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CHAIR'S COLUMN

It is cliché to note that time passes quickly, but planners don't always have to be creative. Stealing good examples from others and bringing them to our communities is kind of our thing. For me, that passage of time has been rather shocking. Four years have gone by, term limits have kicked in, and this is my last column as Chair of the American Planning Association International Division.

It is also cliché to say that this was not the four years that I had planned. One of the greatest joys from my years in the International Division has been getting to meet a collective of amazing people in person. One of my goals as Chair was to facilitate more networking, more in-person events around the country, and more opportunities to connect with like-minded souls. One of the highlights of my term was a meet-up event in New York right at the beginning of my first term. Jessica Schmidt, then our Vice-Chair at-Large, took the Amtrak train up from DC just to meet our group at a bar across the street from Port Authority for a couple of hours. I thought she was nuts. A pandemic later, the level of gratitude I have for her for making that trip is staggering. I would make that trip every time today – you don't know if you will get another chance.

There have been things that have moved forward during my time as Chair. We have strengthened our collaboration with APA national for the production of the annual World Town Planning Day conference. Our partnership with the Humphrey Fellows program has entered its second cycle. Planifiquemos and the Climate & Sustainability Working Group have been established as new division initiatives, while the Humanitarian Planning Committee has drafted a white paper planning in advance for post-conflict reconstruction. Some of these initiatives moved forward because of my contributions, but more of them moved forward because of the dedication and teamwork of other division leaders and members. We won Division Council awards for Best Newsletter Article and Outstanding Contribution to the Profession. In neither case was I the person who did the work that led to the award. It does show, however, that the International Division continues to be a relevant force within APA, and I am proud of that.

I am excited to say that our incoming Board is the most experienced we have had since I started in the Division. Every one of our incoming Board members has had at least one previous leadership position within the Division, and every one of them has accomplishments to show for their past engagement. This Board is evidence that the International Division is a place for leaders to grow and develop over time, to become leaders in our profession. I would like to thank everyone in the Division who has helped me grow over the course of my ten years in the Division. I am looking forward to seeing where the next ten years take us. ■



Michael Kolber, AICP, is a senior planner for the City of Trenton, NJ. He worked for the NJ Departments of Environmental Protection and Community Affairs and served overseas as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Burkina Faso and as a Monitoring Specialist for the International Rescue Committee in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Domestically, Mr. Kolber served as a volunteer in the United Way of Greater Union County and the Manhattan Borough President's Office. Michael has an M.S. in Urban Planning from Columbia University.

APA Announces New International Strategy

Harriet Bogdanowicz, Isabel Fitzsimons, APA National

At a recent International Division leadership meeting, APA National provided an International Strategy update to Division leaders, which we are happy to share with our members.

This summer, the APA Board approved a new strategic approach to international outreach to align with APA's Strategic Goals (Figure 1). Board members were direct in recognizing APA's ethical obligation to advocate for the planning profession and planning professionals globally, while also reinforcing the guidance that international outreach must yield a benefit to APA members. As a result, APA's strategy will focus on gradually evolving existing international learning exchange activities that have potential to advance the Upskilling of planners, and APA will continue to leverage its relationship with partnering organizations in the Global Planners Network (GPN) in pursuit of this goal.

International learning exchange presents opportunities for APA to identify leading planning practices outside of the U.S. that can inspire creative problem-solving by U.S. planners while building their cultural competency. Such engagement also provides a vehicle for APA to share its unique research with other professionals around the world, especially insights coming from the Association's practice of foresight, and its work to identify trends impacting the profession.

APA maintains consultative status to the United Nations through the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and will continue to pursue planning advocacy opportunities with partnering GPN organizations, including the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI), the Canadian Institute of Planners (CIP), the Planning Institute of Australia (PIA) and the New Zealand Planning Institute (NZPI), among others. Every two years, GPN representatives including the APA President and CEO attend the World Urban Forum, the premier global conference on sustainable urbanization. Communication in the network is robust year-round; GPN conference calls convene representatives from 17 planning organizations around the world quarterly, and representatives often attend each other's annual conferences. Regular communication with international peers in these forums has cultivated a strong network of influential allies committed to advancing the voice of planners and planning worldwide.

APA's international strategy offers opportunity for partnership with the International Division, while also leaving room for the Division to pursue distinct goals and activities that are in alignment with APA initiatives, including technical assistance, mentorship programs, and recognition programs. World Town Planning Day is one example of successful collaboration between Division leaders and APA National in pursuit of shared goals; this year's webinar program Think Global, Plan Local attracted nearly 100 participants, offering CM credit. ■



APA's Presidents attend the World Urban Forum bi-annually to advocate for sustainable urbanization from a planning perspective.

APA's 4 Strategic Initiatives

1. Prioritize Equity

APA's inclusive and diverse membership, elected leadership, volunteer and staff workforce lead the way to more equitable communities.

2. Reframe the Voice of Planning

The role of planners is understood, valued, and sought after by decision makers and influencers.

3. Upskill Planners

Planners have the knowledge, insight, and skills to help communities effectively manage change.

4. Pursue Digital Relevance

APA's digital business focus ensures it remains relevant to stakeholders.

Brasilia

and the Legacy of Planning Planned Cities

Andrew Gast-Bray Ph.D, AICP, CNU-A

Matheus Mendes M.Arch, MBA

Traveling to see old friends in Brasilia, a famous ‘planned city’, I thought to do more than be a tourist. My friend, Ana, introduced me to a local planner/architect who had so much insight and thoughtful material to add, not to mention able to translate from the Portuguese, that I asked him to co-explore with us. He, in turn, connected me to a group of professors and community development specialists who provided answers to questions floating around in my head for years about the planning of ‘planned cities’.

As we are 100 years or so on from Le Corbusier’s (Corbu) *Vers une architecture* and roughly 70 after the architect/planners that he inspired, Costa and Niemeyer, conceived

their planning method for Brasilia¹, I wondered, do we have enough distance to appreciate their legacy?

Many articles on Brasilia are more researched and in-depth than my brief overview here, but they tend to be more architectural in analysis or are focused on the architects. I was intending neither an indictment nor a praise of, nor a study of these individuals - moreso casual musings^T about movements to solve current problems, based on the experience and results from the “Pilot Plan” for Brasilia. (*For more musings on related topics see “Termini”*)

I was more interested in ‘Planning’, in the process of planned city movements, the paradigm, the effect over



time of such. Is there anything to be learned from Costa and Niemeyer's idealism and hubris in its application to our times? Some future perspective looking back on us? From a local perspective, from a quality-of-life perspective, which I think is more important for their impact globally (i.e., not a lot of calls to move capital cities these days), what is the legacy both good and bad? Any lessons as we planners embark convinced of our new directions, new science and techniques solving current problems?

Primer on the Plano Piloto (Pilot Plan)

The Plano Piloto for Brasilia stemmed from a long-standing effort to make Brazil less coastal, as the vast majority of the country lived on the coast. Therefore, they proposed to move the capital inland from Rio de Janeiro to better represent and link all of Brazil. Costa and Niemeyer (and Roberto Burle Marx as the landscape architect) were the architect/planners set to the task³.

To avoid disrupting existing economies and to address the planning zeitgeist of single-use-zone planning, the design focused on government/ administrative functions. The plan explicitly avoided industrial and agricultural uses⁴. As high plain (think Serengeti, Aravalli in India or eastern Colorado), the area experienced long dry seasons (over 100 days without rain while I was there), so planning for water was key - a reservoir called Lago Paranoá (Paranoa Lake) was to flank the entire project.

The principal access was designed based on automobile travel⁵ with Monumental and N-S Highway axes² to nest within the arc formed by the topography and the reservoir. The Monumental Axis housed the governmental functions for the country and the federal district. Residential superblocks were aligned along the Highway Axis to house the citizenry of the city. The city was designed to serve up to 500,000 residents with the potential to add more 'villages' along the axes.¹ Costa also planned to have subsequent towns string along in the same manner to accommodate any additional demands.



Monumental and Highway Axes flanked by Lake²



Paranoá Lake and Brasília from Vista where Brasília was first envisioned.

