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department of city and regional planning

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Alumna Profile: The Story of Annie Leonard

Annie Leonard has personally stopped shipments of toxic waste, written a popular book, and made a short film that's been seen by an estimated 20 million people. She's done everything, it seems – except graduate from **CRP**.

After receiving her Bachelor's degree from **Barnard College** in New York, Annie brought her self-professed love of garbage to Sibley Hall. At the end of her last semester, however, she received an offer from **Greenpeace** to campaign against the export of toxic waste to developing countries. She left Cornell, planning to write her thesis and two final papers while working in DC. She wrote the thesis while at Greenpeace, but was so eager to put her skills to work that she never incorporated her professor's comments in a rewrite. Instead, she jumped at the opportunities offered at Greenpeace, leaving those final touches undone. "I could write those papers or just go stop a toxic waste dump," she said.



Annie Leonard
photo/*The Story of Stuff Project*

Through the years, all of Annie's work with Greenpeace and a number of other environmental organizations led to her big idea. Her first film, *The Story of Stuff*, is 20 minutes of accessible, entertaining, and cleverly animated information about the effects of runaway consumerism on the environment and people. By all standards, the video went viral, and has been seen on Youtube and other sites by tens of millions of budding sustainability advocates. Today, she travels around the world, working and lecturing on a number of environmental issues, as she continues making influential videos.

Nearly 25 years later, to mark the occasion of her mother's 80th birthday, Leonard decided it was time to get the **MRP** degree she had been too busy to finish. She approached her thesis advisor, Professor **Dick Booth**, and was shocked to learn that he was receptive to the idea – so long as she finished her land use law class, environmental politics class, and thesis. She thought she might be able to use some of the work she had done in the field; after all, she has lectured on environmental politics at more than 30 universities and has written a book on the subject. "I thought that might be good enough, but Booth didn't go for it," she laughs.

Instead, Annie has been taking coursework to finish her degree at the **University of California-Berkeley**, close to her home. Naturally, it has been hard to escape the attention of Berkeley students. Though she introduced herself only as, "an involved community member ... they figured it out pretty quickly," she recalls. As for her thesis, she has been carrying a box of thesis documents from city to city for two and a half decades, a constant reminder that she would one day have to finish her degree (she has assured *The Planner* that she will eventually recycle the papers).

Leonard fondly remembers a bright, diverse, and professionally experienced CRP student body, and credits the department with introducing her to the systems-based thinking that she describes in her book and films. When asked what she'll do when she finally graduates, Annie responds with a laugh, "I'm just gonna keep doing this stuff until I can't stand up anymore."

And her advice for current and future CRP students? "Hand in all your papers before you leave!"

MRP Exit Projects: Five Outstanding Examples



Exploration of Agent-Based Models as a Means of Modeling Complexity in Human Behavior

Ronell Auld
Chair: Yuri Mansury

Agent-based models (ABMs), which are used to model various phenomena as systems of interacting agents, provide an alternative to traditional methods of verbal argumentation and algebraic formulization. In his paper, Ronell looks at past contributions of ABMs and presents one of his own, a bid-rent model based on spatial economist Johann Heinrich Von Thunen's platform of land valuation.

The Successes and Failures of Urban Agriculture Producer Organizations: Creating an Analytical Framework



Lindsay Carter
Chair: Stephan Schmidt

Commercial urban agriculture has become an important source of food and employment in cities throughout Sub-Saharan Africa. Battling shaky land tenure rights and poor institutional support, many urban farmers have formed Urban Producers Organizations (UPOs) as a means of organizing collective action. Lindsay Carter's project looks at six case studies of UPOs from throughout the region, including her own research from Benin, and identifies which variables are likely to contribute to the success or failure of a UPO.

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Faculty Updates:

Jeff Chusid's book, *Saving Wright: The Freeman House and the Preservation of Meaning, Materials, and Modernity*, was selected as the [University of Mary Washington, Center for Historic Preservation, 2012 Book Prize Winner](#).

Mike Manville discussed the design of [healthy communities](#) on NPR affiliate WSKG in Binghamton.

