

## *Planning News – D.U.R.P*



### *A New Faculty Member Joins the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa*

*By Clarice Schafer*

#### Daniele Spirandelli joins UH Sea Grant and the Department of Urban and Regional Planning through a Strategic Hiring Initiative.

In 2011, former University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Chancellor Virginia Hinshaw awarded the UH Sea Grant College Program the opportunity to take part in a university-wide strategic hiring initiative to strengthen the university's capacity in teaching concepts of sustainability across different disciplines. In 2012, Daniele Spirandelli joined the Department of Urban and Regional Planning and UH Sea Grant as part of a collaborative research initiative to integrate planning, marine science, economics, architecture, and engineering for the establishment of more sustainable coastal communities. UH Sea Grant hired six other faculty members, who represent the Department of Oceanography, the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, the Department of Economics, the School of Architecture, along with the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Management.

Daniele says that this position is very exciting for her as it is the first time she has seen a university hire a cluster of faculty for interdisciplinary research. After witnessing the challenges faced by her professors and advisors during their efforts to devise interdisciplinary research proposals at the University of Washington, Daniele brings attention to the fact that unique programs like UH Sea Grant play an integral role in helping professors overcome challenges associated with scheduling and language disconnects that may occur between or among disciplines. Daniele feels that UH facilities and infrastructure adequately support interdisciplinary research efforts for coastal sustainability. Oftentimes, other universities across the nation do not have these advantages. Daniele enthusiastically supports the Department of Urban and Regional Planning's and UH Sea Grant's specific objectives for community outreach and education. Daniele says that she feels honored that her position as an Assistant Professor will allow her to teach graduate level planning courses while performing interdisciplinary research that can be applied to planning and policymaking.

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## Daniele Spirandelli's Academic Career

Daniele earned her Bachelor's degree in Massachusetts at Clark University where she studied International Development with a focus in Natural Resource Management. Extensive coursework in geography and political ecology are what sparked her interest in urban ecology. She acknowledges her former professor, Dr. Dianne Rocheleau, for teaching her about the implications of gender in forest management practices in Rajasthan, India, along with how people become included and excluded from decision making processes in land use development. These experiences taught her how to think critically about the role of gender, class, and science in patterns of resource allocation and land use.

After receiving her B.A., Daniele moved back to her home in San Francisco where she got an internship to help rehabilitate Park Presidio after its management was transferred to the Presidio Trust and the National Park Service after Congress voted to end Presidio's status as an active military installation. Daniele's experiences with working on various projects to restore lands impacted by 219 years of military use were characterized by stark contrasts in management practices by landscape architects and ecologists. While landscape architects working in the regions of the park with highly valued real-estate were concerned with uniformity and artistic aesthetics of landscape design, ecologists working to regenerate the park's coastal areas focused more on natural ecological processes. The disconnect between landscape architecture and the important functions of natural ecological processes in the rehabilitation efforts of Park Presidio are what compelled her to do more internships with local landscape designers.

Soon after, Daniele decided to pursue a Master's degree at the University of Washington in landscape architecture where she would work closely with Dr. Kristina Hill and Dr. Marina Alberti studying the impacts of urban patterns on aquatic ecosystems in the lowland sub-basins of the Puget Sound. For her Master's thesis project, Daniele studied how humans engage in and identify with the natural environment and urban landscapes while paying particular attention to people's perceptions of urban density. In 2001, Daniele got a research fellowship with the University of Melbourne to study how open space within urban environments might influence or mitigate people's adverse perceptions of high urban density in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Upon arriving to her host university in Australia, the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks occurred. Consequently, Daniele chose to change her study location from Kuala Lumpur to Melbourne. Because the density of Melbourne is similar to that of Seattle, the change of plans enabled her to develop case studies which she could later use for comparative analyses of societal perceptions of urban density in Seattle. After returning to the University of Washington and earning her Master's degree, Daniele stayed at the University to do research in the Urban Ecology Research Lab (<http://urbaneco.washington.edu>).

