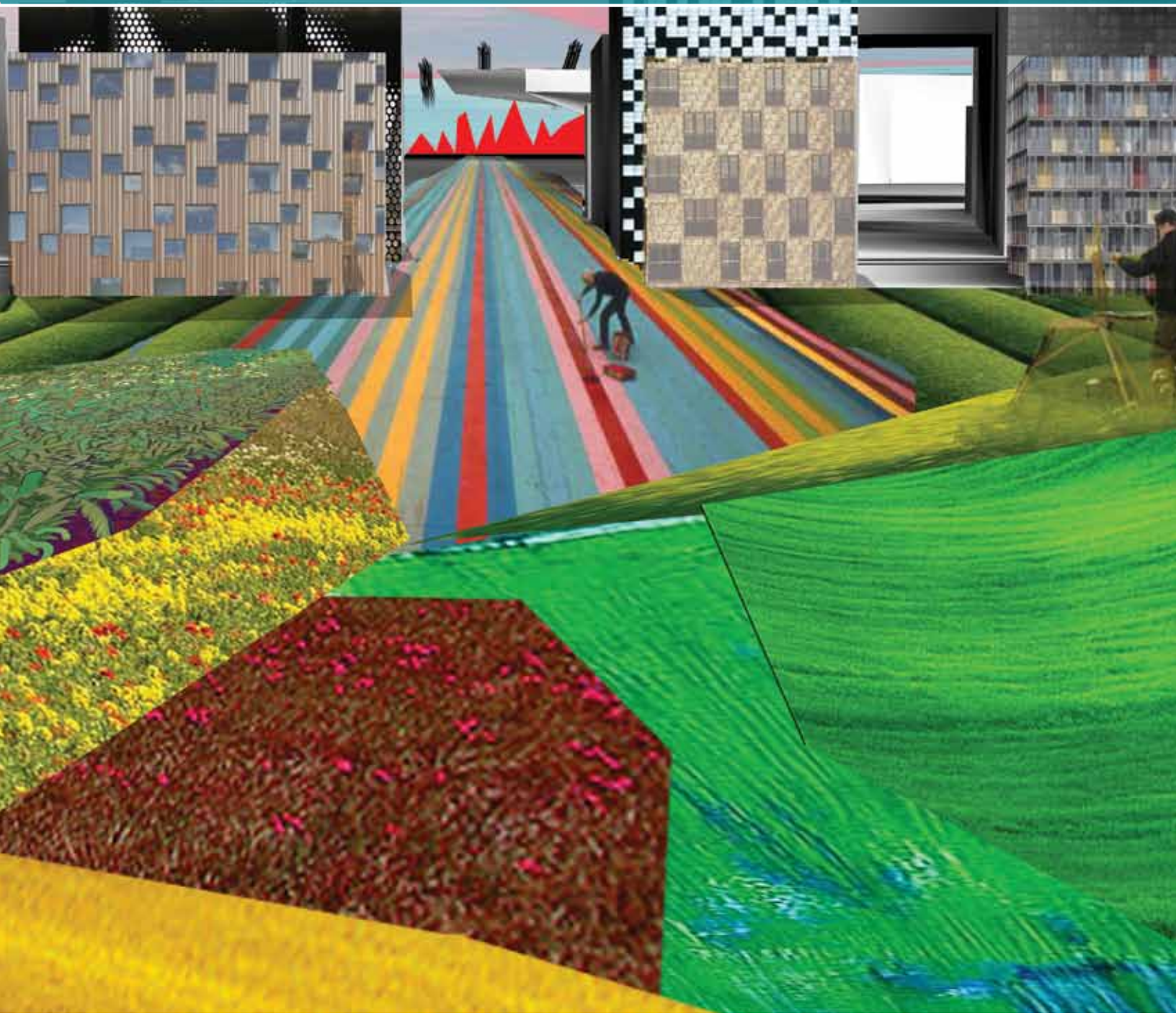
DECEMBER 2012

SITELINES

Landscape Architecture in British Columbia



OUTSIDE-IN/INSIDE-OUT

UBC MLA Student Project Profiles | Interning with OLIN | A Lesson from the Clumsy Cow | Fear of Flooding | Philip Tattersfield Scholarship | "Seeding" the Profession









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OUTSIDE-IN/ *Inside Out*

By Laura Macdonald, BCSLA Student Representative, MLA Candidate

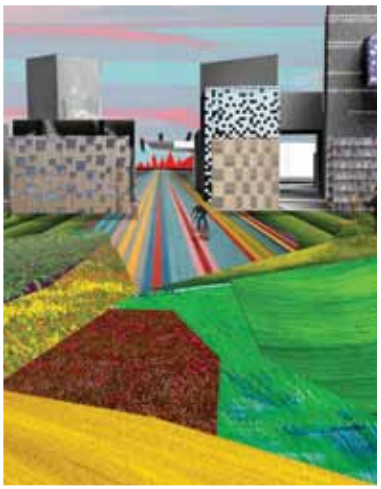
UBC students look inside and outside the profession, challenging the status quo, and exploring innovative ideas.

With contributions from UBC Master of Landscape Architecture (MLA) and Master of Advanced Studies in Landscape Architecture (MASLA) students, this issue of SITELINES showcases some of the creative projects and critical thought emerging from academia.

The students inform their practice as they flip, turn, and shift their perspectives, navigating independent and collaborative processes. These processes question and search inside and outside the profession hoping to come up with positive and creative solutions to challenging problems. Some of the challenges discussed in this issue include, the disconnect between research and practice and concerns of uncertain economic and environmental futures.

