Jaime Lerner, born in Curitiba, Brazil in 1937, graduated in Architecture and Urban Planning from the School of Architecture of the Federal University of Paraná in 1968. Responsible for the creation and structuring of the Institute of Urban Planning and Research of Curitiba (IPUC) in 1965, he participated in the preparation of the Master Plan for Curitiba. He was Mayor of Curitiba for three terms: 1971/75, 1979/83 and 1989/92. During his first term as mayor, Lerner implemented the Integrated Mass Transport System, acknowledged worldwide for its efficiency, quality and low cost. In his two subsequent terms, Lerner continued to develop urban and social programs that resulted in the ranking of Curitiba among the world cities with the highest quality of life. Elected Governor of the State of Paraná in 1994, Lerner promoted economic and social transformations, and generated improvements in transport, land use, education, health, sanitation, recreation and industrialization. The state of Paraná received the United Nations Peace Award from the UNICEF for the “From the Street to School”, ”Protecting Life” and “Teacher’s University” programs. Re-elected governor in 1998, his second term ended in 2002. In July 2002, Mr. Lerner was elected president of International Union of Architects, for a three-year term.

The Jaime Lerner Endowment for Smart Design was established in 2001 at Parsons School of Design in memory of designer Jaime Lerner. Lerner’s career crossed many disciplines, encompassing the work of educator, interior architect, philosopher, scientist and artist. Previous lecturers have included William McDonough, Thomas Horetz, and Julie Segrinmann. 2006 recipients of Michael Kall Endowments are Hervé Aubry (for an eco-effective design for the Williamsburg Waterfront State Park), Matthew Baird (for workshops that will develop methodologies for understanding how to use performance criteria and specifications to select sustainable materials and processes), Michael Hargens (for an extensive investigation of green roofs), Ivan Kiefer (for research into how the Polytechnique Federale de Lausanne to do research on modifying the design of anadolic Daylighting systems), Paul Makovicky (for developing a knowledge map, timeline, and bibliography relating to important examples of sustainable houses in the United States and Canada).

Matthew Baird is a faculty member of the Department of Architecture, Interior Design and Lighting at Parsons The New School for Design. While working at Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects, he was the project architect on the American Museum of Folk Art. In 1999, he founded Matthew Baird Design, whose recent projects include the Tai Ping Carpet Showroom and a newly constructed townhouse in the Meatpacking District, New York.

Benjamin Ives: How easy did you find the transition from being an architecture student to engaging political systems in Curitiba? Did you develop skills in school that you feel were transferable?

Jaime Lerner: The skills I got in school were the same you would get in any architecture of school. But after finishing school I got a scholarship to go to France, where I stayed for one year. During this time, I took a course in urban planning, and I got the chance to work at Candiulli, Josic, and Woods when they won the Toulouse Le Mirail competition. I used to draw all night, and then I would go to the university. And every night, at about three or four in the morning, I would walk through the streets of Paris. At that time, the Toulouse Le Mirail project was considered a significant contribution to city planning. When I returned to Curitiba, the mayor was in the process of trying to tear down many of the most important buildings in the city to make very wide streets for more cars. As a student in the early 60s, I had participated in a movement against that. In response to this protest, the Curitiba City Hall solicited a plan. And when I came back to Curitiba, in 1962, I was part of a small team of young architects - who had no experience at all - that made a proposal in the form of ideas. We lost to a French firm that won together with a firm from São Paulo. But, they needed a local counterpart, and I was one of the architects that made up this student movement to getting involved in urban issues in Curitiba. Because of the student movement, the mayor created a kind of advisory group, and out of this advisory group we founded an institute of urban planning that generated ideas. This city-funded research institute still exists and continues to propose new urban planning ideas. The mayor appoints its director. I was its director for a while and then became director of city planning. In those days, mayors were appointed not elected, and I was appointed mayor by the governor of the region, in 1971. I was appointed because it was thought an architect or an urban planner would not threaten the broader political leadership. And I was a very weak mayor because being appointed I could be fired the next day. So I organized a
**KW:** So is it more about getting people to cooperate and to see that they share a community?

**JL:** You have to have political will. You have to have leadership. But if you don’t, you have to push. I am currently working as an advisor in some cities where people of many cultures, with many different skills, want to improve their cities. For example, in Mexico, in Oaxaca.

**Santiago Rivera:** Well, Oaxaca is a case of a city with an extremely rich historical culture and a still-existing indigenous society with a heightened sense of community.

