

A NEW BEGINNING

EDITORIAL

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“I love beginnings...” used to say Louis I. Kahn. Indeed, every new beginning brings along a sense of excitement and anticipation. A new beginning is always a moment to treasure past experiences and accumulated knowledge, while imagining new scenarios and good things to come.

Launching a new research journal in architecture and urbanism is certainly an example of a most stimulating new beginning. There are already many journals available, showcasing important research, interesting materials and diverse approaches. Joining the group, with some degree of distinction, positioning and relevance of contribution, is no minor challenge. However, together with *THE PLAN* Directors Nicola Leonardi and Carlotta Zucchini, we believed that, by also capitalizing on their experience with the flagship magazine, the moment was right to take up the challenge and venture, with a parallel on-line platform, into the fascinating territory of academic and professional research.

Architecture and urbanism are now at a delicate juncture, one where past paradigms and modes of practices are profoundly questioned, while showing ahead more a broad range of opportunities than defined paths to be followed. What is sufficiently clear, though, is that, if we want to pursue strategic change, achieve a new relevancy and meaningfully contribute towards a better future, robust research and design knowledge will increasingly become the necessary connective tissue of our professional landscape and operativity.

To test our new concept, we decided to tap some of the contributions presented at a recent academic conference of the Association of

Collegiate Schools of Architecture (ACSA) of Northamerica, held in October 2015 at the School of Architecture of Syracuse University (NY, USA). The conference, chaired by Syracuse University colleagues Roger Hubeli and Julie Larsen, revolved around the dialectic “between the autonomous & contingent object,” that is on the on-going debate whether architecture should privilege its own supposed disciplinarity or engage physical, cultural and/or conceptual contexts.

The selection of papers from the conference published in this trial issue of the *TPJ* was not made to reflect the outcomes of the conference or a particular position emerged from the many interesting debates that unfolded at Syracuse. The proceedings (published by ACSA) will offer the proper, comprehensive and articulated representation of the rich and intertwined conversations evolved at the conference. The papers published here (as presented at the conference or somewhat re-elaborated) are very interesting and thoughtful scholarly contributions, but they also want to offer a sense of what the *TPJ* intends to publish and promote: research studies in architecture and urbanism that are innovative, clear in methodology, and potentially impactful on the profession and/or the broader socio-economic context.

To recognize their support to bring this trial issue of the *TPJ* to fruition, we want to thank Prof. Marilys R. Nepomechie (ACSA President), Dr. Michael Monti (ACSA Executive Director), Eric Ellis (ACSA Director of Operations and Programs), and the whole ACSA staff: without their vision and hard work in promoting architectural education and scholarship, we would have not had this opportunity to test our ideas for the new journal. Particular thanks go also to the conference co-chairs, Roger Hubeli and Julie Larsen, for envisioning and organizing a most thought-provoking event. Finally, I want to personally thank the whole staff at *THE PLAN*, who has taken up this new challenge with its typical enthusiasm and professionalism. Special thanks go to Directors & Publishers Nicola Leonardi and Carlotta Zucchini, for their vision, their passionate commitment to promote and disseminate quality work and thoughtful reflections from the various fields of design, and for entrusting me to serve as *TPJ* editor-in-chief.

We hope that you will enjoy this trial issue of the *TPJ* and that you will send us your comments, suggestions and publication proposals. With the help of our Advisory Editorial Board, we also hope that this new beginning will grow into many stimulating and productive conversations, to engage a world-wide audience, interested in advancing the knowledge and the transformative power of architecture and urbanism.