

Preface by Editor-in-Chief: The urban milieu of Helsinki

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The covering theme of this issue is *diversity*, which is at the same an almost self-evident qualitative criterion of architecture, and a paradoxical concept. Architectural works strive for uniqueness and a personal touch, but at the same time their quality is not derived only from subjective idiosyncrasies or micro-local cultures. Aesthetic uniqueness, thus, also entails an international canon of good architecture. This may at times have political impacts, as local cultures and identities are unable to resist external influences; space becomes prey to time.

On the other hand, architectural research has a diversity of its own. Architecture, as an academic discipline, deals with issues requiring knowledge from a variety of sciences and neighbouring disciplines, as varied as arts, philosophy, history, social sciences and technology. While there are several opportunities for interdisciplinary cooperation, there are also irrelevances: history has little to offer to economics, and vice versa.

This variety of theories and methods around architecture has also raised an essentialist critique: architectural research should develop a research base of its own, instead of only borrowing from its neighbouring sciences. This is common when architecture is seen as an artistic, creative discipline. As in other fields of art, different methodologies and ways of publishing research results are sought for. Diversity can also be seen as a danger.

An additional challenge is the relevance of scale. In Finland, urban planning and design are embedded in the programs of architecture, and a majority of practitioners in major cities have an architectural background. Designing urban neighbourhoods and strategic planning of cities and regions require a substantially different knowledge base and problem definition than designing of individual buildings and structures. The ability to zoom in and out has, however, considered an asset.

In this issue, many of the problems mentioned above have been addressed in this rich collection of articles. What is particularly gratifying is that, during the years that we have been publishing this journal and organizing the yearly symposium, the balance of the different approaches in architectural research — its diversity — has clearly strengthened.