

Case Study #1

Lili Abou Hamad MRTPI
Senior Project Manager
PwC Middle East



1. RTPI is one of the most portable qualifications in the world. How has that helped you in your career?

Being a member of the RTPI offered me access to an ongoing learning process, being exposed to different tools, from editorial, to the latest planning policies and research, events and trainings. By benefiting from this knowledge transfer, I enhance my competence and thrive in a rapid changing environment. In addition, being part of this network, with over 27,000 members worldwide and more than 100 years of history, increases trust of the clients and employers in me and in the profession.

2. What do you value most about your RTPI membership?

I value the 5 core principles that we adhered to as members competence, honesty, integrity, independent professional judgement, due care and diligence, equality and respect and professional behaviour. Applying those principles in my daily life in the workplace, helps me inspire my colleagues and increase the trust and confidence in the profession.

3. Since being with RTPI what projects have you worked on that make you most proud?

As a recovery response to the 4th of August 2020 Beirut Port Blast, I managed several research projects by the landscape, planning and urban design departments at Dar. The topics chosen for those articles were reflective of the most pressing issues facing the affected neighborhoods: social sustainability restoration, housing sector reformation, creative industry rehabilitation, and public realm reclamation. By addressing those issues, the resiliency of the neighborhoods will be enhanced, allowing them to survive, adapt, and grow no matter what kinds of chronic stresses and acute shocks they experience. Each article presents a condition assessment of the topic in question before and after the disaster to tailor a context-specific approach before proposing a set of short-term solutions and long-term recommendations. By publishing those articles and making them available to the public, we initiated a conversation around a holistic urban recovery that is people-centered, place-specific, and value-led.



4. Has being part of the wider RTPI community helped you connect with planners around the world?

During my previous job, as an urban designer and planner at Dar, an international multidisciplinary consultancy firm, I met and worked with planners who are members of the RTPI, and exchanged ideas, experiences and knowledge.

5. Thinking about where you are in your career, can you explain how RTPI's qualification will help you in the future?

I am currently part of the Capital Project Services business unit, at PwC Middle East. This unit formed by multidisciplinary experts, offers advisory services for infrastructure projects from strategy through execution.

As urban planner and designer in this unit, I will be able to integrate planning with infrastructure, delivering sustainable, resilient and people focused infrastructure making it, an integral to place making and thus enabling more liveable cities. Also, as part of the RTPI international network, I will be exposed to the latest disruptive projects and the major players in the market, from which I can learn which will help me contribute to the business growth by applying innovative ideas and consequently adding value.

6. Can you tell us about a particularly interesting experience you have had while working as a planner internationally?

I am currently part of the Capital Project Services team at PwC, working in AIUla, with the Royal Commission of AIUla (RCU), in charge of developing, while protecting and safeguarding AIUla, a region of outstanding natural and cultural significance in North-West Saudi Arabia. As part of RCU 2035 vision, 2 million annual visitors are expected to visit AIUla in 2035. I am currently managing projects in the environmental planning department, that is part of the county zoning and planning sector. The role of the department is to regulate, enable and implement sustainability in all developments, ensuring a sustainable and resilient transformation.





Case Study #2

Matt Lally MRTPI
Director, Cities,
Planning & Design
Arup

ARUP



1. RTPI is one of the most portable qualifications in the world. How has that helped you in your career?

One day, many moons ago (OK full disclosure it was 1993), whilst in the final throws of my Town & Country Planning course at Newcastle University, a pal of mine noticed a poster advertising a careers fair for a Singapore Government recruitment drive, rather peculiarly hosted in Manchester. Amongst the target professionals were town planners graduating from RTPI courses. All too keen to justify an escape from our final exams cramming, three of us jumped into my mate's mini and hurtled along the A1. Driven by a vague sense of adventure, we arrived at the host hotel, perused the stands and submitted our CV's. Later, we were summoned for interviews, and I found myself ascending the lift to a penthouse suite. Greeted by a large and rather gruff Singaporean gentleman, flanked by onlookers, the white cat wasn't there but it felt to me like a surreal James Bond scene. It turned out to be a meeting that would profoundly influence my destiny.

For some reason they took to me. Telephone interviews followed and before I had enough time to back out I was on my way to work as an urban planner and designer for the Singapore Government agency, JTC Corporation, specialising in the planning of business parks and leading edge employment facilities.

2. What do you value most about your RTPI membership?

After three years in Singapore, moving mid-way to join an architectural practice specialising in resort masterplanning (not just for the site visits, honest), I returned to the UK for further studies, but knowing that I would ideally love to pursue a career that combined UK and international opportunities.

RTPI membership has been a passport for helping to achieve this vision. I am very fortunate to have practiced throughout the UK, Europe, Australia, Middle East, Asia and Africa. In each of these geographies RTPI holds great currency. The professionalism of UK planners is respected throughout the world and despite all the dysfunctionalities of the UK planning system the broad range of tools and techniques we deploy, and the range of skills we display in shaping sustainable development outcomes is much admired. What I most value in having a RTPI membership, other than the doors it helps open, is that it represents a certain hallmark of quality, a standard of professionalism that I seek to uphold in all the work I am involved, wherever I am practicing.



3. Since being with RTPI what projects have you worked on that make you most proud?

With many planning-related projects there is a lead in period of many, many years before tangible signs of positive change can be evidenced. So projects that make me most proud tend to be where a place has been changed for the better over some considerable time, and yet in ways that I know can be traced back to certain planning interventions or initiatives were established. Ultimately in such instances it is reflecting on the profound impact good planning can have on people's lives, and all the 'hearts and minds' work that went into setting a project or a place on a positive path. One such place is Devonport in Plymouth where I worked from 2003 as part of a designated New Deal for Communities initiative on a development framework, followed by more detailed masterplanning, through a highly collaborative process with the local community who called the shots and brought together a range of other stakeholders.