**JL:** That’s true. In addition to political will, you have to try to feel the city through its daily problems. For example, you have to understand the problems people face in using public transport, understand the problems that children encounter. This information can be gotten from sociologists, from teachers, from journalists, from philosophers. Journalists, for example, are used to daily deadlines, so they are able to condense well. I also work with poets and with artists. Why? Because they can feel society earlier, through the skin. So, if you can work with people that are able to feel society earlier, why should you work with specialists that get their impressions later? Also, although you have to work in direct relation to people’s needs, you also have to work with potentialities. As a mayor, I organized myself and my team to work with potentialities in the mornings, scenarios to address the needs and the problems of large populations, transport, education, government, the care of children, etc. So in the afternoons I was very comfortable putting on my mayor’s hat and dealing with fundamental issues and pressures. I think of every problem to the city as involving an equation of core responsibility. So, for example, our transport system was resolved through a private initiative that bought the double-articulated bus fleet, and we pay an equation of core responsibility. So, for example, our best transport systems in the world, and one of the few that is not subsidized. This is an equation of core responsibility. So, for example, our

**SR:** I’d like to go back to Mexico or to many examples around the world, such as Africa or South America, where the implementation of a culture of change or sustainability has to be enacted at a regional scale. In many cases, the basic needs of a population are not being satisfied, so planning is elaborated more at the level of satisfying primary needs. In such contexts, people can’t grasp or understand global environmental problems. So, how would you, as a politician, help a community to understand this cooperation that you talk about?

**JL:** Well, I’ll give you an example I often use, the problem of garbage. The slums in our region are more or less in the hills or in the valleys. The trash thrown out in these slums was polluting the streams, in which the children were playing. This was terrible. Every strategy and proposal to resolve a problem has to be very understandable and it has to be desirable. If not, nobody will cooperate. So, we proposed to buy their garbage. People said, this guy is crazy, he’s going to buy garbage! But we had to pay anyway to collect garbage, so they were asked to bring bags of garbage and we gave them transport tokens in exchange. The exchange provided income to them and at the same time they learned why it’s important to control waste. This has been going on for more than sixteen years. We needed to have garbage sorted so we started teaching the children how to do it, in their schools. The children teach their parents, so now every family separates. We have the highest rate of waste separation in the world right now, up to 70 percent of households. With regard to environmental issues such as global warming or the ozone layer, people watch the situation as though it was a terminal patient: how sad that there is nothing to be done. Separate your garbage; use your car less; live and work closer together. Urban planning proposals for transport have to relate to land use. One of the secrets of Curitiba is that we have very diverse neighborhoods. The rich live with the poor and that makes for a sense of community. When you separate economic activities from human settlements, when you separate working from living, it is disastrous for cities, and also for regions and countries in general. It’s very easy to

**JL:** First of all, I think that every child should learn how to draw her/his own city. Because if they understand their cities, they will respect them. So, what is the secret of Curitiba? There is no real secret. Every time we had an idea, or put forward a proposal, we tried to make people understand the scenario. If they liked it, they helped to make it happen. If not, we had to change things. One problem is that neighborhood movements are very strong with regard to their neighborhoods, but not so strong with regard to the city as a whole. I think that many countries don’t have a global enough approach to problems, while many cities have too global an approach; they’re not specific enough.

**Nicholas Locke:** I want to pick up on where you’re going with leisure activities. How would you make some of your ideal situations for future cities popular for more than just an architectural crowd!
Matthew Baird: When we talk about Curitiba, there is a lot of optimism, and it’s such a wonderful success to study. And immediately, the debate goes along the lines of “well, how do we do that in New York?” There is a perception that there is really not much we can do, that the general public feels disenfranchised here. And, I think one of the perfect examples of that right now is perhaps one of the most public issues of urban planning that we have in the city, which you may have read about. They want to put a stadium right in the middle of midtown. Hearing you speak today, I started to think, maybe that’s not such a bad thing, to mix a big sports arena with residential and commercial use. But everything in my own teaching or learning indicates that these economic generators should be in areas that need economic development, not in areas where the land is so expensive. What do you think about that?

JL: I’m against big urban fabric works. Usually, it’s the fastest way to transfer one congested place to another congested place. My usual response to such proposals is “Do nothing with urgency.” When I say I support mixed-use zoning, I’m not referring to something like a large-scale stadium. What it means is that they build a big stadium, and the taxpayers have to provide infrastructure to increase the land value so the developers will profit without sharing the profit with the whole city or with the immediate community. It’s a very old story. We’ve had people who wanted to donate their land for an independent university. But it was obvious that they owned adjacent land, and we’d have to make infrastructural improvements and they would profit. I said, no thanks, we want the university to be inside the city.

Michael Hargens: New York is a city in which structures run smoothly. But economically and environmentally, it’s not as friendly. So in that case, how do you get people motivated to change things? And then, how do you convince the bureaucracy to do that?

