

the **WAGNER PLANNER**

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penalosa on bogotá's
brt revolution

//reflection:
trade-offs in post-
revolutionary cuba

//milestone:
a half century of
urban planning
at wagner



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Chief Editor

Alan Lightfeldt

Assistant Editor

Amy Brisson

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Saving Mumbai

a push to protect the city's heritage



by *Prachee Mishra, MUP '13*

Walk around on the streets of South Mumbai, with its forgotten mansions, old bungalows, narrow lanes, crowded bazaars and housing colonies, and you would never feel like you are in one of the biggest metropolises of the world.

A group of seven islands, Mumbai was given as a dowry gift to Catherine of Braganza, who wed Charles II of England in 1661. The presence of a great natural harbor made it a favorable location for trade and helped Bombay (as it was called) grow into dense, metropolitan Mumbai that we see today. Home to the Koli fishermen, the enterprising Gujarati community, the philanthropic Parsi community, its own Maharashtrian community and migrants from all over the country, the city boasts of a diverse culture.

From archaeological sites to Colonial architecture, from fishermen's villages to traditional community housing, from huge mill lands to beautiful waterfronts, the city has architectural legacy that is unparalleled. The city has one of the largest numbers of buildings of Neo Gothic and Indo-Saracenic styles, and its collection of Art Deco buildings is second only to Miami.

Today, the city of Mumbai is perhaps

at one of its most challenging and interesting stages in its history. With a burgeoning population and twice the density of New York City, there is enormous pressure on the city to expand its infrastructure and housing needs. On the other hand, the city's rich architectural heritage is being neglected and damaged in the process of development. The question becomes: How does one balance the need to preserve buildings with great importance to the city's history and heritage and keeping up with the exploding demand for growth and development?

Working as an architect in Mumbai, I have been on both sides of the battle of preservation and development. One of the biggest problems with Mumbai's heritage buildings is the Rent Control Act of 1940, which requires that rents remain frozen at their historical rates. Frozen rents often result in decreased revenue and few financial incentives for landlords and property owners to perform proper maintenance to these buildings.

A major chunk of land in the heart of the city is occupied by the traditional community housing, known as 'chawls'. The housing fabric has a strong architectural character to it

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Community Planning in Pakistan

lessons from the Orangi pilot project

by Sumaila Palla, MUP '13

To a first time visitor, Karachi, Pakistan, may seem chaotic, polluted, and incredibly fast paced. Like New York City, my hometown could be considered a city that never sleeps, especially during the month of Ramadan, where stores and restaurants are open until the early hours of morning.

Crowded just like New York City, Karachi has grown to a multi ethnic population of almost 17 million people. Locally known as the "City of Lights," it is considered to be Pakistan's most cosmopolitan city. It is a city that can present itself as old and new. The Victorian style Empress Market constructed during British rule contrasts with more recently constructed apartment buildings and malls nearby. Karachi is home to the country's main seaport and financial center, and exerts a significant impact on fashion, education, media, and entertainment throughout the country.

As migrants from Pakistan's neighboring countries continue to pour in, its unique demographics and migratory trends also set Karachi apart from the rest of Pakistan. Karachi welcomes

migrants from several neighboring countries, and this multi ethnic culture gives exposure to several languages, religions, and backgrounds. Its diversity and dynamism help create the country's largest middle class, contribute to the highest literacy rate of all Pakistani cities, and make it the most liberal city in Pakistan. Given the historical trends, geographical characteristics, and local culture that are incredibly similar to New York City, one could ask why Karachi does not function like New York City?

For one, Karachi has faced overwhelming urbanization challenges. The United States had the advantage of urbanizing over the course of a century. This gradual pace allowed New York City the time for development of political and economic institutions essential for quality urban life. Karachi, by contrast, has faced massive urbanization at a break-neck pace and largely without any considerable planning. Being in complete disarray after the sudden partition from India, corruption, ethnic rivalries, decades of spastic government, and lack of basic infrastructure have all continuously contributed to a digressing city with ungoverned zones.

As a witness to Karachi's daily life and

problems, I know that the city has had much difficulty in providing a basic quality of life for most Karachiites. Working on projects with low income communities as an architecture student, I heard the day-to-day issues these residents faced, from not having water to no electricity for days. The continuous and dramatic rise in population has overwhelmed the capacity and infrastructure of the city. While there is an understanding of the absence of infrastructure, the city has a shortage of urban planners to target these issues. New York City has a large number of quality urban planners that work towards making this city a better place to live every day. Karachi needs a substantial amount of trained urban planners; however, those urban planners cannot succeed in the remodeling of the city without involving the community concerned, ensuring physical inputs and the concept of sustainable development.

Urban planning is about relating several functions to each other within a city so that the city functions smoothly. As planners, we are responsible for taking environment and society into consideration. However, a planner's

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letter from the editor

by Alan Lightfeldt,
Chief Editor 2012-2013

This year marks an important milestone for the urban planning program at the Wagner School. Fifty years ago, in 1962, New York University's first class of urban planners was awarded degrees, having received an educa-

tion that was firmly grounded in practical skills and with an eye toward serving the people of New York City.

Although much has changed in the world in the last fifty years, Wagner's core focus on public service remains. Today, like in 1962, its planning students confront some of the world's most complex and persistent urban challenges.

The Fall 2012 edition of the *Wagner Planner*, 'Planning + Public Service', is an exploration of the many intersections between planning and public service, spanning both time and geography. Some of the program's most distinguished alumni over the last decade reflect on the value of a public

service-minded degree and provide us with some insights from the field. We examine new efforts to preserve Mumbai's rich heritage, evaluate a groundbreaking pilot project to reduce carbon emissions in South Africa, and discuss what makes planning interventions effective with the former mayor of Bogota. These stories come alive with stunning original photography from current and former students.

This edition is a celebration of the fifty years of urban planners who have brought innovative and thoughtful solutions to the public realm - and a call to current and future students to identify and advance their own public service mission through planning. ■

planning + publ



by Rae Zimmerman

Urban planning occupies a unique position at the intersection of constructed, socioeconomic, and natural environments and the institutions that shape these environments. For 50 years since its founding, New York University's urban planning program at the Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service has been located in a school devoted to public administration and, in its most recent form, a school of public service.

Such programs have often been located in architecture schools with more of an emphasis on the physical and design aspects of planning. NYU's urban planning program location in the public administration or public service context has enabled it to broaden its scope to the political, financial, and other institutional forces that are as important as design in shaping urban settings and making things happen.

Urban planning is living in a new era with concerns over sustainability and resiliency, constantly emerging innovations in resource renewal, and fundamental issues of social equity. These require considerable commitment and the need to change longstanding entrenched practices. Modern professionals need innovative and often-intricate financing tools, legal mechanisms to change zoning to accommodate new innovations, community engagement, and implementation skills in general to achieve many of the strategies.

For the environment, for example, these measures come into play in reducing carbon dioxide emissions through innovative approaches to transportation, energy, and wastewater and solid waste management. For equity, understanding the dimensions of poverty and race are critical to urban policies and strong programs for social justice in housing, economic development, transportation, and the environment.

A school of public service is well situated to tap a wide range of expertise in this area within its own faculty and its alumni, many of whom are well-situated in public service professions. No one strategy to achieve these goals works in isolation. It is achieving the combination, the integration, and co-benefits that planners are skilled in and do best in the context of a public service education. ■

Rae Zimmerman is Professor of Planning and Public Administration, the Director of the Institute for Civil Infrastructure Systems at NYU Wagner, and the chair of its Master of Urban Planning program for the 2012-2013 academic year. She is the author of Transport, the Environment, and Security, which was published in 2012.

ic service

reflecting on 50 years of urban planning at NYU Wagner

by Ingrid Gould Ellen

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of our urban planning program, it is worth reflecting on our program and the niche that it fills in the spectrum of planning programs. We are unique in being located in a school of public service. As such, we focus more than many programs on the difficulties of shaping cities and their neighborhoods in the context of the messy real world. We push students not only to design attractive and well-functioning public spaces but to grapple with the market realities, financial constraints, political hurdles and limits to organizational capacity that challenge their realization.

