

URBAN



columbia university's urban planning magazine

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FROM URBAN

This semester URBAN moves beyond the page. As with many discussions in the profession, the topics explored in this issue do not end here. We have launched a discussion board on URBAN's website as a place for debates to continue. We also invite letters to the editors for inclusion in future issues. Immersed in a dialectical and quickly evolving profession, URBAN hopes to become an arena of exchange and conversation.

As incoming editors, the debate over a theme topic ended on December 26, 2004, with the Indian Ocean Tsunami and the spotlight it cast on latent planning concerns. Yet, in formulating a response, the idea of planning for disaster required us to first define *disaster*. We therefore devote this issue of URBAN to "Defining the Disaster Plan." In addition to the section's numerous articles, many of the others, in fact, provide their own reinterpretations.

Continuing in the spirit of discourse, the magazine opens its pages to all realms of urbanism and planning. Writers have explored life before and after planning school. Some focus on American culture and its shifting sacred spaces, while others look outward at international examples. And, generally speaking, the selection of master's thesis topics reveals the broad interests of Columbia students.

So, define your own place in planning as you read this issue. We want to thank James Connolly, Jessica Neilan, and Tanya Saltzman for their strides in the growth of the magazine. As the URBAN forum opens for discussion, we look forward to joining the debate.

Jen, Leah, & Liz

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IN THIS ISSUE...

Generally Speaking

- 2 **Oh...The Places We'll Go**
Jessica Neilan
- 4 **Taking the Classroom to the Neighborhood**
Audrey N. Carpio
- 6 **Customized**
Joshua Benson
- 10 **The American Dream & the Crisis of Place**
Brian Tochtermann
- 13 **Mapping Nairobi's Slums for Community Empowerment**
Nisha Baliga
- 15 **Public Works of the Turks**
Don Blakeney, Armando Rodriguez, and Brian Stokle
- 38 **Eating, Sleeping, Breathing, Dreaming...**
Master's Thesis Topics
- 40 **It's All About the Spin**
Elizabeth Kays and Leah M. Meisterlin



page 18

Defining the Disaster Plan

- 20 **Planning the Recovery: The Indian Ocean Tsunami**
Alyson Elliott
- 22 **Beyond Relief: Development Lessons from Lisbon & Managua**
Ramón Muñoz-Raskin
- 24 **Poverty's Slow Disaster: Famine**
Jacob Feit
- 26 **Disaster and Creative Destruction: The Great Chicago Fire and Other Opportunities**
Matthew Gebhardt
- 28 **Reversing a Scorched-Earth Policy**
Vivian Castro
- 30 **Planning for Climate Change in New York City**
Ron Slangen
- 31 **The Community Voice & Sustainable Reconstruction**
Michelle Sorkin
- 33 **Detroit's Deterioration**
Lindsay Smith
- 36 **Disaster for Profit: The Tsunami Response in Perspective**
Erin Hyland

OH...THE PLACES WE'LL GO

Jessica Neilan

As we all know, the logical next step after graduation from planning school is to find a job. Where? is the first question we ask ourselves. For most of us, the first step is to decide in which of the three planning sectors – private, public, or nonprofit – we want to work. Talking with those who have been here before and are now working can be our inspiration that people actually get paid for practicing what we learn here at Columbia. We also get a peek into what it's like to work for each of these sectors.

I asked three Columbia MSUP graduates, working in either the private, public, or nonprofit sectors, the same basic questions about where they work. Their answers reveal a few secrets of the urban planning career path...whatever that may be.



Private

CHRISTINA MICHAELIAN

Class of 2002

Concentration: Generalist

Workplace: Philip Habib and Associates (PHA)

What she does: Christina works as an environmental planner at PHA, a civil engineering and

environmental and transportation planning firm. Her job is to write EASs and EISs for a living, and as she can tell you, "I really like my job."

Why Private? "I feel like I really fit in here. It's a relaxed environment, more so than working at one of the city agencies."

The In: Christina got her start at PHA as a summer intern. "At a career night, a PHA representative picked up my resume and sent me an email asking me to come in for an interview. When I graduated, I decided to stay on full-time."

Publicity Perks: Christina speaks of the many usual perks associated with work at a private firm. "There's the monthly Metrocard, the yearly Christmas party . . . oh, and the water cooler is huge. You'd be surprised that in some sectors, employees don't have water coolers. Although that's not surprising given their limited printing privileges. Also, seeing yourself on television at public hearings is definitely a plus."

Drawbacks: Meeting the demands of many clients at one time can be difficult. "You have clients calling you three times a day because they assume theirs is the only project you're working on."

A Part of NYC History: Christina has worked extensively on the Greenpoint/Williamsburg EIS. "It's crazy to be a part of something that's going to affect the city so drastically."

Practical Skills: Writing environmental documents only tangentially relates to her thesis, which addressed big box retailers in NYC. "The most valuable skills have been what I learned in workshop and studio. Even though it was a mess of confusion at the time, land use surveys and demographic work are some of the skills I've carried to my professional life."

Helpful Advice: "Take advantage of internship opportunities. It's the best way to get a taste of many professional environments without actually committing to anything for a long period of time."



Public

RADHIKA PATEL

Class of 2003, Dual degree MSUP / SIPA

Concentration: International Economic
Development

Workplace: NYC Department of City Planning
(DCP), Environmental Review

What she does: There are two parts: Radhika writes EASs and EISs for the City's planning proposals, and she reviews and comments on those that private consultants write. Radhika spends most of her days at 22 Reade Street, at her desk, in meetings, and on the telephone. However, at least once for each project, she ventures out to do a site visit.

The In: "Totally by the book. I applied, interviewed, and got the job."

Why go public? “It’s such an exciting time to be working for the City. We have a mayor really interested in planning, and there’s so much going on with Lower Manhattan, the Hudson Yards, and elsewhere in the City.” Radhika can also make the comparison between the private and public sectors. “As a person with experience working for a private firm, I can say that working for them, writing environmental review documents is like being on a boat, it gets you from point A to point B. But working for the City is like being part of a steamliner crew, you’re part of the entity driving the initiatives.”

Then there’s the issue of one’s personal life. “When I started studying at Columbia, I thought I would end up working abroad. When it came down to it, I asked myself, ‘How? My whole life is here and I really don’t want to leave it.’”

Steamliner Perks: In addition to being part of the entity driving the planning initiatives, Radhika will tell you that the benefits outweigh the drawbacks at DCP. “There may not be a water cooler, and you may have to supply your own soap, but City Planning offers great hours, vacation, and good benefits.”

Downzoning!? Radhika is currently working on the environmental review portion of the City’s proposed contextual rezonings in the outer boroughs.

Analytics: “The most valuable skills I learned were broader analytic skills and problem solving in reading planning literature.”

Helpful Advice: “The best thing you can do for your career is to network. There are Columbia alumni willing to help. And if you want to work for the City, bone up on your speed reading skills; you have to absorb so much information and really know what you’re talking about.”



JULIETTE DELLECKER MICHAELSON

Class of 2004

Concentration: Transportation

Workplace: Project for Public Spaces (PPS)

What She Does:

PPS works with cities and public agencies to improve the form and function of public spaces. “The idea is to create places that are attractive to the community and that the community will use. We also conduct research and advocacy to promote public spaces.”

Juliette is currently focusing on transportation. “People don’t often think of streets as public spaces, but they are. Here in New York, most of our streets are great public places: tons of people, cafés spilling out onto the sidewalk, community stores, a healthy mix of transportation options.”

Why a non-profit?

“I like working with people who have a vision and the motivation to carry out that vision regardless of profit.”

The In:

For Juliette, getting an offer from PPS was a matter of persistence and fortuitous timing. “It was one of my top choices from the beginning, but they weren’t hiring when I contacted them early on in the summer. So I applied to other jobs – by late July, I was ready to accept another offer. But before accepting it, I called PPS again, just in case. They had just obtained a major contract to work with [New Jersey Department of Transportation], so they hired me for that job.”

Perks:

“I spend all day every day in the company of people who care deeply about the work that they do – it’s inspiring. Another perk is that I think that our work is at the cutting edge of transportation planning.”

Are drawbacks possible?

“The salary, maybe? Although I don’t think I make much less than my peers.”

Fighting Sprawl: Juliette’s main project has been to help NJDOT to better link land use with transportation. Instead of building more highways to accommodate congestion, the agency has sought the help of PPS to build a transportation network that will help create more livable towns. “Compact, mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods create communities that are sustainable transportation-wise. It’s a revolutionary concept in the world of transportation planning.”

Most valuable skills: Research and writing skills.

Helpful Advice: “The best advice I can give is to get to know professionals while you’re in school. It’s the best way to learn about the different branches of the profession and see which one is right for you. And you never know, they might have a job for you after graduation.” ■

TAKING THE CLASSROOM TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Audrey N. Carpio School of Journalism

From the outside, the red brick building on Irving Avenue in Brooklyn still looks like the old Bushwick High School of disrepute. In the morning the students, most of whom are Latino, go through the daily ritual of taking off their caps and durags before emptying their pockets of pens, keys, gum, cell phones, wallets, and notebooks in order to pass through the metal detector that guards the school entrance. Every afternoon, when the last bell rings, police officers stand outside the building, directing outbound traffic and making sure every last student has left the building.

On the inside, however, things are in the midst of dramatic change. The last of the Bushwick High students are making their way through the eleventh and twelfth grades. When they graduate, the old school, established in 1910, will be closed down. Three new and entirely different schools, which were embedded into the building in 2003, will claim its place. The Academy of Urban Planning (AUP) occupies the fifth floor and currently consists of around 300 students in the ninth and tenth grades, expecting to reach a maximum of 500 in the next two years.

Bushwick High School's demise is part of the program called New Visions for Public Schools, whose aim is to replace large "troubled" schools with smaller theme ones. In its wake, the new schools are expected to perform where Bushwick High failed, infusing community students with new interest in learning.

The Academy of Urban Planning, along with its sister schools the New York Harbor School and the Bushwick School of Social Justice, was created to solve the problems of low attendance, low graduation rates, and the dismal record for passing the Regents Exam. AUP works through a partnership with the Brooklyn Center of the Urban Environment and graduate students from NYU's Wagner School of Urban Planning, allowing the students the opportunity to be an active, concerned member of their own community.

Urban planning, one would think, is the



Bushwick High School

domain of graduate students who work with statistics, geographic surveys, and sociological studies of cities, people, and their rhythms. Yet, as these students are finding out urban planning starts with taking that first good look at the environment where they live.

"It seems lofty, initially, but we're applying urban planning to local issues," Principal Monique Darrisaw says. "It's empowering for the kids to be able to express what they're seeing. They don't have the same kind of opportunity in other schools or other aspects of their lives."

A typical school week for AUP students includes the regular core courses required of all high school students in New York, such as English, math, and social studies. Where possible, the classes are bent towards urban planning, using examples and texts from current issues (for instance, the controversy surrounding the proposed West Side Stadium). Fridays are dedicated "studio days," when students work on semester-long projects connecting their subject classes to the

theme of urban planning. AUP students leave the dreary razor-wired premises, a constant reminder of a failed system in which only 23% of students graduated. They explore the world of their neighborhood and Brooklyn, the boundaries of which some have never traversed before.

On the day of my visit, for instance, ten tenth-graders from Mr. McQuillan's social studies class abandoned their classrooms to take a brisk walk around the Myrtle-Wyckoff subway station, clipboards in hand. Led by Meredith Philips, the school's urban planning coordinator, the students assessed the cleanliness and safety of the structures they saw, continuing a project from last year that documented the conditions of the existing station and monitored its proposed revitalization.

"It's nasty and dirty" was the obvious consensus. "It stinks" ran a close second. The station, in the glow of flickering light bulbs, was littered with broken bottles, empty cups, food wrappers, and loose batteries. A large section of the platform was boarded up, awaiting promised repairs and renovations. One student noticed an MTA poster claiming the improvements would cost \$50 million and be completed in 2007, whereas the previous year, the figure was smaller and the date sooner. There was genuine disgust in the voices of some students, who live in the area and are most likely inured to the daily grime. These neighborhood walks ask them to open their eyes and think critically about space and how it is being used or abused.

"It's about the small wins," Philips, who comes from the Wagner School, says. "We get them to talk about how they can change what they see, and use the skills they've learned to make positive changes."

Last year, the students were involved in a waste management project wherein they noted the trash on the sidewalks and learned about the City's waste codes, as well as the responsibilities of residents and business owners. "Why do you think there's all this trash on the streets?" A teacher asked. Puzzled looks. "Well, because there's

nowhere to put it!” the teacher answered. The students worked on a campaign that requested more trash bins from City Council and educated their neighbors about proper waste disposal.

“I like our projects, because we get to do something about the neighborhood,” says Kastiana Suarez, a 15-year-old with cornrows and a booming voice. “Before, everybody was just making it dirty.” A ninth-grader, Suarez chose to come to this school because she likes working with her hands and thought that the curriculum, which potential students can learn about at the Department of Education’s yearly city-wide high school fair, would suit her interests. “Every school I went to had no projects where we could go outside,” she said.

Her classmate Nathaniel Amoro, a 15-year-old ninth-grader, transferred from another high school not only because it is close to home physically, but in spirit as well. “I want to help fix the environment where I live,” he says. For him, the interweaving of relevant urban planning issues makes learning easier and infinitely more interesting. “I want to learn about our neighborhood, not about some place like Washington, DC,” he says. In Bushwick, he would like to see “the streets, the potholes, and the crackhouses” fixed.

Not all of the students had the desire to study urban planning. While many come here because they have concerns about their neighborhood or want to eventually study related fields like architecture, some were just placed here by the system and were not too happy about it. Adam Nuñez, 16 years old and in the ninth grade, says, “I had no other place to go. The other schools had no room.”

While his classmates were busily captioning some photos they took around the neighborhood, Nuñez looked uninterested and slouched lower into his baggy pants. “It’s okay, but I’m not really into it,” he says, adding that he is just waiting until he gets out of school. “I don’t think this stuff helps you out in real life,” he said. “Not many people can do anything about the community.”

Attitudes like Nuñez’s are exactly what the principal, the teachers, and the Wagner students are hoping to change. “It’s a challenge turning the students on,” says Darrisaw, comparing it to the relatively “sexier” Harbor School where kids get to sail and play with boats. “But it’s not such a hard sell.” The students who talk about their own neighborhood are its truest experts. English as a Second Language (ESL) students gain confidence when they discuss the place where they live. “It’s the great equalizer. You can’t take that away from them,” the principal says.

The school is under no illusions, however, about how much it can attain, given the circumstances already present. “We’re holding the students up to high expectations, but we’ve still got a diverse population of students who are struggling,” Darrisaw says. “These are the same type

awarding only the best students, teachers also give special recognition to those who have shown improvement, have good classroom behavior, always complete their homework, and exhibit good citizenship and character. In this way, any student can be appreciated by others passing the board as they walk down the hallway. Darrisaw says she can not believe that students would go through eight years of school without recognition. One parent, whose son was named Student of the Month for punctuality, was especially moved because her son “had never won anything in his life.” An accomplishment as seemingly minor as this could very well trigger changes in the student’s attitude, his family dynamics, or possibly his whole outlook on life.