The projects enclosed are a selection of outstanding work produced over the past year by first and second year LARC students. Exploring the theme of "inside and outside", two students examine landscapes on or near UBC. On campus, Zhipin Li creates zones of possible relationships in his design "People are Landscapes". In "Water Garden", Lindsey Fryett reimagines our seasonal relationship to water in Pacific Spirit Park.

Paul Peters poetically uses carefully selected materials to create an intimate gathering space on Bowen Island's Snug Cove. Paul was one of several students that presented his design to the community in the spring of 2012. The community warmly welcomed the new ideas offered by the students for the future of the Bowen Island village. ►



Cover Image: Team LAB.
Image courtesy of Paul Peters , Ryan Coghlan, and Thomas Daley.

In this Issue:

UBC MLA Student Project Profiles 6

Interning with OLIN (and what I learned about our profession) 9

A Lesson from the Clumsy Cow: Netherlands Summer Studio 2012 10

Fear of Flooding – Decommissioning Van Der Pekbuurt 14

Philip Tattersfield Scholarship: Over/Under and Beyond: New Life for the Overpass 16

"Seeding" the Profession 17

Continued from page 3.

Matt Gibbs and Neda Roohnia collaborated on a new design for a West Vancouver museum that blurs the boundary of landscape and architecture. The studio was run by Don Vaughan, LMBCSLA (Retired), FCSLA, FASLA, who was able to provide a great deal of personal insight into the Ambleside community and the site.

Similar to these projects, the articles enclosed are a testament to the challenging thoughts UBC students grapple with all year long, both inside and outside of the studio and classroom.

Joshua Welsh, describes his experience abroad this summer as an intern with OLIN in Philadelphia. Josh worked long hours to unpack innovative ideas relating to one of his research passions, green infrastructure. During his time in the city Josh became well acquainted with Philly's best dinner take out spots.

In another experience abroad, a group of UBC architecture, planning, and landscape architecture students lived and worked together for five weeks under one roof during a studio in the Netherlands. Through a collaborative process the students focused on ideas of "seeding" and "catalyzing" human activities for a site near the IJ river in the Old City of Amsterdam. In "A Lesson from the Clumsy Cow", four of the students that participated in the studio describe how after a number of field trips and site visits, they were charmed by an old Dutch fable about a cow named Hendrika.

"Fear of Flooding? Decommissioning Van Der Pekbuurt" by Caelan Griffiths, BCSLA Student, proposes that designers look outside of our region, to the Netherlands, to help solve important issues of stormwater management in the Lower Mainland. Nina LaBelle Cicero, this year's Philip Tattersfield Scholarship winner, inspires us to see new life in old infrastructure in her essay "Over/Under and Beyond: New Life for the Overpass".

Finally, Cynthia Girling, MBCSLA, FCSLA, FCELA, FASLA, UBC Landscape Architecture Professor and Chair, who accompanied the students to the Netherlands discusses positively, the optimism felt by the students despite uncertain economic and ecological futures.

Many thanks to all the contributors and to Sophie MacNeill and Linzey Bedard for their editing expertise. Also a huge thank you to Jessica Tan and Tara Culham for all of their assistance.

I sincerely hope you enjoy the "ins and outs" of this issue. SL

UBC MLA Student Project Profiles

Park Gateway Snug Cove Village, Bowen Island, BC

By Paul Peters, MLA Candidate

LARC 503 - Design Development
Professor: James Tuer, MBCSLA, MAIBC

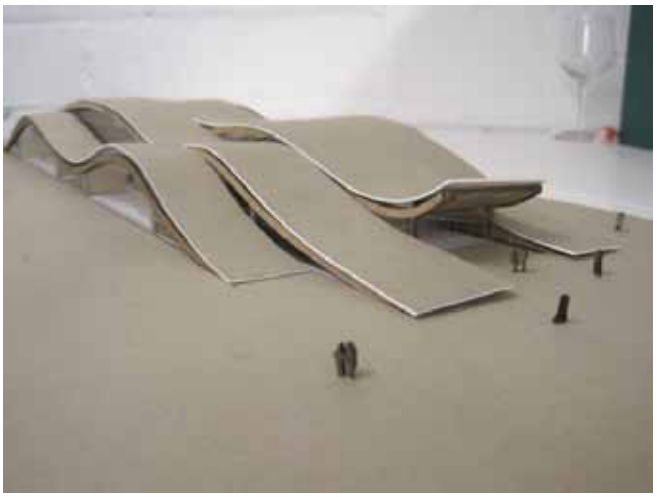
Image courtesy of Paul Peters.

Rain sounds the arrival of autumn as it spills off of the roofs into a basalt gabion inset copper rill. As the central pond collects rainwater, weathered steel plates hover above. Overflowing along a channel and through a swale drifting along a path, water slides by a small seating nook and pools in a wetland.

Framing the west entrance is a pair of patios close enough to allow friends to chat from either side. A kitchen garden steps up a slope adjacent to a cafe, with fruit and hazelnut trees to the side.

Perspective - Snug Cove community gathering area.

Emergence: Art Museum for West Vancouver



By Neda Roohnia, MLA Candidate, Matt Gibbs, MLA Candidate

LARC 504 - Vertical Studio
Professor: Don Vaughan, LMBCSLA, FCSLA, FASLA

Images courtesy of Neda Roohina and Matt Gibbs.

There exists an opportunity for Ambleside waterfront to revitalize and redefine West Vancouver as a world-class community and cultural icon for the arts. This studio, led by Don Vaughan, LMBCSLA, FCSLA, FASLA, merged architecture and landscape architecture to design a new museum that captures the sense of place, creates a connection to the waterfront, and acts as commercial anchor to the area. Our design focused on sensitively and seamlessly connecting to John Lawson Park. Using a West Coast Modern approach, the four emerging bands of the greenroof create a unique experience above, below, inside, and outside.