This approach to regeneration has so much to commend it, and almost 20 years on much physical change has taken shape, but just as importantly this occurred alongside improvements to local education, health, employment and skills development.

Another UK-based project relates to the transformation of the Woodberry Down in Hackney, London. All projects that involve substantial disruption have their detractors, but I know from speaking to residents that the approach to urban renewal in that corner of London has helped change many lives for the better.

To provide a complete contrast, my involvement a few years back in Sierra Leone holds a special place in my heart. Employed on a range of masterplanning and design exercises by a civic-minded diaspora organisation, some of the projects are now coming to fruition and the inspirational Mayor Yvonne Aki-Sawyer is helping to drive positive progress.



4. Has being part of the wider RTPI community helped you connect with planners around the world?

I'm reluctant to use the 'small world' cliché but it is remarkable how in relative terms the global pool of good planners with international experience and know-how does sometimes feel like a relatively compact network. It is a delight to see familiar faces 'pop up' in different parts of the world at international conferences or in various work settings, especially when this takes you by surprise. I recall being in a meeting in Sydney when an old pal from the UK unexpectedly walked in, and we spent the first few minutes beaming at each other.

The sense of a wider community of RTPI and other planning affiliates is certainly the case when it comes to mega event host city planning. Between 2012 and 2015, for example, I was seconded into the organisation set up to plan, design and deliver everything required to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar.

I led the planning and urban design team and it was somewhat 'kiddy in a sweet shop.' The breadth of sports facilities, supporting infrastructure, accommodation and other facilities that needed to be planned for, designed and constructed within a short space of time was staggering. Yet the greatest challenge of all was to look past the tournament, to take a legacy-led approach that used the event as the catalytic basis for delivering sustainable change, and then to work backwards from this favoured end-state.

Middle Eastern forays were followed by a two-year stint in Arup's Sydney office, where I worked with wonderful colleagues on a range of highly progressive planning strategies, policy-making advisory exercises and major city-shaping projects.



5. Thinking about where you are in your career, can you explain how RTPI's qualification will help you in the future?

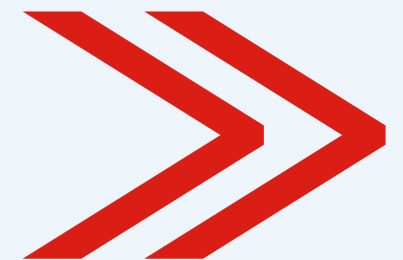
Being a RTPI qualified planner will continue to underpin my credentials, as I continue to practice throughout the UK and the wider world as a Director of Arup – plying my trade as an urban planner and designer and meshing these skills with a broad range of other technical disciplines to offer holistic solutions to complex challenges.

I suppose you could say that I'm in the autumn of my career, and whilst my involvement in a broad range of fantastic projects that help 'Shape a Better World' and my participation in international conferences will continue to provide varied intellectual nourishment and stimulus, one of the sources of greatest satisfaction and fulfilment is helping to nurture and grow talent. Assisting others to gain their RTPI qualification and grow as professionals is a key focus of mine, undertaken through on-the-job training and management, through coaching, mentoring and friendship.

As Arup's Urban Regeneration Leader for the UK, India, Middle East and Africa the future is always difficult to predict. Right now I am working on a masterplan for a new university campus in Sarajevo, having previously prepared a broader-based planning strategy for Bosnia and Herzegovina's capital city, that sought to advise on how climate, disaster risk and socio-economic resilience considerations are integrated into regeneration practices. There is never a dull moment!

6. Can you tell us about a particularly interesting experience you have had while working as a planner internationally?

It would be indiscrete of me to commit my most interesting experiences to print. Let's just say that one that comes to mind whilst working on a project in South-west China involves eating highly unusual cuisine and a hotel owned by the local police force.



Case Study #3

Professor Rebecca Chiu MRTPI
Honorary Professor
of the Faculty of Architecture
and Department of Urban
Planning and Design
Hong Kong University



1. RTPI is one of the most portable qualifications in the world. How has that helped you in your career?

It adds to my academic credentials to facilitate appointment to and involvement in local and overseas government planning and related committees of various spatial levels. These include memberships of International Panel of Experts of Urban Redevelopment Authority, Singapore (2018 – 2024); Urban Renewal Fund Limited, Hong Kong (2018 – 2023), Expert Advisory Panel for “Hong Kong 2030 and beyond: Towards a Planning Vision and Strategy Transcending 2030” (2015 – 2018); Nansha Town Planning Board, Nansha New Development Area Management Committee, China (2014 – 2019); Antiquities Advisory Board, Hong Kong (2013 – 2018); Appeal Panel (Town Planning), Hong Kong (2012 – 2018); Country and Marine Parks Board, Hong Kong (2011 – 2017); Governance Board, Hong Kong Housing Authority (2006 – 2012); Building Committee and Subsidized Housing Committee, Hong Kong Housing Authority (2006 – 2012).

The award of Fellow by the Academy of Social Sciences upon RTPI's nomination set a milestone in and brought forward my academic and professional career at global level. Not only does it help enhance my connections with social scientists in the UK and beyond, it also helps attract international research collaboration, such as the international project led by London School of Economics on financialization of housing, involving 12 countries/cities.



