Publics and Planning Academia: Translation, Interpretation, Resonance

Roundtable with FERNANDO BURGA (University of Minnesota), RICARDO CARDOSO (The Ohio State University), JIA-CHING CHEN (University of California, Santa Barbara), PAAVO MONKKONEN (University of California, Los Angeles), and HAYDEN SHELBY (University of Cincinnati)

In March 2024, *Berkeley Planning Journal* editors Xixi Jiang and Nick Shatan facilitated a virtual roundtable on "Publics and Planning Academia" with five former editors or contributors to the *Berkeley Planning Journal* who earned PhDs from the Department of City and Regional Planning between five and fifteen years ago: Fernando Burga, Ricardo Cardoso, Jia-Ching Chen, Paavo Monkkonen, and Hayden Shelby. This informal conversation moved between multiple registers, from contemplations of the publics and purposes of planning academia to personal reflections on writing, research, and career trajectories. Over the course of two hours, the discussion covered six major topics: Audience and voice; Resonance, relevance, and accountability; Working across linguistic publics; Planners as interpreters; Public teaching; and Doctoral reflections. *This conversation has been edited for clarity.*

Audience and Voice

Xixi Jiang: I want to start by asking a very simple question—I think there is a lot of power in asking simple questions. Who are you writing for?

Paavo Monkkonen: I would say that you don't have to write for one person or for one audience. You can write different things for different audiences. And I think it changes over time. Some of the research I do is more directed at the academic community; some of it is more directed at the policy community or the advocacy community. And some of it is for myself—some of it is my pet peeves.

Jia-Ching Chen: Recently, I've been trying to figure out the structure of a long-simmering book based on my dissertation. A friend of mine suggested the question "who are you writing against?" as a way to structure it. It doesn't have to be an individual; it can be an aspect of the debate that you want to frame it towards. This question helps to simplify how you think about the specific points. In academia, we'll have pet peeves about the way certain issues are framed, or what might be a typical historiography, or a way of framing what has shaped the contemporary moment, or a prevalent theoretical approach to talking about the issue. And that can be really helpful.

Thinking about the audience is also a way to think about how you position yourself as an individual in that moment, for a particular piece, or about your identity as a scholar. I think that that's something that I often struggled with. I came to academia from working in social movements for a good chunk of time. And then, I often felt like a fraud in academia, and then like a poser in social movements. But a longtime comrade told me: it's just about knowing that every position has its contradictions. I've found that also to be really helpful in moments of self-doubt or existential dread.

Fernando Burga: I want to underline one of the things that JC is expressing, which is that, like him, I write to find my voice. And that's always a process. You can identify different genres in which you can explore that voice. So, if you want to get tenured, you need to write articles that are dry, or books, that are legible. I tend to be more of a book person because, for me, there is a process of discovery of my own voice in the book format, rather than the article, which is more descriptive of a logic and of a scientific method and findings. But I think that one gets used to these different genres. And, as Paavo mentions, there are different audiences. I think you have to be flexible and adaptive, depending on the context and who you're working with. I think it was Toni Morrison who said you should write the book that you want to read but does not yet exist.[1] So it's really important for me to think about what thing will excite me or drive my anger, my pleasure, or my happiness and joy. Those to me are clear targets for identifying one's voice.

Hayden Shelby: I also think I'm more of a book person. The reality of planning academia is that, pre-tenure, you're often told that this is not a "book field." I don't think that's true, but I think there is a very strong pressure to produce articles to get tenured, because it's considered the "safer path." So that's a lot of what I'm doing right now, producing articles. But if I'm completely honest, I struggle greatly to find my voice in article form. And if I can be a bit vulnerable: I'm at a moment of really struggling to find my voice as a scholar in this profession, because I think who I am as a writer is a storyteller, which is very difficult to express in a lot of academic media and through a lot of the processes that we have in academia. The deal I make with myself when I write articles is that I am writing this for me: my articles are things that I am trying to figure out for myself and explain to myself, and to clarify my view. It is difficult for me to think about the broader audience in that case because a lot of my research is based in ethnography or community-based work. And I feel a real responsibility to the people who have generously given me time or resources to allow me to do my research, but a lot of academic publishing doesn't make me feel like I'm honoring that the way I would like to. So my communication back to research participants is usually not in written

1 "If you find a book you really want to read but it hasn't been written yet, then you must write it." Toni Morrison, 1981. From Brown, Ellen. 1981. "Writing Is Third Career For Morrison." *Cincinnati Enquirer*, September 27, p. F11.

form. It's usually in presentations or in conversation. That's how I make peace with that. But who I'm writing to, and the way I'm writing right now, is not necessarily the way I want in the long term. As JC said, there are contradictions in every position, and also in every phase of life and in every phase of your career. And so what I aspire to do is more books and more storytelling and expressive writing, but that's not the position I'm in right now.

