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**e-Dialogue Series on Urban Sustainability
Urban Sustainability: Youth—The Missing Solution?**

Wednesday, June 23rd, 2010

Participants

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Steve Dotterer, Principal Planner, City of Portland

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Afton Halloran, Sustainable Urban Agriculture Youth Intern, Dar es Salam, Tanzania

Pam Phan, Youth Planning Co-ordinator, City of Portland

Caitlin Purvis, Youth Intern, Planning Institute for the City of Colima, Mexico

Kathleen Wilson, Youth Led Development Coordinator, The Co-operators, Regina

Dialogue

Ann Dale

Welcome to today's conversation on the critical role that youth have to play and how to optimize their influence in urban sustainability. I am delighted to be hosting this dialogue in partnership with the interns of the International Centre for Sustainable Cities (ICSC). We will be conducting a series of conversations on this critical public policy issue, so please look at our site for future announcements. Could I ask each of our expert panellists to briefly introduce themselves, your physical location, and your first impressions of your internship. Zoe, if you are on-line, perhaps you can explain this particular internship program?

May I add a personal note, we in the East have just experienced an earthquake, estimates ranging from 5.0 to 6.1, regardless, it has been experienced as far away as Montreal, Toronto, New York, Michigan and Ohio. My place here is close to the epicentre. Regardless, it took several seconds for me and my dogs to get outside as I had to grab the counter top to stop from falling, as I was swaying back and forth.

Afton Halloran will no longer be able to join and his contribution to our conversation will be added as a post-conversation piece.

Rebecca Foon

Hello everyone,

My name is Rebecca Foon and I am the Director of Sustainability Solutions Group's Montreal, Quebec office. We are a Canadian worker's co-operative and engage in community planning, green building, climate change research and mitigation and sustainability planning and assessment work. I am an urban planner and LEED consultant and am currently working with Algonquin College in Ottawa on a broad based sustainability strategy. Public engagement is fundamental to our planning work and we are continually evolving and exploring creative ways to engage youth and the broader community to participate in our projects. I am very excited to take part in this dialogue - sharing our collective experience and ideas.

Ann Dale

Welcome, Rebecca, what exactly is a worker's cooperative? What do you think are the most critical issues facing urban planners?

Rebecca Foon

Thanks Ann.

A worker cooperative is a cooperative owned and democratically managed by its worker members. The workers' cooperative is guided by the same seven principles as other cooperatives and credit unions around the world.

1. Voluntary and open membership
2. Democratic member control
3. Autonomy and independence
4. Education, training and information
5. Co-operation amongst cooperatives
6. Member economic participation
7. Concern for community

You can find out more here: <http://www.sustainabilitysolutions.ca/cooperatives.php>

I believe embarking on creating truly sustainable communities is the most important challenge / issue urban planners are facing today. This is why I believe dialogues - like this one - are so important and crucial.

Caitlin Purvis

Hello! My name is Caitlin Purvis and I am an intern with the International Centre for Sustainable Cities (ICSC). I am currently working with the Planning Institute for the City of Colima, in Colima, Mexico. I am very fortunate to be working with a team of dedicated individuals who are also readily available to assist me with the project I am working on. The project is called Community Development around Public Spaces. The objective is to use a participatory approach to design various public spaces. We believe that if people have the opportunity to contribute to the design of a particular space they will hopefully use it more, take better care of it, and feel a sense of ownership. In the process, it is hoped that neighbours will come together, friendships will form, and people will begin to feel a greater sense of community.

Rebecca Foon

Hi Caitlin,

This sounds like a wonderful project! Have any of the projects you have been working on come to fruition? I would love to find out more. I would also love to hear about some of the techniques that are being used to engage youth and community members to contribute to the design of a particular space or project that is being developed.

Caitlin Purvis

Hello Rebecca,

I agree, it is a wonderful project. It is designed to be a three year project that looks at a vast majority of the public spaces in marginalized communities in Colima. Thus far, the engagement techniques have been formal and informal interviews as well as workshops that focus on community identity, assets, and visioning. I am in the process of organizing two community events that will take place after the workshops that everyone in the community can partake in. They will likely be urban greening events such as reforestation and / or recycling and garbage collection. After my 6 month term, another Canadian intern will arrive to create a more formal design of the park.

