Welcome to the winter edition of Newsbytes. This issue highlights some recent SCARP achievements both within the School as well as in the broader planning practice. As the school continues to go through changes, Newsbytes introduces new SCARP courses, the 2012 Planning Student’s Association, and provides an update on SCARP’s involvement in the Integrated Planning and Design Facility process. SCARP’s Professor William Rees, who will retire in 2012, takes some time to reflect on his experiences here at the School. We encourage you to share your ideas and suggestions regarding Newsbytes and its articles (ebbird@mta.ca).

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SCARP students present their ideas for enhancing Vancouver's Chinatown for their Urban Design Project. Photo credit: Yu Kuki

SCARP Students volunteering at the BC Affordable Housing Research and Action Roundtable Series. Photo credit: Tanya Fink
SCARPies Receive Award for Community Engagement Books

The School of Community and Regional Planning (SCARP) is pleased to congratulate former adjunct professor, Wendy Sarkissian, for having been awarded the 2010 Planning Institute of Australia Award for Planning Scholarship. This award was given in recognition of the trio of new books on community engagement Wendy co-authored for Earthscan, the international independent publisher of the year. Wendy started the books while she was teaching at SCARP and three of her brilliant co-authors, Dianna Hurford, Christine Wenman, and Nancy Hofer, were SCARP students who began their involvement in these books as directed studies in 2007 and 2008. The authors of these books are now up for a national award.

Dianna Hurford, co-author of Creative Community Planning: Dianna graduated from SCARP and spent a year writing Creative Community Planning while sailing through the waterways of France. Upon returning to Vancouver, she has been working as a regional planner in Metro Vancouver's Homelessness Secretariat. The Secretariat supports the work of municipalities and community agencies working to address a complexity of homeless issues in the region through an integration of research, policy and engagement. Dianna also writes regularly on the local food movement in a community paper column and has a place-based poetry manuscript nearing the finish line.

Christine Wenman, contributing author of Creative Community Planning: Christine is currently completing her graduate work at SCARP. She has worked on land use planning with Indian and Northern Affairs and has recently joined the team at Ecology North, an environmental non-profit organization based in Yellowknife, NT. At Ecology North, Christine is working with Northern communities to plan for climate change impacts to community water and sanitation systems since climate impacts are more severe in these northern areas and communities face quite unique challenges in terms of capacity.

Nancy Hofer, contributing author of Kitchen Table Sustainability: Nancy, another SCARP graduate, has a background in ecology and natural resource conservation. Following graduation, Nancy worked in Guyana for 6 months on the Canadian Institute of Planners Canada-Guyana Partnership for Community Planning project. There, her planning skills were put to good use writing policy and plans to guide state-funded housing development schemes. While the circumstances were quite different, the skills learned at SCARP of integrative and comprehensive thinking, project management, community engagement and low environmental impact site planning and design were highly applicable. Currently, Nancy works as Environmental Planner at the City of Courtenay on Vancouver Island. Nancy is the first person to hold this position at the City and is finding opportunity to bring plenty of new ideas to the organization.

**2010 Awards for Excellence in Planning Scholarship, Research or Teaching Category winner:**

Creative Community Planning: Transformative Engagement Methods for Working at the Edge (2010) by Wendy Sarkissian and Dianna Hurford with Christine Wenman and a foreword by John Forester demonstrates how artistic, narrative, embodied and technological methods of participation practices can be inspiring and transformative tools for engaging and empowering individuals or communities in planning processes within a sustainability framework.

Kitchen Table Sustainability: Practical Recipes for Community Engagement with Sustainability (2009) by Wendy Sarkissian with Nancy Hofer, Yollana Shore, Steph Vajda and Cathy Wilkinson is a guide to sustainability via participatory community engage-
The approach they take is referred to as EATING: Education, Action, Trust, Inclusion, Nourishment and Governance.


New SCARP Course Offered Downtown in 2012

Professor Tom Hutton, in collaboration with Bing Thom Architects, will be offering a new course at SCARP in the spring of 2012. Bing Thom Architects is a Vancouver-based firm of architects and planners, known for their mixed-used projects and their integration of planning, urban design, and architecture.

