

VICENTE DEL RIO

This past year found us surprised and damaged by the country's economic turmoil that has spared no one. Academia—usually protected against external threats—and education in general got hit like never before: the CSU and Cal Poly facing huge deficits; colleges and departments making deep cuts; faculty and staff suffering furloughs and lay-offs; and students seeing classes canceled and job opportunities vanishing. It will take years to recover, but Taoism teaches us to view a crisis as an opportunity to explore and improve the experience of life. When a crisis hits, we must try to view it from another perspective, learn from the experience, and take it as an opportunity for change. This is how the CRP department is learning to face the new challenges, encouraged by the always positive energy of new Department Head professor Hemalata Dandekar. Shining lights on these dark times, giving hope and offering directions, are the incredible works by faculty and students who never cease to create and contribute to a better future: this issue of FOCUS is proof of our tenacity.

With this issue's Special section, FOCUS draws attention to the work of the European Council of Spatial Planners, an organization representing 26,000 planners in 26 countries. The focus is on their New Charter of Athens, a guiding document for policy makers and planners toward sustainability and quality of life, collaboration and integration, diversity and social equity. A commentary by Mario Moutinho and Diogo Mateus, professors at Lisbon's Lusofona University, serves as a preamble to the transcription of the New Charter of Athens's first part: "A Vision for the European City of the 21st Century".

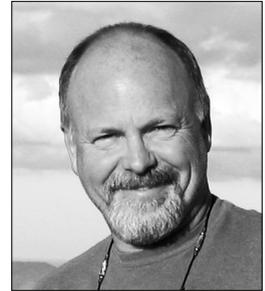
In the Essays section, alumni Scott Kaiser and Kyle Perata write about their experiences during a 50-hour train ride from California to the APA national conference in Minneapolis, making a strong case for public transportation and improved passenger rail. Environmental psychology professor Daniel Levi discusses attitudes of Cal Poly students towards sustainable cities and their perceived livability based on a survey by grad students Rick Casswell, Ulises Gonzales, and Armando Lopez. Professor Siembieda and grad student Rhianna Ortiz summarize the state of planning for disaster resilient environments in the US, a presentation from a recent conference in Taiwan. The section closes with an interesting essay by graduate alumnus Jason Kambitsis on the impacts of personal digital applications in our lives and their potential for planning.

Faculty and Student Work opens with an essay on sense of place and design by Rachelle Lopez, based on her MCRP thesis, where this discussion fueled her project for downtown Cayucos, Calif. Seniors Chad Endicott, Mark Polhemus, and Marco Gonzales offer a provocative discussion on lessons learned from squatter settlements in India, Brazil, and Turkey. Professors Adrienne Greve and Zeljka Howard summarize their senior planning studio, which produced the City of Benicia's Climate Action Plan. The plan received an award from the APACA. Professor Cornelius Nuworsoo collaborates with his students in two essays: with MCRP student Kevin Fang on the impacts of rail configurations on job accessibility in the Bay Area, and with senior Rob Hananouchi on an analysis of parking requirements in conventional zoning and form-based codes in the Miami case-study.

The International section brings Lourdes Flores, professor at the Benemerita Universidad de Puebla, Mexico, discussing her research on the effectiveness of sustainability policies in San Francisco and Montreal. Patricia Cavalcanti, a PhD. candidate from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, writes about her experience as a visiting researcher at CRP, where she completed a substantial literature review and intensive field surveys on environmental perception and the design of out-patient infusion care units.

The Spotlight section gets started with department head Hemalata Dandekar making an overview of the community-based studios which covered eight California cities in 2009. Alumnus Noah Christman reflects on the success of his first job at the peak of the market, its loss, and the aftermath, offering four rules on how to survive the industry's meltdown. Lisa Wise, MCRP alumnus, CRP lecturer, and principal in Lisa Wise Consulting, writes about her successful professional trajectory.

We hope that you, by reading FOCUS, share our enthusiasm with the quality of work developed in the CRP department, and close the journal with an understanding of why, despite the dark clouds that have formed over us, we continue to share our optimism for a much brighter, sustainable, and equitable future.



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