RWVC NEWS

Spring/Summer 2021

ABOUT THE CENTER

The Ralph W. Voorhees Center for Civic Engagement at the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy seeks to enhance educational opportunities and facilitate innovative research through community based research and discussion. The Center is a collaborative effort of faculty, staff, and students and community development actors. The center conducts community based research and facilitates discussions about urban problems and innovative policy and practice solutions.

Announcements

The Voorhees Center is excited to welcome:

• Five new Ralph W. Voorhees Public Service Fellows: Jorge Alvarez, Saidy Cedano, Brooke Margolin, Neha Saju, and Isaac Velez

• Student Researchers: Malembe Dumont Copero, Elana Simon, Natalie Tse, Ananya Kashyap, and Tiffany Yong

• Faculty Affiliate Will Payne

Professors Mi Shih and Kathe Newman to host Seminar Series in the Politics of Land Development and Value Capture, supported by the Urban Studies Foundation

The Seminar Series *Negotiating Social Futures: The Politics of Land Development and Value Capture During and After the COVID-19 Pandemic* focuses on the conceptualization, practices, and sociopolitical and material consequences of treating land as a reservoir of value to be extracted for social provision. The series includes a paper conference (**September 23-24, 2021**), case study workshop (**January 7, 2021**), and case study conference (**September 22-23, 2022**).

The first conference will take place online from **September 23-24, 2021**. The two-day paper conference includes three paper panels with discussants, a keynote address by Professor Emeritus Robert W. Lake, co-author of *Land Fictions: The Commodification of Land in City and Country* (2021, Cornell University Press) and early career scholar training. This project is supported by an Urban Studies Foundation Seminar Series Award grant (**USF-SSA-210213**).

RESEARCH CORNER

Middlesex County Emergency Food System During the Covid-19 Pandemic

The <u>Middlesex County Emergency Food System Covid-19 Pandemic</u> report examines how some food pantries in Middlesex County, New Jersey adapted to the pandemic. The report explores how they navigated increased food demand and supply along with distribution challenges. It also details the experiences of individual pantries.

Emergency Food Providers and Social Welfare

In partnership with the Rutgers Collaborative Center for Community-Based Research and Service, Tiffany Yong joins the Voorhees Center to research how food pantries have experienced non-food service requests. Tiffany is a New Jersey Bonner AmeriCorps member serving as the Food Security Team Leader at the Rutgers Collaborative Center. She works with community partners to assess their needs and address the issue of food insecurity in Middlesex County. As COVID-19 increased the need for food assistance, it also increased the need for non-food assistance which increased pressure on the emergency food system. Tiffany is developing a short set of resource guides about non-food services to support pantries.

New Research Brief on Food Pantries during the Pandemic

The RWV Center released a <u>one-page research brief</u> which highlights findings from the *Middlesex County Emergency Food System Covid-19 Pandemic* report. The brief outlines how a set of food pantries in Middlesex County, NJ experienced the pandemic from March to October/November 2020. It examines challenges related to food demand, access, distribution, and delivery, as well as communication, social services and volunteers.

Faith-based Affordable Housing

Nadia Mian was awarded a grant by the Louisville Institute to study faith-based affordable housing. The research study will examine how faith-based institutions are using their property to build affordable housing, and at the same time advocate for and change land use, zoning and housing policy.

INTERSECTIONS
(A Focus on Affiliated Faculty Researchers)

MI SHIH, Associate Professor

Professor Shih has been working on several projects in two areas. The first examines planning practices, social meanings, and politics of land value creation and capture in Taiwan. One of the papers she is writing is co-authored with Cecille de Laurentis, who recently graduated from Bloustein's MCRP and MPP programs. The second project area involves a squatter settlement called Treasure Hill in Taiwan. This research focuses on issues of redesigning auto-constructed spaces, rehousing the urban poor, and retrofitting the city's formal infrastructure grids and regulatory framework to vernacular landscapes and self-built homes. Mi and Zixuan He, a MCRP student, have been working together to write a case study. Mi and Kathe Newman received an Urban Studies Foundation seminar grant. The funding supports two organized conferences on land value capture and case studies. The first conference will be on September 23-24, 2021.

