

Editorial

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The previous year 2019 constituted a turning point for ALFA journal and one can believe this year will be a year full of changes as well. The year 2019 began with a vision of journal's migration to virtual space and the goal of setting up its own *website too*. The *webpage design process* lasted from the idea to its implementation for about half a year; since October 2019, the ALFA journal can also be presented in an *online* version abroad. Digitization of the previous issues is currently under process (meaning issues between 2010 and 2018), while filling the archive on the website by past issues since 1997 when the journal was founded still remains a challenge. The peer-review form has been innovated and economic costs have been reduced.

The new year starts again with changes. ALFA journal continues with digitization, ceases to be published in printed form and transforms itself into an open-source periodical accessible to all enthusiasts of architecture, urbanism, design and research in these fields. The predefined template distributed to authors, similarly to other journals, aims to reduce the time required for graphic processing of contributions. Digitization itself, in turn, will reduce the time needed for printing and distribution of journal to readers. Nowadays, time is becoming a scarce commodity, and speed and availability of information are crucial. The double blind peer-review process should contribute to a higher quality of the published papers.

If one speaks about the commitments and challenges, the Editorial board "plays" with the idea of switching to the English version of the journal. There are several motivations to do so. The language of Science is English and if our goal is to increase the citation rate of our works, ultimately the *impact factor* - *IF* of the journal as one of the key determinants for indexing in relevant journal databases (e. g. SCOPUS, WoS), there is no other option. Let's admit that the Czech- and Slovak-speaking scientific environment is too small. The ambition of all of us should be to compare our research and findings with the international environment – "to send the world a word" about the results of our work thus raising our visibility. One can't do it through other language than in English. But a long way is still ahead to achieve this goal. The year 2020 will be a test for ALFA, whether it can address the foreign scientific environment and motivate researchers and doctoral students to publish the results of their research within the virtual pages of a journal that is not yet indexed in databases.

The year 2020 is challenging not only for the journal but also for the whole society. It started very similarly to the previous ones and no one expected fundamental changes, either in the management of the state or in the well-established "traditional" functioning of the Faculty of Architecture. The goals and the "*fahrplan*" (German word meaning in English a "*roadmap*") for the summer semester were set before the Christmas holidays; only little things were fine-tuned. Although we were marginally aware of spreading of a sort of coronavirus in China, the huge distance from Slovakia calmed our potential concerns right from its beginning. And, moreover, parliamentary elections were held in our country. Well, there were more important things. But that situation changed in February this year.

The COVID-19 virus entered the Europe and suddenly appeared not only in Italy, but also directly outside our borders, and subsequently in our country as well. The Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava, together with Comenius University, were the first Slovak universities which reacted and closed their faculties on March 8, 2020. (By the way, authors are very pleased with establishing this alliance / coalition. They want to believe that it will very quickly spread into other

spheres of cooperation other than mere coordination of restrictions.) An extraordinary situation we could not have imagined until then has arisen. We hoped it was only for a short period. Nevertheless, education process must continue, doubling the grades and number of students in the upcoming summer semester would be fatal especially for teachers, but also for the faculty in terms of meeting spatial and technical requirements. Reducing the requirements for student outcomes / assignments is only possible to a certain extent as the faculty is limited by accreditation as well as by the internal regulations of the University.

But it didn't happen. The change, which is quite radical, has finally come. But as the saying goes: "*Every cloud has a silver lining!*"

We found ourselves in situation where, due to the high age rate of the faculty members, teachers had to deal with a distance learning method within one week, they had to learn how to use applications such as *Hangouts Meet*, *JamBoard* within the *GSuite* (a suite of cloud computing, productivity and collaboration tools), or other online communication tools that support student education. The coalescence of all employees and their resolution to provide teaching to the maximum extent and to the minimum possible degree affected by the restrictions has given the authors hope and new strength to believe that the University environment is not the "*most conservative regarding its own affairs*", as Clark Kerr states. [1] Many thanks to all of you, teachers and students, for not giving up and accepting this "gag"!

If one looks for something positive in these difficult times, this *ad hoc* arisen situation brought a pressure for digitizing the teaching process resulting in contactless communication with students, creating databases of lectures available from a virtual space, or increasing the educators' interest in improving their IT skills. We are of the opinion that these "very significant" advances in the University environment – valid at least for those in Slovakia - would not be made even thanks to increased subsidies provided by the State or the European budget, or to any efforts of the Faculty's / University's management to motivate its employees.

Finally, we would like to use the words of the Czech philosopher and economist Tomáš Sedláček: "*What if we were hit by a global computer virus instead of a biological virus? What if we were struck by a similar depth with a modern digital virus (worthy of the twenty-first century) instead of the Ancient material virus? What if data couldn't be moved instead of people?*" [2] This would result in a collapse of the Internet, collapse of the distance teaching method, and collapse of the digital ALPHA journal version.

Words worth thinking about.

We wish you all, first and foremost, sound health.

REFERENCES:

[1] KERR, Clark: *The Uses of the University*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, p. 75 (2001).

[2] Tomáš Sedláček provides his thoughts on his Facebook profile of April 4, 2020, in his post entitled *The Medieval virus vs. digital virus or coronal eruption*