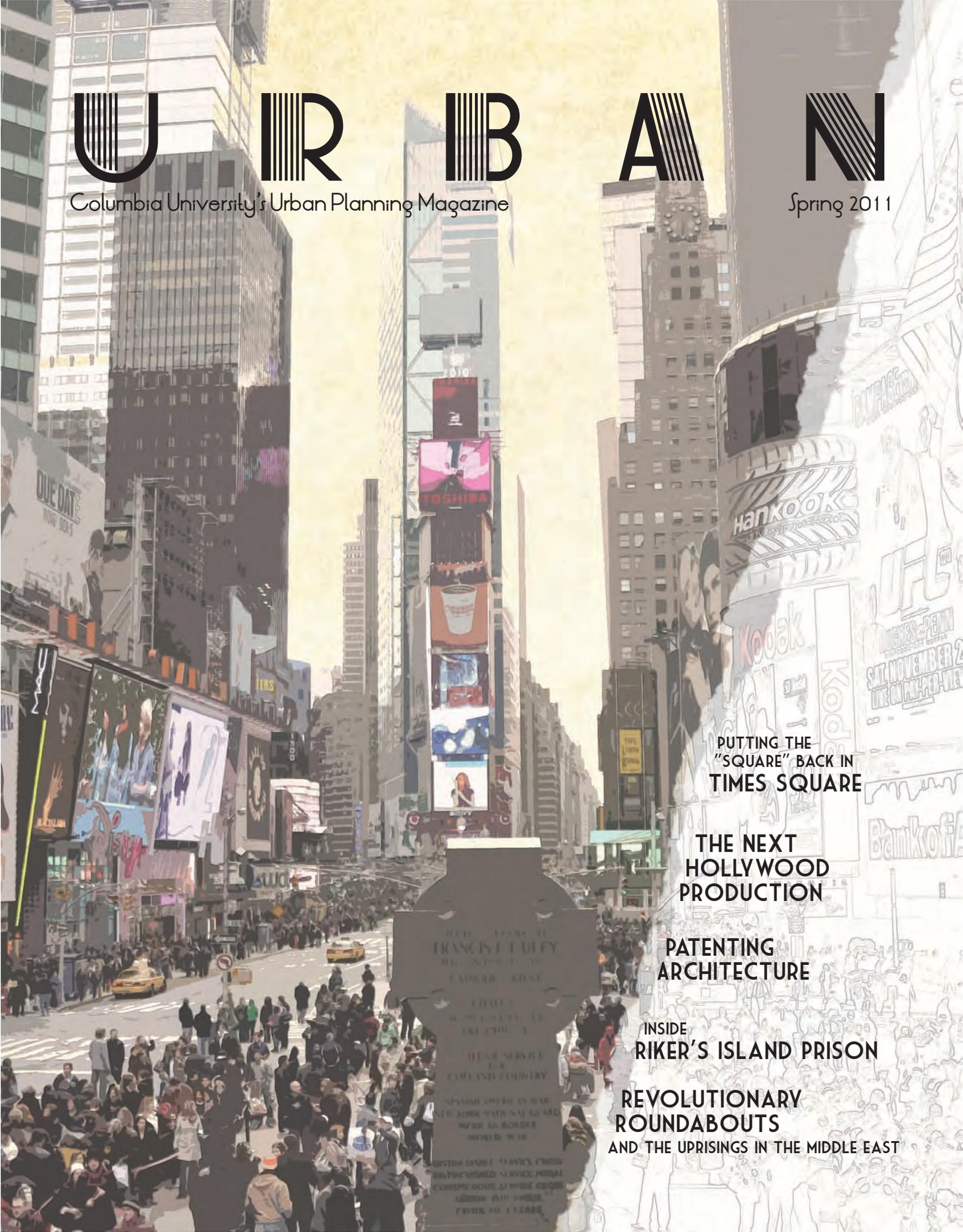


# U R B A N

Columbia University's Urban Planning Magazine

Spring 2011



PUTTING THE  
"SQUARE" BACK IN  
TIMES SQUARE

THE NEXT  
HOLLYWOOD  
PRODUCTION

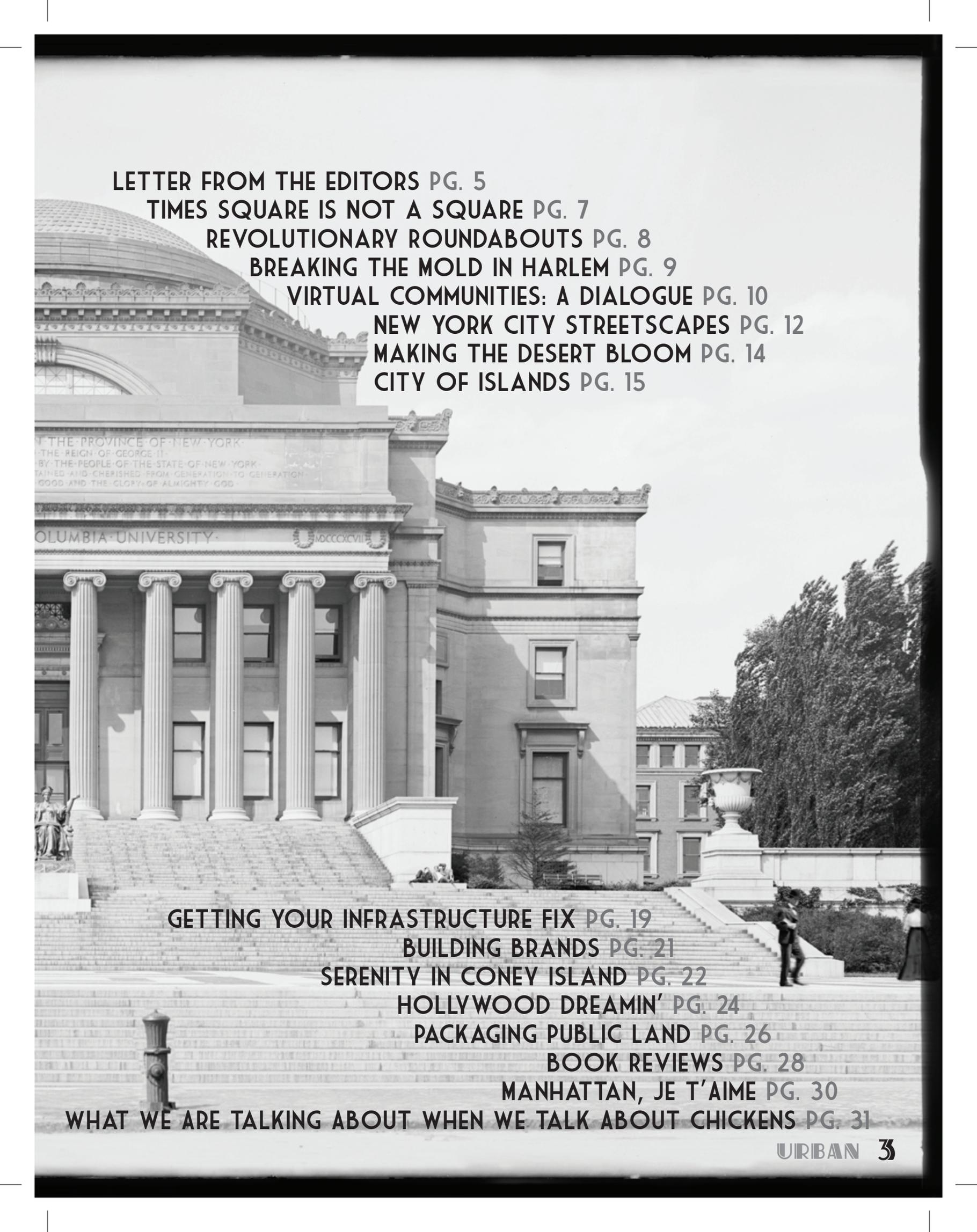
PATENTING  
ARCHITECTURE

INSIDE  
RIKER'S ISLAND PRISON

REVOLUTIONARY  
ROUNDBOUTS  
AND THE UPRISINGS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

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# URBAN

Columbia University in the City of New York  
Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation  
<http://blogs.cuit.columbia.edu/urbanmagazine>

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[urban.submissions@gmail.com](mailto:urban.submissions@gmail.com)

## C R E D I T S

### Editors



Jake Schabas  
*Content Editor*



Claudia Huerta  
*Publishing Editor*



Alex Wallach  
*Graphics Editor*



Alexander McQuilkin  
*Staff Writer*



Vanessa Smith  
*Assistant Graphics Editor*



Jeff Yuen  
*Staff Illustrator*

### Contributors

Nathan Tinclair  
Sara Beth Rosenberg  
Albert Lopez  
Lisa Blake

Ben Huff  
Michelle Young  
Charles Perrault  
Peter Jenkins  
Eric Goldwyn

Dory Kornfeld  
Pey Lung  
Tom Haviv  
Kyle Kirschling  
Maxwell Sokol

Mia Pears  
Dan Rosen  
Greta Byrum  
Joyce Tam

# LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Addressing urban problems has never been easy. The challenges facing today's cities, whether shrinking or sprawling, prospering or declining, developing or preserving, are hardly new.

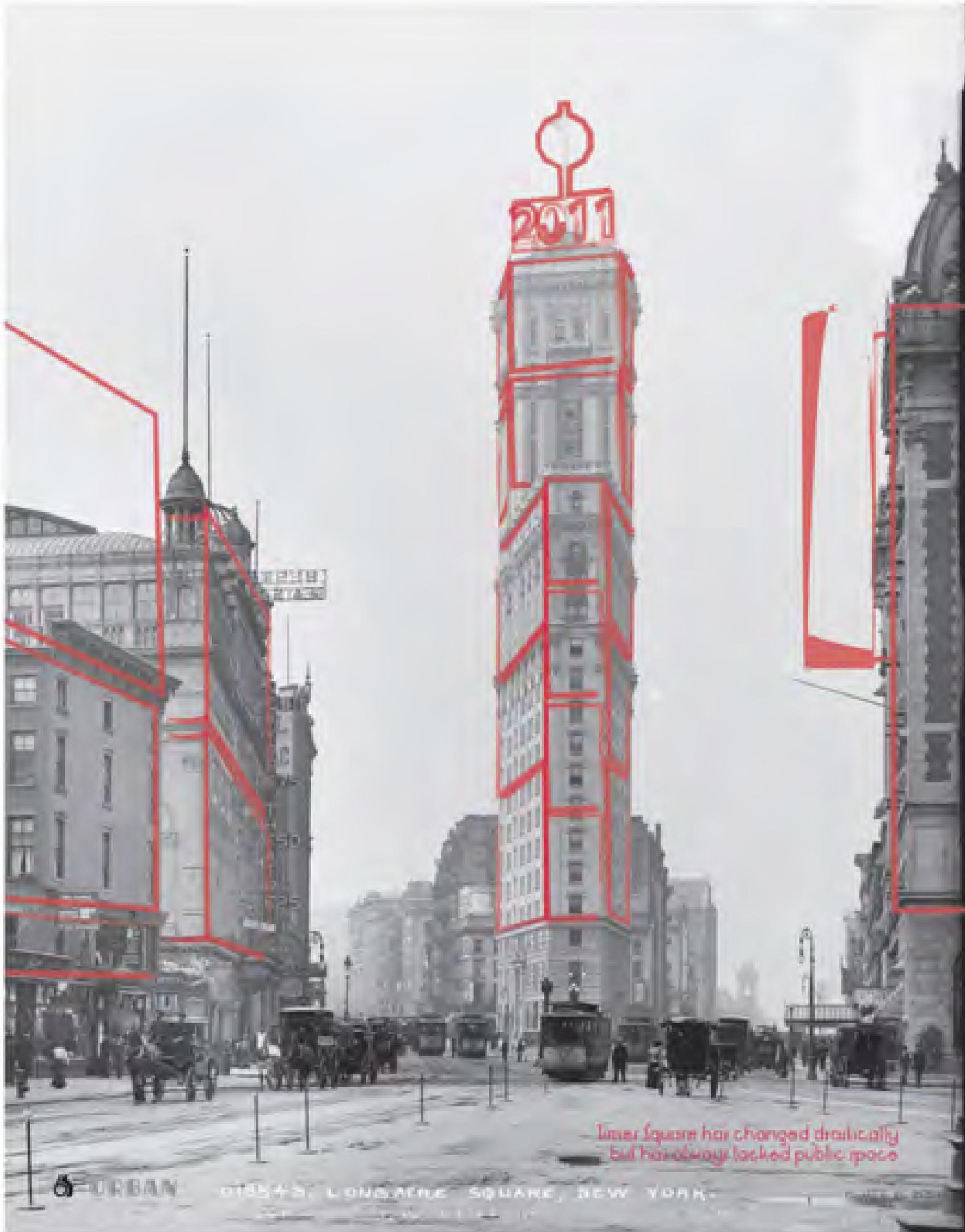
Neither are our methods. John Snow's mapping of Cholera outbreaks in 19th century London shares more in common with graduate planners GPSing food carts in lower Manhattan than it differs. Similarly, we still hit the streets and observe life first hand. Other times it takes speaking to community organizers, knocking on front doors, crossing disciplinary silos and meeting elected officials to inform our potential physical and policy solutions.