Ann Dale

Welcome, Caitlin, what do you think about how much conversion of public space is happening to private space? This is a key issue in Ottawa around a major public space in our capital city, Lansdowne Park, and its potential conversion to private retail space, with of course, some green space, but such a minor percentage.

cpurvis wrote:

Caitlin Purvis

I think the privatization of public space should be kept to a minimal. Public spaces need to be more highly valued because they improve people's quality of life in so many ways. Many forms of expression that can take place in public spaces such as art or physical activities, are not allowed in private spaces. As well, public spaces strengthen communities which we need to have if we want to live in a more sustainable world.

Ann Dale

Caitlin, I totally agree, but I am worried by the continual privatization of public space and the public sphere for conversation, hence, the raison d'etre for this platform. There is such a connection between vibrant public space and peace, law and good order. In fact, a European study proved a link between green space and more reflective capacity by people with access to that space. Hey, Steve, welcome.

Rebecca Foon

Caitlin, I completely agree. Public spaces help build healthy communities and active lifestyles. Public art has been a very controversial issue in Montreal. Many artists have been arrested for building public art sculptures in parks illegally or painting sidewalks and streets. The national film board of Canada made a recent film entitled Roadworth discussing the issue of who owns public space.

<http://films.nfb.ca/roadsworth/>

Ann Dale

I find guerrilla art shows and gardening in actual fact a reclamation and regeneration of public space, wish I knew of some more concrete examples, but then that would defeat the purpose:) Welcome, Kathleen, what do you think are the most innovative aspects of your internship?

Ann Dale

For some reason, we seem to be experiencing a delay in our expert panel coming on line, let us move to our first question, how are youth being engaged in your city in changes for urban sustainability? And, Zoe, can you explain a little about your organization's youth internship program.

Rebecca Foon

What I have always found inspiring and exciting about Montreal is that it is a very vibrant, creative city that nurtures and embraces the arts. There are many different funding agencies that promote and support youth in creative projects – whether it be running small, sustainable creative businesses (i.e. selling locally hand made lamps from re-used materials, locally made clothing from second hand clothes etc.), developing public art exhibits on sustainability, music, film, theatre http://www.blacktheatreworkshop.ca/?page_id=1234 etc. This support has dramatically shaped the urban environment and continues to foster a rich creative landscape. The City of Montreal in collaboration with the Urban Ecology Centre (UEC) is also actively engaged in piloting a green, active and healthy neighbourhood initiative (engaging youth and the greater community is key to the overall success of this initiative). <http://www.urbanecology.net>

The UEC has also developed an education initiative that encourages citizens to get involved in the development of neighbourhoods and the city. <http://www.urbanecology.net/projet/school-urban-citizenship>

Ann Dale

Rebecca, what you are describing for me is a vibrant city that is diverse. The importance of diversity to a city's resilience and vitality is key, and I attach a paper we wrote on this topic.

[Gentrification.pdf](#) (155.47 KB)

Zoe Mullard

Hello everyone,

In response to Ann, I wanted to explain about the International Youth Internship program that we are running at Sustainable Cities. The program will run until 2011 (3 years) and is a partnership with several member cities of the Sustainable Cities: PLUS Network including Colima (Mexico), San Fernando (Philippines), Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) and Dakar (Senegal). Each city will host Canadian interns to support and run different projects related to urban sustainability. There is a range of projects from urban agriculture projects in Dar es Salaam to gaining youth perspectives on green space in Colima. Each intern will be "in the field" for 6 months and then a new intern will replace them; we hope the returning interns will be able to bring best practices and innovative urban solutions to their respective Canadian cities. At the end of the program we will have hosted 60 interns with our partners and hope that these young Canadians will form a strong national network of innovative thinkers and doers.

Ann Dale

Zoe, any lessons for us?

