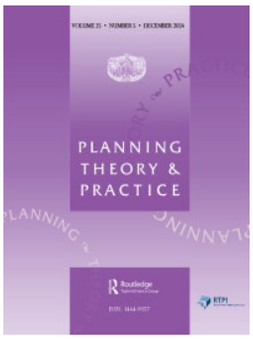

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Inspirations in Planning

Edited by John Forester

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Inspirations in Planning

Edited by John Forester

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Introduction

John Forester

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This *Interface* symposium explores sources of inspiration that have animated a dozen of our colleagues working in fields that range from community development through public health to urban design. These teachers, researchers and practitioners include the younger and older, those engaged in the Global South as well as the North, those varying by ethnicity and gender as well.

I asked our contributors to be more specific than general. So, I asked each one to identify passages or quotations – from scholarly literature or from their fieldwork – that had inspired their work. Because several passages had served as guiding lights for me, I shared an example from my own work. Brazilian educator and action researcher Paolo Freire had written in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, "Any situation in which some men prevent others from engaging in the process of inquiry is one of violence" (Freire, 1973, p. 73). In one sentence, it seemed, Freire captured the core of critical social theory as it linked power, conversation, learning, and human possibility.

I had withheld a second example. British philosopher and novelist Iris Murdoch had written about the question any of us might ask, 'How can I become a better person?' She offered an answer in her *Sovereignty of Good*: "Where virtue is concerned we apprehend more than we clearly understand and *grow by looking*" (Murdoch, 1970, p. 31). Art and literature, film and theatre show us our possibilities. We can learn, Murdoch argued, less by *understanding* rules and principles than by seeing and imagining, paying attention to actual practice and conduct.

Those passages had been like portals for me, doors to possibilities that inspired several book projects. As I had tried to understand reflective and deliberative practices in planning, these passages had suggested what was 'at stake' in planners' work and planning education. So, I wanted to ask a range of thoughtful colleagues *what had opened up the world to them*, what guiding lights helped them in the face of chaos and fog, ambiguity and uncertainty. What memorable advice or insights did they remember when the going became even bumpier than usual? What strong texts helped to remind them of what mattered when it was not obvious.

With such goals in mind, this Interface seeks not to romanticize or re-theorize planning but to open up fresh possibilities. We can agree that the "dark side" of planning can grease the wheels of the powers that be. We can also look for alternatives, for openings, for ways of re-imagining planning and not being held hostage to institutions and images that continue to do violence to human possibilities.

As an aspirational vocation, planning is a calling to repair the world, to do better for our neighbors and strangers alike, to improve spaces and places. Countless political and moral theorists have warned us about the forces of forgetfulness, about ideology and hegemony, about consoling fantasies, about privilege and complacency. That means that planners are also called to resist the subtle ways that our necessarily 'conservative impulse' to preserve meaning and coherence can lead us at times to fear change, to avoid rocking the boat. We conserve meaning to build relationships and coalitions together, just as we work to avoid rationalizing habits, practices, and social structures that perpetuate needless suffering.

As planners work to protect land here, provide better transportation or housing there, anticipate climate change threats and so on, they are also called to work *in the face of nay-sayers, skeptics, and doubters* who might prefer to normalize 'the way things are,' to tinker at the margins rather than even consider restructuring wealth and privilege. Facing such pressures to discourage change, facing widespread cynicism about change, we need always to ask, how can planners do better?

These questions led to this *Interface*, to ask diverse contributors to reflect upon the inspirations that have animated their theory and practice, their work. The essays that follow are thoughtful and moving, heartfelt and provocative. They are as personal as political, as subjectively empathetic as objectively engaged. They engage the 'isms' they face – capitalism, colonialism, racism… – without boundless abstraction. They show as well as tell. They use insight and the words of others, young and old, near and far, not to invoke jargon once more to 'bore us to disaffection,' but to help us to see fresh possibilities.

Notes on Contributor

John Forester is Professor of City and Regional Planning, Cornell University. Best known for his *Planning in the Face of Power* (1989) and *Deliberative Practitioner* (1999), his best teaching materials (practice-focused oral histories) appear in *Planning in the Face of Conflict* (2013) and *How Spaces Become Places* (2021). He continues to study the micro-politics and ethics of planning. Email: jff1@cornell.edu

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Inspiration

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Children make the best theorists, since they have not yet been educated into accepting our routine social practices as 'natural', and so insist on posing to those practices the most embarrassingly general and fundamental questions, regarding them with a wondering estrangement which we adults

> have long forgotten. Since they do not yet grasp our social practices as inevitable, they do not see why we might not do things entirely differently.

Terence Eagleton's quote from his text *The Significance of Theory* (1990) echoes a powerful critique from another part of the world: Mahasweta Devi. In a story written for children, Devi focuses on a young tribal girl, Moyna, who is called the 'why-why girl' for her relentless questions. The 'why-why girl' questions everything, from material wrongs to the magic of the universe: "Why do I have to walk so far to the river to fetch water? Why can't we eat rice twice a day? Why should I eat their leftovers? Why can't the fish speak?"

This quote and story are a powerful exhortation to planners to return to a sort of childlike estrangement. It would be remiss, however, to say that planners do not have the gumption to ask these big 'why' questions. A more pertinent question for planners is how to translate critique into action. Planners have grappled with this question before; see, for instance, the debate on utopias between John Friedmann and Manuel Castells. But the "why-why girl" is a wonderful instance of critique because it starts not from some universal or abstract idea, but from the specific. When my 4-year-old kid asks with incredulity why unhoused folks in Berkeley, CA, don't have a home, she is refusing to see as normalized (or to not see) the crisis of inequality where we live. In their own critiques, Mahasweta Devi and Terry Eagleton are asking uncomfortable questions from their own specific contexts: Devi inspired scholars of the Subaltern School who were questioning the betrayal of a postcolonial democracy, and Terry Eagleton was at his sharpest writing in the context of Thatcherite capitalism.

In my own teaching and research, I find helpful the method of comparing places, particularly places that are seen as contrasts and that are not routinely compared. Comparing places not only elicits why questions, but also opens a new horizon of possibilities for planning and public action. For instance, I teach courses on land-use planning. I generally start the course by comparing the constitutional commitment to land in varied institutional contexts, such as the US and South Africa.

This comparative exercise helps to defamiliarize the meanings and values attached to land and property in a particular place. When students read the South African constitution, which views access to land as a necessary condition for human dignity, it provokes a series of questions: why do US land laws not have a place for human dignity, why does the US prioritize exclusion over access? It makes visible the myriad ways in which our mundane planning practices are entrenched in the institution of private property. It raises unsettling questions about the American dream of suburbs and homeownership, which is premised on private property. These questions then prompt action. It reminds us of the long history of resistance movements in the US, where squatters, renters, the unhoused have occupied land and staked their claims on the city. It also opens the possibility for reversing the flow of knowledge: for too long, planning ideas and expertise have traveled from the west to the rest of the world; what lessons do non-western cities hold for US land-use planning?

I also rewrite this essay on the morning of the Trump victory. As students, staff and faculty in my largely progressive university gather to reflect on the Presidential victory and its impact on cities and urban policy, I am forcefully reminded of Eagleton's and Devi's situated critiques. Devi's work is particularly inspiring because she left the metropolitan core of Kolkata (Calcutta) and questioned from forgotten places. What would a situated critique from places like Central Valley and Appalachia tell us about the rising wave of right-wing politics? How do we prepare planners to work not only in cities like New York and San Francisco, but in places like Stockton, California and Scranton, Pennsylvania? These are

questions that are directly relevant to me as I think about my land-use courses. I will not forget a former student who grew up in Corcoran in California's Central Valley (which is ground zero for prisons, as Ruth Wilson Gilmore shows us in *Golden Gulag* [2007]). When discussing land-value capture instruments, she poignantly asked me, "What good are these theories and techniques when the land in Corcoran has been devalued?" Questions like these remind me of the work to be done: continuing to ask why-why questions with gumption, but to do so from places and people that have, until now, been relegated to the footnotes of our planning canon.