JL: Well, first of all, you have to make people understand the problems. How do you deal with bureaucracies? I would say you have to be fast. As a mayor, I accomplished some things very quickly. The first pedestrian mall in the country, in Curitiba, was implemented in seventy-two hours. We built a big park in twenty-eight days. It can take two or three years to build a park. You start with aerial photography, bids from architects and landscape architects, contractors, etc. But sometimes you have to be fast. We built Oscar Niemeyer’s big museum, a beautiful museum, in five months. So, why is it important to be fast with such projects? Firstly, to avoid your own bureaucracy. Secondly, to avoid political problems. Thirdly, you have to do it fast in order to avoid your own insecurities. In terms of funding projects, sometimes, you don’t have the money, so you have to devise an economical equation. When I was governor, we had to clean our harbors. In Rio they got a loan from the World Bank for 800 million dollars to clean their bays. But we had to work with a different economy. So we asked, how do we avoid pollution? Where does pollution come from? From sewage or from trash. So, I made an agreement with the fishermen. If they caught a fish, it belonged to them. If they caught garbage, we bought it from them. So, if the day was not good for fishing, they went fishing for garbage. The more you fish for garbage, the greener the bay becomes. The cleaner the bay is, the more fish they have. We also paid a monthly subsidy to families whose food needs weren’t being met, in order to induce them to enter into the program. But the cost was nothing compared with 800 million dollars. I wouldn’t say the bay is absolutely clean, but it’s cleaner. It will become cleaner and cleaner and cleaner. So, when money is not available, you have to find a way to do it.

NL: What do you think architects can do in different types of, specifically capitalist, cultures to be able to be heard more?

JL: You have the same problems that we have – problems of transport, environment, education, health care, and the care of children. Our problems are increased through globalization. Every year we’ll have an increasing number of proposals for cities. Why is that so important? Because the discussion of globalization has been considered in very mechanistic ways, very antagonistically. I prefer the expression of a former president of Portugal who said that we have to globalize solidarity. And the city is a refuge of solidarity. It’s where all of the answers to problems of housing, transport, education, health care and the care of children can be resolved. And countries that don’t have a generous view of their own cities, don’t have a generous view of their own people.
This timeline, an attempt to provide a historical context for the discussion with Jaime Lerner, was researched and coordinated by Scapes 4 interns Benjamin Ives (M.Arch 2005), Komal Kehar (M.Arch 2006), Nicholas Locke (M.Arch 2006), and Santiago Rivera (M.Arch 2005), in consultation with Sunil Bald, Parsons Architecture faculty member, and Silvia Kolbowski. Additional research was conducted in Brazil by Laura Barbi and Rita de Cássia Velloso. One of the main questions that underlay the selections was “What could be pinpointed in the genealogy of Brazil to explain Curitiba’s popular support for major public urban works projects?” To that end, the categories that were researched included political history, cultural history, urban history, and Brazilian land rights laws.
Brazil is declared independent as a republic, rather than as a monarchy, as are other countries in Spanish America. September 7, 1822 is celebrated annually as Brazil's Independence Day.

Despite public protest and civil unrest in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil survives intact as a united nation because of support given to government by the landed oligarchy and urban elite, who repress social unrest, and contain the threat of racial war in order not to lose political and commercial privileges.

The legal concept of social property appears for the first time, the idea that the right of private property is only to be recognized provided it performs a social function. This has been upheld in all federal constitutions since.

The Land Law Act forbids the acquisition of public land by any means but purchase. Land of acquiring through squatting and grants from the Crown.

The women’s suffrage movement begins in Brazil.

Decree-Law no. 3.665 allows for land expropriation for reasons of “public utility.”

The Ministry of Education in Rio de Janeiro is constructed as designed by Lucio Licea, Oscar Niemeyer, Alfonso Hestiy, Lartos Larrin, Jorge Moreira, and Ivanol e Wasconcelos. Le Corbusier is a consultant.

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Collapsing a military coup d’état, the name of the country is altered from the ‘Empire of Brazil’ to ‘The United States of Brazil.’ The separation of church and state is decreed; the military dictatorship lasts five years.

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The land expropriation act of 1850 forces a military coup d’état.
Photo super-blocks in Brasilia as a pattern for the residential principles proposed by Le Corbusier.

It is a significant complex of modern buildings derived from abstract art. Brazilian and European important role in advancing national unity and attract worldwide interest. This is followed by the international concrete poetry movement. This is followed by the international concrete poetry movement.

The São Paulo Bienal is inaugurated, and plays an important role in advancing Brazilian and European abstract art.