In this issue, URBAN Magazine features articles intended for audiences both inside and outside the walls of Avery and Fayerweather. With articles on Times Square, the Middle Eastern revolutions and prisons, we bring a planner's perspective to popular topics. Features on the City's Economic Development Corporation and urban chickens take a broader approach to less well-known planning subjects.

If history is any guide, some of the most influential planning ideas have come from distinctly non-planning sources – Jane Jacobs, after all, was a huge critic of the profession – and many prolific city-builders came from distinctly non-planning backgrounds – Robert Moses, William Mulholland and Le Corbusier. While we all have our heroes, perhaps the planners we champion today are the ones who barely leave a mark.

Planners aren't the only ones solving planning problems. Who knows which ideas are most appropriate for the 21st century city? We need to stay involved with the people and professions around us if we hope to challenge the status quo with innovative solutions that avoid repeating the mistakes of the past.





*Times Square has changed drastically  
but has always lacked public space*



URBAN

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# TIMES SQUARE IS NOT A SQUARE

Layout Editor  
**Alex Wallach**

Master of Science in Urban Planning, 2012

Union Square is a square. Madison Square is a square too. Even Herald Square is a square. But Times Square is not a square. In fact, it is nothing but a glorified intersection. At least, that's the way it had been until Broadway was closed to traffic in 2009, finally creating a desperately needed public square.

In this case, "square," refers not to the four-sided polygon, but the dictionary definition of "an open area or plaza in a city or town, formed by the meeting or intersecting of two or more streets." The fact is that Times Square had long been a square in name only; for decades it did not have an open plaza. For all of its length in Manhattan, Broadway forms a square with a public park or plaza wherever it crosses an avenue — Union Square at Fourth Avenue, Madison Square at Fifth Avenue, Herald Square at Sixth Avenue, and so on.

But where Broadway crosses Seventh Avenue, it intersects at such an acute angle that it creates only four median islands in the shape of a bowtie so narrow that they don't usually appear on a map.

In the 19th century, the intersection lay at the heart of the city's carriage-making district, and was called Longacre Square, after Long Acre Street in the carriage-making district of London. With no park or plaza, to call it a "square" was an overstatement that seems to have been made for consistency's sake, since the small roped-off medians were simply part of the unpaved streets. Just uptown, Broadway formed Columbus Circle at Eighth Avenue and public squares at Columbus, Amsterdam, and West End Avenues. But at Seventh Avenue, Longacre Square had no square.

The misnomer "Times Square" dates back to 1904, when New York Times owner Adolph Ochs urged Mayor George B. McClellan, Jr. to rename Longacre Square after his newly built headquarters at the south end of the intersection. The building's opening was marked with a celebration on January 1, 1905, an annual tradition that continues at this location to this day. In fact, the 25-story Beaux-Arts New York Times Headquarters at 1475 Broadway is still there. You've probably walked passed it, looked at pictures of it, even watched it on TV, but you've never *really* seen it. Today it's vacant, plastered with concrete, covered with electronic signs and, on the anniversary of its New Year's Eve opening celebration, topped by an enormous crystal ball.

Not only had Times Square become the new site for New York City's annual New Year's celebration, but the Times headquarters marked the introduction of an invention in 1910 that would define Times Square's identity to this day: the electronic news ticker. People would gather by the thousands on the sidewalks and the small medians in front of the Times Building to get news and play-by-play accounts of sporting events. The electronic billboards soon followed in 1917. During a big sporting event or New Year's Eve, the sidewalks of Times Square would become so flooded with people that the intersection was shut down to traffic; there was just no place for people in Times Square.

To accommodate more pedestrian traffic, in 1937 the City paved the largest parcel at the north end of the bowtie and created "Duffy Square," named after WWI chaplain Father Francis Duffy, whose statue remains there today. In 1945, a military recruiting office occupied the small parcel at the south end of the bowtie sometimes known as "military island." The recruiting station is still there, but Father Duffy's plaza did not last; in 1973 theater ticket vendor TKTS opened a ticket booth there that overwhelmed the small plaza.

**“While there were over seven times as many pedestrians in Times Square as automobiles, 90% of the space was allocated for cars”**

With little pedestrian space, Times Square's congestion problems continued. With over 356,000 pedestrians and 50,000 cars passing through every day, Times Square in 2009 was the most congested intersection in New York, yet one of Manhattan's most vibrant public spaces. Despite this, it hardly had any spaces for people. While there were over seven times as many pedestrians in Times Square as automobiles, 90% of the space was allocated for cars. Both Broadway and Seventh Avenue topped the list of deadliest streets for pedestrians for the period 2007-2009. In 2009, Transportation Commissioner Janette Sadik-Khan announced a \$1.5 million project that would close Broadway to vehicle traffic from 42nd to 47th streets and transform it into a public plaza.

The idea was to create a "safer environment for pedestrians, facilitate traffic flow along Seventh and Sixth Avenues, and create new public plazas." Initially no more than lawn furniture in the street, the changes became permanent in early 2010 with the installation of permanent planters, tables, and chairs. Although the changes never achieved all the traffic reductions promised, pedestrian fatalities sharply declined, and over an acre of public space was repurposed for pedestrians on Broadway. While the problem of congestion is far from solved, for the first time in its history, Times Square is a proper square...a bowtie-shaped square, that is. U

# REVOLUTIONARY ROUNDABOUTS

Eric Goldwyn

PhD Candidate, Urban Planning

Space is both devoid and charged with meaning. Elements of the built environment suggest uses, and cultural norms protect their sanctity. In our society, a sidewalk connotes pedestrians, a roadway cars, and a dog run dogs.

While these spaces have clearly defined purposes, they are not immanent or immutable.

The revolutionary uprisings that have engulfed the Middle East and North African region demonstrate their malleability. Tahrir Square in Cairo is the most prominent example of how a space, once the crown jewel of Egyptian tourism and public life, was quickly converted into a site that fomented the ouster of the country's ruler, Hosni Mubarak.

Cyberspace, specifically Facebook and Twitter, may have received the credit for catalyzing these revolutions, but public spaces have been the true battlegrounds. While one might convincingly argue that these revolutionary spaces resulted from calls to demonstrate from cyberspace, without a physical place to assemble, it's impossible for people to unite and attempt to depose their rulers.

The example of Bahrain stands out from the other uprisings because it has no Tahrir squares. According to media reports, Manama, the capital city, lacks public spaces altogether.

Without space to assemble, Bahrainis were barred from protesting their government. Undeterred, Bahrainis took their fight to the streets: they transformed a mundane piece of road infrastructure into a site suitable for revolution.

The Bahrainis decision to redefine the purpose of Pearl Roundabout and Monument was a stroke of genius that revealed how easily space could be reprogrammed, redefined, and reinterpreted. By removing drivers from the roadway, the roundabout was no longer recognizable as a place for cars. Protesters turned it into a stage for protest.

In response to this recasting of Pearl Roundabout and Monument, the government bulldozed it and forcibly removed protestors and the tent city that sustained the

demonstrations. To further clamp down on the opposition's ability to gather and draw more attention to their cause, the government introduced restrictive curfews, bans on public assembly, and solicited the heavy hand of a regional military.

No one knows how these revolutions in the Middle East and North Africa region will unfold and alter the course of the future. We do know, however, that people can still exert pressure on their governments from public spaces. In the case of Bahrain, we continue to witness how quickly space can be reprogrammed, redefined, and reanimated by new users.

Such is the power of urban space. If a mundane piece of infrastructure can launch and sustain a revolution, any sidewalk or street contains the seeds for the next one. U



“Bahrainis took their fight to the streets: they transformed a mundane piece of road infrastructure into a public space suitable for revolution”



# BREAKING THE MOLD IN HARLEM

by Jake Schabar

Master of Science in Urban Planning 2012

*In just the last decade, New York has changed to an astonishing degree. Just ask Columbia urban planning alumnus Tom Lunke. For the past 12 years, the class of '95 grad has been the planning director of the Harlem Community Development Corporation, where he has witnessed first hand the evolution of the neighborhood and been an insider in some of the more heated public debates, including the Manhattanville expansion plan.*

**URBAN:** *met with Lunke to hear about his experiences in Harlem.*

**URBAN:** What kind of work have you been doing with the Harlem Community Development Corporation (HCDC)?

**Lunke:** I've ended up doing a lot of public space projects dealing with either creating new space or expanding old space or redesigning it in some way with the community's input.

**URBAN:** Have you built good relationships with the community as director of the HCDC?

**Lunke:** When I first came here, people looked at me like I was from Mars. There were very few white people in Harlem at that time, and it was under a republican administration so they thought, "ok, here's a republican coming in and he's not necessarily going to care about what our needs are." So I worked really hard to basically turn that myth on its head and show that I was here for them and that basically I could be a conduit between the interests downtown and their interests, and that I would be an honest conduit.

**URBAN:** Have you witnessed much change in Harlem since you first began working?

**Lunke:** Oh yeah. When I first came here [twelve years ago] it was really something else. There was still a lot of poverty. I mean, now you see poverty in the people on the street, especially on 125th street. But when I first came here you saw a lot of the physical poverty in the structures.

You would go walk down a street and smell mold, because there

were so many buildings that had been left abandoned that they were basically molding. So there was a very kind of musty smell on many of the side streets. You don't have that any more because so much of these streets have been redeveloped.

**URBAN:** If I remember correctly, HCDC opposed Columbia's Manhattanville expansion plan that called for the use of eminent domain which was ultimately approved by the State Supreme Court. How do you look back on that experience?

**Lunke:** That was a real struggle. What was clear from the beginning was that Columbia was only interested in acquiring all the property for what is essentially a 17th century campus plan. What we tried to get them to think of was...a Columbia of the 21st century, where their project would be integrated into the fabric of the existing community.

**URBAN:** What do you mean by 17th century?

**Lunke:** The plan for the future campus in Manhattanville...is essentially a quad with buildings around it. And the way it's built, even if they have streets going through it, psychologically it's an isolating campus.

We [the HCDC] asked them to look at not acquiring all the property, but leaving those businesses that wanted to remain and being aware that there are independent voices within this

larger context so that land isn't controlled by a single entity and is therefore making a single decision.

**URBAN:** So something with a greater mix of uses, essentially?

**Lunke:** They were talking about...the importance of interdisciplinary dialogue. What I tried to explain to them is that interdisciplinary dialogue isn't just one department talking to another, but it's a department talking to the outside world and getting ideas to apply within the department.

