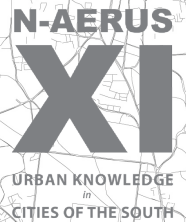


Globalization and the Urban Studio: Evaluating an Inter-University Studio Collaboration in Nairobi^{1*}

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Abstract

Globalization is increasingly shaping the practice and pedagogy of urban planning. In this paper we first explore some of the implications of globalization for planning education. We then describe an experiment in international education, a joint studio/workshops in the Municipal Council of Ruiru, Kenya. The studio and workshops were embedded in a long term, inter-university collaboration between the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Nairobi and the Center for Sustainable Urban Development at Columbia University. Finally, we present and discuss some survey-based findings about the impact on the participating students and reflect on the importance of such international studios for understanding globalization in interaction with urbanization.

Introduction

Globalization is increasingly shaping the practice and pedagogy of urban planning and the related fields of architecture, landscape architecture and urban design. In this paper we explore the implications of globalization for planning education, describe an experiment in international education and present some longitudinal findings about the impact on the participating students as they embark upon their careers as professionals.

Ideologies that define professional urban planning practice are increasingly shaped by the quickening flow of people and ideas that are the essential core of globalization. However, urban space, the substantive concern of planners, is by definition local and specific. Increased global engagement has heightened awareness of the deep complexities and specificities of urbanization in different regions and locales (Sanyal 1990; Sandercock 1998; Garau, Sclar and Carolini 2005). This is reinforced by the fact that globalization is also taking place in the context of an accelerating spread of democratic norms. Reflected within the planning discipline itself which now emphasizes collaboration and citizen participation in planning practice, this has also led to the questioning of North-South relationships in both practice and pedagogy. Too often North-South relationships have reproduced asymmetries of power and problematic “rationalities of governing” and modernist urban ideologies. Rather than support and reinforce the opening of new deliberative spaces and locally produced creative approaches, many international interventions in urban planning tend towards a one-way flow of “technical expertise” (Abdel Hai 1981; Sanyal 1990; Watson 2009). Finally, universities themselves are undergoing globalization pressures reflected in the increasing number of international students and students who wish to practice at a global level upon graduation. Not surprisingly this is raising concerns about the internationalization of curricula, and pressures to provide programs abroad (Nayyar 2008).

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While globalization offers many new and exciting opportunities to enrich the theory and practice of urban planning, and gain nuanced understandings of the diversity of planning cultures, approaches and challenges, clear dangers also exist. Globalizing the studio by leveraging economic and technological integration to hold studios in diverse locales with internationally integrated teams may involve replicating asymmetries of power and knowledge production between “North and South” as well as between universities and local communities.² This asymmetry is linked in part to the resources gap between partners. Another “clear and present danger is that an internationalized higher education system may stifle rather than develop domestic capabilities in the higher education systems of the developing world, particularly in the least developed countries” (Nayyar 2008, 13). Yet these higher education systems are critical for the production of locally relevant urban knowledge as well as training the next generation of urban planners and policy-makers. Supporting them should be a major goal of global collaboration.

In response, many urban theorists and practitioners have embraced the notion of critical engagement in architecture, planning and urban design through such organizations as Architects for Humanity and Global Planning Educators Interest Group. Within this movement a global form of studio emerges as a way to express and deepen engaged understanding and “reciprocal learning as well as confront local implications of globalization including increasing numbers of urban poor and their complex living conditions in cities” (Rubbo 2010). Such studios, which link and work closely with local communities, are common in the United States although they are often understood through the lens of “community service” (Barry 1996; Giles 1994; Lang 1983; Raokes and Norris-Tirrell 2000; Vakil, Maran and Feldt 1990; Wetmore and Heumann 1988). We are now just beginning to reflect and theorize on the studio, taken to a global level, as a way to teach about mutual learning, comparative planning and respectful international collaboration while addressing the complexity of globalization and urbanization processes as experienced from the ground up.