How has the ‘planning’ effort performed after nearly 70 years?

There were several problems that Costa/Niemeyer faced: rapid industrialization, urban concentration, housing needs, international expectations. Records show that solving housing, and its dependent massing particularly from a spatial management perspective, was a principal drive force for their efforts¹.

Furthermore, tenement housing was still fresh in most planners' minds. Apartment neighborhoods were devised as “towers in a park” largely based on Corbu's designs to add greenspace and cost-effective density to theoretically avoid the squalor, but in most places of that time, that led to projects like Pruitt-Igoe in St. Louis, which lost the emphasis on human-scale. In Brasilia, however, the blocks were more reminiscent of Haussman's Paris. Magnificent landscaping, well-scaled courtyard greens – block heights reputedly designed for a mother to call from the top floor to a child playing in the greenspace below.

The Superblocks were much more human-scaled than I was led to believe from my research, far more than a Corbu tower. Sure, there were too few parking spaces because there was too much emphasis on moving cars - similarly there was impingement on the walkability of the place, but spaces seemed intimate and friendly.

Each edifice had distinctive features - akin again to an Haussman boulevard lined with similarly massed buildings but each with unique features.

Unlike many modernist structures, the googie architecture was beautiful and iconic, at least captivating. It was like being in a scene from the Jetsons, rather than in some brutalist vision from a Corbu drawing. “You may not like modernism, but you cannot call her ugly” to paraphrase Niemeyer’s description⁶. Certainly, a long tradition of making a capital a place to awe^T visiting dignitaries persisted: cf. Versailles, DC, Napoleonic Paris... It succeeded in creating a ‘Monumental Axis’ of buildings respected around the world. It does seem distinctive and formal - a stark contrast with the coastal cities^T.

It was mentioned to me, however, that it may have been more of a way to convince the Brazilians to leave the known entity of the coasts for the center AND pay for it – no mean feat as the building and moving of the capital was a tremendous drain on the country’s finances for years, requiring popular support. It also created respect and even love within the country itself - a love and respect has remained long after all the creators have passed.





Superblocks and attendant courtyard spaces, Bottom Right – courtyard with church and school behind.

How did it do?

I put the question to the locals. In a room of a dozen people that study this, unsurprisingly I had even more opinions about Brasilia than people, ranging from mild social critic to passionate advocate, but consensus seemed to indicate that Brasilia did what it was intended to. Its principal problems today were born of that success. Costa and Niemeyer were attempting to solve problems of the day, but, as always, there are unintended consequences that accompany the intended ones.

The housing was a success, at least for a while. It was simply insufficient to handle the 4.3 million residents that

Brasilia did what it was intended to. Its principal problems today were born of that success.

it now has. That has led to voluminous sprawl. The superblock housing is still highly sought-after, gentrifying in fact, which exacerbates the sprawl problem. Now, unfortunately, 80% of the community must find its housing elsewhere. However, what other burgeoning world city is successful in this? With the political zeitgeist, Costa and Niemeyer attempted to devise more equitable accommodations for all, but housing ended up stratifying regardless, with flight of the wealthy to large houses on the reservoir and in posh suburbs. Again, this seems no different than in other cities.

On the other hand, I thought the Monumental Axis was perhaps too true to its name. It succeeded in being monumental, just not particularly appealing for humans to spend time there in the large empty hardscapes. Not soulless – as the quote goes, but somewhat uncomfortable like a de Chirico painting - putting one out of one's element.

The commercial districts^T were placed along a corridor

parallel to the Highway Axis, W-3, with a perpendicular connector. The intent was to create local village centers for daily living needs. However, car-based lifestyles were still relatively new, especially in Brazil. Thus, they were seemingly unprepared for the nature of car travel transforming retail. Large centers cannibalized the smaller ones, creating underperforming areas and also diminishing walkability^T everywhere. None of the commercial areas are particularly walkable (remember, though, that was not a priority in 1957). Transit is also, consequently, underperforming as well – only those with no other choice use this secondary system.

That the car solution is not successful at solving all transportation problems and in fact leads to destruction of human space is not unique to Brasilia. By precluding walking, local retail centers morphing inconsistently into car-based strip malls precluded access to other things: church, school... so everything requires more parking than can ever be provided while maintaining human spaces. Now, everyone must generally drive everywhere,



Cidade Estrutural - St. Oeste: Residential area just SW of Pilot Plan, example of sprawl addressing housing needs.



So-called Googie architecture of the Monumental Axis: Top - Presidential Palace. Bottom - Library, Museum and Cathedral.

and backups inevitably occur (see below) – as in most of the world.

The W-3 is transitioning as a result (see page 15). This appears to be working well – the addition of housing and office space to the mix. However, it is not addressing the housing and commercial needs of large numbers of residents with limited access to the Pilot Plan area (see St. Oeste above).

Costa and Niemeyer attempted to devise more equitable accommodations for all, but housing ended up stratifying regardless.



Neighborhood commercial area perpendicular to W-3, linking to Residential Blocks



Monumental Axis with rush-hour congestion.

Conclusion: What might be involved in a present day do-over?

Certainly, the iconic architecture of an era has had a lasting legacy. The planning efforts solved the problems they were tasked to – within the budget that they had, at least. So, what might be done differently?

After my visit and inquiries, I suspect that Costa/Niemeyer would say that they did not take all into account - even if they succeeded in the focus for the day. They probably would also have asserted that they did not have (enough) contingencies or the contingencies that were needed over time – viz. population numbers in the millions. Finally, I suspect they would have put in more mechanisms to allow change to more easily to address the issues that were not planned for.

I will address each of these three points separately and in order:

1) Planning for the Whole

As is often the case with more architecturally focused solutions, Brasilia emphasized space-solutions over human ones. Providing fabulous world-class architecture to define the new Brazilian government capital as awesome – succeeded. To be fair, this still attracts people here and adds a lot of pride - very little built over the last $\frac{1}{2}$ century has as much appeal in its aesthetic – it inspired the Kennedy Center after all. But the quality-of-life aspect has continued to present a challenge. Far more of the metropolitan area compensates for, rather than complements this aspect.

Cars were favored as well. Consequently, transit and walking were marginalized. Given that most of the poor cannot live anywhere close to the center, this presents a challenge that could have been overcome, but was not. The plan for additional villages accessible via transit was doable theoretically – had there been the contingency (see pt.2).

We know money came up short, which will probably always be an issue. The Brasilia RFP limited/closed the system on the design and/or its future. One lesson might be to encourage proposal (i.e. RFP) respondents to provide critical pushback to ensure that the question at the origin of a study is eventually answered or a mechanism is provided to do so (see pt.3), even if they are outside a study scope. The study itself must not become a self-limiting prospect, losing any chance to transcend from the original challenge to something truly problem-solving or exceptional. Current day examples: an intersection timing study for car travel that did not include consideration of other transportation modes or development of a bayside site without taking into consideration the impacts of flooding and sea-level-rise.

2) Planning for Time

The Pilot Plan mostly addressed the needs of its day, not a much more distant future – so it was out of date not long after it was built. Remember the commercial street, W-3, that, after initial success, failed to appeal to residents and subsequently commercial interests turned to other designs. A more linear commercial street only worked for a while, but with one part looking much like the rest. There was no sense of place or value to the location or orientation² for the commercial interests, which transitioned to commercial spaces akin to those in the rest of the world – more centered in malls elsewhere.

Beauty and pride have seemed to last. The housing proposed worked for a while. For the population numbers requested – it was an efficient housing solution, arguably more successful than similar housing solutions in England and the US. But, it was tied up with Communism ideals and egalitarianism as a goal. Neither seemed to pan out. A parallel today might equate to if we designed exclusively for Covid - will that be the prevailing issue a decade from now? 70 years from now?

Planning contingencies in time? What if something gets bigger than expected? What if it does not do well? Should this not be a part of all planning efforts? Related to this, are the mechanisms there to allow adjustment (see pt. 3)? – to make the solution elsewhere in place and time? If the solution is forced to go elsewhere, does that mean the area proposed to solve the problem did not succeed? Or, is it more “Brasilia, what have you done for me recently”?