We also emphasize the role that planners can play in public service, or in furthering the public good. We push students to think hard about the benefits that improvements to the built environment can deliver to residents. And more importantly, we ask them to focus

on the inevitable trade-offs that arise when making public decisions. There is never enough money (or space) to implement every good idea. Which plans among the alternatives promise to make the biggest difference in the quality of people's everyday lives?

Finally, we feel it is critical to consider how urban planning interacts with other spheres of public policy. How meaningful is a new waterfront promenade if is plagued by crime? How significant is a new playground if the children playing there attend a failing public school? While planners may not have full control over public safety or the quality of local public schools, they ignore them at their peril. Planners must work collaboratively with community residents to identify trouble spots and target them through both local action and engagement with government. ■

Ingrid Gould Ellen is Professor of Urban Planning and Public Administration

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MUP alumni reflect on the milestone and offer advice from the field to current students. page 20

and the co-director of the NYU Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy, a joint research center between NYU Wagner and NYU Law School. She is author of Sharing America's Neighborhoods: The Prospects for Stable Racial Integration, and has written numerous journal articles and book chapters relating to housing policy, neighborhood change, urban growth, and school and neighborhood segregation.

Man with a Mission



Bogotá's former mayor, Enrique Penalosa, discusses his vision of the city, the creation of one the most successful bus rapid transit systems in South America, and the importance of getting you out of your car.

An Interview with Mr. Peñalosa

by Nicolás Galarza, MUP '13

Nicolás Galarza: It is said that cities are a great tool for generating equity and your work in Bogotá is a significant proof of that. How did you build your vision of the cities as instruments of equity?

Enrique Peñalosa Londoño: I fully agree with you that the cities are really powerful instruments to construct equality and if not equality [then] equity. And inequality is the biggest obstacle to creating good cities. Inequality is what makes people want to go into private

clubs and not to parks, keeps higher income people from using public transport, leads people to live in gated communities in the suburbs, leads to the privatization of beaches, and it is what makes it difficult to give priority in the use of road space to public transport.

But, how do you get there? Since I was a small boy, my father was in government. In 1976, he served as the secretary general of the World Habitat Conference, the United Nations conference on human settlements. I became more and more interested in cities. And at that time, Colombian cities were growing at about 5, 6, 7 percent annually. To me it was clear that it was more important what we did with cities to happiness and equality than anything else that we could do. That if we were able to save land for a park, this would create so much equality and joy and happiness for hundreds of years, and instead if we were not able to save this piece of land for a park this possibility would be lost - this possibility to cre-

ate happiness for hundreds of years.

NG: Do you think planners should be more active in politics? And do you think that your success as a planner and as a public servant had to do with the fact you had the authority as head of the city?

EPL: Well I never studied planning in college. I never took one course of planning. However I studied economics and history and then I did graduate work in management and government. It was very important to be a good manager I think because one thing is to talk and another one is to make reality. What is clear is that I wanted to become mayor because I wanted to

and they can change the way people see things. But as things stand, the change is always very difficult, even the changes that are evidently good for you. Like, for example, when I was vice president of the Bogotá Water and Sanitation Company and maybe even before any big corporation, I decided we would not buy any more typewriters, and we would only use computers. And then I sent everybody to computer lessons and everybody was so proud, and the secretaries were so proud, and they on their desk went and took the course and they got the computer and then they would put a flowerpot on top of the computer and continue using the typewriter. So, even something

/// A new idea never happens to a majority at once. A new idea occurs to one person first, then this person may convince five more, then they convince ten or twenty or fifty...but it's always impossible that a new idea will have majority support initially. //

create a kind of a city. It's not just like it was for most politicians. It's not just another job to become more important. No, for me, being mayor was a means to create this dream of a city. And I had written a lot about cities in the newspapers and things for many years. So in a way I had done much studies as a planner, but not in a formal way. And I clearly think planning is much more than a technical issue. Because what we are really choosing is how we want to live. A city is only a means to a way of life. So what we're choosing is how do we want to live. I think it's impossible to do planning without an ideological background or a vision, because basically what we are deciding is what kind of society will make us happier. So clearly this is not a technical issue. It's closer to religion than to engineering.

NG: What is your advice on how to balance the technical vision and your plans, with the will of the people?

EPL: I believe ideas are very powerful,

that can clearly improve your well-being and your productivity such as a computer is difficult to adopt at first.

So it's difficult for people to change. And especially when we are talking about a city, I mean, the people that will be benefited, they don't understand or they don't care, especially if we are in developing countries cities. But the minority of people who feel they are affected and they are, or they imagine that they will be and make such a huge noise. For example, when we proposed to create bikeways, and no bikeways existed not only in Colombia but in Latin America. When we created a 300 km network of bicycle ways, there was not one meter of bicycle ways anywhere in America, and practically there were only bikeways in The Netherlands and Denmark and China. Nowhere else. And so it was a little crazy, but people thought it would be crazy to give space

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Community Planning in Karachi

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responsibility varies with location. Within a city like Karachi, urban planners need to take cultural heritage of the various communities into account.

Governments tend to justify high rises as a solution to relocate the poor – however that is not an ideal solution for Karachi communities. Since the large majority of the city's population belongs to the working class, urban planners should give priority to lower income groups. According to Arif Hasan, a noted architect and planner, "Karachi should be a pedestrian and commuter-friendly city and needs to be developed with equity and justice. Urban planning has to guarantee equity and justice, without which cities end up in conflict and fragmentation."

Despite the city of Karachi being faced with mounting problems, it is inspiring to see the people actually taking control. Orangi, Karachi is one of the largest squatter settlements that has transformed into a

town through guidance by a planner named Akhtar Hammed Khan, but largely because of the work and dedication of the community. A town that had no sanitation or plumbing has built a whole sewerage system, and now each home has a toilet or latrine.

The Orangi Pilot Project has become a self-managed, self-financed, and self-maintained project under the leadership of community members. People have become so frustrated with the lack of help from the government that many are willing to take it upon themselves. Recently, a group of women were so frustrated with the damaged roads outside their homes that they started paying low income construction workers to help fill up the ditches as a temporary solution. Infrastructure is a significant problem; sadly it is something the government can never get around to. The problems residents of Karachi face are not minute, and I often heard friends and others threatening to leave the city if offered the chance. Karachiite's are incredibly

loyal to their city, but that does not necessarily mean they do not hate what is happening to it. But while Karachiites may complain and consider leaving, the last line in any conversation is, "but Karachi will always be Karachi." ■

Sumaila Palla is a second year student in the Master of Urban Planning program. She has a background in architecture and has previously lived in Pakistan and California.

From the Bottom Up

one group's approach to community planning in Queens

by Ben Hagen, MUP '13

Urban planning is often perceived as a distant, abstract concept – how many times, after all, do we have to explain what we're studying to those we encounter? Yet, the effects of planning are all around us, particularly in an environment as thoroughly urban as New York City. This dichotomy – between the concept of planning and its practice – results partly from our own tendency to unnecessarily segment our profession. The reality is that there are countless community and social organizations that participate in the planning process outside of any official capacity, as Domenic Vitiello skillfully wrote in 2009. Community Development Corporations, not-for-profit organizations, and citizen councils are just some of these informal planning groups. And here in New York, opportunities abound for participation and involvement.

One such organization is Chhaya CDC, a community development corporation located in Jackson Heights, Queens. Chhaya – which means "shade" in several south Asian languages – was founded in 2000 to advocate for New York City's fast-growing south Asian population. Recognized for defending renters against illegal rent increases, facilitating mortgage modifications, and combating discrimination against New York's new immigrants, the organization provides a diverse array of community services – including homeownership counseling, tenant organizing, foreclosure prevention efforts, and research in support of their advocacy campaigns. Executive Director Seema Agnani was most recently a member of the Making Room initiative, a panel convened by the Citizen's Housing and Planning Council to explore solutions to the city's increasingly acute housing shortage.

