

# Urban Studies Newsletter

BROWN UNIVERSITY



Fall 2015

# LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

The Urban Studies Program has had a rather memorable fall semester, beginning with the move to our new headquarters in Maxcy Hall, right at the heart of the campus, next to Marcus Aurelius, and in spaces adjacent to the Sociology Department. The move had preceded and was accompanied by countless meetings with architects and contractors, and the final touches are still coming together as I write this (just two weeks ago, all the windows on the first floor were thoroughly cleaned after a long time, brightening our offices and those of Sociology considerably). We are pretty happy with the new location, even if we are already running out of space, due to our growing faculty. And on November 5, 2015 our former building at 29 Manning was demolished to make room for the new engineering building.

Although we had known about it for some time, it was still a bit of a visual shock. But at least we had not let that beloved building – an excellent example of Rhode Island Modernism (designed in 1938 by Margaret Burnham Geddes and her husband Peter Geddes) – go without a big farewell. Thanks to faculty member Stefano Bloch, we were able to hire prominent Providence Graffiti Artist, Greg Penniston, to design and execute a mural for the entire façade of the building. It was a fantastic event – crowds of spectators came and the Brown website showed a time lapse film about it during the entire weekend when it happened (still to be found on our own department website). The demolition crew kindly preserved some bricks for us, some went to students and alumni and some now adorn the bookshelf in my office – a memorial to a building and vibrant period in the program's history.

An important innovation was the redesign of our introductory course: "The City." Prompted by the paternity leave of Josh Pacevicz (congratulations, Josh!!) who had taught it previously, the faculty had decided upon a new format for it in the fall. 14 members of the faculty each did one or two lectures, presenting to the students their slice of urban studies (with me as ring leader). The topics ranged from urban history, urban literature to questions of sociology, political science, sustainability and transportation. Our wonderful TA Leah Burgin conducted a detailed poll at the end, and our 68 students were happy with the new format and greatly enjoyed seeing 14 professors with their different interests, passions and presentation styles.

We started our second year of six Urban Studies Bus Tours ("Providence seen through the eyes of an Urban Studies Professor"), which had been immensely successful last year, and became a great way to reach out to students, faculty and the public – all of them are again sold out. Two tours have already happened in the fall, four more are to follow in the later spring.

Urban Studies held a "welcome back" event for students in the fall, a Champaign reception for our new neighbors in sociology and organized lectures by Professor Thomas Elsaesser from Amsterdam and Lukas Stanek from Manchester University. The program sponsored nine of our students to attend the "Better World by Design" conference. Meredith revised our website, which has now some moving images on the first page. More innovations are on their way. Much of the activities mentioned above were supported by the Harriet David Goldberg '56 Fund, and we are immensely grateful for the Goldman family's continued support.

On November 20th we held a memorial services for Professor Mel Feldman who had passed away earlier this year. He had been with our program from the very beginning in 1970 and for many students the key figure in their Urban Studies experience and very fondly remembered.

As you can see on the following pages, our students continue to conduct exceptional research around the world, our faculty has been teaching, lecturing, researching and publishing widely, we are about to welcome several new temporary faculty members, and we look forward to continued growth and an exciting spring semester.

Dietrich Neumann



**The demolition of the former department building on Manning.**



**Graffiti-covered bricks from the old urban studies building.**



# 8 THESIS WRITERS

## **Anna Johnson**

Anna's thesis focuses on "Olympic Urbanism" (Muñoz, 2006) as a conceptual framework through which to view sustainable development potentially lasting decades beyond the days of competition. The paper will begin with the history of Olympic Urbanism going back to the 1932 Los Angeles Olympics. The following chapters will look at case studies of legacies from Sydney 2000 and Beijing 2008. The second part of the thesis will center on the upcoming "mega-event" in Rio de Janeiro. While there seems to be a combination of debt and regret haunting abandoned venues in past host cities, I hope to demonstrate that Rio could initiate a new category of Olympic history: "The age of progressive social change."

## **Jenna Davis**

Jenna wants to do a theoretical exploration of assemblages - relating to the materiality of artwork created from an event of conflict. She will focus on Simon Rodia's Watts Towers as a private turned public structure built from the remnants of the Watts Riots in Los Angeles, and will do a case study of the modern day equivalent, Charmaine Taylor's Legacy Collection. She took the fence that surrounded Robben Island in Cape Town, South Africa and create jewelry and art out of it by dipping it in gold. She hopes to find some theoretical meaning behind creating material art from conflict.

