



SCARP

School of Community
And Regional Planning

NEWSLETTER - SPRING 2010

This edition of Newsbytes brings a series of pieces from three years of SCARP students. Reflections, reviews and commentaries, the articles on the following pages offer snapshots of where students have come from, where they are engaged now and where they are working towards. There is criticism, optimism, wisdom and humor. Enjoy!

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REFLECTIONS FROM THE MISSION

- Tanya Fink

My experience as a volunteer at First United Church Mission's 24-hour, a low-barrier, emergency homeless shelter in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, was a pivotal reason for me choosing to pursue planning and come to SCARP. Now, after a year as a volunteer, I can easily say that my time at First United is the greatest force shaping the planner I am becoming.

Since coming to SCARP, I regularly attempt to apply the diversity of planning concepts I am learning



Emergency beds set up in First United

(both practical and theoretical) to what I observe at First United on my weekly volunteer shift. One of my main concerns when it comes to community development and urban policy is how to build inclusive communities and as such I have been asking myself how the activities of the shelter fit into creating such a community. Question come to mind,

such as - How do we build inclusive communities? What do inclusive communities look like? And from what I have I observed and learned, I would say that this homeless shelter is a perfect example of inclusivity.

I see elements of inclusion in the shelter on a daily basis. Being a low-barrier shelter makes it inherently inclusive. The homeless people that use this place can pretty much be in any state possible. They can be high, drunk, insane, freaking out, soiled, semi-unconscious—you name it. They can bring their bags, their shopping carts and their pets. They are rarely turned away or kicked out for any reason. Even if caught doing some sort of behaviour that is deemed unacceptable (like

drugs, sex or hurting others) within the church, they are only banned for a couple hours or, in extreme cases, 24 hours. Everyone knows everyone else's personal issues and challenges and as a result they often treat each other with compassion. People who overstep boundaries are rarely reprimanded within the shelter either; everyone is always treated with respect.

To me, this is inclusion. All of the homeless people that stay there consider it their home. I can see how some people might think that this kind of inclusivity is dysfunctional, but it actually

functions very well. Everyone goes about their business and tends to look out for one another, especially those who are less able to care for themselves. Occasionally, there are flare-ups, fights, arguments or disagreements, but they are usually resolved then and there. The immediate resolution of conflict, the way the people move on quickly and efficiently from any problems, in a way seems like a very healthy approach. Some would

say that a place that includes all of these types of people is highly dysfunctional. I say it is highly inclusive.

Imagine having 200 roommates all in varying states of physical, mental and emotional health—most people have a hard time dealing with just one or two healthy roommates at times. I am constantly amazed how things tend to just work out at this shelter. Perhaps it works because there is no other choice. Maybe it works because it is inclusive.



Tanya in the kitchen at First United

I still have so many questions when it comes to what I am learning through my volunteer work. Can a place that includes anybody be healthy? Can it be sustainable? I am also made to ask even broader questions: Can different people of different classes live together in inclusive environments? Can everyone be as accepting as the shelter workers and fellow homeless people are in this shelter? Is inclusivity the key to social sustainability?

It seems that it is possible to form an inclusive community within a shelter full of people that nobody else wants to deal with. But what about forming inclusive communities in regular neighbourhoods? From what I have seen, the deeply marginalized can have so much tolerance for diversity...as is often the case in the DTES. How can regular communities achieve this?

These are all thoughts I ponder as I commence my journey into the world of planning. As I attempt to find answers to all of these questions, I will become the kind of planner I really want to be.

I already know for sure that I will be dealing with issues of inclusivity when planning and will definitely make it a personal goal to better the outcomes of the excluded members of society. Marginalized people really only exist because of the margins we create as a society. I hope that I can be a part of erasing those barriers to inclusivity for the well-being of everyone.

I am so grateful that this shelter and the people in it have come into my life. As a planner, I will always hold my experiences at First United close to my heart and use them to make the decisions I have to throughout my career to better my city.



