

EDITORIAL: THE DEBATE CONTINUES

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A considerable effort has been put into the first issue of Archnet-IJAR, the inaugural issue. The widespread online circulation enabled many scholars, academics, and practitioners to read it, or at least know about it. The result was an excellent, encouraging, and supportive feedback from tens of people around the globe, from South America to Australia, from United States to India, Bangladesh, China, and Japan, and from Norway to South Africa.

In the context of outlining the feedback received on the first issue and the journal in general, I would like to note the marvelous encouragement of many people and organizations including IAPS-the International Association for People-Environments Studies as currently the journal is announced in its website among many distinguished and well established journals. The chief editors of two major journals have also expressed support and interest in different forms of collaboration including Nicholas Wilkinson of OHI-Open House International, and Tasleem Shakur, of GEBr-Global Built Environment Review.

In addition to the excellent feedback received

from colleagues worldwide, Archnet-IJAR is now archived and classified among other distinguished journals and magazines in the Archnet Digital Library. The Archnet administration team led by Ophelia Celine the Archnet Content Editor and Administrator, made excellent efforts toward posting, key wording, and archiving the articles of the first issue. I am thankful to this team and especially to Ophelia whose punctuality and responsiveness made this possible.

Today, Archnet-IJAR carries two ISSNs (International Standards Serial Numbering), one is international (1994-6961) and granted from the international ISSN Center in Paris, and the other is from within the United States (1938-7806) from the Library of Congress. This keeps, maintains, and preserves the identity of Archnet-IJAR, while invigorates its credibility, and enhances its international presence.

As part of the recognition of Archnet-IJAR, the journal is now classified in the WorlCat and OCLC-Online Computer Library Center under the number (# 145980807). Founded in 1967, OCLC Online Computer Library Center

is a nonprofit, membership, computer library service and research organization dedicated to the public purposes of furthering access to the world's information and reducing information costs. More than fifty thousands libraries in over hundred countries around the world use OCLC services to locate, acquire, catalog, lend and preserve library materials. OCLC and its member libraries cooperatively produce and maintain World Cat—the OCLC Online Union Catalog. WorldCat is the world's largest network of library content and services. Its libraries are dedicated to providing access to their resources on the Web, where most people start their search for information. Researchers, students, faculty, scholars, professional librarians and other information seekers use OCLC services to obtain bibliographic, abstract and full-text information when and where they need it.

Another important step is that the journal was recently added to the LOC-Library of Congress Catalogue and Database (# 2007212183). Under both the OCLC and the LOC, the Journal is classified as part of these keyword searches: Architecture – Periodicals, Architectural design – Periodicals, City planning – Periodicals, and Architecture -- Environmental aspects -- Periodicals.

While this is really pleasing to me personally, and I am sure to the advisory and editorial board members, speaking on their behalf, it carries with it more responsibility and also accountability. In essence, it needs continuous technical support from both boards. Therefore, in order to cover some areas for advising, reviewing, and refereeing, a number of distinguished theorists, critics, and scholars were added to the already established list of

distinguished members. Michael J. Crosbie, Nikos A. Salingaros, Besim S. Hakim, and Jamel Akbar have accepted to offer advising whenever needs arise. Rabee M. Reffat and M. Alaa Mandour have also accepted to be included as members of the editorial board. I am thankful to all for their willingness to take part in Archnet-IJAR in order to develop and maintain a leading journal while building on the efforts and the success of the inaugural issue.

Similar to the first issue in terms of energy and effort, this second issue of Archnet-IJAR encompasses six papers spanning across the spectrum of architectural design and built environment studies. While they are diverse in nature, certain commonalities are found. The paper of Newton D'Souza addresses an important topic that continues to pose itself on the map of academic research in architectural and design education. D'Souza addresses the complexity of design tasks and how it requires individuals with a wide array of skill sets - for example, spatial visualization, problem solving, verbal skills, communication skills, interpersonal skills and so on. He argues and one tends to agree with his thoughts that design education today seems to limit skills to form manipulation and graphical skills. These latter skill sets, although essential to design, predict only a part of a designer's application in the real-world contexts. He introduces the theory of multiple intelligences and its underlying types as an important vehicle for conceiving the skills required for future architects. He calls academics to value and nurture diversity in architecture, empathize with the variations of individual cognitive strengths, and implement diverse tools to evaluate different areas of design thinking.

