



## 2010 Brings Some Fresh Faces

### Martin Müller



Martin Müller has joined us as a Visiting Scholar from the University of St. Gallen in Switzerland, where he is currently on leave from a position as assistant professor. Martin is a resident member of Green College and will stay until the end of summer. He will be working on governance and knowledge transfer within the Olympic Games from an actor-network perspective. Situated at the intersection of political geography, economic geography and organisational sociology, his project plans to look in particular at the case of Sochi in Russia, the host city of the 2014 Winter Games.

Anything but a buff of spectator sports, Martin enjoys running, snowshoeing, cycling and hiking himself rather than watching people do it for him. Hailing from the foothills of the

Alps, he is glad that Vancouver is not far from some serious mountainous topography. If there only was a way to convert all this rain into snow ... You can find more information about his academic work on his website at [www.martin-muller.net](http://www.martin-muller.net).

### Leila Harris



Although she will not be working in the Geography Department at UBC, Leila Harris is a new Geographer on campus and is eager to meet up with other Geographers at UBC. Leila has recently arrived at UBC as an assistant professor, with joint appointments in the Institute for Environment, Resources, and Sustainability (IRES), and the Center for Women's and Gender Studies (CWAGs, both in the College for Interdisciplinary Studies). Leila received her PhD from the geography program at the University of Minne-

sota, and has interest in development, political ecology, water politics and governance, and social difference/ inequality--particularly in Turkey and the Middle East. She comes to UBC after working for several years as an assistant professor in the departments of geography, and environmental studies, at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Current research projects include a) continuing attention to issues of gender, nationalism, state building, and water-related development in southeastern Turkey, b) environmental politics and citizenship practices in contemporary Turkey, and c) critical and comparative attention to ongoing water governance shifts, especially in the global South. She can be reached at [lharris@ires.ubc.ca](mailto:lharris@ires.ubc.ca).

## Upcoming Event:

The Geography Sustainability Committee is pleased to present the inaugural Sustainability Film Night!

Showing: THE COVE

When: Thursday, January 28th 7PM

Where: Room 223

Family and friends welcome.

For more info on the film please visit:  
<http://www.thecovemovie.com/>

## Geography Cares: 2009 Update

At the 2009 Staff Retreat the question of how to enhance a sense of community within the Department of Geography was raised. How could we bring together the Geography community of faculty, staff, grads and undergrads and also engage Geography with the community beyond UBC? From this discussion the Geography Cares Committee was born. The committee, currently composed of Sandy Lapsky, Jennifer Hamilton, Stephanie Lambiris, Katie Kinsley and two GSA representatives Max St. Maurice and Jeremy Sanbrooks, met for the first time in late August.

To date Geography Cares has been involved in five initiatives. The first was the Walk of Hope on September 13<sup>th</sup>. Sandy Lapsky and David Ley as well as David's wife and daughter all walked 5 kms to support Ovarian Cancer Research. Nationally the walk raised 2.9 million dollars for Ovarian Cancer Research.

In October Geography Cares turned our attention to refugee needs. With the aim of raising both funds and awareness Katie led a team of cyclists in the Ride for Refugees. The team included Albert Teng and Michael Thomason who rode 75km each and with the help of five other team members raised over \$1400.00 for refugee needs, half of which went directly to the Inland Refugee Society, a local organization that provides for the basic needs of new refugee claimants in Vancouver. Geography Cares in

cooperation with the GSA followed this up with a clothing drive that resulted in several bags of winter



*Cyclists on the Ride for Refugees*

clothing for new refugees in Vancouver.

Not ones to forget our four legged friends, for our November initiative Geography Cares collected blankets for rescue animals sheltered by the BC SPCA. Thanks to everyone's generosity the department was able to donate three big garbage bags of goods for the animals.

Geography Cares also took on the annual Christmas food drive. In concert with the traditional box in the GIC for non-perishable food donation we also accepted cash donations in the main office. As a result we were able to donate 4 boxes of food and \$254.33 in cash to the food bank!

The January initiative, organized by Julie Ranada, is a candy drive. The candies will be donated to the Agape Street Ministry, which packages them for hand-delivery to the women who walk the streets of Downtown Eastside Vancouver and Whalley/Guildford in Surrey. In giving candies the Agape hopes to re-

mind these women that they are not forgotten. Agape also runs recovery houses for women suffering from addiction. So if you still have extra Christmas treats tempting you at home, bring them in to the main office.

Over the past few months the GSA has also been funneling some of their fundraising efforts toward Geography Cares. The current total they have raised is \$118.00. In consideration of the unfortunate situation in Haiti these funds along with any additional funds raised during the January beer garden will be donated to the Hôpital Albert Schweitzer in Haiti, an organization suggested by Alyssa Stryker.

For 2010 we already have a number of exciting initiatives planned! In February we will be collecting used eyeglasses for the Recycle for Sight Program run by the Lions Club of Canada. In March we will be collecting used books and conducting a book sale to raise funds for literacy, and in April we hope to organize a shore clean up. We would love to hear your feedback and ideas. If there are events or organizations that you would like to see Geography Cares get involved with let us know! Ideas can be emailed to [geogcares@geog.ubc.ca](mailto:geogcares@geog.ubc.ca).

