

New Zealand Planning Institute Conference 2009: A young planner's perspective

Clare Sargeant*

My name is Clare Sargeant, and currently I am the Young Planners' Representative for the Canterbury/Westland branch of the New Zealand Planning Institute (NZPI).

The NZPI 2009 Conference was the 2nd NZPI Conference I have attended, and each has been completely different, primarily due to their theming and location.

In 2009 the location was Rotorua, with the aptly named theme of, "Letting off steam – the pressure issues". Rotorua is regarded as the cultural, tourist and geological centre of New Zealand, and this Conference was much anticipated for its potential hosting capabilities, namely the non-conference activities.



The venue was the Energy Events Centre, and the conference ran to all expectations: awesome welcome drinks; great keynote speakers; stimulating workshops/breakout sessions; fascinating field trips and an excellent conference dinner (all food and drinks are part of the deal!).

From a Young Planner's (YP) point of view the Conference is a great opportunity to mix and mingle with some of the great people in the planning profession, and to re-ignite the passion for academic debate in and of planning. The difference with this Conference is that more North Island planners attended, (as opposed to the 2008 Conference in Greymouth, which many South Island planners attended).

From the keynote speakers, I gained the following insights:

Ronald Wright¹:

- There has never been a time when the world needs good planning as much as now!
- We should have more centralised planning; and
- Local areas need to be of a high density.

Larry Beasley²:

- Planners are, or can become, the greatest artists of 'place-

¹ Ronald Wright is an award winning novelist, historian and essayist. His recent publications include *A Short History of Progress* and *What Is America?* Source: (n.d.) *Ronald Wright*, Retrieved, January 26, 2010 from: <http://ronaldwright.com/>

² Larry Beasley is currently the Co-Director of Planning and Director of Current Planning for the City of Vancouver. Source: (n.d.) *Larry Beasley*, Retrieved January 26, 2010, from the City of Toronto website: www.toronto.ca/planning/bio_beasley.htm

making' and, because of that, planning prowess and planning power must come back to the very centre of a contemporary, forward-looking civic agenda;

- The prime equity is love – if you don't love a place, you won't live there; and
- Planners need to lead the way in designing places that allow for people to spontaneously want to live in a mixed use high density 'place'.

Of the workshop/breakout sessions, I attended the following:

- Experienced planners: Survival Tips – I know this sounds funny, a YP attending this session, but it gave me some inside hints on how to progress my career. The first half of a planner's career is spent in achieving success in their studies, qualifications, training and experience, pursuing career opportunities, promotions and taking on more challenging work and responsibilities. The second half tends to be more focused on those aspects which are vital, important or where choice is available – taking on the projects that are enjoyable/challenging/fulfilling. The key is keeping fresh, knowing where you are heading and reminding yourself why you are in it.
- New urbanism: It's not that new – This was a great presentation that harks back to older planning tools which sharply resemble current planning theories (planned unit development = cul-de-sac and traditional neighbourhood development = grid-like). Are we just reinventing the wheel of planning?
- Land in retreat and the reality of coastal hazards – A great session for those not aware of a council's responsibility in assisting with protection of coastal land in private ownership. Many councils own a lot of land along coastal areas that is adjacent to private property. When this land slips and/ or erodes landowners tend to 'blame' the council. In these instances councils have a reasonable duty to act to support the neighbouring properties. There is not a duty for a council to compensate for acts of nature.
- Confessions of an Independent Hearing Commissioner – I've always wanted to know what exactly it takes to be an Independent Hearing Commissioner, and how they thought! A very interesting talk from experienced planning professionals charged with making some very important decisions (to grant, or not to grant – that is the question!). You may not like the decision but you can respect it because it followed due process.

It was great to see that the Otago Master of Planning students attend the annual NZPI Conference, and next year should see a large Lincoln University crew...why you ask?

In 2010 Christchurch hosts a joint Annual Conference with both the NZPI, and the Planning Institute of Australia. The biggest difference is that in 2010 there is a specific programme for Young Planners, called YPConnect10.

YPCONnect10 allows young planners, both students and graduates, to have a voice at a national scale, participate in professional development specifically targeted at young professionals, and to build successful careers in planning and development professions.

A fabulous programme has been planned for this event, which includes the following:

- Welcome Drinks from the top of Banks Peninsula at night – Gondola ride up
- Great Speakers talking about:
 - o Change in planning – Bob Batty (Planit Associates)
 - o Low Impact Urban Design – Viv Heslop
 - o Landscape Assessment – Frank Boffa (Boffa Miskell)
 - o Artificial Surfing Reefs – Shaw Mead (ASR Limited)
 - o Professional development – career challenges
- Panel discussion from ‘both sides of the ditch’
 - o Working overseas – Experiences in the UK, Canada, USA,

Aust and NZ

- o Planning laws – RMA (NZ) vs. State-based (Aust)
- Conference Drinks

I am looking forward to this fabulous programme and having all our young planners attend this event.

YPCONnect is only \$99, so for those of you who haven't been to a NZPI Conference before, you have to come along to this one. We have so much fun, and all the drinks and food are catered for, so really there aren't too many excuses to not to have fun with your fellow colleagues.

www.planningpathways2010.com/ypconnect

** Clare Sargeant completed a Master of Environmental Policy at Lincoln University in 2008; her current position is as a Planner in Environmental Policy and Approvals, Christchurch City Council.*



In conjunction with the NZPI / PIA International Congress

Delegates will engage with some of New Zealand and Australia's leading planning professionals and experts in a forum where students and young planning professionals feel comfortable listening, learning and participating in an environment specifically designed for them.

YPCONNECT10 | Raising the Bar
19-20 April 2010 | Christchurch, NZ

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YP Connect delegate

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