EDITORIAL:
ARCHNET-IJAR IS SETTING THE STAGE FOR ONLINE PUBLISHING IN ARCHITECTURAL AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT RESEARCH

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It was a long time and a long road since the idea of a comprehensive online journal in architectural research and criticism was discussed. While it took sometime, one tends to believe that the best things are worth waiting for. The idea of IJAR-The International Journal of Architectural Research- goes back to late 1999 when Shiraz Allibhai was responsible for coordinating the efforts of developing an online community for architects, scholars, and students of Architecture – "ArchNet".

ArchNet is an international online community developed at the MIT School of Architecture and Planning and the University of Texas at Austin, School of Architecture, in close cooperation with, and with the full support of The Aga Khan Trust for Culture-AKTC, an agency of the Aga Khan Development Network. Throughout the years, ArchNet became a growing global community of scholars, students, and professionals concerned with architecture, planning, and landscape design. ArchNet provides them with A) comprehensive architectural resources, B) new perspectives on the built environment, and C) insights into Islamic design and culture.

The issue of consumption of knowledge versus production of knowledge within the developing and Islamic worlds was always a subject of debate and discussion in different seminars organized by the AKTC. In addition to having digital resources on ArchNet, I was particularly interested in a vision that a high quality refereed online journal developed within ArchNet would complement various modules, invigorate the community efforts, and enhance the bringing of a community of educators, practitioners and scholars in the broad subject area of "Architectural Criticism and Built Environment Research." IJAR is a welcome addition of ArchNet's magnificent resources.

The development of IJAR-The International Journal of Architectural Research is based on the belief that e-journals offer readers a particular ease of access. They can readily work across different journals, find exactly where certain ideas are being discussed, or move from citation to source. They find something that serves their needs, copy the article's bibliographic reference, and perhaps a quote or two. They press Print, or Save , and they move on. Free and open access is what

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IJAR is adopting where the success of the open access publishing model is bound to have a profound impact on the state of knowledge as this depends on the extent of its circulation and exchange.

Time and the future issues of IJAR will tell the international planning, architectural, and design communities what contributions IJAR can make. However, the editorial team is already encouraged by both the number of papers being submitted and the quality of research and discussion they encompass. As part of delivering ArchNet's mission, IJAR will be a mechanism by which the international community of architects, planners, and designers, and those who are working in related disciplines, are engaged in research in research and reflection of their practice debating issues of concern to their social, cultural, physical contexts.

IJAR will be a major source and will provide an international forum for discussion and debate, learning, and scholarship issues. It acts as a means for disseminating knowledge and findings of well founded academic investigations as well as intellectual critical arguments on the current status of architecture. It is the hope that IJAR becomes one of the principal international homes for refereed articles on "Architectural and Built Environment Research."

In this inaugural issue of IJAR, there are seven highly interesting and diverse papers. Two papers place emphasis on the technical aspects of the built environment including accessibility, fire safety, day-lighting, and energy performance; one paper introduces a new position on the role of human intelligence in shaping the architecture of the 21st century; three papers offer critical analyses of the built environment of the Arab world debating issues that pertain to tradition, modernity, and identity; and one paper explores the notion of hierarchy in Taj Mahal's interior spatial environment.

The paper of Sheila Walbe Ornstein, Rosaria Ono, and their colleagues addresses fire safety and accessibility issues in hospital environments by describing and analyzing the procedures and findings of post occupancy evaluation. Their case was the Orthopedics and Traumatology Institute (IOT) of the General Hospital (Hospital das Clínicas) of the University of São Paulo(USP), Brazil. Involving graduate students and faculty the study consisted of the application of various methods for evaluating performance in use and the final results were organized in a concise, user-friendly manner in discovery maps that bring together synthesis of the different evaluation standards including opinions of users and appraisal specialists, the pertinent legislation, and recommendations for each critical point by floor and by sector. These were intended as an aid for decision makers when introducing interventions, remodeling, or expansion projects.