Zoe Mullard

ICSC as an organization has learned and gained a lot by introducing the internship program and by working in general with our member cities to incorporate youth into the long-term planning process. We have actually written a paper that outlines the process undertaken by the organization and some of the key lessons around youth-led engagement. I'm attaching it here.

The key lessons relate to:

- You need unwavering commitment;
- Co-design with youth partners;
- You need two simultaneous paths: specialization and mainstreaming;
- Ensure there are opportunities for active learning;
- Manage risk and conflicts;
- There is a need for seed funding;

- Develop appropriate evaluation and monitoring; and
- Nurture innovation.

File attachment [youth led development.pdf](#) (369.19 KB)

Steve Dotterrer

Hello. This is Steve Dotterrer, with the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability in Portland Oregon. We are currently working on the Portland Plan- a new, long range strategic plan for Portland. Included in the staff working on the plan are Pam Phan, my colleague who is the manager of youth planning and a changing group of youth planning aides. They will be participating in the conversation this afternoon.

The Youth Planning Program at the city is very new and was created as the result of a Youth Bill of Rights effort lead by the City County Youth Commission. One of the first tasks of the Program was the creation of a Youth Engagement Manual, which gives advice on how to involve youth in planning and other city programs. The Manual has been adopted by both the City Council and County Commission as the guidance to staff in how to involve youth.

Ann Dale

Can you provide a link to the Youth Bill of Rights? Thanks.

Kathleen Wilson

Hi there,

Sorry for my lateness. I had a slight schedule mix up! My name is Kathleen Wilson. I run a program in Regina, Saskatchewan called the YES (Youth Engagement in Sustainability) Network. The initiative was created out of a partnership between Co-operators Life Insurance Company and the International Centre for Sustainable Cities. The program aims to engage local high school students and help promote youth led action projects on environmental sustainability. I am currently working with environmental clubs at seven high schools in Regina and area. We just finished up our first year and I am in the current process of evaluating and writing up this year.

<http://www.yesnetwork.ca>

Ann Dale

Let's move to our second question, how do you interpret "long-term planning" or what is your vision for urban sustainability that augments the urban planning activities in your city?

Caitlin Purvis

Hello Ann,

Many people seem to consider 'long-term planning' as 5 or 10 year planning. However, we need to start thinking about our actions and the effects they will have 50 or 100 years down the road. Participatory approaches, community engagement and community ownership are means to achieve long-term goals sustainable goals. These processes not only make changes happen and give people the opportunity to act, but they have lasting effects. For instance, each time I have a workshop I can see youth and adults character changing. They are thinking about their future, thinking about their space and place in this world, they are gaining confidence and also using their voice more and believing in it. I also think it often comes down to education and to the means by which we disperse ideas and knowledge about sustainability.

Ann Dale

Caitlin, totally agree, our research shows the 'more' sustainable communities are those with 100 year long term plans. Such a different time-frame for human systems?

Rebecca Foon

I believe long-term planning is about planning sustainable, healthy communities – communities that are grounded in principles of restorative and regenerative thinking, social justice, equity and active support of arts and culture. A truly sustainable city requires collaboration, innovation and creative thinking (ex. in order for a city to move towards carbon neutrality, a major city-wide long-term planning effort is required). Embedding public engagement with youth and the broader community into city planning is so important not only to understanding the needs and aspirations of the city, but also to discover ways to attain goals – and helps define the overall success of the initiative at play.

Ann Dale

Let me be a little provocative, youth is one of many critical perspectives that must be included in any urban sustainable planning? How many marginalized voices are not included, or do youth have a unique perspective different from other stakeholders?

Pam Phan

Hello folks! My name is Pam Phan, program coordinator for the Youth Planning Program at the City of Portland.

To give greater context: We employ youth ages 14-21 to work as "youth planners" who work on various planning projects. From light rail station neighbourhood study, to youth preferences for neighbourhood commercial corridors, and our long range strategic plan. Youth work alongside planners to learn about planning, but most often offer their real world experience of the built environment and the services in it. We use a YOUTH EMPOWERMENT model that includes youth in a intentional way as experts of their own lives and experiences and values what they bring to the table - in this process we are able to develop lasting youth-adult partnerships that can have an affect on the projects that youth planners are involved in.