Ricardo Cardoso: To build on everyone's points, I would agree and say that I am first and foremost writing for myself and trying to find what it is that I want to say. In terms of finding my public, most of my writing is—because I'm pre-tenure—towards tenure. Then within that, I would say that I'm often divided because I was in an urban studies program and am now back in a planning program. And I feel that as I navigate through these different academic audiences, the publics also change. In addition to that, I have publics in other languages. I feel I have at least two or even three other publics, one of which is the people that I work with in Luanda, Angola. There are people that I work with there who will definitely never read whatever I write. There are academics in Angola, some of whom will read what I write, but not that many. I also think that when I engage with people in Angola, it's mostly through oral communication of different sorts. I am also Portuguese in the middle of this. There are conversations that I also have through different types of writing with the Portuguese public, to put it broadly, which is mostly an academic public. But that also reshapes the way in which I think about who I'm writing for.

JC: Xixi, your question was also pointing back towards training and professionalization, right? I think that one of the things that is great in the larger planning field is that the collaborative co-production of knowledge with the social sciences has become really common. Being able to work with diverse groups of stakeholders—with different kinds of scientists, social scientists, and planners—is key to being able to work across different kinds of audiences and different fields. The opportunities that you have, as a planning student, are really flexible. I remember feeling somehow illegible to myself as a "planner," but then you go out to do research, and in so many diverse venues, your presence is understood as having some situational coherence, like it makes sense for you to be there. I think that's something to cultivate and think about in terms of asking what you want to be doing in each of those spaces, and not how you make yourself legible to these people. Rather, I think about what I really want to be doing with this group of people over a long period of time. Having that kind of an orientation would be how you think about those opportunities as professionalizing, and as preparing for different phases of your career, or ways to orient yourself in different moments, like Paavo and Hayden were saying. So that's something I would encourage students to do now as you get the freedom to work on your own project. You can also cultivate that in particular ways when you're writing grant applications. Also, it can be important

to figure out, through conversations and informational interviews with people, what somebody in their position sees as the value of somebody in your position.

Resonance, Relevance, and Accountability

Nick Shatan: A word that's coming to mind is resonance. I wonder if we can make a connection between the voice and the public through this maybe now oversaturated term. Something people like to say these days is "that resonates!" So I'm curious: are there moments where you felt your own voice resonate with a public? Are there stories that you've told that really hit people in the right spot? What was that story, and who was that public? Another way we could think about it that may be more concrete is: What should be the relevance of planning academia to a public?

HS: I would pull students into this conversation. The moments in my career when I am able to communicate something that I have learned about the world and have it resonate with people happen most frequently through my teaching. And I think one of the reasons for that is that students hold me accountable to being legible. I think that often when we're trying to communicate to other academics, we're speaking to particular bodies of theory. Or when we try to communicate back to the people that we've been working with, we might speak with the same vocabulary. But it's when I'm talking about what I have learned about the world and really trying to pull out what I think is the essence and explain it... I know when it hits in a classroom, when 18-to-20-year-olds can take something that I've spent years thinking about and say, oh, this relates to my life in this way, or I have seen this in the world, in this place. I think those are the moments of resonance that stick out with me the most.

NS: I'm curious, Hayden, if you can think of a particular teaching moment that really stands out to you as, "Yes, that was it"?

HS: I have done a lot of work and thinking about collective tenure for housing and land and about community ownership. I teach in a very US-centric program; most of my students, at least at the undergrad level, are from the Cincinnati area. And so I don't bring my research from Thailand to bear a whole lot. But most recently, I assigned an article I wrote for the Berkeley Planning Journal which was intentionally not a traditional academic article.[2] It was about the tensions of land ownership and forming community. The focus was a man in the middle of Bangkok and how the land he was living on had transformed from the time that his father had the right to occupy it and do some form of agriculture, to where he was surrounded by condos and was going to be evicted because the private property rights had somehow been assigned to someone

2 Shelby, Hayden. 2017. "The Right to Remain in the City: How One Community Has Used Legal Rights and Rights Talk to Stay Put in Bangkok." *Berkeley Planning Journal* 29: 129–52.

else. Through that storytelling, I think students actually grasped some fundamental issues of who has the right to occupy space and how land changes over time, and they brought some really interesting things to bear on it. Part of the article was about the stress of trying to form community, and I think all of them have felt that at some point or another. It also just blew their mind that there are places in the world where private property has not been delineated for all of living memory. So I think the moment came through that use of narrative and non-traditional structure. I think that it brought up interesting conversations about that work that, to be perfectly honest, I did not know was possible with that group of students. So that was a major moment of resonance.