Notes on Contributor

Sai Balakrishnan's research and teaching broadly pivot around global urban inequalities, with a particular focus on urbanization and planning institutions in the global south, and on the spatial politics of land-use and property. She has worked as an urban planner in the United States, India, and the United Arab Emirates, and as a consultant to the UN-HABITAT, Nairobi. Balakrishnan's book, Shareholder Cities: Land Transformations along Urban Corridors in India (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019) explores the urbanization of the agrarian countryside in the global south. Email: sbalakrishnan@berkeley.edu

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When Planners Listen to Gramsci: (Anti)Hegemonic Musings

Emmanuel Frimpong Boamah

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> … strong passions are necessary to sharpen the intellect and help make intuition more penetrating. (Gramsci, 1971, p. 171)

How do we pursue transformative and just planning outcomes in societies? Why do such visions sometimes seem elusive? How do we enlist and build coalitions among W.E.B. Du Bois' *Army of the Wronged* (Du Bois, 1935) to energize and sustain such visions in an increasingly diverse and fragmented society? The works of Antonio Gramsci, Patsy Healey, Elinor Ostrom, and others serve as useful guideposts to muddle through these questions. This brief essay will show how

Antonio Gramsci inspires my walk and talk as a planning scholar and practitioner, especially how his explicit account of *human consciousnesse*s in Marx's historical materialism offers possibilities for thinking through and practicing planning as an anti-hegemonic, collective, and liberatory project.

We understand from Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* that particular visions or outcomes will remain elusive, because our lack of *emotional commitment* and our implicit *consent* reproduce and sustain the *hegemony* keeping us fettered to oppressive orders. Gramsci wrote,

> The mode of being of the new intellectual can no longer consist of eloquence, exterior and momentary motor of emotions and passions, but of an active mixing of the self in practical life, as builder, organizer, permanent persuader… (Gramsci, 1971, p. 10)

From a Gramscian-inspired lens, planners can shoulder the responsibility of being impassioned, politically engaged, and committed to embedding themselves in their communities' lived struggles. For some, we carry out these responsibilities through protesting on the streets, declining rewarding opportunities that may compromise our acting against forms of injustice, speaking up for the voiceless even when that threatens career advancement, or refusing to hunker down in our ivory towers while our world and communities struggle in pain. Gramsci's life exemplified these responsibilities: he wrote copiously in prison (while sick and dying) because he knew "a luta continua" (the struggle continues).

The role of the planning intelligentsia does not start and end with the abstractions and predictions of the mind. These must be grounded in passionate provocations and political commitments and actions that raise the collective will and consciousness of our communities to (1) understand who we are and the hegemonic structures we have accepted, and (2) exert our collective will (volontà) to transform these structures. This strand of planning intelligentsia à la Gramsci strives to reject detached objectivity "because strong passions are necessary to sharpen the intellect and help make intuition more penetrating" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 171). In a planning concepts/theory lecture, for example, I showed Patrick Geddes's Notation of Life chart, and students were struck by Geddes's invocation of Erato (one of the Greek goddesses of music and dance), love, comedy, and other passionate and emotional elements to describe cities. With Gramsci's nudging to mentor passionate planning professionals, I must ask: do planning educators have the needed dose of passion, emotion, and care to prepare our students to care about their communities in ways that matter, heal, and transform?

Like Gramsci, we must also recognize that ideas are not self-evident. Elinor Ostrom, too, cautions about "the danger of self-evident truths" (Ostrom, 2000). Scrutinizing and critiquing ideas elevates our consciousness, unshackling us from hegemonic practices and discourses that fetter subaltern groups to oppressive and exploitative structures. As Gramsci puts it,

> To criticize one's own conception of the world means therefore to make it a coherent unity…The starting point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is, and is "knowing thyself" as a product of the historical process to date which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory…Critical understanding of self takes place therefore through a struggle of political "hegemonies"… Consciousness of being part of a particular hegemonic force (that is to say, political consciousness) is the first stage towards a further progressive self-consciousness in which theory and practice will finally be one. (Gramsci, 1971, pp. 324–333)

The road to revolutionary and transformative change crucially depends on freeing ourselves of historically contingent doctrines that we may have accepted without scrutiny, often prevailing in planning practice, pedagogy, and research. For instance, I recall an African scholar asking if

decolonial planning would become the next frontier of Western-driven hegemony in planning? Would decolonial planning represent another instance of silencing particular subaltern voices? Put differently, can we criticize our scholarship, practices, and pedagogy to create a new planning consciousness, being passionate and willing to lose it all to gain the just societies we dream of?

This lesson became clear to Gramsci and other Marxist thinkers who soon realized that the historical materialist predictions of proletarian revolution never materialized. As Gramsci wrote, this prediction was a vulgar reading of Marx and failed to account for the transformation of individual and collective will and consciousness through the free exchange of ideas, discussions, and active participation in political struggles and democracy. Gramsci aptly captured this lesson,

> In reality one can "foresee" to the extent that one acts, to the extent that one applies a voluntary effort and therefore contributes concretely to creating the result "foreseen". Prediction reveals itself thus not as a scientific act of knowledge, but as the abstract expression of the effort made, a practical way of creating a collective will. (Gramsci, 1971, p. 438)

Planners are familiar with this Gramscian-inspired view, partly due to debates emerging from the communicative and collaborative turn of planning (see Forester, 1999; Healey, 1997; Innes & Booher, 1999). My dialogue with Gramsci's notebooks has also invited me to revisit these conversations as an inspiration to probe more carefully whether and how democratic and inclusionary styles of intercultural communication and argumentation could serve as anti-hegemonic practices for subaltern groups. For instance, could subaltern groups co-opt and co-produce such inclusionary and intercultural argumentation styles to scrutinize and shake up institutional structures that (1) bind them into acquiescence when "planning in the face of power" (Forester, 1989) or (2) make these groups (implicitly or explicitly) consent to oppressive doctrines, ideas, rules, norms, discourses, and practices masquerading as free will? In such Gramscian-inspired probings, I also find a deep appreciation of how planners might move closer to realizing dialectics of theory-practice,

> The identification of theory and practice is a critical act, through which practice is demonstrated rational and necessary, and theory realistic and rational. (Gramsci, 1971, p. 365)

This Gramscian-inspired view of planning offers several lessons as I explore questions about building transformative and just societies through coalitions with subaltern groups. First, we scrutinize and critique inherited institutions (rules, norms, strategies), axioms, discourses, and practices reproducing the systems of oppression and exploitation. Second, we can't be in a hurry to find solutions without 'emancipating' our consciousness – else, we risk putting new wine (solutions) into old bottles (the same hegemonic structures restricting our minds, discourses, and practices). Third, and more crucially, we can't predict what we aren't willing to act into existence.

Notes on Contributor

Emmanuel Frimpong Boamah's scholarship seeks to understand the institutional structures that 'weaponize' planning interventions against historically marginalized communities. He worked as an urban planner in Ghana and the United States. He directs the Just Institutions Lab and co-directs the Community for Global Health Equity at the University at Buffalo. Emmanuel serves on the boards of local organizations, including

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Change is the Only Constant

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My father, Ernest Thompson, was one of the greatest analysts I've met in my life. When I was 16, struck by one of his predictions, I asked him how he could foresee the future. He said, "I study contradictions."

I asked, "What's a contradiction?"

He said, as he walked out of the room, "Read the book."

He came back into the room a few minutes later and handed me Mao Tse-tung's pamphlet, *On Contradiction* (Zedong, 1937). I am not sure how much I understood of the opening paragraphs, but I remember being utterly stumped by this:

> The universality or absoluteness of contradiction has a twofold meaning. One is that contradiction exists in the process of development of all things, and the other is that in the process of development of each thing a movement of opposites exists from beginning to end.

The difference between two-fold meaning eluded me. I read that sentence over and over for months. It was about two years later that the ideas separated. Implicit in the first statement is the assumption that everything is always in process and there are contradictions in those processes. Time moves from day to night, life moves from birth to death, fire consumes fuel and so on. In these processes there are always contradictions. Some of these are fundamental, like the contradictions of standing against the force of gravity, and some are more contingent, like the speed at which fire consumes different fuels. Whether fundamental or contingent, the

Figure 1. A yin-yang symbol.

contradictions can be read in all processes. The existence of an opposite doesn't constitute an 'either-or,' because of the way the opposites shade into one another in the process of change. As we can see in the yin-yang symbol (Figure 1), there is always yin in the yang and yang in the yin. Hence, we cry at weddings and laugh at funerals.

The second sentence takes us a step further to point out that there is a movement of opposites from beginning to end of a process. This is the yin and yang of everything: as one aspect increases, the other will fade. Eventually, the change will reach a tipping point, and a new state – with its own contradictions – will emerge. Think of a baby growing inside its mother's womb. The baby grows, nurtured by the mother, but there is an important contradiction – the space inside the mother is limited. In the beginning, there is plenty of room for baby. But when the baby is too big to continue as a lodger, it must move out or both mother and baby will die. This precipitates a period of crisis, what we call 'birth.' On the resolution of that crisis, a new process – that of rearing the newborn – ensues. Mother and baby face new contradictions and these will be in tension until the child leaves its second home.