The Youth Engagement Manual (attached) is a best youth engagement best practices manual, that helps adults in both government and community based groups work with youth better. It gives not only best practices, also tools that you can use to get youth more involved, or even start your own youth program.

You can also take a look at Our Bill of Rights: Children + Youth, which was written over two years with over 7000 youth participating in it's creation. It has been adopted by both our City and County governing bodies.

<http://www.portlandonline.com/youth/index.cfm?a=246961>

File attachment [youth_manual_screen_quality.pdf](#) (2.57 MB)

Ann Dale

Caitlin, can you give us a copy of your paper? There is a primordial connection between public space, reflective space, and peace, law and good order. Welcome, Pam Phan. Portland is one of the leading sustainable cities, any other initiatives for engaging youth?

Caitlin Purvis

Ann,

I will take a look for the paper but it is likely in hard copy form in Canada as my previous computer crashed.

In regards to other initiatives to engage youth, I believe there are many. Youth can play a large role in hosting community events, presenting their talents (artistic, physical, intellectual) at events, etc.

It is a means to give them a greater sense of self worth.

Youth should also be included in discussions with various stakeholders and it is important to that they are not the minority or they may feel less obliged to speak. Youth really need to feel included and have people listen to them. One youth said yesterday in a workshop I was facilitating on Identity, 'when you are young, people pay attention to you. But, when you become a teenager, it doesn't matter what you do because people aren't watching you and don't care about you as much'. I think this feeling of being abandoned and not cared about leads to youth entering gangs and taking part in frowned upon activities so that they will be recognized in society.

Rebecca Foon

This is a very important issue. I have been involved in many public consultations organized by the Canadian Federal Government - and it is rare that there is a strong presence of marginalized voices at these events (including youth voices). This is very problematic. I believe youth have a unique perspective to offer around urban sustainable planning as do other marginalized voices - and it is key to truly and actively engage these voices to help shape healthy, sustainable communities.

Ann Dale

What have been the biggest challenges that you have overcome around incorporating youth's vision into urban planning processes? and If we were to hold this dialogue again in one year, what accomplishments or changes do you hope to see in your city in regards to youth's involvement in urban sustainability?

Ann Dale

Let's now move on to our next question. What are some of the key lessons learned from integrating youth into the urban planning process and how are these lessons or

best practices being shared internationally (by cities and by the youth). (Who are you learning from?)

Caitlin Purvis

In response to Ann,

Youth are incredibly important to engage in planning. They are the future, they are the ones who will lead this world. The sooner that they are aware of their impact, of all of our impacts on this world, they can begin recognize how important their role is in making the world more sustainable. The problem I have found in Colima is that getting people, both youth and adults, to appreciate the process of creating a sustainable city not just receiving a new neighbourhood park, getting them to participate in discussions, keeping their interest and helping them to recognize the role they can play in creating a healthier world is difficult. Youth definitely have a different perspective from other stakeholders but it is important to remember that all stakeholders must still be included.

Ann Dale

I think this is a very critical point, Caitlin, and much research needs to be done on this critical observation.

Kathleen Wilson

I absolutely agree with this. With my program in Regina we have created a network of community organizations and members to support youth in youth led initiatives. A few weeks ago the students held an end of the year community Eco-Fair where they were able to present and showcase the initiatives they worked on this year. Local NGOs, government members, school board members, other community members and their high schools peers attended the day. Through the evaluation it is quite clear that the day was very empowering. A few of my favourite quotes talk about how great it was to feel part of a community.

Rebecca Foon

We often use a technique called the world café to engage youth and the broader community into the urban planning processes we are involved in. The world café uses multiple small groups that are arranged around a room – creating a café environment. They are not break out groups, they are dialogues aiming to answer questions – progressive rounds of conversation in which everyone is in a new group for each round or discussion. To kick start each round, the facilitator poses a provocative question to engage the group. One person at each table records salient discussion points and after each round, everyone but the recorder moves to another group and the recorder shares with the new group the key ideas from the previous round. After the rounds, the larger group engages in a discussion outlining the key themes that emerged.