While the school may not work for everyone, learning about the real world through the

“It’s about the small wins. . . We get them to talk about how they can change what they see, and use the skills they’ve learned to make positive changes.”

of kids who would have gone to Bushwick High School, kids from impoverished communities.” 38% of the students are ESL students or in Special Education classes. “What we’re offering is a different way of learning,” she says.

The Academy has stopped offering bilingual classes, opting instead for a strict English-immersion policy and providing ESL support classes on the weekends. “It hurts sometimes,” Darrisaw says, but she believes that this will better prepare students for college and foster school community by not dividing the school by language.

Encouraging devices, like the Students of the Month Board, have been especially helpful for students who struggle. Photos of well-performing students are posted on a wall, along with a laudatory write-up from a teacher. Rather than

lens of urban planning seems a good choice for those who are intricately connected to their community — students who grew up in Bushwick and are witnessing its rapid gentrification without an understanding of the forces at work. In one social studies project, students photographed things that caught their eye during a community walk. The result was the juxtaposition of beauty and ugliness ingeniously captured, usually in the same photograph. An oil spill on the sidewalk stuck with fallen leaves, a chain link fence enveloping a decaying playground, a wall of graffiti that bursts with green and yellow swirls, everyday commonplace things that make up the neighborhood. The students looked beyond the beauty and ugliness in their images to start thinking about their causes and, more importantly, their potential. ■

CUSTOMIZED

Joshua Benson



Krissy begs MTV to “pimp” her ugly, but functional, beetle.²³

“I’m so happy now, because my new car matches my new life. Having my car pimped has reaffirmed all the choices that I’ve made in my life. It proves to me that all the hard work and everything I’ve done to make my life better is really worth it,” says Krissy, a 23-year-old guest on the MTV television program, *Pimp My Ride*.¹

Krissy’s car, a 1969 Volkswagen Beetle, was just “pimped.” It is now outfitted with fresh lime green paint, purple graphics, 18-inch chrome rims, 7-inch video monitors on the doors, flowers embossed onto the seats, touch screen radio and DVD player, and a lava lamp. The excitement Krissy feels has little to do with her car’s ability to transport her; it ran well before the show. Rather, Krissy, like many Americans, derives a complex and fleeting set of benefits from her car.

Although planners acknowledge the levels of meaning encapsulated in the automobile, the planner typically reduces the automobile to technical concepts (such as levels of service, delay,

and air quality impacts) or narrowly views the automobile as a machine to move persons and cargo, despite its importance as status symbol and individualistic expression. The rapid success of the car in the United States was partly due to the fact that, “automobility was quickly perceived as promoting individualism.”² Undoubtedly, “the car is much more than a large household appliance,” among other roles, it may be viewed as “a

...fresh lime green paint, purple graphics, 18-inch chrome rims, 7-inch video monitors on the doors, flowers embossed onto the seats, touch screen radio and DVD player, and a lava lamp.

pet of the family.”³ When planners divorce the automobile’s many significances, they create a hurdle that impedes effective understanding of the many problems caused by automobile use. At

the same time, people overuse the automobile, not just for transportation, but also to achieve an illusive sense of individualism, which in turn, obscures their ability to perceive the destructive nature of their quest. By examining the complexity of the sociological mechanisms associated with automobile consumption through the lens of automobile customization, a connection can be forged between the forces that motivate auto overuse and policies that aim to curtail it.

STYLE OVER SUBSTANCE

The supremacy of the functional role of the automobile in the eyes of the planner is particularly problematic, not simply because the automobile represents a complex tangle of uses, but more so because the history of the automobile is the ultimate story of the triumph of style over substance. The process of stylizing the automobile “began in earnest during the first ten years of car production” and has continued ever since.⁴ In 1925, after studying a paper entitled *Annual Models versus Constant Improvement*, GM adopted a formal policy favoring annual models, in which changes were largely cosmetic from year to year.⁵

HISTORY OF CUSTOMIZING

Legend has it that Lord Montagu of Beaulieu first customized the automobile, “when he placed a bronze statuette of St. Christopher on the dashboard of his 1896 Daimler.”⁶ Substantial

customization began in the 1930s in Southern California, where hot-rodders began to rework old cars and milk them for every ounce of speed. The modifications, while largely mechanical,

“turned discarded copies of Detroit’s products into icons of personal expression.”⁷ By the 1940s, hot-rodding gave rise to its aesthetic equivalent, customizing. Customizers modified the appearance of their cars, while leaving the function relatively unchanged. Altered bodywork, paint, and the removal of chrome accessories gave the cars a streamlined look.⁸

Custom car builders like George Barris and Ed Roth pushed the limits of customization and developed styles that would later be lifted by Detroit’s major automakers. Their designs were so developed, Tom Wolfe asserted, that while still technically operable, Barris’s and Roth’s cars were in fact “baroque modern” art.⁹ However, the customized cars were “not an unencumbered art form,” Wolfe clarified, because the car itself “carries a lot of mental baggage with it.”¹⁰ The baggage, sociologist David Gartman argues, is the frustration of the pursuit of individualism through mass consumption. When Detroit co-opted the customizers’ styles in the 1950s, a phony individualism was bolted onto the outside of their standard offerings. “Ever-escalating levels of consumption failed to bring satiation” of consumers’ desire to express individuality, because the outward appearance of cars was “so superficial and random that consumers began to see the mass produced sameness beneath the bizarre surfaces.”¹¹

CUSTOMIZING TODAY

Although the diversity of auto offerings continues to the present, interest in auto customization is at a historical high point. MTV’s *Pimp My Ride* television program, a show that treats guests to elaborate car customizations, “which run \$20,000 to \$50,000 for cars worth a fraction of that” is a “runaway hit.”¹² *Pimp* shares the airwaves with no less than five other car customization programs, but the enthusiasm for car customization is not limited to television reality shows. In 2003, retail sales of specialty automotive products and accessories were \$28.9 billion, 24% higher than

sales (inflation-adjusted) five years prior.¹³ The retail sales figures do not capture the labor costs associated with these products, so consumer expenditures on car customization are even higher than the sales figures indicate.

INDIVIDUALISM THROUGH CONSUMPTION

Christina Ochoa, a 29-year-old woman from Wichita Falls, Texas, drives her car about twice a week and usually stops in a parking lot to show it off. Ochoa’s car, a 1997 Honda Civic has more than \$30,000 worth of aftermarket improvements. Ochoa says that improving her Civic is a way to prove to herself that her goals can be achieved.

She considers the Civic to be a metaphor for her life.¹⁴

“Sometimes people are surprised by how different their car looks after they get rims,” explains Dion Hayes, a Detroit mechanic. “New rims could mean the difference between a junker or a ride that makes people stop in their tracks.”¹⁵ Big Slice, personal car-customizer for the rapper Snoop Dogg, echoes Hayes’s sentiment: “One thing I learned with Snoop: if people, when they see the car when you’re driving down the street, if they don’t do the neck snap, somethin’ wrong. Every car going down the street gets a double take.”¹⁶

Wheels, or rims, are indeed the current focus



A selection of cars painted and customized by Larry Watson exemplifies the stylistic trend of the customizers of the 1940s, 50s, and 60s.²⁴

of customizers. Oversized wheels, with diameters of up to 26 inches “can cost anywhere from \$2,000 to \$20,000 a set” and their large size means that they “add weight to a vehicle, they can put wear and tear on the braking system, reduce fuel economy, even make the ride less comfortable.”¹⁷ Adrian Lund, chief operating officer at the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety warns that putting oversize wheels on an SUV is “taking a bad rollover problem and making it worse.”¹⁸

Ochoa, Slice, and Hayes customize their cars to stand out even if it means reduced safety,

THE LIMITATIONS OF AN ECONOMIC MODEL

A persistent obstacle to controlling levels of automobile use via an economic model are the social costs, or externalities, which are not captured in the price people pay for the use of the automobile. One way to deal with this problem is to impose fees on drivers that are supposed to approximate and compensate for the negative externalities of pollution and congestion. Planning logic assumes that imposing user charges would force drivers to consider the “true cost” of

“stuck in traffic” is not something people will pay much to reduce. Calfee and Winston’s findings are significant in that they used a rank-ordered logit model in favor of the traditional modal choice model in order to achieve a separation of the value people placed on times savings from the value they placed on vehicle type. Their analysis indicates that a perception of the auto as pure transportation is overblown.

While people are not willing to pay pennies to reduce automobile travel times, they invested billions of dollars in accessories for their vehicles

. . . planners may be ignoring powerful non-transportation benefits users derive from automobile consumption. Call them “internalities” – people value their cars well beyond the capability of the car to move them from point A to point B . . .

comfort, and efficiency, to get the “neck snap” from everyone who sees them. They are following Gartman’s model of individualism through consumption, in which they continue to consume the latest products in an ongoing chase for unattainable individuality. Michael Vick, a 24-year-old NFL player for the Atlanta Falcons and avid customizer, sums it up this way: “If you got the paper [money], you got to get the hottest thing out. It can’t be 2004 and you’re still pushin’ a 2001 or 2002. You gotta keep up.”¹⁹ Sociologist Paul Gilroy posits that for oppressed racial or ethnic groups, this type of consumption represents the additional danger that, “rather than receiving the truths of individual or collective identity from a branded, prestigious or expensive object, these people are projecting their race-thwarted individuality back into the object in ways that reply to the respectable world of official, finished consumerism.”²⁰

driving. In light of the importance people place on automobile consumption and individuality, planners may be ignoring powerful non-transportation benefits users derive from automobile consumption. Call them “internalities” — people value their cars well beyond the capability of the car to move them from point A to point B and in ways that are difficult to measure and interpret.

If people used cars the way they use public transit, that is, purely as a form of transportation, they would be willing to pay quite a bit to reduce the duration of a trip. However, a study by John Calfee and Clifford Winston that analyzed people’s willingness-to-pay to reduce automobile travel times found that “the average commuter does not appear willing to pay much to reduce congested travel time under any scenario.” Calfee and Winston calculate that to save one hour of congested travel time, the average auto commuter is willing to pay only 19% of their hourly gross wage.²¹ In other words, time spent in the car, even

in 2003. The value of the sanctuary and medium for personal expression, while internal and immeasurable, is much more than the time wasted in traffic.

CONCLUSION

The incredible expenditures on the unfulfilling pursuit of individualism through automobile consumption and customization indicate that opportunities for more socially productive, meaningful, and accessible personal expression are needed. In the context of planning policy that aims to reduce automobile use, disincentives for driving should be coupled with programs that provide access to alternative means of self-expression. The effect of “internalities,” or the hidden benefits of automobile consumption cannot be overlooked in favor of a rational, scientific planning conception of transportation.

The automobile can be transportation, art, status, and a medium of expression. Customizers



Wheels of desire, New York City, 2004: Today's customizers focus on wheels or "rims," which ideally should be large (20+ inches), with a high-gloss chrome finish to induce "neck snap" from all passers-by.

aim to merge of all of these uses. However, customization is an extension of consumption and is therefore a falsification of individualism. For the vast majority of customizers, the expensive and practically functionless modifications to the automobile achieve a repetitious stylization at best. Few customizations achieve a quality that can be considered art, and most result in a delusion of individuality.

Big Slice, however, is not convinced. "I tell people I'm not a car builder – I'm an artist," he says.²² Just as the planner believes he can create transportation policy with formulas and dimen-

sions, Big Slice thinks he can create art with bolt-on parts, stereo systems, and big shiny wheels. ■

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THE AMERICAN DREAM & THE CRISIS OF PLACE

Brian Tochterman

Since the US government dealt with a post-war housing crunch by instituting policies favoring new suburban construction over urban revitalization, Americans have grappled with the declining significance of place and social capital. The landscape has become so decentralized that people spend too much time propelling from place to place, and that the pinball game of life leaves little time for forging cohesive bonds with others. “As one observer wrote, ‘A man works in one place, sleeps in another, shops somewhere else, finds pleasure or companionship where he can, and cares about none of these places.’”¹ Robert Fishman laments the end of suburbs and reluctantly welcomes the rise of what he terms “technoburbs.” Without “proper boundaries” the technoburb is “a crazy quilt of separate and overlapping political jurisdictions, which make any kind of coordinated planning virtually impossible.”²

Technoburbs elicit a damaging effect on the American landscape. As Fishman notes, the structural impact is twofold:

First, decentralization has been a social and economic disaster for the old city and for the poor, who have been increasingly relegated to its crowded, decayed zones. It has reseggregated American society into an affluent outer city and an indigent inner city, while erecting ever higher barriers that prevent the poor from sharing in the jobs and housing of the technoburbs.

Second, decentralization has been seen as a cultural disaster. While the rich and diverse architectural heritage of the cities decay, the technoburb has been built up as a standardized and simplified sprawl, consuming time and space, destroying the natural landscape.³

This is the so-called American Dream, the technoburban landscape. The structural impact is hardly the most destructive legacy compared to the impact sprawl has wrought on sentiment

and behavior. Perhaps one word defines both the spatial and emotional characteristic of sprawl: distant.

David Brooks argues that contemporary sprawl is “the latest iteration of the American [D]ream.” He labels this period “The Great Dispersal,” where in the new suburban utopia “lesbian dentists, Iranian McMansions, [and] Korean megachurches” dot the landscape. “In the age of the great dispersal, it becomes much easier to search out and congregate with people who are basically like yourself.”⁴ This begs the question: Is this really something to celebrate?

SPRAWL AND THE DECLINE OF SOCIAL CAPITAL

In his seminal *Bowling Alone*, sociologist Robert Putnam details the collapse of American public participation, what he terms “social capital,” from its 1950s apex. Putnam sketches a contemporary era of isolation and universal individualism. His statistical analysis tracks dramatic declines in public trust and political, civic, and religious participation and argues that younger generations lack informal social and workplace

Loved Levittown,” together they worked in the local aviation factories, coached Little League, and constructed additions to their original 800-square-foot homes. When families moved out and young professionals moved in, the neighborhood was inflicted with paranoia, hate, and exclusion, seemingly driven by a tight housing market and the legacy of New Deal housing policies. When lots grew wider, setbacks deeper, and highways longer and more congested, the sidewalks disappeared and social capital faded.

Putnam places the bulk of the blame for social capital’s decline simply on mass media. He writes, “dependence on television for entertainment is not merely a significant predictor of civic disengagement. It is *the single most consistent* predictor that I have discovered [sic].”⁵ Television and the Internet transport thrill seekers to a virtual space and place of manufactured reality with relatively egalitarian chat rooms far removed from the cul-de-sac. Still such space is anything but personal and public. Chat room visitors are free to “be themselves” – which often involves morphing into some kind of idyllic, over-confident pseudo-personality constantly in attack mode (familiar to

With nothing to grasp or hang a hat on, individualism reigns, fostering isolation and paranoia – NIMBYism perpetuates.

friendships, also volunteering or donating less than previous generations.

Ironically, early American suburban growth enhanced civic participation, but as we have seen, it may have been enhanced by exclusionary segregation policies. For Putnam the post-World War II generation represents the social ideal. This generation grew up in dense urban or tight-knit rural environments and eventually settled into suburban housing. Still, the new suburbanites maintained urban and small-town social cohesion despite racist and classist exclusionary covenants. As in W.D. Wetherell’s short story “The Man Who

visitors of rooms in the political vein). However, the impersonal aspect of virtual space oversteps the boundaries of discretion implicit in face-to-face public interaction. Do not equate this with an argument for political correctness. Rather, the objective is to point out tangible spaces and places where such conversations are welcome – i.e. the neighborhood tavern – and are actually encouraged within minor limitations.

