

Obituary for Andrea Chegut

Earlier this week we learned that Andrea Chegut, our good friend and dear colleague, passed away. The news hit all of us in the heart – Andrea was in the prime of her life, both as a young mother of Athalia and wife of Daniel, and also in her career.

We have fond memories of Andrea, as we closely interacted and worked with her at the various stages of her almost 15-year academic career. Andrea wrote her PhD dissertation at Maastricht University, after an early-stage career in mortgage banking in the US. This experience got her interested in real estate. Andrea wasn't just curious and fast-learning, but also quickly became a driving force of social activities for the PhD students and staff, including her legendary Thanksgiving dinners for the Finance department.

Her thesis, "Innovation in Commercial Real Estate," covered many aspects of real estate that are critical to investors, lenders and policymakers today, including green real estate, the spatial economics of data centers, and index construction for commercial real estate. Andrea's aptitude for policy-relevant research culminated in the organization of a large and influential conference on "green building" in Spring 2011, bringing together 250 investors, policymakers and academics on what was then still a nascent topic.

After graduating from Maastricht, Andrea joined the MIT Center for Real Estate, first as a post-doc, then as a research scientist. At MIT, Andrea's PhD on "real estate innovation" defined her academic career, culminating in the establishment of MIT's Real Estate Innovation Lab. In the Lab, Andrea worked closely together with many leading companies in the industry, such as JLL, RCA, and EY, tirelessly pushing both academia and the industry forward in the adoption and understanding of the role of technology in commercial real estate. Over the years, Andrea became a leading example and mentor of young practitioners and scholars, guiding and inspiring them to develop their careers.

Her latest work, on the economics of "health" in buildings, came out right when the industry needed it most – during COVID. As people realized that buildings played a major role in spreading the virus, Andrea showed that investing in healthy building features has a tangible return component.

When Andrea first told us about her illness, she was quintessentially optimistic and powerful, analyzing the process with academic rigor, laying out the process like a research project. It's incredibly sad that we can't finish this together, but we'll keep your ideas and your spirit with us forever.

Andrea, we will miss you dearly.

Your friends from Maastricht and MIT,

Nils Kok
Piet Eichholtz
Rogier Holtermans (Guelph)
Erkan Yonder (Concordia)
Juan Palacios
David Geltner
Dennis Frenchman
Kairos Shen
Siqi Zheng