If Columbia wants to be at the cutting edge, [it needs to speak] with people who are on the streets. Not all the greatest ideas come from above and go down. You can get the reverse. And so if we're talking about a creative economy, well, that involves everybody; everybody thinking and discussing and comparing. **U**



Illustration by J. G. Jones

# VIRTUAL COMMUNITIES: A DIALOGUE

Albert Lopez & Tom Haviv

Master of Science Critical, Conceptual, and Curatorial Practice in Architecture, 2012

*In an online discussion, CCCP student Albert Lopez philosophizes with friend Tom Haviv about technology's increasing weight – for better or worse – in the physical social realm.*

## Albert Lopez:

With the emergence of digital technology as a community-building tool during the last decade, actions in the digital world are increasingly effecting changes in the physical world. A website once used to organize college house parties is now being partially credited by the media and scholars for its effects on the recent string of popular uprisings throughout the Middle East and North Africa. Though the impact these tools have had on these revolutions is still being analyzed, it is becoming an accepted fact that digital access will continue to aid in the democratization of spatial and structural organization.

What we do not know, however, is how the concept of democracy itself will evolve in this age of virtual connectivity that continues to make “freedom of expression” a reality, rather than an abstract concept.

## Tom Haviv:

Instead of democracy, I would instead call it anarchy, since “democratization” of information seems to imply responsibility, centrality and a social good.

Moreover, the horizon-less field of data-generation — information's anarchization — has unpredictable results. The mere pinprick of attention can inspire a wave of hundreds of thousands of hits by going “viral” on YouTube. Yet viral thinking has its limits: it lacks the imperative to galvanize transformative action within our real, lived communities.

We are filled with anticipation over the promise of social networks. This anticipation stems from this mystery: the amount of time we spend on Facebook is disproportionate to the material or emotional rewards it produces and arguably less than our experiences in the physical world. Facebook becomes a life-sap.

To remedy this is to create a social networking platform that recognizes — even exalts — our physical communities. I would propose a geography-based community-networking platform that helps us reconcile, with greater accountability, the virtual and the physical.

## AL:

You bring up an excellent point here by mentioning that users spend a good deal of time entertaining themselves on the Internet. Though entertainment in itself can, at times, have a productive purpose, more often than not it is used as a diversion.

Stemming from this is the question of democratization (or anarchization) for whom? This problem is particularly salient as we analyze who is utilizing these online tools to restructure their spatial and political environments. For instance, to what degree has recent development been the product of an empowered or simply a hyperactive and digitally savvy community?

Previously, the economically and socially disadvantaged fell on the other side of the digitally empowered divide due to a lack of access to hardware, and later, connectivity. With the increases in mobile internet use, it's questionable whether this is still the case. According to a July 2010 poll by the Pew Foundation, 51% of Latinos and 46% of blacks are using their phones to access the Internet, in comparison to only 33% of whites; communication by email and the access of social media via phone is also significantly higher in these groups.

In other words, minority groups hold the potential to become the largest productive force in both digital and physical space. But whether this has more to do with cell phones facilitating more distracting uses and the continued barriers to owning more expensive — and productive — hardware like a laptop remains to be seen.

## TH:

Connecting historically marginalized groups should be an essential goal of a geographically-based online network oriented toward local community engagement.

**TH: (cont.)**

In this imagined network, users would be able to collectively identify points of civic failure and evaluate relations within geographic space by divulging a matrix of contingencies and cultural multiplicities. A complex identity may form, one that resists superficial “hometown tagging” and cruder forms of territorialization, such as unilateral gentrification and wall-building.

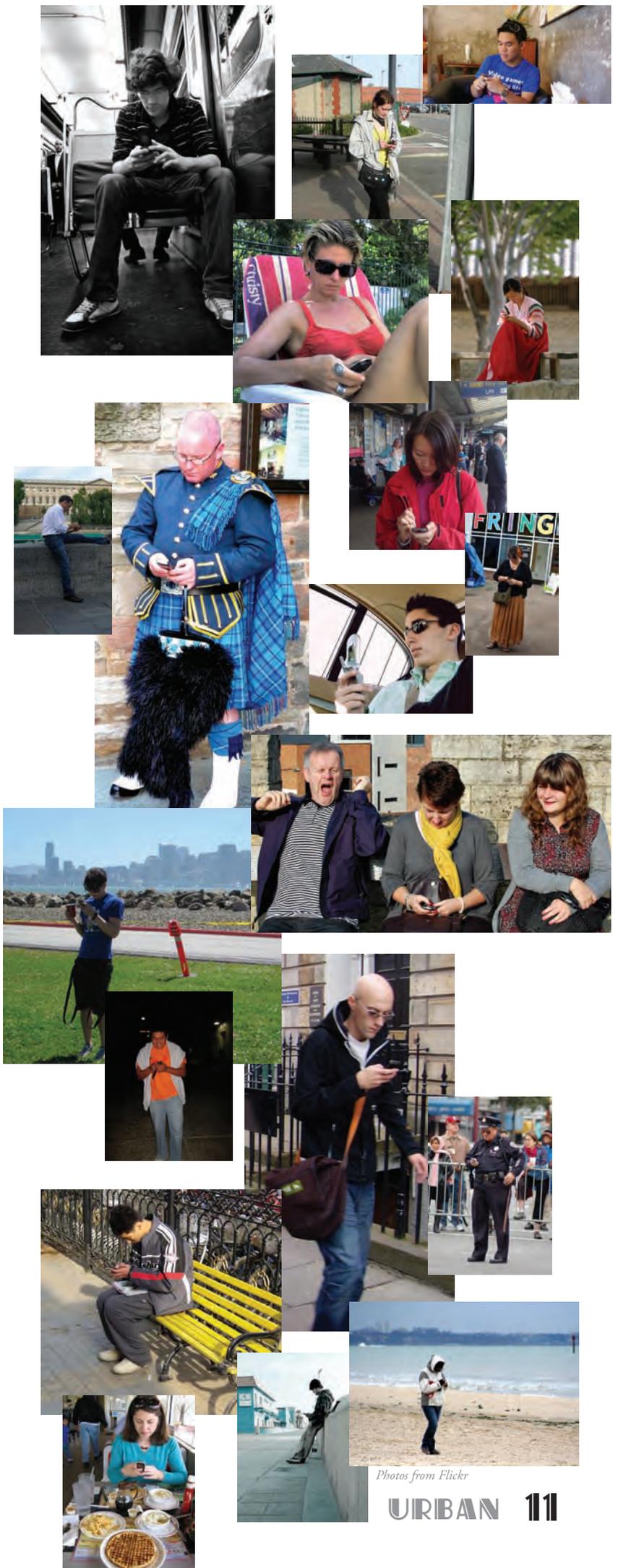
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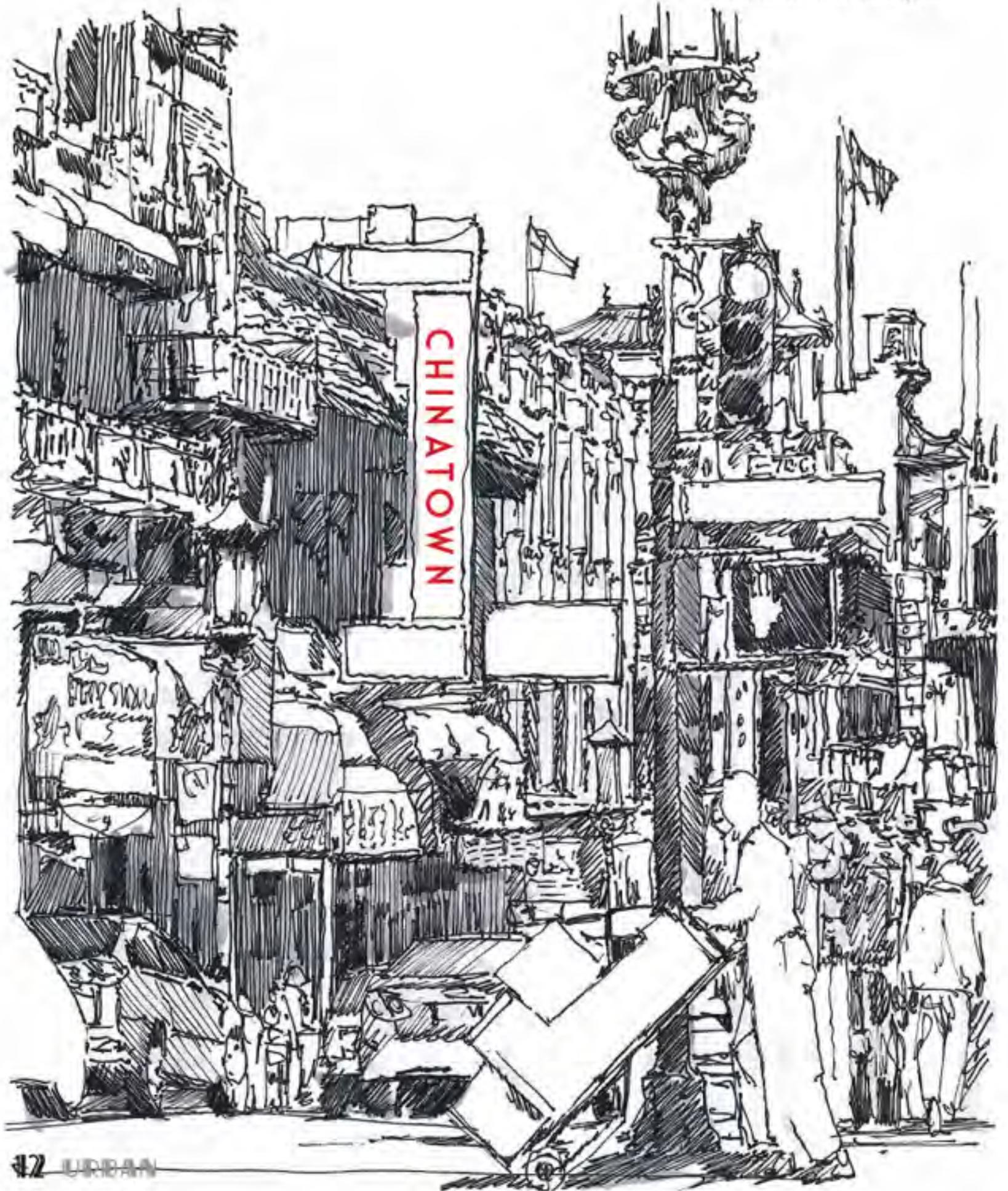
Its potential as a tool for unification and the breaking of existing social barriers is perhaps the key to its success, not only across neighborhoods and classes, but also within the divisions that exist in these marginalized groups themselves. Arguably, by blurring lines between the intercultural differences that exist within the larger ethnic groupings, as well as the making visible of similarities that they possess will aid in the union of a common culture, or at least a more fruitful dialogue between the distinct cultures.

