

The Cornell Planner

department of city and regional planning

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Owego, Washington DC, Chiapas...then the world!

Profile of a Practitioner / Lecturer: Liz Thorndike



You might not have seen her around Sibley too often but Liz Thorndike, one of our Visiting Lecturers, has graced CRP with a unique combination of practitioner experience and commitment to students since 1998.

Liz Thorndike

What is especially valuable for aspiring planners is Thorndike's ability to bridge the gap between academic research and the professional practice of planning: Thorndike has a long history of environmental activism in addition to work within governmental agencies and experience with nonprofit organizations and research institutions. As she passes on her understanding of environmental and land-use planning, Thorndike appreciates that her teaching can be animated and complimented with a constant stream of demonstrative anecdotes from her own practice.

Thorndike has regularly taught the graduate seminar, "Wilderness and Wildlands," focused on environmental policy issues, since completing her Cornell Ph.D in the field of Natural Resource Policy and Planning. She has served on the board of the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) since 1997 in the statutory environmentalist position, where she helps assess state energy use and development needs and oversees allocation of funding for research and development related to New York's energy problems. Her prior experience includes a nearly 16-year appointment as a commissioner of the New York State Adirondack Park Agency—a planning and regulatory agency responsible for public and private land use in the 6 million acre Adirondack Park—and 8 years as a member of Governor Mario Cuomo's Environmental Advisory Board. Additionally, Thorndike is founder of the Center for Environmental Information, based in Rochester. She says she (and no doubt her students) have benefited from the fact that she has been on "both sides" of environmental planning, i.e., the side of the policy-maker/applier and that of the policy advocate.

In bringing her experience to bear on her work with students, Thorndike says one of the most important differences between the academic sphere and the professional one is the time scale of work and she sees helping students recognize this as essential. Time is a luxury of academic inquiry but not one that professional planners are often given, adding to the complexity of their tasks. Another significant

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Students Volunteer in Flood-Ravaged Owego

The town of Owego, just 30 miles south of Ithaca, was hit hard when the Susquehanna River broke its banks early last month. What's being called a 500-year flood left over a thousand homes damaged and forced residents into temporary shelter. Led by Professor George Frantz, several AAP students chose to spend their Fall Break assisting locals in gutting their damaged homes.



Student working

A total of 19 students pitched in over the four days in the unglamorous work of removing soaked drywall, demolishing ruined cabinetry, and removing thick layers of mud from basements. Students of architecture and planning, both graduate and undergraduate, worked closely together to further the reconstruction process on four homes. Three of these homes were in the community of Apalachin, and one in the colonial village of Owego.

At one property, with the initial instructions of "Start with floors," students removed all the damaged flooring,



Students working

interior walls, and kitchen counters, cleaned the basement, and treated the house for mold and mildew. "That represents a giant step forward for that particular home," said Frantz. 77 year-old Dick Motiska, the owner of the home for 45 years, was on hand each day the students were there to work alongside them and show his appreciation.



Students working

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Faculty Updates

Pierre Clavel's article "Planning in an Age of Austerity--1979 and 2011" was published in *Progressive Planning Magazine*.

Ann Forsyth contributed a chapter "Queerying Planning Practice: Understanding Non-Conformist Populations" in a new text, *Queerying Planning*.

Mildred Warner's article "The Consequences of Implementing a Child Care Voucher Scheme: Evidence from Australia, the Netherlands, and the USA" was published in *Social Policy and Administration*.

Additionally, Mildred Warner's article "Good Clubs and Local Governments" appeared in the *Journal of American Planning Association*.

Upcoming Events:

Steve O'Neill Lecture: Affordable Housing Policy and Practice

Friday, October 14, 12:20pm

Kaufmann Auditorium, Goldwin Smith Hall

Iain Borden Lecture: From Skateboards to Automobiles

Friday, October 14, 5:15pm

Lewis Auditorium, Goldwin Smith Hall

George Baird Lecture: A New Interpretation of the Architecture of Public Space

Monday, Oct. 17, 5:15pm

Hollis E. Cornell Auditorium

Goldwin Smith Hall

Planning Graphics Opening

Wednesday, October 19th, 12pm

115 and the W. Sibley Display space

Abby Sigal Lecture: Making the Good Life Affordable

Friday, October 21, 12:20pm

Kaufmann Auditorium, Goldwin Smith Hall

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lesson she seeks to share in teaching is the consequence of citizen participation in planning. Thorndike notes that not only is it practically necessary for the public to be engaged in solution-forming so as not to be part of the problems, but that there are actually multiple “publics” that must be addressed and engaged in any planning exercise.

For future planners, Thorndike suggests that energy will be a key area where they are needed. Global climate change and energy problems are a result of the cumulative impact of countless local decisions about energy use and resource allocation, which planners have the ability to affect, she says. She contends that improving energy efficiency in particular is and will be a powerful measure and that planners are tool-carriers, with land-use and zoning options that can alter the way we currently utilize our energy resources. So fear not, planners, but grab your tools and take Thorndike’s seminar if possible.

Check Out the CRP Blog!