Also, this was the heyday of Robert Moses and his highways as a solution to all transportation. Brasilia was laid out for cars, but still does not work – is that the fault of those architects? Or is it the fault of cars – an untried solution to urban problems of the day that was later shown to fail, but the idea at its heart really was not that of those architects – they simply were exploiting the proposed engineering solutions of the day. Oversimplistic faith in technological fixes? Is there something to be learned by us with green technologies? For instance: AVs being thought of as a solution to current transportation problems, without thinking of the whole picture of transportation and the impact over time.

Furthermore, Maintenance?! There never seems to be enough set aside to ensure that a place stays even at the level of its start - so how can something ever work over time if this is the case? This leads to process point below.

3) Planning for Adaptation

Ironically, the beauty of its Pilot Plan is now often the chief constraint to fixing the issues that currently trouble its adoring residents - with any change being viewed with skepticism if not a religious-like intolerance. My local experts found consensus on the following problems: sprawl, lack of quality transit, lack of walkability, insufficient infrastructure to handle the needs today, rich vs. poor – the same litany of problems facing most of the world's cities. Perhaps, Brasilia failed of its (possibly unrealistic) promise^T; perhaps the promise itself was a drive force that led it to be overwhelmed.

Was the process for the Pilot Plan itself too rigid to adjust? Brasilia no longer seems as relevant a world-leading city, like Paris or even Curitiba. It preserves so much of the original Pilot Plan that it seems a hole in the whole. There seems to be no real plan for future plans, which might address the shortcomings of THIS day? Though there is obviously talk about what to improve, can it be altered without undermining the original objectives/heritage? Can any of us make some place continue to survive and thrive without losing what it was or what it was doing?

In the end, I was left with far more questions than answers. Perhaps, rather than having answers, ‘Planning’ cities may be more about asking the right questions^T. Maybe we, with our newer methods, science and techniques, should not suffer from the same hubris as we plan, for we may do less well solving our problems than Costa and Niemeyer did in solving theirs. ■



W-3 evolving to more mixed use: older section



Newer with offices and more residential

Termini

Since I had far more questions than could be addressed, I left a given question or question set as a query - as a musing - called it a terminus to be pursued later either by me or someone else. Some are listed below:

- What was the meant by 'pilot plan'? Was it a trial or a test of a theory? If trial, why did they not adapt to needs as they went along or at least faster? If test of an idea, i.e., will it work if let run? – was that what the Pilot Plan was doing?
- Corbu's ideas reflect a *tabula rasa* when he calculated his spatial solutions, but the real world is anything but. Would reflecting the true empirical universe have helped designers 'design with nature' and save cost? Drive forces and patterns⁷ in nature are not purely geometric. If both organic and inorganic environmental patterns are taken into account, will that reflect what happens in more 'organic' cities? Design with nature or one will always be fighting a losing battle over time, because the natural realm will eventually win out? –cf. Corbu quote⁵
- Reverence - There was a certain reverence in the Monumental Axis buildings, many replete with stained glass – is that necessarily a part of monuments or should it be?
- Formality vs. informality – Brazilians are so informal, why does the formal Monumental Axis resonate with them?
- Rich vs. poor - is cost overrun just a power and money decision, rather than lack of money itself? If resources are scarce, will decision-makers always choose to protect their own first?
- Wayfinding, signage and human behavior/decision-making. The layout and naming system of Brasilia is extremely logical. Does this lead to better wayfinding? Or does this not take into account real-time decision-making? It is hard to know where you are if you are not familiar with the area – there are precious few signs.
- Brasilia was not walkable – certainly not in areas that most need it - poor crossings, destroyed pavement, etc. This made it feel 'inhuman' and it was seemingly defaced because of it. Human scale, is it a two-aspect essence, like a hadron, but manifestation is walkability and sense of place: Is walkability inextricable from a sense of place for a human – i.e., walkability must be a part of human space? Is walkability just one parameter (but a necessary one) in a human connection to a place?

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1. Urbanistic Paradigms of Brasilia, Sylvia Fischer
 2. Le Corbusier's Modernism in Costa's Pilot Plan for Brasilia 1960, ARTHIST. https://ats.emory.edu/_includes/documents/ARTHIST_InDesign%20Final%20Paper_example%203.pdf, accessed 9/13/2022
 3. Sixty Years Ago, The Modernist City of Brasilia Was Built From Scratch, Stefanie Waldek, Architectural Digest, August 21, 2020.
 4. Edital: Public notice for the National Pilot Plan Competition for the New Capital of Brazil, Oscar Niemeyer
 5. Brasilia's Modernism could do with some urban spontaneity, Carlo Ratti, Mint Curator. <https://www.livemint.com/opinion/columns/brasiliast-modernism-could-do-with-some-urban-spontaneity-11630862155252.html> accessed 9/13/2022
 6. Quotes from Niemeyer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AYhpFEHJkkI> (min 4:49 to 5:51 // 26:49 to 27:31 // 34:15 to 34:28), accessed 9/12/2022
 7. S. Pauls and A. Gast-Bray - Unpublished research demonstrating parallels between planning concepts and natural phenomena like crystal nucleation, growth and Ostwald ripening.

- Why do de Chirico paintings look a bit like the Monumental Axis spaces? Not soulless but out-of-phase, dislocated, abstracted... Are we meant to feel less in the face of the monuments? cf. Monuments before: Versailles, DC, Haussman's Paris... Or are they better if we can connect to them (e.g., Vietnam War monument)?
- Did Costa/Niemeyer tweak boulevards to make the 3 Powers Plaza look like an impregnable castle – with fosse, moat in front of 3 Powers Plaza as one approaches on foot?
- As we look forward to a more sustainable future, will we be making essentially the same mistakes in regard

to our time as Costa did in his? Our efforts, are they simply products of today with metrics and values changing, so we will, in essence, never “succeed”?

- Asking questions like what will be or should be our role in the face of algorithms, computers and robots – as we design for the future – perhaps letting non-human elements do the designs and/or decisions. Will the decisions be the right ones? Even if they ‘technically’ are, should we allow them to decide?
- Is promise itself a drive force?
- Is Planning more questioning than answering? Should it be?

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The need for planning theories to and from the Global South

Fernando Luiz Lara

R.G. Roessner Professor of Architecture
University of Texas at Austin

Brazil is today a highly urbanized country with 85% of urban population, drastically different from the country of 100 years ago that was 70% rural. The urban experience in Brazil, in most if not all of its largest cities, was shaped by conflicts. The long distances between home and work, the difficulty of finding a dwelling close to downtown, few green areas, high rates of air pollution, urban violence, water shortage, raw sewage on the streets: all these problems are experienced daily, especially by residents of large metropolitan areas. The urban experience reinforces the common sense that there is not and there has never been planning for city growth in Brazil.

However, the opposite is true. The Brazilian experiments in urban planning have improved significantly in recent decades, especially after the democratic transition in the eighties and the 1988 Constitution, culminating with the signing into law of the Statute of Cities in 2001. Furthermore, urban planning is not new in Brazil, its