PM: Unexpectedly, I have developed an audience of city planners—something I did not think would ever happen when I started my PhD in city planning. About five years ago, I was appointed to the Southern California Association of Governments' committee for regional housing needs, allocation, and assessment. I did some research briefs directed at the committee process to influence regional government decisions. And since then, I've been doing a lot more research on California's statewide planning mandates. I've been able to find a useful niche for myself to do projects that are publishable in journals but also inform policy in a way that I didn't think would ever happen. This year was the first time a bill based on my research was introduced to the California State Assembly by Miguel Santiago.[3] I eventually arrived at a traditional role for a city planning professor. And I guess the moment of resonance was when I got kicked off the committee—the former mayor of Beverly Hills really wanted me off. That's how I knew I was doing the right thing.

JC: I am actually trying to cultivate more connections to housing advocates around Santa Barbara. If we're talking about residents, a big part of that, for me, is about accountability and having longer-term relationships, in which you're a part of a community. I haven't had that in China for years—and that's been difficult for me—given the kind of approach that I think is an ethical one: you have to be there, and you have to be able to be there consistently, show up for people, and be accountable in some way. That said, the story I thought of when you asked this question was one where I was talking to some planners who are actually industrial ecologists at Tsinghua University. It's the leading program in China that's working on things like the circular economy, i.e., how industrial systems flow into the environment and how they should connect to each other in symbiotic industrial relationships. But it's all very theoretical and based on lookup tables and spreadsheets and models that aren't actually based on measuring stuff in the actual environment. It's just chemistry and technical process-oriented stuff. I was really nervous presenting some information about how land dispossession

3 "Affirmatively furthering fair housing: housing element: reporting," AB 2667, California State Assembly 2024.

actually should be understood environmentally in that context, industrial ecology. I was pushing them to think about the political economy side: how it affects what people consume, how it restructures other systems that aren't planned, and how environmental changes were actually ignored by these models. I was super nervous, but they were really open to it. And we had a conversation about it over three or four years, and there's been more effort to think about that when the industrial ecologists actually engaged with spatial planning. When I found these people, they had made recommendations on how to allocate land for particular industries in the place that I was studying. And that's not something that they're trained in, but they picked up a lot of ideas about regional economy clusters and how to allocate space. So having that little bit of resonance when I was worried about the audience was really encouraging to me. It's not like China's changed because of that conversation, but it was amazing to have these engineers say, one, we never think about land that way, and two, that it was an actual problem that their discipline should engage with.

RC: Going back to what I was saying before about the different types of audiences that I write to, one thing that I've always felt in my interactions in Angola over many years—speaking of resonance—was related to the way in which I was framing the urban problematic in Luanda. I felt resonances in talking to a lot of planners, activists, people in the NGO world, but also just residents in Luanda. My work is about this intersection between oil extraction and the form of the city. Oil infuses everything; everyone in Angola knows that the economy depends on oil. It is an important element in everyday talk. But the connection between that and thinking about the city is not necessarily made. So through the conversations that I was having with planners, making those connections, I always felt that there was some resonance. And people were asking me all these questions, starting to think through those same lenses, and starting to realize that there is actually quite a lot in the city that owes its existence to the oil economy or related forms of finance. So, in that sense, I felt that there was something there. It certainly was not turning into legislation or anything like Paavo's work did, but it at least raised the issue.

PM: It's funny that most of us do research in other countries, countries that we're not from, which I think poses a unique set of challenges for resonance. Previously, I mostly didn't do research on California because I wanted to learn about another country, which was more interesting to me. But the advantage of doing research where you're living is that you can really be angry: it's where you live, so you're empowered to feel that way. Even though I'm one of the experts on housing finance in Mexico, for example, I'm still not Mexican, so I can't be as angry towards some of these things. I wonder if you all have similar feelings.

HS: I could go on and on about this. I'm still interested in my Thailand project and working on the book. But I made a very conscious decision, partially because I had a child, to come back to Ohio, where I'm from. I'm at home now. And I have a new research project based in my hometown about the school board wars, the politics of Ohio, how that plays out for local governance, and what it means for national politics in the future of democracy. Through some of these tensions that we're talking about, I realized that although I've learned a lot from these activists in Thailand who I really admire, have worked with for a long time, and have tried to do right by, that's not actually where I can have the most impact on the world or where I can find the deepest resonances. Where I can do that is where I'm from. And so, I've become deeply connected to Cincinnati. I have too many local projects, and it's my project in my hometown where I think I will find those long-term connections—and maybe get a bill passed. At the very least, I'll write something that my students can really sit with, think with and be guided by. I think part of my career path is figuring out who the publics are that I can actually resonate with the most, and I'm in the process of pivoting right now.

