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IN THIS ISSUE

Photos by Ellis Calvin

Letter from the Editors

For our final effort as the editorial board for URBAN Magazine, our goal was simply to once again provide a forum for our colleagues to discuss what matters to them most. We were pleasantly surprised to find a common thread among many of the contributions, which is that students of urban planning at GSAPP are challenging the status quo by rethinking both practice and theory. The result is a deep critique of what we see happening in cities around the world. The articles are longer, the perspectives are more personal, and the tone is questioning but optimistic.

The issue includes an exploration of the role of hope within planning, reminding many of us of the social goals we had in mind when we embarked upon our academic journeys. One of our PhD candidates passionately advocates for her own hopes that planners and academics will reevaluate their approach to transportation. Two of our contributors have targeted the challenges created by international governmental approaches to city planning, one describing a new housing program in Saudi Arabia and the other reflecting upon the conclusion of a failed downtown revitalization program in the Republic of Georgia. Several articles are looking to changes already being made in practice for examples of the next step, from improvements to infrastructure in Timor-Leste to new design guidelines for contextual, walkable streets.

What we've found - and hope you'll appreciate - is that our student body has a strong collective voice and this magazine is an invaluable tool for us to come together and speak. Clearly, we've identified and understood many of the weaknesses in our field and come up with as many new, fresh ideas to tackle them with. What is not as clear, however, is where we will go from here. In the spirit of this issue's content, the editors are hopeful that our generation of planners will seriously implement the changes we've talked and written about. And, as we pass the editorial torch, we are hopeful that URBAN will continue to evolve while remaining open for a diversity of students to express themselves.

Thank you, GSAPP and UP, for the opportunity to work with you, publish your thoughts, and present to you this magazine. We are so proud of the final product and we've learned a lot. Let us know what you think so that we can keep the conversation going and, most of all, enjoy!

Your appreciative editorial board,
Matt, Sarah, and Ellis

Defining Saint John the Divine

Two Opposing Approaches to Preservation

MATTHEW MUELLER

At the moment, the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine is under attack as the builders and stewards of the Cathedral are pushing to slowly develop the surrounding block, while opponents of the proposed changes to the site are using the shield of historic preservation to fight future development. Although the church has no interest in harming, neglecting or abandoning the Cathedral, outside opponents are trying to wrestle control of the site from the church to prevent them from continuing their work, which includes maintaining and developing the cathedral and surrounding areas. For many, a large part of the debate about the plan for the Cathedral's site hinges on the concept of historic preservation and the nature of the elements which should be preserved.

Photo by Kripa Chettiar/Flickr

Too often, the idea of historic preservation focuses on preserving historic structures and buildings while ignoring the importance of the organizations and individuals which have built, shaped and provide value to the architectural veneer. While the preservation of the historic components of a neighborhood are paramount to maintaining its identity, historic preservation needs to move beyond the preservation of architectural features and into the preservation of the community and its organizations and institutions. In an aging district, it is the unique visions of individual institutions which have preserved and shaped the community, yet their importance is often overlooked as preservationists strive to keep the structures but ignore the inhabitants and existing users who provide the context and value to the architectural features. Contextualizing raises the architectural features from simply a veneer to a meaningful and significant piece worth keeping.

However, this viewpoint of preserving the institutions does not seem to be widely held. While the church is interested in someday finishing construction on the cathedral, outside interests are fighting to make

it harder for the church to restore and rebuild the cathedral by preventing the church from reshaping the site to meet their existing needs. There are few preservationists working on the side of the church.

Over the last century and a half, the church has dedicated themselves to a bold idea of building and maintaining a grand and progressive world class cathedral in New York, which would serve and adapt to meeting the community's needs. The institution has had a vision of not just building a world class cathedral, but also of helping the less fortunate, preserving historical artifacts and tapestries, and improving the community. During the long history of the cathedral, construction has been halted several times as the church is largely reliant on donations for much of its budget and funds were dedicated to addressing pressing community needs of the time.

While the idea of building a grand cathedral has lasted, the design of the cathedral has changed and evolved over the years, as parts of the church were designed by different designers, sculptors and architects at different times and in different classical styles. The church does not reflect the idea of a single planner, but instead is the result of a planning process which has evolved and which has adapted to both technology and social changes. The evolution of the church is even evident in its artistic features and displays, in which visitors can see a mix of historic, modern, and post-modern art and ideas incorporated into the displays. Even the stained glass windows of the Cathedral reflect the changing nature of the Cathedral with images of radios and televisions incorporated into the stained glass displays as the artists strive to keep their work relevant to the modern culture.

Now, with their newest iteration of a plan for the site, the church has decided to do something about the unused and underused space north of the cathedral where there currently exist large rusting corrugated steel sheds and a crumbling parking lot with no historical significance; such areas do not help the church fulfill their mission or enhance our community. This land is an underutilized asset which is currently an eyesore, and the church wants to do something to improve the area.

The church has developed a plan to utilize the property to the north of the cathedral not only to help the church balance their budget by creating a dedicated funding source for their humanitarian missions and maintenance of the Cathedral and site, but to also provide affordable mixed income housing in a city and a neighborhood with a housing shortage. The plan is to construct two apartment buildings, which would provide steady income to the church and include over 100 affordable apartment units. Their proposal for apartments includes height and bulk limits so that both buildings are shorter than the eaves of the church and are set back from Amsterdam Avenue further than the Cathedral in order to enhance the view of the cathedral, which is currently blocked by the rusting steel sheds.

Since the proposed buildings are north of the cathedral they would not block outside light from entering the stained glass windows and the proposed apartment buildings would be set back from the cathedral to ensure both air and light between the cathedral and apartments. Still, these site requirements are not enough to satisfy the demands of many preservation groups who don't want anything built north of the Cathedral.

The plans have left many preservationists upset. They claim that they are interested in preserving the historic building and site, yet many of the issues raised by those opposing the project are not about its historic nature, but are unrelated. Some opponents claim that the apartments would make it impossible to finish the cathedral as they would block the northern transept, when actually the proposed apartments would preserve the footprint for the north transept. Additionally, opposition groups and individuals are attempting to prey on the community's fear of traffic and parking getting worse, even as the new development would increase parking in the neighborhood. Opponents claim the project would worsen parking on 113th street even as they have not fought for parking reforms on the street to fix the existing parking abuse. Opponents claim the new development would desecrate the site even as it would replace the rusting steel sheds and parking lots that currently desecrate and block the view of the cathedral.

With all of the opposition to the project, the one part of the debate which has not been raised is what the impact will be on the institution of the church if the site is redeveloped. What does it mean when the institution is no longer as dependent on the community for support? What does it mean if we take a building and a site which has been constantly evolving and suddenly make it harder to adapt and change?

Developing Dili

Magic and Infrastructure in Timor-Leste

LISSA BARROWS

The best way to experience Dili, a city located in the half-island country of Timor-Leste, is on the back of a motorbike, riding through the daily bustle of the city during the day and under the countless silent sparkling stars at night. Speaking Portuguese or Spanish is very convenient in this former Portuguese colony. Under colonization, the people converted to Catholicism and they continue to enthusiastically attend mass every Sunday and celebrate all of the Catholic holidays. Subsequent Indonesian occupation introduced Indonesian languages, music, and Muslim holidays, making for an interesting cultural mix. A certain mystique also permeates this land. Magic still exists in folklore about the ubiquitous crocodiles native to the island. Legend has it that the island was itself a giant crocodile and the first clan of settlers arrived riding on a bask of them.

The food includes some of the freshest seafood in the world. A meal of fresh fish, perfectly prepared greens, and white rice is typical, accompanied by a small dish of chili spice for the brave. The country is overflowing with colors — green and turquoise waters, red and orange sunsets, and rainbow tais, the traditional textiles made of thick threads. It doesn't take long to fall in love with this country.