Putnam also equates a substantial portion of social decline with sprawl and mobility. Beyond the fact that suburban zoning excludes potential gathering places like shops, restaurants, and tav-



Concession du jour

erns beyond a commercial strip, three characteristics of sprawl contribute to weaker social and civic connections. Sprawl takes time, increases social segregation, and disrupts community boundedness.⁶ In technoburbia, where a “town” has no bounds, there is a lack of identity beyond yard or cul-de-sac. With nothing to grasp or hang a hat on, individualism reigns, fostering isolation and paranoia – NIMBYism perpetuates.

SPRAWL AND THE ANTI-SOCIALISM

Advocating for dense, multiuse neighborhoods of old, New Urbanists reel off a litany of behavioral effects they link to sprawl design. Sprawl, they argue, propagates a series of demographic labels – often bandied about in political rhetoric – including cul-de-sac kids, soccer moms, bored teenagers, stranded elderly, weary commuters, and immobile poor.

When one questions another’s move to suburbia, the oft given answer is along the lines of, “We did it for the kids; suburbs are supposed to be good for children.” Ironically, New Urbanists argue suburbs are horrible for children. Their “cul-de-sac kid” is a “prisoner of a thoroughly safe and unchallenging environment.”⁷ Children grow up without encountering educational risk. “[They] are frozen in a form of infancy, utterly

dependent on others, bereft of the ability to introduce variety into their own lives, robbed of the opportunity to make choices and exercise judgment.”⁸ Isolated since birth, cul-de-sac kids

eventually “develop” into bored teenagers. Childhood complacency is rewarded by the freedom a driver’s license affords. Of course, mobility in suburbs is limited to the automobile, and, as theorists Andres Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, and Jeff Speck point out, “car crashes are the largest killer of American teenagers.”⁹ Alienation, boredom, and the emotional distance associated with sprawl, correlate with the second leading cause of teenage death, suicide. “Teenage suicide, almost unheard of before 1950, had nearly tripled by 1980 and now accounts for over 12 percent of youth mortalities...National rates of teenage suicide are much higher in the suburbs than in cities.”¹⁰ The authors similarly suggest a link between sprawl and the prevalence of suburban high school shootings.

The automobile culture, and apathy associated with spatial decentralization, contributes to a variety of anti-social behavior. Can one

imagine a chance encounter in Jane Jacobs’ idyllic Greenwich Village leading to a spat of “sidewalk-rage?” Yet, road rage is an everyday occurrence. The population spends more time imprisoned in automobiles, less time in public interaction, and less time walking. “Eighty percent of all suburban automobile trips have nothing to do with work at all, but are short drives to places that used to be accessible by foot.”¹¹

Finally, sprawl and technoburban office parks isolate the one-third of the population that cannot drive. Sprawl and the lack of public transportation quarantine the non-driving elderly and render the poor ineligible for suburban occupations. The end result becomes what Robert Reich calls the “succession of the successful.”¹² Attracted by good schools, the mythic American Dream, and dubious safety, those who can afford to leapfrog from suburb to suburb in search of

Open green space has become the code-word concession du jour . . .

the newest land speculation. American policy created an urban form based on class and race segregation, and the relative homogeneity continues to narrow the mind. “A child growing up in such a homogenous environment is less likely to develop a sense of empathy for people from other walks of life and is ill prepared to live in a diverse society.”¹³

PLACE AND THE FAILURE OF PLANNING

The justifiable scapegoat for the decentralized technoburban place-void landscape is policy and planning, or the lack thereof. With a few exceptions, noxious industrial uses have become relatively moot. Yet planners, the supposed experts in this charade but little more than pawns of the real estate developer, still demand segregation of uses on par with the earliest days of zoning’s eighty-year history. Open green space

has become the code-word concession du jour as developers cannot be burdened with real neighborhood institutions and necessities and insist on filling each retail space in developments with tried-and-true identifiable national chain stores and restaurants. Vacationing visitors are assured of some form of simulacrum, but never have to worry about feeling lost in a world without Wal-Mart and Applebee's.

A number of the aforementioned authors have mentioned the failure of planning in preserving¹⁴ and fostering place. Sociologist Ray Oldenburg indicts the profession for its "great disdain for those earlier arrangements in which there was life beyond home and work."¹⁵ Among their crimes, "planners and developers continue to add to the rows of regimented loneliness in neighborhoods so sterile as to cry out for something as modest as a central mail drop or a little coffee counter at which those in the area might discover one another."¹⁶ Putnam echoes this sentiment in relation to the massive shopping center as public space, the informality of the new chain-ridden consumer, and resulting coercion and lack of public trust. "[S]uch gathering places as local shops and restaurants" have been replaced by "America's most distinctive contemporary public space, [which is]

Sociability is sanity's savior, the tenement dweller's tonic.

carefully designed for one primary, private purpose – to direct consumers to buy."¹⁷

Authorities in general have a misconstrued notion when it comes to how third places – which are places like bars and cafés that are neither home nor work where the social beings congregate – are viewed in public safety terms. Though Jacobs's exemplary *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* was written over forty years ago, small neighborhood shops, restaurants, and taverns are still shunned by the omniscient establishment. She recognized the importance of places like this in terms of neighborhood cohesiveness

and safety. She even includes her cherished White Horse Tavern and its late night hours in her safety paradigm. Street traffic and familiar places develop public trust, an aspect sufficiently lacking in the segregated landscape of gated suburban communities and whispered paranoia. "The trust of the city street is formed over time from many, many little sidewalk contacts. It grows out of people stopping by the bar for a beer, getting advice from the grocer and giving advice to the newsstand man."¹⁸

Even historically urban areas are not immune to the segregatory broad-brush. The great urban renewal experiment of the 1960s and 70s succeeded in transforming nearly every city in the country in some form and reaped devastating impacts on vibrant places condemned as blight. Jacobs conveyed the sense of trauma in inflicted neighborhoods that saw streets and sidewalks – thus the neighborhood third places – disappear under superblocks of agoraphobic Corbusian towers-in-a-park. Without the street, and the local small businesses that serve as eyes on the street, there is no ensuing street life.

Herbert J. Gans – no stranger to the devastating effect of urban renewal on traditional urban "slums"¹⁹ – further indicts city planning's

failure to proffer space and place on a community level and its preference to concede to developers' demands rather than public needs. Planners fail to recognize "that [city residents] are not interested in rearranging the land-use pattern at great expense to achieve an order that is most visible on a map or from an airplane and to produce an efficient city."²⁰

The fact is, urban dwellers, particularly lower and working class residents, place a high priority on public spaces and third places in general. Their claustrophobic inner-city apartments drive them out into the public sphere. Sociability is

sanity's savior, the tenement dweller's tonic. Witness the slum's stoop, the corner bodega, and the neighborhood tavern. The working class and minorities continue to remake the urban and embrace the public spaces shunned by the urban bourgeoisie who long ago left the city for dead.²¹ Remarkably, given the trials and tribulations of recent urban history, such places still persist. However, we need more. ■

NOTES

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MAPPING NAIROBI'S SLUMS FOR COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

Nisha Baliga

As part of a research team created in the Applied Workshop class at the School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA), I was fortunate enough to visit Nairobi in January to conduct field research on the work of Pamoja Trust. The Pamoja Trust is a nongovernmental organization established by Kenyans in 2000 to help urban poor communities organize themselves to oppose demolition and forced evictions and to develop their own plans to get adequate housing and basic services.¹

The major strength of the Pamoja Trust lies in its ability to work closely with Muungano wa Wanivijiji (Kenyan Federation of Slum Dwellers) and facilitate their access to land rights, infrastructure, and tenure. While I was in Nairobi, I observed an enumeration and community mapping exercise. Enumerations such as these are instrumental in the Trust's efforts to use community-generated information as an empowerment tool. Pamoja Trust has gathered much of the technical information on how to run a community enumeration through exchanges with similar urban poor federations in South Africa and India.

The enumeration exercise was part of a resettlement project for informal settlements located in close proximity to railroad lines in the Kibera slum in Nairobi. With the support of the World Bank, the Kenyan government is seeking to privatize their poorly managed railway system.

Because the slum dwellers were previously threatened with eviction and demolition from structure owners and the government, they were dubious of efforts to give them compensation.

This particular enumeration process was meant to document persons living within 15 feet of the railway lines which will then be cleared to create a buffer pedestrian path for safety. The information gathered will be used to compensate or give homes to people affected by the creation of the buffer zone.



Community meeting with slum dwellers and Pamoja Trust

The goal of an enumeration is to document everyone living or working in a community regardless of whether they are structure owners or renters. It helps planners assess the needs of the community. From the point of view of the community, it is a way to understand who lives

structure owners and the government, they were dubious of efforts to give them compensation. There were also ethnic tensions between the various communities that were living along the railway line. Pamoja Trust, in collaboration with other community-based organizations, called a series of meetings, publicizing through the Muungano networks. Pamoja Trust's involvement with Muungano means that they are able to get information to most people in a slum with short notice, something that other NGOs, international organizations, or even the government often has problems with.

there and use the data as an organizational and informational tool. The process is carried out using community members and repeated several times for accuracy.

This enumeration was particularly contentious. Because the slum dwellers were previously threatened with eviction and demolition from

Pamoja Trust then explained to the communities what the process involved and answered questions. These meetings were often controversial because the slum dwellers used it as a forum to voice all their concerns about their insecurity. Pamoja Trust then gave each village in the slum time to discuss concerns and nominate their

enumerators. These persons were trained by individuals who had gone through an enumeration already. Teams were formed containing a survey taker, a measurer, and a photographer. A separate team numbered each house in the community.

The documentation started with the numbering of each structure in the affected area. The teams then conducted a detailed household survey, and the measurer recorded the dimensions and GPS position of the home. The photographer took a picture of the home or business along with the house number. Pamoja Trust staff was always in the field as well, answering questions, taking care of conflicts, and making sure that the process was running smoothly. This task was often hard because there are people – particularly structure owners – opposed to this process.

After the information was collected, it was entered into a database attaching the data to the photos and creating GIS files of the affected

areas. The basic information for each household was also posted in each village for public verification. This process is important because it helps weed out people who are trying to be counted too many times or conceal information. After the data

we knew who lived among us, and this allowed us to build some solidarity. We knew how many children, women, elderly people were there, and this was good for us to know. We got to know each other when we did the enumerations.” The

“After the enumeration we knew who lived among us, and this allowed us to build some solidarity.”

is amended by the verification process, it will be used to create a community needs assessment for buffer-creation projects.

Before enumerations are carried out, slum residents may have no idea who lives in their village. The contacts they make as a result of enumerations make future upgrading efforts or project participation much simpler. In the words of one of the residents, “After the enumeration

Nairobi City Council does not have the resources to conduct such a survey by itself, and its relationship with slum dwellers has often been adversarial. The household information they receive as a result of the enumerations, even with some inaccuracies, is highly useful for planning infrastructure and social services to the communities. This process illustrated the multiple positive externalities that can be created as a result of a community mapping and enumeration. ■



Enumeration in Nairobi's Slums

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PUBLIC WORKS OF THE TURKS

Don Blakeney, Armando Rodriguez, and Brian Stokle



Tucked between the fountains of the Blue Mosque and the Byzantine architecture of the Hagia Sophia, we spent our first night in Istanbul. When we woke the next morning, we found ourselves on the cusp between East and West in one of the most beautiful cities in the world. Like Rome, Istanbul defines itself by seven hills from which one can easily see the

comparably sized European cities – maintain extensive metro and regional rail systems, Istanbul has a piecemeal system of buses, light rail, trolleys, and only two short metro lines. In fact, most commuters depend solely on their cars or use buses. Ironically, Istanbul has had public rail-based tram-cars since 1872 (when they were first pulled by horses) and also takes the prize for the

this westernizing country to realize what could become a great public transportation system. In the 1990s Istanbul's transit agency (IETT) reintroduced some of their classic streetcars that were removed in the 1960s to make room for buses. In addition, they opened a light rail line leading from the old city to the western suburbs. In 2000, IETT opened the first line of the city's metro system and is currently expanding it to link with other public transport. The agency has also made good use of its waterways with an extensive network of ferries. Recently, the city has added fast catamaran ferry boats to ply across the Bosphorus and the Sea of Marmara.

This March the national government plans to start construction on a Bosphorus tunnel that will connect the old city by heavy rail to the Asian side – or what Istanbulis call “The Other Side.” Despite these major projects, the city is a long way from a full-blown transport system. According to Zeki Gümüş of IETT, the city must continue building these major projects because without them Istanbul will come to a virtual standstill as it

The need is so strong that the country is willing to go billions of dollars into debt.

city's impressive network of water. Life in the city was always bustling. Set against the shimmering waters of the Golden Horn, the street music, prayer calls, traffic, and birds made for an eclectic soundtrack. Despite Istanbul's lively population of 10 million, the city is still struggling in several basic areas of planning.

TRANSPORTATION

While London, Paris, and Moscow – all

second oldest underground metro in Europe: the Tünel (a short, 573-meter funicular) which was completed in 1875. While the leaders of Constantinople were on the cutting edge of transportation 100 years ago, the leaders of Istanbul are currently behind the curve on curbing automobile dependency.

For the past fifteen years, Istanbul's city planners have been working hard to overcome the topography and the tumultuous politics of

already does due to vehicular traffic. The need is so strong that the country is willing to go billions of dollars into debt. Although that debt is enormous, the rewards to the city will greatly outweigh the negatives.

DEVELOPMENT

Istanbul continues to attract wealth and commerce, as it has for centuries. While the city has made strides in updating its infrastructure, it still shows signs of growing pains. Massive rural migration to Istanbul has resulted in scores of squatter developments. With a history of high inflation rates, dysfunctional capital markets, and religious opposition to the receipt or payment of interest, the introduction of a national mortgage system has not yet been possible. Consequently, homeowners have had to save great sums and pay outright for their homes in cash. Increased housing demands and strict zoning laws have forced families and immigrant workers to build illegally in squatter settlements (*Gecekondu*) on the outskirts of the city.

Development patterns in this city are unlike those in many European and American cities. You could say that this country was hit with the '50s stick, as much of its development was influenced by the ideals of 1950s design which put a premium on towered living. Because homeownership is less common, even in the outer areas, the typical single-family homes you might see in American suburbs are replaced by clusters of high-rise apartment buildings becoming more scattered the farther you travel from the city.

Unquestionably, this city is on the brink of great change. Feeling the pressures associated with being a candidate for membership in the European Union, Turkey liberalized its real estate market in 2003, opening it up for foreign investment. Furthermore, now that the economy has begun to stabilize, the Turkish government is looking to create a national mortgage system as early as the end of this year. The introduction



Istanbul suburb of Ataköy with Half-Metro rail access



Istanbul Metro (opened 2000)



Read all about it! Kadıköy's metro is oooopen!

of mortgages could change not only the face of development, but also the entire culture with the advent of a larger, emboldened middle class of homeowners. This is one of the final steps in the westernization of Turkish society.