This is an excellent opportunity for students to become involved in urban planning in a hands-on setting downtown and to engage in off-campus partnerships.

Organizers will be developing the program approach to this new course in the upcoming summer and fall seasons. They look forward to receiving student input in shaping this course into an exciting and instructional experience for the students.
Thoughts on Canadian Planning Context and Perspective
Ren Thomas and Silvia Vilches

As Canadian Ph.D. students presenting at the annual Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP) conference last October, we were struck by the difficulty of presenting in the American context. While we have very different topics, we both feel the need for a Canadian voice or perspective on planning, and this raised questions for us about whether a distinct theory base needed to be recognized.

Although planning theory is presumed to be universal, questions asked at these conferences often reflected the dominance of the American context in the planning literature. For example, Silvia’s work is focused on ways of improving and exploring social planning in respect to welfare reform, but in the U.S., social safety net efforts are subsumed under community development. As a result, suggestions about how to improve practice are met with confusion because of the need to translate the study findings from the one governance context to another. Ren’s research on immigrants’ housing and transportation patterns reflects a different reality from American cities, where a major factor in research and policy is the high levels of segregation faced by the African American and Hispanic populations. Another current divergence between the two countries is the American mortgage crisis, which makes the lack of focus on this in Canadian research puzzling to the American audiences.

After discussing the types of session questions we were receiving with other Canadians presenting at the conference, we began to wonder whether there is a need for a Canadian planning perspective. Various national contexts establish very different scopes of practice and present distinct challenges. Some of the factors contributing to a distinct Canadian planning culture include that Canadian cities have some of the highest percentages of foreign-born populations in the world, that we have social supports such as health care and subsidized public education, and that Canada faces distinct climate change challenges as a Northern nation. Without a Canadian context in the literature, solutions that could address our unique challenges may not be discussed, and worse, we might assume that American research reflects the Canadian reality. For example, despite many studies showing that residential segregation is low in Canadian cities, persistent media portrayals of “ethnic enclaves” reflect concerns that are actually more relevant in the American context. In Canada, our more expansive social safety net makes debates about the extent of support possible. In both cases, recommendations for reform reflect a very different range of citizen expectations, raising questions about how to situate findings within the field of planning theory more generally.

The dilemmas become apparent in discussing the research. Ren’s research is a case study of Filipino immigrants in Toronto. She examined housing and transportation choices of this group over time by analyzing Census data and conducting interviews with Filipino immigrants who entered the country between 1967 and 2010. Her research shows that structural changes in immigration policy, housing policy and the labour market have had a measurable impact on immigrants’ housing and transportation choices, both a key substantive concern in the more regulated Canadian environment, as well as an important finding from a country with a large immigrant population. Can this be allocated to a “regional” difference, albeit at the national level, or does this constitute and require an investigation of what planning is in Canada and what theory should be drawn on to inform further work here?

The dilemma is similar in Silvia’s research, which, as part of a larger multidisciplinary project headed by Penny Gurstein, looked at the implications of the extensive BC Welfare reform for lone mothers with young children. Her dissertation work suggests there is potential for using quality of life indices as an alternate way of measuring poverty. Such an approach might place more power to effect change in the hands of local governments, which, in BC, typically have social planning departments. At a theoretical level, this extends interna-
tional work to the developed-nation context and challenges the notion of privileged developed-nation status which is assumed to be the reality for all Canadian citizens. The recommendations make sense in a country which has a constitutional responsibility for social services and which utilizes three scales of government to effect change.

Some of the specific theoretical questions we are interested in exploring further area:

- **Theoretical challenge 1**—What insights from the literature in our field can be adapted to a Canadian perspective? Do we need to do this? Is the current body of work sufficient for all contexts?

- **Theoretical challenge 2**—Is there a unique Canadian perspective that we could offer, either theoretically or to practice, which would enrich the general body of literature—if it was presented as part of a distinct stream of thought and practice?