<http://www.theworldcafe.com/>

This technique has been very effective to engage youth in visioning sessions around what it would mean for their city, town, college, university to be truly sustainable. People generally walk away feeling that their voices were heard and that they were participating in a creative dialogue where ideas were constantly evolving.

The City of Vancouver is also beginning a major public engagement initiative to kick start their greenest city action plan.

Their first event is taking place tonight: <http://www.pechakuchanightvancouver.com/>

Caitlin Purvis

Hello Rebecca,

Thank you for sending that link. I believe strongly in having freedoms and it is unfortunate that even in public spaces many forms of expression are prohibited. I wrote an essay a few years ago about how public, public space really is. I found the street is generally where people can express themselves with the least problems however, as you mention, cities often ban activities such as art exhibitions from taking place.

Steve Dotterrer

Pam can say more about how youth are becoming involved in Portland's planning. I want to be clear about two things.

1. We are just starting down the road of including youth in planning and we have taken some big steps but they are really small in their impact so far- probably most Portland youth would say they have not yet seen a difference.

2. Including youth is only part of engagement effort. The City of Portland has a long tradition of involving neighbourhood associations which are partially supported through public funds but follow some simple organizational guidelines. After 30 plus years however, these groups are not representative of the changing demographics of the city. The city staff are now working with DCL groups (Diversity in Civic leadership) to provide training and encourage involvement in public activities. For the Portland Plan, we are using grants to DCL groups to have them lead the engagement process .

Ann Dale

I think, if I am allowed as a moderator, to offer my opinion, that you can only make a difference if you are fully engaged, honour your commitments to participate and participate as fully as possible with ongoing follow up. It seems to me, and this is a very personal statement, following a very unsettling physical experience of the shaking of the earth, that in our supposedly hyper-connected world that our connections are in fact becoming more shallow. If you are so pre-occupied that you cannot honour your commitments, then we are in a serious state of dis-engagement in a very noisy and crowded world. Part of the problem, I think, is that my generation, the boomers, believed each of us could and would make a difference, and somehow or other we must reclaim the belief that every and all actions count, it is about acting.

Caitlin Purvis

Ann, I agree completely. It is all about acting yet for some reason taking action is often the hardest thing to do. It seems that the majority of people watch and support action but do not fully contribute. I often fall into this category and am not sure if it is because of a fear of failure people often have, a fear of change and the unknown, or a disbelief in the possibility that positive changes can happen.

Rebecca Foon

One of our biggest challenges regarding incorporating youth's vision into urban planning processes is actually getting the word out so that youth are informed in the

work and public engagement processes that we are involved in. What we have realized is that it is critical to use the same avenues that youth are engaged in to publicize what we are up to. For example, we organized and facilitated a world café visioning session at Algonquin College. In order to get students to come out, we worked with the local community radio station, the Algonquin Times paper, the student association etc.

My hope is that the City of Montreal begins to work more directly with community and arts organizations that are already engaging youth in urban sustainability thinking and practice – helping to unify and build on the efforts that are already taking place across the city.

Pam Phan

1. We are just starting down the road of including youth in planning and we have taken some big steps but they are really small in their impact so far- probably most Portland youth would say they have not yet seen a difference.

Most youth don't feel connected to the City's planning efforts. Many of the neighbourhood based projects have been limited in duration and scope, which is a common bureaucratic combination that can stop youth involvement before it even starts. What we have been doing is what i consider Community Development. Youth Planners have been building a base of youth participants and community partners that seek and support youth input. It is the hope of our youth planners that there be a shift in the thinking of government and community to open their minds to the value that youth can bring. Especially when we are talking about the changes that will affect them directly - since they will be in our position in the future. We always prefer the "for youth, by youth" model. This helps youth hear and feel more connected to the issues and concepts. Over going into a school or neighbourhood to do a traditional charette, we call them focus groups and youth get to draw and explain their own vision for the space we are getting input about.

