

# Q & A

## Pratt's faculty, staff, and alumni weigh in on some of today's most pressing ecological issues.

### Steven S. Matt

Bachelor of Fine Arts, Communications Design, 2007, Steven S. Matt is founder and chief executive officer of One Earth Network and is a social entrepreneur at Pratt Design Incubator for Sustainable Innovation.

**Q:** How can Internet technology be used to promote sustainability?

**A:** The Internet has liberated us from the constraints of geography. However, one of the medium's most underrated aspects is its ability to connect people locally and to allow for the communication of locally relevant information. Each community must call upon its "local experts"—average people who happen to know a lot about their community's solutions for achieving sustainability. If we draw upon the world's vast source of collective knowledge, there is no need to reinvent the wheel along the way.

My contribution to a solution is one-earth.com, a multifaceted reflection of communities around the world and a way for people to discover what they can do in their community as told by local experts.

One-earth.com acts as a facilitator and aggregator of sustainable solutions. We recently used interactive technology to create a green map of Fort Greene, Brooklyn. The map was originally created for *The Hill*, a local newspaper, but it eventually went on the site. We identified resources such as community centers, compost sites, organic restaurants, and green business services. The interactive map has the same features as the printed map but with the ability for local residents to edit the content, using a Wiki.



### Miriam Greenberg

Professor of social science and cultural studies and faculty fellow at Pratt Center for Community Development, Miriam Greenberg teaches and performs research in urban studies. She co-created and co-taught the Pratt course Eco-Metropolis at Pratt. Greenberg is the author of *Branding New York: How a City in Crisis Was Sold to the World* (Routledge, 2008).

**Q:** What is the most pressing issue you discuss in Eco-Metropolis?

**A:** We ask: How do we think simultaneously about the environmental and social sustainability of cities, and how do we measure the impact of urban development on the environmental, epidemiological, economic, political, and cultural life of the urban areas?

To answer these questions, we use readings from urban sociology, environmental studies, and biology, and we invite speakers who combine an environmental and social justice approach in their work.

The class also does research and analysis of current urban development debates. We recently discussed the Williamsburg Waterfront Rezoning Plan. To its credit, the plan highlights sustainability and green building techniques throughout, and includes set-asides for affordable housing via "inclusionary zoning." Yet, these benefits may be offset by its massive scale. This "green" plan may well lead to greater carbon emissions—due to the influx of traffic, congestion, and sewage—and deteriorating air quality in a neighborhood already plagued with some of the highest asthma rates in the city. It may also exacerbate the displacement of Williamsburg's low-income residents, good working-class jobs, and diverse cultural mix. This is a high cost to pay for "sustainable development."