A visit to Jaco Island, in the eastern part of the country, will turn anyone into a believer. A seven-hour drive through dense jungle is required to reach this paradise. The roads are made of all kinds of materials in various sizes and shapes, with holes to be dodged or slowly rolled through every few minutes. Eight kilometers may take an hour and include steep driving over rocks, but the experience is worth the effort. Rain clouds and storms often encircle Jaco, while the pristine island remains as if in a bubble - dry, sunny, and bejeweled with tiny white butterflies. The sand is like powdered sugar and the clear sea a thousand shades of turquoise and home to vibrantly colored fish and coral.

Still, the country is no stranger to hardship, from security issues to inadequate economic and infrastructure development. After the Indonesian invasion in 1975, a plea by the Portuguese to the United Nations brought Timor-Leste to the world stage. A UN peacekeeping mission secured the country. A common language, Tetum, united the people and began being taught in schools. Today the currency is the US dollar, and it is a surreal experience to pay for everything with dollars so old and withered they are almost unrecognizable. No credit cards may be used here except at hotels. Otherwise, only cash is accepted, and no notes larger than a twenty. It is better to just carry ones, no matter how pitiful their condition may be.

Dili is the quiet and cozy capital watched over by the same Cristo as in Rio de Janeiro. As expected, the traffic is hectic, but improved since the UN peacekeeping mission ended in December 2012. The road network is made up of one-way streets, no traffic signals, and a few roundabouts. The first traffic lights are finally being installed and road lines are being painted in the most frequently transited areas of the city. It seems that everyone automatically knows how the traffic flows and which streets flow in which directions because the signs at the ends of the streets are so small as to be nearly unnoticeable. Public transportation is almost non-existent and consists of small, unmarked buses.

Each sub-district has a social housing project, in which the houses are lined up in an orderly fashion without any character. The social housing lacks the chaos of water buffalo, hogs, chicken, and children that usually surrounds the houses and spills out into the roads where cars and motorbikes travel by at eighty kilometers per hour or more. The people do not like the social housing and feel homesick living there. As a result, they are usually used by a son or other relative but not by the whole family because the housing cannot be sold. The rest of the family prefers to live in the informal housing where they have lived for ages.

Today, development is picking up pace, with numerous projects underway. Oil and gas production funds government spending on infrastructure, which totals US $5 billion, including both public and private funds. A new main bridge recently opened in Dili and district roads are being fixed. An upgrade of the existing airport is planned, which will cause displacement and relocation of some housing. The new passenger port was just finished in the Oecusse enclave and was very welcomed because people previously had to get off the ferry by walking through deep water. Also in the Oecusse enclave, the government plans to create a special economic zone similar to those in Macau, Hong Kong, or Dubai, which will be tax free to attract foreign investment. A new commercial port in Tibar, outside Dili, will take the big ships out of Dili Bay and help minimize the traffic jams caused by big trucks in the city center on their way in and out of the port. The Tasi Mane project will consist of a long highway on the southern coast linking oil and gas production and storage facilities, including several "villages" that will be created for the workers.

It's clear that Dili is changing quickly and entering the global interchange. Although so far undiscovered by much of the world, Timor-Leste will not remain a secret for long. ■

Illustration by Ella Ver

The Public's Penn Station

Toward Public Stewardship of Madison Square Garden and Penn Station

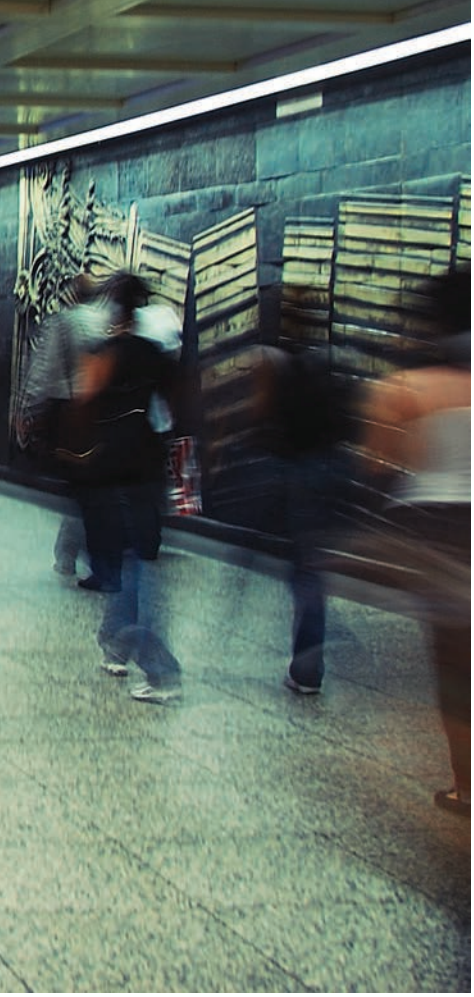
ERIC BLAIR-JOANNOU

The demolition of the original McKim, Mead, & White Pennsylvania Station in 1963 was met with a public outcry of an ilk never before seen in New York City. While the Draft Riots a century before had redefined violent public expression, the public's peaceful yet unrelenting engagement in an issue purely of city planning was unprecedented. Even architects who despised the gaudy design of the building, which was inspired by Old World behemoths such as the Baths of Caracalla and the Brandenburg Gate, picketed its destruction. The citizenry was aghast at how such a storied people's palace could be harmed, let alone destroyed. Yet, from the destruction of the original Penn Station, the people of New York would receive their next edifice with the fourth Madison Square Garden (MSG) that stands today. Madison Square Garden is one of the most attended stadiums in the world and is responsible for much of the essence of New York's local spirit, hosting such world-famous teams as the New York Knicks. Now, after this year's City Council vote to extend the Garden's conditional permit for just 10 years with the implication that a new Penn Station would be built again, many New Yorkers are left scratching their heads wondering why. It is as if history is repeating itself – New Yorkers' pride on 33th Street is once again on the verge of collapse. The original stewards of Penn Station had failed, and now it seems that the new stewards of Madison Square Garden, in whom the public had also trusted, will also fall short of expectations.

Photo by Alexa627/Flickr

Of course, MSG will be rebuilt elsewhere and the Knicks will continue to play into perpetuity. What is more pertinent in this situation is the question of who should be the best stewards of Penn Station and the soon-to-be-relocated Madison Square Garden. If the City goes ahead with its plans for a "New Penn Station," coupled with the adjacent Moynihan Station redevelopment of part of the 8th Avenue Post Office, it would signify a vital shift in stewardship for this swath of Midtown Manhattan. While the public will likely never "own" Penn Station, this shift in the direction of Penn Station would make it more of a public asset than ever before.

