

DECEMBER 2011

SITELINES

Landscape Architecture in British Columbia



ALL FIRED UP

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The purpose of Sitelines is to provide an open forum for the exchange of ideas and information pertaining to the profession of landscape architecture. Individual opinions expressed are those of the writers and not necessarily of those of the BCSLA.



All Fired Up!

By Margaret M. Soulstein, BCSLA Student Representative, UBC MLA Candidate

Pin ups. Desk crits. Drawing and computer workshops. Classes from landscape theory and history to grading and drainage, environmental analysis and planning, and professional practice. All-nighters. Concepts cliquing and BAM, all of a sudden making sense. Developing your design process. The excitement of embarking upon your career. Remember this?

Some of you are more recently out of school, while for others of you it has been many years since you were presenting in a studio (though we see many of you as guest critiques in our studios. Thank you for that!). Perhaps you can remember feeling the excitement when you'd first learned about or finally made sense of a theory, designer, approach, idea, or process. Some student ideas may not seem new to you, but hopefully we're contributing and adding something new to the discussion. Some ideas may be new to you and challenge traditional ways of thinking or seeing the world.

Academia offers an atmosphere of unbridled creativity, where usually constraints are limited, clients are theoretical, and budgets are infinite. Students have a freedom to explore ideas. While we haven't had as long to hone our skills or to work on a diversity of projects, we have an energy and enthusiasm from seeing the world of possibility. Just as Landscape Architecture is a diverse profession, so are the articles and projects presented in this issue. The topics that University of British Columbia Master of Landscape Architecture (UBC MLA) students are excited about and putting their extra time and energy (shhh, don't tell our studio profs that we have extra time and/or energy!) are equally diverse.

These projects, taken from studios, competitions, volunteer projects, and internships, exhibit a passion for this work and a desire to push the envelope through exploration of ideas and designs. These ideas are visions for what the City of Vancouver could look like in the not too distant future. Laura Macdonald, Alexander Suvajac, and Michele Campbell's "Picnic Park" and Ariel Vernon, Julia Hill, and Mary Wong's "The Strand" proposals for the future of the Georgia and Dunsmuir Streets viaducts transforms these strong elements of the city from spaces for vehicles to places for people.

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Cover: Half Moon Bay, Weihai, China - Atmospheric rendering of a waterfront resort landscape designed by Hapa Collaborative. Image Credit: Sheena Soon, BCSLA Student and Hapa Collaborative.



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PERSPECTIVES on PERSPECTIVES

By Sheena Soon, BCSLA
Student, UBC MLA
Candidate



My internship at Hapa Collaborative this summer was fantastic. Part of my work involved generating Photoshop renderings. I came in with an understanding of perspective renderings, and came away with a deepened appreciation of its function.

A successful rendering is less about arranging tree and people cut-outs and more about capturing the emotion, atmosphere, and character of the design. The medium is two-dimensional shapes; the product is ambience. Its creation involves thinking about how details such as lighting, shadows, and the posture of people cut-outs can contribute to the overall feeling of the rendering. It's the little things which draw the audience into the picture, and capture the sense of place landscape architects strive to create. [sl](#)



Top: Seaside allee. Bottom: Plaza. Images courtesy of Sheena Soon, BCSLA Student and Hapa Collaborative.

Half Moon Bay, Weihai, China – The Photoshop collages utilizes various filters and photo adjustments to create atmospheric renderings of waterfront resort landscapes designed by Hapa Collaborative. Thank you to Joe Fry, MBCSLA and his team for guidance, helpful comments, and feedback.

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UBC MLA Student Project Profiles

PICNIC PARK

Vancouver's park system is generally conducive to people circulating through, but few parks form a strong destination. With respect to the Georgia and Dunsmuir viaducts, already significant circulation routes, we wanted to design this site to be viewed as a destination. We also wanted to

By Laura Macdonald, UBC MLA Candidate, Michele Campbell, UBC MLA Candidate, Alexander Suvajac, UBC MLA Candidate

create an urban park that positively contrasts with the plentiful outdoor, nature experiences that exist in Stanley Park and the surrounding mountains.

The idea of the picnic is traditionally associated with celebrating food and play while bringing people together to create a rich

PICNIC PARK AND THE STRAND - Spring 2011

LARC 502B – Parks Studio

Instructor: Alyssa Schwann

Both projects were invited to be a part of the Future Masters exhibition at IDS West 2011.

experience. Situated on the border of several residential communities, Picnic Park encourages neighbourhoods to use the site as if it was their own back yard. The different spaces of the site, such as the orchard, waterfront, or meadow offer a variety of spaces for a multitude of eating and picnicking experiences. [sl](#)

Top: View of long table meadow on top of Georgia Viaduct.

Inset: Plan of Picnic Park featuring orchard, city farm, long table meadow, vista deck, and walking and biking paths.