At the time I was first thinking about these sentences, I had a green Volkswagen Beetle with a stick shift. The mesh of gears enabled the wheels to turn but the ratio of the gears limited the speed that could be attained. As the driver, I had to move the stick to shift the gears in order to increase the speed.

I embodied the process of change while driving my VW around Philadelphia's Main Line. I saw what it looked like in human communities while studying the tragic effects of epidemics in Harlem in the 1990s. What I observed was that the neighborhood had suffered the loss of a third of its housing, giving it a 'ruined' look. What I learned was that the highly functional community that had existed in that neighborhood – the one that produced the Harlem Renaissance and many civil rights and labor leaders – had been torn apart. The social disintegration of the neighborhood had occurred over several decades following on the heels of policies of displacement and disinvestment. We documented that this was a stepwise process, and we used that knowledge to create the 'stage-state model of community collapse' (Figure 2). Its resemblance to working a stick shift might be lost on those who have only driven automatic cars, but other analogies will come quickly to mind – the changes of state of water as it goes from ice cube to steam.

Part of what I learned from Mao – and one of Mao's fundamental contributions to the study of the dialectic – was that change is the only constant. Legitimizing change is, of course, fundamental if you plan to lead a revolution. Everything around us is changing all the time. I think that the ruling classes want to suppress the truth of change so Americans don't really understand this. We think, 'The way it is is the way it will always be, world without end, Amen.' This makes it very difficult for people in several ways. They think they can decipher the future because it will be a continuation of the now. And when things start to shift rapidly, they are very disoriented. They want a quick return to normal, and that might be why they like to describe people and situations as resilient, bouncing back to the way things were. That doesn't happen. Climate change is asking us to understand qualitative change – storms now are not

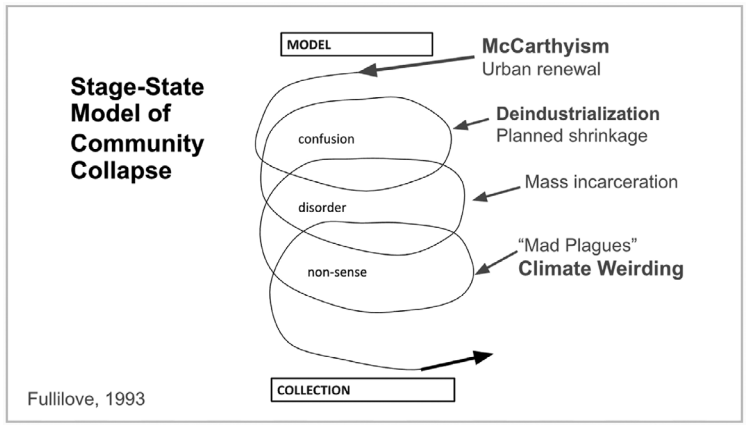

Figure 2. Stage-state model of community collapse.

the same as storms were before – and it is difficult for us. We haven't been sufficiently schooled in the reality that the build up of quantitative change leads to qualitative change, the creation of a different state, one that won't go back. Slowly raise the global temperature and eventually it will be hot enough for the storms to become insane.

This leaves us where we are in 2024: dangerously polarized and suffering on a deep level that is more accurately captured in the Surgeon General's advisories on loneliness and overwhelmed parents than in the nation's robust GDP. For my part, I wrote in my book, *Root Shock: How Tearing Up City Neighborhoods Hurts America and What We Can Do About It* (2004), that displacement would be the problem that the 21st century must solve. I expected to be right, but I did not know that climate change would, in fact, upend all eight billion of us from life as we knew it.

And so, in answer to the question, what has inspired your life, it was my dad's terse, "Read the book" that has shaped everything I have thought about and done for all these nearly 60years.

Just in case what I've written is not entirely clear, my dad's advice is still good: read the book!

Notes on Contributor

Mindy Thompson Fullilove, MD, DFLAPA, Hon AIA, is a social psychiatrist. Since 1986, she has conducted research on AIDS and other epidemics of poor communities. with a special interest in the relationship between the collapse of communities and decline in health. She has published over 100 scientific papers and eight books. Among her books are the highly-regarded Urban Restoration Trilogy, *Root Shock: How Tearing Up City Neighborhoods Hurts America and What We Can Do About It*, *Urban Alchemy: Restoring Joy in America's Sorted-Out Cities*, and *Main Street: How a City's Heart Connects Us All*.

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Planning, Loss and Change

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> Change appears as fulfillment or loss to different people, and to the same person at different times. In either aspect it presents some common features: the need to re-establish continuity, to work out an interpretation of oneself and the world which preserves, despite estrangement, the thread of meaning; the ambivalence of this task, as it swings between conflicting impulses; the need to articulate the stages of its resolution; and the risk of lasting disintegration if the process is not worked out. The outcome therefore depends upon the ability to face the conflict and find a way through it: the particular terms in which it is resolved are accidents of particular history. (Marris, 1974, p. 42)

Peter Marris (1974, 1992, 1996) studied loss and change and their impact on plans. His books describe how psychological attachments shape the developmental and emotional contours of our personality as we grow up. The architecture of these cumulative experiences and ensuing attachments provides the scaffolding for the judgments we make, including how we respond to uncertainties we face in the world we inhabit. We each inhabit a uniquely constructed structure of meaning, one that is adaptively responsive to the cumulative experiences we acquire in our specific social settings.

How Does This Work?

As all change brings loss with it, as he argued in his masterful *Loss and Change* (1974), Marris describes how we grieve (bereavement): conflict integrates differences within an encompassing relationship that transfers the longing for the lost relationship to a future relationship. Crucial to this change are relationships with others who acknowledge and even celebrate the lost relationship while offering immediate and intermediate activities that distract from a stultifying remembrance. We need practical, accessible options for action that follow and fuel new expectations. Unsuccessful grieving can leave people who suffered loss stuck in the past, burdened with longing that cannot be satisfied.

Ideas and concepts that we use to make plans do not offer just cognitive grips upon our imagination; they rely upon emotional attachments to shape their meaning for us. We do not really use concepts as abstractly conceived by philosophers and analysts; we deploy them with purpose and feeling tied to context and audience. Our perception and attention rely upon emotional cues that help us frame and select the relevant dimensions of a situation for cognitive uptake and review. The rich layers of tacit emotional reliance escape conscious notice because they are busy creating the functional conditions necessary to make such reflection feasible and useful.

Recognizing emotions can reveal how attachments guide the ways we frame what we know and do for plan making. Emotions accompany physical and social experience signaling attention, intuiting causes and inciting desires all bound together in situations that evoke cognitive, technical and moral response. Emotions fuel actions as sentiments that select and focus perception, conception, judgment and decision less as phases in a linear sequence and more as layers of mutually interactive aspects of action.

We usually recognize this as we complain that people involved in a planning effort respond to emotional appeals rather than rational argument. But this rhetorical complaint does not recognize the intelligence at play; it presumes that emotions act blindly and independently, attaching values to changes and policies without cognitive, technical or moral direction. Paying attention to emotional intelligence gives pause to consider that people find other ways of coping with the future more attractive and fulfilling than plan making. The classical philosophers studied closely how public speakers use clever (hot) rhetorical tricks to emotionally persuade people to consent to proposals for their future that more rational (cool) reflection would find reasons to reject.

A three person planning research team set out to seek project approval from a suburban intergovernmental planning group of elected officials at a quarterly meeting. We find our way to the public meeting room. The board members sit round a semicircle series of interlocked tables in what seemed to be a hijacked living room. We take seats among the four rows of folding chairs. The staff planner briefly tells the board about their efforts to prepare plans for water conservation and the opportunity to work with university researchers who would help them prepare a plan for the sub-regional area. My colleague, the project PI, stands and makes the pitch.

Her dark pants suit complements long black hair as she describes the purpose of the research: using agent-based models to improve environmental plan making efforts. Earnest and animated, she emphasizes the tentative and modest ambitions that brought us to their attention. We are grateful that they are willing to learn how to use the model. Complex water problems are not easy to solve, and this tool could improve their plan making efforts. Silence.

The board members consisted of elected officials from local suburban governments who agreed to spend time discussing and solving intergovernmental affairs. Water was an emerging issue because their municipal boundaries straddled large underground aquifers facing depletion risk from excessive pumping. B___ the elected official from Village Z___ burst the bubble of silence with a speech. Mayor of a battle-weary village under siege by developers, B___ complains about the lawsuits and administrative maneuvers they use to infiltrate the village's territory. Like minions of the Soviet empire, they threaten to lay waste to the natural environment by building houses and shops – maybe even apartments. Their propaganda is no different than Soviet indoctrination pushing urban density instead of collective agriculture. Their lawyers exploit the powers of the state courts to undermine the private values and freedoms protected by village zoning and subdivision codes. Urban density like the contagion of communism threatens the pastoral freedoms of the meadowland. Other board members did not seem shocked by the virulent cascade, but we were stunned.