2. What do you value most about your RTPI membership?

Internationally recognised as a professional qualification of high quality with a global vision, its wide range of professional activities, and influence on urban planning, albeit limited to the U.K.

3. Since being with RTPI what projects have you worked on that make you most proud?

Advisor to the planning and design study undertaken by a planning consultancy firm on one of the two newest strategic growth areas of Hong Kong. This consultancy study is under the Lantau Tomorrow Vision announced by the government in 2018. The Vision aims to increase land supply to meet the medium-to-long term development needs of Hong Kong, and covers the development of artificial islands in Hong Kong's Central Waters, North Lantau and the coastal areas of Tuen Mun. It is to be supported by a new set of transport networks connecting directly or indirectly various major development areas of the city. The planning and design study, together with the engineering study, are related to the first phase of the development of artificial islands in the Central Waters, involving a total reclaimed area of about 1,000 hectares, and is expected to accommodate 400,000 to 700,000 people. Apart from housing development, the artificial islands will also support the development of Hong Kong's third core business district. Carbon neutral, smart and innovative initiatives are the principles of the Study.



4. Has being part of the wider RTPI community helped you connect with planners around the world?

Certainly. Instrumental for making the connections are my participation in RTPI's annual conferences, newsletters, heads of planning school meetings, RTPI's planning award jury panels, and the AcSS (Academy of Social Sciences) Search Committee for recommending potential nominees to the RTPI's Nominations Sub-Committee.

Obviously, the annual conferences are most instrumental for building up personal contacts. However, it is the RTPI Award Jury Panels which provide the opportunities to be acquainted with the latest and the best planning research undertaken in countries where there are planning schools or programs recognized by RTPI. The breadth and depth of planning research outcomes are indeed eye-opening and facilitate the understanding of the latest global trend and cutting-edge methodologies applied in urban planning research.



5. Thinking about where you are in your career, can you explain how RTPI's qualification will help you in the future?

Having retired from a full-time academic job but still holding an honorary professor post, the RTPI qualification helps the continuation of planning-related consultancy jobs and public/community services. As well, the continued involvement in RTPI activities as said above helps keep abreast with the latest trends in planning research and practices. By the retirement age, one would have accumulated a good deal of working experience and insights into urban issues and their connectivity and intricacy. The RTPI membership is therefore instrumental for me to remain active in urban planning practice, teaching and research, and to contribute to urban planning and development with my accumulated experience, knowledge and insights.

An example is to work with the young urban scientists in my department to offer executive education in smart city planning and development to relevant government departments in Hong Kong. While the young urban scientists are conversant with the collection, analyses and application of big and open data, and the technology involved, I would know where and how the knowledge can be best transferred within the urban planning and land development systems to optimize its use for smart city development.

6. Can you tell us about a particularly interesting experience you have had while working as a planner internationally?

An interesting experience is the exploration with the Bangladesh Institute of Planners and the Dhaka planning authority about the transferability of Hong Kong's new town and high-rise housing estate experience to Dhaka's new development areas. Mutual visits to one another's city were arranged, and during the visits, seminars were held to understand and compare the urban planning systems and the urban challenges of the two cities. These activities facilitated the understanding of how culture, political economy, life style, economic development and urban governance impact on a city's planning and development processes and efficacy, and their relative influence during the processes.

A critical planning issue concerns residential neighbourhood planning in the form of housing estates in Hong Kong, or block-based housing development in the new development areas of Dhaka, or just organically developed traditional street-based neighbourhoods in Dhaka's older areas. The respective housing forms are high-rises, medium-rises, and low-rises, all of which have different implications on population size and density, infrastructure planning, and socialisation patterns.

Daily shopping facilities of these neighbourhoods are respectively purpose-design sizeable shopping centres, street shops within walking distance, and hawker stalls at street corners, around which residents in the neighbourhood socialise. The form and scale of shopping facilities are closely associated with neighbourhood population sizes as they determine the scale of clientele.

If only land use efficiency is to be optimised, the Hong Kong model is obviously the champion. However, apart from infrastructure capacity and its planning, the transferability of housing/neighbourhood forms and therefore changes in cultural and social habits of neighbourhood living are thorny issues.



Case Study #4

Harry Quartermain MRTPI
Planning Associate
Barton Willmore, UK



**BARTON
WILLMORE**



1. RTPI is one of the most portable qualifications in the world. How has that helped you in your career?

I worked in Sydney, Australia from 2010 to 2019 and was involved with various committees for the Planning Institute of Australia during this time. I highly valued the networks and experience that this involvement offered me.

Many countries have their own institutes for planners (e.g. the American Planning Association, Planning Institute of Australia, etc.). Among these, the Royal Town Planning Institute is among the longest established (est. 1914), and is widely respected beyond the United Kingdom.

During my time in Australia I maintained my RTPI membership alongside my PIA membership, and completed my RTPI APC while working in Sydney.

There is a high bar for Chartership with the RTPI. The right to use the MRTPI post-nominals designates a professional as one with an excellent level of technical ability, communication skills, and ethics. These attributes are almost universally useful for delivering great places around the world, and to this end the MRTPI qualification is portable.

2. What do you value most about your RTPI membership?

While I was working overseas, my RTPI membership provided me with a professional connection back to home, keeping me abreast of the issues facing planners, and the profession, in the UK. It also connected me with other 'pommie planners' (RTPI members working in Sydney).

Since I returned to work in England the RTPI, through the International Committee, and the South West International Group, helps me to stay connected with international case studies and global good practice, which I can bring back to my own work.