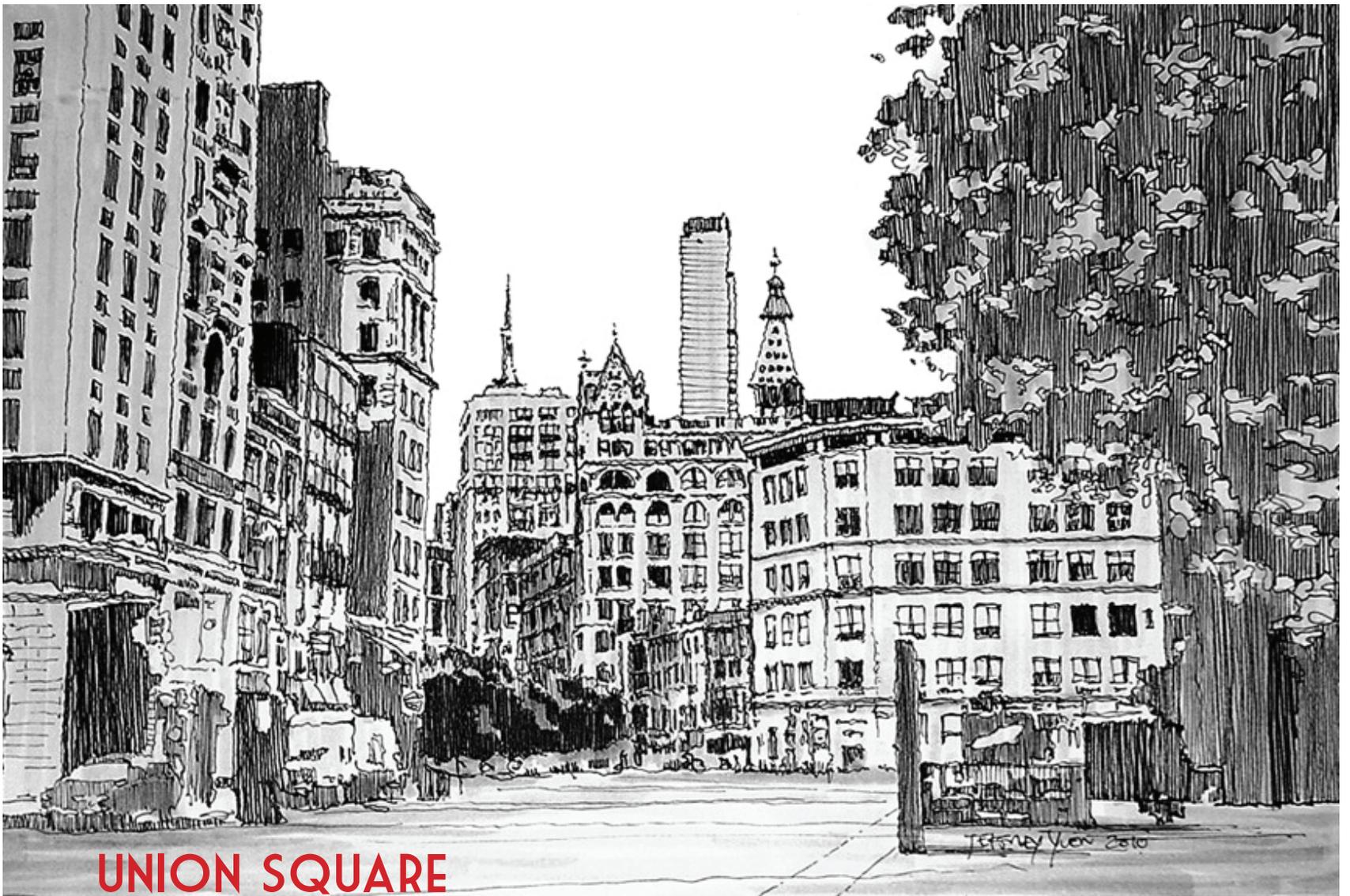
There still exists a threat that perverts this potentially liberating system and could ultimately lead to a sort of herd mentality where a group resorts to indirect representation of its most intelligent or cunning member. Education, the politicization and the digitalization of this growing body of users must inform their social-physical action to produce the abundance of good fruit that the virtual tree has been prophesied to bear: a more active citizenry.

**TH:**

Today, we need a conscious reevaluation of the qualitative. Oral histories of daydreams and spatial discomfort may lay the groundwork for communal upheaval. Affect and emotion foment change. To collect, and share, the subjective experiences of local residents is to validate experience and encourage action. If the vocalizations of activists and casual worriers are metastasized in digital space: the psychology of a city may emerge. **U**







**UNION SQUARE**



**LOWER MANHATTAN**

# MAKING THE DESERT BLOOM

Lisa Blake

Master of Science in Urban Planning, 2012

Upon first encounter, the Arava Desert, located between the Dead and Red Seas on the border of Jordan and Israel, appears to offer little other than sand. So it's surprising that this arid landscape, which receives summertime temperatures in excess of 120° Fahrenheit and approximately one inch of rain per year, is becoming synonymous with green initiatives. Leading environmental sustainability efforts in the region are two communal farms or kibbutzim: Keturah and Lotan.

Kibbutz Keturah houses The Arava Institute for Environmental Studies where I had the opportunity to work this past summer. The Arava Institute, which is affiliated with Ben-Gurion University, affords Palestinian, Israeli, Jordanian, and other international students the unique opportunity to live and study together. With the premise that "nature knows no boundaries," the school works to prepare future Arab and Jewish leaders to work cooperatively in order to solve the region's most pressing environmental challenges.

Research initiatives at The Arava Institute are just as progressive, focused on the areas of renewable energy, trans-boundary water management, water scarcity, and sustainable agriculture. For example, one current project helps Bedouin and rural Palestinian communities to replace their diesel powered generators with biodigestors, a healthier and renewable alternative. Biodigestors allow these communities not only to dispose of animal and human waste but also to use the waste to produce methane gas for cooking, heating or lighting. Another project seeks to introduce salt-tolerant water-saving crops into sustainable agriculture systems, better enabling gray water, run-off water, and saline water resources to be used for farming.

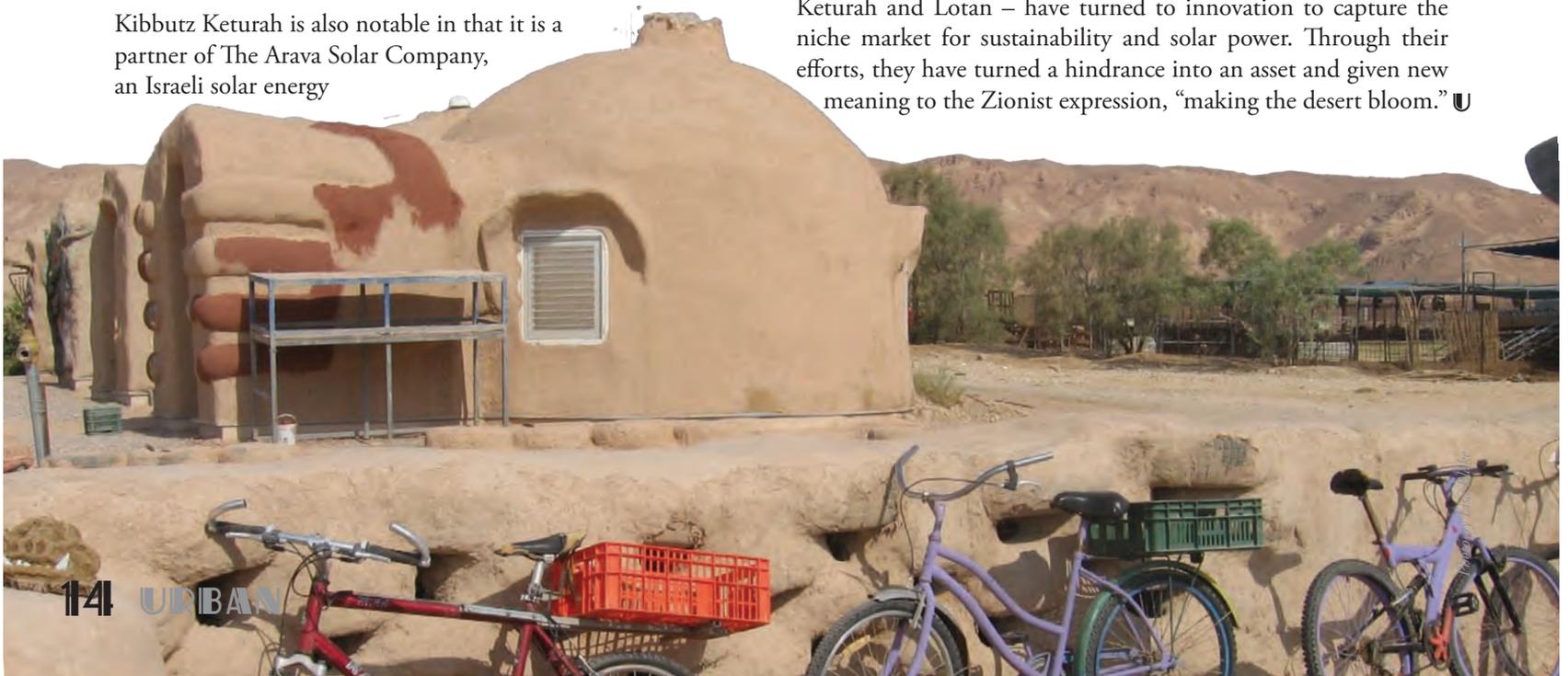
Kibbutz Keturah is also notable in that it is a partner of The Arava Solar Company, an Israeli solar energy

organization. Taking advantage of solar conditions on par with the Sahara and an official renewable energy zone designation by Israel's economic cabinet, The Arava Solar Company has constructed a solar field on Kibbutz Keturah land. This 20 acre field will become operational in June 2011 and will produce five megawatts of power enough for 4,000 Israeli homes.

Another extremely innovative kibbutz in the Arava Desert is Kibbutz Lotan, which exemplifies sustainable living practices. In addition to composting all waste from the community dining hall, the sustainable neighborhood includes solar photovoltaic panels, waterless sanitation systems, solar ovens for cooking, LED pathway lighting, solar hot water collectors for showering, and greywater treatment systems. Apartment buildings also serve as a prototype, requiring significantly less material than conventional buildings do. Through using a geodesic framework of steel pipes, straw bales, and earth plaster (think mud), buildings are both renewable and extremely energy efficient.

Kibbutz Lotan is also a leader in innovative recycling techniques such as using tires and garbage to build benches, playgrounds, bus shelters, and other creative structures. This process is accomplished by filling used tires with recyclables from the kibbutz recycling center and then applying a mud coating over the structure sealing and finishing the project. The results speak for themselves: over the past four years, the kibbutz has been able to reduce waste disposal by 70% each year, and tire recycling efforts are so successful that the community now accepts and recycles all tires for the city of Eilat (population: 46,000).

Sustainability efforts by both Keturah and Lotan exemplify the truism that "necessity is the mother of invention." Given harsh environmental conditions, kibbutzim in the region – led by Keturah and Lotan – have turned to innovation to capture the niche market for sustainability and solar power. Through their efforts, they have turned a hindrance into an asset and given new meaning to the Zionist expression, "making the desert bloom." U



# CITY OF ISLANDS

Michelle Young

Master of Science in Urban Planning, 2012

New York City is full of isolated locations of deviance and crisis, what French philosopher Michel Foucault called heterotopias: fixed spaces that reveal cultural contradictions, where people are often excluded from ‘normal society’ and yet still tolerated. It is this idea of tolerance that I contemplated as I crossed the bridge from northern Queens to Rikers Island on my first day of a six-week workshop inside the city’s main prison complex, where I taught the Bill of Rights to the facility’s incarcerated juveniles, aged sixteen to eighteen.

Roosevelt Island once had quarantine facilities for smallpox, insane asylums and prisons. Riverside Hospital on North Brother Island just west of Rikers Island treated those with leprosy, venereal disease and drug addiction. Both facilities were abandoned in the 1950s and 60s — probably no coincidence as the philosophy on medical treatment shifted from isolation towards rehabilitation. But Rikers Island remains in use.

There is only one way to access the island — across the Rikers Island Bridge. The island facility is comprised of ten jails with a total capacity of 17,000 all-male inmates. It technically is as part of the Bronx, but is part of Queens Community Board 1 and has a Queens zip code. Hazen Street, which begins in Queens at the Grand Central Parkway, continues onto Rikers Island and bisects the space. The MTA runs the Q100 bus over the bridge, but private cars require a permit.

