially when there are resources available from foreign NGOs or from cross-subsidies from historic districts. Aside from the perennial materials shortages, the major barrier to more aggressive rehabilitation is the lack of temporary or permanent relocation units.

### Historic Preservation

Since the mid-1990s there has been a major increase in the rate of preservation and restoration of landmarked buildings and districts, especially in Old Havana. It has been facilitated by a mid-1990s law establishing the role of the Historian's Office of the cities of Havana, Santiago, Camaguey and Trinidad as a developer with the right to tax all entities in the historic areas. Havana's Historian's Office is also allowed to run retail, hotel and construction businesses. Most of the taxes (and profits in the case of Havana) do not get into the general budget. They are used for further restoration and as a cross-subsidy to rehabilitate deteriorated but less historic nearby areas.

Displacement and relocation are also issues in historic preservation. Cuban architects and planners also debate whether only these four areas should have a local dedicated revenue source when so many other areas—historic or otherwise—have great needs.

### Foreign Real Estate Investment

Most real estate joint ventures have been in hotels, other tourist facilities, offices and apartments. Almost all are in Havana and other tourist areas. Apartments were originally for sale only to foreigners (e.g., diplomats, business people, snowbirds), but since 2000, those units without sale contracts were able to be rented.

There have been many drafts of a law governing real estate investment and ownership rights, but still no final version presented to the Cuban parlia-

ment. There are numerous issues to be resolved. For instance, if buyers obtain a foreign loan or mortgage, what happens if they default? What should the ownership rights be regarding sales and inheritance? What happens if a foreigner marries a Cuban or wants to sell to a Cuban? What about a Cuban exile who becomes a Venezuelan citizen and buys an apartment? What would be the relationship between laws and regulations governing housing for Cubans (the 1988 housing law and subsequent amendments and regulations) and those regulating foreigners buying or renting from joint ventures? What is the demand for these units? Is it saturated yet? How are land values to be set?

In addition to these legal issues, some Cuban architects and planners have criticized foreign real estate investments for poor design, high density and questionable zoning decisions. They are also concerned about the geographic impact of investment: most housing and offices are concentrated in one or two areas in Havana. And, of course, there have been debates about building resources going to real estate development for foreigners so that Cuba can earn hard currency, rather than affordable housing for Cubans. As of 2001, the policy was to finish units under construction, but there may not be new starts.

The period since 1990 has been one of both austerity and creativity in housing policy. It hasn't been easy. And the good news is that as the economy picks up, housing is once again one of Cuba's most pressing problems.

*Jill Hamberg teaches at Empire State College in New York City and has written extensively about Cuban housing policy.*

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## Building Alternative Communities: A Middle Path for Urban Planners and Progressives

By Derek T. Chisholm

One way to achieve radical, progressive goals is for people to live in accordance with their principles. Urban "lifestyle" anarchists, for example, create off-the-grid cooperatives. Lifestyle choices, however, while very possible to implement, have a minimal impact on society.

Another way to achieve radical, progressive goals is through social revolution. But while a transformative revolution in the United States would have a tremendous impact, it is not very likely given present-day conditions. So though it might be clear that true change requires revolution, it is not so clear how we can "work toward" a revolution.

One answer may lie in a concept known to social ecologists as "alternative institutions." These institutions can help bridge the gap between the society of today and the new society envisioned by the diverse groups collectively known as progressives. Building alternative institutions can be a middle path that progressives and urban planners can follow.

It is clearly not enough for an individual household to attain independence in terms of energy and food production. It is clearly not enough for an individual household to participate in democratically operated institutions such as cooperative buying clubs. Furthermore, it is insufficient to participate on the one hand in the current culture of gigantism and consumerism, while covertly organizing a revolution with the miniscule handful of people sufficiently disenfranchised and visionary enough to entertain *losing it all*. The middle path is one along which a visionary network of people organize to develop alternative institutions that have the necessary magnitude to constitute a leap forward.

### Communities as Laboratories

In *The Limits of the City*, Murray Bookchin writes: "City planning finds its validation in the intuitive recognition that a burgeoning market society can not be trusted to produce spontaneously a habitable, sanitary or even efficient city, much less a beautiful one." While he is right that "the market" cannot be trusted to produce a sustainable and just society, it is also true that even well-intentioned

city planners cannot produce such a society. Planners are answerable to elected bodies that are beholden to professional developers and constrained by the social and economic motives of modern capitalism.

To a limited degree, however, the market *is able to* produce communities that embody progressive principles. The proposals for these communities, however, cannot come from government planning staffs or from conventional profit-oriented tract developers. The responsibility for envisioning, planning, proposing and building these communities falls to the progressives.

Traditional Marxist theory focuses heavily on economic analysis and the need to reappropriate the means and modes of production. While it is important to maintain a focus on the production side of economics, there is also a need for revolutionary thinking about the consumption side. Chief among our consumption choices is housing. But to understand housing progressives have to become familiar with the whole community development process, something most activists are unfamiliar with. This requires going beyond the mainstays of modern activism—protesting, promoting, critiquing, and theorizing. While "lifestyle" progressives have learned many valuable lessons about solar power, building techniques and group decision-making, to build an entire community requires learning new lessons about real estate law, long-term financing, civil engineering and transportation planning.

In the beginning, alternative communities may have modest goals. Even if residents live "normal" lives, the neighborhood can still be designed with heightened ecological consideration, minimal paved spaces and other amenities made popular in the New Urbanist movement. Because of market constraints, these New Urbanist niceties seldom go beyond being upper-income subdivisions of large houses with antiquated architectural details. From the successes of smaller communities, progressives can learn what is needed to reach the next level for alternative institutions. At this level there should be enough residents (citizens) and land to include cooperative markets, car-free villages, limited

autonomous justice systems, property-sharing agreements and independent energy production. Progressives can then begin to proclaim "it is possible." Without taking this next step, there is no "laboratory" for the exploration of revolutionary issues that are larger than personal choice and more applicable than general economic theory.

Activism is often defined, even within activist communities, by what is opposed rather than what is proposed as an alternative. Progressives, therefore, often best know how to articulate what the future should *not* be, but when questioned about a vision of the next society, theories of progressives often devolve into generalizations. Responses to questions about alternatives may consist of well-articulated answers about new kinds of social *relations*, but not social *systems*. Rarely do progressive alternatives deal with systems—of justice, property rights, sewage or other vital urban systems. Yet until there are laboratories for the study of these matters, it will be very difficult for any progressive movement to engage in more than social criticism. Developing and living in alternative institutions, the laboratories of social ecology, will begin a new phase of movement toward a revolutionary new society.