RC: I can also say quite a lot about this because it's been a struggle throughout my life. The reason why I decided to work in Angola is perhaps a little random. I did my undergrad in Portugal; that's where I started to get into planning, and my initial interest in planning and planning research was actually about Portuguese issues. I have always felt that to this day, even though I've lived outside of Portugal for many years now, it's still the place where I can easily place my voice. It's still too complicated in Angola, and we can talk a lot about positionality. Then I also struggled a lot with finding a voice locally in Singapore, where I taught for the past five years, because Singapore is a difficult place for you to engage locally if you're a foreigner—well, even if you're Singaporean, but especially if you're a foreigner. And I tried in many ways, but it is complicated to find that voice, so I felt uprooted in Singapore. And now I'm back in the US. Now I'm in Columbus, a city that I frankly didn't know existed until a year ago, so I'm also finding that space. There's a lot of things that are interesting about Columbus that I think I can explore, and there's certainly more openness here for a foreigner to engage than there is in Singapore. It is definitely something that it's in the back of my mind in terms of teaching as well. In Singapore, I tried to ground my classes in the local environment, but then you have to learn about what's going on, and there's a curve to all of that.

Working Across Linguistic Publics

XJ: To bring it back to the question of addressing multiple publics, many of us here do work that takes place in a non-Anglophone linguistic-cultural environment. In thinking about fieldwork as informing theory, I'm curious: what does "theorizing from fieldwork" look like in your work when the theory and the fieldwork take place in different linguistic and cultural contexts? And what kind of difficulties have you encountered

when you're dialoguing with your local contacts and interlocutors, and then doing so simultaneously with your colleagues and academics back home who are speaking in English? There's so much tension and so many problems there. What has that experience been like for all of you?

HS: I think in most contexts where a lot of us are working, there are academics who are also writing and thinking. If they're writing and speaking in another language, it's really difficult to pull them into the conversation. So first and foremost, I cite Thai scholars—that is the number one thing I try to do, and I've tried very hard to get myself up to a level where I can read them. So that's a big piece of it. There are a few thinkers in Thailand who are intimate interlocutors of mine, and I cite them even though I know other people probably won't because their work is in Thai, but they've been really pivotal in helping me understand the context. But I do sometimes borrow theories from elsewhere: some of my major framings are Western theories that I think resonate, and that's a real tension. But it is also addressing this issue of the publics because I very much want to bring this case into the global conversation. So some of the things that I have to do are acts of translation. That entails a constant balancing act of trying to acknowledge the work that people have done there while also doing those acts of translation to make that work meaningful to the academic public I'm talking to. But I very much try to cite locally. And then working with a language that's in a different script and has different naming practices, I have to fight with people sometimes to make it known that I am going to follow the Thai convention of writing names in a particular way.

RC: English is my second language. I only started speaking it seriously when I was 24 or 25. So, that is something that I think also enters into the situation here: my writing is slower because of it. It's not that I think in Portuguese—I think I think in English, particularly when I'm writing—it's because my research happens entirely in Portuguese. There is no conversation that I have that is not in Portuguese. Sometimes I did interviews with oil executives, and they would often be more comfortable in English, but 98% of my research is in Portuguese. So that creates all sorts of difficulties. On the one hand, your material—all your raw data—is in Portuguese. But on the other hand, that's what you're using to create theory, which is in English—even though I do have some theoretical writings in Portuguese. But funnily enough, thinking about the couple of things that I've written in Portuguese, they were probably thought out in English and then written back into Portuguese. For me, that's the other issue that stands in the way of engaging with planning and the social sciences: I learned my social sciences in English, so I also struggle with the fact that there are a number of things I cannot say in Portuguese because I've actually never learned them in Portuguese. So, it all becomes a little bit muddled and confused.

It is a constant struggle to try to translate not just language itself, but the way in which one thinks. I know that the differences are even more stark between Chinese and English. There's no doubt that I've tried to engage with Angolan scholars as much as I can when writing about Angola, but it's true, my theoretical engagements are mostly with theory written in English. This also has to do with the linguistic imbalance of the academic world. There's very little actual theory from Portugal written in Portuguese. There's almost no one in Portugal that writes in Portuguese these days; the only place where you have people still writing theoretically in Portuguese is actually Brazil, just because there is a much larger academic world there. So that is definitely a body of scholarship that I engage with. The imbalance of scholarly languages is something that I thought I would be fighting against in my career, but frankly, I just succumbed to the dominance of English in the end. Even if you're doing an academic career in Portugal, these days, people will tell you that you have to write in English.