RONALD QUINCY, Professor of Professional Practice

Professor Quincy was awarded a nationally competitive Citizen Diplomacy Action Fund award on behalf of the U.S. Department of State and Partners of America. Representing the United States as a member of the Department of State Exchange Program, the grant enables Dr. Quincy to engage virtually in support of the civic engagement work of a former Rutgers Mandela Washington Fellow, Dr. Surafel Matthew Alemu, in Ethiopia. Professor Quincy was awarded a nationally competitive U.S. Department of State Reciprocal Exchange Program grant. Working alongside Dr. Alemu, this grant will support travel to Ethiopia to conduct capacity building activities for a consortium of community-based organizations. In November 2020, Professor Quincy participated as a speaker/ lead panelist for the White House Fellows 50th Annual Leadership Conference entitled "Race in America: The Way Forward." Professor Quincy was recognized by the United States Agency for International Development for his extensive engagement in supporting the development of young African leaders in all three regions of Sub-Sarahan Africa. He was selected by the Young African Leaders Initiative West Africa Regional Leadership Center (YALI-RLC) Mentorship Program which is headquartered in Ghana and funded and sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development/International Exchange Program, The Young Africa Leadership Initiative (YALI) was launched in 2010 as part of the U.S. Government's Initiative that supports African leaders to enhance leadership skills through mentorship, training, and education.

ERIC SEYMOUR, Assistant Professor

Professor Seymour is continuing his research on predatory land contracts in Detroit by examining outcomes related to properties sold on contract as well as outcomes for properties purchased during the foreclosure crisis by major contract sellers. Land contracts are a form of seller financing where the deed isn't transferred until the principal is paid in full and the buyer doesn't build equity in the process of making payments. Predatory actors leverage these terms to take advantage of persons locked out of conventional mortgage and rental markets. Professor Seymour is continuing his work on evictions in Las Vegas by examining eviction trends during the pandemic. This research focuses on the relationship between national and state moratoria and eviction rates and landlords' responses to rules preventing most evictions due to nonpayment. Professor Seymour is currently working with Professor Newman and Professor Payne on developing a research program for examining chronic and acute issues of housing insecurity in NJ, with a focus on low-income renters.

WILL PAYNE, Assistant Professor

Professor Payne's latest article, "Powering the local review engine at Yelp and Google: intensive and extensive approaches to crowdsourcing spatial data," was just published online-first ([link](#)) in *Regional Studies* in a forthcoming special issue on "Regional Approaches to data, environment, and society." He presented "Review Bombing the Smart City: Contested Political Speech on Local Review Platforms" at the 2021 annual meeting of the American Association of Geographers (AAG) as part of a two-session series on "Politics and Identity in Digital Geographies," which he also co-organized with colleagues at the University of Nevada, Reno and the University of Washington, Tacoma. Professor Payne was a panelist in the "Smart Data to Illuminate Community Grand Challenges" session of the New Jersey Big Data Alliance (NJBDA) 2021 Symposium, hosted virtually by Princeton University. Professor Payne was elected as a Board Member At Large for the Digital Geographies Specialty Group of the AAG, a group of researchers across a wide variety of disciplines and institutions focused on how digital practices and objects shape space, place, and society.

KATHE NEWMAN, Professor

Kathe Newman was elected to the Urban Affairs Association Governing Board and as the Northeast Regional Representative of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning. She is collaborating with Mi Shih and Elana Simon, an MCRP student, on a set of digital case studies and a seminar series on the politics of land that is funded by the Urban Studies Foundation.

RALPH W. VOORHEES PUBLIC SERVICE FELLOWS ALUMNI ACHIEVEMENTS

Ruthie Goldstein (2014-2015) is an Assistant Public Defender with the Mecklenburg County Public Defender's Office in Charlotte, North Carolina. She represents people accused of misdemeanors who cannot afford to pay an attorney. Ruthie graduated from the University of Texas School of Law in May of 2020.

Kinnary Shah (2020-2021) will be starting the PhD program in Biostatistics at Johns Hopkins University this fall. She hopes to research genomics with an application to public health.

Wamia Siddiqui (2020-2021) was recently accepted into the Mayo Clinic's Bioethics Fellowship and will be conducting research this fall at the clinic in Rochester, MN.

Josie Libero (2020-2021) interned with the Metuchen Edison Assistance League (MEAL) Coalition, a coalition of food pantries in Metuchen and Edison, during the Spring 21 semester and chatted with us about her work.

Q. What's the purpose of your internship?

A. I am implementing one of the suggestions we came up with in our Voorhees Fellows research project - create a social media platform for the MEAL food pantries. I created a mailing list, Instagram and Facebook profiles, as well as a website that's coming soon! This will hopefully grow MEAL's awareness, membership and reach.

Q. Why did you intern with MEAL?

A. I fell in love with MEAL while doing research for the Voorhees Fellows project. Learning about the pantries and how they could improve was not the same as being on the ground doing the work. Once I had all this knowledge, it felt like it was the right next step to become part of the team. I feel like there wasn't even really a decision - I was drawn to the work and there was no other option in my mind.

Q. What's been the most rewarding part of your work?

A. The most rewarding part of working with MEAL is working with the pantry. The weeks I am able to go to First Presbyterian and meet with these beautiful, wonderful people and help them in the smallest way is the best feeling. Everyone works so hard and pitches in.