3. Since being with RTPI what projects have you worked on that make you most proud?

When I moved to Sydney one of the things that struck me about the city centre was how poorly it addressed its western shoreline. Between 2014 and 2019 I worked on a number of projects that have been responsible for rectifying this issue, and this made me particularly proud.

Alongside a number of smaller applications to help realise Sydney's Barangaroo precinct, I led the planning for a new 190m commercial tower at Cockle Bay, on the western side of the city centre. This included a 5,000 sqm urban park located on a decked surface over an existing motorway. The project not only regenerated a dated retail space, it reconnected the city with its western shore and provided new green space in the city centre.

While in Sydney I was able to witness first hand how the planning system was digitised and streamlined, taking a GIS and data-based approach to policy, and to the planning application process. Steps are now being taken to deliver IoT-based data creation sensors within the built environment to help better measure, and therefore understand, how the built environment is performing. We still have a lot to learn about this in the UK, and it's my international experience that has shown me that another – better – planning system is possible.

4. Has being part of the wider RTPI community helped you connect with planners around the world?

The RTPI is a member-based organisation, this means that the work undertaken by the committees and working groups can only be as good as the individuals on those groups. As with any volunteer organisation, the volunteers get out of their membership what they put in. I have valued the connections and learning opportunities that have come from being connected to planners across the globe, both through my membership of the RTPI International Committee and South West International Group, and thanks to the opportunities afforded me by my involvement in PIA.

Currently I am an APC Assessor for the RTPI, a role that not only allows me to get an overview of the great work that RTPI Licentiate planners are undertaking around the world, it also requires me to coordinate my assessment with a co-assessor for each submission. Over the time I have been assessing submissions I have been paired with co-assessors based in, or originally from, places such as South Africa and Canada. This international perspective helps to ensure that the professional standards involved in RTPI Chartership remain high.

5. Thinking about where you are in your career, can you explain how RTPI's qualification will help you in the future?

My RTPI Chartership demonstrates not only my ability to use the planning system to deliver great places, but also my commitment to continued professional development and life-long learning.

It is this commitment that led me to be involved in peer mentoring programmes – both in Australia through PIA, and in the UK through the RTPI. Mentoring is a valuable tool, for both parties involved in the relationship. It helps continually raise the bar of our professional activities, helps people through tough times in their careers, and helps you to stay across emerging trends in areas outside of your immediate exposure through your day job.

My continued involvement with the RTPI will allow me access to high quality professional development topics, delivered by industry experts from throughout the planning profession and related disciplines.

6. Can you tell us about a particularly interesting experience you have had while working as a planner internationally?

Professionally, working in the NSW planning system allowed me to see what is possible from a planning system when a little vision is applied.

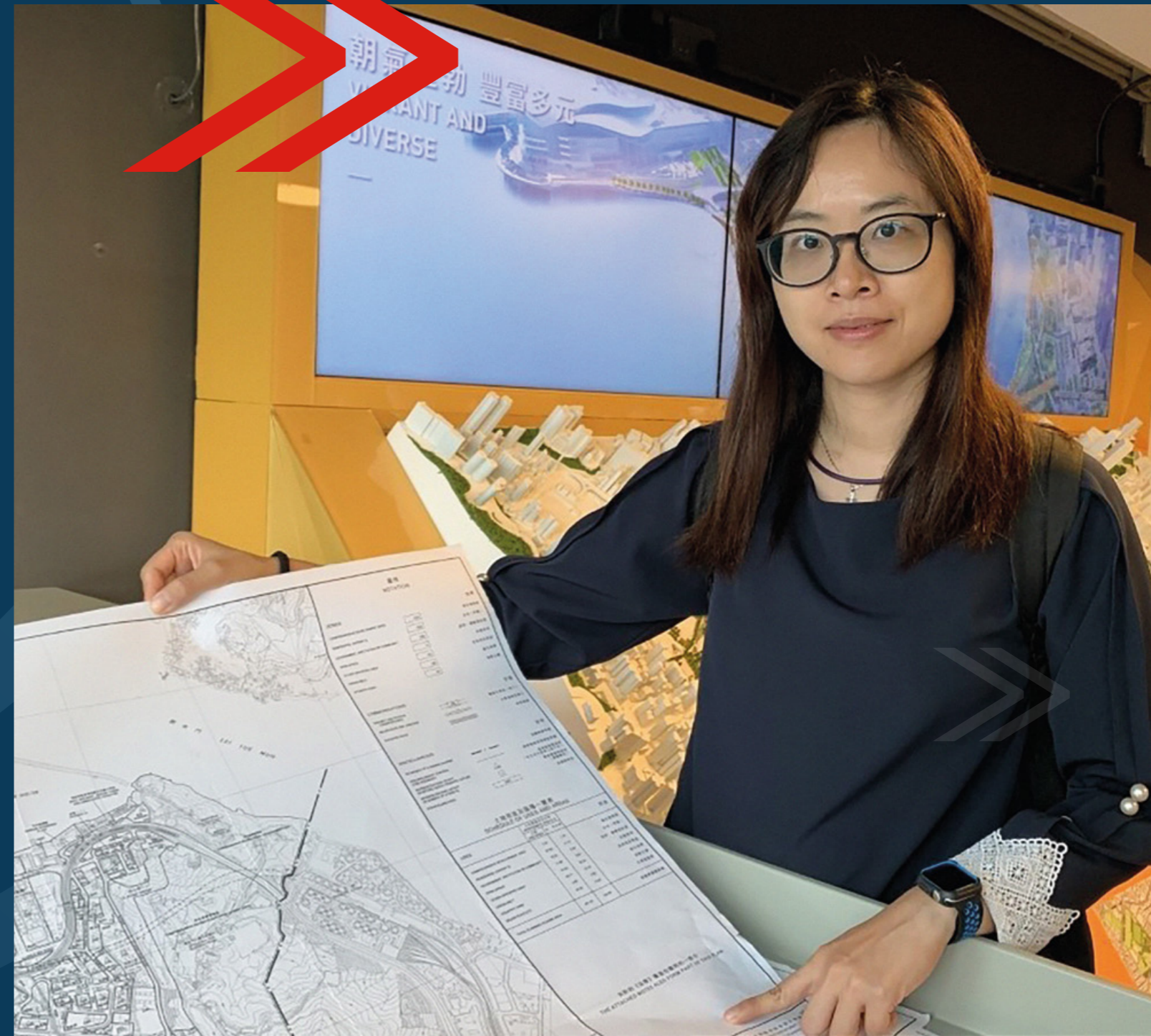
While I was working in Sydney the planning system was digitised and de-politicised. Digitisation of the system allowed for the strategic planning and planning application processes to be simplified and sped up. By going online, consultations were able to be streamlined, with greater transparency about where delays in the process are arising. De-politicisation of decision-making means that planning application decisions, when aligned to a politically driven local plan, cannot be voted down easily by local members. This means that decisions are not held up by local politics – leading to a system that is defined by 'planning by appeal'. Overall, this increase in resource efficiency means that planners are able to spend more time delivering great places.