Against this nemesis B___ envisions making local plans armed with enough analytical clout to disrupt developer plans. He wants a model to supply a weapon local government freedom fighters can use to protect private estates against the spread of godless Soviet-style density.

The PI, still standing, gave me a sidelong pleading glance. I slowly stood up taking time to compose and project a response.

Instead of rejecting the metaphorical ruse, I turned the metaphor to our advantage. I ignored the implication that we were just another set of Soviet density mongers and offered that our research proposal was akin to CIA counterintelligence efforts. We would help local suburban officials learn to use models as part of a long-term environmental counterinsurgency effort. I spoke without any irony.

It worked. The metaphorical rejoinder blunted the attack and kept our effort on track. B___ accepted the rejoinder even if visibly confused and dissatisfied. Other officials were

relieved as more moderate voices expressed support to give model-making research a try. The planning staff person rallied and asked for a decision. The board voted to approve the research project.

Notes on Contributor

Professor Charles Hoch taught urban planning at the University of Illinois at Chicago for 37 years. He studied how professional planners and others make spatial plans and the kind of work plans do using pragmatist ideas. He is the author of *New Homeless and Old* (with Robert Slayton, (American Planning Association Press, 1989), *What Planners Do* (American Planning Association Press, 1994), and *Pragmatic Spatial Planning* (Routledge, 2019), as well as "Neo-Pragmatist Planning Theory," *Routledge Handbook of Planning Theory*, 2017, among other articles. Email: hochchas@gmail.com

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Between Democracy and Deprivation

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> Citizen participation implies government involving citizens in its own priorities through its own processes […] and programs […]. Community empowerment, on the other hand, means giving citizens the tools and resources they need to address their own priorities through their own organizations. (Diers, 2004, pp. 20–21)

After 14 years leading Seattle's Department of Neighborhood, Jim Diers' directorship ended in 2001 after then-Mayor-elect Greg Nickel ousted him and several other department directors.[1] Diers' departure was a big blow to Seattle's many neighborhoods and communities. However, it also allowed him to write *Neighbor Power: Building Community the Seattle Way* (2004), a book of stories, lessons, and insights about how citizens, city government, and communities can partner to effect change. It vividly captures some of the most memorable moments of his directorship (including how he composted his termination letter in a community garden!).

This quote may not be the most striking compared with the many delightful and even bittersweet stories in the book. For me, however, it was a key lesson and one of Diers' most important contributions to the understanding of community engagement in urban governance. Specifically, it highlights the basic dilemma and fallacy of institutional participatory practices,

which, as we have long known, can be manipulative and tokenistic, empty rituals that serve the bureaucracy rather than the public (Arnstein, 1969; Francis, 1999; Hester, 1999). More importantly, Diers' passage suggests that even with the best intentions, participation can undermine community empowerment when it fails to put the community in the driver's seat.

These challenges apply not only to how the government approaches participation, but also to professional practices and even to the work of community organizations, which at times can become less responsive to the interests of residents and community members. Too often, we see active and lively community engagement in the early phase of a project, followed by disengagement and outcomes that are divorced from community voices or intentions. Eventually, citizens and communities became frustrated and disenfranchised. An exercise of democratic 'participation' can ironically leave its participants disillusioned about its purposes and results.

Taking the quote from *Neighbor Power* as an inspiration and a cautionary reminder, I became even more interested in alternative ways of engaging citizens and communities. In the following decades, we worked with our community partners in Seattle's Chinatown International District (CID) to develop a model of capacity building through design (Hou, 2022). We trained bilingual youths in the community to serve as table captains and workshop facilitators. The process became a vehicle for youth leadership development and intergenerational engagement (Hou, 2022). In one project after another, my students and I also experimented with different culturally embedded ways of engaging community members in the CID. Instead of the usual public meetings, we joined (and embedded ourselves in) community meal programs, Thanksgiving dinners, ESL classes, weekly social hours, Lunar New Year celebrations, and summer festivals, working with residents and community members on their turf (Hou, 2007, 2013b).

In addition to this deeper, facilitated engagement, I also became interested in how citizens and communities can lead in transforming cities and neighborhoods. Community gardens (affectionately called P-Patches in Seattle) became the focus of our first investigation. Developed and maintained by gardeners with their own hands, P-Patch gardens in Seattle demonstrate the agency and ability of citizens to self-organize and create alternative forms of public space. Built with the help of the city's P-Patch Program and often with funding support from the Neighborhood Matching Fund program (started under Jim Diers' directorship), the gardens are neither completely 'public' nor 'private.' The making of these gardens blurred the boundaries of institutionalized domains in society.

An understanding of these gardens as a 'hybrid' form of public space led me to a series of collaborative projects and publications to explore the processes of bottom-up placemaking. These included *Insurgent Public Space: Guerrilla Urbanism and the Remaking of Contemporary Cities* (Hou, 2010), *Transcultural Cities: Border-Crossing and Placemaking* (Hou, 2013a), *Messy Urbanism: Understanding the "Other" Asian Cities* (Chalana & Hou, 2016), *City Unsilenced: Urban Resistance and Public Space in the Age of Shrinking Democracy* (Hou & Knierbein, 2017), and *Emerging Civic Urbanisms in Asia: Hong Kong, Seoul, Singapore, and Taipei Beyond Developmental Urbanization* (Cho et al., 2022). From migration to resistance, while the subject matter may vary from one context to another, the agency and leadership of citizens in transforming cities and communities represent a central pillar of these projects.

In today's environment of political polarization and neoliberal governance, more than ever, civic engagement can easily become an instrument of politics and co-optation. It is, therefore, even more important today that we critically examine how participation and public engagement are constructed and practiced in design, planning, and governance. We need to go beyond the conventional forms of participation to consider how citizens and communities can organize on their own to improve their lives and expand their capacity to influence decisions that impact

society. Jim Diers' cautionary distinction between participation and empowerment presents a critical reminder for planners, designers, community organizers, and policymakers. It reminds us about our role and responsibility in deciding between democracy and deprivation.

Note

1. See Nickels, Gregory James (b. 1955). HistoryLink.org Essay 20452. https://www.historylink.org/file/20452.

Notes on Contributor

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We Make the Road by Walking, Perhaps Uncertainly, but Together

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> There is a little difference between knowing intellectually that we are unfinished and assuming the nature of being unfinished. We are not complete. We have to become inserted in a permanent process of searching… It means that keeping curiosity is absolutely indispensable for us to continue to be or to become. – Paolo Freire (in Bell, Gaventa, and Peters, 1990, p. 11)

For several years, I have led a participatory action research project in Roanoke, VA in the southeastern United States. The purpose of that project has been to pilot a community-based solution to the problems posed by the risks of heat and rising temperatures to the predominantly African American neighborhood in the city. But the project has become much more than this – and I have often referred to this work as the most difficult thing I have attempted to do.

I have thought about Paolo Freire's words quoted above as they inform the uncertainty that I have experienced in this project. Freire captures how I think about personal transformation and social change, because he acknowledges the near-constant self-doubt and anxiety that (paradoxically) comes with a resolve to push forward through action. Freire's words not only give me permission to be unfinished and to not know, but they recognize this self-doubting aspect of my personality as a quality that is essential both to being and becoming, which I understand to be a process of transformation.

If it seems strange to need permission to doubt oneself and to be unfinished, there are reasons we deny ourselves this permission and prevent ourselves from really searching. Our academic degrees give us license to call ourselves experts. Even as our academic disciplines assert expertise, they also reinforce our sense of not knowing in many other, even related fields. To switch directions, as I did, from highly quantitative work in computational simulation and data science, toward participatory action research, required that I recognized that I did not have the tools I needed to answer many questions that felt most pressing, and that I didn't know how to conduct this new type of research. 'Interdisciplinarity' means you choose to partner with someone else who has the expertise that you lack. But that is not yet a process of becoming, which is to allow the idea of transformation and social change to apply to ourselves personally first.

Many of us have been trained not to accept leaders who do not know the way forward. In our PAR project on heat in Roanoke, we have had to address much more than heat and the threats of rising temperatures. As one of my community partners puts it, "It's the name, but it ain't the game." What she refers to as 'the game' is the much deeper challenge of trying to improve organizational capacity to increase resources for the community, and to do that in the context of systemic inequality, marginalization, and deep distrust.

