

# GPEIG VOICE

Fall 2009

Newsletter of the Global Planning Educators Interest Group [www.gpeig.org](http://www.gpeig.org)

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## Message from GPEIG's Co-Chairs

The GPEIG Voice provides an opportunity to update our members and friends who have globally-minded interests in planning scholarship, education, and practice.

GPEIG continues to grow as a group not only in terms of the numbers of people on the listserve but also in terms of the level of participation and the range of activities we pursue. You may recall that our goal this past year was to expand the life of GPEIG beyond

the flurry of activity that usually accompanies the ACSP's annual meetings while remaining dormant for much of the rest of the year. We attempted to do this in two ways: by expanding the GPEIG website as a resource and increasing the participation of new and more people in GPEIG's governance and activities.

The new nominating committee did a great job of finding Vinit Mukhija who generously agreed to serve as co-chair this year and next.

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## Virtual Cities Project: Work-in-progress Report

Faranak Miraftab and Ken Salo (UIUC); Neema Kudva (Cornell); and Keith Pezzoli (UC San Diego)

As instructors of courses on urbanization in the global South, we struggle with the problem of engaging students who are often at a distance -- metaphorically and/or literally -- from the places we teach about. The majority of our students in the US have not experienced dense urban environments in the US or cities outside. As importantly, students from the global South have little experience of urban communities outside their middle and upper class comfort zones. For all these students, these communities are places of exotica, or dismal homogenous spaces of poverty and backwardness where terrorists, danger and strange others lurk. To address this challenge, our courses currently rely on a traditional (but interdisciplinary) combination of readings, lecture, discussion, and project work, with visual aids such as overheads, slides and videos being used as instruction props.

But we have a new generation of students facile in multi-media environments that go beyond traditional text-based description or lectures aided by audio-visual material. The Virtual Cities project therefore seeks to create a web-based multi-media resource that connects with our students learning modes. This should not be confused with web-based tutorials and teaching methods that replace classroom interaction, instead it is a resource for teachers and students who are physically present and interacting with each other in the classroom. Aided by technology such as the widely used *wiki* and increasingly popular social networking sites this project seeks to connect classrooms in the global South and North to cities of the global South via internet based sharing of multi-media material created by the users themselves -

- that is anyone who lives, works, visits and studies cities in the global South.

The Virtual Cities project builds and expands on an earlier experiment led by Neema Kudva and Bill Goldsmith at the Department of City and Regional Planning at Cornell University. The current project brings together an expanded group of universities and faculty in the global South and North. Each of us belongs to larger networks of researchers, practitioners, social movement activists and artists concerned with cities, urban development, and governance, and we intend to draw on these networks to keep the site current and robust. While a small group is currently involved in giving shape to the project our goal is to have others join as the project expands. Ultimately, we aim to create a resource that will be accessible (in terms of both producing and consuming knowledge) to anyone, anywhere with internet access. The box below includes the current draft of the text that will appear on the initial page of the project website. This statement lays out the values, goals and objectives of the project. At the moment the project is in an initial design phase, but we will keep GPEIG members updated as we develop this collective teaching resource for all.

We would also like to note here that due to various reasons beyond our control, the project was not able to benefit from the \$3,000 potential funding support HUD's office of International Affairs had kindly extended to GPEIG in 2007. The project is currently funded through a seed grant from UIUC (World Universities Network and International Studies Programs at UIUC).

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Box 1. Draft of Statement on Virtual Cities website that introduces the project's values, goals and objectives.

### **Welcome to Virtual Cities.**

This site is designed to expose students from across the world to the vitality, dynamism, and constantly changing face of cities in the global South. These cities are places of great possibilities, crucibles of the new, even as they wrestle with huge problems of poverty and conflict, difference and degradation.

An important goal of Virtual Cities is to counter dominant narratives that present these cities as ahistorical places of crime and social decay. Virtual Cities is an evolving collective effort to highlight debates and images revealing the social agency of *all* people producing urban space.

### **Who Can Contribute to Virtual Cities?**

We invite everyone who lives, works, visits and studies cities in the global South to make a contribution. It can be a video clip, text, or image based entry that you have created and that abides by our guidelines outlined below. Sample entries are included in the site.

1. You are responsible for your entry and for obtaining copyright on materials that you use. You must also provide, wherever possible, sources for information cited (*note: click, instructions on copyright and citing*).
2. Your entry must include location in the city and should be tagged on the city map (*note: click, instructions on how to tag*).
3. Your entry will be reviewed by the editorial team (*click, names of editorial team*) before it is posted. If there are any problems, someone from the editorial team will get in touch with you.
4. You must be a registered user to upload entries. Registration is free. Please read the use agreement included here (*click, it will take person to a section which says reasonable use is allowed etc. etc. and then takes them to a registration page*)

### **Who started Virtual Cities?**

This site was initiated by a small group of educators at the Department of City and Regional Planning at Cornell University in the United States. It has since expanded to a multi-site collective effort that includes urbanists and educators (*click, and it will take you to the names of the people/organizations in the group including identifying editorial team members*) who teach and work with university level students in the global North and South. We are interested in creating a space to archive the lived experience of city residents, particularly those who fight for equity and seek to gain voice in the cities where they live and work.