Working internationally is more than just the day job. Working in Sydney allowed me to explore a new country and culture and get involved with new local communities. For example, during my time in Australia I volunteered for three years as a Lifesaver on Bondi Beach, learning important skills such as CPR and basic first aid.



Case Study #5

Dr. Janice Tse MRTPI
Chartered Planner
North America



1. RTPI is one of the most portable qualifications in the world. How has that helped you in your career?

I graduated from Cardiff University in MSc in International Planning and Development (RTPI accredited programme) and qualified as Chartered Town Planner (through the APC scheme) in the UK. I have over 10 years public service experience as Planning Officer in London, Wales and Hong Kong executing projects in environmental planning, affordable housing and green infrastructure. I attended various RTPI planning congress, continuous professional development (CPD) and networking activities in the UK, e.g., to understand the latest planning issues and regulations in planning for climate change, sustainable homes, low and zero carbon development. I could gain more confidence in handling the planning policies work in environmental management and sustainability (from planning, implementation, monitoring and review) and community engagement. I also received RTPI funding to conduct research, site visits and interviews with government officials in North America for planning for climate change and green infrastructure. I am eager to promote more international and local best practices. Particularly, it is interesting for me to compare and contrast how different countries, cities and towns could manage similar environmental, social and development challenges under various planning legislations and development regimes.



2. What do you value most about your RTPI membership?

The RTPI members uphold professional ethics and similar values that are important to shape more sustainable towns and cities. Particularly, I am eager to promote more technically feasible, environmentally sound and socially acceptable development, I always know that I am not alone in safeguarding the natural and built environment for the present and future generations. RTPI helps me to gain professional credibility and increase my employability. RTPI also provides easy online access to CPD activities. It certainly opens more doors for me to know the latest planning issues in all aspects.

3. Since being with RTPI what projects have you worked on that make you most proud?

I am very proud of my previous projects at London Borough of Lewisham where I could share and promote international good practices for better natural and built environment. I worked with the Urban Design Team, civil engineers (consultants) and Environment Agency for the Ravensbourne River Corridor Improvement Plan. It provided guidance for new developments to revitalize and naturalise the channelised Ravensbourne River (from River Pool Linear Park, Catford train stations, Ladywell Fields, Lewisham Town Centre, Brookmill Park and Broadway Fields to Deptford Creek). The Ravensbourne River has transformed and served as a green/blue corridor for people to enjoy, walk and cycle. I also helped bidding the € 1.38 million INTERREG IVC European River Corridor Improvement Plans (2012-2014) with 4 regional agencies and 5 local authorities from Germany, Italy, Romania and Greece. I enjoyed hosting the meetings and site visits in Ladywell Fields, Lewisham Town Centre and Deptford Creek with the Environment Agency and Thames 21.

4. Has being part of the wider RTPI community helped you connect with planners around the world?

Certainly. I was invited to join the International Society of City and Regional Planners (ISOCARP) after attending one of the RTPI events in London. I participated in Young Planning Professionals in Wuhan, China in 2011 for the project of Conceptual Design of the Wuhan High Speed Railway Station Area. I had site visits and studio workshops with 25 international planning delegates (from 10 countries), including architects, engineers and planners.

We searched and discussed the site contexts, development constraints, legal requirements, planning and development regimes. We produced sketches and PowerPoint presentation for the sustainability issues and opportunities. We also wrote a sketch, prepared costumes and props, and presented our planning proposal and concepts with a sketch in the Wuhan Grand Theatre. Besides, I also presented my paper on "Planning for climate change with urban green infrastructure in London" at the 47th ISOCARP International Planning Congress "Liveable Cities: Urbanising World: Meeting the Challenge. I also networked with many other RTPI members in the events.





5. Thinking about where you are in your career, can you explain how RTPI's qualification will help you in the future?

As a chartered town planner and environmental practitioner, I trust RTPI's qualification will help me to fulfil my dreams to promote more best planning practices, locally and internationally. I am dedicated to undertaking more international planning site visits, research, publications and teaching to promote more sustainable and climate resilient communities in future. Good planning always needs team efforts.