During the construction of the first Penn Station in 1910, the original Pennsylvania Railroad company, the largest U.S. railroad entity during the first half of the 20th century, was at odds with the oft-corrupt Tammany Hall. Though the public

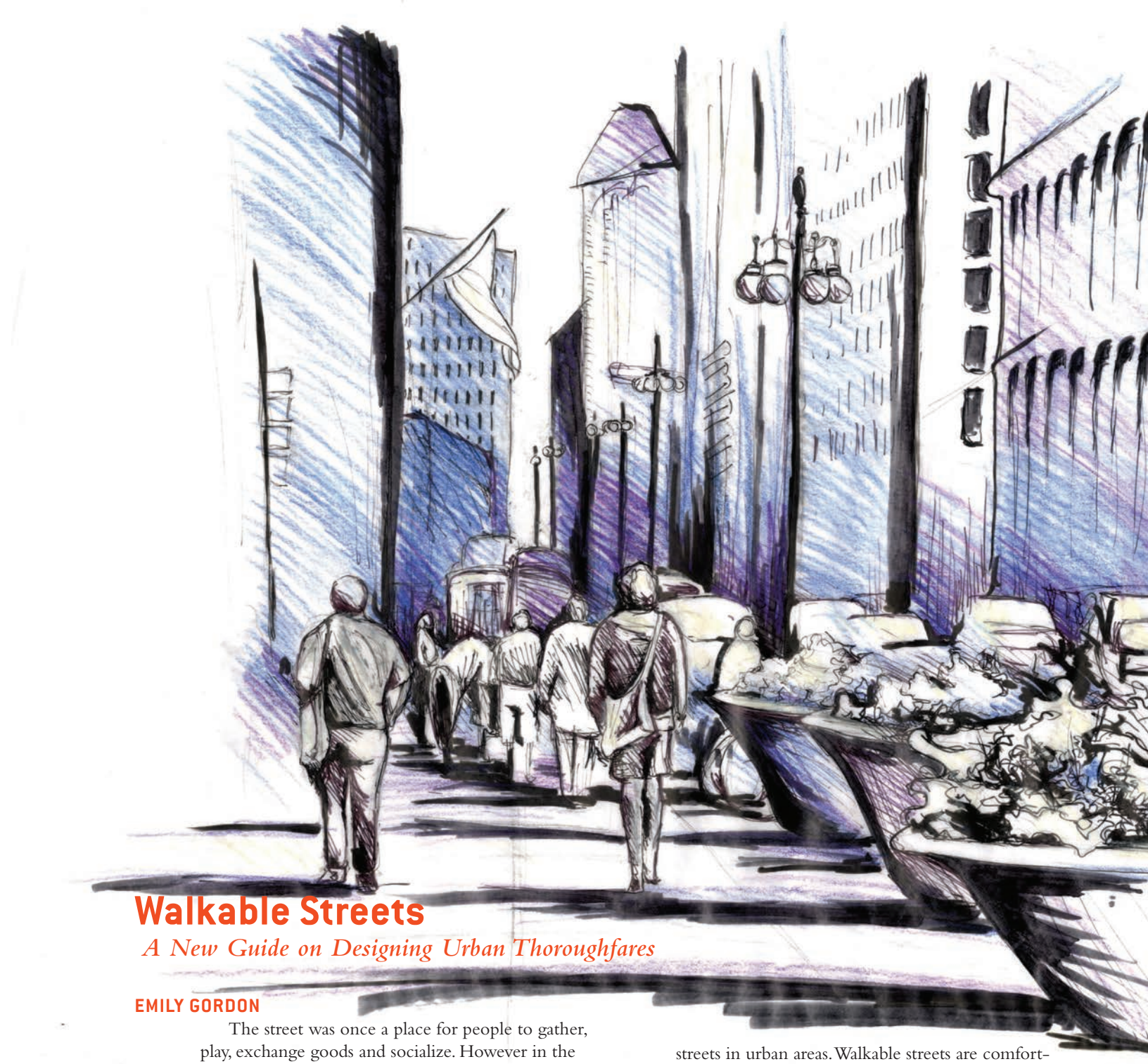


supported the signing of a charter that would grant the lands in question to the Railroad, then-corrupt New York City politicians nearly stymied the entire project. Even though it was of course eventually approved, that approval itself completely denied public participation and opinion; it goes without saying that in 1910 New York, the government did not fully engage the public that "elected" it. From the corrupt stewards of the property in city government who worked against public opinion, to the new keepers of the first Penn Station, an ill-fated private entity which built an anathema to the spirit of design at the time, and ultimately to the demise of the structure against all odds, it would seem that the public was barred from the decision-making process at every turn for Penn Station.

The erection of what would become the fourth Madison Square Garden atop the former site was, nevertheless, another exciting moment for the public of New York. In its previous iterations, MSG had played host to boxing, basketball, indoor cycling, several circuses, and a handful of U.S. Presidential conventions. Knickerbockers rich and poor clamored for a space inside, and its relocation would only make it more of a destination. That said, the Garden has always been a private interest, rife with ownership, tax, and sports team struggles. Coupled with the struggling transit companies beneath it, the site is riddled with problems whose solutions often discount public choice.

Over the years and after multiple bankruptcies, buyouts, changeovers, and mergers, the transportation companies that control Penn Station today are by and large considered wards of the State. Amtrak and the Long Island Railroad, as well as New Jersey Transit and the New York MTA subways and bus lines are heavily funded by all levels of government. The public assistance of some of these formerly gargantuan profit-bearing industries stands in stark contrast to the autonomy of their forbearers in Gilded Age America and, in this case, to the historically private sovereignty of Madison Square Garden and Penn Station. Remove the former, as now proposed by influential community groups, designers, and representative politicians alike, and the built environment as well as the innards of our site in Midtown would be guided by the civic hand more than ever before.

Madison Square Garden will move within the next decade, but it is yet to be determined what will become of the site on which it now rests. If there is to be an "ultimate" Penn Station, taking into consideration the grandeur and imperial prowess of its first iteration as seen through an innovative, community-based, contemporary lens of urban design, the public should be satisfied that the site's stewardship would rest, largely, in its own hands. Furthermore, if our (relatively) modern world of public participation will indeed continue, a New Penn Station would seem to be one of its more sustainable hallmarks. ■



Walkable Streets

A New Guide on Designing Urban Thoroughfares

EMILY GORDON

The street was once a place for people to gather, play, exchange goods and socialize. However in the 20th century, the function of the street shifted to a place for the automobile to drive, rather than a place for people to meet and stroll. Our country's vast network of roads and highways has helped us to connect further and faster, but mobility also became the main and often only function of the street. The Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU), the leading organization promoting walkable, mixed-use neighborhood development focuses on a number of street design and network initiatives to restore multiple functions back to the urban street.

In 2010, CNU published Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach in partnership with the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) as a recommended practice for successful street design of boulevards, avenues and streets in urban areas. Walkable streets are comfortable and attractive environments for pedestrians that provide a separation from traffic, adequate sidewalks, and visual interest. Michigan Avenue in Chicago is an example of a walkable urban thoroughfare where multiple modes of transportation coexist, sidewalks are as wide as the travel lanes, and benches and street trees contribute to the pedestrian experience.

This manual, crafted over ten years, gives recommendations for the design of thoroughfares based on the context of a place. Context is determined using the transect, a planning model created by Andres Duany, one of the founders of the New Urbanism movement. The transect depicts a continuum of natural to highly urbanized areas and the manual focuses on four context zones,

Illustration by Ella Ver

including suburban, general urban, urban center and urban core. For example, if a suburban community is looking to build a thoroughfare, it would consult the specific recommendations for Suburban Context Zone 3. The manual provides guidance on what is acceptable design so the community can decide what will work best.

Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares not only helps planners and traffic engineers to have a common language, but aligns goals that have in the past been disparate. It gives these different professionals a resource that can be agreed upon to assist in the creation of great streets. The partnership with ITE was key for ensuring that the recommendations were aligned with engineering safety practices.

The manual fits nicely with other CNU transportation reform initiatives. The design standards align with the Emergency Response & Street Design Initiative that has helped to demonstrate well connected street networks not only improve safety, but also can reduce emergency response time. This project reconciles narrower streets with access for emergency vehicles. A similar initiative, Transportation Networks has put forth the Sustainable Street Network Principles, a compilation of characteristics and key principles of a sustainable street network. These include creating a street network that supports communities and places, integrating the street network with natural systems at all scales, and emphasizing walking as the fundamental unit of the street network.