These connections mean that, unlike the restricted North Brother Island, Rikers Island is far more ambiguous in terms of its accessibility, especially if you are just looking at a city map. In fact, over the years, the MTA has both included and omitted Rikers Island from its maps as if undecided as to how public or private

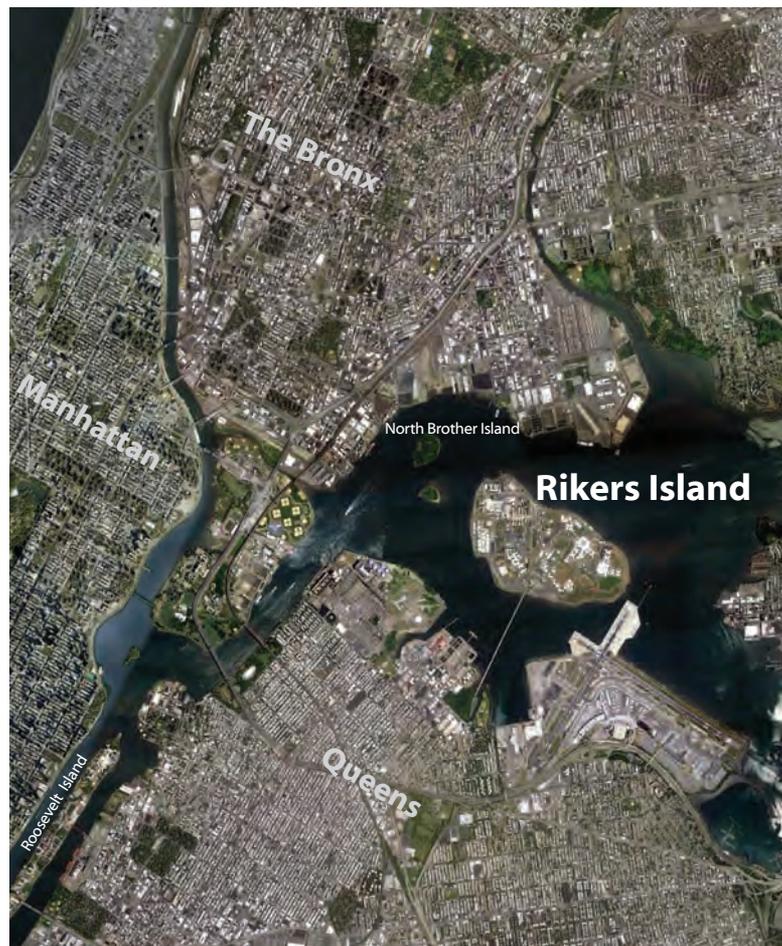
the place truly is. In practice, the island is open to people who are visiting prisoners, employees of the Department of Corrections, or inmates — not exactly the average New Yorker.

Every trip to Rikers Island comes wrought with bureaucratic hurdles. Through Fordham Law School, we are officially sanctioned to run the legal workshop, but the prison system in New York City is so massive that our entry process each week does

not become more efficient over time. Rikers is its own subsystem within the Correction Department — a veritable city in its own right. Invariably, each week an officer would ask where we would be going and we’d get the answer, “The RNDC (Robert N. Davoren Center)? Oh, that’s far.”

When we arrived at the RNDC, we’d get our IDs checked for the third time, sometimes verified against a list of names they had, sometimes not. After handwriting our names into a logbook along with the number on a plastic badge given to us earlier, our belongings would be passed through an X-ray and metal detector. Then we would be ushered into the next room, where after showing our IDs we again we would exchange our plastic badges for a yellow laminated badge. We’d then be led to another security station where we’d have to show the yellow badges.

At this point, the architecture abruptly changes. Before this, you might have convinced yourself you were inside a school — the light blue paint, the photos on the wall, the American flag, the offices. But now, a long hallway stretches seemingly indefinitely before us punctuated with retractable prison bar walls, sanitary beige paint, and defunct x-ray machines. Natural light floods the corridor, but the view outside is of barbed wire.



CONTINUES ON FOLLOWING PAGE

# CITY OF ISLANDS

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About halfway down is an incredible mural, but we'd walk by it so quickly every time that I could only absorb the expressionist style of the brushstroke and the contrast it makes with the linearity of the hallway. But I remember there being women in the mural, one thing that this prison clearly lacks (except for the female correction officers).

After the mural, the architecture shifts again as we'd descend a staircase into a freezing extension of plywood walls. This opens onto a narrow concrete walkway with impossibly high fences and barbed wire, conjuring up scenes from *The Shawshank Redemption* and *Le Prophet* intent on giving a clear message about the futility of escape.

Across a large asphalt recreational area is the building where the juveniles stay. We called it the 'greenhouse,' an apt name because it consists of two cavernous but well-lit rooms — think of inflatable indoor tennis structures filled with beds neatly lined in rows — that distinguish these inmates from their cell-confined adult counterparts. Even though they may be tried as adults, it's nice to know the system differentiates the youth at least in terms of

treatment. Still, there have been reports (and an ongoing lawsuit) that this configuration may not be necessarily safer than the traditional.

When we arrived, half of the kids were usually still asleep and it was our job to round them out of bed. We held the workshops in a semi-circular community space at each end of the sleeping halls. The acoustics of the "greenhouse" made it almost impossible to hear one another, so you'd sit close together. This facilitated discussion but there was usually a group that refused to participate and created noise in the background.

The range of personalities is pretty close to what you would find in any classroom: the outgoing ones who get into the discussion, the reserved ones who prefer to observe, the withdrawn ones that sit at the outskirts, and the troublemakers in the back of the room. Some seemed to eagerly anticipate the class, asking what we will go over that day as they peruse the law textbook borrowed from the prison library. But sometimes the noise becomes overwhelming and reserved kids begin to withdraw.



We taught them the Bill of Rights, culminating in a mock trial on the last day. During the mock trial, we were all impressed with the material they retained, their excitement level, and their desire to perform well for their peers.

After building a bit of a rapport with some of the kids, they started to tell us not only their experiences within the correction system but their hopes for the future. For me, the most rewarding moments came from a few specific kids who I will call Chris and Michael. I met them on my first day. They were both active in the discussion and we talked about our neighborhoods and immigrant family backgrounds.

Chris told me he anticipated being released soon, but on the last day he was still there. He seemed less involved this time and I was concerned until he told me that his case had been dismissed and he was going home the next day. I wondered if Chris was worried about his future outside of Rikers but we didn't get a chance to really chat about it.

On the last day, Michael chastised me for not showing up the previous week (there was a slashing, so the prison was on lockdown) before asking me if I would visit him between Christmas and New Years. Michael's court hearing has been postponed several times and is now scheduled for this May. By then the seventeen year-old will have been in Rikers Island for over eight months.

As a planner, I wondered about the difference between prisons as heterotopic islands of "deviance" versus the many in New York City that are right within our midst. What impact does location have on the inmate and on the public's understanding of the correctional system?

On Rikers, an island within a city of islands, the jail is both visible and invisible to the surrounding city. We tolerate Rikers Island likely because few of us even know it exists. But if we hope to reintegrate the incarcerated residents of the jail with the rest of 'normal' society, a good first step might be to address the role of place and space in our city's prison system and in our own consciousness. **U**

“Over the years, the MTA has both included and omitted Rikers Island from its maps, undecided as to how public or private the place truly is.”

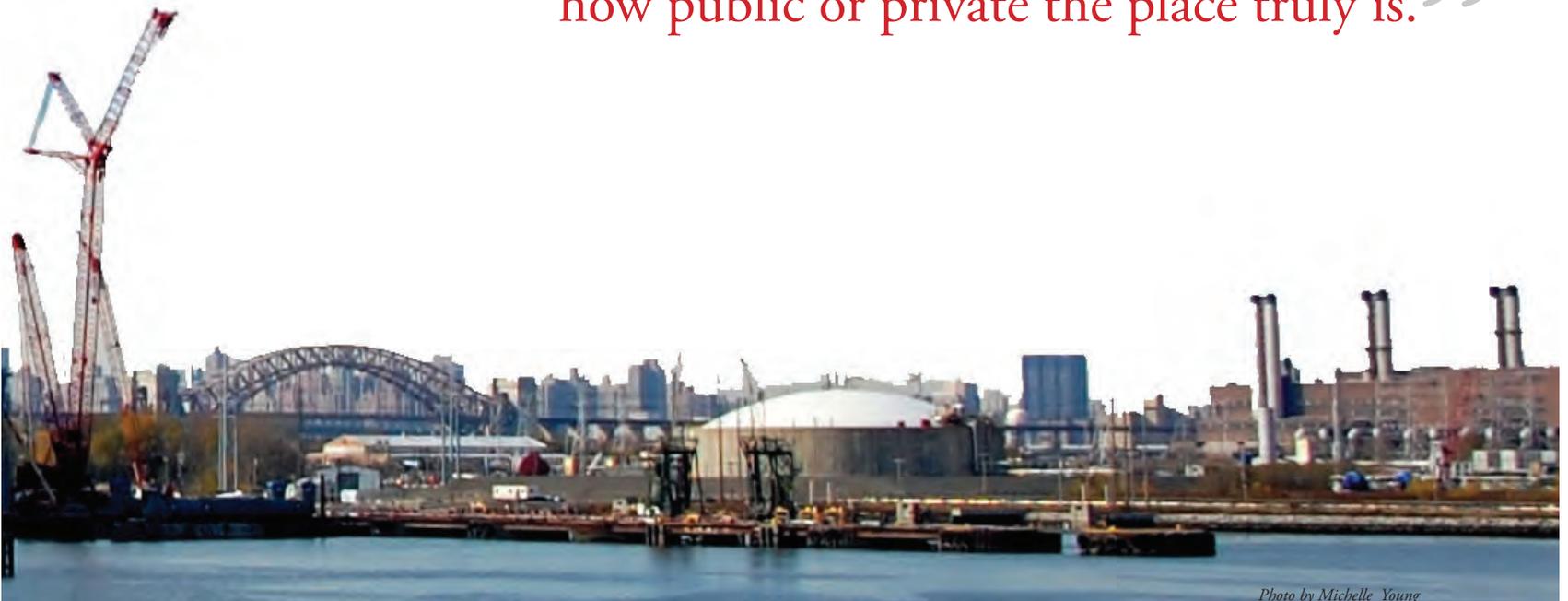


Photo by Michelle Young

# WHO USES BROOKLYN BRIDGE PARK?

Nathan Tinclair

Master of Science in Urban Planning, 2011

With warmer weather approaching, New York City's parks will once again play host to a plethora of public programs. From concerts to exercise classes, the season of free activities is something I look forward to all winter. When Brooklyn Bridge Park first opened last summer, park programmers offered science lessons, a series of four world music concerts, Zumba classes, and the popular outdoor 'Movies with a View' series showing classics from Hitchcock to the Big Lebowski. Officials at the park wanted to get a profile of the typical park user: how did they hear about the park, how did they get to the park, and what activities were they most likely to take part in? Working with the Brooklyn Economic Development Corporation, I was the one charged with finding all that out.

In order to answer these questions I led a team of eight undergraduate students from St. Francis College in Brooklyn in surveying park visitors. The students put shyness aside and administered over 1000 two-page surveys of park-goers, asking people for demographic information, reasons for coming to the park, ideas for improving the park, and familiarity with park events. The park staff hopes to use the results of the survey to better determine how to advertise events at the park, as well as ensure that the park is drawing a diverse crowd citywide.

Despite some nasty summer weather, including a case or two of heat stroke, the survey team was able to get enough data to compile an interesting profile of the park's first summer visitors. Park visitors tended to be rather young, well educated, and came to the area specifically to see the new park. About 40% of park-goers walked to the park, almost the same amount took the subway in from a different neighborhood, and 12% drove. (Not surprisingly,

the drivers were the group most likely to suggest that building a parking lot would most improve the park.) The park drew an ethnically diverse crowd. Approximately 50% of the respondents were people of color, a proportion comparable to that in the Brooklyn Heights/Downtown Brooklyn area. However, some three-fourths of park visitors came from outside of the immediate neighborhoods, including 10% of which were tourists visiting from out of state or country.

Working with St Francis professor Julio Huato, we ran a regression analysis to determine the likelihood that park-goers would attend the different summer events offered at the park, including movie screenings, educational tours, rowing, concerts, exercise classes, and the water taxi service to Governors Island. While most of the correlations were not statistically significant, we did discover a couple of determinants for potential program attendance.

For example, people who drove to the park were less likely to attend events overall. People who did not complete a college degree were more likely than both those with a 4-year degree or graduate degree to attend educational events. African Americans were more likely to attend fitness classes. While in general park visitors who lived further away were less likely to attend events, the weekly movie screenings appeared to attract people from all throughout the City.

