

EDITORIAL: EXCELLENCE IN ARCHITECTURAL AND URBAN RESEARCH

Ashraf M. Salama

This issue marks the beginning of a new year for Archnet-IJAR. A considerable effort has been put to position the journal among other distinguished journals in the field. After a year, the three issues included in the first volume accommodated 23 research paper and 14 reviews and trigger articles. While research papers are refereed by the independent panel of reviewers who are well versed in their areas of specialization and expertise, the reviews and trigger articles are reviewed by the editor based on relevance and the targeted reader. As a result of this effort and the rigorous review process, Archnet-IJAR is now standing among the leading periodicals in architecture, planning, and built environment studies. This is reflected in the recognition the journal has received over the past year. In addition to being part of the Library of Congress database and the OCLC-Online Computer Library System, Archnet-IJAR is now included in the following directories and databases:

- Arclib, Arch Library Services - Australia
- InformeDesign, University of Minnesota, USA
- Trellis Catalogue, Canada
- Ulrich's Periodicals Directory

- University of Waterloo, Canada
- University of Guelph, Canada
- IJA List of Architectural Reviews, France
- Wikipedia: the Online Encyclopedia
- York University, Canada

What was a pleasing news piece I received this year is a message responding to my request of including Archnet-IJAR in the Avery Index of Architectural Periodical at Columbia University, United States. After conducting the necessary reviews Mr. Ted Goodman, the general editor of Avery Index mentioned: *"I am happy to say that we will add your journal to the Avery Index. It fits in perfectly with our strategic goals of increasing global coverage and indexing online journals."* **Starting from January 2008, Archnet-IJAR became part of the Avery Index of Architectural Periodicals**, and is aspiring to be part of other indexing databases and abstracting directories.

Some colleagues were wondering about the images used in the cover pages of the previous three issues. They recommended that some form of identification of these images and what they represent needs to be mentioned in the

editorial. Such a recommendation is considered starting from this issue. In this respect, one needs to relate IJAR readers to the cover images of the first three issues: The cover image used in the inaugural issue was that of Khalifa Stadium in Doha, Qatar—redeveloped by Cox Architects in partnership with GHD-Australia, while the cover image of the second issue was an aerial view of the city of Damascus, and the image used for the cover of the third issue was

that of Petronas Twin Towers, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia—designed by Cesar Pelli (Figures 1, 2, and 3). While information on Khalifa Stadium and Petronas Towers can be found on the web and in some of the reviews and theory books on contemporary architecture, the city of Damascus, Syria is described in many of the books on the history of Islamic architecture or architecture in the Middle East.



Figure 1: Khalifa Stadium in Doha, Qatar—redeveloped by Cox Architects in partnership with GHD-Australia. (Source: A. Salama).



Figure 2: An aerial view of the city of Damascus, one of the only two continuously inhabited places throughout human history; the cover image of Archnet-IJAR, Vol.1, Issue 2. (Source: A. Salama).



Figure 3: Petronas Twin Towers, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia—designed by Cesar Pelli; the cover image of Archnet-IJAR, Vol.1, Issue 3. (Source: A. Salama).

Damascus was founded in the 3rd millennium B.C.; it is one of the oldest cities in the world. In the Middle Ages, it was the centre of a flourishing craft industry, specializing in swords and lace. According to UNESCO reports, the city has over a hundred monuments from different periods of its history – one of the most spectacular is the 8th-century Great Mosque of the *Umayyads*. It is said that Damascus and Aleppo are the only

two continuously inhabited places throughout human history. One should note in this context that Archnet-IJAR covered issues that pertain to the urban environment of Damascus—in the third issue the work of M. Salim Ferwati offered a discussion on human curiosity in the environment through *a street walk in Damascus and the head-turning situations* involved. In this issue, Ferwait and Mandour offer a spatial and formal analysis of historical courtyard house types found in the city while investigating the notions of proportions and human scale in architecture.