Bottom: View of bike path on elevated orchard on top of Dunsmuir Viaduct.

Images courtesy of Laura Macdonald, Michele Campbell, and Alexander Suvajac.



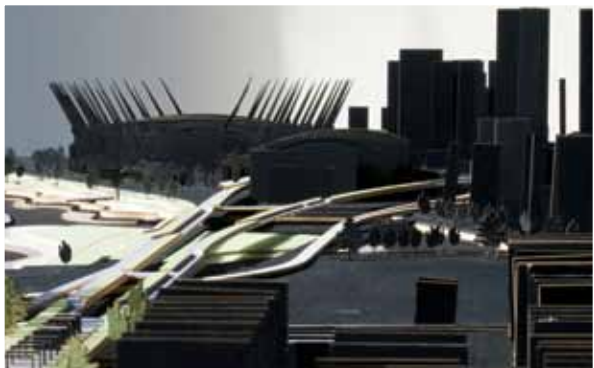
THE STRAND

By Ariel Vernon, UBC MLA Candidate, Julia Hill, UBC MLA Candidate, Mary Wong, UBC MLA Candidate

Infrastructure increasingly provides the public spaces of our cities: whether for cars, bicycles, or people, it is the connection of elements to one another that is the foundation of urban life. This project seeks

to transform the Georgia and Dunsmuir viaducts from vehicular infrastructure into a vibrant public space. Our design is a park without boundaries: its strands transition seamlessly into the city fabric, binding the

city and park together. We have enhanced the viaducts' relationship to the city in order to create a park that celebrates its own cityscape: a park which makes people want to turn toward the city, and consider it anew—its skyline, structures, density, colours, cultures, and history. [SL](#)



Top Left: The Viaduct's strands transition seamlessly into the city fabric, binding the city and Strathcona together.

Bottom Left: We bring the city and its waterfront together by drawing the water through the city and the city down to a series of floating docks before BC Place.

Above: Our design remediates industrial land into a waterfront park and naturalized island.



Top Landscape Drawing: Different layers of movement found on the newly proposed island.

Bottom Landscape Drawing: A perspective rendering from the base of the Georgia Street approach defines the floating boardwalks and reclaimed meadow island. Images courtesy of Ariel Vernon, Julia Hill, and Mary Wong.

LIQUID LANESCAPES

By Glenis Canete, BCSLA Student, UBC MLA Candidate, Tatiana Graham, UBC MLA Candidate

LARC 580 - Directed Study
 Supervisor: Cynthia Girling, MBCSLA
 2011 AECOM Urban SOS Design Competition Honourable Mention

We chose to explore the topic within Vancouver's current Laneway Housing policy. Vancouver is projected to grow by more than 23 percent over the next 30 years; a significant amount of this growth will be absorbed through laneway housing. With its implementation, the initiative will increase pressure on the existing combined sewer system infrastructure. The project led to the submission of a design proposal to the 2011 AECOM Urban SOS Design Competition.

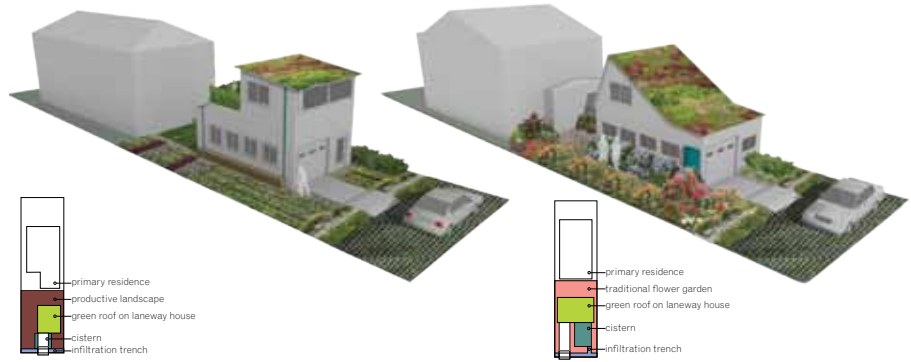
The thesis of this project is that it is possible to concurrently reduce potable water use and stormwater runoff in residential neighbourhoods through different high water use landscape interventions. The following landscape typologies were integrated into the designs:

1. **PRODUCTIVE LANDSCAPE** - Includes urban backyard farming typical crops. May include: lettuce greens, root vegetables, legumes, berries etc. A cistern with 49,000 litre capacity is submerged in the rear yard.
2. **TRADITIONAL FLOWER GARDEN** - Typical plantings may include: roses, hydrangeas, heather, witch alder, and skimmia.
3. **GREYWATER WETLAND** - Greywater wetland plants include wax myrtle, sweet gale, snowberry, hardhack, Labrador tea, pacific nine-bark, coastal red elderberry, reeds etc.
4. **GREYWATER WETLAND WITH ADDITIONAL GREYWATER RECYCLING** - The same plantings and stormwater diversion and capture capacity as Typology 3 with additional greywater recycling appliances installed in the main residence.