- **Theoretical challenge 3**—If we were to consider planning theory to be context-dependent, what voices or perspectives could we draw on to enrich our theory and practice in Canada?

We would like to start a discussion on these questions at SCARP’s lunchtime lecture series by presenting our own work and reflecting on some of the unique differences from the general body of planning theory. We will be presenting on March 26th at 12:15 in WMAX 150.

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**CAG 2011 Calgary: Our Legacy, Our Future**

The University of Calgary Geography Department is hosting the CAG’s 2011 annual conference and meeting, May 31 - June 4, 2011. This is in conjunction with the Canadian Cartographic Association (CCA), and is the first Canadian meeting of the Association of Canadian University Planning Programs (ACUPP). If you are interested in attending this Canadian conference of planning theory, visit: [http://geog.ucalgary.ca/cag2011/](http://geog.ucalgary.ca/cag2011/).

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**SCARP Holiday Party**

On December 3rd, 80 SCARP students, staff, and guests dressed in their finest and got together to celebrate both the end of their first term classes as well as the beginning of the holiday season. The holiday party was held at Radha Yoga & Eatery on Main St—a perfect location for such an event as it was simultaneously elegant and homey. Guests socialized over organic beers and were served a delicious vegan meal which even the biggest ‘vegan-sceptics’ seemed to devour. The night continued with organic, vegan carrot cake followed by a dance floor full SCARPies enjoying the Latino music that our party planners provided.

The party was a great success, providing an opportunity for everyone to relax, discuss their holiday plans, meet colleagues’ loved ones, and enjoy good food, company and music. A special THANK YOU to Yu Kuki, Sarah Gillet, and Yaheli Shtull for all their work in organizing such an enjoyable evening.
A Reflection with William Rees

Since he began teaching at UBC’s School of Community and Regional Planning in 1969, William Rees has brought valuable insights and introduced a strong environmental flavour to the program. Professor Rees established the school’s ‘Ecological and Resource Planning’ concentration and while at SCARP created ‘Ecological Footprint Analysis’ a well-known quantitative method for assessing (un)sustainability. His passion for global sustainability continues to inspire in-depth discussions and debates among students, encouraging them to think outside the box and consider the implications that current planning decisions have in a broader context. Prof Rees recently announced his intention to retire by 2012. He will be sincerely missed.

In a recent interview, I had the privilege of asking him to reflect on his time at SCARP.

What have been some highlights for you in your 40+ years at SCARP?

A continuing ‘highlight’ has been a supportive collegial environment in which I was not only allowed but encouraged to pursue lines of inquiry and research that were clearly outside the mainstream of planning thinking. I was able to satisfy my wildest academic goals which led, ultimately, to the development of ecological footprint analysis. The latter has taken off globally, assisted by the subsequent good work of my doctoral students, and has helped to create the School’s profile as a good place to study sustainability planning.

SCARP really does offer an unusual academic environment.

I’ve also valued the opportunity to work with absolutely fantastic students who have gone out with a mission to change the world. I have great former students in Canada and other countries around the world doing very creative things and I’m very proud of them.

Another highlight was my term as Director, when I had the opportunity to help shape the school’s focus on sustainability and move SCARP forward in a way that no other planning school had dared to go. I think that focus and our mission to facilitate the transition to a sustainable society has put SCARP in very good stead both in the broader planning community and in terms of the university’s overall policy directions. Indeed, more generally, over the years SCARP’s leadership—our global-international orientation, local community engagement and general sustainability focus—has helped guide the university in the direction successive Presidents have wanted to take it.

In your eyes, how has SCARP changed over the years?

Well, I’ll speak very personally. I think there have been two fairly significant changes in the program. Firstly, it has gone from a focus on local, mainly North American urban spatial and social planning to more comprehensive planning for sustainability on local to global scales. The School’s program now encompasses a much fuller range of planning contexts in both the developed and developing worlds. The curriculum covers topics ranging from traditional planning theory and law through social empowerment, international relations, complexity theory and ecological change using tools as disparate as community engagement, decision analysis, negotiation, and disaster preparedness. What an intellectual feast for the truly engaged student!
Secondly, my impression is that the school has gone from teaching facts to emphasizing processes associated with the democratization of planning in the public interest—capacity building, experiential learning, and teaching people how to plan for themselves, perhaps particularly in the international area.