A number of useful reflections by faculty exist on the experience of such global urban studios or workshops (Abramson 2005; Bull 2004; Dandekar 2009; Klopp, Ngau and Sclar forthcoming; Rubbo 2010). However, the study by Bull (2004) is one of the few attempts to actually survey students who were involved in a cross-disciplinary and international program and workshop in Bangkok (University of Melbourne, l’Ecole d’Architecture et Paysage, Bordeaux and Faculty of Architecture at Kasetsart University, Bangkok). A survey of thirty students probed whether the program attained its goals. These included skills in navigating other cultures, capacities in reflective and critical thinking and enriched personal and professional networks. The survey revealed a relatively strong consensus across nationality and institution that the workshop helped them “develop awareness of how other cultures and their disciplines address social and environmental problems” (Bull 2004, 76). However geographical differences emerged; the Thai students were the least satisfied that their expectations were met (Bull 2004, 83). This raised the important question of whether the perceived value of the studio tends to differ between “host” and “guest” and if so, why? Such questions demand more critical inquiry into how the internationalization of education is occurring in practice (Bull 2004, 85).

In order to address such questions and concerns, this paper explores one experiment in the form of an engaged global studio in Nairobi, Kenya which was embedded within a long-term inter-university collaboration. The studio embraced the notion of “reciprocal learning” that begins with the assumptions that:

- 1) local knowledge is critical to developing and testing how planning theories and approaches developed in one region of the world may or may not be applied to another region and if applicable what adaptations or new concepts

² This point was raised at the World Urban Forum 2010 Universities Round Table at Rio de Janeiro on 24 March 2010 by participants from Southern Universities.

may be necessary.

- 2) Deep local knowledge and global collaborations can also lead to new ways of looking at problems all together (Qadeer 1990).

The studio was embedded within an inter-university collaboration based on the notion of an “authentic partnership” that aspires to produce relationships of trust, honesty, transparency, respect and equity and the genuine co-production or facilitation of knowledge for positive local change.³ Fowler succinctly characterizes “authentic partners” versus relations involving “clients” or “counterparts” as involving “an equality in ways of working and mutuality in respect for identity, position and role” (1998, 141).

Drawing on our three year experience with the Nairobi studio, we believe that such studios, based on reciprocal learning and embedded in such longer term authentic partnerships among universities, can help higher education systems manage globalization better as well as create mutual improvements in university learning and curriculum. However, it is critical to examine how participants in this process, from students to those communities and institutions that host and engage the students and faculty, perceive and learn from this approach as practiced in actual international studios. Hence, drawing on a preliminary evaluation by students involved in a studio and workshops in metropolitan Nairobi, this paper presents a reflection on an international studio embedded within an ongoing collaboration between the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Nairobi and the Center for Sustainable Urban Development at Columbia University.

Description of the Workshops/Studio

The idea of a joint studio in metropolitan Nairobi emerged out of collaboration between the University of Nairobi’s Department of Urban and Regional Planning (DURP) and the Center for Sustainable Urban Development (CSUD) at the Columbia University Earth Institute, which began in 2005 and involved as partners the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation (GSAPP) and the School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) at Columbia University. It also began with a mutual concern with Nairobi’s burgeoning problems of rapid sprawl and unplanned peri-urban growth. As Watson notes, “it is these sprawling urban peripheries, almost entirely unserved and unregulated, that make up the bulk of what is termed slum settlement and it is in these areas that most urban growth is taking place” (2009, 2265). In the Nairobi region, following this global trend, ‘ruralopolitan’ development has been providing affordable housing to the burgeoning urban populace but also appears to threaten satellite towns with spill over impacts producing serious peripheral slum growth and environmental damage. Relative to the attention received by Nairobi’s slums like Kibera, this problem of peri-urban growth, including its dynamics, consequences and linkages to Nairobi’s core dynamics remains under-studied (Memon 1982).