JC: Yeah, that has been really hard for me. My cultural and linguistic fluency in Mandarin Chinese has gone up and down over the years. I didn't start learning until I was in my late 20s. I feel like when you're learning as an adult, even if you're kind of functionally fluent, you're not culturally fluent. The more you learn, the more you understand how far away you are from really being a native speaker and having the same kind of cultural fluency that your interlocutors have. And so there's always a process of translation while you're in the field. This may be a bit trite, but I feel like it goes back to your commitment and the way that your interlocutors understand who you are. I don't think the translation process in and of itself is necessarily a problem. It can be really bounded; you could be working on a particular planning consulting project or something where there's some mutual understanding and clarity about what the product is supposed to be, what people's different roles are. And I think that for me, and probably Hayden as well, being ethnographically engaged and wanting to theorize about issues for planning and geography and inequality from these different kinds of experiences of development can be really difficult because we're trying to put something in a global context. For instance, in the building of a Special Economic Zone in China for commodities for the global market, there are these kinds of global connections, but at the same time you're trying to find what's particular there while trying not to make it China-exceptional. It can become very confusing.

A part of that is being clear about what the interventions and conversations are in any particular venue, and that you can't do everything at one time. The basic question for building theory is what the purpose is and which kinds of issues you want to illuminate. If the purpose is to speak to Anglophone academics, it's going to be a conversation that is probably not going to translate back. So I think the only way to deal with that kind of complexity is to try to be as explicit as possible about what you're doing and to have that conversation with your interlocutors as well. But on the other hand, it might not necessarily be about a narrow academic conversation in a planning

or geography journal in the Anglophone world. It might just be a separate issue. I think sometimes we get hung up on questions of accountability or being extractive, and of course I think that those are important ethical questions. At the same time, it's maybe a piece of what we juggle in this profession that is, in many ways, just a separate world from where we might be doing our research.

Planners as Interpreters

NS: This brings us to a question that I'm personally obsessed with in my PhD research, which is the the frames we use to describe planning problems. For example, with "social housing:" what does that actually mean? How do we translate a program that really means "municipal building" into "social housing"? And does this matter? Something that came up for me when I was working with community land trusts in the Bronx—partially because the Bronx is a multilingual set of publics itself—is that we're translating things like affordable housing into *viviendas asequibles*, which didn't quite have the same meaning. There's the same issue with the term Community Land Trust, *Fideicomiso de la Tierra*; it doesn't quite mean the same thing. This conversation could go in a number of different directions, but to drill down on housing, a question could be: why is the US housing conversation at such a stalemate and do the words we use here matter? And then for Hayden especially: do the words to talk about collective arrangements of housing in Thailand and in Ohio translate? And how do they translate not only from one language to another, but from discursive framing to actual housing policy?

HS: So my whole dissertation was initially framed around the word *chumchon*, which is the Thai word for community, and where it came from. It was taken up as a way to describe the primitive Thai social welfare state, but the word itself was actually only coined in the mid-20th century as international development organizations and the Thai Communist Party were both trying to translate this concept of community in Thailand. So it has real world impacts on what people think a collective is, how they create a program for a particular housing problem, and what people have to do in order to prove that they are a community and can hold land together. I'm not sure I have a definitive answer for your question, but the article I just finished revising two days ago is all about the fact that we have all of these words like "community-led housing," "cohousing," and "collaborative housing" that, like you said, mean a particular way of housing together. And I'm saying that when it comes to the word "tenure," we need a word that describes collective tenure, so that we can talk about all these housing projects together. I think translation issues across contexts do matter. These are the frames that we think with. "Social housing" and "community-based housing" and "public housing" do have slightly different rings to them and mean slightly different things in different places, and perhaps one of the things that an academic can do that's meaningful is to understand these different contexts and say that this is what this

thing means in this place. You have to do these linguistic as well as policy gymnastics to take an idea and think about it in another place because it doesn't translate directly. So I do think language matters. We all have these very different metaphors of planning and what it means to be a planner. I have always thought that planners are a kind of translator: we sit at the intersection of all these different fields; an effective planner in practice is someone who can translate among the architect and the engineer, the government official and the residents. I think that's an important planning skill. That's also how I think about myself as an academic, as someone who is a capable translator—perhaps interpreter is a better word—someone who can think across literally different languages sometimes, but also across different contexts and different fields.