Though it grew out of Queens' South Asian population, Chhaya advocates for urban issues that reach well beyond those geographic and cultural boundaries. One of their most far-reaching campaigns takes on the issue of illegally-converted dwelling units – primarily basements, but also illegal subdivision of above-grade housing. This arrangement is not uncommon in New York's tight housing market, but it has a particularly pernicious effect upon



recent immigrants and other marginalized groups who have little recourse when faced with abusive tenancy situations. The illegal status of these dwelling units means that residents lack the same set of codified rights as other New York City tenants. Chhaya's research estimates that there are as many as 100,000 of these units in the city. Their BASE (Basement Apartments Safe for Everyone) campaign advocates for an Accessory Dwelling

Unit code that brings those units with sufficient safety features into the formal regulatory structure. This would not only allow for safer, more secure housing for many low-income families, but it would allow the city to better estimate and allocate resources for its communities and their diverse needs.

Engaging with community groups that perform this kind of bottom-up planning work is key to the legitimacy and effectiveness of the planning profession. Chhaya is only one of such groups working in New York City – there are dozens of others that are doing similar work in communities all across the city. Many present a wonderful opportunity for planning students to reach outside of the classroom through a volunteer position or internship and discover the kind of concerns that animate people within their own communities. For the past year, I have worked with the Neighborhood Economic Development Advocacy Project, a non-profit financial justice advocacy center, and I cannot speak highly enough of the opportunity that these groups present. Whether you are interested in housing, sustainability, transportation, or economic matters – there are organizations out there that offer valuable experience and insight that can supplement our academic work by applying it to our shared city – and in the process deepen our understanding and communication with the people that make it exceptional. ■

Ben Hagen is a second year student in the Master of Urban Planning program. He is a regular contributor to Wagner Today and his research has appeared in the American Planning Association's The New Planner publication.

Equality and Opportunity

tradeoffs in post-revolutionary Cuba



by Christian Gonzalez-Rivera,
MUP '12

Two years before I was born, my parents fled Fidel Castro's Cuba - leaving behind a dream of social justice that had accompanied the Cuban Revolution. In 1980, they, along with 125,000 other refugees, boarded boats and set off for the United States in search of economic freedom.

I was reminded of this story when I visited Cuba this past January, returning to the country where my parents were born and raised. It made me question the tradeoffs that every country must make in providing for its citizens – how do we balance equality of opportunity with private wealth building?

Indeed, Castro and his bearded rebels had promised to right the wrongs of social injustice, which had been fed by capitalism and the economic imperialism of the United States. The Revolution promised to create a new system that would ensure equitable access to opportunity, education, healthcare, housing, and basic resources for everyone.

His government created 'literacy brigades' that fanned the countryside, and made huge investments in a free and universal healthcare system. Regardless of their wealth or privilege, all Cubans can access health services from highly-trained professionals, albeit limited by the lack of resources in a materially poor country.

However, all of this has come at the price of individual economic freedom. In its effort to equally redistribute the means of wealth creation and of production, the government confiscated land from the wealthy - primarily foreign interests - and subdivided it into tracts for poor citizens. At the same time, the government also took away the small family-owned businesses that individuals had worked hard to create, thus rendering them dependent on the state.

All this was sustained by generous economic support from the former Soviet Union. When the Soviet Bloc collapsed in 1991, Cuba lost upwards of 70 percent of its revenue. Analysts world-

wide predicted that Cuba would join the ranks of Eastern European countries whose socialist economies collapsed one by one after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Instead, Castro's government inched towards limited market reforms - opening the economy to foreign trade and some forms of private enterprise. His brother Raúl, the current president of Cuba, is working to open the economy even more.

Today, the Cuban government is actively seeking public-private partnerships with foreign companies and governments to build urban infrastructure, tourist facilities, and to increase housing production. At the same time, they struggle to balance the advantages of economic openness with long-held goals of social justice.

During my visit I had a conversation about these tradeoffs with one of the heads of foreign development investment at the Office of the Historian of the City of Havana. This agency has some functions that are similar to New York City's Department of Housing Preserva-

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Saving Mumbai: A Push to Preserve the City's Heritage

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and is a representation of the socio-cultural life of the locals of Mumbai. Generally these are two-story buildings that look like cottages, and are characterized by gable roofs, airy balconies with wooden louvered grills and wooden balustrades and windows with wooden shutters. These are typically mixed-use developments with small grocery or garment shops on the ground floors and the homes above. There are shared spaces for utilities, narrow access lanes, small dirt play areas for the kids, and green spaces where the residents can sit and chat. However, with the growing needs of families and higher demand for space, these structures are under immense pressure for redevelopment.

During my time working with Architect Vikas Dilawari, one of India's leading preservation architects, I got a chance to work on several restoration projects. One of them was a community housing project for the Zoroastrian community, more popularly known as a Parsi Chawl. Most of the residents of this housing were elderly and retired members of the Parsi commu-

nity. Many did not have a source of income, which made it difficult for them to properly maintain their dwellings.

In many areas, the response to such as a problem was to sell the land to private developers and go for redevelopment. The redevelopment would entail demolishing the community housing and building high-rise commercial towers. Prime land in South Mumbai can fetch a huge price, giving added incentive to sell. However, the residents of the chawl were generally against such redevelopment and refused to sell away their homes. Any new development would not give them the same quality of housing and the sense of belongingness that their present homes did.

Keeping in mind the needs of the community, one of the trustees of a Parsi association (along with Mr. Dilawari) decided to restore the neighborhood using funds from the association. Through this project, the association was able to restore the architectural and spatial aesthetic of the community, without placing a financial burden on the residents. The

phasing of the project was done such that there weren't any displacement costs, with one or two homes being renovated at a given point of time.

Working on this project taught me that how much is identity and sense of a place important to its residents. I also learnt the value of preservation and 'sensitive' development. Redevelopment changes the social, cultural and physical character of a space. It loads the already fragile infrastructure and changes the scale of heritage precincts. So while urbanization might be the need of the hour, it is also necessary to understand the importance and value of history and culture and how it shapes and reflects in the spaces we live in. ■

Prachee Mishra is an architect and a second year student in the Master of Urban Planning program, specializing in international development. She currently interns at the Department of Transportation in New York City.

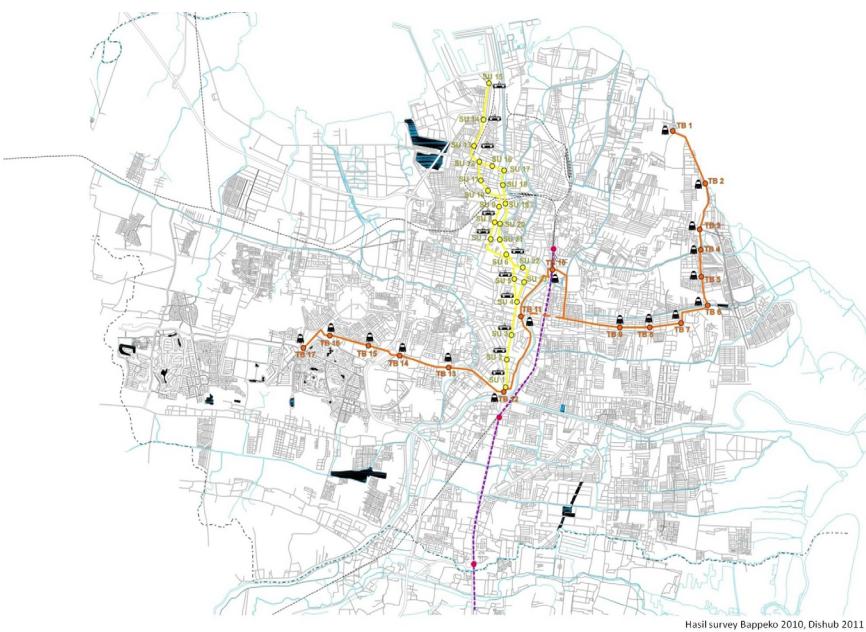


Breaking the Gridlock

a mayor's efforts to transform mobility in Surabaya

by Adam Eckstein, MUP '12

The developing world faces many challenges in the urban planning realm. Cities all over the world are expected to forge ahead to provide world-class systems and services to attract investment and growth but often lack the institutions and resources to do so. However, there are cities across the world that innovate or exemplify outstanding urban planning. Surabaya is one of them.