Model - Entrance to the museum.

Longitudinal section along waterfront. ▼

People are Landscapes

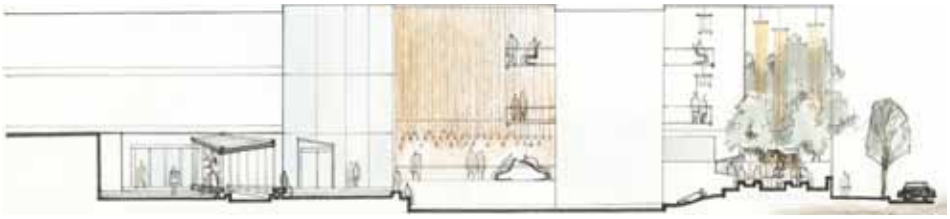
By Zhipin Li, MLA Candidate

LARC 501 - Design Studio 1: Introduction
Instructor: Susan Herrington

Images courtesy of Zhipin Li.

◄ Public space between two rows of trees.

The site is the Neville Scarfe Education Building plaza, located at the corner of University Boulevard and Main Mall on the UBC Vancouver campus. There are two main problems at this site. One, is that pedestrians cannot conveniently nor directly pass through the plaza to the building entrance during busy times. The second problem is the lack of comfortable seating and shelter which renders the plaza an undesirable space to occupy, especially on rainy days and at night. My design is intended to strengthen the main axis of pedestrian flow across the site by using the existing building to create stages at various levels for users to occupy the space. By creating these stages, people act as performers; by creating frames, people are paintings. You become the landscape of others' views.



North-South Section - Facing west. ▲

East-West Section - Facing south showing wind frame. ▼

Water Garden

By Lindsey Fryett, MLA Candidate

LARC 502 - Design Methods
Professor: Douglas Paterson, LMBCSLA (Retired), FCSLA

Images courtesy of Lindsey Fryett.

Down a gravel path through Pacific Spirit Park, 200 metres south of West 16th Avenue, lies a 60 x 80 metre concrete water reservoir. This is the place where water is gathered, stored, and distributed for the community. To celebrate water as a community resource, Water Garden is designed as a place for gathering. Whether it is an ice skating rink in winter, a fountain in the summer, or a quiet water feature, the experience of water is achieved through its many forms. Water Garden is a celebration of the inherent richness of the site. SL

Perspective – The amphitheatre becomes a viewing deck for the water features below, framing the main social space of the garden.

Entry - In the winter, Water Garden becomes ► a space for skaters to weave through and under the amphitheatre or for spectators to watch skating from above.

Interning with OLIN
(and what I learned about our profession)

Summers as a graduate student are meant for travel, study, and work, mostly. It is time for us to see what the world has to offer beyond the tedium of epic crit sessions and the filters of Google Scholar. I came to UBC SALA two years ago with some experience as a practitioner in the field, but could not pass up a particular opportunity to be an intern again.

By Joshua Welsh, MASLA Candidate

For the first time, the annual OLIN summer internship this year had a theme. That theme–Green Infrastructure–is central to my thesis topic, so I took that as a strong sign and applied to one of the two slots open to schools other than the University of Pennsylvania and Purdue University. After learning of my acceptance, road-tripping across the US from coast to coast, and moving into an un-air-conditioned West Philly attic apartment during one of the hottest summers on record, my ten weeks with them began.

OLIN is one of the largest North American firms that practices strictly landscape architecture. You cannot grow to their size throughout the current economic recession, without being a big deal. When I arrived to their penthouse studio overlooking Independence National Historic Park, where the United States began over two centuries ago, this became immediately apparent. Our first two weeks as interns were composed of what they were terming the *Green Infrastructure Charrette*. We were to re-envision the entire school grounds of an elementary school using green infrastructure (GI) to establish ecological, social, and economic sustainability. First thing on day two, we met with the client stakeholder group, the school's principal and teachers, and toured the school building and grounds. To start day three, we met with the Philadelphia Water Department. After, and with designs we had just begun to consider, we prepared for our first critique in front of client group members, project managers, and partners with the firm. With long hours it went like this, and we soon got to know the best dinner takeout restaurants in Center City Philadelphia.

For my billable intern duties that followed, there were CAD details and spec work for a 100% submittal for a new plaza for the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art, diagramming for a brownfield masterplanning project in the Napa region of California, visioning and more diagramming for projects in Tokyo, and then back along the eastern seaboard of the US. I was an intern again, and it felt good to be honing my sketching and drafting skills. I soon however, began to reminisce about the whirlwind that was my first two weeks.

The Green Infrastructure Charrette was highly rewarding. It satisfied an altruistic ideal, taught me that there was much more to GI than managing and cleaning stormwater, and provided the amazing opportunity of designing for children. However, I soon realized that the theme of the internship was not particularly going to weave itself through the remainder of my work, and this disappointed me. The blame for this does not fall in the lap of my summer employer and teacher. Rather, I learned that GI still barely touches the body of work of our entire profession. Whether it is the prevalence of "professional rut", where professions fall victim to the routine and insularity that makes cross-disciplinary collaboration and new learning difficult, or something else, GI is still a novelty.

To help shift this paradigm, OLIN hired a partner whose focus is to help see that GI is considered for each project as it passes from the marketing department to the designers. To date, they have a few high-profile GI built projects to tout, such as MIT's Stata Center and Yale's Kroon Hall, as well as several projects under construction, such as Canal Park in Washington, DC, and Dilworth Plaza in Philadelphia. Further, they aim to do more and occasionally push the envelope by taking on visioning projects, namely their answer to the Living City Design Competition, titled *Patchwork*.

