



**News Digest of the Canadian Association of Geographers
No. 475, February 5, 2018**

Compiled by Dan Smith <cag@geog.uvic.ca>

U British Columbia's David Ley joins call for tax changes to address housing affordability: The Union of B.C. Municipalities is calling for significant tax and regulatory changes for a comprehensive approach to more affordable housing. To curb real estate speculation, the union wants the province to consider expanding its 15 per cent tax on foreign buyers in Metro Vancouver to include other areas, including Victoria, where markets have been heating up. It also wants a review to determine if 15 per cent rate is sufficient. University of B.C. geography professor David Ley, who contributed to the report, said the United Kingdom provides a good example where regulatory changes now require reporting on who the owner is, preventing foreign investors from dodging taxes or laundering money. "We want a declaration of who the actual owner is," Ley said, adding that right now, property can be owned by trusts or companies, hiding the person behind the purchase. Taxes are also being suggested to cut at the heart of the issue of profit-driven property flipping that has fuelled some B.C. markets over the last two decades, Ley said. The strategy includes a sellers tax on those who sell within a few years of purchasing a property to profit on the hot market. It also calls for a more progressive tax system that hits luxury properties at a higher rate. "What we need to recognize here is that we're in a very abnormal situation in Vancouver, abnormal in the scale of the affordability crisis, and it does require determined response from government," Ley said, adding a similar strategy could be helpful in Toronto where affordability has reached similar crisis levels. [Canadian Business](#)

U Calgary's Chris Hugenholtz leads Centre for Smart Emissions Sensing Technologies: The Alberta Government has pledged a 45% reduction of harmful methane emissions from its oil and gas sector by 2025. Taking the lead on meeting this goal, the University of Calgary has launched its Centre for Smart Emissions Sensing Technologies (SENST). "One of the challenges we face in achieving reductions from the oil and gas sector is that we don't always know where all the emissions are coming from or how much gas is leaking into the atmosphere," says Chris Hugenholtz, director and head researcher of SENST and an associate professor in the University of Calgary's Department of Geography. "To better detect these hidden emissions, we need to develop new technology and new measurement systems that will help find them faster and cost-effectively, and allow us to quantify emission rates. This will inform decisions about reducing emissions." Among SENST's goals will be the creation of smart methane sensing systems with embedded intelligence, which fuse multi-sensory data with analytics to better find and quantify methane emissions. A primary focus will be developing next generation scalable sensing technology capable of addressing the geographic scale of methane emissions from Western Canada's massive oil and gas network. This will include ground-based networks of fixed sensors and mobile sensing systems like vehicles, drones, aircraft, and satellites. Another focus area will be advancing sensing using robotic drones. These drones, embedded with artificial intelligence, will essentially act as "sniffer dogs," says Hugenholtz, finding hidden emission sources with minimal human input. [Calgary UToday](#)

Brock U's Phillip Mackintosh reminds us that Toronto's been road-raging about cars, bikes and streetcars for over 100 years: In the long history of Toronto streets, change has never come easily. Downtown, where the streets are narrow relics of a Victorian age, there is little middle ground, only middle fingers. The flipped bird on King St.'s restaurant row is the latest symbol of irritation, a stand-in for the frustration certain business owners feel toward city hall, and a transit pilot they say isn't working for them. Toronto was a city of walkers when it was incorporated in 1834, and that remained the main form of transportation (supported by transit) until the growth of its suburbs after the Second World War, says Phillip Gordon Mackintosh. The geography professor at Brock University researched Toronto's streets for his book [Newspaper City: Toronto's Street Surfaces and the Liberal Press, 1860-1935](#). Torontonians paid for concrete sidewalks long before they agreed to finance asphalt roads, because most people simply didn't use them, he notes. Toronto has greeted change on its streets with excitement, anxiety, finger pointing, politicking, gloomy predictions and ideological bickering for most of its history. Even in the 1860s, when Toronto had close to 45,000 citizens and the roads were covered with filth and roaming animals, we argued about the "itinerant Toronto hog." "Have we no 'health inspector?' What are our 'police' doing?" one citizen wrote to the Globe in 1862, complaining about the pig nuisance. Another defended the pigs, because they were performing a valuable trash-disposal service. When a tenacious gutter pig bit the skirt of a woman walking on King St., the Globe demanded that the pig nuisance be an election issue. [Toronto Star](#)