Map of proposed Surabaya tram and monorail corridors.

Like many of you, I had never heard of Surabaya before. Even though it is Indonesia's second largest city and quickly becoming an important regional hub for business, this metropolitan area of over seven million people lives in the shadow of the country's capital city – Jakarta. During the month of January in 2012, I was able to visit Surabaya to conduct research on the city's large-scale plans that they intend to implement. With my limited knowledge of the city and Indonesia in general, my ex-

pectations were low. What I would come to find would truly impress me.

The metropolitan area is currently under tremendous growth pressure. Just in the last few years, there has been a significant upswing in road traffic. The motorcycle population on the road has increased by over 50% in three years, from 2.1 million in 2008 to 3.2 million motorcycles per day in 2011. There also has been a large increase in cars on the road, increasing from 365,000 cars in 2008

scaped medians on roadways that are reminiscent of Park Avenue in New York City. Mayor Rismaharini also implemented new regulations along the city's congested roads that have greatly improved traffic flow

The mayor has not stopped there. She has announced plans for the city to simultaneously build a new grade-level tram and elevated monorail system with corresponding city wide bicycle paths and sidewalk upgrades. She has also drawn plans to reconfigure bus routes to complement the rail investments and to integrate these two systems to a future commuter light rail service being built from the local airport into the city center.

Surabaya's long-term infrastructure plans are noteworthy for their thoroughness and ambition. For a city without a rail system, the plans for the tram corridors and a monorail network are extremely well done. Both lines are planned to go through a number of popular areas that have a great potential to draw traffic, from shopping malls, high-rise residential areas, universities, parks and even a beachfront redevelopment site.

On their own, each initiative would not strike an urban planner as being particularly innovative or groundbreaking. But what sets this growing Indonesian city apart is the efficiency and care with which their plans are being adopted. In a section of the globe that scarcely has the technical expertise to use mapping programs such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS), the planning process of Surabaya has created higher quality and more thorough plans than many cities in the developed world. ■

to 524,000 vehicles per day in 2011. This severe upswing in the amount of traffic has created a situation that has begun to rival that of Jakarta, which is world-renowned for its traffic jams.

To combat this congestion, the mayor of Surabaya, Tri Rismaharini, has ambitious plans. She won her candidacy in part through her tenure as the head of Surabaya's city planning department. She improved road conditions, opened new parks and created miles of ornate and land-

Adam Eckstein graduated with a Master of Urban Planning in 2012. He is a research assistant at the Center for an Urban Future in New York City.

Bikes for the Unbanked

bike share is coming to New York, but will everyone benefit?

by Lyndsey Scofield, MUP '13

New York City's plan to launch a city-wide bike share program has generated a lot of buzz over the past several months – and with 600 stations and 10,000 bikes, the level of excitement is certainly warranted.

Over 8,000 discrete suggestions for bike share locations have been entered onto their interactive map since its launch says

Stephanie Levinsky, a current Wagner student and full-time employee at New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT). They have also received positive community response at the bike share demos held in Manhattan and Brooklyn over the summer, with some Business Improvement Districts and apartment complexes reaching out to ask for their own bike share stations.

Though the exact locations have not been finalized, the plan is to have one station every three blocks south of 89th Street in Manhattan and into northwest neighborhoods in Brooklyn. If the first phase goes well, NYCDOT and Alta Bicycle Share, the U.S.-based firm that was selected to operate the program, will expand even further from the city's center into places like Harlem and the South Bronx. Alta operates similar bicycle share programs in Boston, Washington, D.C., and Melbourne, Australia.

As students in a public service school, we should be excited about the potential impact of this system on the mobility of New Yorkers and visitors to the city. The recent resurgence of urban bicycling in the United States has brought with it a slew of research showing its benefits to the environment, public health, and quality of life. But as planners, we should consider how to ensure that everyone has

ing to a significant portion of the city's population. According to New York's Citywide Financial Services Study, more than 825,000 adult New Yorkers, or roughly 13 percent of all households, do not have bank accounts.

The city responded in 2010 by launching the NYC SafeStart Account, a partnership with local banks and credit unions to make bank accounts accessible and affordable to all New Yorkers.

Accounts require no minimum balance, do not charge monthly fees, and will not allow an account holder to accidentally overdraft. This innovative type of program has gained traction across the country, including in our nation's capital, where the program is called Bank On DC. In fact, Capital Bike-

share recently announced that they will work with Bank on DC to encourage unbanked households to sign up for an account with them in order to participate in the bike share program. They will also offer low-income residents a reduced membership price, which they hope will succeed in attracting a wider ridership. ■

This is a question that more mature bike share programs have just begun to grapple with, and that New York City has the ability to address from the onset. Checking out a bicycle with a share program often requires a credit or debit card to ensure that the company can recover the cost of theft or damage to their equipment. In major cities like New York, however, a significant portion of the population is "unbanked," meaning they do their banking through cash checking establishments. This presents a unique barrier to bicycle shar-





Ruling the Night

by Andreina Seijas, MPA'13

The night.

As a referential notion of time and space, it has rarely been addressed in social research, especially in urban studies. Existing literature comes mainly from the United Kingdom and North America and has taken two distinct directions. The first is the notion of the night-time economy, which comprises the economic activities that take place during this time frame like the rise of the consumption of leisure and the round-the-clock shifts in the functioning of the city (Chatterton, 2002; Brabazon and Mallinder, 2007; Bianchini, 1995; Kreitzman, 1999; Melbin, 1978; Sharman and Harris, 2008; Winlow and Hall, 2008). A second

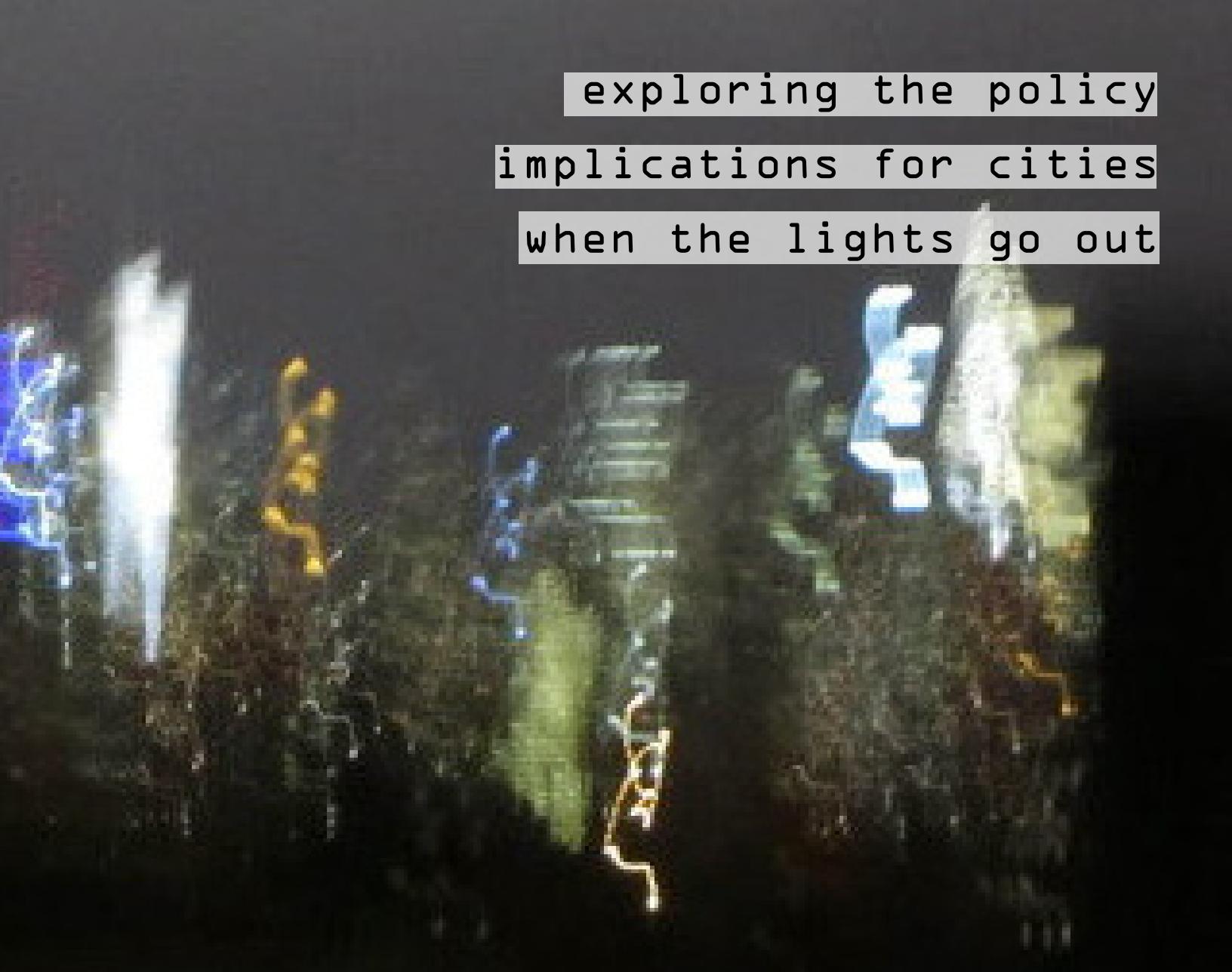
direction explores the aspects of the night related to social behavior, such as attitudes, habits, expressions and cultural manifestations that emerge as a result of night-time regulations (Talbot, 2007; Palmer, 2000; Chatterton and Hollands, 2003; Williams, 2008).

