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Archnet-IJAR: International Journal of Architectural Research
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RECENT DISCOURSE AND THE PROMISE FOR GLOBAL NETWORKS ON ARCHITECTURE AND URBANISM

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Keywords

architecture; architectural education; architectural and urban heritage; cities; design studio; social sustainability; environmental sustainability; urbanism; urban studies; virtual reality; digital technologies

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- DOAJ: Directory of Open Access Journals
- Pro-Quest
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- Web of Science

Abstract

Archnet-IJAR: International Journal of Architectural Research has recently published an outline article that commemorated a decade of discourse and published research on architecture and urbanism since its inaugural issue of March 2007 and up to March 2017. The article offered a comprehensive coverage of the distinguished status of the journal being one of the top high quality journals. The purpose of the present article is provide reflections on some of what the journal has published since March 2017 and presents thoughts on latest developments including collaborations with academic and professional organizations and the move to Emerald; one of the prestigious global publishers in various areas and disciplines including relevant fields in built environment, place making, and urban planning and design. This will enable deepening and broadening existing relationships with various international research organizations and ensure that Archnet-IJAR remains a key channel for those organizations while meeting its promise for global coverage and presence.

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INTRODUCTION

Archnet-IJAR: International Journal of Architectural Research has recently published an outline article that commemorated a decade of discourse and published research on architecture and urbanism since its inception and up to Volume 11, Issue 1, March 2017. The article offered a comprehensive coverage of the distinguished status of the journal being a Q1/Q2 journal in architecture and urban studies as one of the top high quality journals (Salama et. al, 2017). The purpose of the present article is provide reflections on some of what the journal has published since March 2017 and present thoughts on latest developments including collaborations with academic and professional organizations and the move to Emerald; one of the prestigious global publishers in various areas and disciplines including relevant fields in built environment, place making, and urban planning and design.

Over the past two years, Archnet-IJAR continued to receive regular submissions from academics across the world. Notably however, the journal has collaborated with the Fifth Architectural Jordanian International Conference of the Architecture Chapter of the Society of Engineers, Amman, Jordan (Salama, 2017). A special issue on heritage conservation in the digital era has been published and guest edited by Nottingham Trent University's lead of the world-leading Research: Global Heritage: Science, Management and Development (Abdlemone, 2017). This is followed in 2018 by a collaboration with Passive and Low Energy Architecture (PLEA) by including a section which was exclusively dedicated to selected papers from the Education and Training Forum of PLEA International Conference – Design to Thrive, Edinburgh – July 2017 (Roaf, Brotas, and Nicol, 2018, Salama, 2018).

In July 2017 Archnet-IJAR, volume 11, issue # 2 was produced to demonstrate the essence of being a truly international journal covering issues of interest and concern to the global academic and professional community (Salama, 2017). Various topics that manifest plurality and diversity as inherent qualities of architectural and urban research published in Archnet-IJAR were covered. Topics included architectural education and design studio teaching, urban and rural slums, heritage and historic environments in various contexts, participatory planning and the charrette process in the context of Scotland, assessment of public spaces and plazas, and human perception of the built environment. These topics were debated and analytically discussed within cities, settlements, and urban environments in Bahrain, Bangladesh, California-USA, Libya, Scotland, and Spain. The issue also included three papers selected from the Fifth Architectural Jordanian International Conference – 1-3 November 2016, which focused on the context of Jordan and the wider Middle East.

On architectural education and design studio teaching practices Marta Masdéu and Josep Fuses argued for the need to re-conceptualize the design studio and to incorporate pedagogical approaches such as distance learning and blended learning in order to revolutionize the studio environment as a space and a learning paradigm that needs to be continuously updated. (Masdéu and Josep, 2017). On the other hand, in a different context, Fay Al Khalifa discussed the notion of autonomy in learning architecture in the context of the University of Bahrain. Her work examined the effect of using a mixed methods approach to integrate theoretical and practical assignments relevant to students' performance and understanding of complex architectural phenomena (Al Khalifa, 2017).