The cover of this issue is an image of Al Azhar Park project, one of the outstanding projects recently developed in Cairo (inaugurated in 2005). In 1984, the project's idea came into existence at the Aga Khan Award for Architecture's conference titled *The Expanding Metropolis: Coping with the urban growth of Cairo*. With the clear decline of the Cairene built environment, the project was conceived as an urban park, the aim of which was to bring some greenery and open spaces to Cairo, a city with less than one footprint of green for every resident. The site is a centrally located derelict 30 hectare region in Darrassa neighborhood, abandoned for over 500 years, bordering the 12th century *Ayyubid* wall, the 15th century *Mamluk* City of the Dead, and the vibrant historical yet ever decaying Darb Al Ahmar district. The park was conceived to include: main spine (palm colonnade); a series of formal garden; hilltop lookout kiosk; hilltop restaurants; children's structured play area; children's amphitheatre and stage; lookout plaza; water cascade and stream; lake; orchard; playing fields; historical wall promenade and amphitheatre (Figure 4).



Figure 4: A view to the north through the main spine of Al-Azhar Park, Cairo, Egypt. The cover image of this issue of Archnet-IJAR, Vol.2, Issue 1. (Source: A. Salama).

I now return to where I began; the efforts undertaken to establish Archnet-IJAR over the past year resulted in attracting both a large body of readers while distinguished professors and scholars started to contribute their work. In this issue, a considerable number of giants in the fields of architecture and human-environment interaction offer their thoughts

and words of wisdom out of decades of experience in teaching and research. There are great contributions from authorities such as Amos Rapoport; Henry Sanoff; Jack Nasar; Nikos A. Salingaros and Kenneth G. Masden II; Roderick Lawrence; Wolfgang Preisler; and Xinhao Wang. High quality contributions from younger committed scholars include those

of Ceridwen Owen; Ashraf M. Salama; Yasser Mahgoub; Magda Moustafa; and M. Salim Ferwati and M. Alaa Mandour. Metaphorically, one can argue that in this edition of Archnet-IJAR different generations meet to reflect on their experience, interests, and concerns.

Amos Rapoport offers some further notes on culture-environment relations based on four decades of exploring and synthesizing ideas from different fields toward a more responsive interpretation of culture as it relates to the everyday physical environment. Referring to his latest book: *Culture, Architecture, and Design (2005)* as his "last word" on the subject, Rapoport relates some of the concepts he has introduced to a considerable number of new examples from different cultures around the world. These insights are based on his recent travels, while at the same time strongly emphasizing the value of exploring and understanding ideas and concepts from other fields in developing deeper and thoughtful insights of culture-environment relations. He reiterates that understanding culture-environment relations remains an important aspect of Environment-Behavior Studies (EBS). He argues, and rightly so, that developing such an understanding is "*much more complex than it appears at first glance,*" and therefore needs more research and in-depth knowledge.

Continuing the topic of culture, Ceridwen Owen offers a provocative analytical discussion on the relationship between culture and nature as represented by a continuous dynamic tension involved in the creation of built environments. Selecting Geoffrey Bawa's Kandlama Hotel in Sri Lanka, Owen considers culture and nature as two polarities and provides an argument on

how architecture may operate in the space between them. Referring to the work of Dutton (1996), Owen emphasizes that architecture is both "*a product of and condition for our relationship to the world*" and argues that its very manifestation may serve to structure the forms that these visions may take. Based on the Case of Bawa's Kandlama Hotel, she concludes that architecture not only provides a visible record of changing cultural ideals and social practices manifest in built form as a "*spatialization*" of history, "*it also plays a powerful future formative role in imagining other possibilities.*"

Henry Sanoff's three decades' experience in community design and development is reflected in his paper on multiple views of participatory design. Sanoff's vision is that "*participatory design is an attitude about a force for change in the creation and management of environments for people.*" Community participation in design and planning, as a movement, emerged from a growing realization that the mismanagement of the physical environment is a major factor contributing to the social and economic ills of the world, and that there are better ways of going about design and planning. Consequently, how to make it possible for people to be involved in shaping and managing their environment is what the community design movement has been exploring over the past few decades. Sanoff asserts that citizens must be well-trained in participating in their community and workplace at the local level and in practicing self-governance in order to implement participation programs on the larger scale national level.