Mildred Warner and colleague Amir Hefetz published the article, "[Contracting or Public Delivery? The importance of service, market and management characteristics](#)," in the *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*.

Alumni Updates:

Jordan Yin (MRP '94, PhD '01) published his book, *Urban Planning for Dummies*.

Upcoming Events:

Planners Network Forum: "[Partnerships for Regional Equity](#)"
Friday, May 18-Saturday, May 19
Ithaca

[CRP Reception for 2012 Graduates](#)
Friday, May 25, 1:30pm
Arts Quad

CRP Blog

by Ann Forsyth and Bonnie O'Neill

URS Facebook Page

A Technical Analysis of Wind Power in Tompkins County

Ben Koffel
Chair: Susan Christopherson



Ben's project explores the feasibility of wind power projects to serve Ithaca and the rest of Tompkins County. Using GIS, Ben developed models for siting of wind farms that incorporated meteorological data, municipal land use regulations, and other considerations. The project also includes recommendations on improving the permitting process and research on alternative ownership models for wind power facilities.

Ready or Not, Here They Come: How U.S. Cities are Preparing for the Aging Population, and Lessons from New York City and Atlanta

Lydia Morken
Chair: Ann Forsyth



By 2030, an unprecedented 20% of the U.S. population will be 65 or older. Lydia's work explores the relationship between an aging population and the built environment, and asks what makes an elder-friendly community. Through interviews with leaders from New York and Atlanta, she derives lessons for communities looking to accommodate their aging baby boomers.

The Effects of Urban Structure on High-Speed Rail Accessibility: A Comparative Study of High-Speed Rail in California and Spain

Viktor Zhong
Chair: Mildred Warner



Viktor's research examines how urban form might affect accessibility for high-speed rail (HSR). Drawing on data from San Francisco, Los Angeles, Madrid, and Barcelona, the paper lays out a range of concerns for HSR planners in California, singling out the geographical dispersion of potential riders as an obstacle. Viktor further investigates the potential for transit-oriented development and isolates ways to improve inter-modal connectivity in the California cities.

CRPConnect Aims to Unite Students, Alumni

At the end of April, students, faculty, and alumni from the department met to brainstorm ideas for **CRPConnect**, a new group meant to strengthen the **CRP** network outside of West Sibley Hall. The network, meant to get students and alumni connected to internships and jobs, will also strengthen the department's connection to the practice, and become a community for post-Cornell life.

The meeting produced a number of ideas to begin growing the network. Over the summer, using the CRPConnect [website](#), as well as a [LinkedIn](#) page, the group plans to build its virtual community – one that already includes over 410 members.

In addition to the virtual community, the network will also create vibrant regional hubs to foster in-person interaction. Each hub would be headed by a hub leader, a dedicated alum in that locale, willing to work for at least a year to strengthen connections to other nearby alumni. The hub leader would then let those alumni know of upcoming events with CRP students and faculty in the area.

Starting with **New York City** – ideal for the number of great alumni in the area, its proximity to Cornell, and the fact that the **Fall Field Trip** will go there next semester – CRPConnect will arrange for alumni to join students for an event and a reception, and inaugurate the first hub leader. If the hub leader model is a success, the network will install another hub leader in the Fall Field Trip city for the following year, and so on. The long-term vision is to host an alumni-student reception every Fall Field Trip, which would be connected to alumni get-togethers at other regional hubs through video-conferencing.

Says **Marshall McCormick** (MRP '13), founder of CRPConnect, "Right now, it's just a dream, but we all start somewhere."

Please join CRPConnect at www.crpconnect.com

DELHI2050 Exhibit Stimulates Conversation



the opening of DELHI2050. photo/Jeff Chusid

On April 19th, students and faculty from **Planning, Architecture, and Landscape Architecture** attended the opening lecture and reception of the **DELHI2050** exhibit in West Sibley Hall. Opening simultaneously at the **International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam**, the exhibit, which highlights the collaborative efforts of Delhi-based architecture firm, **arch i Platform**, and Amsterdam-based **Venhoeven CS Architecture + Urbanism**, examines the rapid growth of Delhi and its surrounding region, and reimagines its future.

