

Letter from the Editor

Much like young merchants who must feel some uncertainty in their first days at the agora—or open marketplace—our staff has been anxious to see how *Agora: The Urban Planning & Design Journal of the University of Michigan* would fare upon entering the marketplace of ideas for a second time. The excitement of producing our first edition in 2007 has faded somewhat, but like any good entrepreneur, we challenged ourselves to enhance the Journal and the end result stands as a reflection of those efforts.

Our primary goal—to reach and surpass the quality of the pioneering efforts of last year’s staff—was somewhat daunting given the high standards they established. In the end, we feel we have managed to build on the success of last year’s Journal in several areas. First, we have increased representation from Master’s of Urban Design students and augmented the title of the Journal to reflect what we hope will be a long-term collaboration between the programs. Next, we sought to enhance *Agora* by including numerous images to improve the Journal’s quality and appeal. Finally, we are thrilled that one of our recent alumni, Christian Kroll, responded to the call for entries, and hope that this can become an ongoing element in future issues.

As with last year’s edition, the *Agora* staff set no specific agenda for this volume had an open call for original work. We received a diverse, excellent pool of submissions, and as the staff made its final selections through a double-blind review, a common thread emerged: growth management. The articles in this volume address this topic of growth management from multiple perspectives and in various settings.

Our first two articles consider growth management policies and redevelopment issues in a domestic context. In our opening article, Lisa Morris offers a thoughtful discussion of the Community Reinvestment Act and its role in spurring growth in communities underserved by the banking industry. Kelly Koss then offers a variety of concepts for downtown Youngstown, Ohio, which is in great need of vibrant public spaces to serve as gathering places for families.

In our next two pieces, we take a brief respite from on-the-ground growth management to consider two case studies that are set in a more theoretical context. Catherine Gaines Sanders compares the work of two key urban theorists, Paolo Soleri and Ebenezer Howard, who each challenged in unique ways our notions about how cities should grow—Soleri with Arcosanti and Howard with his Garden Cities. Christian Kroll then explores Brasilia’s planned modernist attempts at egalitarian urban organization. In doing so, he examines the broader idea of theory as a way of understanding and informing the tension between forward-looking planning and the



Construction crane in Goult, France. Photo: Sarah Elizabeth Ross

status quo. The international theme continues with Istanbul, where Heather Smirl prompts us to consider how growth and recent changes in housing policy impact the City's communities and citizens.

Turning our sights to sustainability topics in growth management, Jon VanDerZee considers the promise of using wind as a renewable energy resource and includes case studies from Michigan and New York. The environmental theme continues with Josh Anderson's exploration of three remarkable grassroots efforts in Chicago.

Lastly, we head to Cambodia, where John Scott-Railton invites us to once again explore the key role of participation in a unique planning context.

As any good journey experiences its unexpected twists and turns, one of this year's submissions sparked an exciting development for this year's Journal. Kimiko Doherty's evocative description of the street life in Sensenti, Honduras was not an academic work in the traditional sense. However, her lyrical street ballet, composed in the spirit of Jane Jacobs, prompted us to approach Professor Robert Fishman (who regularly asks his students to compose such street ballets from their own experiences) about the possibility of including a series of these ballets for this year's Journal. Essays by Carolyn Pivorotto, Stephanie Etkin, Sarah Elizabeth Ross, James McMurray, and Tobias Wacker are among those recommended by Professor Fishman.

This collection of ballets, interspersed among the academic articles, presents a unique depiction of urban life in all its variety and emotion. In the end, this celebration of cities and the role they play in shaping our experiences serves as a powerful reminder of the ultimate purpose of our efforts as urban practitioners: to improve the quality of people's lives.

This year's edition of *Agora* would not have been possible without the dedication and hard work of the *Agora* Board, those who provided their written work, and the generous funding from our supporters. The *Agora* Board would like to give special thanks to Dr. Jonathan Levine and the Urban and Regional Planning Program; Dean Douglas Kelbaugh, Mary Ann Drew, Janice Harvey, Sandy Patton, and the Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning; and the Swansons for the Saarinen-Swanson Endowment Fund. Additional thanks as well to Ken Arbogast-Wilson for his insights on aspects relating to the Journal's physical production and the many faculty members whose encouragement to students resulted in the publication of several articles that may have otherwise remained unpublished.

We hope you will enjoy the collection we have assembled for this year's edition of *Agora* and that it will provide added inspiration in your own efforts to improve the cities and communities in which we all live.

Sincerely,

James McMurray
Managing Editor