

Editorial

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Dear Readers,
 Dear Editorial Board Members,

Factum est consilium—the decision has been made!

I am addressing you as the new Editor-in-Chief of the *Architecture Papers of the Faculty of Architecture STU (ALFA Journal)* through this first issue in 2025. Historically, it was part of my competence as the Vice-Dean for Research during 2018–2022. After that, I was designated the Deputy Editor-in-Chief. Thus, I am familiar with the internal processes, goals, and challenges we will face together. Now, I humbly accept my new position and am committed to seriously determining my endeavour to sustain or improve the journal's quality. Literally and without a doubt, I consider the *ALFA Journal* to be, to some extent, my “bonus child”. Truly, it was my great pleasure and honour to assist my predecessor, Professor Robert Špaček, who was on board from the early beginning, since 1996. Therefore, I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to him for his many years of service to our journal.

Thank you very much for your perennial effort, Robert!

All things take place in time and space—within *res extensa*, the material world of René Descartes. Without time—the primary factor of cosmic phenomena—space would not exist. In *A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes*, Stephen Hawking argued that the existence of the universe depends on the presence of imaginary time in the vertical direction, a form of time distinct from our everyday life. In Euclidean three-dimensional space, real time represents a component quantity that describes the rate of change of phenomena in material reality or conscious experience. It is often called the fourth dimension, alongside width, height, and length. Such a perspective on our lived experience is intrinsic to architects, urban planners, and designers. We define space through the position and movement of a body or object—what is in front or behind, left or right, above or below. In *Physics*, Book IV, Aristotle explains that place is typically determined to oneself or another body and, ultimately, that emptiness is a place devoid of a body. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, a French phenomenologist and author of *Phenomenology of Perception*, saw space as a form of knowledge shaped by critical thinking, the embodied mind, and reflection. He argued that space is fundamentally tied to human perception and bodily experience, rather than an existing abstract, independent entity. This also applies to the *ALFA Journal*.

In recent years and decades, we have witnessed the dissolution of strictly defined Euclidean space (mainly through information and communication technologies (ICT) such as virtual, augmented, or extended reality), as well as the transformation of global space—long distances have effectively disappeared, and the world has shrunk. Time has become highly condensed, and we are inundated with vast amounts of information. Globalisation, the loss of identity, generic design, along with the rise of ICT and their evolving forms, such as artificial intelligence, presents new challenges and dangers across all fields—not only within the scope of the *ALFA Journal* but also in the very processes of publication.

However, regarding the *ALFA Journal*, we have recently succeeded in many aspects. Mainly, we have effectively implemented the process of the journal's digitisation and finished its transition to an English mutation, which I had always considered crucial in terms of the journal's sustainability and anchoring within the international context. Being indexed in 27 international databases until now only confirms these facts. However, the aim of becoming listed in the two most prestigious databases of *Scopus*

and *Web of Science* is still an ongoing and thorny journey and requires a strong commitment from all of us. Citing the high-quality *ALFA Journal* articles and leveraging the rate of geographically-diverse submissions, mainly from the so-called leading countries, are critical in this context.

Aiming to become a flagship periodical publication of the *Faculty of Architecture and Design STU in Bratislava* (FAD STU), the *ALFA Journal* seeks to showcase the latest and most original, methodologically rigorous, and socially relevant research findings, contributing to the fields of architecture, urbanism, and design—predominantly concerning theory, history, philosophy, psychology, sociology, and practice-, problem- or data-based research in and through the arts, engineering and structural design. The goal is to foster the development of these disciplines and strengthen their position in society. In the context of architecture and urbanism, even design, interdisciplinarity is particularly essential. Topics such as sustainable development, climate change adaptation, digitisation, and participatory urbanism require integrating knowledge from various disciplines. Technologies involving big data, algorithmic design, virtual reality, and artificial intelligence are fundamentally transforming the way of design, planning, and analysing the environment. These tools offer new opportunities for experimentation but also raise ethical questions regarding authorship, intellectual property, and long-term sustainability. The mission of the *ALFA Journal* is to foster discussions on these issues and create a platform for deeper dialogue. However, the *ALFA Journal* operates in a highly competitive and constantly evolving publishing landscape, where quality varies widely. As aptly noted by my predecessor, time is merciless. Therefore, we must remain proactive and adaptable to ensure the journal's continued relevance and impact in these times of dynamic evolution which undoubtedly presents us with many opportunities and challenges.

In the context of maintaining quality, the high speed of knowledge generation, and its validation through peer review processes, continuous technological, methodological, and societal changes, research integrity and ethics will rise in importance. Some entities force the idea expressed by the collocation to *move fast and break things*, others act more vigilant and advocate for being slow, deliberate and responsible. In his book *Slowness*, Milan Kundera noted that *the degree of slowness is directly proportional to the intensity of memory, and the degree of speed is directly proportional to the intensity of forgetting*.