The guidelines in Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares help to fulfill the sustainable street network principles. However, like with a comprehensive plan, the most challenging aspect is implementation. The good news is that a number of cities have started to use the manual in their planning process El Paso Texas adopted the manual as required practice for construction of new roadways and redesign of existing streets. Other cities and municipalities have included the manual as a best practice or have incorporated it as a guide for project development, but this does not guarantee that the manual will be used. The challenge is therefore to ensure these design guidelines are implemented. Like any successful project, street design projects need a champion – someone who can be the voice and advocate for the cause like an elected official or public figure. In El Paso, Mathew McElroy the Director of the City Development Department helped to push for adoption.

Another factor is education. CNU offers training workshops for city planners, engineers and advocates to learn how to use the manual. Leaders and advocates in Blue Springs, Missouri participated in a training event held by CNU and were able to use the manual to establish a plan for improving the intersection of State Route 7 and U.S. Route 40 as well as other roadways in the area. By the following year, Blue Springs added bike lanes along the length of Route 7 and had plans for additional improvements according to their comprehensive plan. Unfortunately, very few communities have participated in a training event. While training can include citizens interested in street design, the manual does not dictate how communities involve and engage citizens in the visioning process.

In Blue Springs and in Twinsburg, Ohio, the cost of the workshop was covered through sponsorship from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency via a grant from Project for Public Spaces. In addition the manual is available for free download from the Institute for Transportation Engineer's website.

The last piece of the process is project evaluation. Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares does not prescribe performance measures to evaluate street design projects crafted with these guidelines. As planners, we need a way to look back and evaluate the planning and implementation process to note what can be improved. This step is critical for any project, and will only help us to continue to improve our streets and communities.

New Life for Old Tbilisi

Downtown Revitalization Schemes in the Republic of Georgia

ANGELA WHEELER

I had the pleasure of working in Tbilisi (R. of Georgia) last year as a Fulbright student research grantee with ICOMOS Georgia (International Council on Monuments and Sites), an NGO comprised of local experts who implement heritage-related projects and advise UNESCO. Our primary goal was to address economic development issues in Tbilisi's historic core in the belief that architectural heritage conservation should be integrated into economic development plans as a tool to help communities succeed in the globalized economy without succumbing to a globalized mono-culture. Effectively preserved heritage sites should not be a backwards-looking economic hindrance, but an asset that still reflects local values. When I arrived, one of the most controversial subjects in the field was city hall's New Life for Old Tbilisi, a revitalization project intended to solve the city's housing, preservation, and economic crises all in one fell swoop.

The plan was partially a response to Tbilisi's dubious distinction of appearing on the World Monuments Fund's list of top 100 most endangered heritage sites from 1997-2002. In 2001, the proposed Tbilisi Historic District was deferred from inclusion on the UNESCO world heritage list; it is currently ineligible for re-nomination due to the city's inability to establish "adequate legal framework, management structures and guidelines for the…control of change in the proposed nominated area." The city's leading architectural historian, Maia Mania, estimated that approximately one-third of the city's pre-existing historic fabric has been destroyed over the last decade, and yet the resulting redevelopment did not bring about a corresponding increase in quality of life for residents.

Both the local and expatriate communities have become increasingly alarmed about the effects of state and municipal "revitalization" policies, which rely heavily on poorly regulated, often international investment. The absence of clear, comprehensive objectives in City Hall's approach to urban planning is illustrated in the Tbilisi Land Use Plan, passed in 2009 without public notice or participation—much like the Soviet-era Five Year Plans once foisted on Tbilisi from Moscow. In fact, the Land Use Plan is currently the only city plan in use at all: Tbilisi's last Master Plan expired years ago, and political change has prevented a new one from being drafted—or, as some say, City Hall has deliberately avoided a new Master Plan in order to pursue investment opportunities freely.

Tbilisi suffers from other problems as well: the haphazard privatization of real estate following the collapse of the USSR, property abandonment, lack of a recognized system for documenting and protecting historic properties, weak enforcement of zoning or

permit violation penalties, poverty, demobilized civil society, and even periodic earthquakes.

Shortly before the 2008 elections, City Hall began formulating New Life for Old Tbilisi to address these issues in Tbilisi's historic districts. The program, implemented in 2009-2012, has probably been the single largest player in historic Tbilisi's planning and preservation landscape since a disastrous earthquake in 2002. Most of the public is still confused as to what it was actually about and how it worked, however, as project leaders made few attempts at transparent explanation before, during, or after implementation. One of my colleagues, urban planning advocate Levan Asabashvili, conducted thorough research and was able to determine the rationale, process, and results of the New Life for Old Tbilisi program.

As a result of the 2009 economic crisis, eighty percent of new construction projects in Tbilisi (primarily in the suburbs or outer districts) were suspended, over 15,000 families were left awaiting their finished apartments, and the construction sector, which comprises approximately 30% of the Georgian economy, suffered massive layoffs. Most significantly, Georgia's banks were in trouble as they had invested 1.75 billion USD in real estate (thirty-five percent of their overall portfolio), not including loans made to real estate-related businesses. A large number of loans, including mortgages and consumer and corporate loans, were secured by real estate. As a result, the banks stopped issuing loans to developers unless they could be convinced there was demand and, thus, profit and repayment for the resulting properties.

New Life for Old Tbilisi's solution was to create an artificial demand for real estate by playing the vacant suburban developments off the deteriorating housing stock of the historic downtown. The idea was to create a win-win situation: banks provided loans which were guaranteed by City Hall to developers so they could complete their unfinished suburban projects. Developers negotiated with Old Tbilisi landlords or homeowners and agreed to a "swap" such that the owners vacated their historic homes, which were surrendered to the developer, and then moved into the newly-finished suburban projects, making them suddenly profitable. The developer either gutted or demolished the historic property and in turn sold the lot back to City Hall, which will ostensibly use all this new property for undefined "future investments and developments," at 400 USD per square meter.

New Life for Old Tbilisi was implemented by a "100% state owned limited liability company," which managed the program in collaboration with banks and the association of developers. For a program that promised more livable and economically viable

historic districts, specialists in urban planning, historic preservation, and community participation were strangely excluded. According to developer and project proponent Gia Abuladze, "the project will offer real prospects for a well thought out and consistent rehabilitation of the old town." This was not possible within the framework of the program, however, as New Life for Old Tbilisi was not part of any unified or long-range plan. There is no coordinated economic plan for the almost 100,000 square meters of space acquired by City Hall, nor are there any plans or funds reserved for long-term maintenance. The competitive nature of the program also meant that developers were generally discouraged from collaborating on their individual proposals, resulting in visual chaos.

The program also encouraged social disruption—program proponents insisted that the project respected the community because developers were required to consult with homeowners first and residents of a historic building would move together to a new apartment building, rather than being split up. The problem is that, in reality, one building does not constitute a community. Even if residents of one entire building agreed to move out together, that does not necessarily mean that their neighbors approved of having the house next door demolished and used for City Hall's undisclosed "investments and developments." Another problem was that the homeowner was not always the resident. In some cases, landlords negotiated with the developer, agreed to sell, and evicted the tenants without consulting them. This approach resulted in accelerated gentrification and a transferal of socioeconomic problems to the suburbs.

Preservation experts also noted that none of the developers' crews included specialists in historic architecture rehabilitation, resulting in ineptly "restored" structures that began deteriorating months after completion. In cases where developers were hired to renovate historic buildings instead of just demolishing them, they were pressured to increase the floor space of the original structure as much as possible so as to get a larger return on their investment upon selling back to City Hall. This led to a sudden increase in building heights, often in the form of absurd Mansard roof additions. This sudden mass expansion of floor space is particularly significant when one considers the original problem that there was not enough demand for housing to begin with.