İSTANBUL, NOT CONSTANTINOPLE

Despite the exotic and foreign elements, there were many reminders that this is a city of both East and West. The fashions of Istanbul had much in common with Europe and America. The Starbucks (skinny, two-pump, white-chocolate) iced mochas were as good in Istanbul as

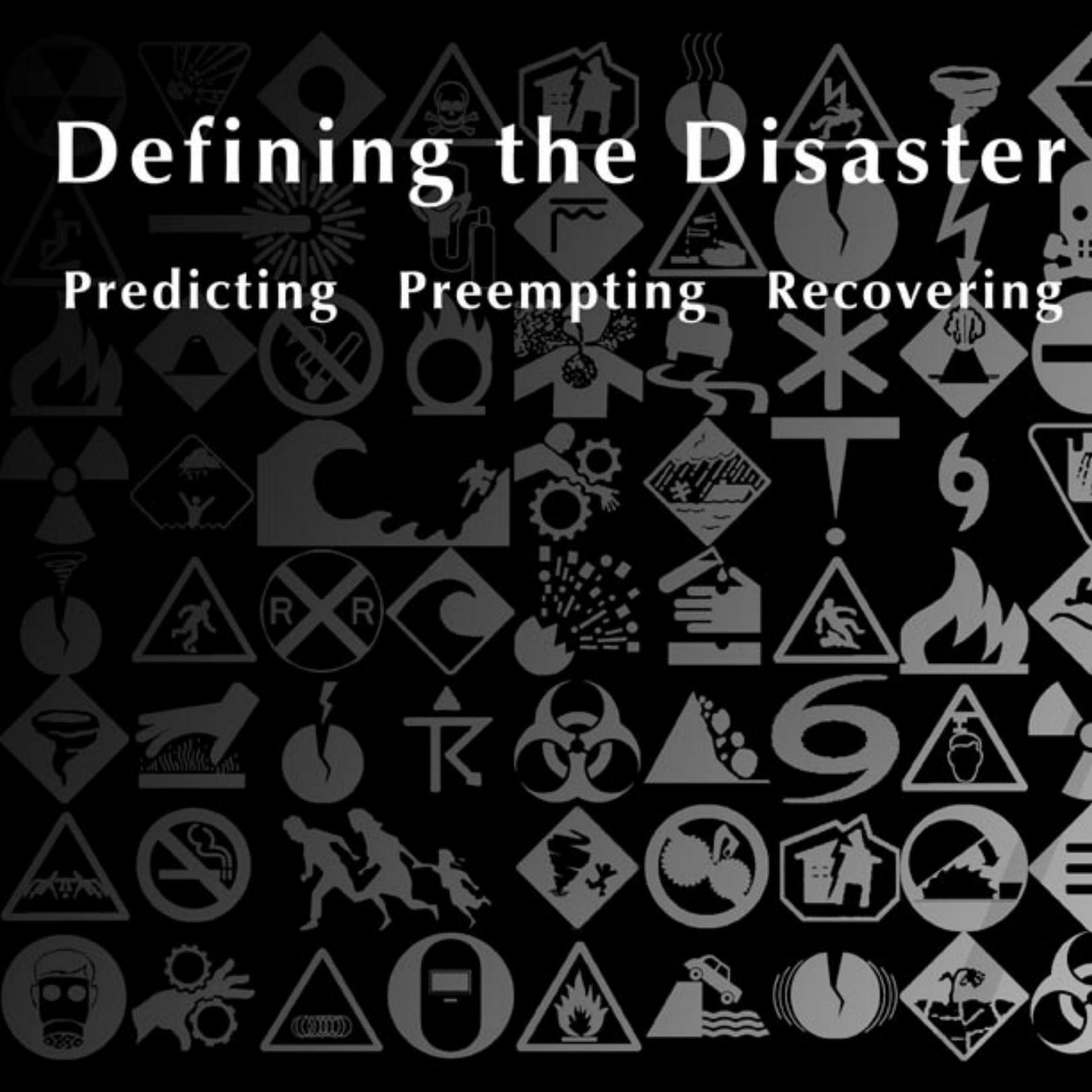
they were in Kuala Lumpur – according to Don. From our extensive research, Istanbul's nightclubs were on par with those of London, New York, or Madrid. High concepts and high prices abounded. One club located under Istanbul's famous Bosphorus Bridge and complete with a glass ceiling allowed us to reflect upon the automobile's role of connecting Europe and Asia as we sipped our whiskey. Our adventures even led us to a private party with Martin Gore (of Depeche Mode) and to another party where we met a national celebrity by the name of Tuba who, we later learned, was the Turkish equivalent of Paris Hilton. Hot.

On our last day together, we traveled to

“The Other Side” to round out our visit. While riding a tranquil ferry back across the Bosphorus to the European side, many mosques and minarets dotted the skyline as the sun set behind the old city. Gazing over the glittering water and rolling hills, we found ourselves seduced by Istanbul. Why the leaders of Rome thought to move their empire here 1,700 years ago was readily apparent. Even though our time there was drawing to a close and the skyline harked to an older time, we knew that Istanbul and Turkey's future was bright, and we would return to see that day. ■

Defining the Disaster

Predicting Preempting Recovering



Plan

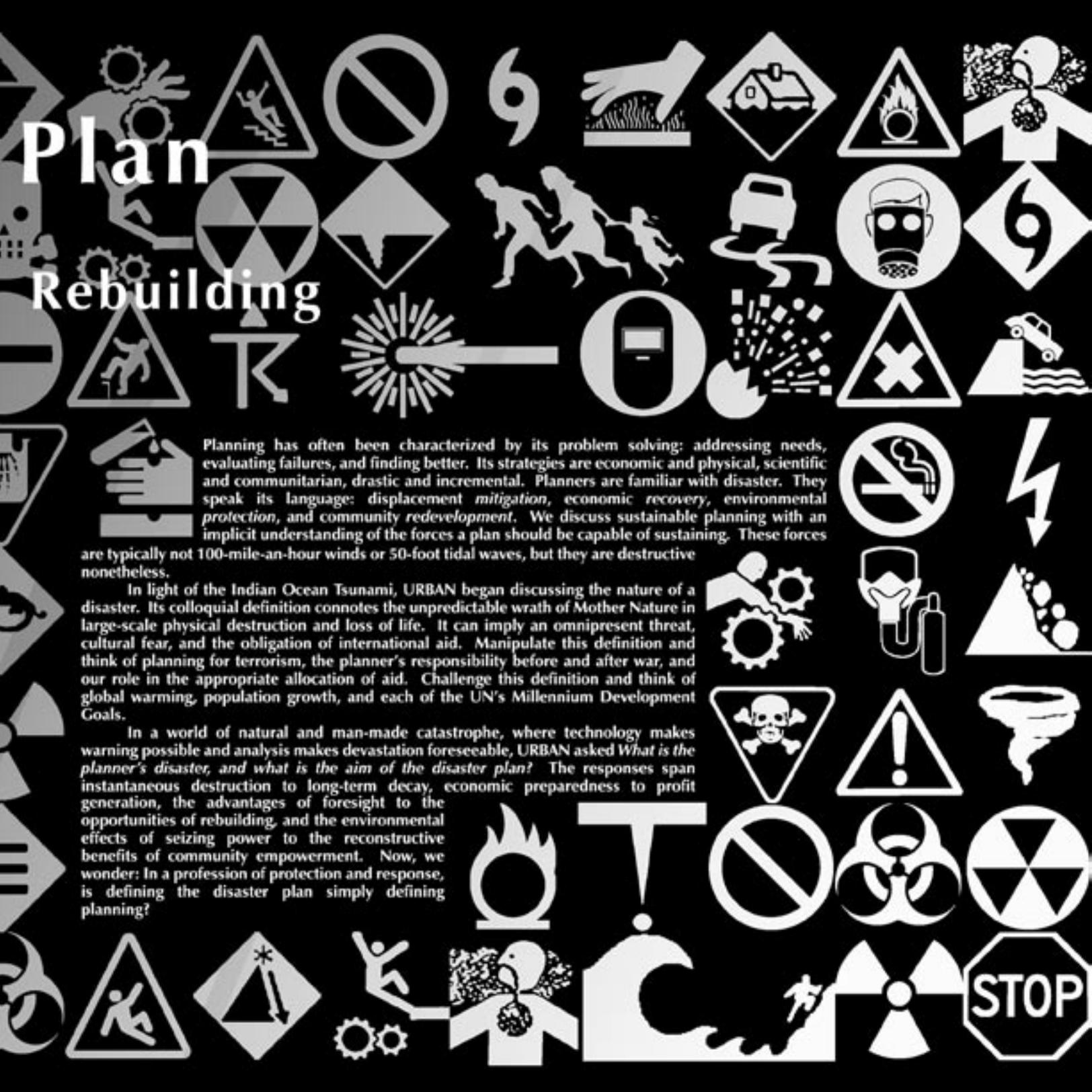
Rebuilding

Planning has often been characterized by its problem solving: addressing needs, evaluating failures, and finding better. Its strategies are economic and physical, scientific and communitarian, drastic and incremental. Planners are familiar with disaster. They speak its language: displacement *mitigation*, economic *recovery*, environmental *protection*, and community *redevelopment*. We discuss sustainable planning with an implicit understanding of the forces a plan should be capable of sustaining. These forces

are typically not 100-mile-an-hour winds or 50-foot tidal waves, but they are destructive nonetheless.

In light of the Indian Ocean Tsunami, URBAN began discussing the nature of a disaster. Its colloquial definition connotes the unpredictable wrath of Mother Nature in large-scale physical destruction and loss of life. It can imply an omnipresent threat, cultural fear, and the obligation of international aid. Manipulate this definition and think of planning for terrorism, the planner's responsibility before and after war, and our role in the appropriate allocation of aid. Challenge this definition and think of global warming, population growth, and each of the UN's Millennium Development Goals.

In a world of natural and man-made catastrophe, where technology makes warning possible and analysis makes devastation foreseeable, URBAN asked *What is the planner's disaster, and what is the aim of the disaster plan?* The responses span instantaneous destruction to long-term decay, economic preparedness to profit generation, the advantages of foresight to the opportunities of rebuilding, and the environmental effects of seizing power to the reconstructive benefits of community empowerment. Now, we wonder: In a profession of protection and response, is defining the disaster plan simply defining planning?



PLANNING THE RECOVERY: THE INDIAN OCEAN TSUNAMI

Alyson Elliott

In the waning days of 2004, the world took notice of inadequate disaster planning. Following an earthquake off the coast of Aceh, Indonesia, the Indian Ocean Tsunami killed 250,000 and devastated miles of coastline. With a newly formed tabula rasa beachfront, many nations face pressure to quickly restore vital infrastructure, industry, and housing to revive local economies. However, considerable effort should be spent analyzing measures to prevent future economic and humanitarian disasters.

The destructive forces of the tsunami great-

tions are an early warning system and education initiatives, such as the implementation of evacuation procedures and introduction of notification signage. While these projects could potentially save many lives with enough lead time, they are not a cure-all for wide-scale destruction of property and damage to local economies.

Another option is the implementation of stringent land-use planning limiting development in disaster-prone areas. While restricting construction or reducing density appears prudent, there are many uses, such as fishing, marinas, and

More densely developed areas along coastal regions are already in place, and measures such as preventing development or limiting density do little to minimize susceptibility to disaster. Retrofitting these areas with techniques that slow the destructive force of tsunamis, steer waves away from vulnerable people and properties, or block waves altogether, can minimize or prevent damage. Another method is the implementation of engineering standards so structures are built to withstand the impact of a tsunami. This can be accomplished through the use of specified building materials and other stringent technical requirements. Additionally, some call for the design of structures with the first few floors either raised above anticipated wave height or used for purposes other than living, such as hotel lobbies or parking, in order to minimize loss of life and livelihood.³

Engineering and design standards, however, are only as good as the level to which they are designed. Communities must decide how strict they want their standards. Designing for the rare 50-foot tsunami would significantly increase con-

Planning for natural disasters is like playing the lottery. If you purchase your ticket and play your numbers, you don't win; but the one time you don't play, your numbers will come up.

ly impacted the region's economy, although some nations and industries suffered more than others. The tourism industry, for example, is recovering from heavily damaged infrastructure and tourists' lack of confidence in the Indian Ocean as a safe destination. For countries like India and Bangladesh, where tourism respectively constitutes 4.9% and 3.7% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the tsunami damage will minimally affect their economies. However, the economies of Maldives and Seychelles, where tourism makes up 74% and 57% of the GDP will suffer until the industry can be rebuilt.¹

Many of the larger, more diversified, and wealthier countries will recover from this natural disaster at the macro-economic level. Like Aceh, the smaller remote economies were most affected. Poor coastal regions dependent on fishing communities and developing tourist economies lost their homes, businesses, and breadwinners.²

To mitigate future disasters in the Indian Ocean region, several planning options are under consideration. The two most popular prescrip-

tourist-support structures, which require coastline proximity to be profitable. Therefore, eliminating beachfront development could stifle weak, developing, or recovering economies.



Tsunami-Affected Regions¹



Boats begging for mercy before Mount Fuji in Katsushika Hokusai's "The Great Wave off Kanagawa"

struction costs, while designing to withstand the more common 10-foot wave would be less costly, but also less effective in the event of a larger tsunami. Governments should determine what types of buildings, if any, should be required to meet these stricter guidelines. For example, a poor fishing community may not find these strategies prudent. Alternatively, tsunami forests and blocking or steering walls offer protection from the force of tsunami waves. However, if low walls are surmounted by larger tsunamis and prevent the water from retreating back to the sea, they could cause more problems than they prevent.

Smart planning, which involves assessing where a community's vulnerabilities lie and planning for them, may be the most effective way to mitigate the impact of a disaster. This entails regulating development so vital community uses are located outside a hazard area. If there is no need for electrical plants, oil tanks, sewage treatment plants, or other such uses on the shoreline,

they should be located further inland where they can continue to serve the community. Community facilities such as schools, hospitals, government buildings, and emergency response services should be located outside the hazard zone, but within easy access to them. Diversifying the location of these resources will enable a community to effectively respond to a disaster with minimal encumbrances.⁴

Planning for natural disasters is like playing the lottery. If you purchase your ticket and play your numbers, you don't win; but the one time you don't play, your numbers will come up. Rebuilding a region following a devastating tsunami creates a chance to design communities to withstand future disaster. However, each nation will need to determine its unique solutions based on its vulnerabilities, assumptions of future risk, and ability to absorb the increased cost of rebuilding according to smart planning techniques. While it may be quicker and easier to rebuild communities as they

were, spending the money now will increase the chances of resiliency for quick economic recovery and the protection of human life. ■

NOTES

¹Economic Forum. *Economic Impact of the Indian Ocean Earthquakes and Tsunamis: A Preliminary Assessment* <<http://www.tdctrade.com/econforum/tdc/tdc041204.htm>>

²Overseas Development Institute. *The Indian Ocean Tsunami: What Are the Economic Consequences?* <<http://www.odi.org.uk/tsunami.html>>

³National Tsunami Hazard Mitigation Program.

"Designing for Tsunamis: Seven Principles for Planning and Designing for Tsunami Hazards." March 2001.

⁴ibid.

BEYOND RELIEF: DEVELOPMENT LESSONS FROM LISBON & MANAGUA

Ramón Muñoz-Raskin

Good planning is crucial to recovery in post-disaster situations. When a disaster shakes a country and disrupts its human and physical capital structures, it affects more than what is erased at first glance. An earthquake, war, or landslide can reduce to ashes an important number of the social and economic programs, and undermine the potential of those remaining. A merely humanitarian or emergency relief framework is not enough for recovery; needs always go beyond relief. Thus, to minimize the impact and effects of a disaster, both short-term relief and long-term development planning are vital.