DESIGN INTERVENTIONS

EVAPOTRANSPIRATION THROUGH LANESCAPE TYPE

After integrating one greywater toilet and one greywater washing machine into each laneway house, the remaining stormwater runoff can be significantly reduced through different landscape typologies.



PRODUCTIVE LANDSCAPE

Approximately 49,000L of stormwater is diverted through summer crop irrigation.

TRADITIONAL FLOWER GARDEN

Approximately 33,000L of stormwater is diverted through high water use plant irrigation.

All calculations based on: British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, 2001. Water Conservation Factsheet: Crop Coefficients for use in irrigation scheduling. <http://www.agf.gov.bc.ca/resmgmt/publist/500Series/57100-5.pdf>
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 Roehr, Daniel and Yueshi Kong, 2010. "Runoff Reduction Effects of Green Roofs in Vancouver, BC, Kelowna, BC, and Shanghai, P.R. China". Canadian Water Resources Journal 55(1): 53-68



We concluded that by advocating site-specific interventions, cities can accommodate growth, while reducing stormwater runoff and demand for potable water. Eighty-three percent of rainfall can be harvested through onsite interventions, recycled through household water use and landscape irrigation of different landscape typologies. **sl**

Top: Productive Landscape and Traditional Flower Garden Typologies.

Bottom: Artistic rendering of a Liquid Lanescape.

Images courtesy of Glenis Canete, BCSLA Student and Tatiana Graham.

ADJACENCIES: ACCOMMODATING DENSITY

By Lisa Lang, UBC MLA Candidate

Fall 2010
LARC 504 – Sustainable Urban Design Studio
Getting to Minus 80 – The Vancouver Streetcar City – 2050 and Beyond
Instructors: Patrick Condon, James Tuer, MBCSLA, Scot Hein

This image shows a design intervention for the Dunbar area in 2050, to accommodate the projected population increase. Rethinking the existing property lines and allowing the existing old growth trees to dictate semi-private open space, a new typology pushes the envelope of the traditional grid of houses, establishing a sensitive approach to density. [SL](#)



1

Above Right: Dunbar and 41st area, 2050.

Image 1: Locate old growth and dissolve property lines.

Image 2: Determine continuous habitat and housing to be retained.

Image 3: Integrate more units, retrofit existing for multi-family dwelling, extend greenways and pedestrian streets, implement urban agriculture into new common space.

Images courtesy of Lisa Lang.



2



3

PUBLIC ART INSPIRING BIOPHILIC COMMUNITIES

By Chloe Bennett, UBC MLA Candidate

Parental fears, limited access to nature, and videophilia are all reasons for kids spending less time in nature, according to Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods*.¹ Much of our time outdoors is now spent in transit between indoor spaces. Increasingly, our contact with nature occurs in cities—not to mention that as urbanism increases, viable habitat for other species decreases. Nature is no longer “out there,” a place beyond the city limits to be explored, but is now on our city streets, our sidewalks, and our front lawns.

With habitat loss comes the loss of ecosystem services. Human well-being is dependent on thriving ecosystems for a multitude of reasons: disease control, food and water, climate regulation, flood control, water purification, nutrient cycling, primary production as well as recreational and educational opportunities, spiritual enrichment, and aesthetic experiences.² In other words, our very survival is reliant on other species such as pollinators. Bees, bats, butterflies, and birds, among others, work tirelessly and often thanklessly for our benefit.

The endless generosity of the bee’s work for humans has recently come into the environ-

mental spotlight. This is for good reason, as we count on bees to pollinate over one-third of everything on our plates at mealtimes. Economically, the total value of all bees’ work is approximately \$3-billion in Canada³.

Media for communicating the loss of other species’ services to the general public within cities is necessary, as this is where the majority of people now live. Given that we are now living in an information heavy world, we need creative solutions to catch the public’s attention.

Public, urban ecological art is one tool that may be very effective, but this is not new information. The arts and visual representation



Osmia lignaria are incredibly docile and are efficient early spring pollinators.

Images courtesy of Chloe Bennett.

have always provided a medium for relating culture with nature, the human, and the natural forces beyond our scope.⁴ Our own profession is full of examples of those also concerned with questioning the anthropocentric development of communities, such as Ian McHarg, Kristina Hill, and Jens Jensen, to name just a few.

Promoting biophilic values does not mean painting a hopeless picture of the earth’s future. In fact, audiences may turn off if they ▶

Continued from Page 3 ▶

Lisa Lang’s “Adjacencies: Accommodating Density” challenges the idea of traditional property lines as a means to allow connectivity, habitat, density, and community.