### Building New Villages

Murray Bookchin, among others, has insightfully dissected the constrained parameters within which government-sponsored urban planning can occur.

Rarely could city planning transcend the destructive social conditions to which it was a response. Furthermore the overwhelming pragmatic mentality of bourgeois society muted city planning's visionary outlook; one had to deal with the "facts of life" to get anything done, not with "utopian schemes."

Government planning has been shackled by the relentless paradigm of "market needs," as if every trend and characteristic of our society is the reasoned result of an informed body of consumers. On the contrary, this same "market" has developed into an inequitable mechanism for providing an excessive supply of products with which consumers are deeply dissatisfied. Left with no true alternatives, the consumer chooses from the lot provided—e.g., uninspired tract housing in sterilized subdivisions devoid of trees, markets and public gathering space. This same "progressive" consumer must then drive to hike where the trees are and to shop where the shops are, and must go online to find *virtual* public spaces for civil discourse.

Twenty years ago, local planners and elected officials may not have been very open to development proposals that did not meet with the intent or the letter of local codes and planning policies. Developers who defied local codes were perceived as attempting to escape from their social obligations to provide affordable housing, open space, sidewalks or traffic impact fees. This perception has changed. In many places, government planners are eager to review and champion development applications that are not in compliance with local code because the code has not yet caught up with progressive planning ideals. For instance, in many zoning codes there are no provisions for mixing uses in order to, for example, locate a small corner market in a residential area; for using alternative building materials; or for establishing cooperative housing arrangements.

### Role of Progressive Activists

Progressive activists should be able to speak with a modicum of authority about new, revolutionary social relations. This is only now possible because radical organizations have served as a laboratory for the testing of our principles of non-hierarchical

**Progressive activists should be able to speak with a modicum of authority about new, revolutionary social relations.**

relations. The development of alternative communities and systems will provide new laboratories for testing other principles. Otherwise, it will not be possible to formulate anything more than abstract theories of how communities should interact.

I hope this can be a call for activists to come together and start the long process of developing these alternative institutions. First steps will need to include visioning, laying organizational foundations, and educating oneself about highly technical, development issues. It will not be long until the next steps will include property acquisition and building projects. Years later, these "first villages" will be seen as the seeds from which the greater alternative institutions have sprouted, growing into the complex systems required to sustain our dreams.

*Derek Chisholm has worked in government planning offices and non-profit environmental organizations, and has been involved in grassroots activism for fourteen years. He lives in Portland and can be reached at [Dpfs@go.com](mailto:Dpfs@go.com).*

## Book Review: Andy Merrifield

### *Dialectical Urbanism: Social Struggles in the Capitalist City*

Review by Arturo Ignacio Sanchez

*Monthly Review Press, 2002.  
192 pp., paperback.*

Andy Merrifield is interested in constructing a modern Marxist politics of the city. To do this he moves beyond what he terms a "utopian alternative" and towards a "practical dystopian politics." This approach represents a shift in emphasis from the economic thrust of the mature Marx to the humanism of the "young Marx."

Merrifield addresses a range of contemporary critical debates that have emerged around such pivotal issues as: the tensions between globalization and place-based urban politics; the increasing importance of racial and ethnic difference and salience of identity politics; and the larger theoretical questions regarding what constitutes "truth claims" and progressive political activity. These issues and concerns, to one degree or another, have influenced the construction and direction of contemporary critical social theory. This is the case in both mainstream social sciences and Marxist thought, which has felt the brunt of the ongoing criticism levied against the modernist notion of progress. Merrifield is intent on constructing an approach to the contemporary city that moves beyond what he calls the "sacred shibboleths" of Marxism. He is interested in weaving into the Marxist fabric elements of contemporary critical social theory such as the notion and politics of difference.

This is clearly an ambitious project that, under the best of circumstances, could have been bogged down in convoluted theoretical arguments. The author nimbly maneuvers around this contentious minefield by structuring his argument around four urban case studies: Baltimore, Los Angeles, New York and Liverpool. In these case studies Merrifield addresses how the workings of the contemporary global economy have transformed a wide range of cities in different ways. He creatively uses these different cities as a backdrop for discussing how a host of generic issues—gentrification, the politics of race and ethnicity, spatial inequalities, homelessness—are embedded and molded by place-based historical circumstances. For example, the city of Baltimore is used to highlight how the built environment and social landscapes were contested, recycled and gentrified terrains during the shift

from industrial to finance capitalism. The iconic industrial city of Liverpool, on the other hand, is used to illustrate how the larger processes of globalization, deindustrialization and Third World migration triggered a politics of difference that revolved around the nexus of race, class and ethnicity. The city of Los Angeles is presented as a harbinger for the grassroots struggles around the growing income divide and the social movements for a living wage. Finally, New York is presented as a canvass for sketching the contradictions associated with economic growth, income concentration in a world-class corporate city and growing levels of pauperism and homelessness.

In taking this bottom-up and case-driven approach, Merrifield highlights how the historical differences associated with specific urban places affect the alignment of local political forces. He successfully illustrates how the top-down forces associated with globalization are modulated by the bottom-up experiences of everyday folks. And by highlighting the variable role of human agency in the local urban political process, Merrifield minimizes the primacy of economic determinism and presents a balanced and nuanced view of the city as a prospective and fertile site for progressive grassroots politics.

In taking this position the author tips his hat to those who argue that, despite footloose market imperatives that crisscross national boundaries, history, difference and the lived experiences associated with place still matter. This position undermines the much-touted conventional modernist wisdom—found on the left and the right of the ideological spectrum, and in the simplest terms stated as the drive towards the "McDonaldization" of society on a global scale—that globalization is inevitably leading to increasing levels of convergence and homogenization. Merrifield rejects this simplified form of economic determinism and adopts a more complex and dialectical approach that combines top-down economic forces with bottom-up local histories and place-based social processes. In other words, because of the wide range of historical differences, the spread of global market relations is a spatially unequal process that is played out in different ways in different places.

Merrifield is rightfully concerned that the contemporary political landscape fails to provide grassroots activists and progressives with a point of reference for organizing their dispersed social movements into a unified political front. Many are concerned that the politics of difference has resulted in the strategic weakening of progressive social movements. The standard argument is framed as follows: the rise of identity politics and the "militant particularism" of place have led to a range of self-righteous positions that tend to balkanize and weaken progressive mass-based politics. Merrifield is on fairly solid ground when he suggests that "fragmentation and particularity" have lead to single issue political activity that tends to minimize what he calls "transformative politics." In the words of the poet Yeats: "things fall apart; the center cannot hold."