I think it’s also fair to say that just a few decades ago almost all of SCARP students were men but in recent years we’ve shifted to having a female majority. Perhaps, along with the general liberation of women, the changing the intellectual environment at SCARP has attracted more and more females to the school.

As mentioned, your ecological focus has been important in encouraging SCARP to be a leader in sustainability planning. What are your hopes for SCARP’s development in the future?

I hope the school commits to staying ahead of the game by take a deeper and longer range view of global change, including climate change and its implications. The profession needs a transfusion of new ideas and thinking to shift its focus from the short-term and addressing mere symptoms of cultural and ecological dysfunction, to the longer term task of re-writing our growth-based cultural narrative. The main question is what might a truly sustainable economy and society look like?

Not enough planners have pondered this question. In my view, such current ‘innovations’ as smart growth, the ‘new (i.e., old) urbanism’, green buildings, greening our neighbourhoods, etc., will soon be seen as ineffective distractions on the path to sustainability. They do nothing either to mitigate global change or reduce our ecological footprints.

We’re facing a world that will be dramatically different by mid century and continuing to plan as if the next 50 years will be a smooth and linear extension of the past 50 years is the height of folly. Planners should be helping to prepare society for possibly dramatic shifts in both short-term weather and longer term climate patterns and their consequences. How will the world cope with a four-metre sea level rise (now deemed possible within a century)? What is the appropriate local response to the displacement of hundreds of millions of people from landscapes, cities and towns all over the world? Is BC or Canada (neither of which even has a population policy) prepared to cope with what may turn out to be significant global population redistribution resulting from flooded landscapes, desertification and civil strife (resource wars)? Have we even begun to think about accommodating (or turning back?) the massive inmigration that may be asked of, or forced upon, us?

And, quite apart from global resettlement issues, what are the implications of global change (including ‘peak oil’) for urban form, densification, transportation and spatial planning, agricultural land use and food security planning (should we think about becoming more self-sufficient given the threats to distant sources of supply?), energy resource planning, the protection of wild spaces, etc.

Finally, are planning schools sufficiently focused on the housing, poverty, food-security and related social justice issues (all exacerbated by the ongoing erosion of the very idea of community and the widening income gap) that will certainly accompany any threat to ecological security?

Despite all the verbiage, my point is really quite simple. Planning is one of those rare professions which is explicitly oriented towards transforming the future. Yet there’s not much evidence that in the core of the profession there’s a deep understanding of the pace of change and the scale of change likely to confront practitioners in coming
decades. Planning schools have an obligation to address the gap evident in current curricula between business as usual planning and the emergent real-world environment that is likely to engulf professional practice later in the 21st Century.

What do you plan to do in retirement?

I am a founding director and initially funded a non-profit research and advocacy group, The One Earth Initiative (oneearthweb.org), dedicated to fostering a dialogue in Canada of transforming production and consumption patterns toward a steady state economy. (This is an initial, politically digestible step or response to the issues outlined above). Several of my former students and colleagues are involved in OneEarth and I hope to join them in a greater hands-on capacity. Fortunately, we are now starting to get consulting work including a significant contract from Environment Canada to host the first North American Conference on Sustainable Production and Consumption in Ottawa at the end of the month.

I'll also be continuing my academic pursuits. I have several manuscripts in process I hope to complete as well—both independent and co-authored. I also hope to do more popular writing for newspapers, magazines, online blogs, etc. to get my ideas into more general circulation, not just within the academic community.

As a former oboe player, I hope I'll find the time to return to my hobby as an active participant in local amateur music.

Finally, as my house (once described in print as a ‘shabby west-side bungalow) also has some long-overdue repairs I hope to complete myself. (By the way, that was an inaccurate description—it’s not a bungalow.)