Fortuitously, the local municipal council of Ruiru, approximately 18 km north of the city invited both DURP and CSUD to help it cope with a myriad of problems linked to Nairobi’s proximity and expansion. While DURP had been conducting studios in Ruiru on various aspects of the town’s urban development within its formal boundaries for many years, it had not yet thought to look at the informal processes occurring outside of formal boundaries. The university had also not yet put into practice more collaborative planning practices promoted in contemporary theorizing or lent its formidable local expertise to directly working with the council. Part of the reason for this was that Kenya was only recently moving out of authoritarian and top-down processes inherited from colonial times. Democratic space had opened, making collaborative planning possible. The CSUD-DURP collaboration provided a catalyst to experiment with a

3 See “Achieving the Promise of Authentic Community-Higher Education Partnerships: A Community Partner Summit” April 24-26, 2006 - Wingspread Conference Center, Racine, WI Available at http://depts.washington.edu/ccph/pdf_files/FINALCPS_Executive_Summary.pdf.

more engaged studio that would bring citizen participation into the beginnings of a local physical development plan. The vision was that this plan, as an instrument of accountability and catalyst for dialogue, in turn could help citizen's organizations and the council start to shape the dynamics of land-use in the public interest.⁴

After consultations with the municipal council, CSUD-DURP experimented with a studio that brought students together between January-May 2006 to work directly with the municipality of Ruiru. They also collaborated with the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University, which carried out a workshop simultaneously and continued for another two years (2007-2008) to conduct follow-up workshops for the Municipal Council of Ruiru on its water, sanitation and solid waste concerns.⁵ Within these workshops the international student teams included two Kenyans and continued to draw guidance and support from DURP faculty and students who helped explain local politics and conditions, assist with advice and contacts as well as research design. We also experimented with bringing one planning student into the interdisciplinary policy workshop teams and a policy student went to Kenya at the same time as the planning studio and worked with these students in the studio, which would normally contain only planning students

The Columbia studio members traveled in February 2006 to meet with their Nairobi counterparts. Prior to that time, they were utilizing the superb library services at Columbia University to do a literature review, but much critical information was not documented and hence the students gathered critical local information in communication with their counterparts and faculty in Nairobi who possessed a fine grained understanding of local context and dynamics but did not always have the same access to a wide range of published literature. The short period of time of the Columbia studio group's presence in Kenya (two weeks) did not easily allow for in depth joint fieldwork, an issue which a number of DURP and Columbia University students raised in the surveys. However, it did allow for extensive discussions between the two groups on methodology, the nature of the issues facing Ruiru and recommendations, all under the guidance of combined faculty. The workshop work (discussed below) supplemented and enriched the studio process as well as allowed for more interaction between Columbia and DURP as the policy students traveled in January, February and March for periods of two weeks each. The time for both studio and workshop on both sides was constrained by the fact that this was going on during the semester when students had other courses.

The SIPA workshops in contrast to the GSAPP studio were based on a different pedagogic model. The GSAPP studio model requires all the students to travel together and then develop a plan working as a single team. The workshop model developed at SIPA is designed to teach Masters students in policy about "applied development". Students are not required to all be on the ground at the same time. Teams of around 6-8 students travel and work autonomously as a team, but with guidance from a faculty member in New York. Because of the CSUD-DURP collaboration a new situation was created where the visiting students now had the enormous benefit of local faculty and students at DURP who served as advisors, mentors and indispensable sounding boards. This meant that the students could build on the accumulated knowledge of the previous student teams which helped mitigate some of the constraints of limited field time. Two teams worked directly with the council while linking to community groups and DURP for the actual research on problems that the council asked them to look into: water, sanitation and solid waste issues.⁶ The students were required to present

4 Land is notoriously mal-governed in Kenya and subject to corruption and political manipulation which is one of the major challenges to improved urban planning. See Republic of Kenya (2004) and Klopp (2000).