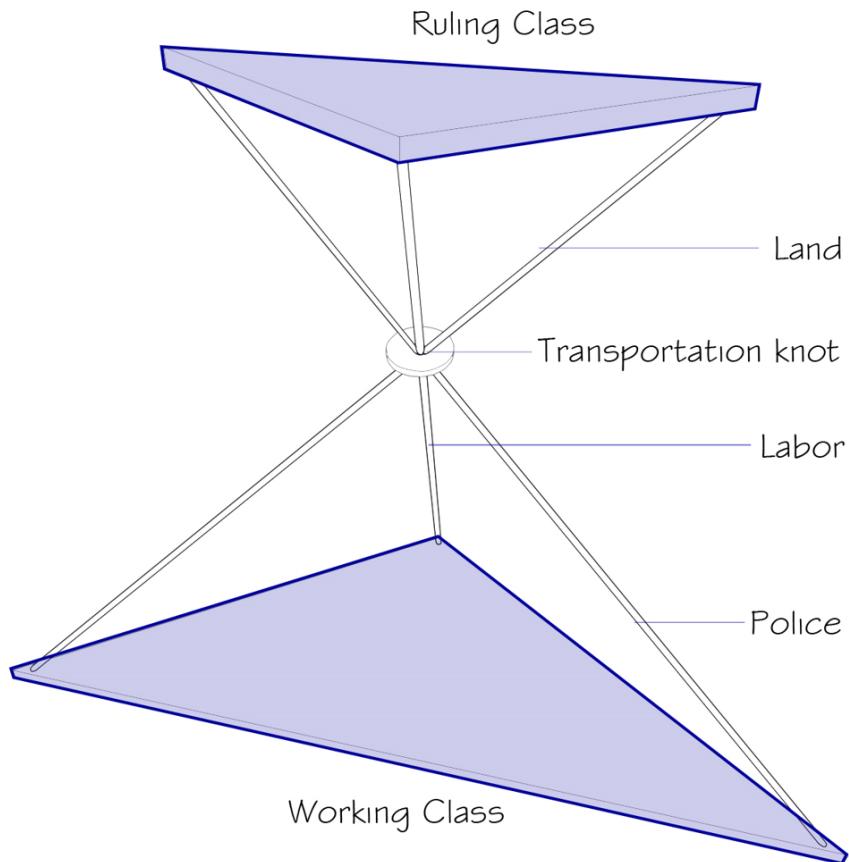
institutionalization refers to the 1940s and is concurrent with the urbanization process.

More than at any other time in recent history, the challenges of economic growth, social development and democracy bring urban and environmental policies to the center of the Brazilian debate. The urban crisis that the country is now experiencing motivated different social groups to take to the streets in June of 2013. Those movements were protesting primarily for improvements in urban mobility, and secondarily for better public services in healthcare. It leads to the urban policy's central dilemma for Brazilian democracy: What should be the role of the State in planning and implementation of public policies regarding urbanization? What should be the contribution of citizenship participation in government decisions? How are universities contributing to the contemporary challenges of urban policy?

Brazilian streets exploded with protests in June 2013, just as myself and Ana Paula Koury were starting a research collaboration comparing participatory processes and traditional top-down planning practices, and we felt the need to develop our own concepts and theories to explain Brazilian spatial history. On the one hand, the narrative set up by international observers such as Perry Anderson or Vicino & Fahlberg did not grasp the nuances of the Brazilian context, and, on the other hand, local scholars such as Rolnik or Ribeiro & Santos Junior were too caught up in the whirlwind (of events) to be reflexive. The more we read the more we felt like there was a mismatch between the conceptual lenses of the Global North and the rich ethnography/engaged scholarship of the Global South. Right in the middle of this mismatch, as if operating a kind of magnetic repulsion, were the Brazilian streets, the way they were designed and the way they were appropriated. There was a lack of theorization capable of capturing the nuances of the Brazilian context,

and it was in order to fill this crucial gap that we wrote *Street Matters: A Critical History of Twentieth-Century Urban Policy in Brazil*, published by the University of Pittsburgh Press this year.

Written almost concurrently with the unfolding events between 2013 and 2018, our book seeks to interpret Brazilian inequality through the lens of the relationship between street protests and urban policy, making explicit the conflict between popular democracy and economic interests in the production of the space on the periphery of Western capitalism. Having space as the main variable of analysis allows us to discuss the production of the Brazilian city as both an instrument, and the consequence, of an unequal society. The tension of street protests is the foundation on which conflicts of Brazilian democracy have been based. By analyzing the historical changes brought about at such moments, we can derive important lessons for urban policy in Brazil. The narrative



The very process of modernizing implies the colonial practice of imposing values and beliefs of ruling elites onto large swaths of the population. Our diagram encompasses the modernization/colonization mirror in its very structure. Every action taken by the ruling elites from the top down in the name of modernization has an effect on the working classes below.

seeks to uncover different historical moments and evaluate the political agenda of the Brazilian state versus popular movements, demonstrating that the struggles for the construction of a more just society are inscribed in the spatial arrangements of Brazil's major cities, for better and for worse.

We introduced a conceptual diagram to theorize and explicate the relationship between space, social movements, and the extreme inequality of Brazilian society. Following Manuel Castells's suggestion that "we need a theoretical perspective flexible enough to account for the production and performance of urban functions and forms in a variety of contexts," we proposed a theoretical tripod comprising the axes of work, land, and security, with transportation as a node at which these three intersect and traverse. The axes form two pyramids—one at the base, symbolizing the working classes holding up the system, and one at the top, inverted, representing the elites.

Another inspiration for our theoretical tripod comes from Arturo Escobar work, *Encountering Development* (1995). Escobar argues that there is no modernization without colonization. The very process of modernizing implies the colonial practice of imposing values and beliefs of ruling elites onto large swaths of the population. Our diagram encompasses the modernization/colonization mirror in

its very structure. Every action taken by the ruling elites from the top down in the name of modernization has an effect on the working classes below. The opposite is also true: social movements' political pressure and protests (their more radical form) push for changes in societal structure that impact the stability of those at the top of the social strata. As the reader can by now understand, our conceptual tripod operates with a broader definition of coloniality, in which structures created for the benefit of a minority are being imposed, on the ground and in the minds of the majority.

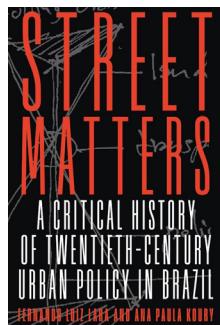
The tripod structure guarantees comfort for those who live at the top (good jobs, land tenure, and protective police force) while subjecting the majority at the bottom to precariousness at work, informality in housing, and repression by police. Regressive policies enacted by the ruling elite have the effect of augmenting the distance between those above and those below. Progressive change pushed by social movements has the effect of shortening the distance between the classes, reducing the privilege of those at the top. Protests, both by the working class and by the affluent classes, take place when the rods expand (more inequality) or contract (less inequality). Our main argument is that while race, gender and class fill the void and are operating in the societal structure all the time, the three institutional variables of land, labor and police are acting in space, producing

progressive or regressive change. If the rods stretch, it means that life becomes more unbearable for those below. If the rods shorten, this threatens the privileges of those above.

Over the years, Brazilian working classes have put pressure on their local governments to build infrastructure such as water and electricity, and pushed the federal government to improve working conditions and raise the minimal wage. Interestingly enough, none of those changed or even threatened the inequality structure theorized in our tripod. Water and electricity, along with more educational opportunities and a public health system (Sistema Único de Saúde, SUS), improved people's lives but kept the distance between the rich and the poor unchanged. The election of Lula da Silva in 2003 looked like more of the same at first, but it eventually did bring some change. In the theoretical tripod, raising the minimum wage above inflation and promoting economic expansion (via consumption) would shorten the labor rod. It bears remembering that police repression did not change during the Lula years, nor was there enough of an effort to give land rights to the inhabitants of the periphery (Lara, 2013). Rather, the poor improved their lives during the Lula years by consuming more, which, ironically, made the rich richer.

When the growth-by-internal consumption model started to sputter during Rousseff's first term (2011–2014), both the elites and the working class took to the streets to protest in June 2013. The commodities boom was over and economic measures implemented to mitigate the 2008 financial crisis of the North were now putting pressure on the Brazilian fiscal balance. Despite significant investments in education and health, the working poor saw their lives worsened by longer commutes (the transportation knot) and decaying infrastructure, and they demanded that schools and hospitals raised to the standards of the Padrão FIFA, the luxurious specifications imposed by the international football association for the stadiums and hotels that were being built at the same time for the 2014 World Cup (Saad Filho, 2013; Vargas, 2016).

Conservative political forces that had been constrained by the success of the Workers Party (PT) took the opportunity and ousted Dilma Rousseff in 2016. The government of Michel Temer started dismantling all labor gains of the 13 years of PT government, halting also the investment in infra-structure that was central to the urban policy of 2003-2015. In terms of real improvement of transportation, sanitation and health infra-structure, the protests of 2013 were a missed opportunity. Despite the best intentions of the protesters, life today in Brazil is much worse than in 2013 for the average worker. Real improvement will have to wait another decade, if they start now. ■



Street Matters

A Critical History of Twentieth-Century Urban Policy in Brazil

By **Fernando Luiz Lara, Ana Paula Koury**

Street Matters links urban policy and planning with street protests in Brazil. It begins with the 2013 demonstrations that ostensibly began over public transportation fare increases but quickly grew to address larger questions of inequality. This inequality is physically manifested across Brazil, most visibly in its sprawling urban favelas.

