Preface by Editor-in-Chief

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Architectural research has its specific challenges but also opportunities, resulting from the interdisciplinary and varied nature of architecture itself. The journal of Architectural Research in Finland, as well as the yearly organized symposium that it originated from, is an attempt to bring together this variety, inviting us to consider what unites the work done is the three universities in Helsinki, Tampere and Oulu, as well as the international work connected to it. It is not a common set of research questions, common methodology or common literature. The scales and the corresponding architectural tasks are also very different, as this issue of ARF showcases: from urban and regional development to detailed design challenges, from typomorphology to lighting design.

The implicit connection, one might assume, is the practice itself. In our urbanizing world, buildings and cities are where everything happens and, correspondingly, where the problems and solutions concentrate. However, there is no commonly practiced 'science' of the built environment that we could all lean on. To the contrary, researchers who have found their topic of interest turn to their respective ways of doing research, together with the network of other scholars relevant to their pursuits. This may seem like fragmented scholarship, but it also implicitly refers to a common ambition: to do something that is relevant to architectural design and planning.

On the other hand, society at large presents us with challenges that cannot be addressed with mainstream tools and ideas. We also meet buzzwords such as smart cities, ubiquitous technologies, network society, co-design, strategic planning, and more. They all have to be reinterpreted, not only adopted by architects, and this requires critical and creative analysis of the social, economic and cultural contexts of the discipline. In the face of it, architectural research should not be seen as an additional element but a way of reflecting the identity of architecture itself. The articles collected in this issue demonstrate the multiplicity of perspectives to approach this task.