## **Maggie Livingstone**

Maggie is currently pursuing an honors thesis that examines how young women establish trust networks amongst tenuous systems of transportation, how they find safety amongst spaces where public infrastructure fails their communities. She is engaging in a critical comparison of the ways young black women of the born-free generation in Cape Town, South Africa use minibus taxis versus the way young women ride the 6 subway in the upper reaches of the Bronx, her hometown.

## **Ruthy Gourevich**

For her thesis, Ruthy is studying the redevelopment of the I-195 land in Providence and the key stakeholders in this ongoing process. Through the I-195 relocation, Providence has gotten the rare opportunity to reconnect the downtown to nearby neighborhoods and plan for the future of Providence from the bottom up. My thesis asks the question of if Molotch's Growth Machine Theory is exemplified in the case of the I-195 relocation and land development. This question illuminates underlying reasons for stakeholders' involvement, and how these reasons can manifest themselves in the future physical urban landscape of Providence.

## **Ayanda Collins**

During apartheid the fear of crime in the middle and upper white classes lead to a racially divided city. Twenty years after the end of apartheid the fear of crime still plays a major role in shaping the city. Ayanda's thesis will be a case study of Gentrification in the Johannesburg Inner City demonstrating that the fear of crime is continuing to segregate the population of Johannesburg along socio-economic lines.

In this thesis she will contrast and compare the characteristics and consequences of these two prevalent forces in Johannesburg, particularly focusing on their intersection in Johannesburg's heavily fortified 21st Century gentrified spaces.



**The beautiful entrance to our new department building!**

# 8 THESIS WRITERS

## (CONT'D)

### Marta Nicita

Marta's research will be guided by two overarching questions. The first is how radical subgroups might modify and inhabit urban space in ways that distinguish them from the mainstream and become meaningful to them. The second question regards the response the subgroups elicit. How does the mainstream react to the presence of these radical subgroups in the urban environment? In formulating answers to these questions, she will explore how spatial practices and rituals crucial to identity assertion by radical groups transpose their ideology onto space. Her aim is also to explore how unconventional manifestations and uses of space typical of radical subgroups generally lead to incidents of violence that pit the subgroups at odds with the norms of mainstream society from which they have withdrawn.

### Joanna Kramer

For her thesis, Joanna decided to meld two of her main interests—cities and Israel/Palestine—to create a study of the light rail system in Jerusalem. Working off Foucault's idea of a heterotopia, she is using the ethnographic research she conducted while in Jerusalem this past summer to evaluate how the light rail facilitates interactions between Israelis and Palestinians with the city, and the quality of those encounters. More broadly, Joanna is interested in understanding if urban spaces can ever be used to foster positive connections between politically and geographically disparate populations within a city.

### Estelle Berger

In October of this year, Charlie Hales, the mayor of Portland, Oregon, announced that the city is in a State of Emergency for housing and homelessness. Within a month, the Portland Housing Bureau confirmed that \$61.6 million dollars would be added to current funds allocated toward affordable housing. As a deeply homogenous and divided city, Portland now has an opportunity to not only develop affordable housing, but to also bolster the cultural quality of the social landscape. Based on Portland's historical context and the State of Housing 2015 report, Estelle will question how the city's current housing plans and processes might either ameliorate or perpetuate spatial exclusion in the city.



**Students hard at work in ANTH 1236 Urban Life: Anthropology  
In and Out of the City.**

# PROFESSOR UPDATES



**Patrick Malone**

Being “Emeritus” does not mean being retired. Keeping busy is a lifetime habit that is hard to break. Professor Malone managed to take on too much work in the Fall semester, but he also made some time for a trip to see and photograph Mayan cities in three countries. Visiting the spectacular ruins of Tikal in Guatemala had been a personal goal for many years. The vast city in the jungle exceeded even Professor Malone’s high expectations. His activities back at Brown included leading interpretive tours of Providence and Newport and serving as a Fellow at the John Nicholas Brown Center. He also put the finishing touches on illustrations for his article on steam mills in New Bedford.



**Howard Chudacoff**

In December, Professor Chudacoff’s latest book was published. Its title is “Changing the Playbook: How Power, Profit, and Politics Transformed College Sports” (University of Illinois Press). The book examines the major turning points in the history of intercollegiate athletes since 1950.