So much learning happens outside of the classroom. Glenis Canete, BCSLA Student and Tatiana Graham’s contribution to the 2011 AECOM Urban SOS Design Competition, “Liquid Lanescapes”, pushes the envelope on urban stormwater management and the idea of the back lane. During a summer internship, Sheena Soon, BCSLA Student (“Beyond Image”) gained tangible graphic illustration skills and perhaps even more importantly, a richer understanding of the power of connecting to people’s emotions.

Chloe Bennett’s “Public Art Inspiring Biophilic Communities” and Saba Farmand, BCSLA Student’s “Landscape Architects of the Future” each take a different angle to illustrate that biodiversity is more than just a passing meme. Paul Peters’ “Movement and Interaction in the Landscape” demonstrates a uniquely poetic approach to reading and understanding place and form. Leslie Van Duzer’s “Teaching by Design” presents a vision for how design and landscape architecture can be taught differently. This vision pushes the envelope of the current approach towards education.

Many of these ideas, including the ability to read the landscape and a love for landscape and place are eloquently discussed in Pietra Baslij’s Philip Tattersfield Competition winning essay, “Celebrating the Canadian Landscape”.

Thank you to all of the students for their thoughtful contributions, both to this issue of SITESLINES and also to the field of landscape architecture. I am excited for the future and I am looking forward to a long career with such exciting colleagues. I was drawn to the field of landscape architecture for a number of reasons, including its interdisciplinary team approach. I am reminded of the importance of this in every class, through public lectures, and now through my work as this issue’s Guest Co-Editor. My many thanks to the contributors and to Pietra Baslij, Glenis Canete, BCSLA Student, and of course Jessica Tan and Tara Culham for all of their assistance.

I hope you enjoy this issue and enjoy reading what students are All Fired Up about! [SL](#)

are continually bombarded with angry messages. The celebratory and playful aspects of the arts can balance environmentalism's often confronting messages with creativity and humour.⁵ The arts also provide effective educational and communication tools, capturing people's hearts in a way that no amount of lecturing or statistics ever could. **SL**

For more information, please visit www.beesplease.ca, www.chloebennetttdesign.blogspot.com, www.bee-diverse.com, and <http://vancouver.ca/engsvcs/streets/greestreeets/>.

Right: Initial sketches for the design of Bees Please.

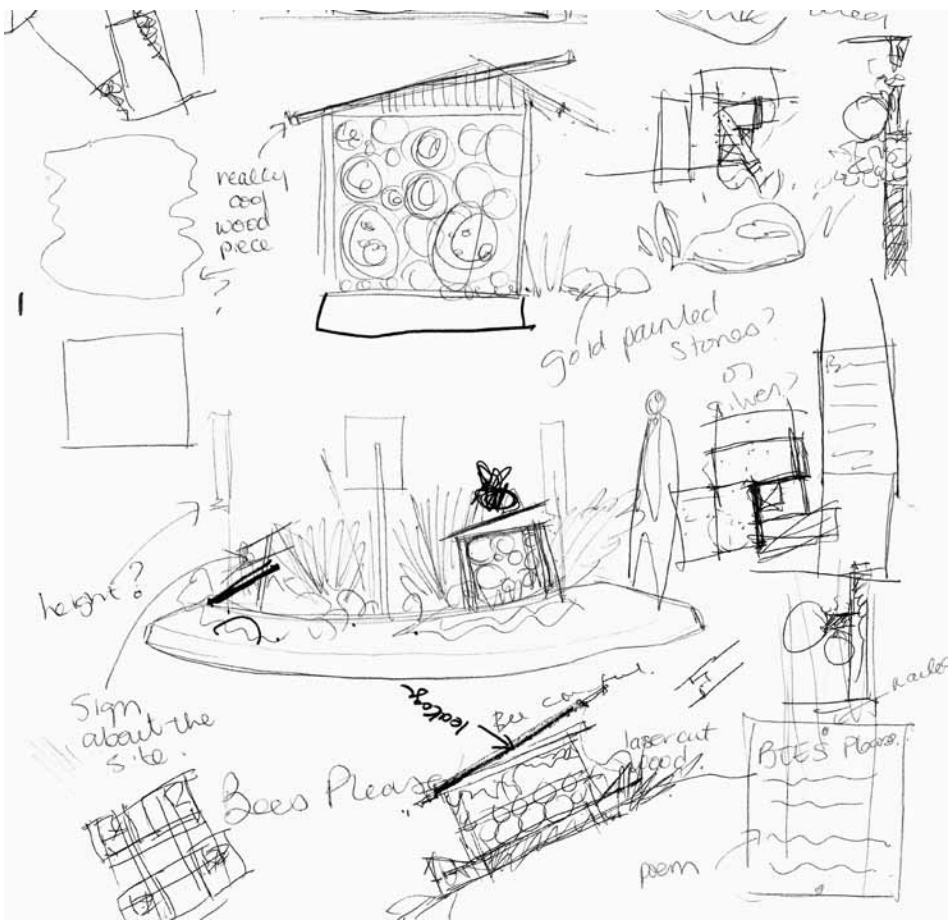
Bottom Left: Bees Please was intended as a didactic habitat/art installation, in order to bring awareness to our native mason bee, *Osmia lignaria*.