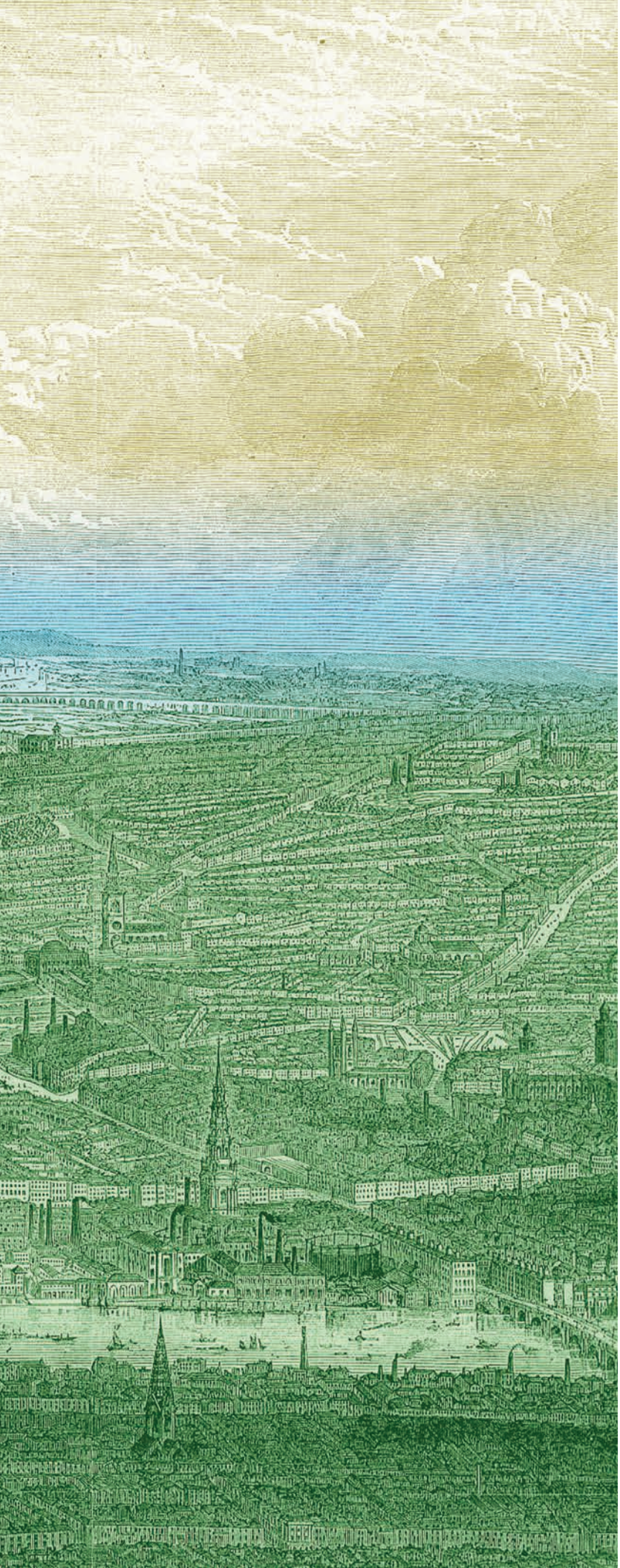
Organizations including ICOMOS Georgia and Tiflis Hamkari are leading discussions to address the issues created by New Life for Old Tbilisi and to set recommendations for better development in the future. Over the course of several meetings between Georgian planning and heritage experts in 2010-2013, the following policy suggestions for future programs in historic Tbilisi were proposed:

- Programs must be transparent. Tbilisi City Hall's approach to 21st century urban planning and heritage management remains as opaque as it was under Khrushchev, exacerbating public feelings of helplessness and apathy.

- Feasibility studies based on social surveys and stakeholder meetings must be carried out before a project is implemented to determine potential conflicts of interest.
- District and neighborhood homeowners unions must be formed, through which the public can express its needs and concerns. These unions have veto power on projects—not just City Hall, selected developers, and the few corporations making investments.
- Projects must be implemented on the scale of district or neighborhood, not by the entire city. "Old Tbilisi" is actually comprised of multiple districts, each with its own socioeconomic issues, historic significance, and development goals.
- Rehabilitation of registered historic buildings must be carried out, or at least supervised by, conservation specialists.
- Registered historic buildings must be fully documented (interior/exterior defining features) before and after rehabilitation/alteration. All documentation must be publicly accessible.
- Prerequisites to façade renovation should include roof repair and basement dehumidification. There is little point in repairing an exterior if structural problems will eventually render the building unstable.
- Construction regulations must be clear, effective, and enforced.
- Most importantly, Tbilisi needs a new Master Plan and it should be the product of multidisciplinary collaboration. The current Land Use Plan was approved with no public input, and is rarely even followed. Without any clear development goals, the city cannot prepare to effectively meet the needs of residents, foreign investors, and tourists. The new Master Plan must include heritage management as part of economic development, rather than as an opposing force.

New Life for Old Tbilisi concluded in 2012 and is unlikely to be renewed under the recently elected government, which opposes the previous administration's abuse of eminent domain in the name of foreign investment. Newly appointed legislators have not yet discussed a Master Plan, leaving historic downtown neighborhoods open to further demolition and insensitive development in the meantime. After November's presidential election, concerned heritage sector professionals see an opportunity to pass legislation in the form of stricter preservation laws and new preservation-sensitive development incentives that could produce better results for historic neighborhoods and their communities than New Life for Old Tbilisi. For more information on current planning and preservation issues in Tbilisi, visit websites for the following organizations: Tbilisi Architectural Heritage Group, ICOMOS Georgia, and Urban Reactor.

Photos by Vladimer Shioshvili, Genadi Yakovlev, and MJ Milloy/Flickr



New Affective Urbanism

Looking for Hope in Planning

MATTHEW DO

In a speech to the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning, Paul Niebanck, a professor of urban planning at Washington State University, stated that urban planning is "rooted in a set of powerful, archetypal human stirrings [i.e. emotions] and the central one among those is hope […] to study and practice planning is to study and practice hope". I often associate planning as the engineering equivalent of the sciences: a balanced combination of both thought and practice. So, after hearing Niebanck's thoughts, I ask myself: is there a framework for planning practice that takes an understanding of hope as its core foundation?

The short answer to the question is "No." While scholars acknowledge that hope is something people

associate with physical spaces, I cannot find a planning approach that brings the concept to the forefront. As such, I want propose a planning theory that uses an emotive understanding of hope as its core. There are a number of different planning approaches to which hope could be applied in some way or another. However, one particular approach that I want to explore in this article is what I call New Affective Urbanism (NAU). As the name suggests, NAU is an elaboration of planning's New Urbanism (NU) movement. While keeping NU's focus of vitality, stability, sustainability and possibility, NAU seeks to (re)integrate the emotional experience of hope as the central pillar from which the other goals of NU are understood.

To understand how NAU could be used in planning practice, it would be helpful to define what hope really means. According to theorists Anderson and Fenton, hope is the "disclosing of moments or instances in which things could become otherwise […][It is] embodying the conviction that the future may be different from the present." Based on this definition, hope has a temporal component: it is a present, cognitive imagining that waits for a future physical manifestation.

However, it is important to take note of two things. First, while hope is by definition future oriented, it is by no means static. According to Anderson and Holden, hope is a physical body experience that actively seeks out "strategic (re) formulations intent on enabling the emergence of a good and possible future." In this way, hope is not only a thought or emotion, but an act of the body. Whether it is writing a letter, politicking the local government in meetings, or engaging in negotiations for space, hope is the act of taking steps to achieve a particular goal by putting thought to action. Hope is therefore not so much a 'thing' as it is a process. To live with, or in hope, is to live in what the academic literature likes to call "moments of suspension," or what I like to call the "in-between." It is the laborious process of taking persistent actions to see that an imagined concept becomes reality, while still waiting for the idea to physically take root.