**Hilary Silver**

Hilary Silver’s new film on homeless in RI Direction Home, has been airing on RI PBS. Her report for the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, “The Contexts of Social Inclusion,” is on-line at [www.un.org/esa/desa/papers/2015/wp144\\_2015.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/desa/papers/2015/wp144_2015.pdf). In November 2015, she was one of a few academics invited to participate in a small HABITAT III Workshop on Urban Renewal with urban development directors of the largest Latin American Cities, held in Mexico City.



**Robert Azar**

In addition to teaching Downtown Development in the fall, Robert Azar led an Urban Studies bus tour focusing on potential development sites in Providence. In his day job as deputy planning director for Providence, he has been busy overseeing the Downtown Circulation project, an initiative to improve mobility for vehicles, bikes and pedestrians throughout Downtown. Professor Azar will be teaching Transportation: an Urban Planning Perspective in the spring.



**Stefano Bloch**

During the fall semester the majority of Professor Bloch’s two hundred “Crime and the City” students conducted extensive fieldwork throughout Providence as part of an ongoing study looking at crime, land use, and graffiti. Along with Dr. Sungu, Professor Bloch will continue this research during the spring, during which time he will also be teaching a new seminar, “Critical Urban Theory,” as well as teaching “Introduction to Geography” in the Rhode Island Department of Corrections Medium Security Men’s Facility with assistance from Jake Soloff, a volunteer TA from the Mathematics Department at Brown. This fall Professor Bloch sadly lost his graduate advisor and mentor. Dr. Edward W. Soja, one of the world’s leading urban theorists. He was 75 years old and still active upon his death as a tireless advocate for spatial justice and Distinguished Professor in the Urban Planning Department at UCLA. He once told Professor Bloch that he always wanted to teach at Brown because he heard there was excellent Guatemalan food near campus. He was right.



**Josh Pacewicz**

Professor Pacewicz was on paternity leave after adding Emmett, a new edition to his family, on June 29th. He also finished the copy edits on his book, which will appear in fall 2016.



# PROFESSOR UPDATES (CONT'D)



## Kenneth Wong

In October 2015, Professor Kenneth Wong collaborated with the City of Providence Mayor's Office to launch an education policy forum, as part of the city's effort to promote its innovative initiative, "Providence Talks." This initiative provides home visiting support to broaden the language environment at home for young children and their mothers. Professor Wong leads the initiative's independent evaluation team at Brown.

During Fall 2015, Professor Wong served as the advisor to RI Governor Raimondo's School Funding Formula Working Group, whose members included state legislators, mayors, superintendents, teachers, principals, and leaders from the private and civic sectors. The Working Group examined current data on funding fairness and equity. On January 14, 2016, the Working Group delivered its final recommendations on improving the current funding formula to the Governor.

In Spring 2016, Professor Wong is teaching "Policy Implementation in Education," a course that is part of the Urban Studies Concentration curriculum. This course examines education policy at the federal, state, district, and school levels. Urban school governance and innovative practices also will be discussed.



## Rebecca Carter

This past semester (Fall 2015) Professor Rebecca Carter (Assistant Professor of Anthropology and Urban Studies) taught an engaged scholarship course on Urban Anthropology (ANTH 1236) that ran in partnership with the Downtown Providence Parks Conservancy (DPPC). The course received funding for teaching support (TA) from Brown's Swearer Center for Public Service. Students (enrollment:18) met with Cliff Wood, the Executive Director of the DPPC at the beginning of the semester and then conducted both historical and ethnographic research on the use and development of Providence parks.

Guided by key texts from urban anthropologists working on issues of public space in cities around the world, students first examined the history of Providence -- focusing in particular on the development, post-industrial decline, and ongoing re-development of the downtown core and giving special attention to current city-wide demographics and urban social conditions. Students then visited five local parks and interviewed residents they encountered there on park use as well as people's visions for the continued development of public space in Providence. Further focusing their research on the land made available by the relocation of I-195, students made recommendations for community-centered, inclusive, and sustainable development, which were culled into a report and shared with the Downtown Providence Parks Conservancy.



## Samuel Zipp

Professor Zipp has been on leave this year, working on two projects. He has primarily been wearing his American Studies and U.S. cultural history hat and working on his book about Wendell Willkie and American internationalism during World War II. He is telling the story of his trip around the world in 1942 and the formation of the ideas that went into his 1943 best-seller *One World*. Right now, Willkie has just left the Middle East—after visiting Egypt, Turkey, Lebanon, Palestine, Iraq, and Iran—and is flying to the Soviet Union. He'll spend two weeks there and two weeks in China. In the meantime Professor Zipp has also been ramping up a new project of interest to Urban Studies folks.