In this moment of difference and fragmentation where does one find the political hook to galvanize the disparate social movements that dot the panorama without muting plurality and difference? In my reading of Merrifield's argument, this is the long-term strategic question that confronts the practical development of a contemporary Marxist politics of the city. For Merrifield the unifying hook

is class. He argues that commonalities must be established while affirming differences. Class provides a sense of unity in difference because the insecurities of the contemporary market economy impact the displaced industrial worker, the contingent white-collar employee, the devalued professional, the low-paid service worker, the single working mother, and the super-exploited undocumented immigrant laborer. While this cross section of workers may differ in terms of race, ethnicity and gender they are all nonetheless feeling the effects of the market-based global economy and the uncertainties of a future without a social safety net. In the current political-economic climate, the imperatives of socio-economic insecurity and downward class mobility may provide a short-term terrain for mobilizing and advancing a progressive political agenda. Yet in the final analysis these are largely nation-based strategies that fail to address the larger cross-border issues engendered by globalization and its discontents. But that's the subject of another book.

*Arturo Ignacio Sanchez teaches at the Pratt Institute Graduate Center for Planning & the Environment.*

## Books by PN members:

Walter Thabit (Foreword by Frances Fox Piven)

### *How East New York Became A Ghetto*

This book describes how the East New York ghetto was created, the way its housing was destroyed, how educational resources were withheld and municipal services cut back, and how difficult it has been to recover the community. It describes the overwhelming numbers living in extreme poverty and the continuing negative role of the police. Both minority and white communities will end up with a better understanding of how ghettos are created, and, hopefully, will be inspired to do something about it.

In 1960, East New York was 85 percent white. By the end of 1966, it was close to 80 percent black and Puerto Rican (now, well over 90 percent). The blacks and Puerto Ricans channeled into East New York were subjected to bank redlining, property neglect, block-busting and vicious exploitation. In the tenement "target" area, 100 of its 450 buildings were vacated, burnt out or demolished. Sanitation services declined, growing school needs were ignored, parks deteriorated. The police became brutal and aggressive. Adding 2,300 units of new and rehabilitated hous-

ing under a city program did not stem the tide of destruction. Foreclosed and burned out empty buildings dominated the landscape through the 1970s.

New housing construction began again in the early 1980s, led by the EBC (East Brooklyn Congregations) and other housing groups which created 2,500 new and rehabilitated units. Progress was also recorded in child care, health care and other services. And while violent crime has been reduced, the criminalization of black and Hispanic youth is still vigorously pursued by the police. Many other basic issues need to be addressed if East New York is to recover from the shock-and-awe of ghettoization.

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# PN UPDATES

## PN BIO: Xavier Morales

### *Sleepless in Phoenix*

I've been involved off and on with the PN since I was in graduate school working toward my PhD. Currently, I manage PN's list serve—I'm the one to blame when SPAM gets through to our list, or when a message to the list gets bounced back for some inexplicable reason.

The Planners Network is one of the few spaces where I feel that my personal, community and academic goals converge. I am interested in assisting community-based struggles for justice. Through my work at the Arizona Prevention Resource Center (APRC) and through my consulting and volunteer activities, I try to put systems into place that privilege the community's role in the discourse surrounding planning and development issues. However, I am finding that putting systems into place is often not enough; some groups also need ongoing technical assistance to help them make their voices louder and more technically compelling in the political and economic arenas in which they seek to engage.

Since 2000, I have been involved with the APRC, whose primary mission is to enable communities to increase their qualities of life by assisting them to engage in effective community-based prevention activities. As associate director, I basically do everything from administration to project development and management to managing our information technologies unit. In mid-June (2003) I unveiled a web-based GIS application that will allow non-technical users to analyze and report spatial data. I also am part of a development team that in 2002 was successful in drawing down over \$120 million in federal grant dollars to help improve Arizona communities. Obviously, my work at the APRC is what allows me to pay my bills. On the volunteer front, I sit on the board of a community development corporation that is building low-income housing in an economically depressed neighborhood in central Phoenix. I also continue

to work with environmental and economic justice organizations in the Southwest, including working with Dine Care and the Eastern Navajo Uranium Mineworkers to create a GIS that makes explicit the link between contemporary radiation-related illnesses with historical exposures in the Four Corners region. I have also been invited to sit on the Interagency Workgroup being formed to remediate and redevelop Kelly Air Force base in San Antonio, Texas. I also helped to organize and coordinate a group called *Los Vecinos de Northwest Tempe*. As a group, long-term Latino residents have been excluded from Tempe's development process and have been dislocated twice in their lifetimes in the name of redevelopment, and are now facing a third dislocation as the city hides behind the veil of New Urbanist principles. *Los Vecinos* has quickly become a major player in Tempe's latest neighborhood-unfriendly development initiatives. Lastly, I am collaborating with two colleagues from my Cornell days on the development of a pilot Regional GIS Center that will be directed by the community groups it seeks to serve. The goal of this center is to develop a community oriented web-GIS that makes sophisticated spatial analysis accessible to a non-technical audience.

It was strange for me to try to get all of what I do into this small space. As is the case for many PNers, until you have to write something like this, you don't realize why you are always so tired. But when you are in a community meeting (or a congressional hearing, for that matter) and from the back of the room you sit and observe as the members of the group that you worked with are standing alone presenting data that you helped them collect, analyze and report, it makes the bags under your eyes much more bearable. It is even more rewarding when you see them presenting data you did not help them collect and analyze because at that point, your job is done and it is time to seek out another group with which to collaborate.

Keep up the good fight! See you all on the listserv.

My email address is [xhm1@cornell.edu](mailto:xhm1@cornell.edu).

## PN Member Updates

PN'er *Patricia Swann* writes:

I recently received a nice letter from you guys bringing to my attention the fact that I hadn't yet renewed, and asking for feedback on why. Since you asked ...

I'm probably in the minority on this, but I liked the shorter format better. I am *totally* overwhelmed with things to read these days. The thing I liked about Planners Network before was that the information was easily digestible. Occasionally I had to put it in the "to be read" pile for one of the longer pieces, but most of the info was in the form of good interesting tidbits. Now it seems that ALL the articles are long, and very academic.

I still believe in the Planners Network principles, and I am amazed at what a few dedicated volunteers can accomplish. You can expect my check via snail mail soon. But I miss the shorter more inviting *Planners Network* quarterly.