Our project exposed many conflicts and deep misunderstandings, not only between academic and community partners or even between community and government partners, which are both to be expected, but also between partners and organizations from within the community. These latter conflicts were the most difficult to witness. Relationships collided and crashed

before my eyes like slow, painful train wrecks. As the leader of the project, I faced an irresolvable problem: all the foresight in the world would not have been able to prevent or address all conflicts, and perhaps I should not have attempted to, given my role as an outsider, and the project's stated focus on heat adaptation. But to exclude the problems that emerged as important to some of our partners also seemed to violate our explicit commitment to be as inclusive of different knowledges, perspectives, and values, as possible. This tension between my responsibility as a planning researcher and acting responsively in these highly contentious and emotionally fraught situations was difficult. But in not knowing the way forward, we also did not shrink away. We tried to try to forge a path forward, in vulnerability.

The title of the book from which the above quotation comes, *We Make the Road by Walking*, has itself been evocative for me. Educators, researchers, and academics are often presumed to have knowledge, presumed to know the road ahead, to guide, to explain. But liberatory educators, those concerned with the transformation of unjust systems, should not be taking only already forged paths, they should be forging new paths with their learners and partners in the community, the marginalized and the oppressed. This is the only way that systems can be transformed, since 'neutral' education simply serves to recreate the unjust systems that caused the marginalization and oppression in the first place.

The making of the road is a cooperative relationship of action. In that process, you find the humanity in people you once considered strangers, in a community you perhaps didn't initially consider your own. You learn to know in a different way, empathically, and with the heart leading instead of the brain, which also ends of up changing the way you think and behave. Transformation therefore takes shape in the greater freedom I have given to my curiosity, both intellectually and interpersonally.

Social change happens slowly and is difficult to define and assess, but what I can say is that I have found myself transformed in this process. And, perhaps my steps have been trod with uncertainty, but, we make the road by walking.

Notes on Contributor

Theo Lim's work is situated at the intersection of planning processes and environmental science. He is interested in how information and knowledge can be used to create just futures amidst accelerating global environmental and technological change. Prior to joining UBC, he was faculty at Virginia Tech, where he led participatory action research projects on heat resilience planning, 'trauma-informed' planning, and planning with youth. He is a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania (PhD City Planning), Tsinghua University (MS Environmental Science), and Swarthmore College (BA Immigrant Studies). Email: theo.lim@ubc.ca

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Planning for the Present: Building Sustainable Communities Through Service and Collaboration

Senchel Matthews

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When I reflect on over 15 years as a planner in various capacities, I can recognize a distinct set of guiding principles that have shaped my moral compass. These values have been my steadfast companions throughout my career. They have influenced choices and actions, and they have provided the foundation for a principled and compassionate approach to my professional work.

Wendell Berry has offered planners a profoundly resonant perspective:

> We do not need to plan or devise a "world of the future"; if we take care of the world of the present, the future will have received full justice from us. A good future is implicit in the soils, forests, grasslands, marshes, deserts, mountains, rivers, lakes, and oceans that we have now, and in the good things of human culture that we have now; the only valid "futurology" available to us is to take care of those things. We do not need to contrive and dabble at "the future of the human race"; we have the same pressing need that we have always had – to love, care for, and teach our children. (Berry, 1990, p. 73)

This philosophy reminds planners of the profound interconnection between people and nature and their essential role in nurturing both to ensure a healthy and just future.

Above all, planners are stewards of both the built and natural environments, but their proper role is one of service. As community planner and professor Ken Reardon has said,

> The best planners are servants. We serve at the people's will, not the will of the almighty dollar. Our role in serving the community is crucial and integral. You will be a part of some unique projects in your career. Most of the time, [as a planner] you will not get recognition, and no one will ever know what you did – and that is okay because our job is to make communities places people are proud to call home.

These two quotes encapsulate the essence of the planning profession. The first truth is that the future is built by addressing the needs of the present – taking care of the land, the people, and the interconnected fabric that makes communities thrive. The second truth is that the work of a planner, though often invisible, leaves a lasting impact that extends beyond recognition or praise. This invisible yet meaningful work fosters real, transformative change in people's lives.

The journey of a planner can often be marked by challenges, particularly when values clash with institutional priorities. In various sectors, such as local governments prioritizing budgets over people, education systems emphasizing test scores over student well-being, agribusinesses prioritizing profits over environmental health, and banking institutions focusing more on loan volume than community revitalization, planners encounter systems designed to prioritize the wrong things. These experiences reinforce my belief that planning must always prioritize people and nature.

One of the most challenging moments for all planners occurs when they enter a room full of residents who have lived through decades of broken promises, neglect, and frustration, residents who might still look to planners to fix what others could not. In such settings, as

planners hear residents' pain and anger firsthand, they bear the weight of being part of the system that these residents distrust… It can be tempting to become defensive or to explain away the challenges and limitations of planning. But the most critical thing a planner can do in these moments is to truly listen – not just to residents' words but to the emotions behind them. Consistently showing up, listening, and demonstrating a commitment to community well-being fosters trust. In time, a planner can transition from being seen as a representative of the system to being recognized as an advocate who amplifies the voices of the community to decision-makers. This role is essential, deeply valued, and fundamental to the planning process.

Being a servant planner involves much more than managing projects or drafting policies. It requires a profound understanding of the importance of community involvement and collaboration. Planning is not a top-down exercise but a cooperative process that centers on the experiences, knowledge, and desires of the people who will live with the outcomes of the work. When planners work 'with' rather than 'for' the community, more robust and more resilient solutions can emerge – solutions that genuinely reflect the needs and aspirations of the people. This emphasis on community involvement ensures that everyone's voice can be incorporated into the planning process, leading to better outcomes.

One of the most rewarding aspects of the planning profession is witnessing the tangible impact of your work. Whether seeing a once-neglected neighborhood thrive due to strategic investments or hearing from residents that the park designed in collaboration with them has become a vibrant community hub, these moments underscore planners' incredible power to shape the future. This power comes with a responsibility to ensure that the future being shaped is fair and sustainable – a responsibility that planners should embrace with pride and commitment.

At its core, planning is about balancing the needs of today with the possibilities of tomorrow, balancing growth with sustainability, and balancing the diverse voices within communities to create a shared vision for the future. The beauty of this work lies in its focus on the present and its meaningful collaboration with communities. When done correctly, planners need not worry about devising elaborate plans for "the world of the future," as Wendell Berry suggests. By caring for what exists now, planners ensure that the future will receive full justice.

To those just beginning their journey in planning, the greatest gift this career offers is the knowledge that you are making a difference. Planners possess the power to transform physical spaces while profoundly impacting the lives of the people who inhabit them. In so doing, planners create a present and a future rooted in justice, sustainability, and the well-being of all – a future of which we can all be proud.

Notes on Contributor

Senchel Matthews has spent the last fifteen years championing holistic redevelopment to create inclusive, thriving communities. With extensive experience in equitable community development, she previously served as the president of a community development corporation, led the GO Neighborhoods program at Houston LISC, and developed family support initiatives with Memphis's Achievement School District. At Heifer International, she advanced sustainable agriculture and economic opportunities in the AR-MS-TN Delta. Senchel excels in innovative program design, collective impact, and addressing social determinants of health. Her diverse expertise spans regional planning, social enterprise, leadership development, mental health services, and community engagement, driving transformative urban and rural revitalization solutions. Email: senrmatthews@gmail.com

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How Could You Decline Planning? A Love Letter to Politicians, Proctors, and Prospective Students

Clare Mouat

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It's hard to write when "all you love is being trashed" (Rose, 2017, p. 52). Yet, as an accredited planner and human, I have the hope, grit, sciences, and alliances for wayfinding towards more-than-human flourishing. I am inspired to write a powerful and impassioned love letter to those who must champion the repair of our broken planet:

> *Hello, hej, hola, kaya, kia ora.*
>
> *We planners are here to help you, your family and eight billion of your closest friends and neighbours. Planners help us understand, imagine, shape, and share healthier, just, and prosperous places, alongside still-possible flourishing futures.*
>
> *We need new grammars to better decline planning – **I** plan, **you** plan, **we** plan, **they** plan,… – where we rethink "community" and our inescapable plurality and interdependence in effective community planning.*
>
> *We could decline planning to face our overwhelming slow and fast crises (climate change, pandemics, and poverty) that reveal and compromise our truly critical infrastructures. How should we now decline planning differently for our "next normal," shaping our daily activities, favourite places, and plans?*

My love letter responds publicly to the pervasive churn of reforms to law and universities wherein the strategic imaginations of politicians, proctors, and prospective students seem blind to planning's legacy and prospects. A spate of Australasian University 'change proposals' are decimating planning, geography, and sustainability. New Zealand government reforms, including planning, are re-colonising our laws, landscapes, health, and curricula at alarming rates and scales. Living and teaching through restructuring and reforms underwrites my letter's aim: making planning visible and vital to our 'now-and-next' practices arising from inevitably-challenging conversations at our kitchen tables, in classrooms, community centres, government caucuses, and pan-global forums.