To date, however, the policy implications of the night have not been explored in the developing world. Particularly in Latin America, public policies can be implemented during this time frame as a means to build trust among the youngest of the population. For the past three years, exploring the need for such policies has been the central object of my research.

Young men and women are the main perpetrators and victims of violence. In Caracas, a city where the murder

rate in 2011 was 108 per 100,000 inhabitants (OMSC, 2012), the night is seen as a negative space that requires restrictive policies such as increased policing and surveillance. As a result, public space has largely become privatized. Shopping malls are safe havens for those who have the purchasing power necessary to afford protected night spaces. Political polarization exacerbates the situation: the city is divided between the rich and the poor – the chavistas and the opposition. The absence of public policies to “humanize” the city, such as rebuilding public spaces and improving public lighting, exacerbates the social divide by restricting opportunities for social interaction during the night.

My thesis is that inclusive night-time policies have particular relevance in



exploring the policy implications for cities when the lights go out

reshaping social relationships between young men and women. As social codes and conventions become more flexible under the darkness, the night is a space where individuals develop values, identities and habits, and where groups look for spaces to socialize and gain recognition. Night spaces have the potential to break down misconceptions by facilitating the coexistence of different social groups without physical or social barriers such as resentment and exclusion.

In this sense, public policies should seek to “re-territorialize” the night, in other words, to create public spaces for interaction during this time frame in order to restore order and to rebuild trust among a city’s population. In the long run, policies that promote healthy relationships and coexistence have

the potential to reduce negative behaviors such as opportunism and corruption, as well as facilitate economic growth and social development.

For Mexican writer Carlos Monsivais (1999) – one of the few exponents of the night in the region – “nothing is able to substitute the night as the main source of voluntary risk and the pleasure of the unknown”. The aim of my work is to serve as an exploratory study of the social significance of the night in Latin America. Whether it is in the streets of Caracas, in Cali or Rio de Janeiro, I believe that differentiating between positive and negative policies to govern the night could reveal deep structural needs and a broader social meaning of this time frame. ■

Andreina Sejas is Venezuelan, with four years of experience in Communications and a Master in Social Policy and Development from the London School of Economics. She is a second year student in the Master of Public Administration program specializing in International Development.

Citizens' Budget

a look at New York's push into participatory budgeting

by Thea Garon, MUP '13

How would you spend one million dollars? Thousands of New Yorkers have an answer to this question: a boat launch for the Gowanus Parkway; security cameras and lighting at subway stops; a dog run; more curbside garbage cans; neighborhood information kiosks for posting fliers, and the list goes on. While these ideas may sound like the pipe dreams of wistful city residents, they are in fact far from it. They are ideas put forth by community members from District 39 in response to Councilman Brad Landers' call for submissions for his bold new initiative, Participatory Budgeting.

Participatory Budgeting is a democratic process whereby community members directly decide how to spend part of a public budget. Councilman Landers and three other New York City Representatives from districts in Harlem, Brooklyn and Queens are offering their constituents the opportunity to decide how to spend \$1 million worth of capital funding – money designated for physical projects such as street repairs, park improvements or the construction of bike lanes.

Since he announced the initiative last fall, Councilman Landers says the project has been met with overwhelming community support. "People are really excited to participate. Some people because they've had something they've wanted to fix for a long period of time, some people because they feel frustrated with the state of government and are excited about the idea of being engaged and really doing something directly. Some people because it's a great community experience and they like to meet people."

The Participatory Budgeting process began in District 39 (which includes among others, the neigh-

borhoods of Carroll Gardens, Cobble Hill, Prospect Heights and Park Slope) when staff members from Councilman Landers' office organized public meetings and neighborhood assemblies to solicit ideas for projects. Nearly 1,000 community members offered ideas for how to improve their communities. Since then, a team of over 100 community volunteers has been sifting through these submissions. Organized into seven "budget delegate" committees, the volunteers have been researching and evaluating proposals to establish their feasibility and determine their costs. The committees are currently in the process of putting together a ballot so that community members can vote on the projects they believe should be funded. Once the votes have been counted, construction will begin on the winning submissions.

One of the reasons the initiative has received such widespread support is because of its concrete nature. As Councilman Landers explains, "We're able to be really clear about how precisely people's participation matters. Many public participation processes are advisory [in nature]. You get to come and say your piece but you don't necessarily believe that what you say will influence the making of decisions. Here we've been able to say, this decision is in your hands."

Of course the initiative is not without its challenges. The process is extremely time-consuming – hundreds of staff and volunteer hours have been devoted to organizing meetings, sorting through proposals and synthesizing data. There is also the concern that in the end, projects might not be distributed evenly throughout the district. Though it is unclear how many projects will be funded – the eventual number depends on the cost of each project – it is likely that some neighborhoods will not reap the benefits of a winning project. While some of the projects are district-wide initiatives like tree planting, many of the proposals are site-specific improvements, like the

boat launch for the Gowanus Canal.

And finally, there is the possibility that the public participation process will draw the input of the most vocal members of a community, but not be truly representative of the community as a whole. This concern, present in all public participation schemes, is mitigated by the fact that the eventual outcome will be decided by a majoritarian vote. However the end result still may not be representative, as the best organized and most vocal groups in the community may be able to exercise undue sway over the voting process.

While the process has gone smoothly up until this point, the true test of participatory budgeting may come after the votes have been counted in May and residents of each district are left to confront the reality that their favored project will not be funded. With so many ideas about the best way to spend \$1 million dollars, will people be satisfied with the four or five proposals that are chosen? ■

Thea Garon is a second-year student in the Masters of Urban Planning program. She is interested in pursuing a career in the field of financial access and inclusion for low-income families.

