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Prospects for research in architecture and urbanism

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to present a brief review of the latest developments of *Archnet-IJAR: International Journal of Architectural Research* while introducing ephemeral observations on the papers published in Vol. 13 No. 1, March 2019.

Design/methodology/approach – Through a classification of topical contents and an identification of the procedures employed in the studies published in this edition, a reflective narrative on emerging concepts and themes is developed to acknowledge and briefly outline these studies.

Findings – The discussion conveys the multiplicity and diversity in architectural and urban research where seven themes are identified from 13 papers contributed by researchers from academic institutions in eight countries. Themes include spheres of inquiry; autism and the spatial environment; communication dynamics and professional practice; assemblage aesthetic and place attachment; housing and urbanity in Istanbul; placemaking and sustainability in the Gulf; and from the Doric order to State mosques.

Originality/value – Establishing key characteristics of various types of research and the originality and values involved would enable engaged and enhanced contributions in architectural and urban research. The identification of themes stimulates the re-thinking of responsive concepts and issues of concerns while invigorating future research endeavors.

Keywords Architecture, Design research, Architectural and urban research, Built environment studies

Paper type Editorial

1. Introduction

A new phase of excellence in architectural and urban research has commenced with this issue of *Archnet-IJAR: International Journal of Architectural Research*.

Vol. 13 No. 1, March 2019 is the first issue to be published by Emerald Publishing, one of the important global publishers in various areas and disciplines including relevant fields in built environment, placemaking, and urban planning and design. While the journal has close ties with various associations and academic institutions in North America, Europe, South East Asia and the Middle East, being part of Emerald will enable deepening and broadening these existing relationships to ensure that *Archnet-IJAR: International Journal of Architectural Research* remains a key channel for those memberships while meeting its promise for global coverage and presence. This is not all; the resources, the distinguished publishing and editorial teams that Emerald enjoys will strengthen the overall quality of the journal including its reach and authorship base. A tremendous outcome of the inclusion in Emerald's portfolio of "Property Management and Built Environment" journals was the updating of the advisory and editorial boards and the introduction of new members of brilliant minds from around the globe. Notably, the introduction of distinguished colleagues whose research and publications are at the international forefront of architectural and urban research, as regional editors, also covering the four corners of the world, would enable more visibility as well as coverage of themes and topics that are prudent to various contexts.

This editorial offers a review of the papers published in this issue by introducing brief contemplations on these papers through a short narrative that conveys the multiplicity and diversity of the contents and the procedures employed. Such a diversity is mirrored in seven themes that include: spheres of inquiry; autism and the spatial environment; communication dynamics and professional practice; assemblage aesthetic and place attachment; housing and



urbanity in Istanbul; placemaking and sustainability in the Gulf; and from the Doric order to State mosques. Undoubtedly, these themes are diverse and distinct. A broad concluding outlook drawn from the arguments and approaches of these papers is developed while echoing the ingenuity and attributes of research in architecture and urbanism.

2. Seven themes shaping diversity of research endeavors

While matters that pertain to multiplicity, plurality and diversity in architectural and urban research have been addressed in earlier editorials (Salama, 2017, 2018), this issue reveals the way in which these aspects remain integral to the core interest and thrust of the journal. In total, 13 papers form the content of the issue in addition to this editorial. They come from 20 scholars and academics of universities and higher education institutions in eight countries that include Bahrain, Denmark, Italy, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, UK and the USA. The multitude of topics discussed in the papers demonstrates how the journal remains fully committed to cover the issues of interest to the global academic and professional community while emphasizing its quintessence as a truly international platform that showcase latest research in architecture and urbanism. The following seven themes emerge from the contributions where an attempt at content classification is made.

Theme 1: spheres of inquiry

Salama's (2019) trigger article discusses methodological research in architecture and related fields and decomposes research underpinnings into philosophical positions, frames of reference and spheres of inquiry. As a theoretical conceptual study, it can be seen as a response to a growing but perplexing body of knowledge that does not offer a clear picture of what research in architecture is. The contribution of this article lies in the fact that grasping a comprehensive understanding of research foundations in the field can offer greater insights into researchers on identifying positions, approaches and tools by which their research objectives can be achieved. Interested contributors to *Archmet-IJAR: International Journal of Architectural Research* are encouraged to review this article prior to submission to future issues.