Bottom Right: Early spring flowering plants such as *Pieris japonica* and *Ribes sanguineum* were planted nearby to ensure a food source for emergent bees.

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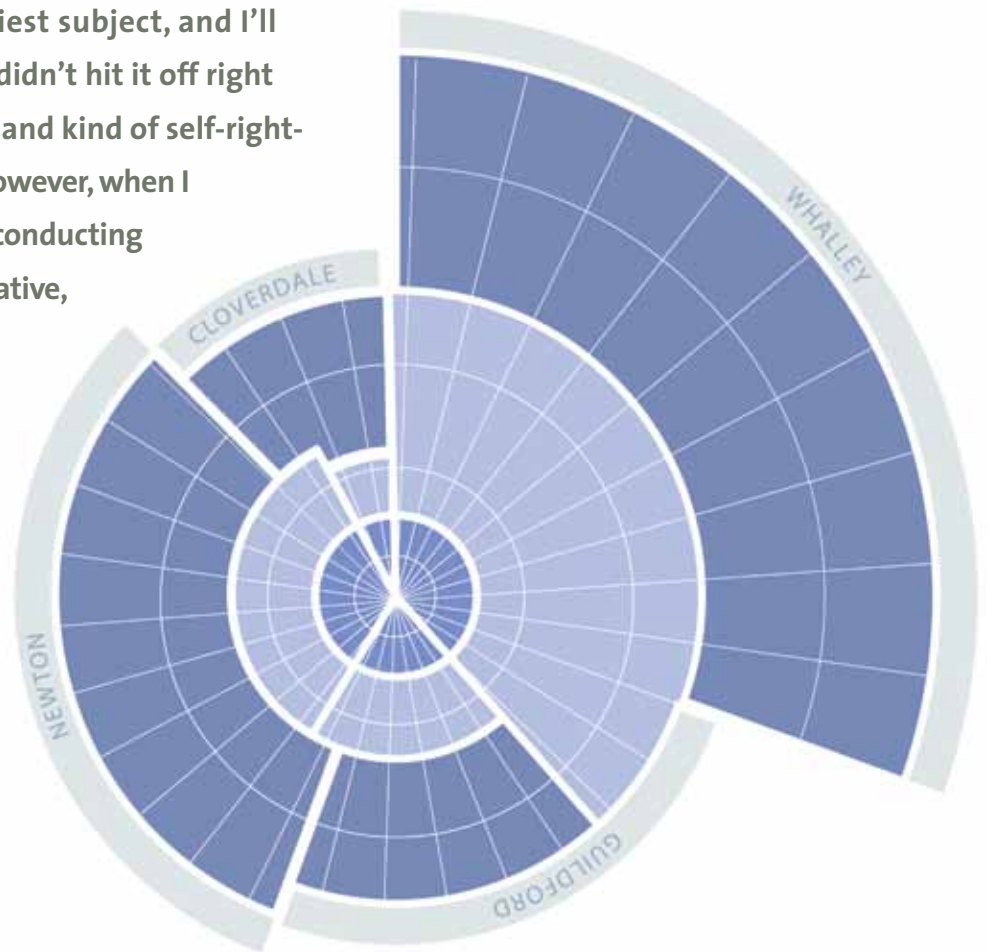
PROJECT PROFILE:
 Bees Please is a habitat sculpture in a traffic circle, which was adopted by landscape architecture student Chloe Bennett through the City of Vancouver's Greenstreets Program. The 2.5' x 2.5' mason bee "castle" sits in the heart of Kitsilano in Vancouver, and was deliberately made at a larger scale than necessary to catch the eye of passers-by.



All fired up about...DATA!

By Lindsay Bourque, UBC MLA Candidate

That's right. Data. Not the flashiest subject, and I'll admit, when I first met Data, we didn't hit it off right away. I found it pretty cold, rigid, and kind of self-righteous. That all started to change, however, when I worked for the City of Vancouver conducting research for the Greenest City Initiative, the summer after my first year in landscape architecture school. I met people who worked in the data group—people that knew almost everything about the city you could ever want to know. In fact, they were so bustling with information that my coffee breaks tended to drift into an in-depth analysis of Vancouver's city structure.



I began to warm up to data with a cautious eye.

My undergraduate degree was in philosophy, and I was interested in theories of perception—particularly that of Scottish philosopher Thomas Reid, an 18th Century less glamorous contemporary of Kant. Amid a climate of table banging rationalism, Reid was an advocate for the senses and much of his philosophical investigations were around visual perception: he believed that there was knowledge to be gleaned from phenomenological experience if only we “attended” to our sensory perceptions. (There are some who credit Reid with the discovery of spherical geometry, but that is still being debated). Essentially, he argues that the phenomenal

world is rich with data just waiting to be decoded, categorized, and applied.