U Waterloo's Markus Moos finds mixed-use developments may actually reduce housing affordability, social diversity: Making the buildings in neighbourhoods more diverse through mixed residential and commercial developments also makes it too expensive for many people to live in. A University of Waterloo School of Planning study of Toronto neighbourhoods found that the increased cost, which was further heightened by the retraction of government support for affordable housing in mixed-use areas, led to the neighbourhoods becoming less diverse. The study also found the cost implications disproportionately impacted people in sales and service occupations. "Making mixed-use neighbourhoods was done with the best of intentions for our health, happiness and the environment, but as communities become more attractive places to live, demand to live there increases costs," said Markus Moos, a professor at Waterloo's School of Planning. "Walking to a nearby fancy coffee shop is nice, but the premium people pay for that luxury means the barista can't afford to live near their job. "While mixed-use areas were intended to make things more affordable, factors such as the shift to a knowledge-based economy reduced social diversity in the absence of policies designed to keep housing affordable." The study examined neighbourhoods in Toronto between 1991 and 2006, at a time when mixed-use developments were prescribed following a rethinking of previous planning that led to decades of urban sprawl. It incorporated existing research on mixed-use developments, as well as housing affordability, classified as spending no more than 30 per cent of one's income on accommodations. [U Waterloo Environment](#)

U Toronto's Carl Mitchell reports that road salt is making GTA rivers, streams as salty as seawater: Environmental researchers in the Greater Toronto Area say road salt runoff is making some local waterways as salty as seawater. The salt is damaging the ecosystem, beginning to infiltrate ground water supply and has the potential to kill sensitive species, scientists warn. "It's really quite worrying," Carl Mitchell, an associate professor of environmental science at University of Toronto, said in an interview. "We're approaching ocean salt levels for certain amounts of time in some of these rivers," Mitchell told CBC Toronto. "You can taste it at those levels." Recent advances in testing technology have made it possible for scientists to track water quality in real time. At Credit Valley Conservation (CVC), the authority responsible for protecting the Credit River watershed, salt levels at or above that of oceans have been recorded for periods following road salting. [CBCNews | Toronto](#)

Queen's U's George Lovell adamant that there is 'still nothing else like' Procol Harum: George Lovell is a specialist in Latin American cultural geography, specifically in the nature of the colonial experience and patterns of indigenous survival in Guatemala. When he was 16 when he first heard *A Whiter Shade of Pale* by Procol Harum and fell in love with the English rock band. It was three years before he found his way to a Procol Harum concert, but in the 37 years since, from 1970 to 2007, he saw the band on stage 27 times. Those first 30 years of Procol Harum were the subject of his memoir, [The Waiter Brought a Tray](#), published in 2007 by Kingston's Artful Codger Press. In the 10 years since, he has brought his concert tally up to 40, which prompted a second memoir, *The Crowd Called Out for More*, to be released this month from Woodpecker Lane. George, a professor at Queen's University who divides his time between Kingston and Seville, Spain, charts this second round of concerts (2007-2017) in a coda to the book. The main text is a reprise of each concert and his travels and travails in getting there, first written as posts on the website [Beyond the Pale](#), affectionately referred to by Palers such as George as BtP. The Crowd Called Out for More is replete with Procolharumisms such as Palers, Procololics and Salty Dogs, a language of insiders. Each concert recollection is titled Lofty Peak #__, an allusion to the lyrics of the song "A Salty Dog." George calls it passion, but, really, we're into the realm of obsession here. In his Preface, he thanks a Catalan friend who has collected 1,137 recordings of "A Whiter Shade of Pale." George honours the band on his licence plate: WGL 1PH. Translation: William George Lovell considers the No. 1 rock band of all time to be Procol Harum. [Kingston Whig Standard](#)

Hot Papers by Canadian Geographers

Tim R. Moore, Muriel Abraham, Margaret Kalácska, Meaghan T. Murphy and atherine Potvin. 2018. [Changes from pasture to a native tree plantation affect soil organic matter in a tropical soil, Panamá](#). Plant and Soil. doi.org/10.1007/s11104-018-3574-0

Martin Simard, Étienne Rivard et Laurie Guimond. (Dir.) 2017. [Le nord québécois, un milieu géographique aux multiples visages : états des lieux et défis actuels](#). Numéro spécial de Recherches sociographiques, LVIII (2).

Laurie Guimond et Alexia Desmeules. 2017. « [Les oreilles se sont ouvertes des deux côtés](#) » : [développement territorial et relations entre Innus et non Innus au chantier Romaine](#). Recherches sociographiques, LVIII (2), p. 363-286.

Étienne Rivard, Caroline Desbiens, Suzy Basile et Laurie Guimond. 2017. [Les « régions carrefours » du Moyen Nord comme laboratoires interculturels de nordicité](#). Recherches sociographiques, LVIII (2), p. 337-361.