PM: I like Hayden's point a lot about being a contextual interpreter. Policymakers always want to just have a new solution that will solve all the problems from some other place without understanding all the extra stuff that goes around it that makes it functional. It's a good conundrum that I do not have the answer to.

HS: Paavo, you've taken part in a bill. In very practical terms, have you used actual academic articles in that process? Does anybody pay attention to them in the policy world? Or do you always have two outputs, whether the other output is a presentation or a white paper or something? Are you literally writing to two different people when you're doing this work?

PM: Sometimes, yeah, I have literally two different outputs for different audiences. But I think having the academic papers out there is often very useful, both for good and for ill because within the housing space, there are some very poorly substantiated academic articles that are used to ill effect in the housing policy making process. But I think it's useful that we can give them the university seal of authority by having academic publications. Personally, I don't write academic papers so that they can be used for politics. Maybe I do more now, but I never used to do that. I never thought about it like that. But increasingly, I see some value in that.

XJ: Ricardo and JC, I recently read your wonderful IJURR article, "Blocos Urbanism: Capitalism and Modularity in the Making of Contemporary Luanda" in which you frame this kind of work you're doing as contributing to the "conceptual apparatus for deciphering our global urban condition."[4] Can you just say a little bit more about the importance of doing this work of—to bring it back to theory—developing a theory for "deciphering our global urban condition," whatever that may be? In other words, what kind of theoretical tools do we need? What kind of innovations should we be making

4 Cardoso, Ricardo, Jia-Ching Chen, and Henrik Ernstson. 2023. "Blocos Urbanism: Capitalism and Modularity in the Making of Contemporary Luanda." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 47: 809–32.

in order to think about categories like the "global" and the "urban" in this day and age, perhaps in a post-pandemic world?

RC: There's a lot of things about that article that touch on different issues of our conversation so far. One of them is collaboration—JC and I have been collaborating with other colleagues for some time now, and that was one of the outcomes of that collaboration. Hopefully, more will come. Ultimately, there is an element of the public within the collaboration itself. This was a collaboration among four of us, and most of the collaboration takes place in Angola. I was the one that brought the others to Angola. So there's an element in which, at a certain point, they almost became my public; I was introducing Luanda to them. This was a really interesting moment because I had been doing a lot of research in Luanda when they came, so that process of introducing, of having them think with me through the problems that I had been thinking through mostly alone or with different collaborators was super generative.
For me, a lot of the article came out of a big frustration with planetary urbanization theory and the way I saw it as falling down from above on a bunch of different places, including a place like Luanda, where extraction happens to enable urbanization everywhere. And you start to think about what falls within and outside of urbanization and about where exactly Angola fits into this—because it is a place of extraction, but then there's a city that is growing as much as Luanda is growing. So what are the ways I can rethink the terms of this debate? That particular phrasing that you quoted comes from us asking how we can reframe this thinking from the problematics that we were seeing together from the particular case of Luanda.

For instance, the "blocos" framing very much came out of our interactions. I had been thinking about these things by myself, but it was through the work that the four of us did together that we started to develop this framework. And to me it is a framework that enables us to think about Luanda differently and to see these connections that I was not seeing before I actually wrote the article and worked through the collaboration. But also, it allows us to make concrete and material connections between the so-called global and the urban. That's very much what I'm trying to think through in that paper and more generally in what I'm writing right now. Because my work is about the connection between what is a very global type of issue, which is oil extraction, and a very local one, which is urbanization. I'm always connecting these two things and also thinking about their material implications. The concept of modularity that we bring about in the article, which actually comes from Hannah Appel's work, allows us to see the materiality of that interaction between the global and the urban.

Touching on the conversation that we were having before about housing and all these different terms, the term that came to mind immediately was actually "suburban." I mean, suburban is also a very peculiar word, right? It means something very specific in the US; it's not the suburbs that I know in Portugal. And now I actually know

the suburbs in Columbus, Ohio; they are certainly not like the suburbs in Portugal. But they are also completely different from the ones in Angola—if the term even has any resonance there. One can say that maybe things have changed over the past ten, twenty years within the postcolonial critique of planning and urban studies, but it is often the case that a lot of these terms do come from the North to the South. To try to think of different concepts and how they can maybe travel in other directions is something valuable and something that I'd like to think that I'm contributing to. To think about this particular article, the way we use the idea of modularity to think about how the global and the urban come together is perhaps something that could contribute to thinking from other places.