Second, while emphasizing process, hope also emphasizes a morality. Not just any action to see imaginings come to life is defined as hope. According to scholars, hope is more specifically the process of seeking a more just environment, a more pro-social agenda and the alleviation of injustice from the world. In this way, hope can be restated as the process of actively engaging and combating negative social realities from the built environment. Who gets to define how such realities are defined is still up for debate and a matter of huge contention, especially when it comes to the spatial. Despite this obstacle, it is very much agreed upon by theorists that the goal of hope is always to aim for a positive impact, rather than a negative one.

So how does this concept of hope change New Urbanism into New Affective Urbanism? As previously stated, NAU still has the core pillars of the New Urbanism movement. Yet, what is intentionally different is the recognition of hope as an emotive driving force and key process of NU's stated goals and assumptions about what urban spaces should be. To take a New Affective Urbanism approach is to recognize that embedded within each stated outcome or goal is, as Niebank would say, a deep archetypal human stirring. It is to recognize that the core values of vitality, stability, sustainability and possibilism are not goals in and of themselves as they have no inherent value of good or better. Rather, each pillar is rooted in an understanding of what is good and what is not and in a process of defining and achieving an understanding of 'justice', 'better', or 'positive'. To engage in NAU is to acknowledge and reflect upon how emotions shape society through space and policy.

To engage in NAU is to also recognize not only the lenders to building hope, but also the barriers that inhibit hope from growing. Alice Street, a professor at the University of Sussex in England states that hope is informed by the material availability of resources and political will. If both are lacking, hope will decline resulting in a loss of the emotive catalyst for positive social change. However, if planning is at its core the practice of hope, it is then the laborious act of removing barriers, overcoming obstacles, and persistently acting to effect change. NAU is therefore an acknowledgement that the abstract and the material are one in the same. That is, political will to enact change often comes when material resources are made available, and material resources often come when there is the political will – the imagined and material are really two sides of the same coin.

In this way, New Affective Urbanism is not necessarily anything 'new'. Rather, it is an approach and framework from which to understand that hope is just as much a product and input of the planning process as other traditional factors, and as I would like to argue, the most important one. As Hester Parr, a professor at Glasgow University suggests, there is an emotional discourse that exists within geography – and, I would argue, in planning – that has until recently remained hidden. While the change is welcomed, there is still an under-privileging of emotional knowledge to current theory and practice, an omission that can undermine people's ability to make effective interventions in the places we occupy. The challenge for planners, then, is to develop a deeper understanding of their own "archetypal human stirrings". While I have discussed one way this could be done with NAU, this discussion barely straches the surface.

As Niebanck asserts, to study and pratice planning is to study and pratice hope. If this is true, then may we commit our academic and professional carreers to developing the courage needed to imagine new places and work tirelessly to see that the places we imagine become reality. ■

Illustration by Ellis Calvin

A Policy of Patronage

Saudi Arabia's Housing Program

JAWAHER ALSUDAIRY

The year 2011 witnessed a surge in political discourse in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In an attempt to respond to growing criticism, the Saudi government stepped-up national spending on welfare programs with the purpose of addressing public demands and demonstrating its commitment to reform. At the forefront of this endeavor was the National Housing Program (NHP), which pledged to provide 500,000 new homes across the nation. The program was decreed along with an injection of US $10 billion into the Real Estate Development Fund (REDF), which is the State's housing finance entity, and the creation of a new Housing Ministry.

Indeed, Saudi Arabia's housing market suffers from a large shortfall in supply. An estimated 1.65 million units will need to be built in the next five years to meet the demands of a population that has doubled in size since 1988, reaching over 29.9 million in 2013, and continues to grow at an annual rate of 2.7% . With this growth, and the private market's focus on high-income consumers, the housing shortage is an increasing concern, particularly for lower income segments[1]. Today, a mere 30% of the total Saudi population owns homes, and they are mainly concentrated in the country's 3 metropolitan centers: Riyadh, Jeddah and the Eastern Province. Hence, the rationale for the pledged new homes is clear.

However, one major challenge stands in the way of success. Through the government's determination to achieve a conclusive solution to the housing shortage, it has reverted to its traditional role as the welfare state. This is both a hard setback to overall public sector and economic reform, and a barrier for other sources of housing supply to enter the market. As the Housing Ministry grapples with its mandate to implement the preset target of building 500,000 units, it has assumed the role of the patron rather than the regulator. Hence, to date, the Ministry has predominantly focused its efforts on logistical considerations, such as design and distribution of land, loans and housing, while shying away from tackling core structural deficiencies in the housing market.

DEALING WITH MARKET BARRIERS

Limited housing finance is one of the key barriers to the Saudi housing market, particularly for low-income families. This year, residential mortgage lending totaled SAR 51 billion, comprising 4.7% of total bank credit, which is significantly smaller than proportions in other markets, such as 73% in Turkey . Hence, the REDF has been a major source of housing finance in the country. The government reinforced that role when it increased the size of housing loans to SAR 500,000 (US $133,000) and injected SAR 40 Billion (US $10 billion) into the fund in 2011. In 2012, the fund distributed loans towards 40,000 units, for a total of SAR 20 billion (USD 5 Billion). This year, the fund reported over 2.3 million applications pending, which would cost the government US $300 Billion.

As for land, the challenge of availability and affordability has created limitations for private sector developers who often opt to build luxury homes and villas to make up for land costs. In 2011, the median asking price for residential land was estimated around SAR 1,631 (US $435) per square meter, up 13.5% from 2010. Similarly, the median price for villas was SAR 1.28 million (US $260,000), an increase of 20.5% . Building homes that are affordable to an average monthly salary of SAR 5,900 (estimated around US $80-150,000 per unit) is only lucrative in the city's periphery, where land is cheaper. However, locating affordable units in distant areas is not a viable option, as basic infrastructure (e.g. public transportation, schools and services) is lacking. Additionally, the Housing Ministry repeatedly stated this year that over half of land in Saudi cities remains vacant due to market speculation. Land trading promises greater return on investment in a market that has sustained constant increases in property value.

The Housing Ministry has confronted a similar challenge in its allocation of housing projects. During the first two years since the NHP's release, implementation was derailed as the Ministry struggled to secure land located within the city. The list of housing projects announced by the Ministry to date have all been in peripheral areas, where schools and other services will also need to be built. In March 2013, the government decreed the transfer of municipal land from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs to the Housing Ministry in order to resolve the land shortage. The Minister has also indicated current considerations for eminent domain and application of tax on undeveloped private properties as a means of inducing private owners to either sell or develop vacant land.

ROOM FOR ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIES

The prevailing strategy of the Ministry's approach to resolving the housing challenge has been to directly augment supply. Whether through

Illustration by Ellis Calvin

[1]The Ministry of Economy and Planning defines the low-income segment as all those employed in occupational groups with average wages less than SAR 5,000 per month (USD 1,300); constituted 67.4% of total demand in 2008

housing, financing or land, the Ministry has perpetually centered itself as the patron. This approach was preconditioned by the 2011 decree that mandated the programs and targets for the Housing Ministry. However, the question is, should that be its mandate?

The opportunity for the Housing Ministry to take on a regulator role rather than acting as the patron may allow for more effective and actionable interventions into the market. Making this shift would mean prioritizing policies that strive to tackle supply barriers through regulations, incentives and reforms. For example, offering subsidies to developers who build affordable homes could motivate private sector supply to lower-income markets by offsetting the high cost of land in central areas. Another option is to explore creative zoning policies such as Inclusionary Zoning, which would permit additional floor areas for multi-family developments in return for new construction of affordable homes. The benefit of such policies is that they are cheap and allow for greater integration of affordable homes within the city, rather than pushing them to the periphery.