We need planners to engage in urgent, concerted, and deliberative action – via investments, education, interventions, allyship, and activism – to recalibrate our plans and places for the not-yet. We witness solidarity with planners in science and policy, and formal letters from peers and international organisations to counter the prevailing neoliberal logics that threaten planning and our institutions of education, government/governance, and wellbeing. It seems easy to discipline planning when planners' actions and the profession's public interest ethics and legacies are invisible, failing, flawed, and "an always-unfinished social project" (Sandercock, 2004,

p. 134). Planning shares the hopes, foibles, and violences of its creators, contexts, and end-users. Generative Artificial Intelligence tends to reinforce the narrow neoliberal 'commercialising' logics of 'delivery states' that crowd media, parliamentary debates, and law reforms (Slade et al., 2022): bridling planning education, law, and practice such that planners cannot plan (Phelps & Valler, 2024) and then damning planning as a handbrake on developing nature's dividend and housing. Declining planning is not focusing on declining development applications or declining enrollments but upon ongoing social learning and dialogue in the public interest.

So, who am I to pen such a letter? In *Rethinking Community in Planning: A Review of the Role of Planners and Citizens in Building Strong Communities* (Mouat, 2010), I argued that planners have a mandated responsibility to shape and support the ways our governance regimes mobilize social existence conditions for community wellbeing. I've explored this mandate in highly-regulated systems grappling with high-profile redevelopment (a.k.a. *The Triangle Wars*) (Mouat et al., 2013), supersizing cities (Mouat & Dodson, 2013), COVID-19 (Ruming et al, 2023), and governing outer space (Mouat et al., 2021). My 2019 TEDxUWA advocated, "new ways of remembering community in how we live, play, and plan for wellbeing and connection." I have proposed *Revolutionary Possibilities of Love in a Time of Disaster, Decolonisation, and Diffraction* (Mouat, 2023) and *Wayfinding Love through Radical Empathy, Sky-Sharing, and Futuring* (Mouat, 2024). Planning prepared me to stimulate enduring and empowering dialogue about planning for what really matters.

So How Might we Better Decline Planning?

Prospective students: *May you share my first-year students' generative delight in discovering planning's radical histories and futuring: to learn, leapfrog, and redeem planning's social licence. Graduates are spearheading societal step-changes from governing regimes reliant on "an incremental, linear approach that assumes forward progress" (Bates, 2023, p. 601). You'll support publics and politicians to decline planning via meaningful democratic decisions.*

Proctors and politicians: *May your strategic decisions value and catalyse planning by recognizing both how 1) our university communities of practice offer the policy-shaping, career-readying, and professionally-accredited higher education and professional training we urgently need, and 2) how closing planning imperils students and societal wellbeing. Circumstances invite, nay compel, my warrant to leverage from formal advocacy for planning programmes by inviting dialogue that better declines planning for humanity and planet.*

May our ongoing conversations better decline planning by reflecting on this Sufi proverb that inspires my work:

We think that because we understand one, we understand two because one and one make two, but we forget we must also understand 'and'.

I champion love as wayfinding that "invites our disciplinary journeywork [for] futuring that includes the importance of rest, repair, awakening, and articulating our 'next normal'" (Mouat, 2024); advocating love-centred "methods of learning and collaboration to do planning for the end of this world" (Bates, 2023, p. 601). We can remember our 'forgotten' love-of-the-world as a human condition (Roodt, 2001) and read alongside indigenous worldviews; in rapid social learning, we can care-fully re-member multi-species conviviality (Figure 1) through non-extractive relations and landscapes (Houston et al., 2018; Tynan, 2021).

Until then, Mauri ora|may you flourish.

Aroha nui|with deep love

Figure 1. Public mural in levin, New Zealand (author's photo).

Notes on Contributor

Clare Mouat in an interdisciplinary scholar-storyteller who examines the regimes and relationships that serve flourishing futures for humans, non-humans, and posthumanism from soil to outer space. This work involves how we imagine, plan, mobilise, democratise, and re-member community and underwrite the regenerative governance modes that we need in an era of polycrises, generative AI, and darkening horizons. A key strand of this work involves navigating the entanglements of community, planning and governance, hope (catastrophic, cruel, and progressive) and the radical possibilities of love/aroha (in times of disaster, diffraction and decolonisation) that are vital to intergenerational wellbeing on a warming planet. Email: c.mouat@massey.ac.nz

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Doing Democracy

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In 2011, Amador Fernandez-Savater (2011) was blogging about his experiences participating in the 15 M encampments in Madrid. At a recent assembly someone had said, "We must not break camp, that is what they want." Someone else had replied, "Didn't we say that we were not anti-system, but that the system was anti-us? In that case, we should do what we want to do, not the opposite of what they want."[1]

I think that on the Left, and particularly on the radical Left, we have mostly been doing 'the opposite of what they want' for a very long time. We ask, 'What are they doing, and how can we stop them?' We raise our fist and resist, refuse, protest, critique, cancel, interrupt, negate, abolish, and smash. We are anti-fascists, anti-capitalists, anti-racists, anti-colonialists. We seek to subvert capitalism, smash the state, abolish the police, interrupt privilege, unsettle the land, and decolonize our minds. Only very rarely do we 'do what we want to do.' We don't even ask ourselves what we *want* in the first place, much less how we might *do* what we want to do.

Most of this is Marx's fault. He taught us to invest every ounce of our being in "a critique of political economy" (Marx, 1993). He showed us how to turn our face toward capitalism, to obsess over its every detail, and to fantasize about its eventual destruction. He almost never discussed communism in any detail, and when he did, he said it was nothing more than the "expression of [capitalist] private property as overcome [*aufgehoben*]" (1994, p. 69). Negate the defining feature of capitalism, he said, and in the wake of that destruction something called communism will (maybe) emerge.

In the 1960s, lots of people on the Left realized that Marxism was greatly constraining their thinking. They decided Marxism's problem was that it insisted *class* is the primary axis of oppression. And so they started critiquing other axes of oppression too. But they left in place the Marxist obsession with 'them.' They never questioned Marxism's most basic teaching: that radical politics consists entirely of destroying the systems of oppression 'they' have created.

Nietzsche diagnosed this sickness all the way back in the 1880s. He called it *ressentiment*, a bitter hatred and lust for revenge that the powerless feel toward the powerful. *Ressentiment* deactivates the powerless, he said, because it causes them to focus all their attention on the powerful, to meticulously catalogue their sins, and to take solace in a self-righteous moral condemnation of the society 'they' built. This outrage might feel good (in a perverse way), but ultimately it only further disempowers those who indulge in it. *Ressentiment* causes the powerless to think only of the powerful. They never turn their attention toward themselves. They

never consider their own power, their own capacity. They never ask what they are capable of, what they want to do, or how they might go about doing it.

I am happy if this is as far as we get, to the point of diagnosing our *ressentiment* and deciding that 'we should do what we want to do.' But let me also explore some possible things we might, in fact, do. There are many, including important projects like LGBTQIA+pride, or an ethics of care, or Black joy. My own answer, developed over the course of the last 15 years or so, has been democracy. For me, democracy is not a form of government. It is, instead, a way to radically re-imagine society such that the *demos* is joined to its *kratos* – people are joined to their power. In democracy, people appropriate their power, and they use it to directly manage their affairs themselves, without the State, the Corporation, the Union, or any other form of institutionalized control.

Clearly such a radical re-imagination of our lives together will not happen overnight. Democracy does not go by way of revolution. It is, instead, a very long-term *project* over the course of which we gradually become aware of and attuned to our power, we practice using it, and we learn just how capable we are. The project of democracy has only one task: the creation, development, and proliferation of democratic lives in common. There is no negative task. We do not need to first destroy not-democracy in order to have democracy. We can just start using our power, today, to do what we want to do, and to build new democratic lives in common.