*[The Editors Respond: We agree with you that when we shifted from a bi-monthly newsletter to a quarterly magazine almost two years ago, we did lose some of the networking functions that PN has always provided. The listserv and website partially fill the gap. We plan to start an on-line newsletter for members that will hopefully expand networking opportunities. See our call for email addresses below.]*

**Jason Gilliland** has been appointed assistant professor in the Urban Development Program of the Department of Geography at the University of Western Ontario. Formally trained in architecture, planning and geography, his research focuses on various (and interrelated) aspects of housing, urban development and public health in cities. In

an ongoing study of "live-work" spaces, Jason is investigating the morphological and social consequences associated with the transformation of non-residential zones and buildings into new uses. On another funded project, he is using a combination of geomatic techniques, visual surveys and focus group interviews to assess the "opportunity structures" for gambling in urban environments. Jason begins teaching at UWO in September 2003 and welcomes queries from conscientious students about graduate opportunities! For more information visit [www.uwo.ca/geog](http://www.uwo.ca/geog).

**Ute Lehrer** is moving on from being an assistant professor at the Department of Urban and Regional Planning, SUNY Buffalo, to the Department of Geography at Brock University, Canada. She will continue her engagement at SUNY Buffalo as an adjunct professor in the Geography Department. Currently, Lehrer is finishing up a book manuscript on large-scale projects, image production and globalization, as well as a research project on "urban cow disease," where she analyzes the political, economic and social aspects of the marketing strategies of cities. She is also involved in practices of contesting the dominant neoliberal agenda that has been mushrooming throughout many North American and European cities. On the teaching front, Lehrer also remains active. Her Fall 2003 studio course won the Western New York Section American Planning Association 2003 Award for Outstanding Student Project. Under her guidance, thirteen students with many different talents worked on the initial phase for developing a master plan in the Town of Porter.

PN Steering Committee member **Fernando Marti** will begin a three-year Rose Fellowship in August at Mission Housing Development Corporation in San Francisco, working as in-house architect and planner for the Mission Anti-Displacement Coalition's "People's Plan." He is ⇒

## SEND US YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS!!!

We'll be starting a monthly email newsletter for PN members to keep the networking going. The e-letter will have member updates, jobs, conferences and other announcements. Often PNers in the same city ask us how they can get in touch with other PNers, and the best we can do is send them names and addresses. Email is also the best way to let you know when your membership/subscription has to be renewed. If you don't want to receive the e-letter, we can keep you off that list, but please send us your email address so we can contact you when we need to.

Send to [pn@pratt.edu](mailto:pn@pratt.edu) and in the subject line put "subscribe to e-newsletter"

leaving Urban Ecology after two-and-a-half years on staff. Fernando is also on the initial board of the San Francisco Community Land Trust, which is on its way to becoming incorporated. This summer he will be co-teaching an affordable housing design studio at UC Berkeley, with Alex Salazar from Pyatok Architects.

**Joan Roelofs** is a PN member, board member of Cheshire Housing Trust in Keene, New Hampshire, and professor emerita of Political Science, Keene State College. She is the author of *Foundations and Public Policy: The Mask of Pluralism* (SUNY Press, 2003), and *Greening Cities: Building Just and Sustainable Communities* (Bootstrap Press, 1996). One of her interests is in the identification of non-toxic, durable, and easily maintainable building and interior materials for low-income housing, schools, public buildings, etc., and she welcomes correspondence from those with knowledge of these arcana. What follows is an update about her involvement with the renovation and restoration of the Hampshire House.

**THE RESTORATION OF HAMPSHIRE HOUSE:** PN member **Joan Roelofs** found a bright spot last winter. As a board member of the Cheshire Housing Trust she participated in the purchase, renovation, restoration, and reopening of the Hampshire House in Keene, New Hampshire. Built as a boarding house in 1914, it remains a single-room occupancy residence.

The house had eighteen single rooms, with shared bathrooms on each of the three floors and no kitchen facilities, plus a small apartment for a manager-owner. In the late 1960s, the last private owners, Alex and Shirley Martinez, purchased the property and continued for many years to operate it as a boarding house. By 2000, Mrs. Martinez was ill; Mr. Martinez was on in years and ready for retirement. The house, a handsome Dutch colonial with a slate roof, was in good structural condition, but needed major interior renovations, new mechanical systems, insulation, windows, etc., to meet current code requirements and to permit energy-efficient operation. Alex Martinez wanted the building to continue serving SRO tenants, for whom alternative accommodation in Keene was practically non-existent. He turned to Cheshire Housing Trust, a non-profit organization that provides affordable housing to low- and moderate-income residents.

The Trust was very happy to take on this challenging project, but there were many daunting hurdles. The building was historic, and any changes had to be sensitive to the original design as well as respect CHT's commitment to the use of sustainable building materials. The Keene City

Council was required to vote on the CDBG application, and in this frugal territory, the large cost of recreating eighteen rooms and an apartment was a shock to many. Furthermore, the house is on a street of elegant homes, one block from the Central Square, and there was fear that the locals might oppose the project. Fortunately, all the pieces came together, and funding was obtained from state (New Hampshire Home Finance Authority) and federal (CDBG) sources, and a mortgage from the private Bank of New Hampshire.



**Hampshire House**

Opening day in January 2003 unveiled a beautiful, functional, safe, and energy-efficient house. The slate roof and wooden siding remained; the interior wooden floors were refinished and prevail throughout except in the bathrooms and kitchens. Volunteers removed and replaced the interior wooden trim, rejuvenated the fine 1920s wooden furniture, made new seat cushions, and laid ceramic tile in the entranceways. The apartment was readied for a manager to be hired by CHT. The renovation included new wiring, plumbing, heating system, sprinkler and fire alarm, intercom, windows, walls, doors, insulation, and lighting fixtures. Kitchens were added on each floor for tenant use, along with energy efficient coin-operated laundry machines. A handicapped accessible room was created.

In January 2003 an Open House was held prior to the return of the residents. Many of those involved with the project were there, including contractors, the architect, carpenters, CHT board and staff, volunteers, Mayor, City Councilors, state and city officials, tenants (not identified as such), a new manager, and Mr. Martinez with his children and grandchild. This was such a happy occasion, especially in contrast to the terrible national and international climate of the time. Reports indicate that the returning tenants were excited about the upgrading and thankful for their CHT-funded temporary relocation.

Roelofs' contribution, in addition to her legal responsibilities as a board member, was to offer suggestions for environmentally preferable lighting and building materials.

Contacts: Joan.Roelofs@verizon.net; Cheshire Housing Trust: cht@monad.net.

