

## Thoughtful ecologies

The idea of ecology – referring, in science, to the study of interactions between living things and their environments – also provides a fruitful metaphor for thinking about human cultures, and architectural cultures more specifically, in terms of intense and particular interactions between people, places, and ideas.

Jin Baek examines Richard Neutra's ideas about house-ness, with reference to that architect's distinctive sense of ecology as being more than the inhabitant's engagement with nature (pp. 349–359). For Neutra, Baek argues, it was the coordination of human relationships – the fashioning of a 'we' – which could activate people's engagement with the natural world to produce a proportionate ecology. Elsewhere in this issue of **arq**, Sarah Robinson reflects on John Dewey's pragmatic philosophy, seeking a framework to apply cognitive and neurosciences to architectural practice (pp. 361–367). She argues that architecture's contribution to sustainability has thus far amounted largely to disconnected technological innovations. There is an urgent need to go beyond this, she asserts, to modify behavioural patterns, cultural habits, and people's ideas of themselves in order to refashion a new 'we' towards a more balanced global ecology.

Distinctive cultural ecologies emerge at particular times in particular places. One that has captured imaginations in recent years is the district of Gangnam in Seoul, South Korea. Jung In Kim explores its contemporary 'highly materialist and extremely competitive culture' in relation to the intentions of the early modernists who conceived it (pp. 369–379). Meanwhile, Chen-yu Chiu, Philip Goad, and Peter Meyers recount the connections between Jørn Utzon's Sydney Opera House, interpretations of traditional Chinese architecture in terms of transcendence and natural dynamic harmony, and the texts of Swedish art historian Osvald Sirén. A building made in one place and time appears to have found its ecology in another.

Architectural practices can also be imagined as their own ecologies, consolidating, testing, and extending particular ideas and modes of behaviour. The sociologists Robert Schmidt III and Andy Dainty explore the distinctive cultures of three contemporary British firms, examining how their distinctive *milieux* have become evident in their projects (pp. 397–409). Peter Blundell-Jones, meanwhile, examines houses designed in the offices of Hugo Häring and Alvar Aalto as prototypes for bigger ideas about organising architecture in relation to nature, finding them to represent distinctive ecologies of object, image, and space (pp. 334–349).

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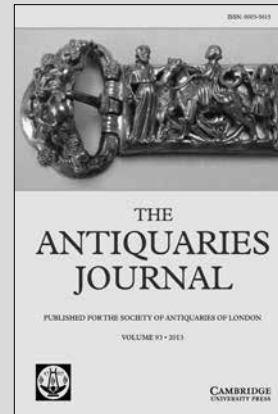
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