Towards the end of my brief, yet enriching experience with OLIN, my requests to work more with the theme of the internship were answered. This time, I had the privilege to work with Steve Benz, the Director of Green Infrastructure, on more visioning work and a series of reports that addressed the needs of both community and the larger natural systems of which we are all a part. During my road trip back across Canada, camping in one park to the next, I considered the experience, was grateful for it, but was left sensing an ocean of disconnection between research and implementation. I could not help but consider the unsettling implications of the inability for firms, even award-winning firms such as OLIN who actively seek out such projects, to produce a portfolio that exhibits GI as the mainstream.

For the sake of future generations, green infrastructure needs be pervasive, not just novel. In November of last year during his address at the UBC CIRS Accelerating Sustainability Conference, David Suzuki pondered the global eco-crisis by asking: "Is it too late?" In his next breath, he replied, "It is late, very late…but it will never be too late for me." While landscape architecture may indeed be one of the professions leading the fight for a more sustainable human enterprise, we still have much more work to do. SL

A Lesson from the Clumsy Cow: Netherlands Summer Studio 2012

By Pietra Basilij, MLA Candidate,
Caelan Griffiths, MLA Candidate,
Lukas Holy, MLA Candidate,
Lindsey Fryett, MLA Candidate,

Clumsy cow. Image courtesy of Dan Borslein.

There is a children's story in North Holland about a clumsy cow named Hendrika, who longs to experience the city beyond her field. Upon tumbling into a canal, and finding it too difficult to climb back out, she capitalizes on a passing raft and floats through Amsterdam, gathering the city's many mysteries into a record of memories and stories. When she is finally rescued and returned to her field, she is pleased that what may have been an unfortunate incident, turned into an experience. The fable reflects an attitude that has become central to Dutch planning and development: make good of misfortune, learn through experience, and never fall in the same canal twice.

For centuries, urban design in the Netherlands has revolved around incident, experiment, and adaptation, relying on the collective experiences of its chief planners and designers, experimenting with infrastructure and design as a means of reclaiming land from the sea, and adapting global urban design theory to the scale of the Dutch city. It is no wonder, then, that the Netherlands is gathering attention on the world stage for its progressive examples of designing for uncertain futures, specifically a future of economic and environmental ambiguity.

Financial uncertainty is much like the changing climate: in most cases, it neither heats nor cools in any coherent and predictable fashion, but rather shows extremes in a chaotic manner. That said, the Netherlands has largely weathered the economic storm that began in 2008. But even with diversified revenues, international investment, and public sector surpluses, 2012 has caught Dutch construction in a downward spiral, inspiring a rather hardscrabble market climate in the urban development and housing sector of their economy.

This was the challenge into which a group of 24 UBC students, from landscape architecture, urban planning, and architecture, were thrown this summer. The class was asked to develop masterplans for uncertain futures on a site where the first phase of planned urban development had been completed. After the first phase, the project was put on standstill as a result of limited urban design success and the unforeseen economic flux.

The site, Overhoeks, is a former industrial site designated for mixed-use, residential, and cultural programming. It's located on the north shore of the IJ, the body of water that serves as an essential connection from the Old City of Amsterdam to the northern neighbourhoods, and acts as a landmark from Central Station. Current plans have outlined a series of condominium developments in three phases. With the exception of four condominium buildings and an iconic film museum, the site is mostly barren. The industrial buildings of the previous occupant, Royal Dutch Shell, have for the most part been leveled.

A series of site investigations and an exploration of notable area developments throughout the region led students to consider strategies and tactics to instigate growth on the site. Seven interventions, ranging from shifts in the urban framework to entire reconceptualizations of community development were proposed. ►

The following three schemes advocate the creation of a principal urban design feature to help catalyze the site's development:

IJ Amsterdam

Team: *Lukas Holy, MLA Candidate, Dan Borslein, MLA Candidate, Maysa Phares, MCP Candidate*

IJ Amsterdam endeavoured to unify the waterfront in order to create a regionally significant public open space. The group proposed to link the banks of the IJ to a network of canal-side open spaces, reaching out to adjacent neighbourhoods in the North. The design capitalized on the site's proximity to water, while increasing the desirability of the neighbourhood through diverse housing types, sensitive built form, and a well-defined public realm.

Team IJ Amsterdam. Image courtesy of Lukas Holy, Dan Borslein, and Maysa Phares.

The Over-hoek

Team: *Matt Gibbs, MLA Candidate, Lindsey Fryett, MLA Candidate, Amanda Grochowish, MCP Candidate*

The Over-hoek team saw an opportunity to stitch north and south together through an iconic skyline with unique places for celebrating and experiencing nature. The major design move aimed to draw visitors and locals into the neighbourhood through a vibrant main street pulsed with small gathering spaces and anchored by significant squares. The group envisioned a pedestrian focused neighbourhood with a diversity of building scales, housing types, and an accentuated distinction between public and private realms.

Team Over-hoek. Image courtesy of Matt Gibbs , Lindsey Fryett, and Amanda Grochowish.

Bridging

Team: *Tatiana White, MLA Candidate, Alex Skibicki, MArch Candidate, Ania Duran, MLA Candidate*

The Bridging proposal linked the site both physically and conceptually with the surrounding neighbourhoods through bridges of public open space. These connecting nodes tied into the surrounding fabric to capitalize on nearby markets and instigate the growth of new commercial and residential spaces. A diversity of open space corridors were designed as pedestrian streets. ►

Team Bridging. Image courtesy of Tatiana White, Alex Skibicki, and Ania Duran.

