Editorial

Comparing various cultures from many different perspectives is not particularly new, but quite an unusual and unique issue among current scholary research dealing with the built environment. Although interdisciplinarity is today one of the major scopes for research generally, it often turns out that each discipline has its own debate, its own way of communication and its own set of research questions and goals. Studies often result in very detailed and deep insights in each discipline; for example, ethnological material is available for more or less all regions and cultures of the world, with a deep insight of people, their behaviour, economy, language, religion, social aspects and so forth. Works from architectural theory describes building construction and its development, historical studies describe the historic process of many cities, others deal with this process in vernacular settlements, town planners deal either with contemporary problems of shrinking or growing cities, or with their history, others solely describe problems of cities outside Europe, and so on. Studies of vernacular houses are concerned mainly with one region in Europe, and some other focus on one elsewhere in the world. Furthermore, researchers dealing with so-called "high cultures" often do not look at vernacular and primitive forms, although they would lie in the same region or culture.

Such a procedure is very useful in many respects, because it reveals lots of the particular culture, society or region. It, too, is important to note, that each discipline is already widespread and manifold. However, it is widely agreed that each discipline should have insights to other areas of research, since all dealing with an area of research of social sciences know about the limits of their own discipline. Nevertheless, for a discourse that goes beyond the own area of research, there is hardly any platform.

Comparing various cultures from a multi-disciplinary view with a view on the built environment results in a totally different debate and discourse. Particularly if one person or a group of researchers will deal with comparisons, the insights in each culture will be not so deep, not all inclusive and probably not so well founded. However, results will reveal a totally different view on discussed issues. Research questions rooted in a comparative method will result in an understanding of the differences as well as similarities that are found in the described cultures. It will help sharpen phenomenological patterns as well as generic elements, i.e. patches that are found in many parts of the world. With such insights it is possible to not only understand the described culture, region or society, but also brings new questions into the debate, particularly, if a pattern that was always believed to be unique of one time or society, has developed elsewhere in the world, but so far no one did ever compare it.

The Journal of Comparative Studies in Architecture (JCCS-a) was designed to be a platform for the above described discourse. It is aimed to bring together studies of various fields that deal with the built environment and aim to compare them. It also is aimed to encourage researchers and scholars from various disciplines who deal with the built environment to leave their own discipline and learn from others, understand their debate.

Particularly scholars who work already in a comparative way are encouraged to contribute to the debate, by one the one hand reading the articles from other fields, but also by their own work, opinions and an active involvement in the debate.

In the first issue of this periodical it was aimed to show how diverse the discourse of comparative cultural studies is. Since the idea of comparative cultural studies in architecture shall be highlighted, most members of the editorial board have contributed to it, as well as two other researchers, who are, too, working not only in one field, but are interested in comparative issues. The papers included cover many regions around the world, cities, villages, or compounds are shown next to each other, or vernacular, primitive cultures as well high cultures are observed.

The first paper by **Erich Lehner** deals with the patters of building structures in desert regions around the world and the generic underlying principles that are found, although they lie wide apart. The paper results in a conclusion that building in deserts has certain logic that is not culturally specific, but is a result of climate and environmental conditions. **Hermann Mückler** describes the traditional Fijian meetinghouse and with it the traditional orientation in space and with it its close connection to the hierarchical social organisation. Orientation in land is closely linked to the Fijian social entity and an overall cosmological category. The meetinghouse with its orientation guarantees identification and secures that Fijian culture will be passed on to next generations. **Gerald Kozicz's** article shows how much a building, in this case a temple in North Himalaya region of the Tantrism period before the Central Tibetan influence, reveals of a society, its religious believes and how much the particular layout of the temple is linked to these believes. **Prezemyslaw Paul Zalewski** highlights that the treatment of historic town centres in Germany and other central European towns in the decades after World War II was often undertaken in the name of mobility, decongestion or economic incentives. However, such planning strategies date back long before both world wars; a fact that is forgotten or neglected in the current debate. **Abidin Kusnos** article highlights the fact that there is an interplay between space, power and identity, by describing the case Jakarta, Java, Indonesia. Looking at the legacy of the colonial town and the usage of space as a disciplinary medium, it becomes clear that Post-colonial leaders did learn their lesson from this and are still using space in the colonial meaning. **Renate Bornberg** introduces the need to categorise public open space. Similarly to architecture, where many types of building are commonly in use, that underlie the main purpose of it, such as town halls, office buildings or airports, public open space undergoes the same process, namely that many categories are effectively used. By looking at various societies from around the world, it becomes clear that public open space was always treated very differentiated according to the central function.

Renate Bornberg

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