Planning and the Public Trust

the importance of good governance in the developing world

by Alejandra Rangel-Smith,
MUP '13

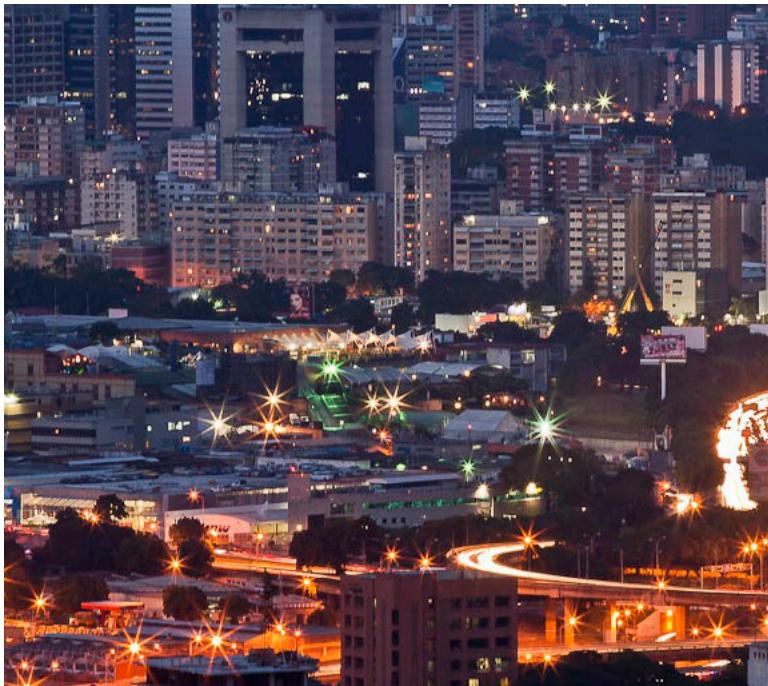
The first time I met Arturo Aispuro, the appointed Housing and Urban Development Secretary for the Mexico City government, I impulsively told him I was absolutely convinced I wanted to work for the Urban Development Department. He cracked a laugh and said in a somewhat frightening voice "you have no idea what you are talking about, do you?" I agreed.

I was particularly interested in the Mayor Marcelo Ebrard's administration because of the innovative vision he presented for Mexico City, which included ten new Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) lines, two hundred kilometers of bike-ways, the regeneration of one thousand public spaces and another fifty similarly considerable commitments. The sheer scale of this vision and the fact that Mexico City had mainly evolved through incremental change and not game-changing investments, made this grand scheme hard to believe. For the first time in decades had any Mayor proposed an urban vision for the city; and it was received by local citizens both with enthusiasm and skepticism. Personally, I was exhilarated either way.

The following year was the most inspiring and frustrating experience of my life. I was honored to serve in one of the few megacities worldwide, but because of the complexities that come with a city that size, I had also been warned about how the system's resistance to change, thwarts most projects no matter how progres-

sive, feasible or urgent these were. Nevertheless, my mind was set.

The development of the City's second Metrobus line, the BRT system, was one of the most complex projects I worked on, and our Department was in charge of the urban planning and public space renovation of the corridor. My bosses were terribly busy trying to fulfill impossible requests from the Mayor's office, so without much thought I was assigned to represent the Urban Development Commissioner in the decision-making process for



the new BRT along with the Transportation Commissioner, the Metrobus Director and heads of several institutions and city departments. With sporadic supervision, I led the urban renovation proposal for the Eje Cuatro Sur corridor and terminal station, Tepalcates. During the meetings where the Metrobus' executive decisions took place, my responsibilities included responding for the project's urban matters and presenting the redevelopment progress. The process to make the BRT

a reality was far from conventional, to the point of becoming surreal. The rigid timeline for the Mayor to cut-the-ribbon cornered the process into such a top-down approach that it seemed almost from another era; negotiating with mafia-style transportation leaders and simultaneously disregarding the neighboring communities. Dealing with protests, delays in the construction works and other serious risks for the project resulted in an incredibly stressful work environment. Those meetings remain some of the most nerve-wracking moments of my professional life.

By participating in a variety of the Mayor's projects, my opinion of the administration began to change. I saw deceitful priorities, hidden political rivalries between high-level public officials, obscure interests of many stakeholders, pervading corruption, and the unethical practices that permeating nearly every department. Slowly I became profoundly disappointed with the City's administration and the regrettable dynamics of the Mexico City government.

The most challenging aspect of working in the city government was neither being in charge of a more experienced team than myself nor my superiors' attempts of coercing me into participating in left-wing political rallies. It was not even being threatened with losing my job if I didn't "donate" five percent of my salary to the presidential campaign of the former mayor of Mexico City. The true challenge was trying to accomplish projects in an administration where a deliberate lack of cooperation was the norm. We were explicitly prohibited from assisting certain public officials, and many times entire departments would conceal information. Marcelo Ebrard's counter-

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 19)

In the Field: Kuyasa Project

evaluating South Africa's initiative to curb greenhouse gasses

by Patrick Cammack, MUP '13

Can developing countries reduce pollution while providing low-cost housing, heat, and energy to their citizens?

That's the aim of the Kuyasa Project in South Africa, an initiative to reduce carbon emissions while improving living conditions in the Khayelitsha township of Cape Town. The project targets an entire neighborhood to retrofitting solar water heaters (SWHs), insulated ceilings, and energy efficient lighting in over 2,300 low-cost homes.

Wagner students had the unusual opportunity to explore the Kuyasa project during a January course in Cape Town, "Environmental Policy, Sustainable Development and the Economics of Climate Change."

There is a lot riding on the success of projects like Kuyasa, since South Africa is a significant polluter and emitter of greenhouse gases and is considered one of the most vulnerable regions to the negative consequences of global climate change.

The Kuyasa project is made possible by the Kyoto Protocol, which includes a statute allowing developing countries like South Africa to earn certified emission reduction (CERs) credits through a Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) by selling these credits to industrialized countries. The Kuyasa Project is South Africa's first internationally registered CDM and the world's first Gold Standard CDM.

Led by the South African Export Development Fund and the non-profit SouthSouthNorth, the project

claims to save 2.85 tons of greenhouse gas emissions per house per year. It has created over 80 local jobs, and 50 workers have leveraged the training received in Kuyasa to gain employment elsewhere. The new solar water heaters and insulated roofs have also reduced residents' health risk by replacing paraffin fires as a source of heat for water and home interiors.

After a professionally produced intro-

ably an exaggeration for two reasons. First, the local culture prefers baths to showers, so residents consume much less warm water than a shower-dependent population. One might then argue a similar project in a wealthier neighborhood that consumes more water could save more emissions.

Second, they questioned whether solar water heaters are the best solution for maximizing emissions savings. For example, reducing dependency on the

electric grid might have a larger and more cost-effective impact than a \$500 solar water heater. Additionally, a local expert pointed out that the community values the insulated roof more than the solar water heaters because it prevents dust from covering the house's interior; eliminates condensation caused by burning the paraffin; and keeps the house warmer in the winter and cooler in the summer. If the insulated roof yields the most value, perhaps the project could better meet its goals by prioritizing this element and expanding its outreach.



Dawn at Table Mountain, South Africa

ductory video on the project, a delicious warm meal made with the eco-friendly "hot box" cooking method, and a walking tour of the neighborhood, we were won over by the CDM policy tool and its success in Kuyasa. However, before declaring the Kuyasa Project the panacea of poverty and climate change, the return bus ride provided some very interesting analysis, led by climate economists Dr. Tomas Sterner (University of Gothenburg) and Dr. Edwin Muchapondwa (University of Cape Town).

Both professors argued that, although baseline emissions (i.e., emissions without the project) are difficult to estimate, the claim that Kuyasa saves 2.85 tons of emissions each year is prob-

Despite the criticism, it was clear that the Kuyasa Project has visibly improved living conditions and curbed emissions in Khayelitsha. Poverty and climate change are two formidable challenges that cannot be conquered with a single initiative. Clean Development Mechanisms might not be the long-term solution to climate change, and solar water heaters may not alleviate poverty, but these pilot projects do get the ball rolling, increase awareness, and teach us how to improve in future projects. ■

Patrick Cammack is a second year urban planning student with interests in economic development and transportation.

Trade-offs in Post-Revolutionary Cuba

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10)

tion and Development, but focused on the old colonial center of the city of Havana (a UNESCO World Heritage Site).

"Bringing in foreign private capital is like a double-edged blade," she said. "A cruise ship company, for example, may come in wanting only a dock for its ships, but then it also wants us to give up a portion of the surrounding cityscape to incongruent commercial land uses, which are likely to displace more crucial uses like housing for our population."