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## **The Blog of Indonesia's Urban Studies**

Deden Rukmana (Savannah State University)

I am honored to share my blog of Indonesia's Urban Studies with the readers of the GPEIG

newsletter. The blog, located at <http://indonesiurbanstudies.blogspot.com> was

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# Linking Science and Global Planning: A US-Mexico Border Initiative

Keith Pezzoli, Ph.D., [kpezzoli@ucsd.edu](mailto:kpezzoli@ucsd.edu) (UC San Diego)



Figure 1. Location of Los Laureles Canyon along the U.S.-Mexico Border (red boundaries outline watersheds)

The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) holds its annual meeting on Feb. 18-22, 2010, at the San Diego Convention Center. Urban Studies and Planning faculty and researchers from the University of California, San Diego, have organized a special symposium for the AAAS meeting. The symposium focuses on a U.S.-Mexico border initiative that integrates science and global planning. It is not very common for planners to present at the AAAS meeting. So is worth noting how this came about, and how it ties planning and the globalization of science together in promising ways.

The AAAS is a non-profit organization founded in 1848 with the mission to: "advance science and serve society" through initiatives in science policy, international programs, and science education. The AAAS serves 262 affiliated societies and academies of science that

reaches over 10 million individuals (<http://www.aaas.org/aboutaaas/>). The AAAS publishes the journal *Science*. *Science* has the largest paid circulation of any peer-reviewed general science journal in the world; over one million people subscribe to it. The AAAS has begun to embrace the language of sustainable development in ways that invite partnerships with planning researchers. There will be a special *Forum for Sustainability Science Programs* at the AAAS's February 2010 annual meeting. The Forum will examine "the challenges confronting universities as the attempt to meet a growing need for sustainability research--curriculum development, linking science to decision-making, and funding."

The theme of this year's AAAS meeting is "Bridging Science and Society." The conference web page boasts how "the Annual Meeting is globally one of the most widely recognized interdisciplinary scientific events, with hundreds of networking opportunities and broad national and international media coverage." The UCSD

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Planning faculty and researchers that will present at this AAAS meeting were encouraged to do so by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) Superfund Research Program (SRP). The NIEHS SRP supports a transdisciplinary approach to research (including research translation and outreach) for the protection of human health. This is accomplished through programs that integrate biomedical research with engineering, hydrogeologic, and ecologic components within the context of unique scientific themes. Planning is a newcomer to this scene. The NIEHS SRP is funding UCSD Planning faculty and staff as part of a major, long term Superfund research grant to UCSD (\$34 million over the period 2000-2011). The grant involves an interdisciplinary mix of ten departments and centers across the UCSD campus. This NIEHS-SRP group at UCSD studies molecular mechanisms and models of exposure involving superfund toxicants. UCSD's Urban Studies and Planning faculty and researchers lead the Superfund team's "Research Translation" and "Community Outreach" activities ([http://superfund.sdsc.edu/index.php/research\\_support\\_cores/](http://superfund.sdsc.edu/index.php/research_support_cores/)).

Presenting at the AAAS meeting is one of the many venues to meet the grant's research translation and outreach aims. In addition to the symposium, faculty and researchers of UCSD's Urban Studies and Planning program have agreed to organize a tour for participants of the AAAS meeting. The tour will focus on a community-based project along the US-Mexico border. ([http://superfund.sdsc.edu/index.php/news\\_events/comments/border\\_tour/](http://superfund.sdsc.edu/index.php/news_events/comments/border_tour/)) The US-Mexico border project that serves as the focus of the AAAS symposium and tour is featured in a 28 minute UCSD-TV documentary titled, *Los Laureles Canyon: Transborder Research in Action*. This TV documentary will be shown at the AAAS meeting. It will also be shown at the

annual meeting of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP, October 1, 2009) as part of a pre-organized panel titled, *Film and the Scholarship of Engagement: Integrating research, education and action*. The ACSP film panel was put together by Professor Leonie Sandercock. The 28 minute Los Laureles Canyon story highlights the practical and process perspectives of creating a TV documentary project aimed at highlighting the value and challenges of transboundary research, scholarship of engagement, and science communication. The story examines challenges at the water/climate/poverty nexus in low-income human settlements at risk along the U.S.-Mexico Border. More specifically, the TV documentary features the border initiative's effort to integrate participatory watershed-based planning with environmental health science (including ecotoxicology and biomolecular technologies) and climate change science.

The TV documentary was funded by the NIEHS, UCSD Center for Iberian and Latin American Studies, UCSD Office of International Affairs, the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, and the Worldwide Universities Network (WUN). The AAAS symposium and the ACSP panel presentation noted here will share lessons learned by those engaged in this effort, including a binational team of planners, scientists, educators, multimedia experts, government partners and community-based organizations. There are many scientific, socio-technical and cultural challenges involved. The coupling of planning with the environmental health sciences has proven to be a fruitful partnership in this case. It has enabled us to improve methods for measuring, understanding and managing risks associated with exposures to toxicants. The planning contribution adds value by relating the built environment and land use to public health outcomes while taking climate change and the globalization of science into account -- a promising new trajectory for planning research and action in a global context.