Martin Simard, Étienne Rivard et Laurie Guimond. 2017. [Les recherches sur le Québec du Nord : Un instrument d'appropriation territoriale pour quels acteurs?](#) Recherches sociographiques, LVIII (2), p. 251-262.

Myriam Simard, Laurie Guimond et Julie Vézina. 2017. [Neo-rural populations and their relations with local decision makers in rural Québec: Collaboration or conflict?](#) GeoJournal. Online First. doi:10.1007/s10708-017-9789-4

Ihor Stebelsky. 2018. [A tale of two regions: geopolitics, identities, narratives, and conflict in Kharkiv and the Donbas](#). Eurasian Geography and Economics. doi.org/10.1080/15387216.2018.1428904



Rina Ghose and Tom Welcenbach. 2018. [“Power to the people”: Contesting urban poverty and power inequities through open GIS](#). The Canadian Geographer / Le Géographe canadien. DOI:10.1111/cag.12442

Geospatial technologies are central to spatial decision making and governance, but gaining equitable access to these is still difficult for traditionally marginalized communities. We contend that the dominance of proprietary GIS software has contributed to this digital divide, as these are inherently disempowering to marginalized social groups. Their high purchasing cost and licensing fees pose access barriers to resource-poor citizens. Design of proprietary software may also not be appropriate for marginalized groups who are neither trained in GIS, nor represent the needs of dominant market base. Therefore, “free and open source software for geospatial” (FOSS4G) and open GIS provide new opportunities in democratizing GIS, as these are open code and free of purchasing and licensing costs. This paper aims to discuss the role of open GIS in advancing the goals of public participation GIS (PPGIS). We first discuss the origins of the FOSS movement, and explore the ways it has shaped the FOSS4G and open GIS movements. Next, we examine how a community information system built with open GIS software is being successfully utilized by an environmental organization in Milwaukee, to contest urban poverty. Our research demonstrates that open source GIS offers unique opportunities in advancing PPGIS research and practice.

Recent Theses and Dissertations

Holly Clermont. 2018. [The underbelly of economy versus environment conflicts: Detangling sources of tension in contentious natural resource decisions](#). Phd Social Sciences. Royal Roads University Victoria, British Columbia. Supervisor: Professor Ann Dale

Scott George. 2017. [Volunteered geographic information: a review of the openstreetmap.org project and factors relating to its reliability](#). MSc thesis. Geography with Specialization in Data Science, Carleton University, Ottawa. Supervisor: Scott Mitchell

Other “Geographical” News

Which Canadian universities spend the most on scholarships? Students need everything from financial aid to a variety of services and extracurricular programs. In this measure of student support, Maclean’s examines the % of total operating budget devoted to scholarships and bursaries. [Maclean’s](#)

B.C. wildfire and flood review kicks off consultations: Province-wide consultations have begun as part of a review to hear stories about last year's devastating wildfires and spring floods. The independent review was launched last fall get feedback on how to better plan for future environmental disasters. More than 65,000 people were displaced last summer. Fires burned 1.2 million hectares of forest and there was widespread flooding in many communities. [CBCNews | British Columbia](#)

Nagging university students for feedback is like pestering for TripAdvisor reviews: Universities are manipulating their students into providing positive NSS scores to boost their reputations. This has to stop. [The Guardian](#)

North American ice sheet decay decreased climate variability in the Southern Hemisphere:

The changing topography of ice sheets in the Northern Hemisphere during the last Ice Age forced changes in the climate of Antarctica, a previously undocumented inter-polar climate change mechanism. [ScienceDaily](#)

Did the ancient Greeks sail to Canada? The ancient Greeks could have reached Canada in 56 AD - almost a millennium before the Vikings. This is according to a controversial study that claims Hellenistic Greeks had such detailed knowledge of astronomy that they were able to pinpoint Atlantic currents that would propel them west. This idea is based on a study of the text 'De Facie' by Greek biographer and essayist Plutarch, who lived between 46 and 119 AD. A character in the texts recounts meeting a Greek stranger who had recently returned from a 'great continent' - and scientists say this may have been Canada. Powered by sails and oars, they may have regularly visited Newfoundland, mined gold and set up colonies that thrived for centuries, the study claims. [Daily Mail](#)

Some Not So “Geographical” News



The CAG works for geographers on [Twitter](#). Keep up-to-date by following [@CanGeographers](#)
GeogNews Archives: <http://www.geog.uvic.ca/dept/cag/geognews/geognews.html>
@CanGeographers Weekly: <https://paper.li/CanGeographers/1394987315>