Daniele went on to study for her Ph.D. in Urban Design and Planning at the University of Washington. While her research continued to concentrate on urban ecology and the coupling of human and natural systems, Daniele decided to focus on how wastewater infrastructure relates to land use and development patterns. With little existing research or empirical evidence about whether centralized or decentralized wastewater management is more appropriate for maintaining water quality in near shore

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ecosystems, Daniele became even more interested in investigating the necessary actions that should be taken to establish sound wastewater management policies and plans for the future.

## **Daniele's Involvement at UH's Department of Urban and Regional Planning**

Daniele admits that joining the DURP faculty as an Assistant Professor was a rather unsuspecting opportunity as she was not planning to leave her home in Washington since her twin daughters are still very young. Yet she could not refuse the opportunity to take part in her dream to do interdisciplinary research where a strong dialogue amongst planners, engineers, oceanographers, architects, and geologists is continuously taking place. Daniele has a strong appreciation for how the UH Sea Grant program takes into consideration various stakeholder perspectives during outreach programs. She points out how the program works closely with the Department of Land and Natural Resources and planning departments in all of the state's counties as it places trained geologists and other science experts in positions where they can more effectively communicate with planners and policy makers. She hopes that initiatives such as this will help promote more comprehensive methods to planning in Hawaii that can be both state and county driven with a balance of top-down and bottom-up approaches.

Daniele is currently working with other faculty members from the economics and engineering departments on a proposal for the National Science Foundation's Water Sustainability and Climate (WSC) project. She has also been invited to join Chancellor Apple's team to go to The 1st Annual Hawaii Sustainability in Higher Education Summit, which is a two-day conference for policy planning and program sharing about sustainability initiatives in the University of Hawaii 10-campus-system, Hawaii Pacific University, Brigham Young University, and Chaminade University. This summer, Daniele will be representing the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at the joint Association of European Schools of Planning (AESOP)/Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP) Congress at the University of Dublin. She will be presenting a paper on wastewater infrastructure for this event.

This semester, Daniele is teaching the graduate course, Environmental Planning and Policy. In this class, students learn to critically assess scientific research and technical reports for the purpose of environmental planning. The course helps guide students in their understanding of the key driving forces and policy trends that affect modern environmental planning in the context of Hawaii, the nation, and the world. Next semester, Daniele will be instructing another graduate planning course, Land Use Policy and Planning, which will address growth management and land use guidance systems.

Daniele feels that the field of planning has transformed into a discipline that fulfills the strong need for various disciplines to come together and become involved in developing practical resolutions to social and environmental problems in addition to emphasizing theories and ideas. She appreciates how the Department of Urban and Regional Planning strives to bring an applied aspect that is grounded in practice for different areas of study. Because the field of planning is inherently interdisciplinary, it is imperative to study how humans actually engage in systems at different scales and time frames. Thus, informing planning inquiries through place-based learning is central to fulfilling planning responsibilities for community engagement. Daniele feels that the Department of Urban and Regional Planning is well

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positioned to be a notable leader for promoting sustainable development not only for the Mānoa campus but the whole University of Hawai'i System. She considers sustainability's position within the practice of planning to be ideal for working out what the rather nebulous term, sustainability, actually means. It is essential to also define what sustainability means for Hawaii's fragile environment and distinct culture.

Daniele would like to see additional opportunities to incorporate interdisciplinary learning. To do this, she would like to incorporate practicum-based design studios where students from multiple departments could work in teams on complex issues facing Hawaii and the Pacific region. While she admits that such a process would be rather challenging, the procedures and outcomes would be more applicable to real world scenarios. Such projects could take the form of a practicum where students experiment at a localized scale with storm water management at the University of Hawai'i Mānoa Campus while monitoring the efficacy of designs and plans. Daniele feels that the time is right to actually implement the many talked-about sustainability initiatives into academic curricula and UH infrastructure. Continued support from Chancellor Apple, the state legislature, professors, and students for the execution of green ideas will only augment the collaborative efforts to promote the betterment of the University of Hawai'i along with the state's environment and community.

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*Clarice Schafer is a graduate student studying to earn her master's degree at the University of Hawaii's Department of Urban and Regional Planning (DURP). She is currently serving as a student representative of DURP for the APA, Hawaii Chapter.*