On the issue of slums or squatter settlements, Aisha Abubakar et al. embarked on a journey to define slums through a rigorous and rational thinking process. Summarising various trends, definitions and approaches to solutions of slums, their work critically analysed more recent and structured approaches that attempt to grasp the complexity of all realities constituting the slum as a crucial key to their management (Abubakar et al., 2017). Their work concluded with a proposed Slum Property Map as a dynamic way that enables a

deeper and a comprehensive understanding of slums and their underlying characteristics and parameters.

In the context of the United Arab Emirates and the wider Gulf region, Joseph Hobbs (2017), from a geography-discipline perspective, examined how the architectural, social, and cultural heritage of this unique context may contribute to better development of this region's lived environment. His work proposed that adopting and adapting the vernacular architectural heritage to the modern built environment should not be the fundamental goal for heritage-informed design. He called for understanding and examining the social processes underlying the traditional lived environment with the ultimate goal of reaching social sustainability. Likewise, but totally different context, the argument for heritage conservation persisted where Rahman and Imon discussed the socio-political forces that shape human interventions in waterfronts in the context of Dhaka (Rahman and Imon, 2017).

An analytical overview of the charrette process in the context of Scotland was presented by Ainslie Kennedy, while focusing on key aspects of commissioning, construction, and delivery (Kennedy, 2017). Her work offered a typology of charrette-approaches unique to the context of Scotland. The work of Georgia Lindsay explored the United Nations Plaza in San Francisco by arguing that the introduction and construction of the new Plaza has not fulfilled its promise to fully transform the social and economic life of the area. Yet, it has achieved a public space and a new scene of urban culture (Lindsay, 2017).

The interest in understanding social and economic dynamics as they relate to public spaces was evident in that edition of Archnet-IJAR. Salama, Remali, and MacLean (2017) responded to the question of how successful urban spaces could impact the growth and performance of an urban context, not only as a physical urban reality, but also as a generator of social life. Utilizing St. Enoch Square as a case study, their work employs a multi-layered methodological approach constituted in a series of tools that include behavioural mapping, visual preference survey, walking tour assessment, contemplating settings, and observing physical traces and by-product of use in order to interpret various forms of experiences that take place (Salama et al, 2017). ON the other hand, the work of Agael and Özer is innovative in the sense that it applied two contrasting theories; Mental Map and Space Syntax on two Libyan cities, Al Khums and Bani Walid. Their work offered an advanced understanding of they way in which various qualities and properties of the built environment affect human perception (Agael and Özer, 2017).

Identifying three articles from the Fifth Architectural Jordanian International Conference – 1-3 November 2016, the issue has expanded to include the work of Al-Jokhadar and Jabi who presented the different qualities of vernacular houses and neighbourhoods in the different regions of the Middle East and North Africa in an attempt to build a vernacular model and apply it to high-rise residential developments. Additionally, the work of Fakhouri and Haddad offered a definition of the key constraints and opportunities through conserving architectural and urban heritage in the historic cores of As Salt and Irbid (Fakhouri and Haddad, 2017). Abu-Alatta and Freewan (2017) argued that the recent developments in Information Technology (IT) and digital media have introduced new opportunities to design studio teaching and learning and new dimensions to design and architecture. They examined the way in which the immersion of Virtual Reality (VR) affects spatial perception within the design process in the architectural design studio.

In November 2017, the special Issue on architectural and urban heritage (volume 11, issue 3), guest edited by Abdlemonem (2017), included important articles that have emerged from Virtual Heritage Cairo (VHC) Network's International Conference, "Sustaining Heritage in the Digital Age: Towards Virtual Environments for Middle East's Cultural

Heritage”, that took place on 20-21 February 2017 at the National Museum of Egyptian Civilisation, Cairo, Egypt.