SOCIAL MEDIA

- Karen Quinn Fung

Having both studied academically and worked at the intersection of institutions, information and communications technologies (ICTs), and individuals, I feel like there is no more exciting time to be thinking and planning for the future of communities. ICTs in daily life — for most of us, manifesting most commonly as a cellphone, a laptop and/or a Facebook account — have substantially altered people's perception of what's possible with regards to the speed individuals interacting with institutions such as the press, the arts, and levels of government at all levels.

Our everyday experience with information is evolving faster than ever before. Much of this information and, at a higher level, insight, is necessary for our role as citizens in a democracy, as consumers in a market economy, as well as our different roles as professionals, planners, civil servants or consultants in various processes. New tools permit broader audiences to be exposed to local knowledge, through tools like collaborative and community mapping, and for this information to be disseminated instantaneously.

What hasn't changed?

The fundamental wants and needs of people, in all their diversity. While new tools may have changed the precise forms of it, the motivation to direct time and energy to any of these things - to be engaged, get involved or educated about causes or movements that affect us or that we want to affect, to connect with our peers and neighbours — comes back to the same trade-offs and choices about how to spend our time, what our values are, and what we want and get out of it, that it always did.

How does this affect the work we will do as planners?

We now have more ways than ever to learn about each other: what others in society think, want, and choose in their respective spheres, and the experiences that inform that all. Through emerging initia-

tives like municipal open data, we are building the groundwork for increasing our collective capacity to reflect on what we are doing well and the consequences of what we aren't. It opens the door for us in our role as community builders around issues of sustainability and meeting the challenges of transition due to climate change. As the school's motto alludes, the onus is on us to treat people as partners rather than adversaries in the process of managing and adapting to change.

As future representatives and agents of institutions, it is more important than ever to remember that the people we plan for may not be just like us or those in our immediate sphere. But it is now easier than ever now to listen for what makes a difference in people's lives; and ultimately, to work with them in shaping the world which we will all inherit



THE TRUTH ABOUT VANCOUVER

- Iona To

Brutally honest and incredibly refreshing. That's how I sum up Matt Hern's newly released book, *Common Ground in a Liquid World: Essays in Defense of an Urban Future*. As the book's title alludes, this is a collection of essays written about urban spaces and their importance to our species' future. The focus of the book is none other than local Vancouver. But instead of analyzing Vancouver from the inside out, each of the essays is written from the perspective of a different city to which Hern has traveled to within the past several years. And in each essay, Hern draws lessons from these cities and provides refreshing and insightful ideas on how Vancouver might be improved to become a truly livable city, instead of a "No Fun" city.

In his book, Hern, who brought us Car-Free Vancouver Day and founded the Purple Thistle Centre, does not hold back any punches. He tells it as

it is, critically analyzing Vancouver's flaws as well as its positive attributes. He tackles a variety of topics, from Vancouver's history of displacing and relocating First Nation communities, to the need to increase density while providing affordable housing, to the commodification of Vancouver on the international stage. He also provides a strong argument for the need to have neighbourhoods and communities that are planned by its residents, rather than by architects, landscape architects and planners through the creation of master plans that may reflect little of a neighbourhood's true character and demands.

This is definitely a must read for all politicians, architects, urban designers, planners, and anyone who is interested in innovative and realistic, solutions for many of the problems this city is facing. By implementing these solutions, Hern argues that Vancouver will be able to shift from being a liquid city, in which its residents and visitors are hypermobile and constantly moving about without really getting to know their neighbours, into a democratic, redefined and resilient city with vitality and depth.

A CITY GROWING FOOD

- Joanna Clark

In March 2009, City of Vancouver's Mayor Gregor Robertson announced that part of the City Hall lawn would be devoted to a community garden. This initiative was a recommendation of the Greenest City Action Team and is part of the City's commitment to develop 2010 garden plots by 2010.