I am sure such a project will seem like folly to those who are used to doing the opposite of what 'they' want. They will worry that if we don't fight 'them,' if we don't destroy their systems of oppression by any means necessary, 'they' will only grow stronger. But where has that fight gotten us, exactly? How destroyed is capitalism today, after 200 years of anti-capitalist struggle? What if we have been looking at this the wrong way this whole time? What if the relentless fight against 'them' is making *us* weaker, because it is causing us to ignore our own power, our own capacities? What if the way forward, the path to our empowerment and a better world, is not to destroy 'them,' but to engender us? What if we turn to face ourselves, take up the power we have, whatever it is, and commit to using it, developing it, and helping it grow? What if we leave off resenting the powerful and being outraged by their system, and instead begin to experiment with the joy, or even the delight, of democracy? I can't say for sure, but let's give it a try. Let's stop doing the opposite of what they want, and let's do, for a change, what we want to do.

Note

1. The post is in Spanish, and so the original phrasing here is "debemos hacer lo que queramos hacer, no lo contrario de lo que quieran ellos."

Notes on Contributor

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Expanding Knowledge from the Roots and the South

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Inspiration often comes from unexpected moments, and for me, it began 18 years ago during the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP) Annual Conference in November 2006. This was the first academic conference I attended as a new faculty member. I received my PhD in Urban and Regional Planning from Florida State University in April 2006, and I had written a dissertation on homelessness in Miami-Dade County, FL. I had started my academic career at Savannah State University in August 2006. Before attending the conference, I signed up for the mentoring program from ACSP. The mentoring committee assigned Lois Takahashi as my mentor because one of her research areas was homelessness in the U.S.

I still vividly remember that afternoon when I met her at the 2006 ACSP Conference. I was somewhat surprised when she asked me, "Why don't you research Indonesia? You have the language and the network to do it…You should expand our knowledge using your roots." My mentor's powerful 'reminder' has stayed with me ever since. Those simple yet profound words have become a guiding principle in my academic work, reminding me of the importance of personal experience and identity.

Takahashi's encouragement to conduct research on Indonesia by utilizing my language skills and connections prompted me to delve deeper into a subject I had not previously fully considered. Her words have been a constant reminder not only to rely on conventional paths but also to enrich academic discourse by incorporating my background and insights. Over the years, this has profoundly shaped my research approach. It has driven me to contribute significantly to global understanding by leveraging my origins and building connections across different worlds.

Personal experience and identity can be pivotal in shaping the academic research process (Gupta, 2023; Matu and Perez-Johnston, 2024). Integrating one's background, cultural identity, or lived experiences offers a unique lens that contributes to the richness and authenticity of our studies (Bailey & Bailey, 2021). I was born and raised in Indonesia and worked there for nearly eight years as an urban planner in the 1990s. In addition, I continue to be in touch regularly with my family, colleagues, and friends in Indonesia. I also read and follow the news and updates about Indonesia, particularly its urban development issues. My work on academic publications in Indonesian cities, particularly Jakarta, has allowed me to integrate my personal upbringing and insights into my analysis. I have also found my insights about Indonesian cities helpful when reviewing manuscripts for academic journals.

Personal experience and upbringing in a city or place were also important considerations when I began work on my edited book (Rukmana, 2020) in March 2018. The book discusses the challenges, processes, and best practices of planning in 27 megacities in the Global South. A total of 51 scholars from different career stages contributed to this book. In addition to general urban planning list-serves and social media outlets, I also deliberately sent the book's call for abstracts to the Global Planning Educators Interest Group (GPEIG) of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP) and the International Association for China Planning (IACP). Many GPEIG members who are faculty in various universities in the U.S. are also rooted in many countries in the Global South. All contributors to the chapters on Chinese megacities in the edited book are members of the IACP.

All three major planning journals in the US reviewed the book (Siddiqi, 2022; Silva, 2022; Vasudevan, 2023). I was grateful and honored to receive positive reviews from these three planning journals. Vasudevan also confirms my argument about the importance of personal roots in expanding knowledge:

> Rukmana's inclusion of fifty-one established and early career scholars, as well as practitioners, mostly from non-western locations as chapter authors is commendable. The cities in this compilation represent much of the Global South, including South America, the Middle East, South/Southeast Asia, and Africa. Not only are the cities in this compilation representative of the Global South, many of the contributors themselves are also located in the Global South, *repositioning whose knowledge is foregrounded in academic circles*. (2023; italics added)

Another important source of inspiration for my work was Vanessa Watson's "Seeing from the South" (2009). I had also contacted Professor Watson while preparing my book, *The Routledge Handbook of Planning Megacities in the Global South* (2020). I was grateful for her support, as she offered suggestions for the contributors of the African megacity chapters. Her seminal article of 2009 is inspiring and motivating. She critiques the dominance of Western-centric urban planning theories, arguing that they inadequately address the unique realities of cities in the Global South. I agree with her about the need for urban theorists and planners to adopt more context-specific approaches rooted from Global South cities that often experience more informal economies, rapid urban growth, and inequalities.

Watson had written, "A view of planning from outside the global heartland where it has its origins – i.e. a view from the global South – provides a useful and necessary unsettling of taken-for-granted assumptions in planning," and that became the primary reference when my co-editor and I wrote the concluding chapter of our edited collection, *Routledge Handbook of Urban Indonesia* (Rukmana & Roitman, 2022). We argue that contemporary planning scholarship and practice have been dominated by Western/Northern concepts, and the study of cities of the Global South, including Indonesian cities, matters as they help to reconceptualize postcolonial theory.

In sum, my work on Indonesian cities and megacities in the Global South has been inspired by the words of both Lois Takahashi and Vanessa Watson. Takahashi's encouragement to explore Indonesia and integrate personal roots in scholarly work has been instrumental in shaping my contributions to urban planning scholarship. Takahashi and Watson have inspired me to recognize the importance of viewing urban challenges through a lens rooted in local contexts. Leveraging personal identity in research can provide fresh insights and challenge dominant Western-centric concepts, ultimately enriching the discourse and paving the way for more inclusive urban planning theories and practices.

Notes on Contributor

Deden Rukmana received a Ph.D. in Urban and Regional Planning from Florida State University and completed master's degrees from the University of Southern California and Bandung Institute of Technology. His research is supported by organizations including the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the National Science Foundation, and the National Institute of Health. Many media have also cited his works, including the New York Times and NPR. He has received numerous awards, including the Outstanding Journal Reviewer Award from Town Planning Review and the Georgia Planning Association Service Award. Rukmana is the Global Planning Education Association Network (GPEAN) secretary from 2022–2026. Email: deden.rukmana@uta.edu

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Planning for the Beloved Community

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I met Puanani Burgess ('Aunty Pua' to many) upon arriving at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa in 1996. Her red-lipsticked smile and warm hug were as penetrating as the knowing

observations she would share with those who sought them. We were lucky to have her in our midst as a Community Scholar-in-Residence at the Department of Urban and Regional planning.

A well-respected sage in the Native Hawaiian community, Pua traced her lineage to Hawaiian, Japanese, German and numerous other ancestors, which may help explain her gift as a self-described 'cultural translator.' She embodied the meaning of the Hawaiian word *aloha* and the Buddhist term *gassho*. These two words share the aspiration of being 'one with another,' whether one with another person, a plant or butterfly, a community or the larger universe. Pua was perhaps best known for her practice of 'building the beloved community,' a simple but profound idea that heavily influenced who I was to become.

Soon after we connected, Pua and I decided to co-teach a class together that she named 'Planning the Sacred.' It was an exploration of planning from an indigenous and humanistic place. We blended readings related to community planning and Native epistemologies with class discussions and guided exercises that she led to imagine planning as sacred work in the building of beloved communities. This meant ground-up planning in honor of our ancestors and for the benefit of future generations to come.

We began to think about planning as ceremony, grounded in relationships between people as well as between people and the living land that feeds us, across generations, among many forms of life. The mana'o (thought, idea, belief, theory) she shared with me and many others helped me ground myself in my community, the academy, and with the profession, all of which were often worlds apart. This led to decades of work with and in Native Hawaiian and local grassroots community organizations. This allowed me to hold onto values and aspirations commonly crushed in market-driven bureaucracies, including planning regimes that more often destroy rather than build upon the many beloved communities that thrive around us.

In the practice of teaching participatory planning, the idea of the beloved community meant working in equal partnership with communities in the design of planning processes to make sure planning initiatives were on the rhythm and beat of their time and place. Students learned to listen to what community members wanted, and they tried to grasp communities' capacities to get there. This meant collaboratively taking stock of the community's assets – capabilities, resources, knowledge, networks – and facilitating the expression of their values and vision in their own words. Planning was not just about producing a plan, but about nurturing the community's capacity to plan and see to their implementation over time.