The article of Patrizia Riganti, “Smart Cities and Heritage Conservation: Developing a Smartheritage Agenda for Sustainable Inclusive Communities” (Riganti, 2017), discussed advancements in Information Communication Technologies (ICT) for cultural heritage preservation highlighting the potential of virtual environments to assess the impacts of heritage policies on urban development while using virtual globes and crowdsourcing to support the participatory valuation and management of cultural heritage assets. On the other hand, the article on Virtual Platforms for Heritage Preservation in the Middle East: The Case of Medieval Cairo” (Abdelmonem et al, 2017), reported on a research process to investigate and incorporate a cultural-feed into digital platforms of Virtual Heritage, analysing current practices and projects of the virtual heritage technologies. Mohamed Khalil’s paper, “Talent Management as a Novel Approach for Developing Innovative Solutions for Egyptian Heritage Communities Development” (Khalil et al, 2017), interrogated aspects of intangible heritage such as stories, memories and traditions.

Stuart Burch’s article, “A Virtual Oasis: Trafalgar Square’s Arch of Palmyra” (Burch, 2017), questioned the destruction of the Arch of Palmyra in Syria in 2015 and its temporary reconstruction a year later in London’s Trafalgar Square. This was undertaken by scrutinizing the processes involved in the artistic production of public memorials and art’s commemorative function. The work of Neveen Hamza and colleagues attempted to validate the notion that market halls offer the chance to enable the instigation and operation of sustainable local economies that are creative and inventive (Hamza et. al, 2017).

A series of papers introduced various aspects of heritage conservation, representation, and modelling which included the work of Ramsey (2017) on virtual Wolverhampton; Gehan Selim on contested heritage in Northern Ireland (Selim et al, 2017); Mohamed Soliman on the Islamic Water System in Cairo (Soliman, 2017); Khairi Abdulla on Walkability in the historic urban environment in the context of Tripoli, Libya; Aggour on public awareness of heritage conservation in Alexandria, Egypt; Arafa on marketing tools for virtual heritage applications (Arafa, 2017).

Offering insights into the impact of socio-cultural and political contexts on the identity and characteristics of architectural heritage a number of papers are addressing these aspects of heritage conservation in various contexts in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Harrington et al, 2017); Iran (Eshrati et al, 2017), and Kazakhstan (Yussupova et al, 2017). Notably, the preceding outlines of the papers published in the special edition demonstrated various possibilities for sustaining heritage in the digital era. The papers offered insights into advanced understandings of the ever-changing landscape of contemporary architectural and urban heritages.

In March 2018 Archnet-IJAR, volume 12, issue # 1 the edition encompassed a wide spectrum of topics that range from architectural theory and history, to urban studies, and from spatial analysis and technical systems in building design and components, to education for sustainable development, and architectural and planning education. This was coupled with selected papers from the Education and Training Forum of PLEA International Conference – Design to Thrive, Edinburgh – July 2017 (Roaf, Brotas, and Nicol, 2018, Salama, 2018).

In the area of History and theory four papers can be identified in four different contexts and historical periods Emina Zejnilovic, Erna Husukic in the context of Sarajevo, Bosnia

(Zejnilovic and Husukic, 2018); Marwa El-Ashmouni and Haitham Selim in the context of Egypt (El-Ashmouni, 2018, Selim, 2018); Majd Musa in Amman, Jordan (Musa, 2018).

In the same edition several papers have addressed various contexts in Australia, Europe, the Middle East, the Far East, and Southeast Asia including Shehab and Salama in Glasgow, Mikkelsen and colleagues in Melbourne, Capitano in small settlements of Japan (Shehab and Salama, 2018; Mikkelsen et al., Capitano, 2018). Other explorations in urban studies examine various contexts as they relate to formal housing and supporting social infrastructure in the context of Indonesia (Yuliastuti et al., 2018), to historic urban quarters (Dastgerdi and De Luca, 2018), and spatial transformation processes in the historical peninsula of Istanbul (Mutman and Turgut, 2018). They all offer lessons important to their contexts as well as to the wider community of urban researchers. In the milieu of Arab cities, the contribution of Ahmed El-Kholei traces the development of the capitalist agenda, its concomitant societal schematic transformations, and their implications for cities in the Arab region. In a thorough comprehensive manner, he reviews the development of planning theory and practice in the developed world and its implication for Arab cities. The work is important in the sense that it offers narratives on the challenges and opportunities while suggesting remedial scenarios for actions within the remit of theory research, practice, and education (El-Kholei, 2018).