PN'er **Neil Mayer** writes: Neil Mayer & Associates is a consulting firm undertaking projects in the fields of economic and community development and housing, focused on meeting the needs of low-income and working people. We do economic research, evaluation, strategy development, program and project TA, and project negotiation. Areas of specialization include economic sectors and clusters, industrial retention, employment linkage and training programs, comprehensive strategies for neighborhood revitalization, the work of CDCs and the process of building their capacity. For more information, contact Neil at Neil Mayer & Associates, 1309 Solano Avenue, Suite B, Albany, CA 94706, 510.528.1071, Fax: 510.528.1072, e-mail: NSMayer@earthlink.net.

From PN'er **Irwin Mussen**: Six years ago I retired from my role as principal planner of the Bay Area Air Quality Management District. Retirement was not motivated solely by the fact that the administration had become quite tired of my insisting on the assessment of the differential socio-economic impacts of air quality programs and/or absence of programs, especially impacts on low-income neighborhoods and communities of color (examples available on request). Even after I left the agency, I was able to assist in establishing a special advisory committee, made up of representatives of Bay Area organizations focused on social equity.

Since retiring I have become even more involved with a number of projects that address concerns of environmental justice and social equity. I am on the boards of directors of Resources for Community Development, a developer of low-income and special needs housing; the Social Equity Caucus of the Bay Area Alliance For Sustainable Communities; and Architects, Designers, and Planners for Social Responsibility (ADPSR), NorCal Chapter. I also am

involved with production of the ADPSR national publication, *NewVillage*.

My most intense and interesting work since "retiring" has been abroad. I am a consultant to Friends of the Earth Middle East, a transnational consortium of Jordanian, Israeli and Palestinian environmental NGOs. Yes, they are still working together through all of the turmoil, trying to address the problems of environmental protection and sustainable development. I see the effort as fulfillment of William James' challenge to engage in "the moral equivalent of war." My work involves drafting comprehensive conservation and development strategies for the Dead Sea basin and the Gulf of Aqaba.

Another most interesting project, with a focus on the bridge between social and environmental concerns, has been as a "volunteer expert" advisor to environmental NGOs in Armenia. Much of the population there is currently more impoverished than they were when Armenia was the most prosperous republic in the Soviet Union. As a consequence, widespread illegal deforestation, and even cutting down of urban trees, has been motivated by the need for inexpensive heating fuel during the frigid Caucasian winters. Another instance: it is believed that there is a widespread practice of government officials who supplement their meager salaries with bribes from developers, even when the developments severely degrade the environment. I must quote the Armenian Minister of the Environment, in response to a question I asked him during an interview about the relationship between the economy and the environment in that "Newly Independent State." The minister's poetic—but accurate—response became one of the themes of our workshops with NGOs: "Poverty is poison to the environment."

From new PN'er **Phillipe Y. Paul**: I am applying for the MUP program at Hunter College in NYC. Joined this (PN) list to keep abreast with this cyber community and for the learning experience I hope to get here and as well as using this list as resource bank. Please feel free to contact anytime. I look forward to this experience. Until then, Philippe <http://pynyc.blogspot.com>.

**HOLD  
THE  
DATE**

**The 2004 PN conference is tentatively set for New York on June 17-20, sponsored by Pratt Institute and Hunter College. Watch the pages of Progressive Planning and the PN website and listserve for more details.**



# RESOURCES

## Conferences and Exhibitions

**September 10-13, Boston, MA: Annual Conference of the National Network of Sector Partners.** Learn how sector initiatives are proving to be valuable tools for enhancing employment and economic development opportunities for low-income individuals, families and communities.

Information at: [www.nedlc.org/nnspevents.htm](http://www.nedlc.org/nnspevents.htm).

**September 10-14, Atlanta, GA: Rail-Volution 2003.** An in-depth exploration of how transit and land use can work hand-in-hand to shape the best and brightest of livable communities. Information at: [www.railvolution.com](http://www.railvolution.com).

**October 17, Los Angeles, CA: 2nd Annual Tools to Revitalize California Communities Conference.** The California Debt and Investment Advisory Commission presents a new series of educational courses on tools for tools financing community development and economic growth. Information at: [www.treasurer.ca.gov/cdiac/tools.htm](http://www.treasurer.ca.gov/cdiac/tools.htm).

**November 2-4, Cambridge, MA: Sustainable Communities.** Explore how various investment sectors stitch together to help build sustainable local economies. Educational panels and speakers will bring together angel investors, professional venture capitalists, venture philanthropists, foundations and others to examine the continuum of strategies for deploying risk capital to support social entrepreneurship at the community level. Information at: [www.investorscircle.net/Conference2003.html](http://www.investorscircle.net/Conference2003.html).

**November 5, Baltimore, MD: Re-inventing Community Development.** Connect with peers and pros in development, finance, philanthropy and government while learning about new strategies, techniques, and successes from around the country in community development. Information at: [www.enterprisefoundation.org/resources/Trainin](http://www.enterprisefoundation.org/resources/Trainin)

[gconf/conferences/networkConference/index.asp](http://gconf/conferences/networkConference/index.asp)

**November 6-9, Amherst, MA: Marxism and the World Stage.** The 5th International Conference organized by the journal *Rethinking Marxism*. Information at: [www2.uta.edu/arvidson/marxismandtheworldstage](http://www2.uta.edu/arvidson/marxismandtheworldstage).

**November 10-12, Cambridge, MA: International Conference on Public Participation and Information Technologies 2003.** Researchers and practitioners come together about using information technologies to support public participation and participatory democracy. Information at: [www.citidep.pt/icppit03](http://www.citidep.pt/icppit03).

**November 11-14, Los Angeles, CA: Business for Social Responsibility.** Explore how corporations can better achieve success in ways that respect ethical values, people, communities and the environment at one of largest forums for corporate social responsibility. Information at: [www.bsr.org/BSRServices/2003/index.cfm](http://www.bsr.org/BSRServices/2003/index.cfm).

**November 13-15, Syracuse, NY: National Community Land Trust Conference.** Learn how community land trusts can benefit communities in a variety of ways by choosing from among more than 75 technical workshops aimed at supporting and building capacity among community land trusts. Information at: [www.cltconference.org](http://www.cltconference.org).

**March 3-5, 2004, NYC, NY: 10th Annual Conference of the Community Development Venture Capital Alliance.** Discover how venture capital can create jobs, entrepreneurial capacity and wealth to advance the livelihoods of low-income people and the economies of distressed communities. Information at: [www.cdvc.org/events.html](http://www.cdvc.org/events.html).