Addressing the issue of residential mobility,

Roderick Lawrence introduces an article which is culled from a wide spectrum of issues he has explored for twenty years. His work takes into account how a human ecology perspective can be applied to improve our current understanding of housing, including housing cultures, and identities which are linked to motives concerning why households move or stay in the same housing unit. As Lawrence states "*These are complex subjects that influence housing markets and domestic life especially in a period of rapid change.*" On this basis, he offers a review of some key concepts related to human ecology, including housing, culture, identity and cultivation while linking these concepts to the way in which residential mobility can be re-interpreted utilizing an interdisciplinary approach. Lawrence presents an empirical case study of residential mobility in Geneva, Switzerland which delineates the way in which this approach may help develop a deeper understanding of the motives people have regarding their wishes to stay in their residence or to move elsewhere.

Analyzing the evolution of the field of post-occupancy evaluation and aesthetic programming and evaluation from their origins in the 1960s, Preiser and Nasar analytically describe different transformations which led to current developments in building performance and visual assessment studies. Their discussion relates this field to the consumer-oriented approach that embodies a number of qualities including self organization, adaptation and continuous improvement. Preiser and Nasar outline issues that pertain to the future of this field, its value, viability, cost-effectiveness, and benefits for different types of stakeholders. Their work concludes with an examination of a

recent project, reported in the book *Designing for Designers: Lessons Learned from Schools of Architecture* that utilized distributed technology to systematically evaluate the performance of 17 contemporary architecture school buildings from around the world. Reflecting on the future development of the field, the approaches utilized, lessons learned, and ways in which the methodology and findings apply to other kinds of facilities are explained and discussed.

While the contributions of Rapoport, Owen, Sanoff, and Preiser and Nasar can be categorized under the general heading of human-environment interactions, two contributions of Ashraf M. Salama and Nikos A. Salingaros and Kenneth G. Masden II focus on architectural education. Based on his research and experimentation on architectural education and design studio teaching practices, Salama conceptualizes a new theory for integrating knowledge into architectural design education. His work is structured in four distinct but related parts that involve the reasons for developing a new theory. Salama explains the current context in which such a theory is developed, then presents the components and elements of the theory, and the way in which such components and elements can be accommodated at the studio level and at the overall curriculum level. Salama bases his work on some alarming figures, the syndrome of viewing architects as art and only art, the syndrome of emphasizing the development of skills at the expense of knowledge, and comments on a number of missing conceptions in architectural pedagogy.

Nikos A. Salingaros and Kenneth G. Masden II offer a provocative position based proposal

that goes beyond current discussions on architectural education and addresses a new way of thinking based on integrating other fields into architecture. Such a proposal is responsive in nature. On the one hand, it responds to the current ills of architectural education worldwide. They eloquently phrase some of these ills and this is evident in their statements: *"Forced to formulate a body of work constrained by the paradigm of contemporary design, students learn to copy fashionable images without understanding their geometry; or simply invent forms that look as if they possess a contemporary sense of architecture."* On the other hand, these authors respond to the fact that a considerable work to rejuvenate architectural pedagogy has been done but perhaps neglected *"While many innovative didactic materials and ideas for revising the architectural curriculum are available today, they are often overlooked or ignored."* The proposal of Salingaros and Masden is aimed at students, faculty, and those who make decisions about the structure of architectural curricula. It is based on the evolutionary process of human interaction with the environment. Overall, the proposal brings to life some of the forgotten values that shaped the education of architects throughout the years. One should note that while this proposal is responsive, it is also generous as it details a new curriculum model for programs leading to professional degrees in architecture. Such a curriculum model is underpinned by a considerable number of theories, concepts, and paradigms.