HS: I would say I also think a lot about how cities are produced by the global. In particular, I'm really interested in the concept of community and how this has traveled the world and how people enact it in different ways—literally through translation and also through policy mobilities that rely on "the community" to do things, so the concept of modularity is also really interesting as another way to think through all of that.

Public Teaching

NS: Hayden and Ricardo, when you were talking about your teaching experiences, it struck me that a really important part of DCRP and this question of publics is that UC Berkeley is a public university, and all of us teach at public universities. I'm curious what it means to you that we come from a public university and that we teach at public universities.

PM: I love teaching at a public university. I strongly support public universities; I think we should have built ten more campuses over the last 40 years. I did a calculation once of the population growth in California and the share of people that get a college degree. Using those metrics, enrollment in the University of California system should be vastly higher than what it is. It's one of the great social mobility generators of our state, and we should have invested a lot more in it over the last decades. And so I do think there is some responsibility for professors and a public university to do more public-oriented activities and research.

RC: I just arrived at the Ohio State University. It is a huge university, and it has a huge weight on Columbus. To the point that Paavo was making, OSU is remarkably engaged in the community around Columbus and Ohio generally, and that is definitely something that I like to be a part of. So that puts me in a slightly strange positioning in teaching here. This is my first semester, and I've only taught graduate students so far. The planning program is all international students right now. The undergrads are more like those at University of California campuses in that most of them are from Ohio. I don't teach American planning and don't intend to, so I'm now teaching in

the very small international cluster that we're trying to develop here. I see my role as bringing the world into Ohio students' planning education. A lot of them have never even traveled outside of Ohio, and I come with all these different cases from different places—places that I'm sure a lot of them have never heard of.

HS: Being just about 100 miles away from Ricardo at the University of Cincinnati, I'm coming at this question of being at an Ohio public university from a slightly different angle. I'm also trying in different ways to bring the world to students who are from around here, who have not had that experience of traveling, but one of the reasons I love being here is that I was one of them at one point. So I see this as a piece of my mission, to bring that perspective into my classroom and to the students in an environment where that is increasingly not welcome. There are pieces of my syllabi that could very well become illegal in the near future. And that is now a piece of my research. It's a piece of my political activism in the classroom. I am not willing to budge on these things. I am here at a public university in my home state. This is my fight. I do feel a tremendous mission being at a public university. There's something that is different about being at a non-elite public university as well that I think changes the way that you conceptualize what you're doing and the types of conversations that you're in. It's a different relationship to the academic profession. I certainly feel like I'm communicating with people who are not interested in the same sort of theoretical preoccupations that I have when I'm doing my academic work. There are moments of frustration in that, but ultimately it's a challenge I really enjoy. It pushes me to think and communicate in different ways. But as much as our public universities are less public than we would probably like them to be—certainly from a financial standpoint—to me, it is a call for the importance of what we're doing in a lot of ways.

RC: The fact that what we do here is overseen by the state—that can be incredibly problematic. I mean, that has had real life implications here at OSU already, and that frankly scares me a little bit. Because everything, including our syllabi, is public record. It is a contested issue in this state, probably much more so than in California.

FB: I think that public universities in general are going through a moment of crisis in terms of inclusion and exclusion. I also think that it is an issue that is very particular to every context, given the demographics of which state you're in and the particular goals that that state government may have. So it's different to be in a public university in Florida than in Ohio than in Minnesota. Here in Minnesota, you are bound by a certain progressive whiteness, in a sense, that tries to be progressive but also remains racist at times. I think Ohio, which is maybe more purple, and places like Florida, which are also very diverse, are suffering because of the ways that state governments are trying to scuttle any type of diversity question. It's one of those fascinating things that every department is different, and every department is an entity comprised by the professors

and faculty who make it what it is. Every department has a particular culture, and you have to make choices about what drives you and what makes you tick in the type of scholarship that you want to produce.

Another interesting point is that I'm in a policy school: I'm very "exotic" in being here because I'm a designer by professional training, and I do not know how to do statistical analysis. I always joke that I can only subtract, add, multiply and divide. So you have to find ways to do your scholarship in manners that are impactful beyond the limits of your methodology and the ways that you may consider developing a research agenda. In my case, I do qualitative research and a lot of participatory design work because those are the things that I can do. That allows me to open the door to community-engaged projects in terms of service as well as in terms of teaching and research.

The University of Minnesota, because of George Floyd, has made great efforts to really become a publicly engaged university. But you know, these universities are also complex bureaucratic systems, and what may happen at the level of the central administration may or may not echo into your particular unit. That's also an interesting question, how you navigate the bureaucratic system and then find people, ways, training, and partners who may help you align with what you want to do.