## Publications

**America's Newcomers**, a report by the Lewis Mumford Center (Albany), summarizes what has been learned from Census 2000 about the 29 mil-

lion immigrants living in metropolitan regions throughout the United States. **People and Politics in America's Big Cities**, another report from the Mumford Center, explores the lag between changes in the racial and ethnic composition of cities and the representation of new groups in local politics. Both reports are available at: [mumford1.dyndns.org/cen2000/report.html](http://mumford1.dyndns.org/cen2000/report.html).

Writing from his jail cell, Richard M. Flood explores the radical political potential of the Almighty Latin Kings y Queens Nations—a so-called “street gang” active in at least 25 US states, as well as Puerto Rico, Mexico and Panama, with an estimated membership of 100,000 people. His essay, **Towards a Theory of Revolutionizing Street Nation**, can be found at Socialism and Democracy Online, [www.sdonline.org/33/richard\\_m\\_flood.htm](http://www.sdonline.org/33/richard_m_flood.htm).

**The City: From Self-Managed Movements to the Self-Managed City.** Tom Wetzel advocates for “an alliance—a people’s alliance—of unions, tenant groups and other mass organizations coming together around a multiplicity of concerns that affect city dwellers in their daily lives.” Read more at: [www.zmag.org/wetzelcity.htm](http://www.zmag.org/wetzelcity.htm).

**There was a reason they called it the Casino Economy. There's lots of losers.** Thomas W. Croft credits the late economist/urban planner Bennett Harrison with coming up with a perfect fit to describe the economy of the last decade. Find Croft's article at: [www.counterpunch.org/croft07032003.html](http://www.counterpunch.org/croft07032003.html).

**What's not available at the local Wal-Mart store: good jobs, good pay, and good benefits.** That's why the residents of one California community are trying to stop the retailing giant. Read about *The Great Wal-Mart Wars* at: [www.alternet.org/story.html?StoryID=16282](http://www.alternet.org/story.html?StoryID=16282).

**What happens when an oppressed community moves into a neighborhood where another oppressed community lives—and starts gentrifying it?** The documentary film *Flag Wars* is a poignant account of the politics and pain of gentrification. More information about the PBS film is available at: [www.pbs.org/pov/pov2003/flagwars/index.html](http://www.pbs.org/pov/pov2003/flagwars/index.html). A related online discussion about gentrification and inter-group tension can be found at *Shelterforce* magazine, [www.nhi.org/online/issues/129/POV.html](http://www.nhi.org/online/issues/129/POV.html).

**(Low) Power to the People: FM Mini-Stations**

**Put Neighborhoods on the Air.** Low-power FM radio stations owned by churches, charities, environmental groups, schools and governmental agencies are the Davids to corporate media Goliaths Clear Channel and Viacom. Visit the Ford Foundation Report online at: [www.fordfound.org/publications/ff\\_report/view\\_ff\\_report\\_detail.cfm?report\\_index=430](http://www.fordfound.org/publications/ff_report/view_ff_report_detail.cfm?report_index=430).

**After the dilapidation of urban modernism, what kinds of city and what forms of architecture await us?** In an article for the *New Left Review*, Frederic Jameson considers the work of Rem Koolhaas, the mega-developments of the Pearl River Delta and the conceptualization of “Junkspace,” at: [www.newleftreview.net/NLR25503.shtml](http://www.newleftreview.net/NLR25503.shtml).

## Announcements

**The American Planning Association's International Division** has launched its new website. The division welcomes American planners with an interest in planning practice and urban development in other countries, as well as planners living and working outside the US who want to maintain contact with the American planning community, and others concerned with urban development worldwide. Information at: [www.planning.org/international](http://www.planning.org/international).

**The Indigenous Planning Network** is proposing to form a new division of the APA to link planners of every tribe, native community and Indigenous group with each other through this division, utilizing newsletters, the internet, and conferences. Information at: [www.planning.org/divisions/ipn.htm](http://www.planning.org/divisions/ipn.htm). A background article on the Indigenous Planning Network can be found at the Planners Network website, [www.plannersnetwork.org/htm/pub/archives/139/jojola.htm](http://www.plannersnetwork.org/htm/pub/archives/139/jojola.htm).

**Propose an APA 2004 Conference Session.** Washington, DC will host the APA National Planning Conference April 24-28, 2004. The deadline for submitting a session proposal is September 1. Information at: [www.planning.org/2004conference/sessionproposal.htm](http://www.planning.org/2004conference/sessionproposal.htm).

**New York Municipal Art Society launches ebuletin.** Sign up for this free service and keep abreast on a range of issues pertaining to the waterfront, historic preservation, planning, zoning, as well as walking tours, boat tours, ➡



exhibitions and talks. Email [larana@mas.org](mailto:larana@mas.org) to sign up.

**Women & Environments International Magazine**, a Canadian magazine offering feminist perspectives on women's relations to their natural, built and social environments, is looking for submissions from north, south, aboriginal and minority communities around the world. Information on submitting articles to the upcoming special issue, "Cities for Women," can be found by selecting the "participate" menu option at: [www.weimag.com](http://www.weimag.com).

#### Internet Sites

**Ask Henry** is a search engine specializing in economics, politics and reform. [www.askhenry.com](http://www.askhenry.com)

**GreenMoney Journal** covers socially and environmentally responsible investing and business. [www.greenmoneyjournal.com](http://www.greenmoneyjournal.com)

**HUD's** website is now available in Spanish. [espanol.hud.gov/index.html](http://espanol.hud.gov/index.html)

**Inequality.org** aims to circulate information about the divide in income, wealth and health. [www.inequality.org](http://www.inequality.org)

The **Journal of Poverty** is a refereed journal designed to provide a focused outlet for discourse on poverty and inequality. [www.journalofpoverty.org](http://www.journalofpoverty.org)

**Mother Jones** is an independent nonprofit whose roots lie in a commitment to social justice implemented through investigative reporting. [www.motherjones.com](http://www.motherjones.com)

**Moving Ideas Network** is dedicated to explaining and popularizing complex policy ideas to a broader audience. [www.movingideas.org](http://www.movingideas.org)

**The Progress Report** is published daily by the Benjamin Banneker Center for Economic Justice and Progress. [www.progress.org](http://www.progress.org)

**Responsible Wealth** is a national network of businesspeople, investors and affluent Americans concerned about deepening economic inequality. [www.responsiblewealth.org](http://www.responsiblewealth.org)

**TravelMatters.org** is an online tool that discusses the link between sustainable surface transportation and climate change and provides emissions calculators for individuals and transit planners. [www.travelmatters.org](http://www.travelmatters.org)