5 Nairobi Studio Report 2006 "Nairobi Metropolitan Expansion in a Peri-Urban Area", Nairobi Studio Report, Columbia University 2006. EPD team 2006 Meeting Basic Needs in a Rapidly Urbanizing Community: A Water, Sanitation and Solid Waste Assessment in Ruiru, Kenya, SIPA Columbia University EPD Team 2007 Building Community, Building Rujuwasco: An Integrated Water, Sanitation and Health Strategy for the Municipality of Ruiru. EPD team 2008 Kenya and Opportunities in Water: From Cape Town to Ruiru Available at <http://www.sipa.columbia.edu/academics/concentrations/epd/workshop.html>.

6 One of the student teams working on solid waste management was diverted to Cape Town because of the post election violence in Kenya in 2007/2008. They were able to link up with DURP faculty who were in Cape

their results to the municipality through stakeholder meetings. One such meeting that presented results of water sampling conducted with the Ministry of Water drew 200 stakeholders. One of the Kenyan students on the team and Professor Musyimi Mbathi of DURP facilitated the meeting using Swahili when necessary. The ongoing CSUD-DURP inter-university collaboration then allowed for much deeper engagement on the ground as well as mutual learning and respect.

Key Questions: The Survey

The aim of integrating the DURP and Columbia students was to bring Kenyan students⁷ from the University of Nairobi and diverse Columbia University students together in a collective interdisciplinary project that was responding to the demands and needs of an actual municipality. We wanted to provoke them to think about how to collaborate across cultural and economic gaps as well as create a heightened awareness of power relations and institutional dynamics at both local and global levels. While students were prepared through course-work to be aware of power inequities and their impacts, studies, time and again, show learning in a classroom setting does not easily translate into improved practice outside the classroom (Resnick 1987). We wanted to exploit the power of learning in an actual work context while recognizing how we learn in context - passively or more actively and self-reflexively - also matters.

As we began to theorize more about our approach, we realized the need to more rigorously assess the impact of the studio/workshops process on students, the local community and the universities who participated including changes in curriculum. We are now planning a broader independent evaluation from the perspective of Ruiru municipality and its residents and also a reevaluation of curriculum (DURP recently completed its review which was influenced by the collaboration and joint studio/workshops). However, we also wanted to more systematically study the way students from both universities perceived the impact of their studio/workshop experience a number of years after the fact when they were practicing in their fields of urban planning and international development.

As a first step we devised a survey that sought to find out whether in fact the students, now several years out of the program, felt learning in context through the studio/workshop made any difference in what and how they learned. We also wanted to know whether they learned about local and global power dynamics through the collaboration and if so, what they learned and if they felt the inter-university collaboration and the work directly with the municipality enhanced their learning. Finally, we were also eager to know whether they kept in touch with each other within and across institutions.

The surveys were sent by email to all the students involved in the studio and workshops. This included twenty-eight students from DURP, both the BA Planning (undergraduates) and MA Planning (graduates); twenty students, including many international students, in the SIPA Columbia University workshops; and eleven students in the planning studio mostly from GSAPP Columbia University (there was one public health student as well). The surveys were sent out and then the responses compiled by colleagues at both institutions who were not involved in the studio/workshops. The students were reassured that their responses would remain anonymous. They were also given a chance to write as much as they liked about any other reflections stemming from the experience.

Overall the response rate was quite good.⁸ The exception was that few of the BA students from DURP responded (7 out of 22 BAs (31.8%)), which we understood to mean that they were most likely struggling looking for work and are possibly less likely to have cheap internet access. We hope to trace them in the future. At DURP four of

Town and the report was circulated back to Ruiru.

⁷ Most of the students at DURP are Kenyan.

⁸ At one point when we had a poor response rate from SIPA students a faculty member who knew the students sent a gentle reminder which improved the response rates.

the six MA students (66.7%) responded. All twenty students from SIPA involved in the workshops over 2006-2008 were surveyed with a response rate of 12 of 20 (60%). All eleven of the studio students involved in the joint studio were surveyed, with a response rate of 10 of 11 (91%).