Doctoral Reflections

XJ: To close this out, let's do a round of rapid-fire questions. Can everyone please give one piece of advice for current PhD students and share one favorite memory of DCRP?

PM: I had a great cohort and bonded really well with the other cohorts. In the second-ever planning theory class with Judy Innes, she was really trying to convince us that communicative planning would resolve our differences, and we were just all so completely unconvinced. It was maybe one of the first times that the collective group of students were just like, "Sorry, Professor, you're just wrong about this." For current students, I have two pieces of advice: first, be pragmatic about publishing and try to submit articles early on in your career to get practice and feedback if nothing else. Second, your dissertation is the first big research project of many, so if a particular question or topic is too challenging for a dissertation, you can always come back to it later. I changed my original dissertation idea dramatically, but I was able to do the research I had originally wanted to do several years later.

FB: My advice to current PhD students is that you are wonderful, amazing, and magical. Don't let any of the negativity or toxicity that defines academia define who you are. You don't have to become anything. You don't have to prove yourself. Those are the things that prevent you from actually accomplishing things. Do the things that you love, and write about them. And if people don't like it, that's totally fine. One of the things that I enjoy so much is that I may cause a visceral negative reaction in a

person—that means that you've touched something that is really important for them, a framework that they cannot change or a thought that they cannot go beyond. In terms of fond memories, I remember a lot of fun. I remember Ricardo at the parties we used to go to and have a great time. Ricardo was quieter at the party, and I would dance. I remember one time where Ricardo was really kind; he drove me and my partner back to our place. I won't forget that. You were really, really kind. Everybody left, and Ricardo stayed behind. And he said: "Hey, do you need a ride?" And to me that was a sign of his value as a human being. I remember Ricardo's wonderful library that he was accumulating while he was a PhD student. I also remember Paavo's issue of the BPJ. It was so much fun how you did it and how you were excited about it. So it was just the social connections, the networks. I remember fighting a lot with Alex Schafran, but he brought out my passion. And we had kind of a dialectic in a sense. That was also a great experience for me to grow, which is part of the editorial board's work. You are fighting about things that you really care about.

RC: One thing that I'll say is to just enjoy yourself, and you'll find your publics. Enjoy the process, and the publics will come somehow. But I don't know that I did that very well; I don't know that I enjoyed it that much. Looking back, I wish I would have just enjoyed the process a little more. I also remember bonding over Judy Innes's class and the frustrations over it with Hun Kim. We were probably talking during class on, what was it, Google Chat? I guess an outcome of that frustration was the new curriculum: we had two planning theory classes when we went through the program, and now you have planning theory and urban theory, right? I also remember very distinctively that interview that you, Fernando, had with AbdouMaliq Simone after that amazing talk that he gave in which the slides did not correspond. And it was amazing. It was kind of mind-blowing. I do not remember giving you a lift, but it was probably Alex Schafran's car.

JC: I have many wonderful memories from my (long, long) time at DCRP. Apart from any single memory, the thing that stands out most is a general intellectual excitement and rigor. There was a vibrant student and faculty culture that spanned several departments including Anthropology, Geography, Sociology, ESPM (Environmental Science, Policy, and Management), and ERG (Energy and Resources Group). For those of us working on interdisciplinary projects related to the environment and cities, this was amazing. We had a real sense of interdepartmental camaraderie and a cohort that spanned several years. We read one another's work, organized events together, commiserated and supported each other through the ups and downs of student life. This dovetails with a minor bit of advice: as you all know, the people of DCRP and Berkeley have amazing networks and resources. Reach out to the people you want to meet. Find resources and bring them to campus. Senior scholars are almost always eager to connect and to support and learn from students. Another bit of advice would be

about building disciplinary credentials though your coursework and committee members and to make sure you're able to make your work legible within those disciplines. This can be really challenging, and there are often rigid barriers in many disciplinary departments. However, you can talk to your advisors about it, frame some part of your work, e.g., a chapter of your dissertation, within a clear disciplinary conversation, go to conferences, and work to publish in key journals.

HS: My advice is not to be afraid to ask questions and build community. I think there's always a pressure to try to sound like the smartest person in the room and make the most trenchant critique. But being the one who will admit that you don't understand something is when the conversation really gets started. My best memories are just being in the PhD room. I think during the time I was there, it became a lot more collegial than it was when I first entered, and by the end, it was just one of my favorite places to be. To sit there and to be sometimes frustrated but sometimes proud of what I was accomplishing, and just to have everyone around me. Those are the things that I really take away from DCRP.