About being a planner in Brazil...

Ali Estefam

Ali is a multilingual urbanist, who brings a people-centered approach to planning and community development. Ali worked for a decade with diverse, multicultural populations in Latin America, Spain, Africa, and the US. Ali holds a Master in Urban Planning from Columbia University, focused on Community and Economic Development. She also holds a Bachelor of Science in Architecture and Urbanism from the University of Sao Paulo (Brazil) and is a Specialist in City Management and Revitalization from the University of Castilla La Mancha (Spain).

When I became a planner, I didn't know what planning was. It was walking through the favelas of my city, waiting for the crowded bus to come, or waiting for hours on the Sao Paulo traffic when the key turned, and I became a planner at heart. My professional training came years later when in my late-teenager years I went to study at FAU-USP, one of the most renowned planning schools in Latin America.

It was there that I learned about the amazing work of several Brazilian planners, such as Lucio Costa, the urban planner behind Brasilia, or Jaime Lerner, the planner behind urban acupuncture and one of the responsible for the implementation of Curitiba's BRTs, and many others. It was also at FAU where I was able to understand the roots and consequences of the so present urban inequalities of the city (and I dare say, of the country, or even the world!). I was taken by planning professors to neighborhoods that clustered drug addicts and homeless, to illegally occupied buildings, and to favelas. With these experiences, more than theories and methodologies, I learned to build empathy, look at people in the eyes, and dedicate my professional life to improving their situation.

I worked in Sao Paulo as a planner for 8 years before moving to America. My Brazilian career was all in the municipality of Sao Paulo, where I worked in the departments of planning, buildings, landmarks, and technology. I liked to think of myself as a public servant – someone who was dedicating their professional life to serving the public. With every small action that I took –

from reviewing new legislation to approving a building permit – I thought that I was somehow improving my city. I had the opportunity of doing a lot of good things while working for the city. For example, I presented proposals to modernize the building approval process, based on international experiences. I also proposed strategies to implement smart city technologies to increase public participation. I trained other city workers on public engagement methodologies, and took part in the review of the masterplan, proposing increased public participation schemes. I and my team were responsible for studying and approving several now landmarked buildings and creating legislation that determined the height and envelope of nearby buildings to ensure visibility and structural protection of historical buildings. These are only a few examples of many good and interesting works that I could do while working for the city of Sao Paulo.

However, I would say that most of the projects that I wanted to implement didn't come through. Not because of a lack of interest (mine or of other planners), but because of a bureaucratic and plastered system, that barely embraced changes. After my almost decade of experience working for the city, I came to realize that, in my experience, the best way to have some influence in the city-making process in Sao Paulo is either to get involved with politics (for example, becoming a city councilor) or gain international acknowledgment. I realized that many of my professors at FAU-USP, who are until now currently influencing and improving city-making, chose one of these two paths. I chose the latter. ■

Ukraine Rebuilding Action Group Updates

The Division established the Ukraine Rebuilding Action Group (URAG) under its Humanitarian Planning Committee. The recent updates include:

Major Goals in the URAG Workplan

- Help institutionalize and support planning education in Ukraine.
- Help organize and mobilize an association of Ukraine professional planners.
- Collaborate with and influence APA and other relevant key organizations.
- Develop publications on Ukraine's recovery and rebuild.
- Provide capacity building and technical assistance.

Sustainable Planning Mission Statement

Members of the URAG, along with several others from Ro3kvit, are setting up a new working group within URAG and within Ro3kvit. The mission statement for this new collaboration is on page 25.

White Paper: Post-Crisis Pre-Planning for Ukraine Reconstruction

This paper is under preparation by Dr. Lyndsey Deaton, AICP, Vice Chair at Large of the APA-ID and Assistant Professor of Architecture at Clemson University and co-authored by Emily Clifton of the Urban Collaborative.

Field Guidance on Public Participation in Urban Planning

This guidance is intended as a first step in facilitating Ukraine rebuilding and post-war prosperity. It concisely summarizes the best of US public participation practice -- basics, tools and strategies. The draft guidance is available for review on a Google Doc file at urag.org/english/resource/reports. Comments can be sent to jing@planning.dev.

Congratulations to Gala

Congratulations to Gala Korniyenko on earning her Ph.D. in City and Regional Planning at the Ohio State University. Her research focuses on planning with autistic and neurodiverse communities, including them in the design and planning process. She is a member of the International Division and participates in the division's Ukraine Rebuilding Action Group. She aims to use her planning research and expertise in international contexts, especially in the rebuilding of Ukraine. Gala can be reached at korniyenko.1@osu.edu.

A Letter from Ukraine

Oksana Kolisnyk, a consultant for Cherkasy expert group, wrote a letter to American planners about the importance of rural communities in rebuilding Ukraine. The letter was written in Ukrainian and translated into English by Gala Korniyenko, a friend of Oksana. (page 22)

If you are interested in joining this group, please fill out the form on www.urag.org/english/join or scan the QR code below. We welcome everyone regardless membership status.



Dr. Jason Reece (left), Dr. Gala Korniyenko (middle), Dr Bernadette Hanlon (right)



Лист до американських планувальників

A Letter to American Planners

I thank the American people for the aid provided for Ukraine. I have my own measure for this gratitude: for many years I have worked in programs focused on community development and strategic planning financed by USAID in Ukraine. And I know how many good things have been done for the Ukrainian people in infrastructure, business, and agriculture development. As much as I am aware of the scale of the good things, I increasingly feel that all this effort has been in vain. We are deprived not only of the results of our work, plans and dreams; we are deprived of life. The launch of powerful rockets from Russia is observed in real-time until they take the lives of infants, young people who could do so much for the world, experienced people who will no longer be able to pass on their experience to anyone...

I have been hearing more and more reports about the preparation of certain programs for the reconstruction of Ukraine. But for the most part - this is how it turns out - they focus mainly on destroyed cities and bypass the issue of rebuilding rural settlements. Moreover, even a cursory review of popular materials about the destruction caused by the war shows most of the damage which has been done to cities, on the other hand villages, despite the fact that many of them are simply erased from the face of the Earth, remain invisible.

There are reasons for all this. First of all, the very issues of infrastructural and general development of rural areas became more visible to society only a few years before the start of the war, when communities were formed in connection with administrative and territorial reform and decentralization. Communities in rural areas received more resources and more powers, including spatial management and infrastructural development. Only the first steps were taken on the way to planning and real infrastructural development of rural settlements. But in general, the rural area remained infrastructurally





undeveloped: without proper water pipes, sewage systems, with worn-out power lines and power equipment, etc. And therefore, as it seems, there is practically nothing to rebuild.

The second reason is the logistical inaccessibility, and during the war, the critical informational isolation of rural areas. Now, when the gradual liberation of occupied territories is taking place, the scale of the damage to the villages itself remains practically unknown, as well as the degree of traumatization of the local population, which either remained under occupation and experienced the violence of the occupying military forces, or, while leaving, losing essentially all from their previous life.

It seems that the question of reconstruction in rural areas, which suffered from military operations and occupation, is not raised, also because this problem is threatened by many unknown circumstances, even at the level of defining the problem. But it cannot be bypassed when planning any assistance in rebuilding Ukraine. It is certain that in a number of regions it will not even be reconstruction, but the creation of a living space from scratch, because the actions of the occupiers have made entire settlements and the territories around them unfit for life in an ecological sense. It is certain that new communities will be formed in the rural areas of these regions, because many people will simply not return to the place of the ruins of their homes. It will probably be necessary to create special conditions for the formation of new, younger and more dynamic rural communities, which would also ensure the activity of a sufficiently technological agricultural industry, which is important for the economy of Ukraine, and would also form a new infrastructural and social landscape of non-urban Ukraine.