Through a series of phases, the project rethinks the existing **Delhi Master Plan** to account for the area's infrastructure, resources, and institutions, which will be unable to accommodate the area's rapid growth. After touring the city with models of four future scenarios, arch i used resident responses to develop a spatial planning process ranging from street- to regional-scale. This, coupled with further collaboration with researchers and designers of various disciplines, resulted in a variety of alternatives to the existing master plan.

"As a progressive planning program, we tend to be skeptical of 'experts' and quite interested in how power works in land use and policy decisions," said Professor **Jeff Chusid**, CRP organizer for the exhibit, "The ways in which arch i has been negotiating between a bottom up and top down planning model therefore gave us a lot to discuss."

The exhibit's opening included presentations from CRP professors Jeff Chusid and **Neema Kudva**, as well as **Aditya Ghosh**, an architect from arch i currently working towards his Cornell MARCH degree. The speakers' familiarity with Delhi, the diversity of backgrounds within the audience, and the project's approach, resulted in a rich discussion about the project's process and outcomes.

"The DELHI2050 opening was an all-too-rare opportunity to see two CRP professors and students from many disciplines ... engage and challenge one another intellectually in an intimate setting," commented **Chris Hayes** (MRP '12), "... the exhibit has prompted discussion in the halls long after the opening was over."



students and alumni gathered at an event in Washington, D.C. last fall. photo/Jeff Chusid

Undergrads Explore Cleveland

Every year, URS students vote on a class trip to a city within seven hours of Ithaca. Native Clevelander **Ken Kalynchuk** (URS '14) lobbied hard for his hometown and won. "I wanted my fellow students to see the good and the bad of **Cleveland**," he said.

In the early morning hours of April 19th, 29 students, led by Professor **Pike Oliver**, gathered in the Sibley parking lot to board the bus for their three-day trip. The itinerary was packed, and, by noon, the group was fully immersed in the 'Cleveland experience'. Their first taste of the city was downtown, where they visited **Playhouse Square**, a large performing arts district. The real estate developer, an acquaintance of Professor Oliver, met with the group and showed them around the set of *The Adams Family*. The remainder of the day was spent exploring downtown and visiting the celebrity-chef restaurant district, where the group heard from the developer of **Greenhouse Tavern**.

The second day focused on Cleveland's east side, starting with a tour of the **Detroit Superior Bridge Subway**, a historic system of streetcar tunnels. The group walked through the old subway system, a lingering memory of more prosperous days. The students were also led on a tour of **East Cleveland**, one of the poorest cities in Ohio. Later, they met with the President of **University Circle**, **Chris Ronayne**, to discuss cultural district planning. In the evening, the group attended a northeastern Ohio alumni event, which included famous alumnus **Norm Krumholz** (MRP '65).

The students spent the last day of their trip on the west side, and had an opportunity most city tours don't afford: a hayride along the **Rapid Line**, an old railroad track turned bike corridor. The Rapid Line showed the students a shining example of a good public space, and how to reclaim an old industrial use area.

The group also went to **Westside Market**, a century-old public market reminiscent of Grand Central Station, where the architect, manager, and a restaurant owner spoke to the group about the importance of utilizing these old market spaces. The group then toured **Ohio City's** six-acre urban farm, which offered spectacular views of downtown just before the group headed back to Ithaca.

Kalynchuk, who organized most of the trek, believes most of his fellow students were able to see the how easy it would be to get involved in revitalizing an old Rustbelt city, but doesn't think that was all they got out of the trip.

"They also learned how great the food is in Cleveland!" he said.



photos courtesy of Ken Kalynchuk (URS '14)



A Postcard from Rome

This is the sixth in a series of "postcards from Rome": pictures sent home from the contingent of CRP students spending their semester abroad in the Italian capital.

Here they are outside of the Boss Bar in L'Aquila, the city devastated by the 2009 earthquakes.

photo courtesy of Brandon Taylor (BS URS '13)