To minimize the cumulative impact on social and economic structures, market conditions must regain their roles as soon as possible. This recovery can not be accomplished without flexible and coordinated domestic and institutional planning comprising all strata of society. If this process is done organically, without thinking comprehensively and sitting key stakeholders at the table, misallocation of scarce funding and intellectual resources is likely to occur.

This article will focus on the examples of two cities which have been reshaped after devastating natural disasters. In each of them, planning – or its absence – has played a fundamental role. Planning becomes very important to recovery, given the fragility of a city severely injured by a disaster and the consequences of a nonplanning or a poor planning scenario can condemn generations of its dwellers.

LISBON, PORTUGAL

Striking and shaking much more than the city and its buildings, the 1755 earthquake that destroyed Lisbon had a tremendous transformative impact on the city fabric. In addition to the estimated 90,000 people killed (out of 275,000), 85% of Lisbon's buildings were destroyed by the combination of the tremors, a subsequent large tsunami, and fires caused by lit lamps. Because Lisbon was the fourth largest city in Europe and the capital of one of the most powerful empires in



Depiction of Lisbon's Catastrophe

the Occidental World, this catastrophe had severe impacts on European culture and society. Lisbon was the capital of a devout Catholic country, and this manifestation of the anger of God was difficult to explain. In fact, it heavily influenced many thinkers of the European Enlightenment, such as Voltaire and Kant.¹

Nevertheless, the existence of visionary and charismatic leaders, led by Prime Minister Marquis of Pombal, marked a difference with other

major disasters in history. Immediately after the tragedy, Portuguese society started to reorganize. The king and the Marquis of Pombal quickly hired architects and engineers, who planned the reconstruction. In less than a year, Lisbon was free from debris and undergoing major urban works. The earthquake led to an unexpected change. In many ways, the tremors tore Lisbon from its medieval decadence and forced it to acknowledge the necessities of an increasingly modern world.² This process was well planned and undertaken, rebuilding the areas with the highest level of damage along a wide-street grid system, while the less damaged areas were restored to their original street and building design schemes.³ In addition, the new “pombaline” buildings were among the

first occidental seismically-designed structures to be built in history.⁴ Therefore, this was an opportunity to develop a new, perfectly ordered city that magnified the splendor of the empire.

Although the quake accelerated political tensions in Portugal and profoundly undermined the colonialist ambitions of the Portuguese Empire, the socioeconomic costs were dramatically reduced. Had immediate action not been taken with a developmental perspective, the breach of financial and human development would have been much too severe. With the disaster, Portuguese society faced a process of crisis, but took advantage of this opportunity to rethink and reshape its potential. Latent ideas and energies were released, and Lisbon was modernized.

MANAGUA, NICARAGUA

A counterexample to Lisbon's post-disaster reaction is Nicaragua's capital, Managua. In 1972 an earthquake, with its epicenter under the city, resulted in the destruction of the heavily populated central core. Subsequent fires blazed throughout

More than three decades later, Managua is still only the ghost of a city that used to exist.

the city compounding the damages. In the wake of the disaster, at least 8,000 of Managua's total population of 430,000 died, 50% of jobs were lost, and 70% of the population became homeless. In addition, the earthquake wiped out at least 10% of the nation's industrial capacity and 50% of the commercial property, while 70% of the government facilities were rendered inoperative.⁵ Although Managua had been partially destroyed by previous earthquakes (1844, 1885, and 1931), the severity of this one was compounded by a bad cotton harvest, which along with coffee, was the most important asset of Nicaragua's economy. This combination of factors intensified the crisis and undermined the economic potential. Political weakness became rampant and partially induced a



Managua before 1972 (left)⁶ and in 2003 (right)

period of instability, social inequalities, corruption, and occasional war that lasted three decades.

Central Managua was never rebuilt. “If you look at the center of Managua, you will not find it: it does not have one.”⁶ Instead, a sprawl of markets, businesses, and houses developed organically with the only major constraint being the right-of-way of some major roads. Reconstruction and redevelopment abandoned the city center and started to occur in dispersed suburbs where construction was easier due to less control and the existence of land without debris. The city grew without planning, and spatial diseconomies spurred organically, like cancer. Even today, some streets have no names, and coordinates used by the population are based on unorthodox points of reference: “from Loli’s ice cream store, seven blocks to the lake, and three up.” More than three decades later, Managua is still only the ghost of a city that used to exist.

Managua gives post-disaster evidence of post-disaster moving beyond relief towards development. At first, international donations flourished in the form of aid injections, but the flow stopped when this aid was still necessary to guarantee sustainable development. The minimal planning that Managua has unfortunately undertaken has developed a sprawling automobile-

oriented, pseudo-suburban fabric, favoring those who can afford a car and creating a horrible widespread network of pedestrian-unfriendly facilities.⁷ Managua is a clear example of post-disaster, long-term, steady chaos, and a model to stay away from for future reference.

WHAT CAN WE LEARN?

As the Lisbon case shows, much of the post-natural human disaster could have been prevented with targeted development planning beyond mere relief aid. Two and a half centuries ago development-oriented planning at the appropriate time reduced and mitigated the negative spillovers from future economic and social post-disaster development. In this sense, post-disaster planners have two key responsibilities: protecting the fragility of very damaged societies and acting beyond relief. If the indirect effects of the disaster are not addressed immediately, the situation is likely to be more painful in the long-term.

Reconstruction is not enough. There are risks of socioeconomic involution and inhibition of productive rehabilitation. It would be unfair to say that Nicaraguans did not want to follow the Lisbon example. However, the consequences of a poor planning scenario have condemned the city and country for more than three decades.

Managua’s missed opportunity to foster post-disaster development should be seen as an important lesson. ■

NOTES

¹“Lisbon earthquake.” *Wikipedia*. <<http://en.wikipedia.org/>>

²Reeves, Robert. *The Lisbon Earthquake of 1755: Confrontation between the Church and the Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century Portugal*. <http://www.dickinson.edu/~quallsk/thesis_reeves.doc>

³Rational Responses

⁴“Lisbon earthquake.”

⁵University of Wisconsin Disaster Management Center. *Natural Hazards: Causes and Effects*. <<http://dmc.engr.wisc.edu/courses/hazards/BB02-02.html>>

⁶Pinoleros. <<http://www.pinoleros.com/>>

⁷With Nicaragua having an average per capita purchasing power parity of \$2,470 (HDR, 2004), most of the population cannot acquire a car and a pedestrian unfriendly urban layer as existing in Managua is obviously mistargeted.

⁸Alcaldía de Managua.

POVERTY'S SLOW DISASTER: FAMINE

Jacob Feit

According to UN projections, the world population is increasing sharply. From approximately 2.5 billion people in 1950, to a current population of nearly 6.4 billion, the number is projected to reach about 9 billion in 2050. In 1950, the population of developed countries was nearly 813 million and grew to 1.2 billion people by 2005. Over the same time period, the population of the developing world skyrocketed from 1.7 to 5.2 billion people. The growing disparity between these numbers is accelerating. By 2050, 7.8 billion people will live in developing countries, while the developed population will stagnate around 1.2 billion.¹ One of the world's greatest challenges remains feeding this rapidly growing population.

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that there are 852 million people who do not have enough to eat. One in three lives in sub-Saharan Africa, and 315 million live in South Asia. Both are prime examples of regions where nature and civil strife converge to create a major disaster. Conflict disrupts the agricultural cycle and relief efforts. Moreover, it diverts government budgets toward military operations and detracts resources from long-term development.² Ultimately, as a

in Sudan, caused by an ongoing drought and civil war, in which warring factions hoard available food. Furthermore, Kenya's second poor maize crop only aggravates their food shortages. However, where weather conditions have improved (such as Ethiopia), so has the food situation. The effects of drought have gotten so severe that hunger and malnutrition are the number one risk to global health, killing more people than AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis combined.⁴

Not only does famine devastate the lives of people in the developing world, but it harms a new generation of children. Therefore, a new generation in the developing world is condemned to start their lives in trouble. According to the FAO *State of Food Insecurity in the World 2003*, famine poses grave risks to children. Every year, 17 million children are born underweight because their mothers are malnourished. Specifically, over half of all pregnant women do not have sufficient iron, and every day almost 300 die in childbirth. Iron deficiency impairs growth and is the most common form of malnutrition, affecting 180 million children under four. It impairs the mental development of 40 to 60% of the children in developing countries. In fact, fortifying food



Artistic depiction of the Ukrainian Genocidal Famine (Holodomor (1932-1933), by an unknown artist.⁸

the age of 5 die in developing countries each year. Malnutrition causes 60% of these deaths.⁵

In response to the magnitude of the problem, programs have been implemented to start to remedy the situation. One solution to this crisis requires the developed world to commit funds in various forms of aid. According to the UN's World Food Program (WFP), the average daily expenditure on food in the developed world is \$10, yet the WFP food rations amount to 29 cents per day. Furthermore, only one week's worth of developed nations' farm subsidies would cover the annual cost of food aid to developing countries. Beyond subsidies, implementing proper infra-

... hunger and malnutrition are the number one risk to global health, killing more people than AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis combined.

result of famine, hunger and malnutrition result in 10 million deaths a year.³

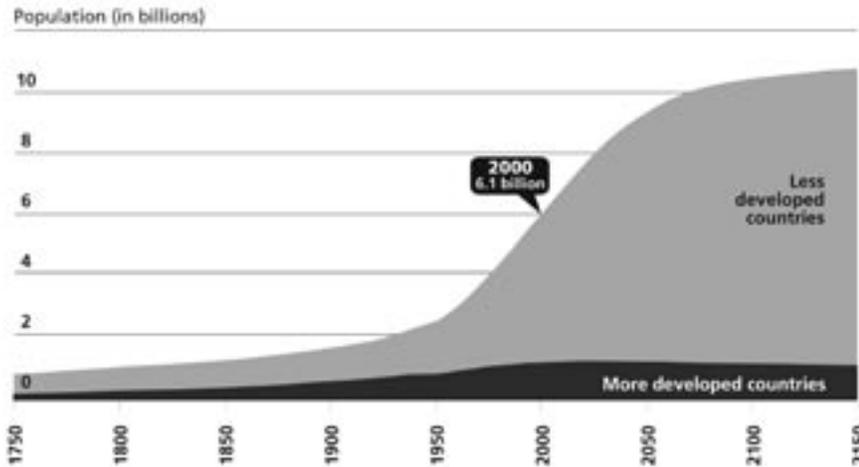
In February, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) identified 36 countries as facing serious food shortages and eleven countries with "unfavorable" prospects for current crops. Of these countries, 23 are in Africa. While there are various reasons for this, their report cites civil strife and adverse weather as the primary concerns. The most notable example is the famine

with iron has shown a greater impact on health than immunization. In addition to iron, vitamin A deficiency kills a million infants each year, can cause blindness, and weakens the immune system of 40% of children under five. Lastly, iodine deficiency is the main cause of brain damage in the early years of a child's life. As a result, child mortality rates in Africa are eight times higher than Europe, and malnutrition is considered the main cause. Specifically, 10.9 million children under

structure would have a lasting effect. To counter drought as the main cause of food shortages in poor countries, irrigation systems could be constructed, potentially boosting crop yields by up to 400%.

However, all these plans require political commitment and action from the developed world. The commitment was expressed in the first of the UN's eight Millennium Development Goals, aiming to cut the percentage of the world's

World population growth, 1750-2150



From the Population Reference Bureau⁹

hungry population in half by 2015.⁶ One example of political commitment is the creation of the Inter-Agency Task Force on the UN Response to Long-Term Food Security, Agricultural Development and Related Aspects in the Horn of Africa. Established in April 2000, by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, the task force is charged with recommending a solution to famine in the region. As a result, the agency proposed a Framework for Action, a ten-year strategy to rid the countries in the region of their dependence on foreign aid and implement changes necessary to prevent famines from recurring.⁷ While this severe problem will not be eradicated quickly, with the proper political and financial commitment, in time it could be resolved. ■

NOTES

¹Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat. “World Population Prospects: The 2004 Revision” and “World Urbanization Prospects: The 2003 Revision.” <<http://esa.un.org/unpp>>

²The Inter-Agency Task Force on the UN Response to Long-Term Food Security, Agricultural Development, and Related Aspects in the Horn of Africa. “Eliminating Food Insecurity in the Horn of Africa.” 15 September 2000. <<http://www.fao.org/news/2000/brief/img/HoAsum.pdf>>

³UN World Food Program. <<http://www.wfp.org/aboutwfp/facts/hungerfacts.asp>>

⁴Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. <<http://www.fao.org/newsroom/en/news/2005/90082/index.html>>

⁵UN World Food Program

⁶<<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals>>

⁷Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. “Action Plan to End Hunger in the Horn of Africa Unveiled” Press Release, 27 October 2000. <http://www.fao.org/WAICENT/OIS/PRESS_NE/PRESSENG/2000/pren0060.htm>

⁸<www.artukraine.com>

⁹Data from the UN “World Population Prospects: the 1998 Revision,” and estimates by the Population Reference Bureau.

DISASTER AND CREATIVE DESTRUCTION: THE GREAT CHICAGO FIRE AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES

Matthew Gebhardt

At about nine o'clock on the sleepy Sunday evening of October 8, 1871, a small fire broke out in a cow barn at 137 De Koven Street in Chicago. Within an hour the fire had burned the entire block and was quickly spreading to nearby factories and grain elevators on gusting winds. Sparks and burning cinders fell "like red rain" on the city igniting drought-dried pine buildings and raised wood walkways. As the panicked population fled, and the fire companies vainly sought to slow the conflagration, the fire continued to consume the city. On Tuesday morning rain finally smothered the last of the flames.

The Great Chicago Fire, as it came to be known, left over 2,000 acres of the city, including

The Great Fire cleared away the obsolete existing fabric of the city and afforded opportunities for innovation and growth.

the entire central business district, in smoldering ruin. Nearly \$200 million worth of property was destroyed, and more than 100,000 Chicagoans were left homeless. Although evidence suggests otherwise, blame for the fire was placed on a surly cow belonging to the O'Learys, a poor Irish immigrant family.

Even as the first relief efforts started to ease the suffering caused by the fire, city officials and business leaders began to plot the "Great Rebuilding" of the city. Within two days William Bross, co-publisher of the *Chicago Tribune*, was traveling to New York to urge renewed investment in Chicago. He proclaimed that this was an opportunity "to establish [the American enterprise] on a scale more gigantic and more profitable than ever before," with New York and Chicago as its key partners. John Stephen Wright, an ardent supporter of Chicago since his arrival in 1832, proclaimed that "five years will give Chicago more men, more money, more business, than she would have had without this fire."¹

While their statements reeked of booster-

ism, Bross and Wright were correct. The Great Fire cleared away the obsolete existing fabric of the city and afforded opportunities for innovation and growth. Few of those opportunities were missed. The central business district was rebuilt and greatly expanded, its buildings climbing taller and becoming grander. Even the removed debris was used as landfill to claim portions of the lake-front for building.

