4-1-2013

Editor's Overview

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Recommended Citation

del Rio, Vicente (2013) "Editor's Overview," Focus: Vol. 10: Iss. 1, Article 6.
Available at: http://digitalcommons.calpoly.edu/focus/vol10/iss1/6

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It is exciting to celebrate FOCUS's tenth anniversary with its largest issue so far, featuring almost twice the number of pages as the first issue back in 2003. And having it published in full colors again brings the contents so much more alive. In this tenth iteration, once again, FOCUS demonstrates the quality of what is discussed and produced in Cal Poly’s CRP Department, and how meaningful this work is to the academic and professional fields.

In his provocative perspective, CRP lecturer Chris Clark reminds us of the importance of our work by noting how the increasing daily demands in our profession make us risk losing the bigger picture of tomorrow’s needs. The Cartoon Corner provides a little break from this serious question with a beautiful sketch by Filipa Antunes from the Universidade Lusofona in Lisbon (CRP’s international partner), and an ironic cartoon by Tarcísio Bahia from the Federal University of Espirito Santo, Brazil.

The Special Section features presentations by external guests and an account of Cal Poly’s first conference on climate action planning. The opener is the CAED Hearst Lecture by Lewis Knight, director of Planning and Urban Design at Gensler San Francisco. Drawing from his international experience, he discusses the importance of inserting resiliency and sustainability in the urban development equation, and shows how planning and urban design can help with these issues, through various projects he has been involved with. Next Claudia Isaac, from the University of New Mexico and a consultant to minority groups, discusses fundamental issues when planning for complex communities such as ethics, empowerment, multiple identities, conflict, community identity, and democracy. The section closes with CRP professor Michael Boswell’s account of Cal Poly’s 2013 California Climate Action Planning Conference, an important event he co-organized which attracted more than 200 professionals from the public and private sectors.

In the Essays Section contributions come from the US, Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina. Francisco Perez—an architect and planner from Guadalajara, Mexico and a former planning director for the State of Jalisco—writes about his city's competitive sustainable advantages, and identifies nine strategic projects toward this end. John Decker, an architect and urban designer based in the Greater Denver Area, presents an engaging discussion on the use of computers for the analysis and representation of urban morphology through several layers and at various scales. The effects of Cal Poly’s Sustainability Program on students is discussed by psychology professor Daniel Levi with senior Rebecca Sokoloski, based on several research studies conducted by students in his classes. The importance of competitions to advance the state-of-the-art in architecture and urban design is discussed by Miguel Baudizzone, partner in one of Argentina’s most famous private practices. Hing Wong, a planner with the Association of Bay Area Governments, writes about the history of his organization that provides assistance to nine counties and more than one hundred cities and towns. Ivor Samuels, senior researcher at Birmingham University and twice Cal Poly’s visiting professor, discusses a recent attempt to encourage the delivery of better quality housing in Britain through an assessment program with national standards. Last in this section, Elisabete França, former deputy-secretary for public housing in São Paulo, Brazil, describes the challenge of reorganizing policies and programs for slum upgrading in such a large metropolis, and some of the results of her successful leadership.

Articles on Faculty and Student Work demonstrate CRP’s breadth in both undergraduate and graduate programs. CRP senior Andrew Levin describes this year’s Low Income Housing Challenge, an interdisciplinary student competition sponsored by the Bank of America/Merrill Lynch and won by a Cal Poly team the third year in a row. Emily Gerger, also a CRP senior, writes about planning for the unincorporated town of Templeton in San Luis Obispo County, a work developed by the fourth-year studio led by instructor Zeljka Howard. The evolution of the port of Mumbai, India, and the shortcomings of recent plans to redevelop along international private-sector led models are discussed by CRP department head Hemalata Dandekar and planner Sulakshana Mahajan. Graduate students Stephen Schmidt and Kayla Gordon discuss the Portland-Milwaukie Light Rail Project, one of the case-studies they did as interns with ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability. Emily Lipoma writes about hazard mitigation in Watsonville, California noting the importance integrating it to the city’s comprehensive plan. Professor William Siembieda describes graduate projects for Clearlake and Bell, developed in-lieu of the master’s thesis or professional projects. Lorenza Pavesi—a visiting researcher and PhD candidate from the University of Sao Paulo, Brazil—writes about Jan Nairn, one of the founders of the Townscape movement. Closing the section, MCRP student Abraham Sheppard writes about sustainable planning for Ghenh Rang in Vietnam, the object of an elective studio sponsored by Eric Lloyd Wright & Associates.

The Spotlight Section provides an appropriate closure for FOCUS. It starts with CRP department head Hemalata Dandekar highlighting this academic year’s studio projects, noting the importance of CRP’s community outreach and studio pedagogy. Assistant professor William Riggs—CRP’s newest hire—writes about his professional experience, focusing on the challenges of campus planning. MCRP alumnus Richard Rojas discusses his work with the City of Henderson, Nevada and a successful $3.5 million grant application for sustainable planning. Next, an interview with Trevor Keith (MCRP class of 2003), planner with San Luis Obispo County’s Planning and Building Department and coordinator of the county’s energy programs. The abstracts of the seventeen MCRP’s theses and professional projects defended in this academic year, and their URL addresses, close this issue.

I hope you enjoy FOCUS 10, keep it as your bedtime reading, and continue to support it.

Vicente del Rio, PhD.
CRP professor and FOCUS managing editor.