Indeed, in a city where over half of all housing is substandard and overcrowding is rampant, the government is seeking new investment sources to expand its stock of affordable housing. The Cuban government argues that while these investments may produce opportunities for some, tourist-based economic

development will leave other citizens behind, thus creating social inequality.

Although the United States and Cuba have virtually opposite forms of economic organization, they are faced with some of the same issues around economic development: how can growth be encouraged while providing for people who may have limited access to the opportunities?

It is an important reminder that there is no one solution to these challenges, and as urban planners and public servants, we must understand that all choices have tradeoffs. We cannot extol the benefits of any one proposal without taking into account both the winners, and the losers. ■

Christian Rivera-Gonzalez is a 2012 graduate of the Master of Urban Science program. He is currently a research associate at the Center for an Urban Future in New York City.

Planning and the Public Trust

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17)

productive strategy consisted of assigning a single project to several different departments and allocating the final responsibility depending on their short-term performance. Unfortunately for Mexico City, the Mayor had set the perfect scenario for an antagonistic and competitive ambience between his closest executives. The intense power struggles between departments became unbearable, crippling most projects.

I have had the opportunity to compare this experience to working for local governments in small and medium cities in Mexico; and fortunately there is almost no resemblance between the two. Smaller governments have reduced budgets and therefore less intense power struggles, less bureaucracy, more manageable projects, and generally less resistance to change.

Developing cities, small and large

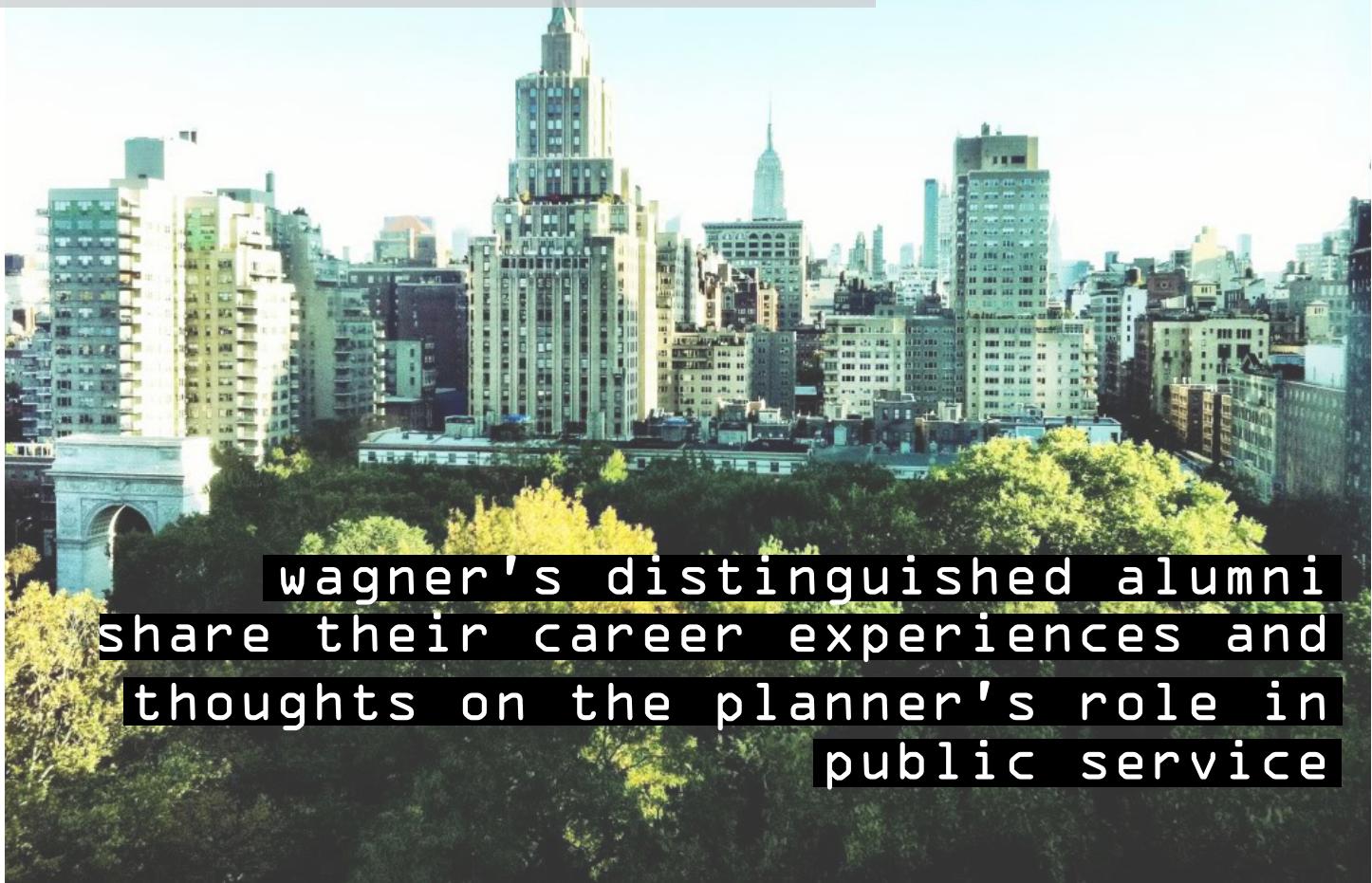
have incredible opportunities for public servants; yearning for knowledge, strong political leadership, highly efficient use of financial resources and multi-disciplinary and collaborative work. We have a long way to go in terms of building capacity, strengthening institutions, providing long-term vision, increasing efficiency in public service and finally and most importantly collaborating for a common goal.

In a future with scarce resources and a growing population, we will face some of the most difficult challenges in the professional world. However, I am positive that there are tangible and relevant changes we can make as public servants if we strive to improve our surroundings in collaboration with others. ■

Alejandra Rangel Smith is a second-year planning student and architect. She has worked in the public, private and non-profit sectors, mainly in the U.S. and Mexico.



//alumni reflection:



wagner's distinguished alumni
share their career experiences and
thoughts on the planner's role in
public service

Angela Sung Pinsky, MUP '05

I often refer to graduate school as one of the best gifts that you can give to yourself, which may be a reflection of my years at Wagner. But more than just a fun escape from the working world, it prepared me for a new career and increased my skill sets to perform at a management level for the first time. Wagner successfully transformed me into an Urban Planner in two short years by ingraining a few key lessons that I've applied almost every day of my six years at City Hall and the last two years working at the Real Estate Board of New York.

Participation matters

Not only does it matter, it makes all the difference. Public Service is not a field where you can leave work at the office. To be really successful in this arena, to be able to affect change, engag-

ing with whatever you are working on multiple levels is the only way to really understand how your decisions are going to impact the environment.

MPSO is actually a very important class

Public Service is not a connection point for like-minded people - it is the forum in which opposing views from every direction duke it out for a priority position. It is an inevitability that you will be working with people who have different ideas, different intentions, and different solutions in mind. The goal in public policy is not to have a single perspective prevail over others, it is to communicate and work together on policies to optimize different or competing priorities.

There is no right answer in public policy

There are plenty of wrong answers, but there is no bottom line in public policy. The best proposals and initiatives come from talking to communities and getting

the input of others as much as possible.

For those of you nearing the end of your graduate school career, be nice to your classmates - Wagner graduates are everywhere! Also, rely on the Wagner network, ask for informational interviews with alumni, and talk to your professors. Not every conversation will lead to a job opportunity, but it will lead to the next conversation. ■

Angela Sung Pinsky is the senior vice president for management services and government affairs at the Real Estate Board of New York, a real estate trade association composed of over 12,000 members who represent the real estate firms in Brooklyn and Manhattan, as well as professionals from all sub-disciplines of the real estate market. She was previously the deputy chief of staff to Deputy Mayor Robert C. Lieber of New York and, until 2007, to Deputy Mayor Daniel L. Doctoroff.