2. Including youth is only part of engagement effort.

I would also add that we understand that youth cannot be divorced from the identities, backgrounds, and experiences that they are formed by. We make sure that we are conscious of their identities in order to ensure the effectiveness and understanding of issues of planning and sustainability. For instance we support youth from affluent backgrounds differently than youth planners who are newly immigrated from countries of refugee status. The idea is meeting youth and people where they are at, as opposed to making assumptions about what they already know or should know. That way we can incorporate their skills and input more readily and realistically.

Ann Dale

I have very much enjoyed our conversation, any last comments, colleagues. My last comment is that if people, young or old, do not feel they are heard, can make a difference, then they disengage? One of my research questions, what engages and what disengages people of all ages, and how can we connect the dots between so many people working so hard on multiple levels?

Rebecca Foon

There are different initiatives taking place in Canada as well internationally trying to involve youth in urban politics and sustainable thinking. For example there is a collaborative music/hip hop project happening between Canada, Brazil, South Africa, Senegal - exchanging these ideas through music (I will try to find the link).

Inner City Angels in Toronto also brings artists into inner city schools throughout the Toronto area to engage youth (although this is mostly elementary schools) in sustainable thinking through art. The program is incredibly successful as it gives youth an opportunity to explore creative expression through mediums they would otherwise potentially not even know about.

innercity angels

<http://www.innercityangels.ca/Public/Default.aspx?l=349&n=Urban+%26+Rural+Communities>

Ann Dale

Thank you for your contributions, a good and safe night to everyone. Try and send the link, Rebecca, and we shall include in the archived conversation.

Caitlin Purvis

Rebecca,

I have also heard of a variety of international initiatives to engage youth, often marginalized youth. I used to work for Ser Paz in Ecuador. The organization is dedicated to eradicating violence within and between gangs. Ser Paz, under the leadership of Nelsa Cubelo has given youth the opportunity to host community dances, graffiti exhibitions, hip hop and break-dancing shows as well as encourage

them to turn over weapons for employment and contribute to their communities in a positive way. I will attach a link to a short video clip called Barrio de Paz whereby Nelsa puts explains the work she is doing and puts a name to the faces of some of Ecuador's marginalized youth.

<http://www.globalonenessproject.org/videos/barriodepaz9>

I'd also like to mention that youth in Colima are getting involved in what is called Parkour. They utilize urban landscapes by jumping and flipping from buildings and benches etc. I am fond of it because not only is it a creative and athletic means of expression but it also keeps youth out of trouble. I am meeting one of the leaders on Friday and hope he can present his talents at a community event.

Rebecca Foon

Caitlin, this is very interesting. When I was living in Cape town, South Africa, I was involved in helping to curate a city wide art and music festival - entitled the Once City, Many Cultures festival. This was an initiative to help unify the city through art. Exhibitions and music festivals took place throughout the city and townships and transportation was organized.

I believe engaging youth in creative expression around sustainable development issues is key to not only have active youth engagement, but to inspire and build momentum to help create a sustainable world - together - as a unified force moving towards positive change.

Caitlin Purvis

Thank you for this opportunity Ann!!

Rebecca Foon

Thank you everyone for this wonderful dialogue.

Post Conversation, Afton Hollaran

1. How are youth being engaged in your city in changes for urban sustainability?

Most of the solid waste collectors here are youth that have self organized themselves. One example is from a peri-urban area outside the city that helped youth with substance abuse issues to earn some income through garbage collection. These youth were provided with training in order build on their knowledge of solid waste issues and the collection system that they use. They have won 3 awards at the city, municipal and national level for their best practices.

In an unplanned settlements upgrading project that we are currently developing in Mikocheni A (a ward in Dar es Salaam) we are working with a community based organization (SAFINA) to improve solid waste collection in this settlement. Along with our partners we are intested in having community members invest in a ward level solid waste collection system. If things go as planned The Sustainable Cities: PLUS Network Africa Program will help facilitate the training of the youth interested in solid waste collection in Mikocheni A. We intend to work with the group in Gongolamboto so that the new group can learn from them.