6. Can you tell us about a particularly interesting experience you have had while working as a planner internationally?

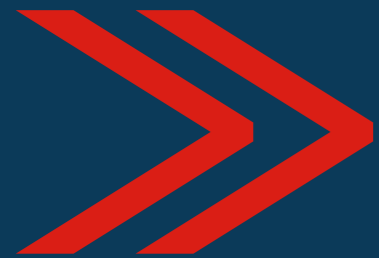
I had the European funded project (Méthodologie d'Approche Educative Précarité Energétique) for energy efficiency best practices to tackle fuel poverty in social housing with PACT des Alpes-Maritimes, Nice in France and Urban Centre, Brussels in Belgium (2010-12). Firstly, I visited some affordable housing sites in Cannes, Southern France. I thought Cannes was a very affluent and poetic city where the Film Festival is held annually. However, I was shocked when I visited the caravan site for gypsies (very unforgettable!) and affordable housing in the outskirts, where the poor and the rich would not meet with each other.

Secondly, I went to Moortebeek Garden City (about 360 houses that were built in the 1920s) in Brussels to see how the historical buildings could minimise energy consumption. It was interesting for me to know that cling film (a very light, thin and cheap materials) could be used to cover the single glazed windows to reduce heat loss. What a quick and easy solution to conserve the building structure and maintain its unique and historic appearance.



Case Study #6

Andrew Turner MRTPI
Transportation Planner
Montgomery County
Planning Commission
Pennsylvania, USA



1. RTPI is one of the most portable qualifications in the world. How has that helped you in your career?

My MRTPI status was instrumental in me being able to undertake graduate study in the US. Not only did my professional planning experience and accreditation enhance my application, they were instrumental in my being assigned planning projects as part of the university's scholarship and graduate assistantship programme. This made the move from the UK to the US financially feasible.

During my time in graduate school, I became interested in food systems planning. After completing my master's degree, I began working on a diversified vegetable farm to get some "hands on" experience. I enjoyed it so much that I ended up completing a three-year biodynamic apprenticeship and, after managing an urban farming operation, I became co-owner and operator of the Community Supported Agriculture business where I originally apprenticed. Due to time constraints and a limited amount of CPD hours while weeding carrots in the rain, I had to let my MRTPI status lapse. However, the skills and competencies I gained in pursuit of MRTPI were instrumental in my success as a small business owner.

After 11 full seasons farming, I made the decision to try to restart my planning career. I enrolled in a Geographic Information System certificate program at a local university. Through this graduate program I was able to gain the required 25 CPD hours within an 18-month period to be reinstated as MRTPI. This process of seeking my professional accreditation contributed to being hired in my current role as a county transportation planner. Moreover, having MRTPI status has fast-tracked my application to attain the US's equivalent professional planning accreditation with the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP).

2. What do you value most about your RTPI membership?

I originally gained my MRTPI accreditation while working as a planning consultant in Lincolnshire. There, I met the standards required to be a reflective professional and competent planner. Working in the private sector offered a wide and varied case load and being mentored by some very patient and experienced planners provided a very strong foundation for me throughout my subsequent endeavours.

I attribute gaining the necessary experience to meet MRTPI requirements as the basis for my success at running a small farming business. Having already gone through a very steep learning curve in planning and being experienced in project management, running a business didn't seem so daunting. Overall, the structure provided by RTPI and its related professional competencies has been a strong guiding force throughout my planning and non-planning pursuits.

3. Since being with RTPI what projects have you worked on that make you most proud?

In my current position I work on a variety of multimodal transportation planning projects. At the county level, we serve both urban and rural municipalities and everything in between. Regardless of where we plan in the county, historically, transportation policy has favoured the automobile.

As a department we pride ourselves on understanding the practical transportation alternatives for each municipality. We are still involved in traditional road widening, bridge rehab, and intersection realignment projects, mainly to provide new safety measures and relieve congestion.

We also work very closely with our regional transit authority, making sure our residents and businesses have safe and easy access to bus and train services where they exist.

In our more rural areas, multimodal transportation planning consists of trying to implement our county-wide walkability plan through the promotion of a regional trail network and "complete streets" policy. It may seem strange to claim that getting a short segment of trail or sidewalk built is something to be proud of, but without these small, disparate, sections, our county plan to 'connect' our rural communities without the use of an automobile wouldn't be possible.





4. Has being part of the wider RTPI community helped you connect with planners around the world?

I have recently been asked to mentor and sponsor a US-based planner's application to become a Chartered Town Planner. Having studied in the UK but primarily worked in the US, this young planner is in need of some assistance in 'translating' their US experience to meet the RTPI's professional competency standards. I am in quite a unique position to help. I found the MRTPI mentoring process extremely valuable. The relationship I developed with my mentor benefited me on a professional and personal level and I often reflect fondly on that time. Being reinstated as MRTPI has afforded me the opportunity to offer this type of support to another member of our global community.

5. Thinking about where you are in your career, can you explain how RTPI's qualification will help you in the future?

My section manager was very excited when my MRTPI was reinstated. In lieu of the equivalent professional accreditation in the US, he insisted I use it in my correspondence to gain planning 'street-cred.' My role involves working with many different governmental and quasi-governmental bodies, engineers, and advocacy groups. The recognition of my MRTPI status among planning professionals and engineers has facilitated much conversation about my past planning experience. Beyond having MRTPI after my name as a talking point, it has done exactly as my manager suggested: it earns respect and credibility among my peers.



6. Can you tell us about a particularly interesting experience you have had while working as a planner internationally?

I am part of a planning team that is auditing the walk- and bike-ability of seven schools in one of the county's school districts. School districts are a unique level of single purpose local government in the US, primarily funded through residential property taxes.