Two teams proposed novel development frameworks to organize their schemes around ecological principles and planning for climate volatility:

21st Century Garden City

Team: *Pietra Basilij, MLA Candidate, Weigin Guo, MLA Candidate, Allison Savigny, MCP Candidate*

Team 21st Century Garden City. Image courtesy of Pietra Basilij, Weigin Guo, and Allison Savigny.

The 21st Century Garden City proposed to maintain the spirit of the original European garden cities, which was to bring people closer to nature, while meeting today's demands for greater density, more diverse user groups, and greater ecological and social functionality of green spaces. "Gardens" of varying ecological and social function were knit into the built form bringing people closer to their natural environments and increasing the potential for various populations, both human and animal, to inhabit private, semi-private, and public open space.

Blue Light District

Team: *Caelan Griffiths, MLA Candidate, Shan Liu, MLA Candidate, Andrew Yoo, MCP Candidate, Mira Yung, March Candidate*

The Blue Light District proposed an intricate network of feeds and flows—canals that act as the lifeblood of the city. Its aim was to take advantage of the opportunity to re-design water treatment on several scales in order to achieve the goal of clean water while sparking a new urban form. These water-based interventions included flexible floating programming, a blue-green park spine, and extensive waterfront recreation. ►

Team Blue Light District. Image courtesy of Caelan Griffiths, Shan Liu, Andrew Yoo, and Mira Yung.

Please note the following corrections for the print version of October 2012 SITELINES.

On Page 4, in "*Trees in the Urban Landscape*", the sentence, "He can be contacted at 778.433.846, jd@dunster.ca, and www.dunster.ca," should read:

"He can be contacted at 778.433.8465, jd@dunster.ca, and www.dunster.ca."

On Page 14, "*Economics of City Trees*", should be credited:

"By Kathleen L. Wolf, Ph.D., University of Washington"

The final two proposals recognized a need to fundamentally rethink the way we build cities:

The Plug-In City

Team: *Glenis Canete, MLA Candidate, Terence Radford, MLA Candidate, Alex Suvajac, MLA Candidate, Emily Sprague, MArch Candidate*

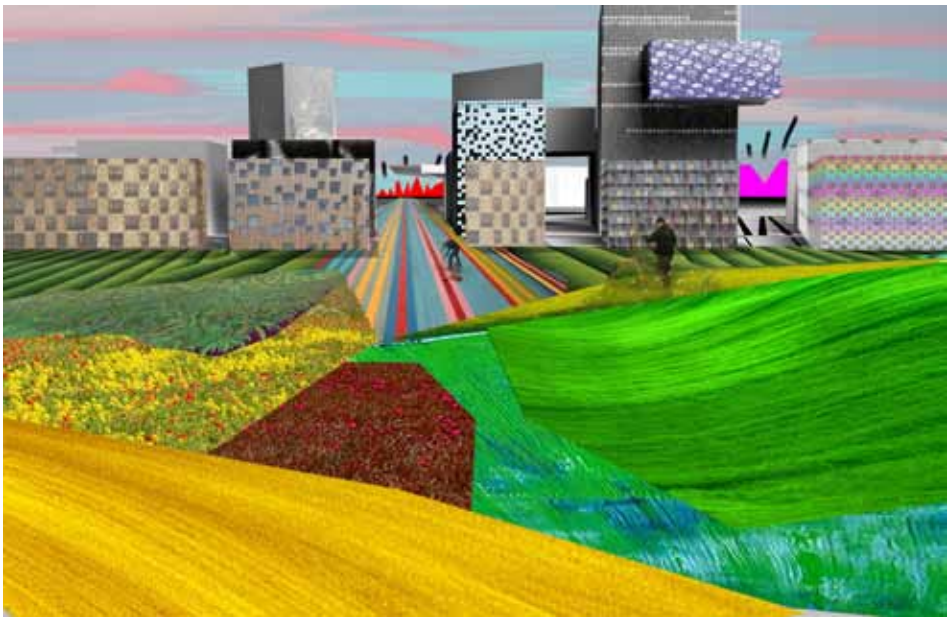
The Plug-In City dared individuals or cooperatives to "plug-in" to a parcel and develop a unique piece of the city, shaping its form and future. The Plug-In City is a bottom up approach to making a city that is inclusive, diverse, encourages people to do what they love, and fosters personal and professional growth. The proposal focused on devising ways to allow residents to build their own living and working spaces to suit to their own unique needs.

Team Plug-In City. Image courtesy of Glenis Canete, Terence Radford, Alex Suvajac, and Emily Sprague.

The LAB

Team: *Paul Peters, MLA Candidate, Ryan Coghlan, MLA Candidate, Thomas Daley, MCP Candidate*

The LAB aimed to maximize liveliness on the site with minimal initial investment. With flexible and sometimes temporary scaffolding, a sustainable human habitation was envisioned. This proposal revitalized existing buildings on site to seed human activities and foresaw plant succession as a way to keep Overhoeks lively throughout the development process.



Team LAB. Image courtesy of Paul Peters , Ryan Coghlan, and Thomas Daley.

The Netherlands Summer Studio inspired a valuable exchange of ideas among City-officials, instructors, and students on a particularly difficult urban design challenge. As in the case of Hendrika, the clumsy cow, everyone was encouraged to embrace uncertainty and seek opportunity in the unknown. The Dutch spirit of experimentation and adaptation was born out of necessity in keeping their cities above water, but it illustrates an attitude that has universal applicability for design as the world tackles issues of environmental and economic uncertainty.

