

A Welcome Letter from the Chair – Why the CUA Journal, *Urbanities*

The project of establishing a journal of the Commission on Urban Anthropology was discussed at the CUA Business Meeting during the Commission's 2010 Annual Conference in Gioiosa Marea, Sicily. Senior scholars who attended that meeting paid tribute to the CUA's many accomplishments; among them, the expansion of the international network of scholars actively engaged in urban research, the publication of the Newsletter – later replaced by the Bulletin – the establishment of the website, the successful Conferences and Symposia, some resulting in the publication of edited volumes, and the many academic events to which the CUA, or its members, had contributed. It was also felt, however, that the Commission could do more to bring out the relevance of urban research to the discipline as a whole, as well as to the broader society. Italo Pardo suggested the establishment of an 'interactive' Journal; that is, an academic peer-reviewed journal organized in such a way as to offer both a forum for analysis and debate among young and established scholars and a platform for anthropologists to communicate and share their research findings with the general public, particularly with professionals who operate outside academia and are involved in key decision-making processes that directly affect people's lives. The Journal would, therefore, carry short articles and other contributions in order to explore new trends in urban anthropology, thus promoting critical scholarship in international anthropology while highlighting the relevance of anthropological urban research in understanding the social, cultural, political, economic and environmental changes of today's world.

The suggestion was enthusiastically received by the meeting, though all were well aware that establishing a journal raised many practical issues with which the Commission had to cope. As Jonathan Parry pointed out, the CUA did not have a budget. Having the CUA no paid membership, all its initiatives have been made possible by the active involvement of its members in seeking funds, particularly for the organization of conferences and seminars. Joan Weibel Orlando suggested that the Journal could be on-line, at least at an initial stage. The pros and cons, and the actual implementation of the project, were carefully discussed, and useful suggestions were made about international scholars who might be interested in joining the Journal's Scientific Committee. It was also agreed that Ilka Thiessen – who had efficiently edited the CUA's Bulletin over the past two years – should be asked to take up the Editorship of the Journal. We left with the feeling that establishing such a Journal would not be easy, but could be done.

Ilka Thiessen was both enthusiastic about the new Journal and somewhat timid about serving as its Editor; the professional quality of the first issue testifies to the fact that such timidity was wholly unjustified. Dr Thiessen suggested the title *Urbanities*, which was later adopted for the Journal.

Urbanities' cover image intends to convey an informed positive message; it is a modern, multifaceted cityscape dominated by an enlightening sun – reproduced from a bronze sculpture by Lello Esposito. The centre of this sun is an egg, representing fertility, rebirth and, of course, knowledge.

Following several discussions and proposals, an agreement was reached with *Il Denaro Group*, an independent Publishing Company based in Italy that, among other initiatives, promotes non-profit the pursuit of cultural and economic development goals. Their technical team have efficiently designed the website and the format of the Journal. We owe them a debt of gratitude.

I would like to acknowledge the engaged collaboration of the CUA members who have contributed their ideas and suggestions, of the many colleagues who have supported us in this endeavour both joining the Scientific Committee and in other, complex ways and of all the people who have freely given their time and expertise to help bring this project to life.

I wish *Urbanities* well in developing as a forum for intellectual debate and the exchange of ideas, and as a useful research tool. I hope that the international community of scholars engaged in urban anthropological research will support this endeavour.

Giuliana B. Prato

Chair, IUAES Commission on Urban Anthropology