In June 2009, with much media attention, the City Hall Community Garden was launched with 36 garden plots all happily claimed by local residents and community groups. Evergreen, a non-profit organization has been selected to manage the project and is responsible for coordinating the building of the plots, list management, educational workshops and work parties.

Despite being spearheaded by the local government and outsourced by a local non-profit, the garden has become very much a community endeavor as the gardeners have contributed to every stage of development.

Gardeners are helping to design and build all of the gardens and features beyond their own plots. They have designed the perimeter garden of apple trees, berry beds, planters, benches and a healing garden. Well-attended work parties of over 20 people contributed to the building of an arbour, the healing garden and two large garden beds in only one day. Gardeners also actively share ideas and photos on a facebook page as well as get involved



Mayor Gregor Robertson at the inaugural planting



in educational gardening workshops. This community spirit is pretty significant after only being active for 9 months. It will be interesting to see how both the community and the garden will flourish in the years to come.

If you are interested in getting your hands dirty, building planter boxes and getting to know the community gardeners, there are three upcoming events at the Community Garden:

Work Parties: Bed preparation, planter box and bench building

Sunday April 11th
Sunday April 18th

Community Planting and Arts Celebration

Sunday May 2 1-4

Evergreen: www.evergreen.ca



**Welcome to the City Hall
Community Garden!**

The City of Vancouver and Evergreen are working together to develop and manage this community garden as part of the City of Vancouver's commitment to the 2010 Community Garden Challenge and the Greenest City Initiative.

For more information, contact infobc@evergreen.ca

Evergreen is a national charity that makes cities more livable. To learn more, visit evergreen.ca

 



“DON’T GET A JOB UNTIL YOU ARE DONE” an interview with SCARP Alumni Sawngjai Dear Manityakul - Paris Marshall Smith

It is the end of April, papers are complete, classes are over, and a sigh of relief hangs in the air, but not for long, because for many of us a major deadline sits still on the horizon – our final project/thesis.

Recently, I sat down with Sawngjai Dear Manityakul (Dear) to talk about her life post-SCARP and glean wisdom from her experience of transitioning out of SCARP to re-join the workforce.

Dear graduated in September of 2009 and began working a few weeks later as a Junior Planner (and has since been promoted to Planner – congrats Dear!) at AECOM. In many ways, Dear represents SCARPIE success, particularly for the emerging bright-eyed SCARPIES who are now very close to being complete and have begun to actively consider employment prospects.

When asked why AECOM, a major international planning and engineering firm, Dear said that she has always been clear that she wanted to work in the private sector, particularly as one of her mentors, Scot Hein stated that private consulting offered a important opportunity to develop project management skills and varied learning opportunities.

The Day in the Life of Dear:

Sleep in as long as she can before beginning her 45-minute commute to Burnaby.

A day at work consists of:

Checking emails and eating breakfast (allows for more sleep time)

Allocating time for projects, policy analysis, report

writing, filing out timesheets, organizing data and making lists, meetings, research, responding to client calls and queries (can take half the day), responding to Request For Proposals (amazing how much time is spent trying to win work), supporting the senior planner with preparing graphics, presentations, more meetings, research and lots of proposal writing, organizing stakeholder consultation, putting together teams and marketing her services as well as her team’s (proposal writing and marketing is a skill set, Dear says, she did not learn at SCARP).

Dear’s Current projects include –

- Developing a Comprehensive Community Plan for the Tsawout First Nation on Vancouver Island
- Creating an Employment Land Strategy for the City of Richmond
- Developing the Eastern Hillside Comprehensive Area Plan for the City of Chilliwack

Workday ends and it is home to bed and sleep.

What are the highlights of her work?

Learning lots of different things, such as navigating bureaucracy and creatively working through the inevitable obstacles that each new project presents. Dear has also had the opportunity to step up to take on more responsibility because her senior planner left several months ago. As well, developing a high level of competency for working around office politics and the dynamics of a small team

What are the challenges of her position?