**Working USA** is a journal focusing on labor and society. [www.workingusa.org](http://www.workingusa.org)

#### Resources on Progressive Urbanism, Marxism and Socialism

**Council of Georgist Organizations.** The Georgist philosophy advocates equal rights for all and special privileges for none. [www.progress.org/cgo](http://www.progress.org/cgo)

**Historical Materialism** is an interdisciplinary journal dedicated to exploring and developing the critical and explanatory potential of Marxist theory. "Unburdened by pre-1989 ideological baggage, *Historical Materialism* stands at the edge of a vibrant intellectual current, publishing a new generation of Marxist thinkers and scholars." [www.brill.nl/m\\_catalogue\\_sub6\\_id17936.htm](http://www.brill.nl/m_catalogue_sub6_id17936.htm)

**In These Times** is a national, biweekly magazine of news and opinion. [www.inthesetimes.com](http://www.inthesetimes.com)

**Jay's Leftist and "Progressive" Internet Resources Directory** is a web portal "for all who want to fight back and build together a better world." [www.neravt.com/left](http://www.neravt.com/left)

**Left Business Observer** is a monthly newsletter on economics and politics in the US and the world. [www.brill.nl/m\\_catalogue\\_sub6\\_id17936.htm](http://www.brill.nl/m_catalogue_sub6_id17936.htm)

**MARXMAIL** is a worldwide moderated forum for activists and scholars in the Marxist tradition. [www.marxmail.org](http://www.marxmail.org)

**Monthly Review.** Since 1949 the Review has "spoken for socialism and against US imperialism." [www.monthlyreview.org](http://www.monthlyreview.org)

**New Left Review** is a bi-monthly journal of the international Left. [www.newleftreview.net](http://www.newleftreview.net)

**Rethinking Marxism** is a journal of economics, culture and society. [www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/econ/RM\\_test.htm](http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/econ/RM_test.htm)

**Socialism and Democracy** is a semi-annual publication of articles, interviews, symposia and book reviews. [www.sdonline.org](http://www.sdonline.org)

**Z Magazine** is an independent monthly of critical thinking on political, cultural, social and economic life in the US. [www.zmag.org](http://www.zmag.org)

#### Books on Marxist Urbanism

Manuel Castells, *The Urban Question: A Marxist Approach* (MIT Press, 1979)

Frederick Engels, *Conditions of the Working Class in England* (Progress, 1973); *Socialism Utopian and Scientific* (International, 1994); *The Housing Question* (Progress, 1975)

David Harvey, *Social Justice and the City* (Arnold, 1973)

Henri Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution* (University of Minnesota Press, 2003)

#### Books on Socialist Cities

J. Beecher and R. Bienvenu, *The Utopian Vision of Charles Fourier* (Beacon, 1971)

Paul Conkin, *Tomorrow a New World* (Cornell U. Press, 1959) [Resettlement Administration]

R.A. French and E.E. Ian Hamilton (eds.) *The Socialist City* (Wiley, 1979)

M. Jaggi, R. Muller, S. Schmid, *Red Bologna* (Writers and Readers, 1977)

N.A. Miliutin. *Sotsgorod: The Problem of Building*

*Socialist Cities* (MIT Press, 1974)

William Morris, *A Factory as it Might Be* (Mushroom Bookshop, 1994)

Bruce M. Stave. *Socialism and the Cities* (Kennikat Press, 1975)

Dolores Hayden, *Seven American Utopias: The Architecture of Communitarian Socialism* (MIT, 1976)

#### Resources from the Planners Network Magazine Archives

Jonathan Michael Feldman and Jessica Gordon Nembhard, "Towards a New Community Development Paradigm: The Political and Economic Agenda," Special Section on Economic Cooperatives and Alternative Economics. September/December 2001.

William W. Goldsmith, "Participatory Budgeting In Porto Alegre, Brazil," March/April 2000.

#### Employment Opportunities

The **Housing & Community Development Network** in Trenton, New Jersey is looking for a Community Planning Specialist. Contact: Michael H. Barber at [mbarber@hcdnnj.org](mailto:mbarber@hcdnnj.org) or go to [www.hcdnnj.org](http://www.hcdnnj.org).

## Planners Network Student Campaign

Planners Network is launching a new student outreach campaign, and we invite all interested students to get involved. The Planners Network 2003-2004 Campus Drive aims to raise student awareness about progressive planning and provide support for students to organize local progressive planning events and initiatives.

The campaign hopes to demonstrate that, contrary to what students hear from professional planning associations and many professors, there is a viable alternative to the mainstream planning establishment and that planners can indeed be advocates for social change. We are therefore inviting students to join PN and establish local PN chapters, to better incorporate progressive principles and ideas into planning education and to create focal points for local planning action.

Students are encouraged to take action at both the local level and in the broader context of Planners Network, through a variety of activities:

- organizing panel discussions, workshops, design charettes, a speaker series, or other events;
- producing newsletters, articles, or other publications;

- working with faculty to develop a more progressive curriculum;
- engaging in critical projects related to local planning issues;
- contributing to the PN magazine, newsletter, list-serve, or website;
- planning a workshop or event for the June 2004 PN conference in New York City.

Students who join PN and form a local chapter will be eligible to receive financial support and other benefits. PN can provide up to \$500 per campus for student events, along with copies of *Planners Network* magazine, brochures, and student orientation materials. New chapters may also benefit from reduced PN membership deals, publicity on the PN website, and opportunities for networking with other progressive planning students and PN members.

Students at 14 universities have already started local organizing – for more information or to get in touch with a chapter near you, please email [pnstudents@yahoo.com](mailto:pnstudents@yahoo.com)!

Josh Lerner  
For Planners Network



# PN NEWS

By Ann Forsyth

The Planners Network Steering Committee and Planners Network Magazine editorial group met on July 26, 2003 in Brooklyn, New York. Also at the meeting were several current and former PN interns and members of the PN advisory committee.

Several decisions were made:

**Magazine:** The magazine will be renamed *Progressive Planning: The Magazine of Planners Network*. This is part of a strategy to increase subscriptions by firms, organizations, and libraries. We need someone to volunteer for the new role of development coordinator to take on the task of increasing subscriptions. The cost to subscribe to the magazine without becoming a member will be \$25 for individuals and \$50 for institutions.

In upcoming issues look for more regular columns. For example, Arturo Sanchez will be reviewing books—see the review of *Dialectical Urbanism* in this issue. While this review is of a single book, the more general pattern will be to briefly review a number of books of interest to PN readers including popular books on planning related issues.