Theme 2: autism and the spatial environment

The journal has recently published two contributions on designing and assessing environments for autistic users (Love, 2018; Mostafa, 2018). The rising attention to this area of research is manifest in two papers published in this edition on autism as it relates to designing spatial environments for children. They demonstrate the growing interest in addressing the topic from the perspective of human behavior or environment behavior studies as discussed in the work of Julie Irish or as part of educating future designers as presented in the experimental work of Joan Love. The work of Irish (2019) is exploratory and experimental in nature and offers, through analytical descriptions and documentation, a better understanding on how to work in a learning setting where children with autism spectrum disorder are the key user. The outcome of this work represents a model, which is applicable to future similar studies. In a different context, advancing the design of autism schools is at the center of a teaching model developed and implemented over a number of years to enhance the student experience in focusing on a unique user type (Love, 2019). In essence, this work contributes to paving the road for future professionals to address the unique particularities of designing responsive spatial environments.

Theme 3: communication dynamics and professional practice

Advocating the needs of junior professionals with respect to the architect–client relationship (ACR), Angral (2019) assesses the factors that may affect such a relationship while identifying the future support for emerging architects. Exploring implicit hierarchies and

power sharing involved in the dynamics of communication during the construction stage are debated based on various information gathering techniques that include an attitude survey, semi-structured interviews and online focus group discussions. Along the same line of thinking, improving the communication process at the early design stages of a project delivery process is examined by Landgren *et al.* (2019). They identify the impact of visually communicated engineering concepts and ideas to architects in an interdisciplinary design team while delineating the way in which architectural design decisions can be quantified and the potential of improving communication during the early phases of a sustainable building design process. One of the important values of the work reported in the two papers lies in the fact that research in the area of communication whether in relation to ACR or among interdisciplinary design teams does not fall within mainstream academic research and thus the papers expand the scope of interest in a manner that bridges one of the gaps between research and professional practice.

Theme 4: assemblage aesthetic and place attachment

At an urban scale, a number of papers explore the multilayered nature of the urban condition. Heathcott's (2019) work examines the everyday street market environment in Mexico City. Identifying five spatial typologies of street markets, including the linear, the circuit, the cluster, the contour and the hybrid, his work divulges the polychromatic markets as expressions of an assemblage aesthetic involving cumulative daily choices, desires, routines and densely intertwined associations of working-class individuals and communities. In the context of Trabzon in Turkey, the work of Özkan and Yilmaz (2019) establishes the required physical and social attributes of open spaces while validating the effects of these attributes on place dependency as a key functional dimension of place attachment. In this particular context, Özkan and Yilmaz study emphasizes that place attachment increases in successful urban spaces where user needs are substantially met.

Theme 5: housing and urbanity in Istanbul

Two papers in the context of Istanbul, Turkey, tackle housing and residential environments in this rapidly growing urban context. In essence, the two papers are complementary where Gür and Yüksel (2019) explore the evolution of housing typologies, while Türkoğlu *et al.* (2019) examine residential satisfaction. On the one hand, Gür and Yüksel conduct a classification procedure addressing various typologies with the aim of providing a comprehensive understanding of the urban housing stock and the emerging trends in Istanbul. On the other hand, Türkoğlu *et al.* employ an attitude survey on residential satisfaction by examining particular qualities and how they relate to various types of residential environments. The residents who live in the planned sections of the city are satisfied with the attractiveness and accessibility of their neighborhoods, while those who live in unplanned sections of the city are satisfied with their level of attachment to their neighborhoods. From a comparative perspective, the outcomes of this work contribute to a better understanding of residential satisfaction as part of "life satisfaction" in a contested urban milieu.

Theme 6: placemaking and sustainability in the Gulf

Following the work of Wiedmann *et al.* (2014) and Salama *et al.* (2016), Furlan *et al.* (2019) investigate the significance and authenticity of placemaking within Msheireb urban regeneration project which is being completed in the historic core of Doha, Qatar. The findings uncover the urban realities of this regeneration scheme of the historic district. These include the public realm and the conservation of traditional buildings in an integrated whole that instigates a new contemporary architectural language which involves the spatial environment as well as the unique urban character employed in the master plan. In a neighboring country, Al Khalifa (2019) conducts a comprehensive investigation of

11 sustainable building rating tools followed by a comparative analysis that aims at elucidating the essential characteristics that can be adopted and adapted to the context of Bahrain. The unique aspects of the context of Bahrain mandate particular set of sustainable design and planning rating tools that speak to this specific context with its distinct cultural traditions and climatic conditions.