People's understanding of, reaction to and interaction with the environment appear to be a sustained theme throughout the papers of this issue. Evidently, the papers of Magda

Mostafa, Wolfgang Preiser and Xinaho Wang, Yasser Mahgoub, and Ferwati and Mandour all contribute to such a theme through different perspectives and interests. Magda Mostafa argues that architecture should respond to all types of users. With interest in the autistic user and how design guidelines may contribute to autistic needs Magda sets the stage for discussing this type of special population, *"Despite this high incidence of autism, there are yet to be developed architectural design guidelines catering specifically to the scope of autistic needs."* Through a rigorous research process, she first determines the spatial elements that have a strong impact on the behavior of autistic children, and then rank those elements to identify specific behavioral indicators including attention span, response time and behavioral temperament. Her work results in a series of findings that include design strategies for autism involving a "sensory design matrix" and a set of hypothetical design guidelines developed as possible design interventions for future testing. It is believed that this work provides a basis for developing design standards for autistic users.

Wolfgang Preiser and Xinhao Wang articulate an innovative approach for investigating the performance of public libraries. The approach integrates qualitative building performance evaluation (BPE) and a quantitative geographic information system (GIS) into a coherent methodology. Such a methodology is implemented in a research project which was to create a Facilities Master Plan for the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County in the United States. The outcomes of the project are recommendations, as well as medium to long term projections, with primary emphasis

on branch libraries. Specific recommendations for each branch placed emphasis on: needed improvements; closure and/or consolidation with other branch libraries; and, the creation of new full-service "hub" libraries. These recommendations are envisioned to achieve greater cost-effectiveness and improved services. Practical implications of this project include a rational decision making tool for library facility master planning in the future.

Yasser Mahgoub investigates the impact of the war on architecture in Kuwait as a literal and figurative target of the warfare. His intention is to offer an understanding of the change of Kuwaitis attitudes towards architecture as an outcome of the war aggressions. Mahgoub concludes that while the war had a physical impact on buildings and structures; it also had a perceptual impact on their meaning as architecture and places. *"It polarized attitudes towards architecture and its significance; while traditional architecture gained importance and admiration; global styles of architecture became more trendy and fashionable."* One of the important contributions of this paper is that a significant impact of the war in Kuwait on the progress and implementation of many strategic urban initiatives is explained and outlined. It is believed that this work offers a good basis for understanding the relationship between war and architecture and ideas for future understanding of healing the processes of human, societal, and cultural evolution in war-torn countries and cities.

The eleven contributions presented in this edition offer a wide variety of ideas, concepts, arguments, conclusions presented by authorities, distinguished professors, and committed scholars.

Reiterating, they offer a wide venue for achieving excellence in online publishing in architecture and urbanism, while paving many roads for debating the complexity of built environment related fields. I invite interested academics to contribute to the future issues of Archnet-IJAR, especially fellow academics and practitioners who do not have access to other printed journals.

Ashraf Salama
Archnet-IJAR Editor
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Ashraf M. Salama

Ashraf Salama holds B.Sc., M.Sc. and Ph.D. degrees in Architecture. He is Professor of Architecture currently teaching at Qatar University, was Associate Professor at KFUPM (2004-06), and was the Director of Consulting at Adams Group Architects in Charlotte, North Carolina, USA (2001-04). He is licensed architect in Egypt received his training at Al Azhar University in Egypt and North Carolina State University, Raleigh, USA. Salama chaired the Department of Architecture, Misr International University in Cairo (1996-01). He has published numerous papers and authored and co-edited five books on Architectural Education: Designing the Design Studio (USA), Human Factors in Environmental Design (Egypt), Architectural Education Today: Cross Cultural Perspectives (Switzerland), Architecture as Language of Peace (Italy), and recently, Design Studio Pedagogy: Horizons for the Future (United Kingdom). He is member of the scientific boards of several intl. journals including Open House International, Time Based Architecture International, and the Chief Editor of "Archnet-IJAR." He can be reached by email at asalama@gmail.com or ijar@mit.edu.