From a methodological standpoint our study could have been buttressed by a higher student response rate to the survey and follow-up interviews with those students who did complete surveys. Follow-up interviews would present an opportunity to elicit more in-depth student opinions on some of the most salient survey results we observed. Additionally, students typically complete course evaluations at the conclusion of the semester. We were unable to obtain these evaluations, which is unfortunate, as they would have allowed us to better understand how student reactions and opinions of the studios/workshops changed or remained the same over time. However, even if we had obtained these evaluations, they tended to ask different kinds of questions. In the future, similar surveys conducted both before and years after the studio would be very valuable.

Results /Analysis

In this section we present the results of the key survey questions, supplementing the numerical results with highlights from student commentary. One striking result is that *all* the students surveyed felt that they learned “different skills” from the workshop/studio than any other course in their program (see Table 1).

Table 1: Did you find that you learned from the workshop/studio? (The same skills and knowledge as any other course in your program; Different skills and knowledge)

Possible Answer	SIPA Workshop N=12	GSAPP Studio N=10	Total Columbia N=22	DURP N=11	Combined Total N=33
Same	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Different	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Some students from both institutions used similar language to describe the experience:

“The studio was a special eye-opener in dealing with real life planning work, integrating problem identification and solution-finding, in an environment of different actors’ participation...the studio teams from UoN, and from Columbia University, the local stakeholders in Ruiru” (DURP student)

“It’s one thing to learn about metropolitan planning from the desk. It’s entirely another to learn about it on the ground. By immersing ourselves in meetings and informal chats with residents, community groups, professionals, academics, and local government, I learned about the complexities, nuances, and attention to local issues that make good planning.” (Columbia University student)

The vast majority of students found that the studio or workshop helped them learn to work across disciplines (see Table 2). By integrating interdisciplinary policy students and planning students as well as one public health student, the first year the planning students had an unusually cross-disciplinary experience, while for many of the policy students it was their first time working with planners.

Table 2: Did you find that the workshop/studio helped you learn to work in an interdisciplinary context?

Possible Answer	SIPA Workshop N=12	GSAPP Studio N=10	Total Columbia N=22	DURP N=11	Combined Total N=33
Yes	100%	90%	95%	100%	97%
No	0%	10%	5%	0%	3%
Not sure	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

The majority of students also felt that besides gaining practical experience, they learned about “complex relationships and power dynamics at a local level” (see Table 3) and some noted in particular that the experience allowed them to give voice to some local people that might not normally be given the opportunity.

Table 3: Do you feel that your studio/workshops provided an opportunity to get practical experience in dealing with complex relationships and power relations at the local level?

Possible Answer	SIPA Workshop N=12	GSAPP Studio N=10	Total Columbia N=22	DURP N=11	Combined Total N=33
Yes	100%	70%	86%	91%	88%
No	0%	0%	0%	9%	3%
Not sure	0%	30%	14%	0%	9%

When it came to the question of the “complex relationships between global South and global North” the responses were more scattered (see Table 4). In this question we wanted to see if students would notice any asymmetries of power and resources within the project itself as well as within the work in Ruiru.

Table 4: Do you feel that your studio/workshops provided an opportunity to get practical experience in dealing with complex relationships and power relations between the global South and global North?

Possible Answer	SIPA Workshop N=12	GSAPP Studio N=10	Total Columbia N=22	DURP N=11	Combined Total N=33
Yes	50%	20%	36%	36%	36%
No	8%	40%	23%	36%	27%
Not sure	42%	40%	41%	27%	36%

Here with many students reporting that they were not sure of the response, it is possible that the question was not clear, but even then a substantial number of students felt that they did *not* learn about North-South relations through the experience. A number of DURP students had some clear concerns reflected in their comments. They recognized the inherent asymmetry in having Columbia University students travel to Kenya but not the reverse. Many suggested that an exchange where they traveled to New York would have helped, and they were disappointed about not having the equivalent experience of learning about planning processes elsewhere.⁹ For their part, the Columbia students suggested more time in Kenya and improved information sharing with their local partners and counterparts. Clearly, there was a need to find ways to involve two-way travel and also more overt discussions about globalization and North-South collaborations in the studio work as well as longer time frames to better understand complex power dynamics. It is interesting that the Columbia students did not seem to notice the asymmetry in travel and power between the local and American students.