Finally, it was all of you who truly made our initiatives successful. Thank you to everyone who contributed their goods, time and energy over the past four months. You have demonstrated without a doubt that UBC Geography really does care!

## Feature Geographer: Merje Kuus



**Hails from:** I was born and raised in Estonia, also known as the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic at the time.

**Chose Geography because:** Like many other high-school graduates who fancy themselves as non-conformists, I wanted to do something different. Geography seemed vaguely promising. When I told this to my older brother, an economist, he fully approved: 'Good. Go as far from society as you can. I made the mistake of studying economics. The better you understand how the economy works, the more stupid the Soviet system seems. The less you know, the better'. Once I started earning my geography stripes though, which was generally done through reckless hikes in Central Asia or Siberia those days, I realized that I did not actually like leaving society. I certainly took no pleasure in wearing hiking boots for weeks. And so when time came to choose between physical and human geography, I went for the latter. My college friends have been to Kola, Kamtchatka, and Karakum—

they would not even tell you about Northern Urals or the Caucasus because these are commonplace—whereas all I managed was twice in southern Turkmenistan and once in Buryatia.

**Years at UBC:** 7 1/2

**Strangest Geography related experience:**

Perhaps that summer day in the early 1990s when I was the local guide to thirty elderly Germans who had come to visit their childhood town of Kuressaare, Estonia. As the bus was entering the lovely neoclassical old town, the visitors—whose families had left when Hitler called all Baltic Germans back to the homeland in 1939 and who had not seen their birthplace since—quietly pointed to the buildings that had once belonged to them. The whole old town, it seemed, had been owned by these aristocratic families. To me, these people were mostly a historical oddity. But I also sensed that I had caught a glimpse of a whole lost world—the centuries-old German influence throughout central Europe. That world had perished in World War II along with countless others in the belt of mixed populations that used to run from the Baltic to the Adriatic.

**Current research interests:**

The methods and technologies of social control.

**Favorite research destination:**

Brussels, Belgium. As the *de facto* center of the world's largest trading block and a regu-

latory center of global reach, this city packs a lot of power. It is a key place to study the bureaucratic processes through which dominant understandings of politics are put into practice. Brussels also has fabulous art museums: try a languid afternoon hour gazing at the old city from the terrace café of the Royal Museums of Fine Arts. It is a wonderful spot for contemplating the melancholy splendour of Europe.

**Little known fact:**

The little-known facts I am pleased to keep that way. A well-known fact is that I have an interest in Baroque art. This was in many ways a time of opening in Europe, when medieval dogmas were starting to crumble and modern ones had not yet emerged. I love the structured exuberance of its operas and its staircases.

**Favorite film:** *La Dolce Vita*. Always fresh, always stunning.



*Kadriorg Palace, Tallinn*

# Sabbatical Stories: A year in France

By Philippe Le Billon



*A car, observed in France.*

This title is a *cliché*, especially for a Frenchman 'returning home' after nearly two decades of life abroad. This sabbatical was the first I had ever taken, and our family opted for France. I took a visiting position at the Institut d'Etudes Politiques in Paris, within their *Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches Internationales* (CERI), one of France's best schools for international relations. Having been forewarned of the outrageous cost of living and difficulty of finding childcare in Paris, we had also been cautious by settling outside of Paris. Although I remembered the region as grey and rainy, it seemed like a perpetual spring compared to Vancouver.

When we arrived, France was in the midst of experiencing its own 'Berlusconesque' neoliberal moment under Sarkozy's 'bling bling' Presidency. Having separated from his second wife, a former model, our dear President had taken a former model

and pop star as third wife. Sarkozy's decriminalisation of white-collar crime, tax cuts for the wealthiest, jet set life-style, and vast reform projects were among the many factors that brought a high degree of opposition to his rule. Vocal opposition being a tradition in France, there were many peaceful and colourful street protests. One of Sarkozy's targets was the university system, to which he promised major reforms. In response, many students went on strike and closed several universities for the better part of the year. All this political tension was exacerbated by the massive financial crisis and economic recession, combined with the threat of the swine flu, making this a 'year of crises'.

While France seemed on the brink of collapse, I completed several refereed papers and participated in half a dozen conferences. Several of these conferences gave me the opportunity of presenting my work, and discussing with a wide range of African and European scholars. One conference specifi-

cally focused on natural resource management in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where the collapse of copper prices and other metals was sending a shock wave through the economy. I also joined a research project on primary commodities and armed conflicts in Colombia. The highlight was participating in a major policy meeting in Qatar. The Emirate, which hosts the Al Jazeera news network, is seeking to establish itself as a 21<sup>st</sup> century political hub, in part by sponsoring peace talks and international governance initiatives. The Qatar-hosted Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative more directly involved the Emirate, as the main objective was to secure financial and tax transparency in the oil and gas sectors. While based in France, I was able to continue co-supervise several graduate students, including Simon Springer who successfully defended his PhD in Spring 09 before taking a position at National University of Singapore.



*A car, captured in Doha, Qatar.*

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