Nate Gilbertson, MUP '00

From my perspective, the strength of Wagner's Urban Planning Program is based on three key elements, all of which prepared me extremely well for my career in public service:

- 1) A multi-dimensional approach to urban planning which familiarizes students with subjects and skills that go beyond traditional planning disciplines into public finance, management and policy-making;
- 2) A living laboratory approach which provides exposure to real-world issues both in the classroom and through projects with fellow students who are also working for and bring experiences from public and non-profit agencies throughout New York City; and,
- 3) A dedicated group of faculty who are who are plugged into current issues in their field and well connected with the people—many of them public service leaders—

-who make New York City work.

Planning is ultimately about decision-making and striving to make decisions that will lead to better outcomes and results. I often tell people that this is essentially what I learned in graduate school. So, if you want to go out and "do planning," then you need to find a way to work closely with decision-makers in the public or private sector to see how it gets done.

In an era of constrained public resources and pressure for more openness and transparency about what public agencies do and how they do it, I think the role of the planner has become more important than ever. Planners are needed to dig into complex issues and analyze the advantages, disadvantages and impacts of making different decisions. Sound decision-making is critical for gaining and sustaining the political and public support needed to provide public services and make public investments and improvements.

My advice to current students is two-fold. First, find a job that provides you as

much exposure and access to decision-makers and leaders as possible—it is the best way to learn how to become one yourself. Second, learn how to write well. Being able to crank out a succinct yet informative one-page memo which describes all the issues and puts forth a recommendation for decision-makers is an essential skill and will be viewed as an asset by any organization or individual you are working for. ■

Nate Gilbertson is the Deputy Director for Corporate Compliance and Strategic Development at MTA Metro-North Railroad where he works with departments to identify and implement managerial and operational improvements. He has experience working on both coasts with large transportation organizations at the nexus of policy, technology and management. Prior to joining Metro-North, he was the Special Assistant for Policy in the Office of the Executive Director and CEO of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority.

Shani Leibowitz, MUP '01

The role of public service in the field of planning is paramount. Wagner was my pathway into the field of planning, and where I learned to think critically and comprehensively about ways to positively impact the built environment and those that live in it. For years after graduating from Wagner, I worked at a planning consulting firm in the New York metropolitan region. While I learned a tremendous amount and developed invaluable skills, I felt I was not affecting change in the way I had hoped coming out of Wagner.

Then I found my way into my dream job with the Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corporation, where I have been afforded the opportunity to do place-based planning and development, maintaining and redeveloping one of the city's most historic assets. We strategically lease space, target

the city's growing manufacturing sectors to strengthen the city's economy, ensure maximum job creation. We also provide employment opportunities for people in the communities that surround the Yard, particularly those from the three public housing complexes. Promoting urban manufacturing and employment is critical, as manufacturing jobs typically pay 20 percent higher than service sector or retail jobs and represent a significant contribution to the growth of a community's middle-class.

What interests me the most about the Yard is that it is more than a typical industrial park. As a not-for-profit, we take a multi-faceted approach to development that involves not only improving the well being of the tenants inside the industrial park, but also positively impacting the lives of the people surrounding it. We accomplish this by providing employment opportunities, an improved urban environment through a major commitment to environmental sustainability, educational programs and community dialogue, and historic and cul-

tural stewardship. It's exactly what the comprehensive, policy-oriented program at Wagner prepared me to do. ■

Shani Leibowitz, AICP, is the Vice President, Director of Development & Planning at the Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corporation (BNYDC), a not-for-profit responsible for managing and redeveloping the 300-acre Brooklyn Navy Yard industrial park. Shani earned her Masters in Urban Planning at Wagner (2001) and was Co-Chair of the Urban Planning Student Association and Editor-in-Chief of the Wagner Review. Prior to joining BNYDC, she was a Senior Planner at the Manhattan-based urban planning consulting firm, BFJ Planning.

Man with a Mission: Interview with Enrique Penalosa

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7)

to bicycles and all this. Now we have more than 300,000 people using bicycles every day in Bogota. And now no one questions today that bicycle ways are good, and besides they are doing them everywhere in the world. They are doing bicycle paths in France and here in New York and everywhere, but at that time, 15 years ago, this was something that sounded crazy. And some even more crazy projects. Because we did about 60 km of roads only for pedestrians and bicycles, and so these were completely different concepts of how a city could be organized. If we had asked the people in these very low income areas sometimes where these bicycle highways go through, whether they wanted this, instead of paving the streets, the traditional streets, I'm sure they would have said no. And even though they don't have cars! But it's very difficult to change. I was almost impeached! It was very painful. I was almost impeached because I decided to get cars off the sidewalks. All it takes is a change in mentality. But that was extremely painful.

NG: Given the difficulty of implementing new ideas, how did you go about it?

EPL: Of course you have to try and sell the ideas, but in the end I think a mayor has to run a risk and do things that are unpopular, or that some people will not like. In the end, people love it. Sometimes when societies are very democratic, such as the New England towns where everybody votes on everything, or Switzerland, it is very difficult to change anything, because change always starts with a minority idea. A new idea never happens to a majority at once. A new idea occurs to one person first, then this person may convince five more, then they convince ten or twenty or fifty or maybe even 10 percent of the population or 20 percent, but it's always impossible that a new idea will have majority support initially. So, always change comes from a minority. Always change comes from one person ini-

tially and slowly from a minority. But to get change - to get majority approval for change - is almost impossible.

NG: You are perhaps best known for developing the BRT in Bogotá. How did you end up implementing TransMilenio after 20 years it was launched and created in Curitiba?

EPL: The Curitiba system was implemented in Brazil in a small city which was about 400,000 inhabitants at that time, and it was a very rich city. So, people never paid attention to the Curitiba system in the world, because the developed countries thought this was a developing country idea, and was not relevant. The other poor countries thought this was a very rich city and a very small city and so it was really not relevant. And even though at that time there was a dictatorship in Brazil, and so many people thought it would be easy to do that in a dictatorship, but not in a democracy. But to me it was absolutely clear - and it continues to be. I believe bus systems with exclusive lanes are not the best solution for cities in developing countries. They are the only solution possible, and not only because of cost.

There are many advantages to bus systems. One is that they have been very stigmatized as being for the poor. It was not always like this. In 1940, it was trams that were seen as bad and for the poor. That is why, when buses appeared, trams disappeared in a matter of ten or fifteen years, not because General Motors bought a few trams and scrapped them. Basically, they had a very bad image and buses were sexy. Of course, by 1940 already cars were sexy. When we did it in Bogota, which was a large city, a poor city, a mess of a city, and we did something that was very well done.

NG: As students of urban planning, what is your advice for us who are going to be designing the cities and managing the cities that are going to receive 2 billion people in the next 50 years?

EPL: In relation to the developing world, even in places where the societies have already largely urbanized, such

as Latin America, where it's almost 90 percent urban, the cities will more than double in square meters over the next 30 years. For example in Bogota will be more than double as large as it is today. Bogota's population increased between 1950 and 2010, the urban population in Colombia went from about 35 percent to about 80 percent, and the large cities population increased by more than 1000 percent. We are going to have to do over the following 50 years in the developing world to do cities much more than they exist now. Much more. Cities from zero, where there is only agricultural land today, which are much more square meters than exist today. The issue is, are we going to do the same stupid things we have been doing? Cities without parks and so on. One of the main ways to be behind is bad, to be backward, but in some aspects it's good, because we can learn from the development mistakes and successes of the advanced societies. I believe we can do totally new - and the opportunity for urban planners is amazing. We can do completely new cities, with hundreds of kilometers of roads for buses and pedestrians only, with hundreds of kilometers of promenades for bicycles and pedestrians only, without cars next to it. Just through the buildings. Completely different ways of organizing urban land - to provide in high density what people seek in suburbs. To provide green, great parks, but all of these things will only happen if government acts. This will not be the product simply of market forces. ■

Nicolás Galarza is a Colombian second year student on the Master of Urban Planning program specializing in International Development.

More online. Read the interview transcript with Mr. Penalosa in its entirety on the UPSA website.

<http://wagnerupsa.wordpress.com/planner>

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