CREATIVE DESTRUCTION

In 1942, Lewis Mumford reflecting on the bombing of cities throughout Europe declared, "there is a sense in which the demolition that is taking place through war has not yet gone far enough." What must be done, Mumford ex-

brutal hit-or-miss, if we are to have space enough to live in and produce the proper means of living."²

Mumford's thoughts reflect Joseph Schumpeter's famous contribution to economic theory, the concept of creative destruction. Schumpeter theorized that creative destruction, the incessant outdated and destruction of old economic structures through innovation spurred by competition, was a necessary element of capitalism.³ David Harvey and Neil Smith, among others, have extended this to suggest that capitalism needs and profits from the constant reconstruction of cities. Investment in fixed assets such as buildings becomes trapped as these buildings become obsolete. For this investment to be freed and for innovation to occur, the old must be swept away. The city must be constantly updated to meet the needs of capitalism.^{4,5}

Mumford, an avid planning historian, was no doubt thinking of Baron Hausmann's reconstruction of Paris when he wrote these lines. Hausmann systematically and radically reconstructed



The Central Business District after The Great Chicago Fire of 1871⁶



The courthouse was one of few surviving structures in Chicago's burnt district.⁷

a city viewed as obsolete and not conducive to business or bourgeois tastes. Mumford's statements reflected the sentiment of many planners during this time period and presaged the massive post-war slum clearance and urban renewal programs aimed at removing outdated and dangerous portions of the city to free those areas for capital investment.

Creative destruction in Chicago did not need Baron Hausmann or urban renewal (until many decades later). It had Mrs. O'Leary's cow. And Chicago is not the only city that saw many benefits from a devastating fire. After fires destroyed much of their downtowns in 1666 and 1676 respectively, London and Boston seized the opportunity to widen key streets to ease travel and commerce. The spectacular 1835 fire that destroyed parts of Manhattan turned out to be a fortuitous event for many area property owners as a building boom, brought on by the completion of the Erie Canal, took advantage of the sudden availability of prime real estate. History is

replete with examples of disaster sweeping away the old arrangement and replacing them with new configurations more conducive to innovation and accumulation by enterprising capitalists.

Of course, these calamities did not benefit all. Quite like Hausmann's reconstruction of Paris or urban renewal, only a few shared in the spoils of rebuilding. Most residents, after seeing their homes destroyed in the Great Chicago Fire and losing their entire investment, found only higher rents brought on by the housing shortage and stagnant wages as employers cited economic hardship. The amount of human suffering associated with disasters such as fire or war or tsunamis is often staggering. However, as each generation becomes increasingly distant, the suffering – while not forgotten – is diminished. What most often remains is the triumphalism of the capitalist spirit and progress typically trumpeted by those who benefited most from the tragedy. ■

NOTES

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²Mumford, Lewis. *City Development: Studies in Disintegration and Renewal*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1945.

³Schumpeter, Joseph. *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*. New York, NY: Harper, 1950.

⁴Harvey, David. *Urban Experience*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989.

⁵Smith, Neil. *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital and the Production of Space*. Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1991.

⁶Bales, Richard. *The Great Chicago Fire and the Myth of Mrs. O'Leary's Cow*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 1951. Figure 30.

⁷ibid. Figure 17.

REVERSING A SCORCHED-EARTH POLICY

Vivian Castro



A Marsh Community⁵

One of the lesser-known changes that Americans are bringing to Iraq is marshes, or the reintroduction of marshes in southern Iraq. Former leader Saddam Hussein, a Sunni Muslim, purposefully diverted and dammed the water of the southern marshes in order to cut off the lifeline of the Shi'a Ma'dan, also referred to as Marsh Arabs, following an anti-government uprising after the 1991 Gulf War. The water level was already sinking as a result of Turkish and Syrian dams built in the 1950s. However, Saddam intensified the desertification process through the diversion and damming of the waters of the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers. Consequently, a majority of the human, livestock, and wildlife inhabitants of this unique wetlands ecosystem either perished or were displaced. Approximately 300,000 out of the 500,000 Marsh Arabs died. The majority of survivors migrated to refugee camps in Iran or to urban areas in Iraq. The Ma'dan whose people had inhabited the Mesopotamian marshes for the last 5,000 years had their culture, livelihood, families, and way of life destroyed.

The Iraqi government claimed that its actions were part of a national dryland agricultural scheme, but UN Human Rights-Rapporteur Max van der Stoel stated in 1993 that “there’s not the slightest indication that [the government is] working on such a program. Every indication points in the same direction: they do this purely for military purposes, they want to subdue these people.”¹

The marshes are located amidst the junction of the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers, an area purported to be the site of the biblical Garden of Eden. In 2001 the United Nations Environment Program reported that about 93% of the swampy oasis is parched and contaminated, resulting in one of the “worst environmental disasters of this century.”² The destruction of these wetlands, the largest in western Asia, has had far-reaching

monkeys – one can not just pour water and watch them magically grow.

RESTORATION CHALLENGES

Regional cooperation can not be underestimated if the marshes are to be widely reflooded. Turkey and Syria continue to use large amounts of the rivers’ waters for irrigation, reducing the flow of water through Iraq. At present, there are no viable transborder water-sharing agreements between Iraq and its neighbors.

Intertribe communication is also imperative. The area to be restored is equivalent to the Everglades. However, the Iraqi marsh project is more complex because the project seeks to restore a way of life and bring back the original inhabitants. Marsh restoration planners must be weary

...93% of the swampy oasis is parched and contaminated, resulting in one of the “worst environmental disasters of this century.”

environmental consequences. The destruction of the area’s natural hydrology system has disrupted the migratory cycles of millions of birds, fish, and shrimp. Species of endemic plants and animals are now in danger of extinction.

AMERICANS ENTER IRAQ

After the 2003 US-led invasion, Iraqi officials blocked one of Saddam’s artificial rivers, diverting the water back to the marshes and reflooding ten percent of the marshes near Nasiriyah. Today, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) is spearheading a nascent project to reintroduce the southern Iraqi marshes in order to restore their cultural, environmental, and socioeconomic value. Reintroducing a complex ecosystem into an altered temporal, social, and political fabric does not come without its challenges. These are not your childhood sea

of the potential for new conflicts. People have been displaced, and there is a high potential for land disputes over what is sure to be limited land, at least in the beginning stages. Also, what may be good for one man may not be good for another. For example, a family’s rice production may flood the homes of people downstream. For all of the mentioned reasons – land, water, and the conse-



An Iraqi scientist checks the state of Iraq’s desiccated Qurnah marsh.⁶

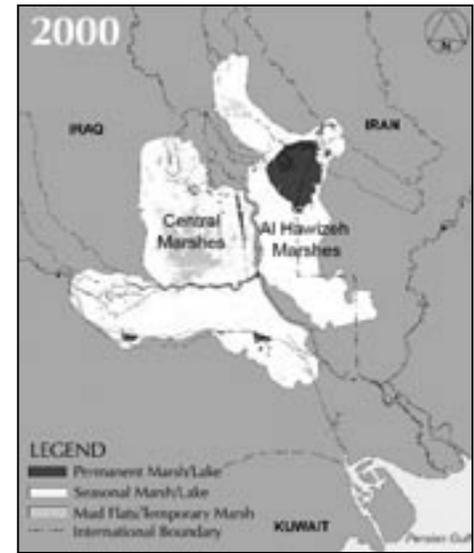
quences of haphazard development – regional and local communication will shape the success of the marsh restoration. Doug Poole, senior consultant for USAID’s agriculture program in Iraq stresses the importance of partnerships. So far, USAID has partnered with the ministries, the Iraq Foundation, Duke University, and others.³

Marsh restorers are also faced with the challenge of selecting the target areas. The full restoration of the marshes to their former state is unlikely, and a nontransparent selection process could be perceived as biased against areas that are not included in the scope of the project. However, a transparent and unambiguous selection process based on land-use capability mapping and proper geographic analysis could mitigate potential conflicts. So far, the Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs has expressed concern over the United States government’s lack of transparency in the general reconstruction process. “The contracts are not available for public reading, there is no public participation process for evaluating them, and no environmental or social impact statements are required in the manner of those required by the U.S. Environmental Policy Act of 1969.”

These are not your childhood sea monkeys – one can not just pour water and watch them magically grow.

An important question that must be asked is whether people want to return to the marshes. Younger generations with a taste of city life might be reluctant to return to a life of no electricity, running water, paved roads, and modern schools.⁴ The focus should be on what people want today and not on a romanticized view of the marshes.

Economics will also play an important role in the future of the marshes. The area holds one of the largest unexploited oil reserves in the Middle East. The exploration of oil reserves has already



Depletion of the Mesopotamian Marshlands⁷

begun and is sure to strongly shape the future of the marshes. Although no definitive decisions have been made to extract oil, members of the Iraqi Ministry of Water Resources recently visited a site in southern Louisiana where oil and natural

commitment of donor countries and the Iraqi government. In summary, the comprehensive planning of the marshes could be a positive force in a country thirsty for new beginnings. ■

NOTES

¹Kazmi, Sayeed Nadeem and Stuart M. Leiderman. “Twilight People: Iraq’s Marsh Inhabitants.” *Human Rights Dialogue: Environmental Rights*, Spring 2004. Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs. <<http://www.cccia.org/viewMedia.php/prmTemplateID/8/prmID/4458>>

²United Nations Environment Programme. “The Mesopotamian Marshlands: Demise of an Ecosystem.” 2001.

³Interview conducted in Washington DC, 15 December 2004.

⁴Glanz, James. “For Iraq’s Great Marshes, A Hesitant Comeback.” *New York Times*, 8 March 2005.

⁵<<http://alamood.dk/iraq/marshes>>

⁶Photo by Suzie Alwash.

⁷Maps: UNEP/DEWA/GRID-Geneva 2001

gas are extracted in a wetland environment.

And finally, funding remains a crucial obstacle to realizing the marsh restoration vision. The United States has only allocated \$4 million dollars for an 18-month program that ends in December 2005. The Italian, Canadian, and Japanese governments have also committed funds. USAID is working with these country donors and the Ministry of Water Resources to create a strategic master plan. The long-term nature of the project could be undermined without the long-term

PLANNING FOR CLIMATE CHANGE IN NEW YORK CITY

Ron Slangen

Climate change is the most severe problem that we are facing today – more serious even than the threat of terrorism.

–David A. King, Chief Scientist, United Kingdom

The thought of melting glaciers in the distant arctic may seem of little concern to someone living in Battery Park City in Lower Manhattan. The truth of the matter, however, is that it should be. As James Gustave Speth, Dean of Yale's School of Environmental Studies states, "... temperature and sea levels could continue to rise well into the next century even if societies stabilize the levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere."¹ Bolstering Speth's prediction, the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) – the world body charged with assessing scientific information relevant for understanding climate change and its potential impacts – reported several changes they anticipate will occur between 1990 and 2100. In their report released in 2001, the IPCC forecasts an increase of temperature from 1.4 to 5.8° C, increases of precipitation globally (with some areas experiencing decreases), increases in sea level from .09 to .88 meters, and an increase in extreme events.² If what Speth and the IPCC say is true, climate change will have serious implications for New York City.

Situated on islands (except for the Bronx) and exposed to open coastlines, New York City is dangerously vulnerable to sea-level rise. As a result of small increases, storm floods would be higher, cover wider areas, and occur more often.³ Moreover, increases in sea-level would also cause coastal erosion, the submergence of wetlands, and the intrusion of salt water into estuaries and aquifers. Salt water intrusion will affect the Hudson River, possibly reaching the water supply system's emergency Chelsea Pump Station south of Poughkeepsie. Other impacts include damage to the City's sewer, wastewater treatment systems, and transportation infrastructure.

To the comfort of New Yorkers, however, sea-level rise is an issue that New York City is well positioned to address. With a strong scientific base of climate researchers at Columbia Earth's Institute, as well as the political will to enact changes (e.g., the Mayor's new Task Force on Sustainability⁴), New York can potentially be a model city

for adaptations and mitigations to climate change. The 2001 report issued under the auspices of the Earth Institute, *Climate Change and a Global City* focuses on the impacts of climate change on the metropolitan east coast.⁵ It is a valuable resource for policy makers thinking of ways to prepare the city for climate change.

Researchers have identified a range of potential actions to prepare the city for climate-related impacts, including institutional and physical adaptations. These include changes that may have been made for other purposes, but show the way toward increasing the robustness of systems in the face of the uncertainties of climate change impacts. These are particularly important for the water system. Cynthia Rosenzweig, William Solecki, and David Major provide many examples.⁶ A simple institutional change demonstrating flexibility in water system use was the purchase of water-storage capacity in the F.E. Walter Reservoir, normally a flood control reservoir, by the Delaware River Basin Commission.⁷ One of the earliest available examples of a physical adaptation is the raising of an outlet pipe for the City Tunnel No. 3 at Roosevelt Island above its original design level, explicitly in response to predicted sea level rise.⁸ Zoning and land-use responses, furthermore, could also enable orderly urban development that is sensitive to sea-level rises, especially along waterfronts. This is particularly relevant to the Greenpoint-Williamsburg waterfront redevelopment in Brooklyn.

Another important angle to consider is the use of public space. With colder winters and potentially hotter summers, people may find themselves less involved in public life, namely in the use of parks. As Stephen Carr, in his book *Public Space* suggests, "Climate acts as a significant constraint on both the existence of an outdoor public life and the nature of the settings that develop..."⁹ The impacts of climate change, therefore, could significantly alter the nature of public life in cities.

With the recent enactment of the Kyoto Protocol, governments around the world, with the notable exception of the United States, have taken concrete steps to control global warming. The Protocol, which President Bush rejects but which the nations of Europe, Japan, Russia, and Canada now support, is a positive step towards limiting emissions of carbon dioxide and the other gases scientists blame for rising world temperatures. However, as Speth mentions, the impacts may be inevitable.

Although the climate change predictions are dispersed over the next century, this period of grace should be utilized to prepare future mitigation and adaptation responses.¹⁰ New York City is well positioned to do something about it. Unlike developing countries, New York has both the economic and technological resources to make needed adaptations. With foresight in planning, the innovative strategies that the City devises now can therefore be adopted in other cities around the US and the rest of the world. ■

NOTES

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THE COMMUNITY VOICE & SUSTAINABLE RECONSTRUCTION

Michelle Sorkin

Ecological catastrophes, along with the depletion of the earth's resources and climate change are on the rise. In fact, they are most likely interrelated. Hardest hit are usually dense, poor areas lacking adequate infrastructure and the capital to rebuild what was destroyed. Not surprisingly, these pockets are commonly areas that are most reliant on immediate, raw natural resources for their economic survival. Thus, they are all the more devastated by disasters.

With the Indian Ocean catastrophe still looming fresh in our minds, planners have a chilling reminder of the vulnerability of cities and their inhabitants. Not too long ago, images of homes flattened and lives shattered in the aftermath of the earthquakes in Kobe, Japan and Bam, Iran permeated the media. Anyone who ventures to put a dollar figure on the total cost of damage caused by floods, earthquakes, hurricanes, and pandemics in the last ten years is only telling half the story. The other half is incalculable. It is the cost of human lives.