And, of course, we cannot forget about the rural communities, which seemed to have bypassed the war directly, but which lost economically, were forced to stop their own development programs, and found themselves without the support of the few state programs addressed to the villages. And most importantly, they suffer (and the consequences of this are still unknown) from a significant outflow of the few active able-bodied men and women who went to serve in the army.





In my opinion, these issues should be singled out in a separate direction among the entire complex of issues of the post-war reconstruction of Ukraine. In my opinion, assistance activities addressed to rural areas require separate programs that would take into account their specificities and needs.

I really believe that decisions will be made that will give us hope in rebuilding all of Ukraine.

Sincerely,

Oksana Kolisnyk

Translated by Gala Korniyenko, Ph.D.

From February 2007 Oksana works as a consultant, expert, trainer, and a project coordinator for Cherkasy expert group (in the past - Central Ukrainian Regional Training Center of the Community Partnership Program of the "Ukraine-USA" Foundation under USAID funding) of the Institute Democracies named after Pylyp Orlyk (IDPO). Since 2016, she has been a member of the Polish-Ukrainian expert team for development and monitoring the implementation of strategic community development plans within the American-Ukrainian framework DOBRE ("Decentralization Offering Better Results and Efficiency") programs. During this project 10 communities (in Dnipropetrovsk, Mykolaiv, Kirovohrad and Chernihiv regions) participated in strategies for development and monitored their implementation. A big part of Oksana's experience is working with villages and rural communities.



URAG-RO3KVIT

SUSTAINABLE REBUILDING PLANNING GROUP

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of this joint URAG-Ro3kvit working group is to integrate spatial, temporal, programmatic, macroeconomic and environmental context into of Ro3kvit's efforts to plan for the rebuilding of Ukrainian cities, and to complement local and end-state planning and design projects and services. The team's efforts are based on Ro3kvit's five core values and are split into three conceptual lenses. The working group is a voluntary collaboration between two independent organizations.

Ro3kvit's five core values governing its approach to reconstruction is that they should be

1. Social and inclusive while emphasizing a people first strategy
2. Climate proof and resilient for future generations
3. Aimed at developing networks within Ukraine and beyond
4. Aimed at facilitating learning, education and providing continuity
5. Transparent and ethical

Conceptual Lenses

Temporal

1. Coordinate the planning and implementation of urgent relief and repairs with the longer-term rebuilding and redevelopment; in so doing, create a basis for work / action planning
2. Strategize how urgent actions to provide humanitarian relief can be accomplished so that they do not preclude optimal long-term redevelopment by lacking an exit or removal strategy and thus end up being permanent
3. Highlight development of pilot projects during urgent near-term rebuilding that can be replicated in longer-term redevelopment.

Spatial

1. Integrate local, oblast and national plans that have spatial components with emerging Ro3kvit city plans, such that local plans reflect regional and national programs and priorities and vice versa: “bottom up and top down”
2. Coordinate existing Government of Ukraine, EU, USAID, UN and World Bank regional plans and planning methodologies with redevelopment planning
3. Ensure that rebuilding planning addresses the needs of small towns and rural communities such that Ukrainian “territorial communities” (or “Hromadas”) are included within broader plans
4. Coordinate the location of sites for interim housing, construction camps / depots, and waste management facilities with land decontamination and transport repairs at the oblast level

Programmatic

1. Provide recommendations to improve public participation laws and practices within Ukrainian urban planning, for both the near-term urgent rebuilding and the longer-term development, i.e., a program that balances top-down decision-making for urgent near-term actions with bottom-up decision-making for the less urgent and long term. Public participation for both phases will need to address and accommodate a war-caused disabled and traumatized population, as well as the needs and desires of marginalized and underserved territories and communities, including ethnic and linguistic minorities, to achieve a holistic reconstruction effort.
2. Provide recommendations for coordinating among different levels and ministries/agencies of Ukraine’s government, EU, US and donors relative to policies, laws and regulations, plans, procedures, permits and approvals, and public participation, etc.
3. Convey knowledge on EU and Western standards and practices to achieve innovation and resilience (e.g., smart communities, energy efficiency in housing and transport, distributed energy systems, more extensive and better equipped underground shelters)

Examples of Macroeconomic Interventions

1. Determine where a mismatch may exist between plans and current/predicted future macroeconomic conditions, i.e. plan urgent and longer-term redevelopment to be consistent with macroeconomic changes and trends and with the consequent national and oblast economic development policies and plans
2. Examine strategies for sourcing and moving key commodities needed for reconstruction with an aim of minimizing transport cost and negative externalities

URAG -RO3KVIT SUSTAINABLE REBUILDING PLANNING GROUP MISSION STATEMENT

3. Comment on and critique major quantitative analyses performed by external organizations
4. Investigate the viability of proposed new base industries, particularly for cities whose prior economic base has been destroyed or otherwise rendered economically obsolete

Examples of Environmental Interventions

1. Ensure that land decontamination, interim housing construction and transport repairs reflect land suitability opportunities and constraints and minimize, mitigate, offset or compensate for environmental and social impacts
2. Continue and integrate with existing and planned GOU, EU and UN, USAID and World Bank national and regional planning, e.g. river basin, coastal zone, biodiversity, climate action plans, etc.
3. Coordinate national and donor environmental and social safeguards policies and procedures (e.g., consolidate standards, establish “one-stop shops” for permits and approvals)
4. Coordinate UXO, hazardous waste, and demolition and construction debris collection, transport and disposal operations and facility site selection and design
5. Develop and pilot innovative approaches to achieving environmental sustainability, e.g., renewable energy powered microgrids, smart interim housing areas and alternative building techniques



ro3kvit.com

Ro3kvit is an independent NGO headquartered in Ukraine and the Netherlands aimed at developing a methodology for rebuilding Ukraine's (physical) infrastructure and cities.

**Ukraine
Rebuilding
Action Group**

URAG.org

The Ukraine Rebuilding Action Group (URAG) was established by the American Planning Association International Division under its Humanitarian Planning Committee. As a volunteer-based organization, URAG's task is to develop and facilitate projects and programs to assist Ukrainian rebuilding through networking, capacity building, knowledge sharing and collaboration.

Leveraging ESG in Real Estate to Promote Sustainable Urban Planning

Mai Nguyen

Mai Nguyen has 10 years of experience in green buildings, sustainable real estate, and urban development in Asia Pacific and North America. Mai holds CFA ESG Investing Certificate, LEED AP (BD+C, ID+C), and EDGE Expert Certification. Prior to joining VinaCapital's ESG Department, Mai worked on the City of Boston's first Zero Net Carbon Building Zoning Initiative and the City's Climate Resiliency Requirements. She writes about sustainable urban planning, ESG in real estate, and serves as the Representative of the American Planning Association – International Division to Vietnam. Mai earned a master's degree from Saitama University, Japan, and a research fellowship from Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

The real estate industry is a crucial part of the economy due to its significant capital holdings and its close relationships with other industries in its supply chains. When the real estate industry slows down, it can lead to difficulties for these other industries, resulting in a collective downturn that can have negative effects on the economy. Ensuring sustainable development of the real estate industry is therefore vital for promoting sustainable urban growth and supporting the overall economy.

ESG stands for Environmental, Social, and Governance, the concept started in the finance industry to emphasize more responsible investment activities without sacrificing financial performance. Environmental criteria cover major issues including climate change and GHGs emissions, pollution, energy and water consumption, biodiversity, and waste management. Those environmental elements consider both impacts of a business on the environment as well as the environmental risks facing the business. The social category usually evaluates corporates' consideration towards their employees and people living in the surrounding communities with which their business has a relationship. The social criteria ensure

basic human-related matters such as human rights, labor standards, DEI (diversity, equity, inclusion), data privacy, and community relations. The last pillar, governance, addresses corporate structures which demonstrate that enterprises are transparent and well-managed. Despite its definition, ESG is an evolving concept, its application in different industries therefore flexibly touch on the most relevant environmental, social, governance issues in that sector.