Although we are sad to see such a wonderful teacher leave, we look forward to following the activities of the One Earth Initiative (oneearthweb.org) and reading Bill’s latest insights as they are published. We hope he will find time to relax and return to his love of music in retirement. Good luck!

Updates on the new Integrated Planning & Design Facility

Jessie Singer

SCARP’s 60th anniversary marks not only 60 years of operation but also 60 years in our current home on campus, West Mall Annex. As beloved as WMAX is to all SCARPies, there are plans underway to develop a new facility for us to call home.

The idea of a transdisciplinary facility goes back to the spring of 2008 when SCARP first entered into collaboration with the School of Architecture & Landscape Architecture (SALA) to campaign for a new building. The UBC Integrated Planning and Design Facility emerged and both faculties began to envision a space which would prioritize sustainability and transdisciplinary learning. This partnership was formed recognizing the need for more adequate space for our growing faculty and the potential benefits to be gained from greater learning and sharing between the two disciplines.

Currently SCARP, SALA and our campus partners are participating in a feasibility study for the new facility which is set to run from January 2011 to April 2011. Input from stakeholders is being solicited by the chosen consultants, Vancouver-based SHAPE Architecture. Engagement is centred on three “event weeks” entitled: Learning Landscapes (January 2011), Spaces for Learning (February 2011) and Low Energy Landscapes (March 2011).

In response to this ongoing process, SCARP has formed a directed studies course to coordinate SCARP engagement surrounding the feasibility study and to conduct research into innovative planning and transdisciplinary facilities. In preparation for the first stakeholder workshop in January, SCARP directed studies students collected SCARP’s views from a number of sources includ-
ing, an online survey, posters in WMAX and Lasserre and a student visioning session. Current staff, students and faculty can expect further engagement activities to be conducted by the class over the coming months. We will be looking for ideas around sustainability, SCARP culture, technological requirements, innovative space and more. We encourage all of you to come out and participate so that we are sure to capture what you think are important features to be included in the new facility. If alumni would like to be involved in this process we encourage you to contact the directed studies group for ways to contribute.

For more information on the process and to see what has been produced from the event weeks, please visit the official UBC IPD site at http://ubcipd.wordpress.com/.

SCARP directed studies contact: Jessie Singer (jessiea.singer@gmail.com)

Displayed are some of the SCARP visioning images produced for Workshop #1: Learning Landscapes.
Welcome PSA 2011

With the New Year comes a new board of representatives for the Planning Students’ Association, to be directed in 2011 by President Lauren Klose and Vice President Devon Miller.

The call for self-nominations was met with great enthusiasm from the first-year class - so much so that some positions will now be shared by two or more people (a more inclusive alternative to elections!).

The 2011 PSA is as ambitious as ever, already discussing how to bring the 2012 Canadian Association of Planning Students Conference to Vancouver and how to restore the CIP National Student Representative position to SCARP.

They will also continue to build on the work of the 2010 PSA, including Jessie Singer’s involvement in the integrated planning and design process for the new Integrated Planning and Design Facility.

We all owe some thanks and appreciation for the work of the outgoing 2010 PSA, guided with charm and grace by President Kasel Yamashita and Vice President Murray McKenzie.

The PSA helped to make 2010 a little more fun, including Yu Kuki’s terrific End-of-Year, Halloween, and Winter Parties, and Wendy Tse’s successful orientations week and Whistler trip. And let’s not forget the SCARP cookbook!

Sam Mohamad-Khany and Kasel became involved in the CIP’s Planning for the Future process by writing a letter that encouraged the adoption of a broader definition of planning. Kasel also rewrote a significant portion of the PSA Constitution, granting more freedom for the PSA to be redefined on an annual basis.

Other ongoing work initiated by the 2010 PSA includes our involvement in campus sports (you almost did it, longboat team!). Erik Blair will continue developing the PSA presence on the SCARP website, as begun by Chris Gallop. Erica Lay, John Chapman, and Polly Ng will manage the popular lunchtime lecture series, as done by Ellen Bird and Sarah Gillett.

2011 will surely bring another great year for the PSA. Thanks again to everyone who contributed hard work in 2010!