We would like to thank Cynthia Girling, MBCSLA, FCSLA, FCELA, FASLA, Anita Van Asperdt, Patricia Bijvoet, and Nicole Taddune, MBCSLA, and our colleagues in architecture and planning for providing us with such an enriching experience. SL

Fear of Flooding?

Decommissioning Van Der Pekbuurt

By Caelan Griffiths, BCSLA Student, MLA Candidate

What lessons can the municipality of Delta, BC learn from stormwater issues in the Netherlands?

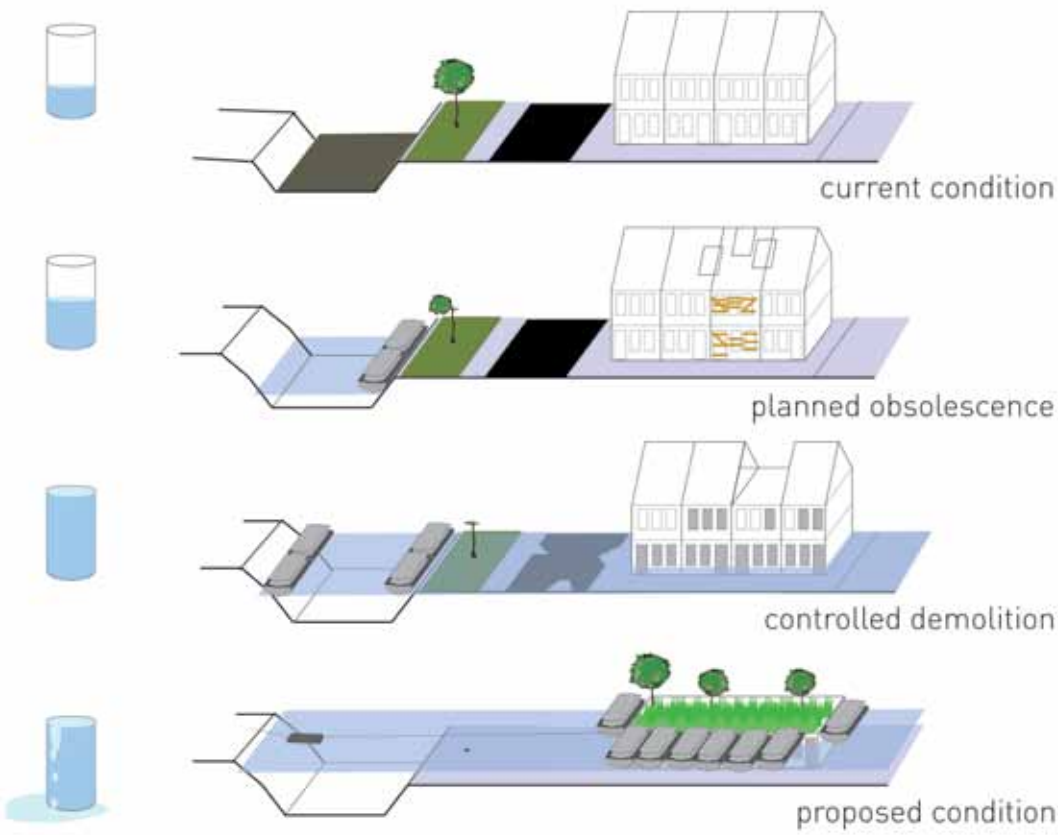
Picture central Amsterdam in your mind: canals shaded by shiny-leaved, mature linden trees; gently arching bridges with locked-bike sentinels; a barking sea-gull gliding on a prevailing westerly. Now, walk north out of the canal belt to the Centraal Station, straight out the back door, across the notoriously busy De Ruyterkade street, dodging bicycles thorough-faring, and make your way to the ferry to Amsterdam Noord (north).

A stone's-throw across the somnolent IJ River from the city centre, a new neighbourhood is being built on the old site of Shell laboratories – a place called Overhoeks. This once highly polluted oil by-product laboratory has been scraped of its worst contamination and is ready to house upwards of 4,500 new residents on 25 hectares. A nearby brick low-rise neighbourhood has only just got back to its feet, with a revitalization of its commercial strip and a slow renovation of its buildings currently underway. This place is known as Van Der Pekbuurt.

My interest lies with this garden city. In our era of global climate change the Netherlands is at risk of higher sea levels, salinization of its soils, dike failure, and greater strain on its water-pumping infrastructure.[1] Van Der Pekbuurt lies at only 2 metres above the nearby river IJ – and even moderate projections put it at significant risk.[2]

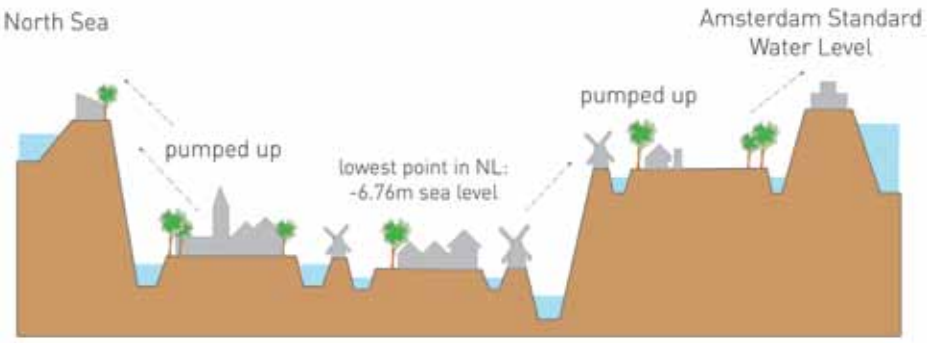
In the Dutch landscape, water first collects in a *sloot*, or a ditch, and in order for it to flow away it must be pumped uphill. At each connection to the larger waterway there is a pump – and thus an incredible chain of energy inputs. It is a costly effort to keep the cows on dry land – and the Dutch people safe. The traditional response to rising water levels is to build more pumps. In this radically speculative design response I envision a failure of this system, and the unique opportunities in a flooded urban landscape. ►

Figure 1 – Dutch waterway diagram.