Theme 7: from the Doric order to State mosques

The last two papers of this issue fall within the field of theory in architecture and the development of intellectual discourse in the field. However, they adopt very different approaches and contexts. On the one hand, in philosophical terms, the work of Charalambides (2019) provides a Gestalt-based reflection on the nature of the Doric order by exposing and subjecting it to the logic of Deconstruction. On the other hand, the work of Allahham (2019) scrutinizes the transformation of the semiological meaning of the contemporary mosque. Focusing on State mosques, she argues, and rightly so, that the contemporary mosque is experiencing dramatic transformations ensuing from the evolving understanding of the concept of the “sacred”, and its relationship to the “secular” in contemporary Muslim societies which continue to experience modernization. Both papers represent the logical conceptualization and argumentation of key issues relevant to in-depth understanding about architectural forms and the meanings they convey.

3. Outlook

Archnet-IJAR: International Journal of Architectural Research continues to publish latest research findings within its overall aim of establishing a bridge between theory and practice in architecture and urbanism. This is in parallel to strengthening ties between scholars, academics and practitioners from the global north and the global south. This edition of *Archnet-IJAR: International Journal of Architectural Research* marks a new beginning in various terms including form and content, a more systematized rigorous peer review process, quality of production and global reach.

One of the vital new aspects toward the development of robust research writing in the field is the standard structured prerequisite adopted by Emerald that requires contributors to think more clearly about their work. While such clarity and sharpness is expected throughout the manuscripts submitted and reviewed, the structured abstract approach is an invitation for a more vigorous consistency by identifying and developing clear statements on purposes and objectives, frameworks and methodological approaches to investigation, findings and outcomes, and value and originality. This is coupled with various types of implications including those that relate to the research presented as well as social and practical insinuations.

In total, 13 peer-reviewed papers identified for this issue generate substantial research questions and issues that are highlighted to reveal the plurality and diversity as salient characteristics of research in architecture and urbanism. The seven important themes instigated by the discourse within the papers include: spheres of inquiry; autism and the spatial environment; communication dynamics and professional practice; assemblage aesthetic and place attachment; housing and urbanity in Istanbul; placemaking and sustainability in the Gulf; and from the Doric order to State mosques. Broadly though, four papers address the notion of research “through” design whereby aspects relevant to design, production and communication processes become a form of developing new knowledge (Al Khalifa, 2019; Angral 2019; Love, 2019; Landgren *et al.*, 2019). All other papers address the notion of research “into” design by exploring historical aspects, or developing conceptual arguments, or empirically examining human–environment dynamics. Between the two types of research “through” and “into” design diverse methods and approaches to investigation are employed enabling the operationalization of concepts and theoretical research underpinnings.

Evidently, the 13 papers contained in this edition meet the fundamental requirements of architectural and urban research including rigor, logic and reason, clarity, depth, and breadth of the questions and issues interrogated. In maintaining and exceeding these qualities, the *Archnet-IJAR: International Journal of Architectural Research* team will continue to work closely with the interested contributors to enable them disseminate their research work. Through a distinguished review board, whose knowledge and expertise are at the forefront of contemporary discourse in the field, the journal will continue to ensure publishing high-quality scholarly papers, allowing for a comprehensive academic review of contributions that span a wide spectrum of issues, contexts, methods, theoretical approaches, and architectural and development practices.

It has been a great honor and privilege to continue to lead *Archnet-IJAR: International Journal of Architectural Research* since its inception in 2007, throughout the process of its transition to Emerald, and to continue to contribute in a chief editorial capacity after this transition. My sincere thanks go to Emerald's team involved in *Archnet-IJAR: International Journal of Architectural Research* review, editing, production and publishing, in particular Gemma Hemming, Publisher; Carys Morley, Content Editor; and Ciara Boardman, Publishing Editor. My appreciation goes to the editorial, advisory and review boards whose support and guidance are indispensable toward achieving excellence in research in the field, and to the reviewers of this issue whose efforts in improving and sharpening relevant submissions are critical to the success of *Archnet-IJAR: International Journal of Architectural Research*. Last, but not the least, a warm welcome to the regional editors and the new members of the advisory and review boards.

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