Based on his ten-year collaboration between Chinese universities, Abrahamson notes the value of “maintaining long term relations and trust as a basis for collaboration” (2005, 99). Such collaborations require time; it is through ongoing communications,

⁹ The original grant from the Rockefeller Foundation included this component, which has since been cut with the amount of the grant under the current financial crisis.

collaborative projects and coproduced research papers that relationships of trust and mutual exchange get built. The DURP-CSUD studio and workshops came at the beginning of an ongoing collaboration and before these relations were firmly established. However, we still felt it important to ask students about the value of the DURP-CSUD collaboration for their studio experience (see Table 5).

The results show that a bulk of the students - 69% - felt that the collaboration improved the studio experience, with the vast majority of DURP students and Columbia students involved in the joint studio in the first year reporting that the collaboration improved their experience. Slightly less of the SIPA students involved in the workshop reported an impact, but this appears linked to responses from the team that was diverted from Kenya during the post election violence in 2007/2008 and never had a chance to use the full support of the DURP network in Kenya.

Table 5: How did the CSUD-DURP collaboration affect the workshop/studio experience?

Possible Answer	SIPA Workshop N=11	GSAPP Studio N=10	Total Columbia N=21	DURP N=11	Combined Total N=32
No impact	0%	10%	5%	9%	6%
Made it better	55%	70%	62%	82%	69%
Made it worse	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Not sure	45%	20%	33%	9%	25%

We were also interested in the role of studio in building networks beyond the studio and also across the two institutions. Here we found that students did stay in touch with their colleagues, but this was limited for the most part to those who were in their teams. The lack of continued interaction between DURP and CSUD students beyond the fieldwork in Kenya meant that only a few students from both institutions reported sustained contact with someone from the other institution. Finally, the vast majority - 84% - reported that the studio contributed to how they do their current work with DURP students all reporting an influence (see Table 6). Some of the discrepancy may be explained by the fact that the studio was in Kenya and hence the kinds of locally specific knowledge gained in the studio were of most practical use to the DURP students who responded, many of who are now working in the field of planning. Still large numbers of the SIPA students who are now working at an international level reported a contribution to their current work.

Table 6: Do you feel the workshop/studio experience has contributed to how you do your current work?

Possible Answer	SIPA Workshop N=12	GSAPP Studio N=9	Total Columbia N=21	DURP N=11	Combined Total N=32
Yes	83%	67%	76%	100%	84%
No	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Not sure	17%	33%	24%	0%	16%

Conclusions

Student evaluations of the CSUD-DURP studios/workshops highlight key issues concerning how the urban studio travels to the global level. First, it shows the value of further evaluating, analyzing and comparing these new global forms of urban studio. The student feedback and the experience of studio/workshop have been invaluable in learning how to address the challenges of teaching planning in a rapidly globalizing world. In the case of DURP, it has fed into a curriculum review¹⁰, and CSUD also aims to trigger more reflection at the way Columbia University, which is attempting to position itself as an innovator in education about sustainable development, intervenes at local levels and the kinds of partnerships and collaborations it forms.

Secondly, despite the overall success of the studio based on a variety of indicators, attention needs to focus on questions of asymmetry in power and access within the global studio and the learning process itself. We need to move from a situation in which “planners and ideas from Western countries do the traveling to one in which “both the planning issues and planners themselves travel in all directions” (Bowen and Delius 2001, 6) cited in Abramson 2005, 90). Within the CSUD-DURP collaboration, we have succeeded much more at the level of faculty exchanges which donors appear more willing to fund. However, as the DURP students point out, much more might be done to bring Kenyan students to New York to work on similar studios in neighborhoods facing urgent problems. In this way more reciprocal learning can take place. As the experiment in Chicago with participatory budgeting from Brazil suggests, much learning can and must go both ways.¹¹