Theme issues in 2003 and 2004 will include issues on physical activity, food, the 2004 Elections and convention cities of New York and Boston, and Canadian and U.S. urban policy. Overall, after some initial glitches, the operations of the magazine are running smoothly.

**E-newsletter:** With a quarterly magazine rather than a bi-monthly newsletter, there is a need for a way to distribute more time-sensitive information and news from members. Norma Rantisi, assisted by Eve Baron, has agreed to edit the new *PN E-newsletter* (PNEN). This will be a short edited newsletter emailed monthly to members. It will include material similar to the content of the Resources section of the magazine, including jobs. The Resources section of the magazine will be reduced in size. If you want a copy of the *PN E-newsletter*, email [pn@pratt.edu](mailto:pn@pratt.edu) and indicate “subscribe to E-newsletter” in the subject line.

**Campus campaign:** Through faculty and direct emails, Josh Lerner has contacted students from across North America interested in creating student chapters of PN and organizing students around progressive issues. There has been a great deal of positive interest. See details elsewhere in this issue.

**Web site:** Over the next year the web site will evolve to at least incorporate a searchable roster—protected with a password—and space for student postings and interactions.

**Conference:** Next year’s PN conference is tentatively set for New York on June 17-20, sponsored by Pratt Institute and Hunter College. The theme will be “Rebuilding Communities” and the focus will be on the U.S and elsewhere. Ayse Yonder and Tom Angotti will be forming a conference committee.

**Membership rates:** Membership rates will stay the same except for Canada where the rate for students, unemployed and those with incomes under \$40,000 will be reduced from \$40 Canadian to \$35 Canadian. This will make the amount listed in the brochure and the magazine the same.

**Steering committee:** Two steering committee members indicated that they wanted to step down: Barbara Rahder and Gwen Urey. Thanks to both for their service, particularly Barbara Rahder who has served as co-chair for several years. Norma Rantisi, editor of the new e-Newsletter, and Josh Lerner, main organizer of the campus membership drive, agreed to join the steering committees as interim members. Steering Committee member Richard Milgrom will become co-chair with Ayse Yonder who has agreed to continue. Full elections will be held at the PN conference in NY in 2004.

**Advisory committee:** Chester Hartman agreed to create a plan for an expanded PN advisory committee.

Those attending: Tom Angotti, Eve Baron, Ann Forsyth, Pat Gallo, Chester Hartman, Vanessa Irizarry, Josh Lerner, Fernando Marti, Eugene Patron, Norma Rantisi, Susan Robinson, Arturo Sanchez, Walter Thabit, Ayse Yonder.

# JOIN PLANNERS NETWORK

For over 25 years, Planners Network has been a voice for progressive professionals and activists concerned with urban planning and social justice. PN members in 38 states of the U.S. and 16 other countries receive this bimonthly publication, network online with PN-NET, and take part in the annual conference. PN also gives progressive ideas a voice in the mainstream planning profession by organizing sessions at annual conferences of the American Planning Association and American Collegiate Schools of Planning.

The PN Conference has been held annually each spring 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 Washington DC, East St. Louis IL, Brooklyn NY, Pomona CA, Lowell MA, Toronto, Canada, and Rochester, NY.

Join Planners Network and make a difference while sharing your ideas and enthusiasm with others!

All members must pay annual dues. The minimum dues for Planners Network members are as follows:

- \$25** Students and income under \$25,000
- \$25** Subscription to *Progressive Planning* only
- \$35** Income between \$25,000 and \$50,000
- \$50** Income over \$50,000, organizations and libraries
- \$100** Sustaining Members -- if you earn over \$50,000, won't you consider helping at this level?

Canadian members:  
See column at right.

Dues are deductible to the extent permitted by law.

## PN MEMBERS IN CANADA

Membership fees by Canadian members may be paid in Canadian funds:

- \$35 for students, unemployed, and those with incomes <\$40,000
- \$55 for those with incomes between \$40,000 and 80,000
- \$75 for those with incomes over \$80,000
- \$150 for sustaining members

Make cheques in Canadian funds payable to: “Planners Network” and send w/ membership form to:  
Barbara Rahder, Faculty of Environmental Studies  
York University  
Toronto, Ontario M3J 1P3

If interested in joining the PN Toronto listserv, include your email address with payment or send a message to Barbara Rahder at [<rahder@yorku.ca>](mailto:rahder@yorku.ca).

## PURCHASING A SINGLE ISSUE

*Progressive Planning* is a benefit of membership. If non-members wish to purchase a single issue of the magazine, please mail a check for \$10 or credit card information to Planners Network at 379 DeKalb Ave, Brooklyn, NY 11205. Please specify the issue and provide your email address or a phone number for queries.

Back issues of the newsletters are for sale at \$2 per copy. Contact the PN office at [pn@pratt.edu](mailto:pn@pratt.edu) to check for availability and for pricing of bulk orders.

Copies of the PN Reader are also available. The single issue price for the Reader is \$6 but there are discounts available for bulk orders. See ordering and content information at <http://www.plannersnetwork.org/htm/pub/pn-reader/index.html>

## PLANNERS NETWORK ON LINE

The PN WEB SITE is at: [www.plannersnetwork.org](http://www.plannersnetwork.org)

The PN LISTSERV:

PN maintains an on-line mailing list for members to post and respond to queries, list job postings, conference announcements, etc. To join, send an email message to [majordomo@list.pratt.edu](mailto:majordomo@list.pratt.edu) with “subscribe pn-net” (without the quotes) in the body of the message (not the subject line). You’ll be sent instructions on how to use the list.

## Progressive Planning ADVERTISING RATES:

- Full page **\$250**
- Half page **\$175**
- 1/4 page **\$75**
- 1/8 page **\$40**

Send file via email to [<pn@pratt.edu>](mailto:pn@pratt.edu), or mail camera-ready copy, by January 1, April 1, July 1 and October 1.

- ☐ **Yes!** I want to join progressive planners and work towards fundamental change.
- ☐ I’m a renewing member — Keep the faith!
- ☐ Just send me a subscription to *Progressive Planning*.

My contribution is \$ \_\_\_\_\_. Make checks payable to **PLANNERS NETWORK**.  
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Brooklyn, NY 11205

INTERNATIONAL MEMBERS: Please send U.S. funds as we are unable to accept payment in another currency. Thanks.

# In This Issue

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**Special issue on Marxism,  
Socialism and Planning**

**New book review column**

**News from the steering  
committee meeting**

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And while you're at it send us an **UPDATE** on what you're doing.

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