Three papers demonstrate the expanding scope of architectural and urban research including spatial analysis and assessment studies Tarabieh et al., 2018; Arranz et al., 2018; and Elbakheit, 2018). Additional substantial and important series of contributions in the area of architectural and built environment education were included. The paper of David Grierson and Karen Munro surveys the relationship between education for sustainable development (ESD) and interdisciplinarity in the context of architecture and engineering higher education. Grierson and Munro present a case study of the University of Strathclyde Glasgow's Sustainable Engineering (SE) postgraduate programme, within the wider context of common principles and practices present across higher education in the UK (Grierson and Munro, 2018). Utilizing experimental and empirical approaches, the work of Han Hee Choi and Mi Jeong Kim explores different strategies to overcome design fixation, which is defined as a lack of flexibility in relation to a limited set of design ideas. They call for introducing the digital context as one of the promising strategies that enhance design thinking while promoting creativity (Choi and Kim, 2018). Discussing the studio learning environment, Mohd Zairul (2018) reports on the initial results of the exploratory research related to student-centered learning (SCL) in final year architecture studio education at the UPM—University Putra Malaysia, which offers an additional capacity for a dynamic reconstruction of knowledge.

The preceding contributions offer key lessons relevant to the way forward in education in built environment related fields at various levels, ranging from curriculum development to design thinking and students abilities. Five papers have been selected from the Education and Training Forum of PLEA International Conference – Design to Thrive, Edinburgh – July 2017. The papers were submitted to the journal and have been subjected to a second layer of peer review process. In this context it is important highlight some key aspects of the forum including the scope, plurality of topics, and emerging themes (Salama, 2018).

The theme of “Community and Social Responsibility in Architectural and Urban Education” was clearly articulated by Rachel Sara and Matthew Jones on the co-creation of live community architecture clearly articulates this theme (Sara and Jones, 2018). The theme of Renovation, Technology, and Materiality in Design Pedagogy: was evident in the work of Bibbings et al. which included the introduction of a design competition module as a primary motivator for learning about sustainable technologies (Bibbings, Bieluga, and Mills, 2018), utilizing design frameworks and full-scale construction, and the development of guidance

documents for sustainable construction. The theme of “Architectural Education Across the Boundaries of Cultures and Regions” was demonstrated in various contexts including a discussion and analysis of the vernacular context of Egypt (Dabaieh et al., 2018); and teaching processes for the final year projects in Technion, Haifa, Israel (Natanian and Aleksandrowicz, 2018). Key approaches, perspectives, experiences, and experiments were deliberated. Topics included experiential aesthetics; institutional challenges facing architectural education, diploma and graduation projects, as well as incorporating sustainable traditional construction techniques in the architectural curriculum. Additionally the theme of “Design Learning for Efficiency was clearly evident in the work of Domínguez-Amarillo and colleagues (Domínguez-Amarillo, J. Fernandez-Aguera, P. Fernandez-Aguera, 2018).

While future review articles or editorials will refer to some of the latest articles published in 2018 including those which are published in this edition, it is important to inform the contributors to and readers of Archnet-IJAR that the journal has been recently acquired by Emerald Publishing which is part of Emerald Group. The new acquisition complements Emerald's existing portfolio of journals in Property Management and Built Environment, introduces new areas in architectural and design research, while also expanding coverage in areas such as urban design, urban planning, and cities and sustainable urbanism (Vare, 2018). Archnet-IJAR, which will be free access throughout 2019 then a subscription journal in 2020, adds significant value to Emerald's existing journal collection, particularly to Emerald's offering in the European and Middle Eastern market. The journal has close associations with scholars working with several societies that include Environmental Design Research Association (EDRA), International Association for People-Environment Studies (IAPS), Architecture and Urbanism in the Mediterranean and the Middle East (AUMME), International Association for the Study of Traditional Environments (IASTE), to name a few. Being part of Emerald will enable deepening and broadening these existing relationships to ensure that Archnet-IJAR remains a key channel for those memberships while meeting its promise for global coverage and presence.

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