In landscape architecture, we often rely on our senses to gain new knowledge, but this knowledge can be difficult to communicate. Graphic representation is a natural channel through which abstract design concepts and intended experiences come to life, using visualization to decode, categorize, and apply sensory data. My interest in information processing and perception led me to Manuel Lima's *Visual Complexity*,¹ a visually arresting book that showcases multi-variable analysis diagrams. In this text, you are met with elegant visual representations which can offer new insights into old classics, such as W. Bradford Paley's haunting word ▶

Targeting Crime

- Property Crime
- Criminal Code Violations
- Violent Crime

Figure 1: Targeting Crime – This diagram simultaneously displays the proportion of crime within a community (concentric circles) and the proportion each community contributes to the total incidence of crime in all of the communities (spread).

frequency and association visualization of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, as well as the newly exposed territories of visual exploration—most notably, the Internet.

As Matthias Shapiro puts it, “[visualizations] communicate a concept in a way that is more natural to human comprehension than a string of digits.”²² Regardless of their level of sophistication, each visualization aims at using multiple data sets in an attempt to capture phenomena and generate emergent knowledge by presenting data in a new way. Indeed, these are not the single-variable binary bar graphs that leave you a little glazed over but dynamic representations that lead to further questions and critical investigation.

As with most investigations, the central issue in visualizing data revolves around crafting the right kind of question. Questions are linked to the purpose or goal of the visualization. For example, I am interested in addressing Surrey's crime problems in my

graduation project, as outlined in the OCP. To do this, I needed a better understanding of the particular crimes in the neighborhoods adjacent to our site and how the level of crime in each area contributes to the overall incidents of crime. These questions formed my purpose or goal for the following visualization which ties in the objective of my thesis to reduce crime (see Figure 1: Targeting Crime).

Marshal McLuhan's adage, “the medium is the message”, is recast in this new era of information graphics: “By giving shape to data we not only provide access and insight to the hidden patterns of meaning it could reveal, the visual form we adopt becomes driven by the tool or the topic we are presenting.”²³ What Reid was applying to phenomenological perception is also applicable here: As our world becomes more complex, we must grow more sophisticated in how we convey knowledge and be intellectually daring enough to create visualizations that may take

a little more work to understand. In attempting to decode data in new and visually stimulating ways, we employ the chance to unlock the imagination and convey some new and unexpected knowledge.

These days, Data and me are beginning to see a little more eye to eye. [sl](#)

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Celebrating the Canadian Landscape

By Pietra Basili, UBC 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 2011/2012 recipient of the Philip Tattersfield Scholarship is University of British Columbia, Master of Landscape Architecture Candidate, Pietra Basili's "Celebrating the Canadian Landscape", which took the prize for being extremely well written, engaging, and addressed the topic in a way that is fresh and meaningful to Canadian people.

The North American landscape is one of the most highly celebrated and diverse landscapes in the world, but you wouldn't know it from walking the streets of your average Canadian or American city or town. Over the past hundred years we have progressively removed ourselves from the natural landscape trading rich meadows and rolling hills for rows of townhouses and blank lawns, forests, and wetlands for highways and shopping centers, and prairies and plateaus for grids of high rise buildings. We have set ourselves up for a form of development that not only physically and psychologically removes us from nature but is also excessively expensive, short-lived, and degrading the natural systems on which we depend.

What concerns me most about this change is how quickly we seem to be losing our uniquely Canadian identity. There is an exceptional amount of rich natural beauty in every corner of Canada, but it is not being celebrated in our built communities. Rather, it remains almost completely separate from the places we live and work. As globalization opens the channels of communication and education between countries, we find our-

selves looking to other countries and other parts of the world for design inspiration. The result is the slow dissolve of the local character in landscape. There are, of course, handfuls of landscape projects that attempt to reference the mountains, forests, oceans, lakes and prairies from which we emerge, but these attempts are so few and far between that we cannot yet find the forest for the trees.

The Canadian landscape needs to be celebrated for a number of reasons, not least of which is its ecological and cultural function. The vast number of forests, habitats, and freshwater resources should be recognized and appreciated rather than exploited, and its potential to inspire and connect people to the land needs to be considered among its most important assets rather than simply a byproduct of its existence. This is especially true in cities where our sources of water, clean air, good health, and inspiration are not immediately evident. We live with all of these luxuries without considering their value or their connection to the natural environment.

What is inspiring and promising as a student of landscape architecture is the evident shift in attitudes within the profession to-

wards recognizing and reconnecting people with the environments that as Canadians we hold dear. We are no longer afraid to propose urban forests or the daylighting of streams. Rather than burying our storm water and grey water underground, we are encouraged to bring it to the surface and accentuate its presence with plant and aquatic life. As we start to take on projects that place an emphasis on biodiversity, we bring the birds, insects, and wildlife back into the city, highlighting the rich habitats that the Canadian landscape houses.