1. Rijkswaterstraat: Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment. (2009). Water Management in the Netherlands. 1st reprinting 2011.
2. Most new developments are being constructed 4m above the river.

Figure 2 – Climate Change Strategy diagram.



1. **Current Condition:** Existing water quality is poor due to point-source pollution and un-controlled stormwater. The canal is functioning as an open storm sewer.
2. **Planned Obsolescence:** As the ageing garden city buildings become difficult to maintain, maintenance costs are saved and folded into a fund subsidizing houseboat purchase by the occupants leaving the decommissioned buildings. These boats are moored adjacent to the occupant's former address.
3. **Controlled Demolition:** The work of controlled demolition is given to residents of the garden city. Priority is given to re-use and re-purposing materials. The first story of brick forming the walls of the former garden city block is prepared to withstand inundation.
4. **Proposed Condition:** The repurposed shell of the garden city housing block forms the foundation for a biological grey water treatment system. Houseboats are floated to their old "address" while employment takes place in the newly built neighbourhood adjacent.

The issues of Van Der Pekbuurt are as significant to Amsterdam as to our local region, especially the Delta area of the Lower Mainland. As the climate changes, the municipality of Delta, British Columbia is particularly vulnerable to a rise in sea and river levels.[3] These regional hydrological changes, combined with market forces and obstinacy that drive continued waterfront development means an almost certain future of local flooding. The speculative scenario (proposed above) in Van Der Pekbuurt could be translated to a decommissioning strategy in our own backyards. If we are to inhabit an inherently unstable territory, landscape architects must resolve perceived challenges by presenting them as opportunities. SL

3. Visualizations of this changing region can be found at : http://www.calp.forestry.ubc.ca/gallery/gallery_images/Delta/D71_South%20Delta%20-%20Tier%201%20-%202100.jpg/

Philip Tattersfield Scholarship

Over/Under and Beyond: New Life for the Overpass

By Nina LaBelle Cicero, MLA Candidate

The intent of the Philip Tattersfield Scholarship is to promote writing early in the careers of future landscape architects, to spark an interest in this form of communication, to diversify students' skill sets, and to improve the level of writing within the profession. Excellence in design writing should be critical and constructive in nature and engage the reader with a deeper understanding of the topic at hand.

Philip Tattersfield, LMBCSLA #001, FCSLA, (1917-2008) had a distinguished career as the first landscape architect registered in British Columbia. He was integral in shaping the BCSLA and contributed extensively to SITELINES magazine. Over his career, Tattersfield authored more than 150 publications, briefs, lectures, and television series in North America and overseas covering philosophical and technical aspects of practice.

The 2012/2013 recipient of the Philip Tattersfield Scholarship is University of British Columbia, Master of Landscape Architecture Candidate, Nina LaBelle Cicero, for her forward-thinking essay, "Over/Under and Beyond: New Life for the Overpass".

While the trend in many cities is to tear down old highway infrastructure in favour of creating new open spaces, I would argue that we should learn to work with our existing infrastructure. Our bridges, over, and underpasses offer unique vantage points to experience the city and shelters in a climate that desperately needs more covered public space. As landscape architects, we should be creative and resourceful enough to design with our existing structures rather than specifying their removal.

The concrete soaring over our heads forms the skeleton of the city and we should build as such, layering our musculature and the pulsing lifeblood of movement around our urban. Instead, we treat our bones as blight, a necessary evil, and design our public spaces away from infrastructure. Generally forgotten, derelict, and dangerous, the left-over under spaces in our cities need not be so. As we densify, we can't afford to have leftover space in our cities and these spaces will be used, whether formally or informally.

In ignoring or tearing down our overpasses so we ignore a huge asset, especially in a climate such as Vancouver's. This city needs more sheltered outdoor space and the spaces under the overpass can become gathering places where we can interact and recreate. A recently completed park designed by Vancouver based design firm Phillips Farevaag Smallenberg, has proven that once activated, underpasses have great potential for programming. As part of the West Don Lands redevelopment in Toronto, Underpass Park is a landmark project in its extensive use of the underpass space. The Canadian Urban Institute recently recognized the import of Underpass Park with a Brownie Award for best small-scale project in a brownfield site. Underpass Park, located under and around the Eastern Avenue, Richmond, and Adelaide overpasses, re-imagines neglected urban space into a vibrant park that connects communities once separated by the highway. The highway overpass provides year-round weather protection for a playground, skate-park, basketball courts, and flexible community space. A lighting installation by Paul Raff Studios uses the planes of the underpass to bounce light around and draw users into the space. Underpass Park, the first of its kind in Canada, inspires us to see new life in old infrastructure. If Toronto can do this, why shouldn't Vancouver?

Even as Vancouver has made huge strides in public transit, it would seem that the passenger car will be with us for some time. The associated infrastructure will thereby be necessary even as the dominance of the passenger car wanes. The problem is not the passenger car per se, but the separation that automobile infrastructure has caused both in our city form and in our society. By celebrating these existing structures and laminating more use onto them, we can perhaps make peace with the automobile. As automobile traffic decreases we can reimagine these spaces and green our skeleton. Auto bridges can become bikeways, concert stages, urban farms, amusement parks, gathering spaces, recreational facilities, and more. Concrete forms can evolve to take on different uses while still informing us of our past. We can't move forward unless we know where we have come from.

