On June 1, the first cohort of Master of Community and Regional Planning (MCRP) students will be graduating. It has been an exciting time to watch these students grow as professionals and people, as they learn to meet the challenges of the planning profession. The feedback I have received from planners who have worked with our students is that they are amazed at how confident and skilled they are. I wish all of our graduates the best of luck in their future careers. I will only make one small request: please keep in touch! We would love to hear about your career path.

The first cohort of students in the Master of Engineering Leadership (MEL) in Urban Systems, which we are cohosting with Civil Engineering will also be graduating this spring. This new program is growing as we almost doubled our intake of students this year.

After a very busy term where we had two accreditation site visits and an university external review, I am pleased to report that the reviewers’ comments were generally favourable about SCARP. We are in the process of assessing the comments in order to glean insights that will help us in our future trajectory.

We had a number of very successful public events this year. On March 3, our annual student-organized symposium was held in the Student Union Building, the Nest, with a record number of people in attendance. The theme this year was “Audacity,” and from the dynamic keynote speakers (both women), to the thought provoking sessions, it was a roaring success. We also had excellent project presentations from our second year planning studio on March 31 in New Westminster. The caliber of the output of these students was outstanding. I encourage you to attend both of these events next year.

In September we will be welcoming our first cohort of students in our redesigned research degrees, the MA and MSc in Planning. We also will be offering four new undergraduate courses: City Building; City Visuals; the Just City; and Indigeneity and the City. Our Indigenous Community Planning concentration has secured funding for five more years that is allowing it to grow. Finally, the Faculty of Applied Science Dean’s Office has formed a search committee for a new Director for SCARP as my second term will end on June 30, 2018.

As we consolidate our current programs and contemplate new programs, we are seeking input from the local and global SCARP community.
FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE

By: Austin Lui

As the 2016/2017 academic year comes to an end, it is important to reflect on the year and what the SCARP community has accomplished. The 2016–2018 cohort was asked to reflect on their first year at SCARP. This article has compiled these reflections to look at the diverse perspectives, highlights, and insights from the various members of the cohort.

Most Valuable Lesson

The most valuable lesson I have learned this year is the benefit of working and collaborating with others. My undergraduate degree gave me very little opportunity to work with others, and I actually preferred working alone. Coming to SCARP, it was amazing to see the diverse skills sets of all my classmates, and since most assignments are done in groups, I am constantly impressed with the quality of work we can create together.

- Devon Harlos

The most valuable lesson I took away from the past year is that as planners we need to be careful what we wish for. This is because planning, in the words of Michael Leaf, is a wicked problem, meaning that by the time we think we have a solution, the problem or issue will have already changed. This is evident in the theories purported by so called “visionaries” of planning and their inadequate applications.

- Navid Helal

I liked that we were encouraged to be creative in thinking and presenting our projects/assignments.

- Grace Agapito

What is one highlight from this year?

The overall highlight for me was having my heart beat faster than it ever did in my whole life!

- Grace Agapito

One major highlight was when Austin, Grace and I got to invent a interactive game to present our ideas for a post-apocalyptic city. Another highlight from this year was definitely the SCARP Symposium. As difficult as it was to organize, it brought the SCARP community together to work hard and exceed our own expectations. As tired as I was by the end of it, our achievements made me proud to be a Scarpie.

- Navid
What are you looking forward next year?

I am excited to work on more specific topics such as the studio and our capstone
- Grace Agapito

Realizing the dynamism and energy of everyone at SCARP, I am very much looking forward to work with my team on a real life capstone project. I also look forward to graduating and hopefully being blessed to get a job that doesn’t feel like it’s a job.
- Navid Helal

Advice for prospective students?

Talk to second years. We're full of wild opinions good, candid, advice and willing to share. Much of my course planning and understanding of the program was influenced by talking to second years. Also, talk to grads whenever you get the chance. Networking opportunities are one of SCARP's strengths and the planning community is generally quite friendly and helpful.
- Michael McBurnie

I came into this program not really knowing what Planning is; I still don’t. I also thought I had to be absolutely anal and ready about the type of specialization I wanted to pursue and that there was no turning back once something was picked. My advice to the incoming students is that none of the aforementioned worries are necessary. Just let your body flow with the endless stream of life and possibility.
- Navid Helal

Some advice I have to incoming students is to take advantage of as many opportunities as possible during your first year. This includes volunteering, attending networking and social events, taking on any sort of leadership role within SCARP, or just doing things outside of your comfort zone! Sometimes it feels like homework and class projects take up all of your time, but it is important to remember that your graduate education is also about making connections and personal growth.
- Devon Harlos

A general advice maybe is to take time to make friends within the cohort and SCARP. Breathe. Look forward to school breaks.
- Grace Agapito
DEVELOPING A CULTURE OF EXPERIMENTATION IN PLANNING

By: Jordi Honey-Rosés

Jordi Honey-Rosés is an Assistant Professor at School of Community and Regional Planning. If you have ideas about how planning initiatives may be evaluated with a field experiment please contact him at jhoney@mail.ubc.ca.

Experimentation has a long history in planning. One might even argue that the modernist planning project has unleashed multiple planning experiments on cities and their citizens. Even today, planners are testing, probing, and trying things differently all the time. To say that we are “learning by doing” has become so well-accepted, it is virtually cliché. While planners are willing to experiment in the informal sense of trying things differently, it is perhaps surprising that planners are not engaging in formal or structured experiments that would allow us to maximize learning.