I believe that boundaries must not be pushed in ethical issues, and there are no ethical conflicts so small that they can be generously overlooked. Besides that, one of the main challenges for the future is ensuring the sustainability of the journal's open-access model, as the norm in academia, which fosters interdisciplinary dialogue and lowers barriers to information access. Nevertheless, its funding primarily comes from the FAD STU budget, and paper publication is currently free of article processing charges. Other objectives include maintaining an efficient peer-review process and providing professional support to authors, continuously improving the journal's digital platform, strengthening marketing strategies, and fostering collaboration with international partners. The ultimate goal is to produce relevant, reliable, and easily accessible scientific content.

Science is a human invention. Its findings and truths are not eternal (not revealed) but provisional, verified through empirical observation and scientific experiments that must be replicable—otherwise, they are disproven and invalid. This makes science an institution of a transcultural character. It influences generations and civilisations, helping to address various problems and challenges. This is primarily applied through technology, inventions, and innovations that verify and confirm scientific truths in space and time. Truths derived from natural laws and principles reflect the climate and environment changes. One can then continue that only the truth is beautiful (growing in importance in today's *post factum* or *post-truth* era), after all, beauty is one of the main attributes of sustainability (*restituitas*), respecting the Vitruvian triad of *firmitas*, *utilitas*, *venustas*. Therefore, time and space are the foremost characteristics of the nowadays more relevant notion of *resilience*.

The main topic of this issue is space—its regulation, perceiving, preservation, modification, space-related well-being, and sustainability, which all vary over time. The

first article elaborated by Zhour Derriche, Malika Kacemi and Mohammed Seddiki, titled *Multi-criteria evaluation applied to a pilot sustainable neighbourhood project in Algeria: The El Ryad neighbourhood concerning sustainability indicators* envisages the climate change largely driven by human activities and urban development. Through the study in Algeria, the authors of the article present a new political approach that seeks to integrate sustainability into urban planning, while adapting a localised evaluation grid which combines two assessment systems to better visualise urban sustainability within the local contexts, in particular of the El Ryad district. As discussed, criteria of HQE2R approach shall be further developed and verified in time.

The second presented study entitled *Formation and evolution of residential buildings in the Djelfa region of Algeria* by Salah Eddine Heffaf, Siham Bestandji and Nadjla Samah Hamida traces the evolutionary trajectory of residential architecture in Djelfa, Algeria, shaped by the coexistence of sedentary and nomadic lifestyles. Analysing a sample of sixty dwellings, the research examines typological transformations from huts and tents to courtyard houses, row houses, and apartment buildings. Their conclusions highlight the courtyard house's pivotal role due to its adaptability, evolving through modular expansion and urban densification. The study reveals a cyclical pattern of growth and transformation, where new building solutions emerge, stabilise, replicate, and shape the region's dynamic architectural landscape.

Buberwa M. Tibesigwa and Benson V. Karumuna in their study *Maternal health and well-being: Behavioural perspective of architectural garden features for sustainable antenatal and postnatal care in Tanzania*, explored the impact of garden features on maternal health and well-being, focusing on their role in sustainable antenatal and postnatal care. Conducted at the Meta-Maternal Department of Mbeya Zonal Referral Hospital in Tanzania, the research utilised surveys and statistical analyses to assess caregivers' and visitors' perspectives. The findings accentuate the significance of garden features, behavioural perspectives, and social factors in reducing maternal anxiety and depression, with an explanatory power. The study underscores the need for integrating healing garden design elements in maternal hospitals to enhance recovery and well-being.

The study of *Urban form and psychological sense of community: The role of intermediate spaces in collective housing in Jijel, Algeria* by Mounia Ouari and Ammar Bouchair inspects the influence of urban form on social interaction and psychological sense of community (PSC) in collective housing areas in Jijel, Algeria. Analysing data from 400 residents across six housing zones, the research emphasises the role of transitional spaces—such as courtyards, pathways, and common areas—in fostering community ties. Research findings reveal that well-planned shared spaces enhance social interactions, strengthening PSC, while fragmented layouts hinder engagement. The study underlines the importance of integrating community-building principles into urban design, advocating for accessible and well-maintained common spaces to promote social cohesion and residents' well-being.

The last article by Abdurrahman Mohamed delves into *A new comprehensive approach to architectural heritage conservation* while presenting the so-called GRASP framework involving generative, responsive, adaptive, sustainable, participatory, and conciliatory elements to investigate the interplay between society, culture, economy, sustainability, and urban fabric in heritage preservation. The study focuses on the conservation of Al-Alami Historical House in Gaza, Palestine, a significant project by IWAN for Architectural Heritage Conservation. However, the recent destruction of Gaza's historical sites underscores the urgent need for sustainable and inclusive conservation strategies. The GRASP model, therefore, offers a structured methodology for planning, managing, and assessing heritage preservation efforts.

The year 2025 presents an opportunity to strengthen the *ALFA Journal* identity as a journal that supports innovative ideas, interdisciplinary collaboration, and a high level of scientific discourse. In the Editorial Office, we believe that every article published in this journal will contribute to the advancement of the journal scope, whether through theoretical research, empirical studies, or experimental design.

Finally, I want to extend my gratitude to our readers, authors, reviewers and editorial board members for your support, collaboration, and trust. I look forward to your

insightful contributions that will push the boundaries of knowledge, enrich academic discourse and help to develop the *ALFA Journal* in space and time.

Wishing you inspiring reading, fruitful research, and much success in 2025.