FIRST LAYER: MOBILIZING THE AFFECTED

Japan, one of the largest industrialized nations, and Iran, a less developed country, similarly experienced disasters of epic proportion and the chaos that ensued. In light of recent events, the fact that any region, regardless of wealth or development, is not immune to the forces of nature becomes apparent. At the same time, developed countries are better equipped to deal with such disasters. Within one year, Kobe established a ten-year plan called the "Kobe Revival Plan." The plan outlined strategic goals, which included improving infrastructure, communication, and accessibility to information and health services. The strategy was very deliberate: by empowering local communities, in the event of a recurrence, they would be able to respond faster at the local level than the federal government. Ten years into the program's inception, "almost 40% of elderly



Remains of a citadel after Bam's earthquake¹

people, and more that 50% of youth are participating in community groups."² The city of Kobe continues to modify its communicative planning approach as a preemptive measure, while acknowledging that full preparedness is unattainable.

Nearly a year after the deadly quake destroyed one-third of the total population, the

desert city of Bam illustrates the approach of a community dealing with the aftermath with far fewer resources. Bam's economy is largely dependent on date farms. Therefore, the recovery efforts have mainly focused on the reconstruction of needed infrastructure, specifically the canals that irrigate the date crops. Water supply to this town and nearby rural areas was completely destroyed, and the area's economy was on the brink

of destruction. With foreign aid and the physical efforts of the community, many of the canals have already been rebuilt.³

SECOND LAYER: SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE THROUGH RENEWABLE ENERGY

A disaster is not necessary for chaos to reign in urban areas. Take, for example, the energy crisis in California or the 2003 blackout in the Northeast. Despite their transient nature, these unpredictable power outages have a tremendous psychological effect, leaving residents feeling helpless and at the mercy of large utilities. Efforts to promote alternative energy are under way, but policy makers must make this a priority not only through emergency management, but more importantly with long-term sustainability.

Increasing awareness of dwindling resources has prompted more research in the field of renewable energy, and several key, forward-thinking projects have been implemented. In the East River, the Roosevelt Island Tidal Energy project developed by Verdant Power involves the installation of hydropowered turbines submerged eight to twelve feet below the surface. Estimates show that the system could replace "the equivalent of 68,000 barrels of oil," and power about 7,000

There is no cookbook recipe for disaster mitigation, but the move from visionary to planner occurs when we stop bowing to the inevitable.

homes,⁴ representing a pollution reduction of 167 tons of sulfur dioxide, 100 tons of nitrogen oxides, and over 30,000 tons of carbon dioxide. The new technology is cost-competitive, even in its infancy. The cost is projected at roughly four cents more per kilowatt hour than traditional fossil-fuel generation, and this gap will likely decrease with time. This would be great for the New York region, but imagine how it would impact parts of the world

Cost of Natural Disaster as Percentage of Exposed Country's Annual GDP, 1990-2000⁷

Argentina	1.81%
Bangladesh	5.21%
China	2.50%
Jamaica	12.58%
Nicaragua	15.60%
Zimbabwe	9.21%

with more lax emissions regulations.

The potential use of this system in underdeveloped countries is particularly noteworthy. The system is designed to be adaptable and moveable, creating hydroelectric power without dams. In the future, these systems will hopefully be designed such that the fields could also perform water purification and desalination. "In developing countries, these systems can power irrigation, and suck oxygen down to aerate streams clogged

with runoff."⁵ In terms of natural disasters, this is particularly important for global economies dependent on agriculture.

Another example of renewable energy in the US is the Waste-to-Energy transfer system. A study estimates that if all the solid waste currently land filled in New York State were combusted, it would save an additional 16 million barrels of oil. Moreover, the process would reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 19 million tons of carbon dioxide, not to mention the physical space saved in landfills.⁶ Dealing with waste is a planning concern, a challenge which deserves more attention. Looking forward, successful implementation in developed countries will have a ripple effect abroad.

THIRD LAYER: DON'T UNDERESTIMATE THE ROLE OF THE PLANNER

Planners are in the vanguard of international development, and as such, sustainability is becoming more and more important to us. With large-scale natural and man-made disasters on the rise, exploring alternative infrastructures has gained importance where traditional ones have

failed in the past. As planners, we are beginning to recognize the strength of smaller communities in rebuilding efforts through sweat equity, as seen in Kobe and Bam. These earthquakes took place in completely dissimilar political and social contexts with different levels of disaster preparedness, but nonetheless demonstrate the power of the local community. Realistically, the task of building strong community networks may only occur in the wake of a disaster. Where it does not occur, planners can help facilitate the shift.

There is no cookbook recipe for disaster mitigation, but the move from visionary to planner occurs when we stop bowing to the inevitable. We can not undo damage, but we can certainly minimize our losses in the future. Building sustainable infrastructure in at-risk areas, domestically and internationally, will help mobilize and empower local economies in the wake of unpreventable disasters. The reality is that the poorest parts of the world will need financial assistance post-natural disaster in order to get communities back on their feet. The task of planners is giving survivors a say in the sustainable reconstruction of their communities to make them more resilient. ■

NOTES

¹*Tavoos Quarterly, Iran's first Bilingual Art Quarterly.* <<http://www.tavoosmag.com/english/news/detail.asp?keyword=bam&codeclass=457&cid=4017>>

²International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI). <<http://www3.iclei.org/localstrategies/summary/kobe.html>>

³World Vision International. <www.wvi.org/wvi/archives/middle%20east/iran.htm>

⁴Verdant Power. <<http://www.verdantpower.com/Com/media.shtml>>

⁵ibid.

⁶Themelis, Nickolas J. "Waste to Energy for NYC: The Scientific Basis." New York: Columbia Earth Engineering Center, 2004. <http://www.nyfederation.org/PDF2004/Presentations/M15_ThemelisNik.pdf>

⁷The World Bank. "Natural Disasters: Counting the Cost." 2 March 2004.

Comparison of Natural Disaster Impact⁷

Industrialized Countries	Developing Countries
Tend to suffer higher economic losses in strict dollar terms	Cause setbacks to economic and social development
Have mechanisms in place to avoid loss of life, such as early warning systems	Lack resources for early warning systems
Have immediate emergency and medical care	Inflict massive casualties
Insurance of property losses	Divert funds from development programs to emergency relief and recovery

DETROIT'S DETERIORATION

Lindsay Smith Department of Historic Preservation

Unlike a natural disaster that destroys people and landscapes within seconds, disaster can also be a long-term and continuous process which populations and places have experienced over the course of years and decades. Detroit, Michigan, has endured over fifty years of degeneration. Any attempt to revitalize the city, however, has been unsuccessful as Detroit struggles to prosper.

Gizella and David Coutts have witnessed this very disaster since 1955. Over the course of fifty years, this couple has seen neighborhood,

the movement of the automotive companies to the suburbs, moving into new mass-produced ranch-style homes. Attaining the American Dream was in full effect, hypnotizing men and women to search for a better life.

With this movement during the 1950s, the demography of Detroit changed drastically. White neighborhoods transformed into Black neighborhoods. White families began moving out not only because they followed economic prosperity, but also due to the revolving population. Later, in 1967, a riot in Detroit caused elevated animosity

and prejudice between these social groups.

The white population's abandonment of the inner city posed a problematic social phenomenon. However, the disaster was furthered by the city's attitude regarding this change. From the 1950s through the 1970s, many attempts were made by city planners and politicians to improve and restore the physical beauty and success of Detroit.

Three notable planning endeavors – known as Lafayette Park, Charles Blessing's urban revitalization, and the Renaissance Center – are particularly important in the effort to get Detroit back on its feet. These three projects, however, resulted in a negative influence on the metropolis rather than a positive one, despite the efforts of Colman A. Young to promote the fair treatment of Blacks within the city.

The city selected 129 acres for redevelopment, displacing 1,953 families and 989 individuals, 98% of whom were African-American.

friends and families come together only to separate. They have seen precious memories made only to be destroyed. The neighborhood they once lived in on Wilfred Avenue was formerly a small, quiet, and safe neighborhood in north-west Detroit. It is now categorized by disaster and decay, crime, arson, drugs, rape, and fear. Six years ago, the Coutts' home itself was lost to abandonment and demolition. Today, only 22 of 37 dwellings remain on a 400-meter section of Wilfred Avenue. The decaying homes stand only as a reminder of this area's past glory. The trend of crumbling and demolished housing is not only found on Wilfred Avenue; it is a characteristic prevalent throughout entire residential and commercial areas of Detroit.

During the 1920s, Detroit was a booming and wealthy industrial city, full of hope and prosperity for blue collar workers and immigrant families. Gizella Toth's family, Hungarian, and David Coutts' family, Scottish, both came to Detroit during this time to reap the benefits of the thriving automotive city.

Thirty years later, the same families that moved into this area abandoned it. They followed



Decaying Structures in Detroit (2003)

The first planning attempt took place in the early 1950s, called The Gratiot Urban Renewal Project, or Lafayette Park. This renewal attempt was a city-sponsored redevelopment project at the edge of downtown Detroit. The city selected 129 acres for redevelopment, displacing 1,953 families and 989 individuals, 98% of whom were African-American. Civic leaders believed that clearing this “slum” would remove the blighting influence on the central business district. Replacing the slum with a residential superblock would attract families who would otherwise leave Detroit for the suburbs.

Overall, this project provided 2,000 homes on a 78-acre plot of land for the residents of Detroit. Although the city continued to deteriorate and lose population, this development remained occupied and well-maintained. Some of the buildings were owner-occupied, while others were inhabited by middle-income renters, who included a broad spectrum of ethnic and racial backgrounds.

Today, Lafayette Park exists as a unique island of stability surrounded by poorly designed housing projects and the abandoned wastelands untouched by redevelopment. This redevelopment project is an example of the City of Detroit’s attempts to improve its physical character. Even though Lafayette Park was individually successful, it left the remainder of the city isolated, revealing Detroit’s disastrous state by comparison. Unfortunately, planners were unable to cure the cumulative disaster of the city through only one project. Only one area of Detroit was aided by this plan, while the remaining city remained in shambles.

During the 1960s, Planning Director Charles Blessing attempted to comprehensively improve Detroit’s urban life. He hoped to “restore the inner city to the beauty and dignity it had fifty years ago.” Charles Blessing focused his redevelopment plans on specific spots to improve, hoping that the new areas would revitalize Detroit as a whole and relying heavily on urban design. In the end, Blessing’s schemes worked for discrete redevel-



Art Moderne Movie Theatre, now Wholesale Furniture Warehouse, in Detroit (2004)

opments, like Lafayette Park, but his attempt at a comprehensive plan for inner-city development was unsuccessful. Neglect and abandonment continued steadily throughout the heart of the city into the 1970s.

Another project approved by the City of Detroit during the 1970s focused on commercial buildings rather than residential dwellings. This project, unfortunately, decreased the prosperity of Detroit. In 1971, Henry Ford II announced the construction of the Renaissance Center, a 73-story hotel, along with four 39-story towers containing 2.2 million square feet of office space. Furthermore, a 14-acre, four-story building was designed containing additional retail, convention, and parking facilities. The strategy aimed to allow Detroit’s business district to profit from the tourist and convention industry. The project was placed along the Detroit River, in an area where it

would receive increased visitors and capital flow. The project cleared 33 acres of “blighted” property and provided a twelve-lane road connecting to the interstate highway system.

Between 1950 and Ford’s proposal, Detroit’s population declined by 339,000 people. While the Renaissance Center was being constructed, the City of Detroit was shutting down. The existing businesses in downtown Detroit were not receiving revenue from residents who were leaving the city and spending their money in the suburbs. Hudson’s, the nation’s tallest and second-largest department store, closed its 1.2 million-square-foot store. Vacant office and retail space was a common sight in downtown Detroit.

When the Renaissance Center opened in 1977, it was unable to obtain projected rents and levels of occupancy. Planners had overestimated the convention and tourist market in Detroit.



Coutts' Home on Wilfred Avenue (2003)

Furthermore, there were not enough tenants for office space at high rent levels or enough customers to support the retail outlets.

Overall, the construction of the Renaissance

twelve-lane road adjacent to the interstate system. Visiting convention users, furthermore, did not find it necessary to visit Detroit's downtown center, already suffering from a reputation as a

Since the 1970s, only small-scale revitalization has occurred in Detroit. Most recently, a small ice-skating rink was introduced in December 2004. This recreational rink is accompanied by family-oriented activities. Unfortunately, projects such as the ice-skating rink and recreational programs continue to be built in areas isolated from the remaining decaying and dying city. The reality of historic preservation and planning in Detroit is ultimately based on isolation and ignorance, demolition and reconstruction.

A serious and comprehensive consideration regarding the changes and movements occurring in Detroit over the past fifty years reveals a destroyed city, underanalyzed by its past and current legislators. Neighborhood and city-center revitalization has not been extensively considered. The deteriorated neighborhoods continue to decay, while the unsuccessfully revitalized areas "tread water" in hopes of a significant revolution.

The Coutts' first hand experiences in Detroit show how long-term disasters are a reality. Over the years, they have witnessed a planning process that has failed to revitalize or turn around the economy of this once booming city. Urban planning-oriented projects, such as Lafayette Park, Charles Blessing's revitalization attempt, and the Renaissance Center have only focused on individual and isolated areas of Detroit, lacking

The reality of historic preservation and planning in Detroit is ultimately based on isolation and ignorance, demolition and reconstruction.

Center exacerbated an already bad situation. The project's office space was designed to attract the city's major firms. The move from existing downtown commercial space to centrally located modern buildings on the Detroit River drew customers further away from the steadily declining business district. Still worse, the project was separated from downtown Detroit by the new

risky area to explore and enjoy. The Renaissance Center was inwardly designed as essentially circular, self-referential, and complete in itself. As the cityscape was changed by Ford's plan, Detroit was newly defined by a type of modern disaster. Poor planning focused efforts away from the residents, neighborhoods, and businesses that needed the aid.

congruity and aid to surrounding areas such as the Coutts' neighborhood on Wilfred Street. Unlike a natural disaster that destroys people and landscapes within seconds, it has happened over the course of decades. They still hope to witness a successful recovery from this cumulative disaster. ■

DISASTER FOR PROFIT: THE TSUNAMI RESPONSE IN PERSPECTIVE

Erin Hyland

Forgive me if I affect disinterest in all of the tsunami relief hype of early 2005. I actively resisted it, irritated by a common pattern: rather than looking at larger issues and staying involved, attention and effort are short-lived and temporary – the commercial-break

developed nation guilt – I remain skeptical of how much is reaching the communities for which it is intended. Rather, from a cynical stance grounded from watching band-aid remedies play out all too frequently, much of the efforts seem like short-lived easements on guilt. I'll go watch my friend's

have their living conditions and support networks weakened? Funds and attention are being given to disaster prevention strategies, and long-term strategic plans were discussed at January's World Conference on Disaster Reduction in Kobe, Japan. Hopefully these discussions do translate into action, with early-warning systems and strengthened emergency response protocols successfully implemented. However, efforts elsewhere should not be sacrificed.

Water-borne diseases claim the same number of victims as the tsunami every 18 days.

attention span extended from the schoolyard to the international scale. Neither self-absorption nor lack of compassion incited the irritation I felt when accosted by those collecting money everywhere, ceaselessly approaching me for donations. Rather, the cynicism results from viewing this latest event as just another marketing ploy, enhanced by camera-wielding tourists and super-models stranded on holiday, and knowing that it will shortly fade from thought leaving those in need still in need.