In terms of tourism and pedestrianization, Ryan Whitney, our other Dar es Salaam Project Officer will be engaging youth to perform on the pedestrian street and, as part of the process, he hopes to raise awareness about the value of urban public space. The majority of street performers and artists in Dar es Salaam are youth. The Pedestrian Street Festival that Ryan is planning will close off one section of downtown to celebrate car free-street culture.

2. How do you interpret "long-term planning" or what is your vision for urban sustainability that augments the urban planning activities in your city?

Long term planning is a way to incorporate the voices of those who would usually not have access to decision making process into the planning discourse. It is different from short term planning because I feel that short term plans in Dar es Salaam are made in haste and do not take into account the needs of all of the relevant parties.

My vision for urban sustainability here is for more people to be engaged in the Master Planning process. We recently held a successful workshop on Urban Agriculture in Urban Planning that addressed the issue of incorporating agriculture into the up coming Dar es Salaam Master Plan. From this meeting all of the stakeholders agreed that they would be like to form a working group to help steer the process. If successful we can help to incorporate the voices of researchers, urban planners, agricultural extension officers, farmers, ministry officials, and other concerned parties into the decision making process. To me that is how I view sustainable long term planning in Dar es Salaam.

4. What are some of the key lessons learned from integrating youth into the urban planning process and how are these lessons or best practices being shared

internationally (by cities and by the youth). (Who are you learning from?)

A group of urban farmers that we are working with will not allow any one under the age of 18 to become a member of the group because they think that youth under 18 should be in school being educated. I found this to be very interesting, as many urban farmers do not see urban farming as a career for their children.

I have learned that youth (in Dar, as well as everywhere else) need to put pressure on the municipalities and the relevant authorities in order for their voices to be heard. Most youth that I have talked to have an issue that they are passionate about, but are surprised by bureaucratic systems. One friend, who is a member of UWABA (<http://www.uwaba.or.tz/index-en.htm>), a cyclist rights organization in Dar es Salaam, and the founder of Afriroots (<http://www.afriroots.co.tz/>), told me that no one took UWABA seriously when they first began as an organization. They didn't give up, instead they kept pushing and inviting themselves to meeting that they weren't invited to and slowly, slowly raising their voices about the issues that they were advocating. Now, years later they are receiving funding from embassies, and other bi-lateral organizations. This year their bicycle caravan (similar to a Critical Mass) was supported by the European Union. During an address after the caravan the head of the EU delegation in Tanzania granted financial support to UWABA's bicycle caravan because they supported the idea. To me this exemplified what patience, passion and a good idea can translate into. However, none of this would be possible without the constant pressure and presence that UWABA had.

In an office discussion my colleague Ryan said “Under ‘participatory planning’ we often assume that the community can formulate detailed strategies to solve their own problems. I don’t think this is the case, and there’s a balance between engaging them, incorporating their feedback and, somehow, helping to foster creative and innovative ideas. This has several international implications, especially for the participator-planning framework.”

5. What have been the biggest challenges that you have overcome around incorporating youth's vision into urban planning processes?

In terms of urban agriculture the groups that we have been working with are mixed in terms of age and gender. So, it has been difficult to separate the youth vision from the group vision.

According to the other project officer Ryan Whitney: “Often it’s difficult to navigate between what the youth want in their community, and what is actually feasible in the community. Bridging this gap is difficult, and often involves an acute understanding of our own personal bias.”

6) If we were to hold this dialogue again in one year, what accomplishments or changes do you hope to see in your city in regards to youth's involvement in urban sustainability?

I hope to see more youth acting as activists in terms of urban agriculture and solid waste management. I hope that these issues will be recognised as not only livelihoods, but dignified jobs for youth in Dar es Salaam.

Additionally, more engagement initiated by the people in power, specifically around youth engagement is needed. It would be wonderful for the municipalities to see why youth engagement is important, and then adapt this model to work with youth without third-party intervention.