As Canadians, we are 80 percent urbanized. We spend on average 90 percent of our time indoors and 5 percent of our time in cars. The hours we spend outside is often in the built environment, so it is becoming increasingly important that in order to maintain a connection to nature and a connection to the natural Canadian landscape that we bring it into the urban environment—get it to interact with our buildings, sidewalks, and streets. The interventions by landscape architects as an attempt to reconnect city dwellers with nature may never be enough to restore the natural character of the Canadian landscape, but they act as a sign of changes to come—as evidence of a shift in thinking and a shift in values. We are no longer attempting to move away from nature, but rather fighting to bring nature back to the city.

The Canadian anthropologist Wade Davis once said, "A language is the flash of the human spirit. It's a vehicle through which the soul of each particular culture comes in to the world. Every language is an old growth forest of the mind, a watershed of thought, an ecosystem of spiritual possibilities." The landscape, as a language through which the stories of our cultural and natural history are told, needs to reflect our Canadian identity. If we lose sight of our unique and rich landscape, we lose what it is to be Canadian. Landscape architecture may not be the solution, but it can certainly be a strong force in signalling and inspiring a shift in the way we think about and develop our urban environments—a demonstration of how we can enhance, enrich, and see the opportunities in what is right here at home. [SL](#)

Facilitators of Urban Biodiversity

By Saba Farmand, BCSLA Student, UBC MLA Candidate

How often do landscape architects find themselves searching for the right words to describe to friends or family what it is that landscape architects do? As we all know, the scope of our profession is broad, and the landscape architect of the future may answer this question in a different way. Considering the projected increase in urban populations worldwide and the drastic decline in native animal and plant species being witnessed today, the landscape architect of the future, if asked to describe his job in as few words as possible, might say something along the lines of, “I bring nature into cities to preserve and enhance urban biodiversity.”

Currently more than half of the world’s population is living in cities (50.5 percent).¹ In 40 years, this proportion of urban dwellers is projected to increase up to 68.7 percent.² The trends of urban and suburban sprawl are still very active, as cities are expected to grow 2.5 times in area by 2030.³ As humans thrive and our populations grow, policy-makers are now beginning to understand how our species’ success is negatively impacting that of other species, and how our own success ultimately depends on theirs. Biodiversity can be defined as the variety of all forms of life, from genes to species, through to the broad scale of entire ecosystems.⁴ We depend on biodiversity through our reliance on ecosystem services, which are the conditions and processes through which natural ecosystems sustain and fulfill human life.⁵ These conditions and processes result in services we benefit from daily, such as clean air, clean water, and opportunities for contact with nature that increase our physical and mental health.

The idea of ecosystem services, especially within an urban context, has recently gotten attention in the fields of economics⁶, conservation biology,⁷ and even medicine. In the latter’s case, a comprehensive report was completed in 2008 by Harvard’s Medical School that compiled all known research on how other species contribute to human health. The report was published and released

as a 550 page book entitled *Sustaining Life: How Human Health Depends on Biodiversity*.⁸

Urban biodiversity’s relevance is increasing due to the aforementioned trends in urbanization and the “6th mass extinction event” that the world is currently witnessing.⁹ The last sudden decline in biodiversity, or the “5th mass extinction event”, occurred when an asteroid collided with the earth — the current drop in biodiversity is being caused by humans.¹⁰

Landscape architects can play a major role in bringing biodiversity into cities and helping curb this current mass extinction event. The Vancouver Convention Centre’s green roof, and the Olympic Village’s Habitat Island (both designed by PwL Partnership Landscape Architects Inc.) are two local examples of urban biodiversity projects that would not have been possible without landscape architects. These two projects achieve two important goals: First, they demonstrate that cities can support biodiversity; and second, through positive attention in the media, they raise awareness of biodiversity among the general public. This awareness extends to policy makers and developers and, in turn, demonstrates that supporting urban biodiversity will contribute positively to a project’s success.

The Vancouver Convention Centre’s green roof has won numerous design awards and provides ecosystem diversity through replicating an endangered Garry-oak grassland ecosystem. It also enhances species diversity through creating habitat for a variety of birds, bees, and butterflies.¹¹ As a result, this project has garnered attention from the mainstream media raising awareness of urban biodiversity and ecosystem services.¹² Habitat Island was also featured in the news when Pacific herring, a key indicator species for the health of the once toxic waters of False Creek, began spawning again along its shores.¹³ Furthermore, an article from the travel section of the *Pittsburgh-Gazette*, entitled “A scenic stroll on the Vancouver, B.C., waterfront”, makes specif-

ic reference to the ecological features of the island, such as its “eagle-friendly tree snag”¹⁴

These two projects sow the seeds for future integration of biodiversity into the least expected and most urban of locations, and they demonstrate how this integration can lead to the success of a project. Judging from their popularity, and considering the challenges our world will face with increasing urban populations and declining biodiversity, preserving and enhancing biodiversity in the city will play a key role in the future of landscape architecture. [SL](#)

To view more of Saba’s content on urban biodiversity, including a brief documentary on a current initiative, please visit his blog at sabafarmand.livejournal.com.