Inarguably the Indian Ocean Tsunami was a tragedy. The 250,000 lives lost within such a short timeframe are not to be taken lightly, and assistance to the survivors in terms of food and health provisions, rebuilding, and other needs is vital. But, must we all respond to this one crisis, when there are myriad other crises to be addressed? As a planner, there may be other ways in which my skills stand to have a larger impact. Increasing awareness, especially within the United States, of ongoing international efforts, such as with the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) implementation, might be a better task.

Add to this concern a sense of nausea by the profit-incentive to “assist.” Be they bars increasing alcohol profits at tsunami benefits or non-profit and aid organizations reaping in administrative costs from donations – nevermind the fraudulent organizations preying upon de-

veloped nation guilt – I remain skeptical of how much is reaching the communities for which it is intended. Rather, from a cynical stance grounded from watching band-aid remedies play out all too frequently, much of the efforts seem like short-lived easements on guilt. I'll go watch my friend's

band play, pay a \$10 “donation” (tax-deductible no less), increase the bar's profits while imbibing, and then go home to sleep soundly, convinced I did my part.

With governments and private sector industries committing billions (for which there are on-the-ground delivery issues), shouldn't the individual donor commit funding and give attention to the other problems likely to be ignored and financially abandoned in all of the tsunami frenzy?

I'll go watch my friend's band play, pay a \$10 “donation” (tax-deductible no less), increase the bar's profits while imbibing, and then go home to sleep soundly, convinced I did my part.

At the United Nations Environment Programme's Governing Council meeting in February, this question arose regarding pursuing donor aid for MDG projects involving water, sanitation, and settlements. The underlying question was, of course, whether other efforts should be competing with tsunami relief. If all attention is given to Southeast Asia and the tsunami victims, what happens to the other millions of people, primarily in Africa, who stand to lose out and possibly

Putting the situation into perspective, according to the 2003 *African Malaria Report*,¹ approximately 3,000 African children die daily. Additionally, the 2002 *World Health Report*² placed the annual loss of life due to water-borne diseases at 5 million, or 13,698 lives per day. At this rate, water-borne diseases claim the same number of victims as the tsunami every 18 days.³ Given that many of these diseases result from poor environmental practices, including land and water use, the situation is a prime candidate for planning intervention. Thus, lessening the commitment to global environmental projects will have disastrously large ramifications.

When approached for money or invited to said events, I feel like returning the request. Perhaps I start wandering around with fact sheets on sub-Saharan issues or the MDGs, providing names of alternative aid organizations to support. In all seriousness, if I believed most of these same efforts would still be ongoing nine months from now when the hype is gone, when Anderson Cooper isn't presenting a special report and when CNN isn't still devoting massive coverage to the

Southeast Asia situation, I would not object as strongly. But that is not what I foresee. Another event will arise, our attentions further distracted, and the cycle will repeat itself.

Much is discussed about the role of planners, and the need for long-term vision. Maybe one of the challenges for the field is to pick a cause or an issue and stick with it, fighting against the media frenzies and ensuring attentions and resources stay focused on the issue. So for you perhaps it's the recent Tsunami, but for me it is not. And this is fine, but enough with the moralizing and generalizing about the need for all planners to act. There are too many crises demanding attention for us all to focus on one. ■

NOTES

¹The World Health Organization and UNICEF.

²The World Health Organization.

³This says nothing of the numbers lost in conflicts in which foreign aid or intervention might play a role in stopping.



Building material for Sri Lankan and Indonesian villages? Given Christo and Jeanne-Claude's stance against auctioning or selling-off individual gates and the intentions to industrially recycle all of the materials, would not a more timely end for *The Gates* to be as construction materials for devastated communities? Picture whole temporary communities of bright orange metal and nylon.

EATING, SLEEPING, BREATHING, DREAMING...

Master's Thesis Topics

NISHA BALIGA

For my thesis, I am attempting to offer a comparative view of community-based self-help housing initiatives in the United States and Kenya, with an emphasis on two particular non-governmental organizations that are active in this work in New York City and Nairobi respectively, namely the Urban Homesteaders Assistance Board (UHAB) and the Pamoja Trust. Few such comparisons of this kind have been made, particularly between Northern and Southern countries and cities; so this study could be helpful in generating a comparison of the methods used in implementing self-housing. I am hoping this will create opportunities for cross-fertilization of ideas for future self-help initiatives.

JAMES CONNOLLY

The Community Reinvestment Act (CRA), enacted by congress in 1977 as part of an effort to combat redlining, is currently being scaled back by several of the federal agencies that monitor banks for compliance. The new structure being adopted removes over 90% of the banks from the current fair lending review requirements. My thesis uses the borough of Brooklyn as a case study to examine the possible effects of this regulatory change. First, Brooklyn's history of community organizing around this piece of legislation is presented in order to establish the intent and importance of the law to Brooklyn's communities. Next, a quantitative analysis of lending activity by bank size over a five-year period in the late nineties is used to draw some conclusions about the possible spatial effects upon different neighborhoods.

CHRIS GOMEZ

My thesis evaluates the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council's (NYMTC) federal Job Access and Reverse Commute Program (JARC) in Westchester County, NY. The specific research

questions are whether JARC funding awarded to the Westchester County Department of Transportation has increased welfare and low-income individual's access to jobs and whether such programs are financially sustainable.

BEN KORNFEIND

My thesis is a case study of DeKalb Ave Apartments, completed in 2003 by Dunn Development Corporation and Community Access. Located in Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood, the Apartments provide affordable housing for working families and formerly homeless adults with psychiatric disabilities. This innovative integration of persons with special needs into a mainstream setting, along with the high quality design and construction, has made this a model project that is expected to be widely replicated. The case study investigates the structuring, financing, and construction of the Apartments, touches upon nonprofit/for-profit joint ventures, and considers the future of this development model.

GALEN (CHI-HANG) LAM

My thesis will study the economic development of Chinese enclaves in NYC. I will concentrate on one in Sunset Park and one in Flushing. Also, I will look at the relationship between Chinatown, Sunset Park, and Flushing.

JAKE MCKINSTRY

Ideally, this thesis will analyze the question of whether the current model utilized by non-profits for developing affordable housing is sustainable given the recent market trends in East Harlem. East Harlem is an interesting case study for many reasons but primarily because of its small area, 2.2 square miles; proximity to one of the most hyperactive real estate markets in the world, the Upper East Side; lack of available city-owned vacant

land, less than two percent remains; and its rapidly appreciating real estate values, privately owned vacant lots are being sold for \$100 per square foot. For the past 20 years, largely in conjunction with the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program initiated in 1986, non-profits have served as the primary vehicle for the creation of affordable housing in New York City. However, the structure of LIHTC affordable housing deals requires multiple layers of complex financing and often does not achieve the economies of scale of for-profit developments. Furthermore, non-profits often do not have the 'war chest' of equity needed for private acquisition of land. This thesis will explore more appropriate models for developing affordable housing in response to changes in the East Harlem marketplace.

STEPHANIE MARKISON

My thesis seeks to understand how active community members view block and voluntary neighborhood associations in Bushwick, Brooklyn. What motivates them to get involved? What effect do they think associations have on the neighborhood? Through a focus group and interviews, I plan to understand what role they play in the community.

TANYA SALTZMAN

What is the potential for green and/or cool roofs to mitigate aspects of the urban heat island effect in Hunts Point, the Bronx? This study will seek to understand why a neighborhood such as Hunts Point – with its disproportionate at-risk population that includes the elderly, those living alone, and the poor, as well as environmental stressors ranging from numerous waste transfer stations to a dense network of truck routes – presents an appropriate location in which to encourage the use of green and cool roofs. In addition, the study will explore a Department of Energy computer simu-

lation model to determine the potential energy savings that would occur with the installation of a cool roof on one site, the American Banknote Building.

RON SLANGEN

My thesis will be exploring the role of public-private partnerships in managing urban public parks. To this end, I will be conducting an evaluation of Bryant Park in New York City. The increasing trend of private management over public parks as a revitalization strategy will be analyzed in light of park budget cutbacks, increasing trends towards joint public and private development, and the increasing occurrence of privatized downtown public space. Whether or not this model can be exported to other parks throughout New York City and other cities throughout the world will also be considered.

BRIAN STOKLE

So housing prices went up near train stations along a New Jersey rail line. That's nice for the homeowners and tax revenue for the state. Have developers built new housing? It seems that little housing has been built. Is that the fault of city zoning, developers, or a lack of infill sites? I'll bet local residents and municipalities are against new housing despite the housing crisis in greater New York. Through analysis of housing construction and zoning data I plan to determine the extent of housing production near train stations and the background of its development.

DANA SUNSHINE

I am writing my thesis on financing small-to-medium scale brownfield redevelopment in New York City. Has recent legislation, as well as adjustments in the appraisal, insurance, and environmental industries, made this type of redevelop-

ment more attractive to the marketplace? Why hasn't the market been more receptive to these changes and what significance does this have for economic development initiatives in the city? I will present financial analyses of two case studies, one in Queens and one in the Bronx.

CHIA-LIANG TAI

Chia-Liang's thesis looks at the transformation of Shanghai's Pudong New Area. China has made many efforts to reshape Shanghai as a world city. Since initiating redevelopment, the strategic position of Shanghai has been founded as "a dragon head, three centers." As a "dragon head," the Pudong New Area will be open to the coastal cities along the Yangtze River. By doing so, the plan will transform Shanghai into an international economic, financial, and trading center by stimulating the regional economy of the Yangtze River Delta Region. This study will explore two questions. What is the interrelationship among the participants within the redevelopment processes? What is the environmental and social impact of the redevelopment process? Confucius said, "All my knowledge can be explained in one principle." Through this study, Chia-Liang is trying to find whether there is one principle to explain the urban redevelopment context of eastern and western countries.

BRIAN TOCHTERMAN

This thesis, *The Working Class Tavern, Public Space, and the City: A Cry and Demand for Urbanism*, explores the crisis of place and space that has plagued the American landscape since misguided government policy and supposed transportation preferences managed to render urbanism unattractive to a large portion of people. In recent decades the American neighborhood or working class tavern, so prevalent and such an important part of early industrial community, was condemned by anti-

social shut-in prudes, and excommunicated via the suburban zoner's broad-brush along with other traditional neighborhood fixtures. I argue that when planners or developers think about placing "public space" within an area they should consider the likes of tavern over useless open greenswards because people, for one, actually use taverns. Neighborhood taverns feature a unique blend of diversity and solidarity in action, forge community, and mix political citizenship with impersonal sociability – public space characteristics championed by the likes of Hannah Arendt and Jane Jacobs respectively. Thus, the tavern becomes a metaphor against traditional forms of zoning which forces planners to think differently about urban form and how to foster real public interaction and participation within the spatial makeup of the city.

MALENA (MARIA ELENA) VEGA

The government applies the power of eminent domain for the purpose of urban renewal and economic development, but in the case of Downtown Brooklyn, is it really justified? Is the government acting on behalf of the public or the developers? I will be interviewing the residents and business owners of the condemned buildings, finding out their displacement plans. An important issue in this case is the many illegal residents in the area that will not be taken into account because of their status. Another issue involves the taking of existing visitor parking lots both for construction and for new buildings as densities are increased. This will create even more traffic in the area. I will also interview building owners, community leaders, and politicians to find out if they have any plans to help those displaced residents. Based on the results, I will make an evaluation of the possible positive and negative effects of eminent domain, distinguishing which parties will be more affected and which stand to gain more. ■

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE SPIN

Elizabeth Kays & Leah M. Meisterlin

Mid-process in a comparative study on Tourism Planning—comparing Harlem, New York and Kreuzberg, Berlin—our studio headed to Germany in February. Meeting up with our Technical University of Berlin counterparts, we sought to learn what the Kreuzberg example could teach us and experience the city as guinea-pig tourists for the Berliners.

By the 1980s, rebuilding after WWII had been decades in the process. However, at that time West Berlin planners began a movement to reestablish historical tradition with the “critical reconstruction” of the city. Continuing through today, critical reconstruction policies control the development of the built environment, requiring that new projects replicate Berlin’s historical form. “Historical” specifically, but not explicitly, refers to the pre-1933 cityscape. By implementing this plan, they have implemented a contradiction of purpose: the simultaneous celebration and negation of history. As history is generally written by the winner, Berlin’s landscape is being rewritten by its democracy. At first, critical reconstruction began erasing the evidence of 20th-century fascism. Since reunification, it has also concealed the projects of communism.

As Berlin’s critical reconstruction is planning with history, or *selective highlights of history*, here are two critical reconstructions spun from a week and a half in the city.

DAY ONE

Leah: Forget about my lost luggage with a three-hour, chain-smoking-in-a-café conversation about German race relations with a 22-year-old. Question: Why can’t I have this conversation in the States? Answer: I’m not allowed to smoke in a café in New York.

Liz: For a country with such a large social conscience, what’s up with all the smoking? This can not be helping my cough.

DAY TWO

Leah: Developed an appreciation for the eclectic

while walking through history: side-by-side examples of different eras, painted building replicas advertising rebuilding landmarks, and the hopeful transparency of the contemporary Reichstag dome.

Liz: Berlin may not know who it is: multiple master plans from multiple governments, each trying to one-up its predecessor. The Reichstag’s dome allows visitors to watch “democracy in action,” though we were the only ones who got to look at anything but the giant exhaust fan.

DAY THREE

Leah: Saw my first bombed-out church and appreciated better graffiti than what we have in Queens. Bought cool arm warmers and saw the Digable Planets. Why do all club-goers face the DJ?

Liz: After commenting on the nice courtyard behind my host’s mid-block apartment building, he casually mentioned, “Oh, a bomb landed there.”

DAY FOUR

Leah: After a tour given by a Turkish resident of Kreuzberg, we see that the “parallel societies” of Berlin’s ethnic communities create thriving enclaves of traditional and new cultural experiences.

Liz: Realized that the Critical Reconstruction of Berlin is the reconstruction of a city without its largest minority group. Our tour guide—a third generation immigrant—still lives “parallel to” (segregated from) German culture as a *nonGerman*.

DAY FIVE

Leah: Wow! Did I just see a presentation on a pilot project where participatory planning worked? Plus, when you eat lunch by yourself with a book and don’t speak the language, you get free schnapps. Unfortunately, I lost my cool arm warmers.

Liz: Sick in bed. The BBC recycles its headlines

every twenty minutes...and apparently, sound-bites and snapshots of a Bush-Chirac handshake translates into “everything will be alright.”

DAY SIX

Leah: My “history” is winning because Liz is being oppressed by her illness.

Liz: How do you spell the sound of a cough?

DAY SEVEN

Leah: At the Regenbogenfabrik, we saw a community-based hostel/bike shop/kindergarten/cinema using tourism to fund social programs. We also saw an expert-led program with recovering drug addicts creating tourist maps.

Liz: Apparently, not all planning thought in Germany is bottom-up: Some people believe that a clean coat of white-wash and eradicating the drug addicts “lying and dying in the streets” are what a neighborhood needs to attract tourism. Times Square is cited as an example.

DAY EIGHT

Well, this is awkward. Let’s just say Day Eight didn’t happen.

DAY NINE

Leah: Despite the challenges, two days of workshopping, concept-mapping, utopian vision, and participatory planning create concrete products.

Liz: Leah, get over it. Two-day planning charrettes make planners plan.

Leah: Whatever, Liz. ■



To preserve or not to preserve? “Zweifel” (Doubt) mounted on the East German Palace of the Republic

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