The data certainly provides an interesting look at the demographics of the new park's visitors and the demand for proposed events. Perhaps more interesting, and definitely encouraging, is that the department is interested in who is going to the new park, and is conducting such sophisticated studies so early on. They are not done; the park plans to conduct more surveys this summer in order to see if last year's guesses match this year's realities. U



Julienne Schaefer

# GETTING YOUR INFRASTRUCTURE FIX

Peter Jenkins

Master of International Affairs and Urban Planning, 2012

Infrastructure shapes our relationship to the city. Nearly every aspect of urban life is predicated on some form of infrastructure system, from the water we drink, to the energy we consume, the waste we generate, the transport systems we rely on and the streets that so immediately define urban space.

Yet by most estimates, our infrastructure is in desperate need of maintenance and new investment. According to the American Society of Civil Engineers, bringing current infrastructure in the United States up to full repair will cost \$2.2 trillion over the next five years, to say nothing of new investment. With state and municipal budget cuts in the pipeline, continued disinvestment of infrastructure could lead to dire consequences.

At the same time, aging infrastructure presents planners and policy makers with an opportunity to rethink the way we design, build, and finance the infrastructure systems that shape our cities. As Stephen Graham, professor of Cities and Society at Newcastle University, has noted, infrastructure systems aren't static: they change as cities develop. Over time, this synergy can sometimes constrict innovations in the organization and function of the built environment. The expansion and current dominance of auto infrastructure is one clear example.

In some cases, path dependencies stemming from older, inflexible infrastructure systems can perpetuate hazardous conditions. Within the past year, the BP oil spill in the Gulf, coal mine explosions in China, and the nuclear power crisis in Japan have all demonstrated the dangers of our dependence on fossil and nuclear fuels and the ramification of highly centralized energy generation systems.

To avoid such overdependence, planners and policy makers should adopt more comprehensive and strategic approaches to infrastructure design and investment. While capital funding from the Federal government continues to favor large new investments in the US, more attention should be dedicated to policies and investments that minimize the strain on existing public works facilities.

For example, California's sustained support for energy efficiency, anchored by a utility rate structure that incentivizes conservation, has led to below-average increases in total electricity consumption over the last few decades despite continued population growth. This policy has helped avoid the need for new conventional power plants while buying time for more sustainable technologies to mature.

Similarly, New York City's recently released Green Infrastructure Plan promotes landscaping features such as bioswales, sidewalk vegetation, green roofs, and permeable surfaces as cost-effective investments that reduce the burden on the city's stormwater management system while improving urban design and local environmental quality. The City estimates this will divert ten percent of stormwater from water treatment plants and avoid \$3 billion in traditional "grey" infrastructure investment needs. Bike lanes are another example of a cheap way to reduce the strain on transportation in New York City.

Of course, these approaches by themselves cannot fully address our urban infrastructure needs. Rather, they should be considered complements that lessen the burden on aging infrastructure with minimal cost to the public. This kind of multi-pronged approach can help overcome insufficient and inefficient infrastructure finance mechanisms and provide flexibility in the way that infrastructure is developed. U



Greenstreets and bike lanes lighten NYC's infrastructure burden



# BUILDING BRANDS

“Buildings as brands run counter to one of architecture’s fundamental tenets: that a building be a product of its environment. How can a building respect its context if corporate policy mandates that it look like every other store’s layout and design?”

Staff Writer  
**Alexander McQuilkin**  
Master of Science in Urban Planning, 2012

In late February, hundreds of lawyers, architects, planners, and marketers descended on the New York Bar Association for a “Discussion at the Intersection of Marketing, Design, Planning and Law.” It was a diverse group to be sure, and I found myself somewhat uncomfortably among them.

Panelists included Shake Shack’s CEO, a Columbia business professor, the creative director of architecture firm Gensler, a Washington University law professor, a Columbia-bred planner, and the eccentric principal of the Frederic Schwartz design firm. Moderated by a self-admittedly design-handicapped attorney, the dialogue was animated, if not entirely civil.

At the core of the meeting was the question: can buildings be branded? According to U.S. trademark law, the short answer is yes. Companies have been exploiting their built spaces, particularly retail spaces, as branding vehicles for as long as brands have existed. McDonalds’ iconic golden arch drive-thru and Disney’s fabled Main Street USA have cemented those brands into our collective consciousness.

Branded spaces are consistent, distinct, and compelling. They ensure that we know exactly where we are, and they are a valuable component of the comprehensive, multi-sensory experience of consuming. But a building is infinitely more complex than a logo and things can get messy when one architect’s peerless vision is public domain for another.

Just such a disagreement erupted in the discussion when Mr. Schwartz’s vertical bamboo motif for clothing retailer Aéropostale was deemed not distinct enough to be protected by trademark law. But Gensler’s John Bricker said he just laughed when he discovered that a candy store in Dubai had shamelessly ripped off several elements of his design for Dylan’s Candy Bar, the famous New York shop. Imitation, after all, is the highest form of flattery.

Corporate marketers and trademark lawyers everywhere are watching closely to see if the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office

grants Apple its application to trademark the famously minimalist aesthetic of its stores. The approval would come as a surprise to many; despite being the reigning tastemaker of American product design, Apple’s store design is rather generic. While Apple, like many retailers, tends to keep its store design consistent in each location, who is to say that the ubiquitous steel and wood classroom-like interior is truly unique to Apple?

But buildings as brands run counter to one of architecture’s fundamental tenets: that a building be a product of its environment. How can a building respect its context if corporate policy mandates that it look like every other store’s layout and design? In the same vein, brand consistency writ large translates into dull repetitiveness in the urban environment. Today’s city dwellers are unlikely to blink at the sight of another Starbucks or McDonalds. New Yorkers like to complain that the city’s unique abundance of locally-owned shops is giving way to a slew of the national chain stores more common in the suburbs.

Questions of real estate and price competition aside, national chain stores do make city streets less exciting spaces to inhabit. But branded environments are not the exclusive realm of global corporations. Pressure to compete with the big guys and increasing access to creative resources and technologies have allowed many small business owners to craft clever identities for their spaces.

Neither are global corporations necessarily averse to experimenting with and diversifying their architectural languages. Some long-established brands are beginning to recognize the value in differentiation. New York City, ever the epicenter of consumption, is the new home of Nike’s SoHo “atelier” and Toys R Us’ marquee-wrapped Times Square flagship. These not-so-subtle appropriations of place may further commercialize the city, but they might also add to its distinctly capitalist character. With the U.S. Patent Office acting as judge, at least we know the fate of the city is in good hands. **U**

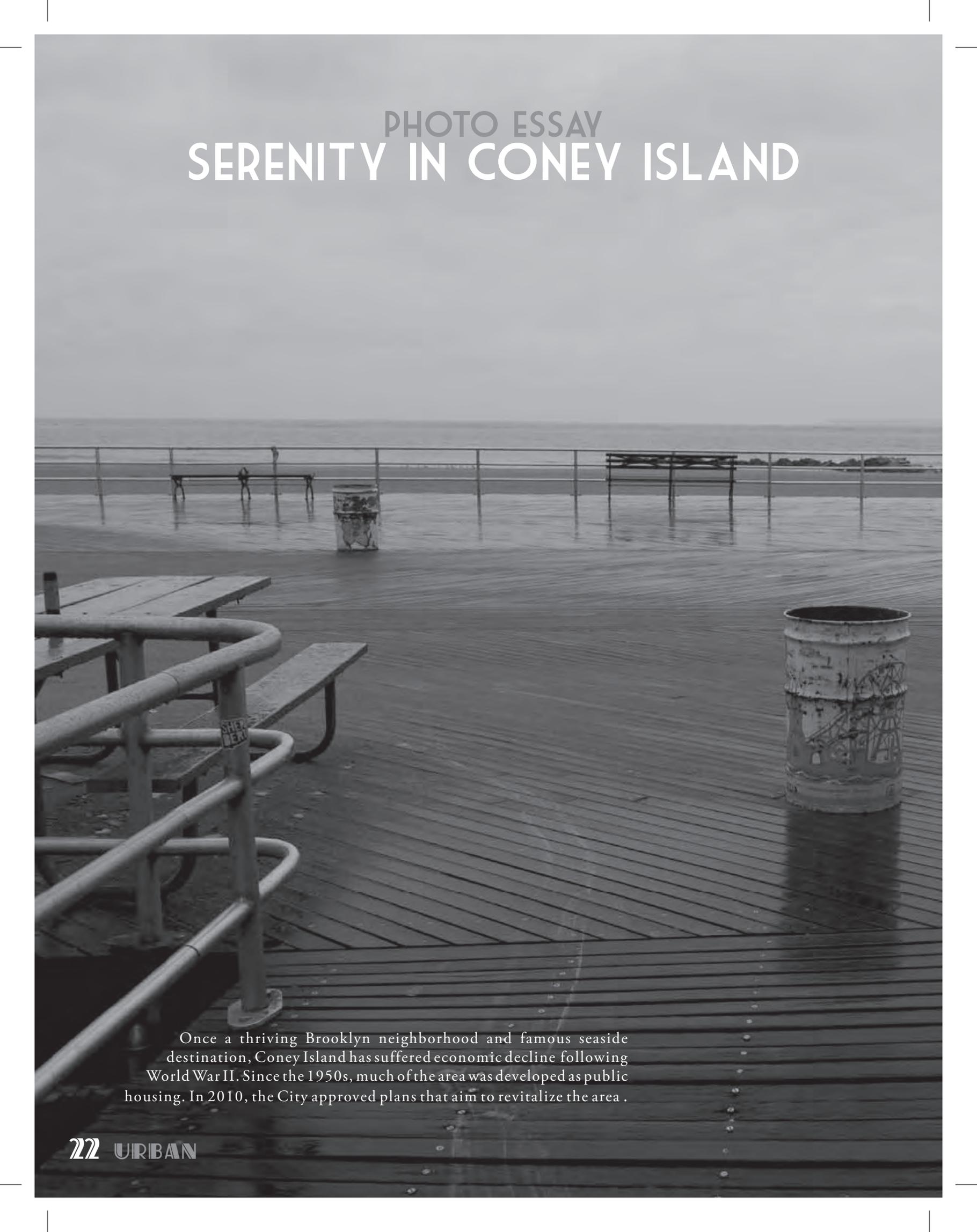


PHOTO ESSAY  
SERENITY IN CONEY ISLAND

Once a thriving Brooklyn neighborhood and famous seaside destination, Coney Island has suffered economic decline following World War II. Since the 1950s, much of the area was developed as public housing. In 2010, the City approved plans that aim to revitalize the area .



Pey Lung

Masters of Science in Advanced Architectural Design, 2011

# HOLLYWOOD DREAMIN' DECKING THE 101

Publishing Editor  
**Claudia Huerta**

Master of Science in Urban Planning, 2012

Both New York City's recently opened High Line park, and Los Angeles' answer to it, the Hollywood Freeway Central Park, are reminiscent of the City Beautiful movement – the turn-of-the-20th century planning approach responsible for such enduring landscapes as Central Park and Prospect Park. A century later, cities are still building parks that reclaim and readapt space in unconventional ways. Today, new parks not only serve as destination points for residents and visitors, but they act as tools for increasing the city's global profile.

The proposed Hollywood Central Park will run on top of Highway 101 between Hollywood Boulevard and Santa Monica Boulevard. Like NYC's reengineering of the landscape to create their Central Park was revolutionary for its time, LA's idea to rethink the purpose of its highways is similarly innovative — a concrete deck will be built above the freeway with soil, plantings and other man-made decorative park elements.

The similarities between the two cities don't end there. Los Angeles' motives are only slightly different from those of New York City in the City Beautiful days. Hollywood Central Park will of course serve as a much-needed green oasis in the city of freeways and provide a compelling reason for Angelenos and tourists to get out of their cars. Perhaps more importantly, it is a 'global city' branding project that aims to create a unique destination point like New York City's High Line.

LA's reputation as the quintessential car city leads many to think of it as 'park poor'. But many areas in LA boast abundant parks. When the decking project was first proposed, the promoters of Hollywood Central Park asserted that it would bring much needed park space to Los Angeles. But nestled between Griffith Park (LA's biggest, at 4,210 acres) and Echo Park, and in close proximity to Hollywood Memorial Park, Hollywood Central Park may not be located in a park poor area of Los Angeles. This begs the question, why here?