Uma Maheswaran and Ang Guo zi investigate condominiums as an important typology of housing in Singapore. They address the factors of day-lighting and energy performance as important determining factors in the design of condominiums. A thorough case study of one such condominium development is introduced and the results obtained through this pilot study are used to analyze the trends across prototype units using simulation tools. The results show that

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the residents of such units pay a very high rate for electricity resulting from air conditioning the habitable spaces in their residence. Their paper is a conscious attempt to discuss a few examples of condominiums around the western part of Singapore as a means of debating the emerging design trends and the performance aspects of the design solutions in terms of day lighting and energy consumption.

Salingaros and Masden introduce a critical and thought provoking argument on a newnew way of thinking about, teaching, and practicing architecture. Founded on the basis of how the human mind perceives and interacts with the built environment, their paper calls this new design process "intelligent architecture". They argue that scientifically-conceived rules for architectural design and building can lead to a more human architecture, one with a renewed respect for traditional methods of architectural design. They recommend that by applying the most recent scientific advances to architectural thinking, we can better appreciate the architectural heritage of the past, giving scientific insight into its origins and manner of conception.

The papers of Asfour, Mahgoub, and Salama share common concerns. Khaled Asfour argues, and rightly so, that there is a great divide between academic field and professional practice. He introduces the thought that in Arab countries academics are advocating traditional architecture in a "traditional" way. They believe in image cloning and visual abstraction from history, but because of rising competition, architects in the market are giving what the society aspires for: modern architecture.   Criticizing academics Asfour

states that this polemical practice has not yet penetrated the thick skin of academics. He sheds light on established and emerging trends on architectural practices in the Arab world.

Yasser Mahgoub discusses the mutual relationship between cultural identity and the built environment. He introduces a number of critical questions that pertain to such a relationship: what aspects of cultural identity change and how do they impact architecture and the built environment? And, in return, what aspects of architecture and the built environment change and how do they impact cultural identity? In an attempt to answer these questions Mahgoub's work focuses on Kuwait as a case study. It starts by analyzing the cultural transformation that occurred in Kuwait during the 20th century under influences of economic and global changes, and then examines recent attempts at the beginning of the 21st century to reflect a cultural identity in architecture. He recommends that when searching for cultural identity, one should expect be find several overlapping identities. Mahgoub calls for a more open-ended approach to be adopted when studying cultural identities; an approach that stresses the *hybrid* and *hyper* nature of culture identity; a hyper-identity.

Ashraf Salama introduces an argument with cases on the issue of identity, tradition, modernity, and the underlying ISMS and trends in contemporary architecture of Egypt. Based on his earlier work. His argument presents a new positional interpretation of contemporary Egyptian architecture. It calls for a fresh look at the issue of meaning in architecture by critically analyzing the current status of architecture in Egypt through a reading of trends that emerged

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over the fifteen years. Debating the concepts of Mediterraneanism and Middle Easternism in association with the situation of architecture and urbanism in Egypt, Salama identifies and critically analyzes a number of ISMS including postmodernism, historical revivalism, critical regionalism and confusing symbolism. His work concludes by outlining an approach for a deeper insight toward the understanding of meaning in Egyptian architecture.

Thalia Kennedy explores the notion of hierarchy in architectural design and decoration with specific reference to the Taj Mahal complex in Agra, dating to 1632 onwards. As one of the acknowledged architectural masterpieces of the world, addressing the concepts that lie behind the design of the Taj Mahal allows an understanding of that achievement beyond its immediate visual impact. Much research has been carried out on various aspects of this Mughal tomb complex. However, Thalia's work focuses on the notion of hierarchy that informs the design of the inlaid decorative programme in the zone immediately surrounding the tombs of the deceased. This zone of decoration was particularly highlighted by Mughal commentators for its opulence and accomplished craftsmanship and remains today a highlight for visitors to the mausoleum. The work addresses three main issues: the decorative technique and its context and symbolism; a description of the gemstone and ornamental stone programme with a focus on motif, material and location; and the relationship between that programme and the concept of hierarchical organisation in its enhancement of the visual and spatial effects.

This is an eclectic mix of for a first edition and one which gets IJAR off to an excellent start.

We wish to have more papers in our system so that responsive debates continue. It is expected that there will be three editions per year and special editions on pressing issues.

I would like to thank the advisory board for contributing and taking part in this project. Thanks are due to my colleagues and friends of the scientific board for their support and encouragement, and for their efforts in reviewing the papers of this first edition.

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