The absence of formal or systematic experiments in planning is partially the responsibility of planning academia. While researchers in other disciplines, such as economics, political science, and public health, have used experimental methods to advance their field (Boruch et al. 1978), experimental methodologies are absent in planning (Du Toit et al. 2016). Planning researchers are aware of the advantages of experimental research designs, yet the dominant view has been that experimental methods are not appropriate for planning, simply because they cannot be done. It is true that many planning policies cannot be assessed through an experimental design. But by focusing on the glass half-empty we have overlooked opportunities to use experiments to advance planning knowledge.

We need to develop a culture of experimentation in planning. I took this idea to Portland, Oregon, last November, at the premier academic planning conference of North America organized by the Association of the Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP). I made the case that planning academics should adopt experimental methods to advance planning theory and practice. Not surprisingly, the idea was met by a combination of scepticism and enthusiasm.

But while some planning academics are lukewarm to the idea of experimental methods, the tide may be turning. For the upcoming ACSP conference, a panel is being organized on the subject of field experiments in planning. The panel organizer, Kelcie Ralph, is a junior faculty member at the Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers. She recently conducted an experiment that examined a basic planning question: what does it take to change individual’s travel behaviour? Working with UCLA Transportation Services, she developed a transportation guide that informed UCLA students about travel options with the goal of shifting travel behaviour to more sustainable alternatives. In many
respects, the travel guide and program is not new. However, this study had students divided into a treatment group (students who did receive the travel guide) and a control group (students who did not receive the travel guide). The experimental design allowed them to quantify the impact of the program (Ralph and Brown 2017).

Programs that are implemented with an experimental design can help us learn about what work, what does not, and why. These are central questions that are relevant to both practitioners and researchers. Currently, the outcomes of planning policies, programs, neighbourhood designs, and public participation methods are uncertain. Many planning decisions are not supported with strong evidence about the likely impact of planning efforts on communities. Other fields are developing a stronger evidence-base for their policies (Baylis et al. 2016). Experiments are a big part of many disciplines. Planning has yet to catch up.

As an academic community, we need to adopt experimental ways of thinking. But this research cannot be designed without collaboration with professional planners. A key challenge has been identifying planning practitioners who are open to examining their programs with a rigorous research design.

I anticipate that in the next decade, experimental methods will become increasingly common in planning academia and in planning practice. There are other global trends that lend themselves well to this approach. The Millennial generation has grown up in a hyper-connected world, in which change is rapid, and nearly everything is temporary. In a culture of constant change, introducing variation into a program design will seem like part of the natural order. Harnessing and learning from experiments will seem intuitive. The rise of citizen-led initiatives and tactical urbanism, in which citizens introduce temporary changes to our physical surroundings (Lydon and Garcia 2015), are also consistent with the goals and approaches of experimental research.

I am personally hopeful that experiments can help us advance our understanding of public engagement - a topic of great interest at SCARP. We often assume that public engagement leads to better outcomes, greater satisfaction, more trust in our public agencies, and greater acceptance of planning decisions. But how do public engagement approaches compare to one another? Do we have strong evidence to support our choices in public facilitation techniques? Are we willing to put our theories about public engagement to the test?

References
SCARP SYMPOSIUM:
A REVIEW IN PHOTOS

By: Austin Lui

The SCARP symposium is one of the biggest events at SCARP. This year’s event, which took place on March 3, 2017, was curated around the theme “Audacity: Bold Ideas for Planning Communities”. Organized by the first-year cohort each year, this event is an opportunity for the SCARP community to showcase their ongoing research, connect with professionals and the broader planning community. The following pages is a photographic snapshot of some of the exciting workshops, conversations, and activities that transpired that day. All photos were taken by Jacob Côté.

Top left: The calm before the storm, in preparation for the big event. Top right: registrations begin in front of the Grand Hall at the AMS Nest. Bottom right: One of the first workshop sessions on “Bricks, Beams and Brews: the transition of inner city industrial lands.” Bottom right: Keynote speaker, Severn Suzuki showing a multimedia video on the realities of climate change.
Top left: Second keynote speaker, Kaye Krishna talks about the role of creative design in planning. Top right: A walking tour, led by Grant Miller, the current director of planning and development services at UBC. Middle right: A group of people discussing the role of “Women and City Building”. Bottom photos: Participants of the symposium enjoying breaks to enjoy food and connecting with old colleagues and new professionals.
Top left: A graphically facilitated workshop on affordable housing. Top right: This workshop on gender and planning used storytelling to gather ideas and common themes. Bottom left: SCARP’s PhD candidates lead a discussion on the rise of populism and the effects of an increasingly divided world. Bottom right: Panelist speaker Janice Abbott discusses housing and homelessness in the city.
**Top left:** Symposium MC’s Devon Harlos and Navid Helal closing remarks.  
**Top right:** Devon Harlos congratulating Marjan Navab-Tehrani and Kai Okazaki (co-directors) for their leadership.  
**Bottom:** All the contributors that helped make the symposium as successful as it was.
NewsBytes is SCARP’s tri-annual newsletter highlighting current announcements, recent accomplishments, events, research, and broader planning movements of interest to staff, faculty, students, alumni, prospective students and members of the community.

Opinions expressed in NewsBytes are not necessarily those of UBC, SCARP, or the NewsBytes Editor. If you have questions or comments, or would like to make a submission to a future edition of NewsBytes, please contact NewsBytes Editor and Outreach Coordinator, Austin Lui, directly at austinlui6@gmail.com or contact the School of Community And Regional Planning at the address provided below.

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