The shaded red area highlights the proposed Hollywood Central Park, which will cut across some of LA's most iconic streets.

In most city projects there lies a fine line between needs and politics, and the reality is that it is hard to get unconventional projects built without the backing of an influential City official. A project like Hollywood Central Park is controversial and very expensive. When it was first proposed, some thought it was more of a Hollywood dream than a real project. Today those sentiments are all but memories.

Eric Garcetti, the local area councilmember and LA's City Council President (and a Columbia alum), is the political muscle behind this project. Even though there are only a few stretches along the freeway that are suitable for a decked park, his support answers the question of location — the project needs to be within his district's political boundaries to justify his level of support.

In 2006, the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce unveiled the first iteration of the plan, stretching the park between Hollywood and Sunset Boulevard. In 2007, Garcetti led a City Council vote that expanded the project to Santa Monica Boulevard, increasing the proposed parkland to 44 acres. Even though the project will be mostly funded by foundations, the council president's support is crucial to getting a project of this scope and cost (estimated at \$950 million) built.

Park support continues to grow. Friends of Hollywood Central Park is a non-profit organization that advocates full-time for the

realization of the park. The California Endowment, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and the California Wellness Foundation have all been identified as potential sponsors. Last year Congressman Xavier Becerra (D-Los Angeles) also agreed to request \$5.85 million from the federal government to help build the park.

Hollywood Central Park is part of the ongoing effort to revitalize Hollywood by rethinking its brand and making it a more livable community and a more dynamic tourist destination. From both a resident's and a tourist's perspective, Hollywood Central Park is a good thing. The increased vertical density that results from LA's recent densification means that there are fewer private lawns that Angelenos can enjoy during the weekend.

At the same time, a big complaint about LA from tourists is that all of the attractions are sprawled out in different neighborhoods, which makes touring the city very difficult. Hollywood Central Park will be between Hollywood and Downtown LA (both well-served by transit) and should increase connections between both neighborhoods. Hopefully it will also ameliorate some of the city's car dependency by re-greening part of the infamous concrete network of LA's freeways. Only then might it enter the pantheon of the world's great parks. **U**

# PACKAGING PUBLIC LAND

## THE CITY'S ROLE IN PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT

Ben Huff

Master of Science in Urban Planning, 2012

It's hard not to notice all the construction going on in New York City. Yet where the average passerby sees only cranes and the hands of private developers reshaping the city, planners, policy-makers and political insiders see the increasingly powerful role of the city's arms-length organization, the Economic Development Corporation (EDC).

Sometimes referred to as 'the City as developer,' EDC seems to have its hands in just about every major development these days. For better or worse, this has given them a lot of attention, yet few people actually understand the purpose of the company and how it operates.

Many people confuse EDC with the Empire State Development Corporation, the state body that invoked eminent domain to expropriate land from Harlem property owners for Columbia's Manhattanville expansion. The main tasks of EDC is decidedly less hostile: it oversees the sale and development of city-owned property.

Through various fiscal crises and major shifts in the economy during the 1960s and 1970s, many buildings became vacant and derelict throughout the five boroughs. These abandoned buildings and key pieces of infrastructure were taken over by the city in lieu of back taxes with the idea that one day these properties could be fixed up and reused.

In 1966, the City created a Public Development Corporation to oversee a lot of this development. A second entity, the Financial Services Corporation was created in 1980 to administer government financing programs to expand business on many of these vacant properties using local and federal government funds

“To many New Yorkers the EDC seems to have their hands in just about every major or development these days”

(think incentives). During the 1990's these two companies were merged to form the Economic Development Corporation.

Added to this mix was the Industrial Development Agency (IDA), whose purpose was to manage finances that specifically pertained to attracting and retaining industrial businesses. Structured similarly to the three corporations that had come before it, this new agency was not a City department, but a not-for-profit corporation. The board of directors were appointed by the mayor,

City Council and borough presidents, however it was intended that the IDA would operate as a semi-independent entity. This single corporation was now given the responsibility of ensuring the sale of city land and financing of future uses that benefited the economic health of New York City. Such financing could come in many forms, including municipal funds earmarked by the city council to federally administered new market tax credits and stimulus funds.

But EDC is different from other city agencies in some important ways. For instance, when city-owned properties are sold, the names of the bidders and their projects are not revealed to the public. It is only after EDC selects a developer that the community is informed of the developer's plans. Unsurprisingly, this process has raised the ire of many New York City communities and made it the target of a public backlash, as was the case in the recent Willets Point and Atlantic Yards development proposals pushed by EDC.

Having many different funding sources gives EDC a lot of power. Add to that its unique semi-public, semi-private status and it is a recipe reminiscent of Robert Moses' Triborough Bridge Authority, which built countless bridges, tunnels and highways throughout the city with impunity from the 1940s to the 1960s despite much public disapproval.

Although their procedures may not earn the approval of many New Yorkers, EDC's work is nonetheless vital to the economic success of New York City. Throw a rock and you are likely to hit a project forwarded by EDC, from the Brooklyn Cyclones baseball facility at Coney Island to the new West Harlem Piers Park adjacent to the future home of the new Columbia campus. This summer EDC will oversee the operation of a water taxi service on the East River, the opening of the East River Esplanade park, and the continued growth of business incubators like a kitchen facility for immigrant women in East Harlem to a technology office hub in Hudson Square.

From projects as large as revitalizing the South Brooklyn Marine Terminal — a project that aims to bring thousands of jobs back to the Sunset Park neighborhood and revitalize a freight rail line adjacent to the site — to selling a small lot in Midwood, Brooklyn to a Jewish Day School, EDC is a powerful and omnipresent force in New York City development. Despite their somewhat controversial reputation, EDC's use of public assets to leverage private development has been instrumental in keeping New York City the business hub of the region. **U**

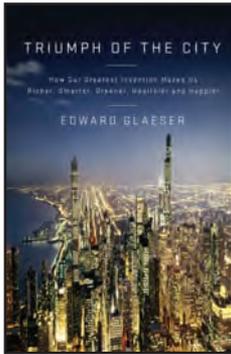


A section of the Atlantic Yards

*Photo taken from Flickr*

# BOOK REVIEWS

## Passionate Urban Economics



*Triumph of the City: How Our Greatest Invention Makes Us Richer, Smarter, Greener, Healthier and Happier*

By Edward Glaeser  
(Penguin Group Inc.)

*Cities enable the collaboration that makes humanity shine most brightly. Because humans learn so much from other humans, we learn more when there are more people around us.*

— Glaeser, *Triumph of the City*

Not only do humans make cities, but also, Harvard economist Glaeser argues, cities make us more human. Cities triumph because of their ability to enhance our greatest strength — our ability to think and learn. This is because we learn most fully when we interact face-to-face, and communication technology has not yet been able to replicate this.

As Glaeser points out, cities have been the source of our progress throughout time and space. 2,500 years ago, Athens attracted many of the brightest minds in Asia Minor, producing much of the Western canon of philosophy, theatre, and other arts. Glaeser provides many interesting examples of how cities allowed humankind to make great leaps forward. In each case, he explains how urban proximity was fundamental to innovation.

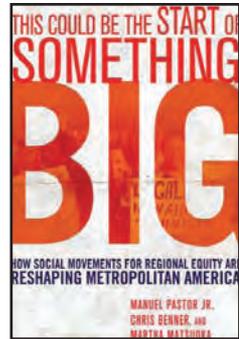
The book clearly reveals Glaeser's sincere passion for cities, making it a pleasurable read. The tone of the book is much like *The Economy of Cities* by Jane Jacobs (1969) and *The Wealth of Cities* by John Norquist (1998) that shed light on the under-appreciated benefits of cities.

The book's main virtue is its big-picture evaluation of cities. Despite being loaded with examples, it gives a clear overall sense of how we can make cities

better, and more importantly, how cities make us better. U

Kyle M. Kirschling

## Roadblocks Remain for Regional Equity



*This Could Be the Start of Something Big: How Social Movements for Regional Equity are Reshaping Metropolitan America*

By Manuel Pastor Jr., Chris Benner, and Martha Matsuoka  
(Cornell University Press)

In their 2009 work, Pastor, Benner and Matsuoka explore the theoretical framework of the regional equity perspective. The authors provide a thorough synopsis of social movement regionalism, which identifies the metropolitan region as not only the scale of problems and potential solutions, but also the scale at which to create a social movement for change.

A main criticism of the book is that the authors oversimplify the concept of regional equity in their failure to clearly differentiate it from social equity, which leaves the reader with an incomplete picture of the transportation equity conundrum. Although it is clear that Pastor et al. are social equity advocates at heart, their conclusions fail to consider a sustainable transportation viewpoint to help untangle the issues of regional and social equity.

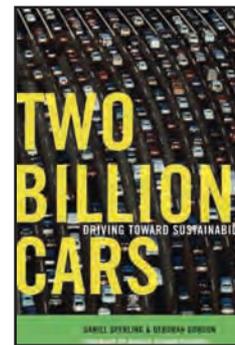
The multi-faceted transportation agenda must address regional and social inequity. However, these objectives are not necessarily mutually supportive. The authors point to examples of investment in commuter rail, endorsed by both suburbanites and central city residents, as regional equity success stories that also promote social equity. While commuter rail does facilitate reverse commuting, which can have social equity benefits, from a social equity perspective, the limited

funding available for transit investments would be better targeted to improving accessibility within the central city.

Although the book does not discuss the anticipated federal transportation reauthorization bill, it concludes by asserting that a national movement built around regional equity can, will, and must emerge as a “transformative force for a better America.” It remains unclear whether the envisioned “better America” will be able to pride itself on true social equity or merely the socially inequitable status quo couched in achievements of regional equity. U

Maxwell Sokol

## Beyond Alternative Fuel Solutions



*Two Billion Cars: Driving Towards Sustainability*

By Daniel Sperling and Deborah Gordon  
(Oxford University Press)

Transportation policy will arguably play the most important role in mitigating the inevitable effects of climate change. Worldwide, there are one billion cars on the road — a number that could double in the next 20 years.

More cars on the road and more drivers produces more congestion and pollution, more strains on quickly depleting and environmentally sensitive resources, longer travel distances, and inequitable effects on others. As countries like China and India turn to car culture, there is still opportunity to revamp the entire way we move around.

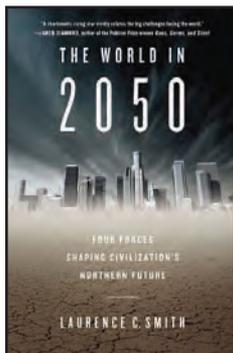
Daniel Sperling and Deborah Gordon, the authors of *Two Billion Cars: Driving Towards Sustainability*, see this as an opportunity. Both transportation policy experts, Sperling and Gordon write of America's reliance on the car, and what is needed to instigate a move away from

car culture. Their argument covers three main points: innovation in alternative fuel sources, development of an efficient car, and progress in consumer behavior. They apply these not only in the United States, but most pressingly, in rapidly developing China.

The authors believe that by 2050, massive shifts will be underway in alternative fuel, efficient vehicles, and consumer behavior. Improvements and changes in fuel source and efficiency are required to reduce projected climate change, but this alone will not be enough. For both the short- and long-term, policies must shift travel behavior, as the effects will be more effective and lasting. Technological solutions are also needed for the short term. Mobility is now cheap and is seen as a “right” in the US, but it obviously has major costs. Ultimately, the marginal cost of a car trip is less than the marginal cost of public transportation - this must change if there is to be any global transformation. U

Mia Pears

## Cold Future Ahead?



*The World in 2050:  
Four Forces Shaping  
Civilization's  
Northern Future*

By Laurence C. Smith  
(Dutton)

An exploded population leveling off around 9.3 billion, dwindling sources of fresh water and fossil fuels, rising global sea level, mega storms, and warmer global temperatures are just a few of the changes we can look forward to in the next half-century. In *The World in 2050: Four Forces Shaping Civilization's Northern Future*, Laurence C. Smith thoroughly surveys these “hot” topics on the global agenda.