The papers of Ocheing Crispino, Jörg Seifert, and Ashraf Salama introduce different arguments but with similar concerns. Crispino critically analyzes issues that pertain to housing affordability in Pumwani, Kenya. He reviews the national housing policies and how they have resulted in users' dissatisfaction. Quoting Crispino; although the new housing was slightly of an improved physical and spatial quality it was unaffordable. Beneficiaries were required to pay an average monthly rent of US\$157 for up to eighteen years towards purchase of the new house. In the beginning, some of them had declined to take position of the newly built houses. Investigating the institutional decision making factors within which the affordable housing development process took place, Crispino's paper qualitatively analyzes the political, socio-cultural and socio-economic aspects that influence such a process within Pumwani's context.

Jörg Seifert in his provocative translated article questions the reliability and validity of UN slogans and underlying activities. The decade from 1997 to 2006 which ended just a few months ago was the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty. Within that context, the Union Internationale des Architectes (UIA) and UNESCO joined in sponsoring the international ideas competition entitled "Architecture and the Eradication of Poverty". The competitors were to propose solutions aimed at improving the living conditions of the most deprived in all the regions of the world, developed or developing and across the sphere of human settlements. The size, type and chosen locality were left to the choice of the participants. The pertinence of the proposals it was hoped, would make it possible to establish the social

nature of the mission of the architects. Seifert's article attempts to answer a number of critical questions: Did this initiative represent a genuine commitment, a half-hearted initiative or a cynical intellectual mind game? The fates of the projects developed for the competition raise a number of questions. Seifert critically analyzes some of the winning projects addressing the contribution of architecture in the eradication of poverty at different levels and in different social and cultural contexts including New York, Hanoi, Mumbai, and Qusier.

Ashraf Salama builds on the idea of trans-disciplinary and the integration of what he calls "lifestyle Theories" into the affordable housing research and practice with particular emphasis on the Gulf States. He criticizes the typical approach of affordable housing research and practice which views cost reduction as one single determinant, while other crucial factors such as lifestyles of the targeted populations, people satisfaction of their current houses and residential environments, and their aspirations and preferences in future houses are always oversimplified or superficially addressed. Therefore, the objective of this paper is to argue for a comprehensive approach for affordable housing practices in the Gulf States. The approach is based on a new paradigm of research: trans-disciplinarity; a form of inquiry that crosses the boundaries of different disciplines. Brief notes to highlight affordable housing issues in the Gulf States are outlined. An argument on the impact of trans-disciplinary thinking on understanding affordable housing is developed, then is placed within the perspective of how lifestyle theories and their underlying concepts including place attachment, appropriation, visual preferences,

and people satisfaction, can be integrated into a comprehensive investigatory process.

While the preceding three papers of Ochieng, Seifert, and Salama attempt to articulate real life issues and solving the contemporary problems of specific segments of contemporary societies, the paper of Alaa Mandour takes us to the future and argues for the need of new design thinking, tools and techniques, simply “the paradigm of virtual architecture.” Mandour argues that the information age has led us to experience our environment in innovative ways, especially after the emergence of virtual spaces. Our senses have been triggered and our perceptions have been significantly altered through our experience of ever developing virtual spaces, comprising of spatial metaphors coded through an abstract flow of electronic signals, or physical spaces, constituted in zones adapted to activities and channels of communication providing links between zones, or a combination of both. His paper attempts to explicate the concept of shared mixed realities in the field of architecture based on the construction of transparent boundaries between real and virtual spaces. On another direction, Khoukhi Maatouk’s paper covers the engineering aspect of architecture and introduces a simulation study on the air flow patterns and stake pressure for a high rise building in Seoul, Korea. While some may see that this paper goes beyond the interest of the reader of Archnet-IJAR, it should be noted that the journal covers the entire spectrum of built environment related studies.

I should note that based on some discussions with some colleagues and board members, a decision was made to add a new section,

which is exclusively dedicated to reviews and trigger articles. In this section, non-refereed thought provoking articles are published while book reviews, conference announcements of interest to Archnet-IJAR readers are outlined and summarized including critical reviews of recent books. The intention of this section is to give room for more voices so that the debate goes beyond pure academic writing. Therefore, the new section represents a means of rapidly disseminating innovative ideas or lessons learned from experience and practice. However, while following the same graphical format, submissions are reviewed by the editor and interested board members principally on the basis of usefulness and interest to Archnet-IJAR readers. However, the section is not necessarily a regular section and it will be available based on submissions. For this section distinguished contributions are presented by Besim Hakim, Michael Crosbie, Abeer Hasanin, Ashraf Salama, Nikos Salingaros, and Akhtar Chauhan.

I invite the members of architectural, planning, and design communities, academics and practitioners, to contribute submissions to either section, so that critical debates on improving the physical and social world in which we live continue.

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Archnet-IJAR Editor
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