Our planning process has been in accordance with a federally funded program called Safe Routes to School. Our initial step was to arrange stakeholder meetings with each school to determine specific problems that inhibit students from walking and biking to school. Following these focus groups, we physically examined the routes students use to walk and bike to school as well as vehicular circulation patterns on each campus. After these physical audits, we developed a parent survey seeking feedback relative to why they do or do not allow their children to walk or bike to school. The end product will be a document providing recommendations for each school, and the school district as a whole, to improve and encourage more walking and biking to school.

After initially contacting all the school principals to help arrange the stakeholder meeting, we were informed under no circumstance do two of the schools allow students to walk or bike to school. Both of these schools are located on rural thoroughfares separated from any surrounding residential development, with no sidewalks or footpaths directly accessing the school. Moreover, none of the schools provide any biking facilities on campus and do not allow students to bike to school.

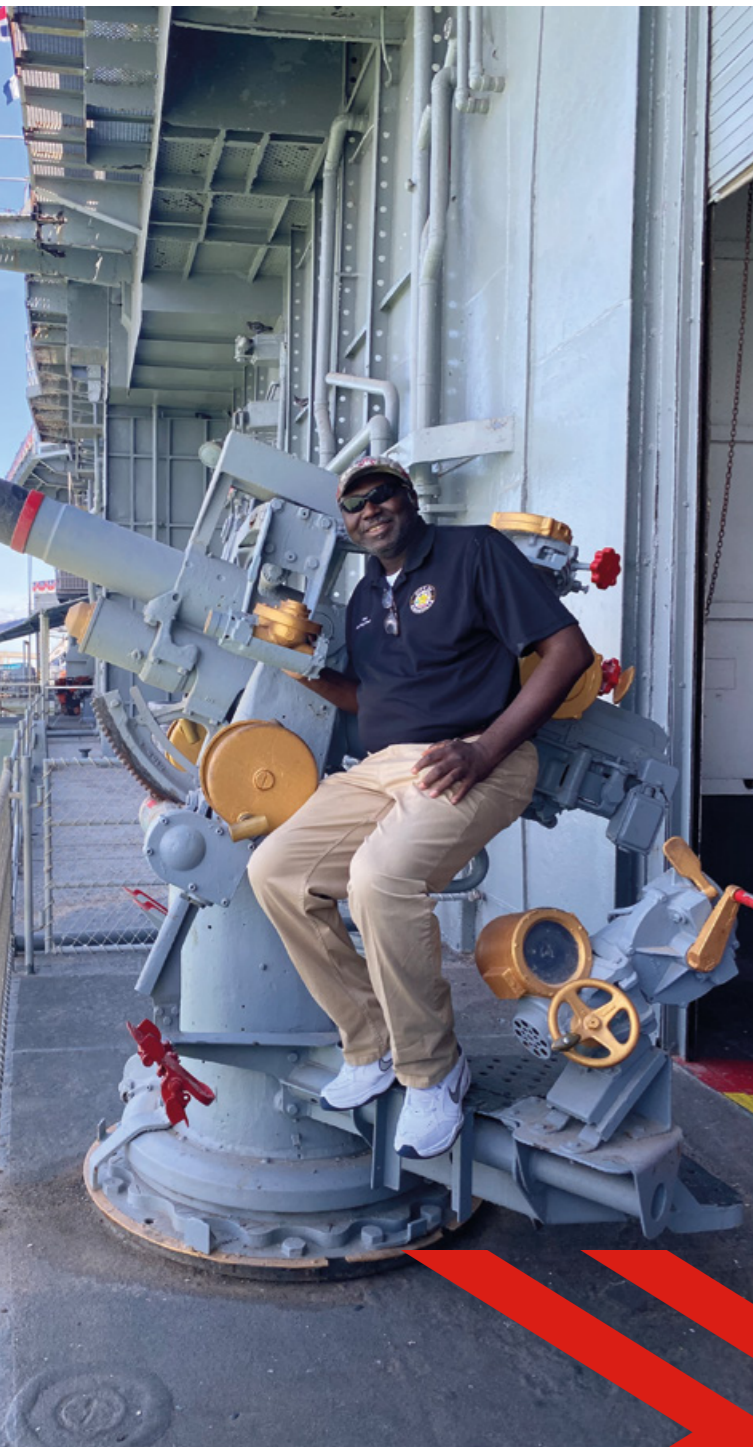
A primary challenge is a mis-match of federal guidance and state and local land use policy that dictates building specifications for school campuses. While we haven't concluded the project, we are tasked with developing a solution that satisfies the planning process in the unique setting of the school district. This is a common issue that face planners in the US, who are working in a multi-level, highly politicised economic and governmental structure.



Case Study #7

Uche Echeozo MRTPI
Planning Director
Raymond-Schortz
UK Limited





1. RTPI is one of the most portable qualifications in the world. How has that helped you in your career?

The Institute has shaped the way I function as a town planner. My work in local government (in the US) is much richer due to my UK planning experience.

2. What do you value most about your RTPI membership?

It enables me create value both to the Institute and to all jurisdictions that I have had the opportunity to operate in (home and abroad).

3. Since being with RTPI what projects have you worked on that make you most proud?

I am a comprehensive planner by occupation. I have carried out projects such as town centre regeneration, local plan preparation and the process-driven development management. However, I am most proud of the work I am currently doing abroad where I am applying the LDF system of plan development to prepare a comprehensive plan for a small city in Texas.

4. Has being part of the wider RTPI community helped you connect with planners around the world?

Yes it has. I have met colleagues in Nigeria (West Africa), Ireland, Canada, the US, and the UK of course.