The wild success of the High Line project in New York City, designed by landscape architect James Corner of Field Operations and the architecture firm of Diller Scofidio + Renfro, shows us that there is life beyond original intended use. A disused historic freight rail line, once a dangerous and abandoned space, takes on new life as an ►

elevated urban park. The expansive linear space of the High Line invites visitors and wildlife to experience the city at a unique plane. Between the soaring skyscrapers and the ground plane, the High Line connects with an industrial past but reimagines our urban future.

Our urban skeleton is formed not just by automobile infrastructure but also by the support for our transport systems. Vancouver has chosen the SkyTrain as the carrier of the city's developing transit needs. Currently the track thrusting the train to the sky accomplishes only that. The SkyTrain lines have created spaces without regard to designing what happens underneath, around, or above them. We should embrace this space rather than either disregarding it or making feeble attempts to simply decorate it. Moving beyond the dichotomy of at-grade v. above-grade, let us look to the air rights surrounding the SkyTrain tracks. Development of the total space, under, over, and around will lead us to experience the city in a new way and connect with our transit infrastructure in an emotional way, rather than viewing it as a vehicle for moving from point A to point B. As our species becomes primarily an urban dwelling species, we need to adapt to inhabit all of the planes of our city habitat. We could build grand urban staircases ascending to our SkyTrain stations and make stations into places we love.

Underpass Park – looking west. Underpass Park design by Phillips Farevaag Smallenberg. Artwork - "Mirage" by Paul Raff Studios. Image courtesy of Nicola Betts/Waterfront Toronto.

Until the day when humans fly though the city in bubbles or jetpacks, as science fiction would have us believe, we are hewn to our urban skeleton for better or worse. As designers, it is up to us to trust our skeleton's support and build our urban musculature around it. SL

"Seeding" the Profession

By Cynthia Girling, MBCSLA, FCSLA, FCELA, FASLA
UBC Landscape Architecture Professor and Chair

Are these essays a glimpse into the future? What ideas and values will today's students bring to our profession? The articles included in this issue of SITELINES cross a range of topics, ideas, and scales— from decidedly architectural propositions to musings about climate adaptation. Seen together, they express a quest for equitable, creative, and sustainable solutions for our future with several themes. How we manage and delightfully express our increasingly precious water is one. Re-purposing grey infrastructure and employing green infrastructure (landscapes that intentionally perform infrastructural "work") as a pervasive mode of practice are other themes. ▸

"Roest" (Rust) is a privately run café, bar, and beach located on vacant industrial land. Images courtesy of Cynthia Girling.

A public realm that is active, diverse, flexible, resilient, and performs environmental services concurrently is yet another vision. Ideas, processes, and strategies for designing landscapes that will not only withstand but embrace and adapt under unpredictable, even chaotic futures is perhaps the most intriguing.

The latter was the challenge in the recent Netherlands Summer Studio 2012 that I taught with landscape architect Anita Van Asperdt from Oregon and our assistant, Nicole Taddune, MBCSLA of Phillips Farevaag Smallenberg. With the help of our City of Amsterdam client, especially urban designer Patricia Bijvoet, we challenged the students to consider the economic and climate-induced uncertainties facing Amsterdam Nood (north) in the coming decades. We also asked how a new, dense development targeted to Amsterdammers would engage with an 86 year old garden village—predominantly low-rise social housing occupied by a diverse, modest income community (and at risk of calamitous flooding).

In the article above about this studio, students use the terms "seeding" and "catalyzing" human activity, instigating growth, and bottom-up development. What do they mean? How do these ideas implicate landscape architecture? These might be understood as ideas about the times in which both economic and environmental futures are uncertain, even chaotic according to these authors. We were all inspired by a creative, entrepreneurial response discovered in Amsterdam, which in turn, inspired some of the students' urban design ideas. The students were particularly interested in NDSM, where students and artists squatted on former industrial land and eventually convinced the city to legalize ad hoc, bottom-up enterprises on essentially unimproved brownfield land. "Bottom-up" is an idea about setting in place legal structures and lean infrastructure that allow, and enable "the people" to initiate development. For example, several of the student teams proposed transitional live-work space, perhaps in shipping containers, serviced by bare-bones infrastructure to provide incubator business space on vacant areas of our site. The Plug-In City team proposed a form of homesteading new urban blocks in which groups of people would build moderate density housing themselves, incrementally. Inspired by the urban beach and the temporary park we observed in the city (see images), "seeding" proposes strategic insertions of human activity (activation) on public or private land to bridge the time-gap until development resumes. Several teams of students recognized the forgotten canal around the east side of the site as a significant amenity and opportunity to "seed" the development and activate a waterfront at relatively low cost. By providing public access to this waterway, even a very temporary path, and concurrently encouraging boat-based restaurants and entertainment, existing infrastructure might become a lively public realm enabling more refined upgrades in the future.

While such enterprises are found in most global cities these days, the challenge for our students is to understand the role of planning and design professionals in seeding and activating bottom-up urban enterprise. As expressed above, they are tackling these questions head-on. They are deeply concerned about a world facing potentially catastrophic impacts of climate change, decreasing biodiversity, damaged ecosystems, water scarcity, uncertain economic times, and housing shortages to mention only some. Yet they are optimistically creative about finding solutions—new ways of thinking, working, designing, doing business, and conducting their lives that will work toward a more sustainable world. We hope that you enjoy this issue and are also invigorated by these ideas. SL

A temporary park in the Kinkerbuurt neighbourhood in Amsterdam — site of Stoere Picknick, a music festival, picnic, circus, and eating festival.

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