



Young Planners Congress 2012: “Dualities in Planning”

“YPCongress12 is an event that allows young planners, both students and graduates, to have a voice on a national scale, to participate in professional development, and network with peers at an event specifically targeted at young planners.” – Bruno Brosnan, YPCongress12 Convenor/Blenheim YP Rep.

The theme of the New Zealand Planning Institute (NZPI) Young Planners Congress 2012 (YPCongress12), held on Monday 30th April and Tuesday 1st May 2012 in Blenheim, was “Dualities in Planning”. This theme was chosen to highlight the varying views existing in planning, and to provide young planners with exposure to experienced professionals, business leaders, and international planners who might encourage young planners to contemplate the future of planning, and the role they play in it.

The Congress began on the Monday evening with a pre-Congress function held at Fairweathers Bar on Scott Street. This function was for all the attending young planners to meet and get to know each other before the main event. A range of activities was involved, including a pub quiz and a tricky competition to create iconic world buildings out of paper, ice block sticks and cello tape. The evening included nibbles and drinks, kindly sponsored by Blenheim’s Hardy-Jones Clarke Barristers and Solicitors, and this gave everyone plenty of opportunity to talk about anything and everything associated with planning and young planners.

On Tuesday 1st May the main part of the Congress was held at Heartland Hotel and began at 8:00am with the NZPI Young Planners Annual General Meeting. At 9:00am attendees were welcomed to Marlborough by Andrew Besley, Chief Executive Officer of Marlborough District Council. He spoke in particular about how varied the planning issues within his region are, from reverse sensitivity conflicts created by vineyards and lifestyle blocks, to matters relating to marine farming within the Sounds, a topic that we would hear more on later that day.

Attendees were treated to a dozen speakers throughout the day who really encapsulated the theme of the Congress. These included international keynote, Keith Hall, Client Services Manager/Senior Transportation Planner with CH2M HILL’s Toronto Office, who was well placed to discuss the opportunities for young planners to work with global peers. Within this topic he opened attendees up to thinking about dealing with issues at a local level whilst

also needing to think globally. He particularly encouraged young planners to participate in international exchanges and to make sure they get lots of different experiences early on in their careers.

Keith was followed by Blenheim consultants Steve Wilkes and Ed Chapman-Cohen, who represented developers' perspectives, Steve advising that planners must remain professional and impartial, and Ed emphasising the importance of effective communication. Businessmen Peter Yealands, of Yealands Estates Wines, and Mark Gillard, of New Zealand King Salmon spoke from their own industry's point of view, with Mark noting the importance of planners building strong relationships with industry. Lawyers Tama Hovell and Vicki Morrison, of specialist firm Atkins Holm Joseph Majurey Limited, and planning consultant for Te Atiawa Manawhenua Trust, Ian Shapcott, then spoke of planning from a Māori perspective, including the different world view held by tangata whenua and the importance of having this voiced in the planning sphere. Two resource management lawyers, Murray Hunt and Quentin Davies, spoke, respectively, on how to be a successful expert witness within the Environment Court and how RMA processes within the Environmental Protection Authority are carried out. Finally, attendees heard from the council's point of view, when Executive Manager Regulatory for Nelson City Council, Mandy Bishop, and Marlborough District Councillor, Peter Jerram, offered some insights from their own experience. Mandy spoke of the planner's role in informing those who make decisions, the councillors, whilst Peter again emphasised the importance of planners being effective communicators within this role.

At the conclusion of the Congress, attendees joined planners for the opening of the main NZPI Conference, a great opportunity to network with planning professionals from many different areas of planning. A suggestion on the best way to undertake networking is to come up some simple questions beforehand about what you would like to ask planners who are working in the industry. It also helps to get someone who knows a few other people and to go around with them to make more connections.

Overall the experience was extremely rewarding and relevant for what young planners at Lincoln are learning about in their studies. It gave great insight into what it could be like working for either a consultancy, council or for Māori interests. The speakers at Congress were interesting because they helped young planners to understand what their role as a planner actually is (or might be) which can be a bit confusing at times. It was also great for the networking opportunities because this creates connections for when graduates begin their careers.

Some thoughts from Lincoln University attendees:

"It was a great opportunity to hear a variety of people talk about their take on environmental management and what is important to them currently. It was also interesting to talk to people who are in their first few years of their jobs, finding out what they do in their jobs and the advice they had."

My advice for students who are thinking about attending is that they should attend at least one while still at University. This was the second one I attended and found that because I knew more of what to expect I felt more comfortable talking to other planners and I got more out of it. It is also a great opportunity to learn more about the entire industry and to see if this is what you would like to do for your future.” – Holly Gardiner, Bachelor of Environmental Management with Honours.

“Attending my second Young Planners Congress this year was an invaluable experience. There was a great variety of speakers on a range of different, and importantly, relevant topics. As a student it was also an excellent opportunity to network with fellow students, young planners, as well as prospective employers to determine the best study options and skill set to make me competitive when entering the workforce. I would recommend attending the Young Planners Congress to any fellow students. I look forward to attending YP 2013 in Hamilton.” – Michelle Ruske, Bachelor of Environmental Management (Minor in Professional Planning).

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