Over the last year or so, he has been working with Nathan Storrington, a curator and designer who works at the Project for Public Spaces in New York, to put together a selection of the essays of the urbanist, economics thinker, and iconoclastic writer Jane Jacobs. *Vital Little Plans: The Uncollected Works of Jane Jacobs* will bring together a selection of writings and interviews from across her long career. 2016 is the 100th anniversary of Jacobs' birth so there will be a number of events commemorating her work. If the schedule is kept, the book should appear in the fall!

# In Memoriam



**Melvin Feldman**

Melvin L. Feldman of Providence, 91, Adjunct Professor of Urban Studies at Brown University from 1970 – 1991, died June 10 at Epoch Assisted Living at Blackstone Boulevard. He was the beloved husband of Paula Libby Feldman. Born in New York City, a son of the late Philip and Ann (Friedman) Feldman and brother to the late Phyllis Shirley Feldman, he lived in Providence since 1956, except for one year in Palo Alto, California in 1967. He previously lived in Norwich, Connecticut, where he had graduated from Norwich Free Academy in 1941.

During World War II he served in the Army Medical Corps. A graduate in 1947 of Brown University, where he was named to Phi Beta Kappa and where he served as the first president of Hillel, he started his graduate work at the University of Chicago. After an interruption of his academic career in the early 1950's when he became the owner/manager of the family's grocery and bakery supply firm in Norwich, he resumed his studies and received his graduate degree from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1961. During his professional practice in the field of urban planning, he served on the staff of the Providence Redevelopment Agency, later with the firm of MKGK (San Francisco, California) and then as principal of his own consulting firm, INSTITUTEEDUCAP. In 1970 he participated in the development of Brown University's urban studies program, where he taught for more than 20 years. Governor Sundlun appointed him Chairman of the Rhode Island Housing and Mortgage and Finance Corporation in May, 1991.

Professor Feldman was a charter member of the American Planning Association, a charter member of the American Institute of Certified Planners, and a past President of the New England Chapter of the American Institute of Planners. He chaired the Mayor's Oversight and Review Committee in Providence during the mid 1970's and for almost two decades served on the technical (planning) committee of the State of Rhode Island. In 1986, he served as a member of the Downtown Strategy Implementation Committee. In 1990, The Federal Home Loan Bank of Boston named him to the Advisory Committee of its Affordable Housing Program. Besides his wife, he leaves twin daughters, Karen Sue Feldman of Providence and Linda Ruth Feldman and her husband Evan of Annandale, Virginia and his twin granddaughters Jessica Ann and Laura Rose, of Washington, D.C.

# New Faculty



**Ted Widmer**

Ted Widmer was recently announced as the first Donald Saunders Fellow for Public Engagement and will be based in Urban Studies during the spring semester of 2016.

Ted is already well known around Brown, as the author of Brown's history (Brown: The History of an Idea), as an Assistant to President Paxson, and as Director and Librarian of the John Carter Brown Library (2006-2012). He also served as a senior advisor to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in 2012-2013. He is a widely published historian who has written or edited nearly a dozen books, writes a monthly column in the Boston Globe, and contributes often to the New York Times. In the spring of 2016, he will be teaching an Urban Studies class, "Brown in Providence" and lead a series of discussions with newspaper editors and writers about writing for the general public.



**Katharina Galor**

Katharina will be joining the faculty of Urban Studies in the fall of 2016. Katharina is an art historian and archaeologist working in the Mediterranean and the Near East with a specific focus on Israel/Palestine. Her book *The Archaeology of Jerusalem: From the Origins to the Ottomans* (2013) explores the city's urban, architectural, and art historical development from antiquity to the modern age. Her recently completed book manuscript *Finding Jerusalem: Archaeology Between Science and Ideology* explores the city's antiquities in their contemporary contexts, questioning how ancient remains — and cultural heritage more generally — have been manipulated for religious and political agendas. She will be teaching classes on ancient cities as well as on the integration of antiquities into the modern and contemporary urban landscape.

Urban Studies Program  
Box 1833  
Brown University  
Providence, RI 02912

**FALL 2015 COURSES OFFERED IN URBAN STUDIES**

*The City: An Introduction to Urban Studies*  
Dietrich Neumann

*Urban Life In Providence: An Introduction*  
Rebecca Carter

*Planning Sustainable Cities*  
Yesim Sungu-Eryilmaz

*Crime and the City*  
Stefano Bloch

*Urban Regimes in the American Republic*  
Marion Orr

*Downtown Development*  
Robert Azar