Thirdly, although the majority of the Columbia students perceived the studio/workshop as a learning experience, many felt that they got more out of the studio than Ruiru, which was left with “solving the problems”. All of the Kenyan students from DURP raised concerns about the usefulness of the studio for the Ruiru community. They articulated sensitivity to “involving the community fully in the planning process” and a strong desire for continuing engagement “throughout the life of the studio from conception to implementation of the plan” (which is a long term process that extends beyond the studio). These students expressed concern about the extent to which their work, which became part of the local physical development plan, would have an impact on the municipality. Some raised concerns about not enough engagement with the council and also about managing expectations of the diverse actors within the municipality. This all points to the need to also evaluate the way the local community partners experience the studio/workshop processes and its outcomes and how communication and expectations might be better managed. This is an understudied aspect of these studio approaches and is one of the next phases of this work.

Fourthly, we agree with the students’ concerns about impact and Abrahamson’s key insight (2005, 99) that:

“transcultural collaborative fieldwork studios might best be used as part of a continuing research and pedagogical engagement which includes opportunities to reduce asymmetries in opportunity by leading to two –way travel. If engagement involves a series of studios, then the integration of teaching and research could form a kind of feedback loop that allows successive studios to benefit from the experience of the previous ones, then use new approaches that are challenging for faculty as well as students.”

For us the studio/workshop was a logical beginning point of what would evolve into a larger inter-university collaboration focused on Ruiru and Nairobi’s growing ruralopolitan region. Deepening this collaboration to have more impact on students and learning requires more collaborative engaged studios. Applying to new studios and curriculum the lessons learned from the 2006-2008 CSUD-DURP studio/workshops along with other experiments such as Global Studio (Rubbo 2010), the Sino-Canadian collaboration (Abramson 2005), the Mexican studio at the World Urban Congress (Dandekar 2009) and the Thai-Australian-French workshop (Bull 2004), among others is a key next step. This project along with the collaborations that sustain them are however highly dependent on sustained funding. Yet many funding agencies tend to have short time horizons and follow trends rather than support the slow process of institution building and global networking needed to confront the massive twin challenges of globalization and urbanization. More evaluation and documentation of the value of these long term collaborations and joint studio exchanges would help in creating needed support for this kind of engaged networking and knowledge production.

Finally, we do need to address the critical issue of the impact of this work on Ruiru and the metropolitan planning process itself in Nairobi. While we await a long term independent assessment, it is clear that the DURP/CSUD studio and workshops, stakeholder consultations, research and ongoing dialogues with the Ruiru Municipal Council provided the building blocks for both a local physical development plan and an improved local dialogue about wider governance issues.¹² The plan is undergoing final refinements before approval, a process more recently complicated by the ongoing donor-funded construction of a super highway with minimal transparency and consultation. The highway, much like a Robert Moses project in New York City of the 1960s, is tearing the municipality into two and destroying key local neighborhoods and nodes of commerce such as the large regional market. This makes the task of creating some form of planning and land use control through a citizen-backed and enforceable local physical development plan all the more urgent.

Events in Ruiru suggest an ongoing need for more and more symmetric international studios that directly grapple with the dynamic forces that are shaping our globe and will shape the character of twenty-first century urbanization in locally specific ways. An engaged global planning community that experiments in novel internationalized and interdisciplinary learning must continue to grow if we are to better learn how to empower local communities, governments, and transnational networks confronting formidable forces of globalization and local politics such as those that are converging on the small town of Ruiru with astonishing speed and with potentially devastating consequences. To better design and implement international studios, relevant curriculum and the inter-university collaborations that sustain this, as well as improve their quality and impact for students, faculty and citizens, we must also engage in more sustained evaluation and self-reflection on current efforts at globalizing learning.

12 As part of the discussion around making the plan public and widely accessible, CSUD and DURP with help from a small ICT start-up with a social agenda, E-pasha, have assisted the council with a website <http://www.ruirumunicipal.or.ke/> where a summary of the plan can now be found. We are experimenting with the helpfulness of this technology (among others such as community radio) for how to make plans widely accessible.

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