The ceremonial rituals that Pua taught, such as 'Guts on the Table,' deepened the interpersonal bonds of trust and respect while the stories she told, like 'Poha and Popo,' fostered humility in the acknowledgement that any single vantage point is only one of many. Pua even recounted scenes from Sylvester Stallone movies to encourage patience, to resist writing off others too flippantly, by reminding us that "not everyone who craps on you is your enemy; not everyone who digs you out of that crap is your friend" (Burgess 2013, p. 23). She cautioned against drawing forever lines in the sand, writing that "sometimes we decide that too soon, and it turns out later that the person or situation we thought of as our enemy turns out to be our best teacher" (Burgess 2013, p. 34).

I saw these practices as working to undo the harms of centuries of impossible choices imposed on people whose sovereign powers had been overthrown and whose knowledge systems were subverted by claims of superiority among Enlightenment thinkers, including the extolled fathers of planning thought. A challenge for me was applying Pua's community building principles to the field of planning while recognizing the settler colonial conditions

in which I as an Asian settler participated. I saw the emancipatory potential of the beloved community in community-based planning: one in which people could see the world from another's point of view, especially settler populations understanding Hawaiian epistemologies and cosmologies. I saw the potential to reclaim and re-indigenize places and spaces as everyday acts of the sovereign; the possibilities to wrestle with the legacies of historical trauma in ways that release as much joy and hope, to take time needed for the hard work of bringing harmony to lingering divisions; to create a place for people to share, grow and appreciate each of their unique gifts, reshaping what we see as worthy; and to allow oneself and others to listen deeply to one another, calling attention to the vast inequalities in power and privilege.

These principles of the beloved community that I took from Pua's training influenced all that I have done. My first published article in planning, entitled "Walking in Another's Shoes: Epistemological Challenges in Participatory Planning," for example, was an attempt to elevate the problem of epistemology and reflect on how planners, including myself, might confront it (Umemoto, 2001). This text has been misinterpreted by some as a naive elixir in the service of state power. But it is not an approach meant for state actors. Participatory planning that centers epistemic difference is critical to building a beloved community in the face of white supremacy and conventions of colonial dominance. The beloved community imagined at different scales, from the neighborhood to the planetary, is neither prescriptive nor a utopian imaginary. It is an idea that urges us to think more critically about the meaning and practices of planning in a world increasingly controlled by extra-state actors and authoritarian states.

Christabelle Yoshie Puanani Burgess passed away 2 months prior to this writing at the age of 76. I hope that the beloved communities that she has spawned and the movements to build them go forward in full force.

Notes on Contributor

Karen Umemoto, Ph.D., was born and raised in Los Angeles and lived in Honolulu, Hawai'i for 22 years while a Professor at the University of Hawai'i. Her research centers on race and democracy in the U.S. with a focus on juvenile justice transformation and community-based development. Among her publications are *The Truce: Lessons from an LA Gang War* (Cornell University Press) and *Jacked Up and Unjust: Pacific Islander Teens Confront Violent Legacies* (University of California Press). She is co-director/editor of a forthcoming online collection, *Foundations and Futures: Asian American and Pacific Islander Multimedia Textbook*. Email: kumemoto@ucla.edu

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Planning Inspiration: The Poetics of Place

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What gives us inspiration in the daily grind of work and struggle? What puts wind in our sails? In this short personal essay, I draw on my own source of (perhaps unusual) inspiration, being the poetics of place. At present, with horrific violence, terror and colonial urbacide in Palestine/Israel, such inspiration is needed more than ever.

My short planning poetic journey starts in Tel-Aviv, where until recently Giva'at Amal was one of the city's notorious sites of anti-eviction struggles. Local informal residents – mostly low-income Jewish immigrants – have staged a long but losing battle against their forced displacement so that a set of prestigious towers could be built by one of Israel's richest men. Eli Eliyahu, an Israeli urban poet, captured the sights and the emotions of this callous eviction in his poem "Giva'at Amal" (Eliyahu, 2022):

I saw the helpless

Evicted forcefully from home and time

What is poured out is often not just blood

And sometimes the law itself is a crime

I saw the hardship of building a home

And the heart ache of its fall

And how we are all put to shame

In the face of falling bricks and walls

And I knew that revenge would come

From the towers and the havoc, they wreak

Because how long can men be fed

By the flesh of the very weak…

Inspiration is a hidden engine for all people who strive to make society a better place – metaphorically and physically. Nowhere is it more needed than in urban and regional planning, a field emerging from the deep urban crisis of modernity, with the mission of first saving and then improving our living habitat, turning problems and knowledge into action and hope.

Yet, inspiration in our field is rare. Like most spheres of scholarly and professional endeavor, planning has been institutionalized, developing 'accepted' sets of customs, laws and practices, framed by omnipotent political, economic and academic powers. Most planners, whether practitioners, students or researchers, have become cogs in a large (pro) development machine.

This is more so in areas embroiled in violent conflict, such as Israel/Palestine. Not only is urban planning subject to the demands of ruthless capitalism and ethnocratic politics as in

most countries, but it also deals with the raw nerve of a colonial conflict including violent theft of land and settlement. As such, planners in our land often engage with the 'dark sides' of planning, such as eviction, dispossession, demolition and colonization, only increasing the dose of inspiration needed to continue the struggle.

In these conflictual settings, poetry has often been for me a mental saving grace, a textual "place" where evils are succinctly articulated, emotions are truly exposed, and new visions and hopes are born. Reading, reciting, rapping, and often singing the poetics of place "in the face of power" all make the heart beat louder, the blood flow faster, and the eyes both tear and see clearer, echoing what the renowned Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish once wrote: "On this land life is worth living… to see the tyrant's fear of poems…" (2013).

In our torn land, poetry is rife among the Jews, intensely echoing the tremendous drama of a nation of refugees, seeking safe haven in an ancient homeland, already populated by Palestinians. Hebrew poems and songs, however, have little to say about the Palestinians, who are generally ignored. On the other hand, Palestinian writers constantly refer to the Jew, with anger, revenge, pity or – at times – visions of a joint future.

Palestinian texts on land and place abound, filled with ample ricochets deflected from oppressive planning, violent displacement, marginalization, and destruction. At the same time, Palestinian poetry also exposes their resistance, resilience and 'sumood' – a culture of perseverance, hanging on, not leaving their forefathers' land. In this vein, Tamer Nafar, lead singer of hiphop group DAM (meaning 'blood'), wrote 'Bornhere':

They tell us – "there's a problem with your shack"

Our day is turning blacker than black

They tell us nice words like law and order

Before they bring in the f…g bulldozer

Sorry, this song has no censor

It cuts our pain like a razor

Where are the knights of

justice and peace

in their "wisdom" and

"values" they glow

When our kids live in the dirt

and are becoming ready to blow

Your slogans are covered

by my home's dirty rubble

But for me this is just

the start of a bloody struggle

Cos' the Gov has a wish:

Max Arabs on min land

And min Jews on max land

And more and more "olim" (Jewish immigrants – OY)

On the land that was once ours

And max modern buildings

On our ass and within our bowels

Yes, my shack never received

any legal approval

But no! You will not live to see my removal!

In less combative tones, some poets have also attempted to create hope, new spaces of imagination for coexistence in a shared homeland. In a long poem, written in Arabic classical Qasida style, titled; "A Little Honesty Has Not Killed Anybody Yet," (2023) Palestinian poet Marzuk alHalabi speaks to his Palestinian brethren, sketching new geographies of a shared homeland, where a third (joint Palestinian-Jewish) story can be created. In planning vocabulary, Halabi provides us with inspiration for a new generation of plans, articulating a transformed mental, political and spatial future.

… and when they open their maps

To fix their new lines

And calculate sites, settlements

borders and safe passages

Tell them:

Roll up your maps

I have an idea that includes all:

Let the land be

    Two languages, Two names

    Two colors, Two braids

… Think about the future

So you are protected from the

Cruel past (or boredom)

And for preventing you from

Falling further into the abyss

With your foe…

Perhaps you cannot salvage your orchard

Now covered with concrete and asphalt

But as much as this vision grows

You will find your escape route

From the imprisoning moment

You can liberate history

So it can tell a third story.

Notes on Contributor

Prof. Oren Yiftachel is a geography and planning researcher at Ben-Gurion University and an honorary professor at the DPU, UCL, London. Yiftachel has published 11 books and over 110 scholarly articles translated into six languages. His recent book coedited with Nisa Mammon titled *TheoriSe: Debating the Southeast Turn in Urban Studies*, was published 2023. Yiftachel is an activist in human rights, social justice and peace organizations, and a co-founder of the Palestinian-Israeli peace movement – 'A Land for All.' Email: yiftach@bgu.ac.il

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