5. Thinking about where you are in your career, can you explain how RTPI's qualification will help you in the future?

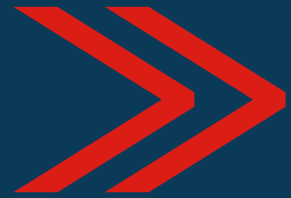
I am getting to the late stages of my career where I am making plans to transition into the academia where I hope to stay and manage retirement. My RTPI qualification establishes my professional status and positions me as an authority even as I impart knowledge on junior planners.

6. Can you tell us about a particularly interesting experience you have had while working as a planner internationally?

Working on secondment to the US as a director of planning for a small city in Texas, I had the task of preparing a local plan for the City. I needed to engage with the public (residents of the city) to ensure public participation. I employed so many techniques in community engagement just to make sure the evidence base was sound and robust.

However, I was not getting as much feedback as I would like to have. People were not filling out the survey, nor were they attending meetings. In order to create awareness that was relevant, I had to bring the message to the people by using a bull horn, driving a pick-up truck (with a colleague) and "scooping out the streets" chanting "come, let us plan our city", "fill out the community survey" and so on. It was only then that people knew what we were doing and they participated. That is what I term "thinking outside the box".





Case Study #8

Roya Jodieri MRTPI
Associate Planner
Cities
BuroHappold

BURO HAPPOLD





1. RTPI is one of the most portable qualifications in the world. How has that helped you in your career?

From my experience, although the role of a planner changes across geographies, the core competencies and skills required as part of our profession remain the same, which has enabled me to transition from the UK to the Middle East. Some of these include: our innate project management skills and ability to integrate multiple disciplines; our ability to understand the bigger picture yet being able to focus in on the detail; an appreciation of global issues and how they manifest in a local context (such as climate crisis, rapid urbanisation, advanced technological change, increased inequality etc); and an understanding of the need to balance the needs of communities, businesses and the environment.

2. What do you value most about your RTPI membership?

There are three key aspects I value most about my RTPI membership. These are:

Firstly, having access to The Planner, to keep myself updated on UK news and seeing how the RTPI covers global issues. I am particularly interested in how planning can shape equitable cities and deliver wellbeing and health outcomes, and the RTPI's Levelling Up Hub has provided a useful source of information.

Secondly providing access to a wider planning network that I can be a part of here in the middle east.

Thirdly, I have really valued and appreciated the efforts made by the leadership team at the RTPI to reach out to and meet their members. I have been fortunate to meet and have a number of insightful conversations with both Victoria Hills (current Chief Executive) and Sue Manns (former RTPI President).



3. Since being with RTPI what projects have you worked on that make you most proud?

I have been lucky to work across the UK, Africa and the Middle East. The projects I have worked on that make me most proud are ones where I have actively helped shape the urban form of a city through an integrated lens, such as co-managing a new building code for Dubai and being part of a wider team delivering a set of master planning guidelines for the Dubai Development Authority. I am also proud of being part of plan-making initiatives that are in close collaboration with the community and stakeholders, such as leading the community and stakeholder engagement efforts for the development of a strategic plan for the Seychelles.




4. Has being part of the wider RTPI community helped you connect with planners around the world?

Prior to the start of the pandemic, myself and a small group of Planners kick-started a series of events/talks in the middle east aimed at planners and built environment professionals. This was held under the sponsorship of the RTPI and the turnout was absolutely fantastic (including a waiting list for the first event!). It provided the opportunity to meet other planners (RTPI and non-RTPI accredited members) in the region, and it was fantastic sharing experiences and hearing the types of projects others have been working on.

Looking ahead, I believe the RTPI can play a critical role in further supporting and strengthening the wider urban planning community in the Middle East, potentially in collaboration with locally based organisations such as the Emirates Planning Association. More face-to-face events would be fantastic.





5. Thinking about where you are in your career, can you explain how RTPI's qualification will help you in the future?

Although my family and I are fully settled in the UAE and call it home, we really do not know what the distant future has in hold for us - whether that is remaining here, moving to the UK (where I am from), moving to Portugal (where my husband is from) or elsewhere!

I would like to think that being an RTPI chartered member and part of a credible global institute (alongside my work experience) signifies that I have the knowledge, skills and competencies in spatial planning to an appropriate depth of detail and I'm subject to a code of conduct which sets standards of professional ethics. I would also look to the wider RTPI community to help with any future transitions -I'd be fascinated to know if there is a Portuguese RTPI community!



6. Can you tell us about a particularly interesting experience you have had while working as a planner internationally?

Two experiences come to mind!

The first was when working for my previous firm, Arup, where we developed a countrywide strategy for the Seychelles and a masterplan for the city of Victoria. I was responsible for leading our community engagement efforts and we organised and delivered community events across three islands (locations included schools, community halls and overlooking beautiful beaches!). We manage to reach out to over 1,000 community members, which was an amazing accomplishment!

The second is a more recent experience at Buro Happold, where I was part of a wider team delivering a high-level tourism-led framework plan for an area in the Aseer Province (southern Saudi Arabia). We had a guide who took us on a tour of the local area, including Habala Hanging Village, an ancient settlement built on the side of a very steep cliff face, which used to be accessible only by rope. The village was previously inhabited by a tribal community known as the 'flower men' because of their custom of wearing garlands of dried herbs and flowers in their hair. We wrapped up the tour with lunch in a local restaurant, comprised of a communal Mandi eaten sitting on the floor.

RTPI International Membership

Now that you have read the experiences of our members around the world, you can understand the wide international possibilities that a membership of RTPI can offer.