ESG in the real estate industry goes beyond the above-mentioned general metric, that refers to a range of practices that promote sustainable urban development. These practices can address issues such as housing, traffic, and pollution. While green building is a prominent concept in sustainable real estate, ESG covers a wider range of important areas and offers an opportunity to advance sustainability standards in the built environment sector. This article will explore the E, S, and G components and explain how they can be applied in the context of real estate and urban planning. By applying these principles, real estate developers and urban planners can create more sustainable, livable, resilient, and equitable cities.

Environmental

Buildings are responsible for 40% of the world's total GHGs emissions and approximately 40% energy consumption, greening this industry is inevitable. Over the past decades, the concept of green building has gained widespread acceptance and adoption in the building industry as a new standard. Green building design starts from the site selection phase and continues throughout the construction and operation phases, shaping greener physical characteristics of the built environment. Green-certified buildings save 15%-30% on energy consumption, use 20%-45% less clean water compared to typical buildings, and produce no harmful refrigerant gas emissions. In addition to their environmental benefits, LEED or BREEAM certified buildings also offer occupants healthy indoor environments. These buildings are designed to eliminate toxic building materials, supply sufficient fresh air, and ensure thermal comfort, all while consuming less energy through the use of new technologies such as smart sensors. As a result, occupants of green-certified buildings often experience improved productivity and an overall better quality of life. Some other green building design philosophies such as private owned public use open spaces, green transportation facilities can help improve community's wellbeing. ESG investing in real estate has gained significant attention in recent years. Green building practices address many environmental and some social factors. To create more sustainable urban environments, it is important to prioritize the "S" and "G" components of ESG, in addition to the already-focused-on "E" component. This will help to unleash the full potential of ESG investing.

Social

The social aspect of real estate development is often overlooked, but it can add significant value to urban growth. In other industries, social factors often relate to welfare policies for employees and the relationships that enterprises have with the local communities where they operate. Real estate is a human-centric industry that closely ties to urban spaces. These spaces are where people live and build economic and financial centers, and where our cultures originated. The social pillar of real estate encompasses current urban issues such as

affordable housing, housing security, urban segregation, and inequality. These issues are interconnected and have a profound impact on the sustainability and livability of cities. The current ESG boom offers an opportunity to address the affordable housing crisis. By ensuring that investments in housing contribute to affordable and secure housing, we can seek better solutions to this problem. Other social contributions can include investments in healthcare, education, and civic facilities such as parks, museums, and cultural centers. ESG practices also emphasize climate resilience, which can help properties in climate-threatened areas continue to function in extreme weather conditions. By focusing and promoting ESG, we can achieve larger, more positive environmental and social impacts on building livable and equitable cities.

Governance

Dealing with larger-scale issues requires greater efforts from multiple stakeholders. Therefore, the governance component of ESG plays a more significant role in the real estate industry than it does in the common definition of ESG. To address the housing crisis and other urban problems such as pollution, social exclusion, and poor infrastructure system, there is a need for a collective effort from policy makers, local governments, private owners, developers, and community leaders. By working together, these groups can leverage the unique advantages of ESG in real estate industry to tackle these issues and make progress in solving these challenges. As such, governance in this context is not only about managing a business, but also about collaborating with other institutions to achieve social and environmental goals while maintaining an adequate return on investment. Inclusionary zoning, a regulation being practiced in some states such as Massachusetts, can be an option to consolidate ESG values and promote social impacts. Or in Boston, there is a project where community leaders, real estate developers, and local authorities are joining together to connect isolated green spaces in the city to form an integrated greenway system. This aims to make the city more accessible, environmentally friendly, and optimize the value of public land. This could also lead to a redistribution of real estate value and improve affordability.

Current Practice to Incorporate ESG

More than 80% of Real estate investment trust (REITs) (\$4.5 trillion in the U.S. as of year-end 2021) incorporate ESG into their investment process, as reflected in their ESG or sustainability reports. However, many companies have not established a rigorous framework for consistently applying ESG principles in real estate deals. This lack of a systematic approach can hinder the ability of REITs to effectively incorporate sustainability into their operations and investments. Considering sustainability or ESG strategy at the early stages of a project is more efficient and effective than scattered efforts later on. And by doing so, environmental, social, and financial returns can be improved. Additionally, measurement is crucial. The lack of relevant and high-quality data is often cited as the top challenge facing real estate investors and developers. In order to make better-informed decisions and measure progress, there is a need for high-quality data. This can help these investors to effectively incorporate sustainability into their operations and investments, and improve environmental, social, and financial returns by having relevant inputs and by measuring and monitoring performance.

Opportunity in the Global South

The ESG movement is not limited to Europe and North America. While there may be differences in geopolitical, economic, cultural, and legislative factors, a similar momentum for ESG practices is also being observed in developing countries. Vietnam, for example, has a rapidly growing real estate market due to its high urbanization rate of almost 40%. The integration of ESG practices in this frontier market offers diverse opportunities to generate both social impact and financial returns. Cities in Vietnam are undergoing transformations to accommodate a growing population. The number of green buildings is increasing, and the country is ready to quickly adopt emerging technologies. The Vietnamese government is committed to promoting green growth and has released a number of regulations and legal frameworks to support sustainable development. This creates opportunities for collaboration in sharing knowledge, experience, best practices, and case studies, which can lead to investment and other business opportunities. It is worth noting that Vietnam is among the top five countries most affected by climate change, and as a result, the country faces numerous challenges in addressing this issue. The Mekong delta region has been heavily impacted by climate change, therefore, there have been many studies conducted on climate adaptation

Boston is putting effort into solving affordability issues and making green spaces more accessible





Construction is booming in Ho Chi Minh City

in this area. Providing secure housing is essential for supporting climate-vulnerable communities. In light of these developments, ESG in real estate has become a highly relevant topic in recent years in Vietnam. Climate risks, such as flooding, are now increasingly being considered during the early design stages, indicating that this industry is evolving. This demonstrates a shift towards a more proactive approach to addressing climate risks in the design and development of real estate projects in the country.

Ultimately, real estate is a long-term investment that requires a long-term strategy, and this is where ESG plays a significant role to meet our resilience and net zero targets. ■

Cities in Vietnam are undergoing transformations to accommodate a growing population. The number of green buildings is increasing, and the country is ready to quickly adopt emerging technologies.

Collaboration with Vietnam

The Division collaborates with the Vietnam Urban Planning and Development Association (VUPDA) and the Special Program for Urban and Regional Studies (SPURS) of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) to initiate and facilitate knowledge exchange and project partnership among planners and planning educators in the two countries. More information on: international.planning.org/community/vietnam-en.

Coordinator / APA ID Representative to Vietnam: Mai Nguyen, mai.ntk12@gmail.com

Transit in Singapore and Beyond

- Interview with Nathanael Tan

How do you describe yourself?

I am a motivated individual with unparalleled passion and experience in managing miscellaneous administration and an aspiration to shape the future of Singapore's land and public transport industry. I strive to bring about the best in the administration processes, as I believe having a well-managed administrative process will have a positive impact on the operational efficiency to achieve the objectives of the organization.

I do what I can in my capacity to improve the industry by sending feedback to Public Transport Operators (PTOs) accordingly, reminding and assisting Bus Captains (bus drivers), and also advising commuters who may be in need of help of any kind.

What types of suggestions do you usually propose to the transit authority?

Being dynamic, I respond to what the public transport industry responds to, in order to assist them with whatever may come. I contributed to the industry by suggesting LogoSwapConcept, SideLogoAddition, and 2/3 Ad Policy for easier identification of bus companies. The latter two have already been implemented. I have also contributed suggestions such as requesting for bus service to call at a bus stop it previously skipped for no reason and also suggested the erection of metal bars at MRT station escalators to control human traffic flow.

In recent months as the world was dealing with COVID-19, I discussed with several people to bring forth

a suggestion to control access to public transport during the Circuit Breaker period that all Singaporeans are familiar with. I also continued with another suggestion to do away with the SafeEntry procedure for public transport and to incorporate contact tracing methods into our CEPAS-compliant ez-link cards with proper measures that are put in place.

How do you describe your interaction with the transit authorities?