The CRP Blog has taken off this semester and has proven to be a great resource to the department. Professor Ann Forsyth, who created and oversees the blog says “the blog is a way to communicate about coming events, update people about recent activities in the department, and also provide resources for students more quickly than is possible with the main web site.” Examples of entries include student-sponsored dinners with guest speakers, academic resources available (such as the Knight Writing Center), and informational meetings for department and college-wide opportunities. Bonnie O’Neill (MRP ’12), one of the main contributors, remarks “the blog showcases the level of involvement among our faculty and students. We encourage everyone to become a follower!” Please visit the blog: <http://cornellplanning.blogspot.com/>

CRP Workshop Travels to Chiapas

Students from Professor Marcela González Rivas’ Planning in Developing Countries Workshop recently traveled to Chiapas, a state in southern Mexico, to continue a study of the controversial Sustainable Rural Cities (SRC) program. Initiated by CRP students in a similar workshop last year, the study has impressed academics and groups from civil society in Mexico, who have been eagerly awaiting this year’s follow-up.

The SRC program is an initiative of the Mexican Government designed to fight poverty, reduce dispersion, improve social services, and promote governance and social cohesion. The program involves creating whole new cities in rural areas and encouraging the migration of people from surrounding villages. The government is officially tasked with providing public services and economic opportunities for the incoming residents. The class has been working with an organization called The Forum for Sustainable Development in evaluating progress in Santiago el Pinar, a city completed in February 2010.

The students spent their time in Chiapas conducting field research that will support a report to be provided to authorities later this semester.

Students met with national and municipal agencies, community members, civil society organizations, UN agencies, and academics to assess the program and gather information about issues affecting Santiago el Pinar. The weeklong field study culminated in a public forum with representatives from several academic disciplines and NGOs.



Students with Prof. Gonzales-Rivas in Chiapas

First-Year Master’s Students Visit Washington DC

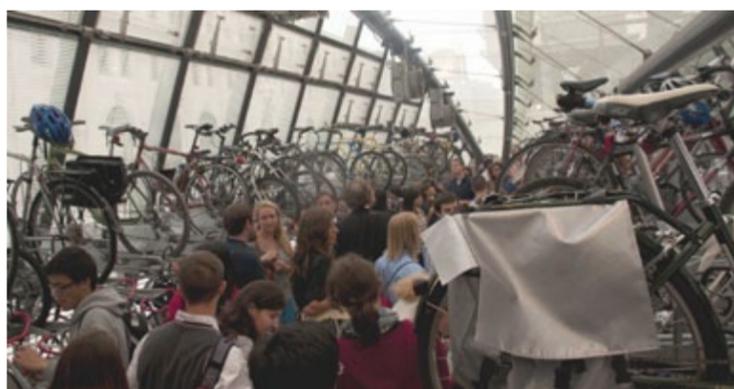


1st-year students at MLK memorial

This year’s Fall field trip took the HPP and MRP class of 2013 to the nation’s capital, a living laboratory of planning and historic preservation.

Led by Professors Jeff Chusid and Michael Tomlan, students learned about and observed the lasting elements of Pierre L’Enfant’s 1791 plan and the City Beautiful-inspired McMillan Commission’s 1901 reimagining of the city. The group toured through somber memorials, bustling downtown corridors, and inspiring museums, always accompanied by the expert commentary of Professor Chusid, Professor Tomlan, and an enthusiastic cast of local scholars and professionals. Stops included the fountain-laden memorial to Franklin Roosevelt,

historic and revitalized Penn Quarter and Union Station, the massive hall of the National Building Museum, and the rapidly metamorphosing Virginia suburbs. Student leaders Alyson Fletcher (MRP ’12) and Katie Coffield (HPP ’12), who were responsible for much of the trip’s itinerary, kept the group organized and on time through a very busy weekend. Local alumni, including Peter Rizzo (MRP ’09), Carrie Barton (HPP ’09), Steve Callcott (HPP ’89), Nancy Witherell (HPP) and Justin Schor (URS ’93), also helped organize the three days of events and spoke to the students about their work.



1st-year students at bike station

On a perfect day, the students strolled around the national mall, studying the design, placement, and use of monuments. Special attention was paid to safety and security issues in post 9-11 Washington. In addition to these iconic sites, students visited two large affordable housing projects. One of these, the Ellen Wilson Homes, was an innovative New Urbanist Hope VI project in the historic Capitol Hill area that included brand new streets and parcels reserved for market-rate housing.

Panelists and speakers from various local, federal and nonprofit agencies shared their knowledge with the group. These included representatives from the Department of Transportation, the Environmental Protection Agency, Housing and Urban Development, the General Services Administration, the DC Office of Planning, and the Washington Area Bicyclist Association. Students also heard from architects, designers, planners, and preservationists working throughout the region.

The group explored and discussed some fine examples of historic preservation work, including the recent restoration of Eastern Market. Originally finished in 1873, the unique Italianate structure suffered extensive fire damage in 2007.

Before all of this, however, on the first evening of the trip, CRP alumni working in the area shared their experiences over pizza and drinks with the students. It was a hospitable introduction that was appreciated and enjoyed by all.

Alumni Preservation Symposium at Cornell
Friday, November 4th, 9am-5pm
Location TBD

John Reys Lecture
“How Gotham Got It’s Grid: The Inside Story of Manhattan’s City Plan”
Tuesday, November 8th, 4:30pm
Reception to follow

AAP Young Alumni Mixer
Thursday, November 3rd, 2011: 6pm – 9pm
Chelsea Manor, NYC, 138 W. 25th St.

Money Blog

by Luiz Martinez

CRP Blog

by Ann Forsyth and Bonnie O’Neill