As this is Dear's first job as a planner, she has not been clear about the expectation and the demands of the position so there has been a steep learning curve.

How to issue and write RFP's & grants

Coming from the reality of academia, it is, "Good to know what's possible, to dream, to strive for the ideal, and then learn how to still get all of that with the constraints of being bound by budgets, deadlines, and other resource constraints. More often than not, it's not possible to achieve the ideal, so you have to learn how to evaluate and balance the tradeoffs."

What did SCARP teach her?

Dear feels like SCARP offered a solid foundation of key planning and local issues and a deep understanding of the varied aspects of sustainability. Group work – as much of a pain as it could be, it is very important in teaching us how to communicate with so many different personalities, and learning to articulate our own interests and needs. And she particularly recommends Jay Wollenberg's course on Urban Development Market and Financial Analysis.

And when asked for her wisdom and advice, Dear cautions us not to underestimate the energy and motivation needed to get the final project/thesis done. Echoing the advice of many of our great profs, she says, try to avoid getting a job before your are totally complete. In her final summer as SCARP, Dear organized a position at Translink and planned to work on her project in the evenings and on the weekends. But the physical and mental exhaustion of a new position often prevented her from effectively getting her work done. As result she worked right up until her transition to AECOM in September and was not able to take any time to relax. Dear encourages all SCARPIES to allow yourself a graceful transition period (minimum 2 weeks), "It is OK to take time, to rest, to reflect and enjoy the time off", because once you start working the luxury of time is gone. "However",

she continues, "I do understand the anxiety that comes with the transition period and job hunting. So it's still a good idea to begin the job hunt close to when you're done SCARP, but do you know that you have options with respect to leveraging a job that works best for your schedule and any other commitments in your life."

Dear's advice for getting a job?

"Stay positive, there is a lot of planning work out there and lots of jobs despite the economy. Be flexible." Dear says that it is important to commit to what you say you will do, ie, if you meet someone and say you will send them your work, be sure to follow up – it is the little things that get noticed and can be the difference between you and another applicant. And also use your connections. Dear's position at AECOM was supported by a referral from her good friend and fellow SCARPIE – Iona To.

Finally for International Students, a word of advice regarding work permits. Start to think ahead sooner and be organized – you only have 90 days after your graduation to find work.





THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
SCHOOL OF COMMUNITY & REGIONAL PLANNING (SCARP)
Presents.....

The 2nd Annual SCARP Symposium

PLANNING FOR RESILIENCE

MARCH 4-5, 2010
Identifying the Tools to Move from Knowledge to Action

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS: DR. EMILY TALEN (author of *Designing for Diversity*) &
DR. C.S. (BUZZ) HOLLING (originator of Resilience in Systems)

The UBC School of Community and Regional Planning is excited to announce the 2nd annual Symposium and this year's topic of Planning for Resilience. The day will include a broad range of panel discussions

with a diversity of perspectives from students, practitioners and academics from planning, architecture, geography, resource management, landscape architecture, and more. Join us as well for a wine and cheese

reception on the evening of March 4th. Held at the Graduate Student Society Building at UBC. \$75 for professionals, \$25 for students and \$50 for non-profits. PIBC Credits available.

<http://cfis.ubc.ca/resiliencehome.html>



On **March 4-5 2010**, a cross section of 120 graduate students, professional practitioners and academics explored various themes of resiliency. The symposium featured panel discussions on subjects as varied as the Healing City, Greenest City Planning, International Equity Planning, Sustainable Energy and Social Food Systems. Speakers included Buzz Hollings, Nola-Kate Seymour, Mark Holland, Darrell Mussatto and many more. The day proved to be an excellent opportunity for students to connect with practitioners and academics, present their ideas and work and share in the success of organizing a wonderful event. Congratulations to all involved and we look forward to next year.