I dare say I have a lot of experience in dealing with government bureaucracy. When I sent out my first emails to the Land Transport Authority (LTA), they never responded. Today, I have a few direct contacts I can mention so certain feedback can be addressed to these contacts respectively. This was of course, not an overnight thing. It took roughly 4 to 5 years for the LTA to realize that I was for real and not sending emails merely to troll them or to mock them for their poor performance in matters relating to mobility.

For those familiar with Customer Relationship Management (CRM), you would know there's this thing called a Service Level Agreement (SLA) which organizations put out to give customers a general idea of what their time frame is in responding to emails. SLAs typically range between 1 business day and a few weeks. With CRM experience myself, and at one time only receiving a response from SMRT Buses, one of four PTOs here, after 6 months, I came up with my homemade Internal Reference Number (IRN) tracking system. Under the IRN, cases are typically open for up to

6 months (based on SMRT Buses' response time in the aforementioned case), with exception of time-sensitive ones. 6 months is more than enough time to look through even the biggest kind of feedback involving multiple government agencies and other stakeholders. It also gives a false sense of security to the LTA and PTOs that 6 months is more than enough for them to answer "a simple query" but there were times when they forgot who they were talking to - not a typical commuter or a typical citizen, but someone well-versed in the industry and fully understands what's going on. Some customer service representatives tried to lie their way through something only to be reprimanded by me in return. Also due to the illusion that the SLA is long enough, some cases are simply left open till the due date has been reached.

What is your approach to improving public transit?

First, let's break it into two: transportation and administration. I am a strong advocate for administration excellence. Many people see the administration as general work that isn't important but I see it as a necessity. Without proper administration, how can anyone get anything done? I have a phrase that I encourage people to quote me on: "Communication breakdown is worse than train breakdown."

I don't have to be the CEO today to set my expectations for SMRT and other stakeholders in the land/public transport industry. I have done it and I am still doing it, even when not officially employed in the industry. That's what I call, "change from the outside". People often focus on "change from the inside", but with personal

experience, I dare say that change can come from anyone, but only if they dare to say and do what's right.

In my podcast, I mentioned a lot about aimless and mindless complaints which is something that SMRT is far from unfamiliar with. People love to visit SMRT's Facebook page mainly just to rant about breakdowns and poor service. Having observed the page for a few weeks a few years ago, I then knew what we needed to do to make things right. When reporting faults, commuters more often than not get confused as to what they should report. It goes without saying that a picture with no context helps no one, let alone a simple rant that goes like "TRAIN BREAKDOWN TODAY AGAIN HAIYA! SMRT YOU SUCK!!". I fully understand that service from the industry to commuters is a given but the other way around isn't - commuters would not want to spend extra time and effort to look out for important details like license plates, car numbers, noting down the time when something happened, which Platform Screen Door (PSD) had a fault, etc. With this in mind, I have plans to come up with a comprehensive fault reporting system that is commuter-friendly. While reporting will take longer than usual, commuters will know what to look out for when reporting a fault.

All in all, the industry is highly dynamic, and being at the forefront of all these changes, I am always there to intervene when I see a dire need for change or improvement. Likewise, for everyone else out there, we need to be prepared for changes. The more flexible we are to change, the more we will see ourselves prosper. We cannot hope for the trains to not break down, what we can do instead is to prepare for the breakdowns to occur and then have a solid plan to communicate the

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disruption and subsequently, mitigate the consequences of the disruption.

Any thoughts on informal transportation in other Southern Asian countries?

Nathanael Tan: I am no stranger to informal transportation (which I will shorten to infPT - informal public transport, in some cases) even though this sort of system is non-existent in Singapore as our services are tightly regulated. Many people have a negative opinion of infPT because they are known to be unregulated, unreliable, unhygienic, and all the "uns" you can think of. However, after attending several online events sharing about what infPT is and hearing from not just operators but also commuters and patrons of the infPT systems themselves, I feel that it has been heavily stigmatized in lieu of many government's wishes to encourage people to take "licensed" forms of transportation.

You mentioned South Asia so let's start with India. India is infamous for its congestion and naturally, due to that, bus services are unreliable. There are typically two types of public transport in India - State Transportation Undertakings (STUs), which are state government-owned as is mentioned in the name, and private operators. Unfortunately, both sides do not see eye-to-eye with each other and feel that they are competitors and through the many online events I've attended focusing on India, you can tell from the audience comments that the private operators feel that they are being shortchanged because 90% of India's PT fares are handled by them,

and not the STUs. Also, private operators often profit less despite the higher uptake of passengers since they have to keep fares affordable for everyone as well, while unsubsidized or receiving just a little subsidy from the state government(s). As a result, in FPT sectors are always slow to transition from traditional drivelines to newer, alternative energy such as what we popularly know today as electric vehicles (EVs), fuel cell electric vehicles (FCEVs), and the like.

However, being slow to transition in the energy sector does not necessarily mean that they are slow in everything. In Indonesia, there's Go-jek, which got the inspiration from the local ojeks to leverage on technology in order to bring forth smoother and faster rides and deliveries. When I first heard about this myself, I was surprised as well. After hearing so much negative news about infPT, I was also of the opinion that informal transport handled by the people themselves, and not the government, would be bad. Little did I know, ojeks made use of technology themselves way before Go-jek was a thing! I would say that as long as there is a certain pressure to do something better, people will naturally adapt and that's exactly what the people of Indonesia did.

For references, one can attend Busworld India's events to learn more about the landscape there and get in touch with the Global Partnership for Informal Transportation (GPIT) to learn more about the many different types of infPT systems out there, their unique names as well as the history of these usually age-old systems!

Should informal transportation be formalized?

A big fat No. Why not? Well, as you can see from above, there isn't enough support from the government and governments often focus on the need to move from informal to formal, neglecting the actual users of the informal systems who have been relying on it for years. A certain degree of formalization is fine but not an entire overhaul. We can have better scheduling, and better ticketing but can we achieve better reliability and performance if we fully formalize it? Sometimes, it's best to leave things as they are. If it's not broken, why try fixing it right? Governments are often disconnected from the ground and their policies; often with a top-down approach. And sometimes, it's the people who know best.

What are your thoughts on public involvement, based on your experience with SMRT?

General citizens often do not have the capacity to navigate through the system, so the authorities should make it as easy as possible, but the easy way may not be the most effective way. I am passionate about community engagement. What makes a genuine and meaningful citizen participation in the planning process? Let's face it. Most, if not all, democracy fails to do that. Public input is a fantasy where citizens have the power to make decisions.

If everyone had the power to decide on something, it would not just be chaotic, but slow as well. This is something people need to accept. Yes, feedback matters but the government often has the "bigger picture" perspective and is able to see how one policy might affect another so we must all be prepared for our ideas to be rejected, just as many of mine were or even left hanging for a few years now. The idea is to get people to contribute, regardless if their ideas will be accepted or not. As long as people are welcome to chip in, they will

feel part of the community and know that they are truly being heard. It's no public relation stunt, it's truly how we can let people tell us their thoughts.

In my podcast, I often emphasize the importance of having feedback going to the right party but also making it as easy as possible for commuters to report defects. While you may say that 'easily' does not necessarily equate to 'effective', the idea is still to make it welcoming for people to give their input. First of all, do people know what they should look out for before submitting a report? Without critical information, a report is essentially useless, and we do not want or even need reports like these. As I said, I am passionate about community engagement and so leverage tools for outreach to collate opinions on the ground for specific issues and will even make a trip down to the site itself if necessary.

People have to not just be heard but also feel that they are being heard. What's the point of voicing out something only to not see anything change? While there may be impractical ideas, is it necessarily impractical later in the future even though it is now? We should always assess each person's case and understand their perspective on why they believe that their idea helps. There will always be people who want to help while some simply use it as a complaint channel. Whatever the case, we need to transform both into actionable items when practical and not just stop there. With personal experience of having my ideas implemented, we also have to give credit to where they are due and encourage people with ideas to take ownership of their creativity. Only the creator knows their own ideas best and we should always listen to their point of view, no matter how crazy it might sound.

Everyone has a part to play and is welcome to do so, no matter how big or how small their contributions are. ■

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