Similarly, and as an extension of this regulatory role, the Ministry could also revise the REDF mandate as a primary source of financing and move towards greater collaboration with private sector lenders. As private banks remain at risk of high default rates, provision of incentives, guarantees, and protection is imperative to unlocking supply of housing finance. A great example that illustrates the efficacy of policy is the impact of the new mortgage law, passed earlier this year. Since its release, mortgage credit peaked at nearly SAR 51 billion (US $13 billion), compared with SAR 14.8 billion (US $3.97 billion) recorded at the end of 2008 . The reason for this success is that the law addresses critical regulatory deficiencies related to property repossession and asset liquidation in the case of delinquency.

The Housing Ministry's commitment to supplying homes and loans has overpowered the role of the private sector to respond to market demand. Since the announcement of the NHP, many developers have been cautious, perceiving the NHP as competition to their own developments. Additionally, the exorbitant cost of directly supplying homes and loans is inefficient and unsustainable. Hence, it is imperative for the Housing Ministry to evaluate the impact of its current policies and consider alternative options that respond to structural deficiencies in the market and strengthen its regulatory infrastructure.

Critical Transport

Changing Our Approach to Transportation Planning & Scholarship

LAUREN FISCHER

The United States transportation system is a study in contradictions and unintended consequences. Large scale transportation investments, intended to reduce regional travel times, have spurred longer commutes as people locate farther from employment centers. The outcomes of urban highway investments and the emergence of a service-based economy have distributed entry-level work opportunities farther away from entry-level workers, creating a spatial mismatch. The transportation investment strategies enlisted to help us adjust to the demands of the new economy, namely road building and fixed rail transit investments, have proven anemic at addressing social and environmental issues of great concern. Expensive transportation investments routinely fail to produce anticipated ridership or promised economic development benefits and, paradoxically, they are saddling local and state governments with transport systems which may be more of a financial burden than asset. Increasing concerns about environmental and economic sustainability present stark challenges for existing patterns of mobility, yet we seem unable to alter these patterns in desirable ways; indeed, our efforts may even contribute to the problems we aim to fix. One conclusion is clear: the U.S. transportation system does not serve all of the nation's residents adequately (with particular failures for lower-income urban populations), and our efforts to address this problem in recent decades have been largely unsuccessful.

Photos by Ellis Calvin

What explains this state of affairs? While there are numerous contributing factors, one explanation may be our continued reliance on the "Predict and Provide" approach to transportation planning. The "Predict and Provide" model uses past trends in travel behavior to predict future transport demands and identifies ways to accommodate those demands, usually through transportation investment. Essentially, we plan our future transportation system based on how people use our current transportation system instead of altering patterns of location and movement to address pressing social, economic and environmental problems. The persistence of the "Predict and Provide" approach can be explained by its reliance on mathematical models to predict future trends, an element that endows it with a veneer of scientific objectivity removed from undue political influence. The power of the "Predict and Provide" model is that math, not people, determines the appropriate course of action. The result of this process is a transportation system that largely supports the status quo, despite clear calls from many actors for change.

In spite of this seeming preference for the status quo among policymakers, the crisis in transportation provides a unique opportunity for planners and policy researchers to reconsider transportation policies and assess their relevance for the future. With only a brief investigation, most will find that current conditions necessitate new questions and new methods that challenge dominant assumptions about the world. The relative stability of transportation policy solutions over the past half century, despite their inability to address stated areas of concern, begs

for critical investigation that identifies the root causal factors of undesirable outcomes by considering issues of power and resource distribution.

A CRITICAL APPROACH

Last year, New York-based PhD students investigating these transportation issues started meeting regularly to discuss a new approach for transportation scholarship and practice which we term Critical Transport. Critical is a defining term for the challenges we face in transportation:

This is a **Critical Moment** for Transport. Critical, as used in the medical terminology, refers to patients approaching a state of crisis. With almost all transit agencies in the U.S. operating under a state of permanent funding deficits, it seems our urban transit systems are not just approaching, but have reached a state of perpetual crisis. With dwindling revenues from the national gas tax resulting in fewer federal funds for maintenance and innovative projects, we need to be more selective about how we spend our limited resources. Such selectivity should not be determined by aggregated mathematical models that predict average demand. Decisions about future urban transportation systems are not primarily technical in nature; they are fundamentally political and need to be assessed in an arena that allows for value discussions, debate and compromise. Indeed, the most successful transit systems in the world (as measured by use and resident satisfaction) are notable for their high levels of public participation and public debate.

We need a **Critical Orientation** toward Transport. Here, critical refers to the questioning of assumptions that underlie current understandings and the search for the proverbial wizard behind the curtain. In a less extreme manner, it involves using judicious evaluation, variant readings and scholarly studies to assess reality. Critical scholars approach transport from a position that challenges the dominance of "Predict and Provide". The move mirrors trends that took place in urban planning during the 1970's, as the technically-grounded rational-comprehensive planning was augmented in favor of politically oriented planning that prioritized bottom-up public participation over top-down, expert analysis. Thirty years later, this planning-based critique has reached the borders of transportation, an area traditionally dominated by economists and engineers. The key is to nurture this new approach by finding ways to integrate it into existing political and organizational structures responsible for transportation policy, while also fostering a research community that supports critical investigation.

There is a **Critical Mass** for Transport change. Realizing that transport systems are not serving the needs of all of society's members, a movement is afoot to produce an alternative vision and approach for the future. Dissatisfaction emanates from across the political and social spectrum, indicating a consensus in favor of change; however, what type of change remains hotly contested. Citizen activism, supported by academics and progressive policymakers, was a key catalyst for securing federal support for mass urban transit and for halting many urban highway projects during the 1960's. Their success should be a positive example of what can emerge from collectively challenging the status quo through direct political action.

BECOMING CRITICAL

Critical Transport scholarship is not new. Indeed, over the past 40 years scholars in many fields have taken shots at transport planning, policies and implementation, albeit in a fractured, haphazard manner. Without a community of like-minds to turn to for support, these scholars have made relatively minor dents in the veneer of the transportation-industrial complex. Their work, however, highlights areas that we may be able to target as a foundation for a new paradigm.

We need new **questions** to help us consider topics not adequately addressed by existing scholarship. How do different groups of people make decisions about travel behavior? What factors do people and firms consider or what pressures do they face, beyond efficiency and productivity, when making transportation-related decisions? How do existing power structures, in and outside the formal political arena, influence transportation policy at the national, regional and local levels? What role does transportation play in facilitating a high quality of life or localized economic development? Are the answers we accepted during the mid-century still relevant? Do aggregate trends reflect, or conceal, actual local conditions? We need to bring up topics not traditionally considered by transport scholarship (such as the role that poverty plays in household transportation decisions) and look for opportunities to include investigations into equity and power.

We need new **theories and frameworks** for thinking about the role that transportation plays in urban development and resident quality of life, both today and into the future. Economic-based assumptions about the primacy of rational behavior and relatively unconstrained individual decision-making have not served policy well in recent decades. Reducing travel times has only allowed people to live farther away from their work locations, not to spend additional time pursuing leisure activities or other pursuits, as our models assume. We need approaches that recognize and embrace the complexity of decision-making and the importance of politics and values, and to reject frameworks that oversimplify reality or ignore the important role played by both power and culture. Our theories should help us think about transportation infrastructure as socially embedded, not as an isolated, atomized input to a static social or economic system. Let's think in terms of process and be concerned with causal mechanisms, to better assess whether we are implementing policies

based on accurate assumptions or if we are acting on fairytale notions of how the world should work.

We need new **research methods** for evaluating the role that transportation plays in society, including how it relates to other aspects of social organization, such as education, healthcare and work. Aggregated, econometric studies that tend to dominate in transportation scholarship have produced a plethora of conflicting conclusions while failing to tell us about specific populations of interest. Hindered by poor data, flawed assumptions and unbridled faith in statistical outputs, this body of work provides few conclusive insights on the questions posed by policymakers and planners. Ethnographic and qualitative methods allow for deep, process-based investigations. They also help us frame transportation policy as a value question, by encouraging us to consider the distribution of resources in conjunction with the needs of society.