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Teaching by Design

By Leslie Van Duzer, Director and Professor, UBC School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture

Imagine a design education that begins with the cultivation of empathy for beings both animate and inanimate, one that sensitizes students to the needs and aspirations of the other. Imagine graduates who have imagination and the will to match, who have the eloquence and confidence to convince others to envision along with them, who consistently raise expectations and deliver. Imagine a design education that trains design activists, those who see in one thing many things, who jump freely between scales and categories, who communicate with ease across disciplinary boundaries. Imagine a design curriculum where technology, sociology, psychology, and history are integrated, not exiled, where research and writing and play are as much a part of the design process as sketching and modeling.

What if the design of a curriculum began with a set of aspirations and not a list of courses? What if we began by, for example, acknowledging the need to teach all our students how to collaborate, analyze, and communicate complex information, read the nuances in their environment? What if the curriculum supported a dynamic and reciprocal relationship between the academy and practice, one capable of moving larger conversations forward? Imagine the potential of professors and practitioners actively collaborating on the education of their successors.

Picture a school where students and faculty from each discipline regularly intermingle, where old stereotypes are abandoned and a common culture is intentionally cultivated. While the student of landscape architecture might require more lessons in horticulture

and less in structures than the student of architecture, surely both must learn to conduct design research, use precedents, and build strong arguments, to ideate, iterate, program, and present with intelligence and humour.

I imagine a School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture that respects the distinct history and core knowledge of each discipline while actively fostering exchange, that graduates students who come to interdisciplinary collaborations with discipline-specific expertise and an understanding, even a love, for the other. I wish for a school that fully embraces the interdependent relationship between landscape architecture and architecture, between the academy and practice, a school that demonstrates its belief in the real power of shared values and aspirations. [SL](#)

Movement and Interaction in the Landscape

By Paul Peters, UBC MLA Candidate

Just as nature exhibits an intricate and complex order, the built environment, both designed and incidental, can reveal a subtle yet deliberate order that influences the way we move and interact. This order can be found by observing people's actions in social spaces and the ways in which they correspond to subtle changes in the landscape. A splendid example of this is an informal space on Hornby Island, BC which lends itself to gathering and social interaction. Here, centres emerge as an incidental order, chains of movement, pause, and interaction cultivate the experience. Participation and interaction in the landscape are dictated by dominant features and inconspicuous changes in the built form. ►



Hornby Island, BC. Image courtesy of Paul Peters.

A four-way intersection of road marked by a stop anchors the network of the island like the pole in which a compass needle spins about. In one quadrant of this intersection sits a small village of buildings. It is centred around a large maple tree. Under the tree a small patch of grass spreads out from its trunk then turns into gravel. A wooden bench placed on the north side of the tree provides shade throughout the day. A ring of tiny eclectic shops wrap around the maple with each caravan-like building supported by sun-baked, worm-holed driftwood, displaying its raw grey twisting form.

The space is set back from the two adjacent quiet roads by a skinny winding path from the west side and a short fence to the north. On the other side of the fence, the ground is lifted slightly so that sitting on the bench under the maple one cannot see out to any passing traffic, but wanderers along the fence can stop and rest an arm and chat to those in the central space. A small coffee shop and ice cream shop sit directly in front of the bench. This creates another centre in itself with its own slightly raised deck edged with benches on two sides. It creates a new gathering of people. Close enough to the central maple bench, it allows for conversation back and forth. Raised up slightly, it creates its own unique sitting spot. It backs on to the small fence to the north so walkers-by stop to chat with deck inhabitants, strengthening it is a centre. The deck begins to connect fence people to the maple bench people, a relationship that at one point was too far to serve.

Beside the deck a small patch of grass sits facing the sun. The softness of the grass beckons you to sit—it becomes a centre unto itself. People move in and out of the general store to the east of the space. The low grassy patch catches people, holding them in conversation, reinforcing its centeredness. A spiral of chattering people begin to emerge from the space, separated by no more than a few paces. Other centres of people begin to grow and move and exchange between

groups in a dance-like rhythm from one centre to the next.

Within this dynamic yet soft environment, centres emerge, grow, and evolve as people interact with each other and the built environment. Simple gestures such as slightly elevated platforms to create new wholes,

and the distance between these wholes as they form chains are valuable in design considerations. By practicing observation exercises in the field and analytically studying the phenomenological experience of the place, these interpretations can be used to further increase the understanding of design in place. [sl](#)

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