The Art Museum of São Paulo (MASP), designed by Le Corbusier, is completed.

Brazil is constructed to replace the former capital, Rio de Janeiro. The plan of Brasilia is executed by Lucio Costa. Architect Oscar Niemeyer designs the Senate, Secretariat, and Congresional buildings. Brasília symbolizes modern national unity and attracts worldwide interest.

A military coup takes place. The military regime supports a policy of centralized economic control. It restricts political activities and represses opposition.

The government begins to expropriate urban areas in order to sell or rent them to private developers committed to giving them a social utilization.

To discuss and make the population more aware of environmental questions. The law is created to discuss and make the population more aware of environmental questions.

Brazilian poet and critic Ferrerro Waller publishes the “Neoconcrete Manifesto,” which seeks to define the relationship between European Concretism and its Latin American expression. Among the artists associated with the movement are Lygia Pape, who staged her Neoconcrete Ballet in 1960, and Lygia Clark.

The Baeta House is designed by Vilanova Artigas initiating the “Paulistanian Brutalist” movement. Paulo Mendes da Rocha, Rino Levi and Roy Chafets, among others, are also associated with this movement.

Federal Law no. 4.132 allows land expropriation for reasons of “social interest,” makes it possible for the government to expropriate urban areas in order to sell or rent them to private developers committed to giving them a social utilization.
1974
The first bus corridor is
completed in Curitiba under the
IPUC, and extends 12.4 miles.

1977
Completion of Boqueirao bus
corridor in Curitiba.

1979
Jaime Lerner appointed to
second term as Mayor of
Curitiba.

1981
Federal Law no. 6.931: formulates
the National Environmental Policy,
which requires Environmental
Impact Reports as the condition
for official authorization of
activities and projects potentially
harmful to the environment.

1984
Adopting the slogan of 'diretas já'
('direct elections now'), massive
public rallies are held in major
cities, demanding the passage of a
constitutional amendment to allow
direct popular elections for the
presidency in 1985.

1985
After more than two decades of
authoritarian military rule, José
Sarney becomes Brazil's first
civilian president since 1964.

1988
Brazil's federated-states are
allowed to institute metropolitan
regions, urban agglomerations
and micro-regions, thereby
integrating the organization,
planning and execution of public
functions.

1988
Luiza Erundina (Workers’ Party)
is elected as Mayor of São Paulo,
the top elective office held by a
woman in Brazil.

1988
Brazilian Museum of Sculpture
Designed by Paulo Mendes da
Rocha. Photos: Laura Barbi.

1989
Jaime Lerner elected to third
term as Mayor of Curitiba. In
1991 the Botanical Garden (left)
designed by Abrão Assad is
opened as are in 1992 the Free
University for the Environment
and the Ópera de Arame (right),
both designed by Domingos
Bongestabs. Photos: Laura Barbi.

1990
Urban Policy Bill enacted.
Rewritten from the National
It seeks to materialize the
constitutional requirement of the
social function of property, and
includes legal instruments for
land use control.

1991
The “Speedybus” is inaugurated
in Curitiba, and operates parallel
to the busway axes and on other
high-demand routes, stopping
at tube stations where floor-level
platforms are provided.
Photo: Jaime Lerner Institute

1995
The Inter-American Development
Bank gives $180 million to the
“slum to neighborhood” project.
It seeks to integrate existing
favelas into the fabric of the city
through infrastructure upgrades
and service increases. The project
involves 253,000 residents in 73
communities in Rio de Janeiro.

1995
Jaime Lerner elected governor
of Paraná.

1996
The City Statute (Estatuto da
Cidade) is created. This law
establishes architectural and
urban rules and guidelines for all
of Brazil.

1998
Brazilian Museum of Sculpture
Designed by Paulo Mendes da
Rocha. Photos: Laura Barbi.

2001
According to the World Bank
statistics, 22% of Brazilians live on
less that $2 a day in relation to
the international poverty line.

2002
Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, Brazil’s
first left-wing and working-class
president, is elected due to a
political platform addressing
inequalities in wealth and income
distribution.

2003
Within the Brazilian federal
government, the Ministry of
Cities is created, responsible
for developing, formulating
and managing Brazil’s urban
development policy to promote
social inclusion and to universalize
access to basic urban services
such as housing, environmental
sanitation, urban traffic and
mobility, land and territorial
planning and management, in
partnership with all spheres of
government and civil society.

2001
The transition from military
authoritarianism to civilian
democracy is symbolically
made complete by the holding
of direct popular elections for
the presidency, for the first time
since 1980.

1992
United Nations Conference on
Environment and Development
held in Rio de Janeiro.

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