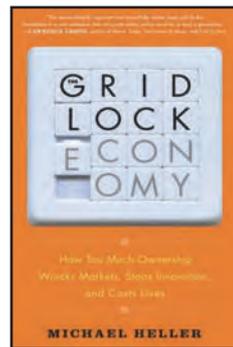
A professor of geography and earth and space sciences at UCLA, Smith also took the time to travel the world

documenting firsthand accounts of climate change on the atmosphere and civilizations. He provides an account of the current state of the world's environment and combines the current trends to project a portrait of what the future may look like. It is clear to the reader that the future is bleak — the clock is ticking and we need to take action! Smith's forecasts revolve around four forces that he posits will shape the future of the world: demographics, natural resource demand, climate change, and globalization.

In the end, Smith argues that much of our future lies to the north, where economic opportunities and stability should stand out. Cities like Toronto and Stockholm, he says, will continue to grow. Less so in the high Arctic, which will still be foreboding. “Its prime socioeconomic role in the twenty-first century will not be homestead haven,” Smith writes, “but economic engine, shoveling gas, oil, minerals, and fish into the gaping global maw.” Nothing is inevitable, though, as he makes clear. The actions we take in the next few decades could reshape the world of 2050 that Smith has laid out. We can either grab up real estate in Oslo and Reykjavik, take one last long look at the Arctic, or we can start to plot a new way forward. U

Dan Rosen & Joyce Tam

## Paralyzed by Property Rights



*Gridlock Economy:  
How Too Much  
Ownership Wrecks  
Markets, Stops  
Innovation, and  
Costs Lives*

By Michael Heller  
(Basic Books)

The cold war is over, most socialist states have disappeared, intense state regulation of resources has dropped from favor, and privatization has accelerated.

— Michael Heller, *Gridlock Economy*

A study released by the American Institute of Biological Sciences in February has announced that, worldwide, oysters no longer play a significant role in their ecosystems. The usual culprits are to blame: overexploitation, degradation of habitat, invasion of non-native species. A commonly held resource that supported life for millennia has now become a tragedy of the commons.

This is bad news for lots of reasons: epicures can no longer slurp freely, oystermen will go out of business, and oyster-beds will cease to filter water, reduce algae blooms, buffer erosion, and support coastal biodiversity. But it's especially bad news for the handy symmetries of Michael Heller's book *Gridlock Economy*, in which oyster conservation is offered as a kind of paragon of public-private cooperative commons management. Tragedies of the commons, according to Garret Hardin, occur when a resource is available for use by all yet no one in particular feels a responsibility to preserve it.

Heller builds on Hardin's concept to suggest that resource use occurs along a spectrum, with overuse on one side and underuse — the “anticommons” — on the other. An anticommons is a resource or a good that is split so many ways that it is unusable.

Heller believes that “commons and anticommons tragedies mirror each other, so solutions for one may inform the other.” If this is the case, our anticommons may be in trouble. If the oyster's expense failed to save it, perhaps market-based solutions to problems of the commons are not as robust as we had hoped.

Yet overall, Heller's argument about the patchwork of ownership that builds optimum resource management makes sense. The more we shift toward public-private partnerships in transportation policies and across government, the truer this will become, and the more useful the “gridlock” concept. U

Greta Byrum

# MANHATTAN, JE T'AIME

Content Editor  
**Jake Schabas**

Master of Science in Urban Planning, 2012

*In early February, Paris-born planning student Charles Perrault began his first assignment for an urban digital design class. Charles decided to overlay his native city's maze of streets onto Manhattan's rigid grid. The image caught the eye of fellow planner Michelle Young, who posted the image to her blog Untapped New York. In a few hours, the image had gone viral — AM New York published Charles' Manhattan in the next morning's paper.*

**URBAN:** *caught up with Charles and Michelle to hear their thoughts on the experience.*

**URBAN:** Charles, what gave you the idea for your image?

**Charles:** Well there was no particular concept behind this. It was like...the grid for me is shocking. But for most American people, I think it is a given. They don't think about it. But for me, it is not obvious, it is not normal. I wanted to challenge that.

**URBAN:** What kind of an effect do you think the grid iron street pattern has on New Yorkers?

**Charles:** Well, a type of public space—a street space—changes a lot. When you have a grid, you have to always be moving, you can't stop to breathe. In New York, you don't want to stay on the sidewalk, and I think [the grid] is part of the explanation.

**Michelle:** I think maybe that's what creates New York as a city of movement. You are always going from one place to another and that says a lot not only about the city but New Yorkers.

**URBAN:** Michelle, what grabbed your attention about Charles' image?

**Michelle:** I saw it and immediately knew I wanted to write about it. I think New Yorkers are always interested in these quirky—what I would call quirky—topics.

**URBAN:** What are some differences between Paris and New York that you might relate to the street pattern?

**Michelle:** I've lived in both cities and I think when you explore Paris, there's a real sense of discovery in a different way. It revolves around the idea of getting lost. I think everywhere I went, I would always get lost at least once. Parisians get lost.

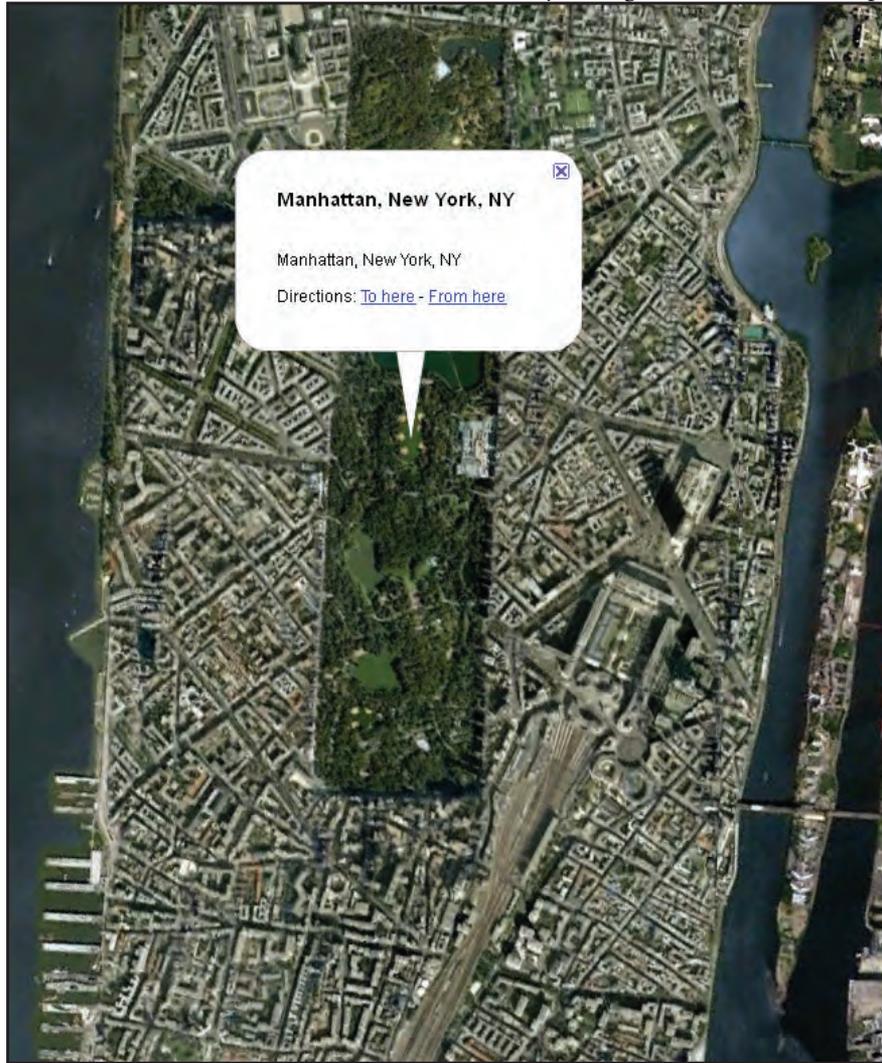
**Charles:** Oh yeah, I used to get lost.

**Michelle:** Whereas in New York, the sense of discovery... how do I explain. It's more like the contrast within a street block. You get the skinny building that's left over and then you get the huge high-rise. It's that chaos of the city that you discover.

**Charles:** Yes, in New York when you go from one street to another, the contrast is sometimes very striking. The proximity and the contrasts are less so in Paris.

**URBAN:** Charles, could this image have anything to do with you feeling a little homesick?

**Charles:** Yeah, maybe homesickness. Or French arrogance (laughing). **U**



*Graphic by Charles Perrault.*

# WHAT WE ARE TALKING ABOUT WHEN WE TALK ABOUT CHICKENS

Dory Kornfeld

PhD Candidate, Urban Planning

There they are in the middle of page A19 in the New York Times: the young couple, scruffy but stylish, all plaid and beard and leather jacket, holding a chicken. A few weeks ago there was a different chicken story, about the front yard hens on Franklin Avenue in Bed-Stuy and the way the neighborhood rallied when one went missing. After losing (badly) at board game night this past week, I was awarded a consolation prize of a dozen eggs laid by my friend's four backyard hens — Rhonda, Shirley, Rosie, and Sandy.

But really, does anyone want to hear about backyard chickens anymore? Is feeling a lack of a “connection” with your grocery store produce really the most pressing issue of the day? What do urban chickens have to do with democracy and human rights?

Geographers Michael Widener and Sara Metcalf at SUNY Buffalo write about the the negative reaction of many Buffalonians to the legalization of backyard chicken-keeping. Chickens and their keepers, according to a letter written to the local paper, don't belong in the city: “It is the ultimate in anti-social behavior for someone to move to the city and try to force their neighbors to endure health risks and nuisances due to their unwillingness to live on a farm where they would prefer to be.”

As Buffalo continues to suffer, folks who lived through its heyday would like to see it return to a busy industrial city; they are not interested in the “subversive spatial fix” of urban agriculture and chicken keeping.

Underneath this attitude lies the premise that there are things, behaviors, activities, and people that do not belong in the city. However, the cities in this country contain a great many things, many of them at odds with each other: kitchens too small to cook in and stores devoted entirely to spatulas, bicycle lanes and the

police cars that park in them, wheelchairs and subway stairs, loud bars and 311.

In 1903, the German sociologist Georg Simmel wrote about the alienation one feels in the modern city but also the way it frees individuals from the rigid confines and social control endemic to small communities. The city, Simmel wrote, “can give room to freedom and the peculiarities of inner and external development of the individual...the citizen of the metropolis is ‘free’ in contrast with the trivialities and prejudices which bind the small town person.”



Urban Chicken Farmers in Brooklyn

Cities are the places for peculiarities and freedom, for all to craft the lives we want to live, to the best of our abilities. Earlier this winter, Ben (the friend who awarded me the eggs) took a certain glee in posting photos of himself shoveling the chickens out of the snow. “I don't think this is what people have in mind when they think of a New York City life,” read the caption. By affording us the freedom to take delight in not quite belonging, the city creates an alternate—and completely reasonable—way of being. Chickens in New York City are their own “subversive spatial fix.”

So this is what we are talking about when we talk about chickens: democracy, self-determination, and the way we must learn to live together. Chickens are allowed, but roosters are not. Their cock-a-doodle-dos are loud and will disturb the neighbors, (though, by this logic, I don't quite understand why car alarms are permitted).

“Cities are the places for peculiarities and freedom, for all to craft the lives we want to live, to the best of our abilities.”

The chickens are not faux-utopian garden-cities-in-reverse. They are not the saviors that will make us renounce the evils of industrial agriculture. They will not solve New York City's garbage problem by eating all our food waste. What they do is remind us that we are all individuals living in a place where we must recognize each other's peculiarities. They ensure that the city remains, as Simmel writes, “the seat of cosmopolitanism.” U

Contact **URBAN**

Send letters, articles, photos, graphics, artwork, or cartoons to:  
[urban.submissions@gmail.com](mailto:urban.submissions@gmail.com)

Columbia University in the City of New York  
Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation  
<http://blogs.cuit.columbia.edu/urbanmagazine>