Planners are well posed to tackle these transportation concerns, with their interdisciplinary training and an inclination toward thinking about interrelationships between urban forms and processes. Planners also have the perfect toolbox of skills to facilitate public dialogue, build coalitions and work effectively with the public – all aspects that are largely missing from current transportation planning processes. Urban planning coursework, informal discussions and formal seminars provide great opportunities for faculty and students to question the validity of existing transportation policies and identify power structures at work. This lays a strong foundation, but creating a new paradigm must be more than just an intellectual exercise. It will take action, and require organized mobilization.

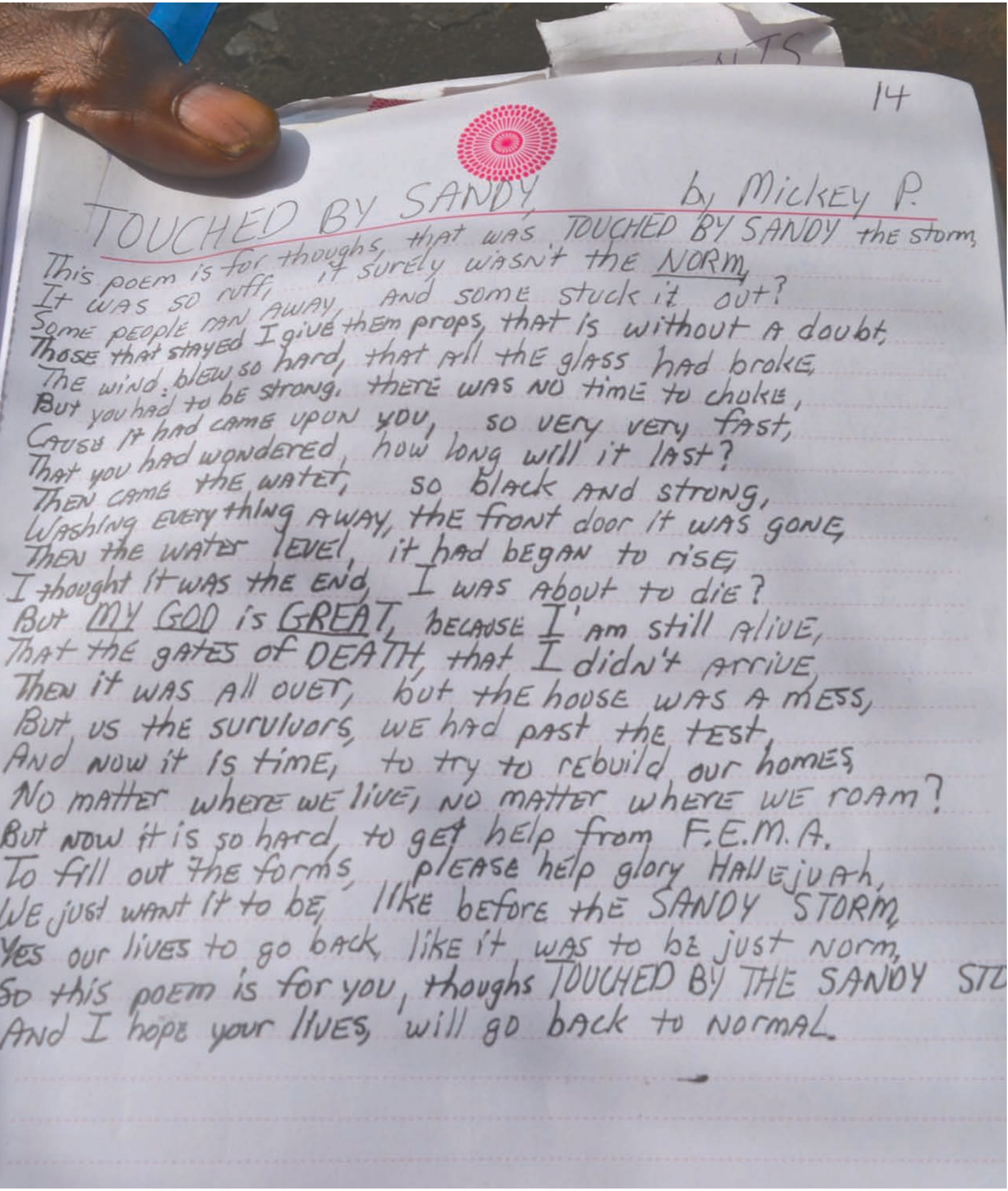
I am not simply proposing that we embrace new modes of transportation or alter funding arrangements. These elements will be necessary, of course, but my larger point is that we need to start challenging ourselves to think differently about the entire transportation system and how it is connected to other aspects of human survival and prosperity. We need to be critical of our biases and assumptions, not just those that dominate the scholarly literature. We need to question assumptions about travel behavior and relations between different modes that we may strongly believe to be true, and we must be open to the idea that our initial conceptions may be wrong for certain groups or in certain locations. Many scholars agree that a new paradigm in transportation is necessary, but being a critic and calling for a new paradigm is not the same as working to construct a new, critically-oriented paradigm. The latter requires a self-reflexive orientation, openness to new ideas and a willingness to mobilize against the status quo. I hope you will join me.

One Year After Sandy

Photos of a recovering Staten Island neighborhood

JORDANNA LACOSTE

There is no trace of Sandy in much of New York. However, in the worst hit areas residents are having a hard time forgetting about the disaster since life has yet to get back to normal. In areas such as Midland Beach in Staten Island, thousands of people are still displaced.



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TOUCHED BY SANDY

by Mickey P.

This poem is for thoughs, that was TOUCHED BY SANDY the storm,
It was so ruff, it surely wasn't the NORM,
Some people ran away, and some stuck it out?
Those that stayed I give them props, that is without a doubt,
The wind blew so hard, that all the glass had broke,
But you had to be strong, there was no time to choke,
Cause it had came upon you, so very very fast,
That you had wondered, how long will it last?
Then came the water, so black and strong,
Washing everything away, the front door it was gone,
Then the water level, it had began to rise,
I thought it was the end, I was about to die?
But MY GOD is GREAT, because I am still alive,
That the gates of DEATH, that I didn't arrive,
Then it was all over, but the house was a mess,
But us the survivors, we had past the test,
And now it is time, to try to rebuild our homes,
No matter where we live, no matter where we roam?
But now it is so hard, to get help from F.E.M.A.
To fill out the forms, please help glory HALLEJUAH,
We just want it to be, like before the SANDY STORM,
Yes our lives to go back, like it was to be just norm,
So this poem is for you, thoughs TOUCHED BY THE SANDY ST
And I hope your lives, will go back to normal.

To the right is Will, and to the left Mickey P. (author of Touched By Sandy), they are both from Read Hook, Brooklyn. When I asked Will how the community helped him during Sandy he replied, "The community didn't help me, I helped the community."

The Midland Ave Neighborhood Relief center was spontaneously created after the property owner's home was destroyed by Sandy. He is still homeless, but trying to provide aid and resources to other displaced people in the neighborhood.

Around Midland Beach in Staten Island, many homes look as though they are abandoned. Homeowners are in need of more funds to continue rebuilding. Insurance firms have failed people, and now financial struggles are degrading the quality of life for those who cannot return home. People in the area say there is a need for affordable housing and stronger community networks. Many of the area also state that bureaucracy and a lack of attention to residents of the community are challenges impeding a return to normalcy and to get people back into their homes.

On October 29 2013, exactly a year after Sandy-Light the Shore vigil, residents of Staten Island pay condolences to those who lost their lives to the rising waters.

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