

# ANSWER TO THE COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE ARTICLE "ON URBAN SAFETY IN THE OCCIDENT: SOME RELEVANT OBSERVATIONS", T. KAUKO, URBANISM ARCHITECTURE CONSTRUCTIONS 12(1): 67-72

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**Abstract.** The present article is a summary of investigations carried out in response to the complaints against the article "On urban safety in the occident: Some relevant observations", published by T. Kauko in *Urbanism Architecture Constructions* 12(1): 67-72. The results indicate that the article was peer reviewed in compliance with the standard policies of our journal, and the requests for retracting it, phrased in two of the three complaints, are not justified, as none of the conditions recommended by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) as possible reasons for retracting the article is met.

**Key words:** article, complaint, investigation, COPE, Kauko.

## 1. The article

The article "On urban safety in the occident: Some relevant observations", authored by Tom Kauko, independent scholar from Budapest, Hungary, was published by *Urbanism Architecture Constructions* in vol. 12(1) of 2021, pp. 67-72. The article was submitted November 9, 2020 and rejected due to the lack of compliance with the Author Guidelines and Editorial Policy.

However, after several rounds, the author corrected the errors and the version submitted December 17, 2020 was admitted in the peer review process. According to the journal policy, the submission was assigned to two reviewers, who assessed the submission independently. The first review report, received December 25, 2020, recommended the acceptance of the manuscript, conditioned upon a minor

revision; the reviewer suggested that *"The authors should make better reference in the title regarding the area they consider investigating. The title needs some clarifications regarding ("some relevant observation from the west")"*. The second review report, received December 29, 2020, recommended the rejection of manuscript, on the grounds of low originality, contribution to the field, technical quality, clarity of presentation, and research depth, and lack of representative references, focused on the mainstream literature (these criteria are scored or checked in the review sheet), and the fact that *"most statements were at least arguable and lacked scientific support"*. According to the journal policy, since the two opinions differed substantially, a third reviewer was appointed; the third reviewer recommended the manuscript for publication as received in the report dated December 30, 2020. Based on the three reports, the article was accepted conditioned upon a minor revision. The authors submitted it December 31, 2020. Since the reviewer who has asked for concrete changes was pleased with their implementation, the article was accepted January 7, 2021 and included in vol. 12(1) of 2021, pp. 67-72.

## 2. The complaints

The Editorial Office of *Urbanism Architecture Constructions* received three complaints. All came from the same country in a very short time (less than two weeks), but after more than one year since the article was published online, and were phrased in a similar way, in a very strong language.

The first one, received February 24, 2022, pointed out that the article does not fit the scope of journal, and is *"extremely and unabashedly racist"*. In

further correspondent, the petitioner expressed some worries about the peer review process. In response to these queries, the Editorial Office explained that the article had undergone the peer review process, and that *"the views expressed in the articles belong to the authors and do not reflect the position of our journal"*.

A second complaint was received March 3, 2022. The author was *"disgusted that this article passed peer review"*, considering it *"a blatantly racist, ill-researched and clearly xenophobic diatribe meant to forward a white supremacist agenda"*, and asked that *"this article be removed and renounced from your journal, if a reputation of inclusion, diversity, and equality is important"*, asking the reviewers to *"consider the harmful language, ideology and false claims this author makes, challenging and denouncing it"*.

After the reception of the second complaint, the Chief Editor launched an investigation of this issue.

The third complaint arrived during the investigation from a person *"horrified to read this article"*, who has *"expected that a peer review process would have noted the egregious racist content of this article and denied publication"*. Similar to the first person, some concerns were related to the references, particularly to those from the *Occidental Quarterly* and *Mankind Quarterly*, and suggested that *"professionalism obliges the redaction [N.A., probably retraction] of this odious piece of racist writing from your journal"*.

The latest two people submitting complaints were also informal on the start of the investigation.

### 3. The investigation

The investigation was carried out according to the journal's *Ethics and malpractice statement* (Urbanism Architecture Constructions, 2022) and the recommendations of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) on handling post-publication critiques (COPE, 2021). The Chief Editor contacted the author and the reviewers, each person independently of the other, informing them on the complaints and asking them to phrase a viewpoint.

The reviewers have reiterated the fact that they acted according to the journal review policy, "*focused on the technical quality and readability of articles*" (Urbanism Architecture Constructions, 2022). In more detail, they assessed whether the study was properly grounded in the literature, has a clear research methodology, and is written in a form than can make the research process be understood by the readers. Also, as per the journal policy, they did not assess the nature of statements made in the article, since the authors hold the full responsibility for them, but only whether these statements were scientifically grounded.

The author has pointed out that "(1) 'racism' is not an academic concept [...]; (2) all my arguments are well-developed and their basis referenced, the realist approach follows academic suit, etc.; there should be no objective problems; (3) traditionally there was always room for all different views in an academic debate", and suggest that those issuing the complaints "*should be invited to write their counter piece. That would be the real academic thing to do.*"

Moreover, the author mentioned receiving positive feedback from a

member of the academic community from another country, who was "*really impressed*" by the article.

### 3. The resolution

According to *COPE Retraction guidelines* (COPE Council, 2019), an article can be retracted only if the findings are unreliable, either as a result of major error, fabrication or falsification; the article is plagiarized; the article constitutes plagiarism (including auto-plagiarism); it contains material or data without authorization for use; infringes copyright; reports unethical research; has been published solely on the basis of a compromised or manipulated peer review process; or the author failed to disclose a major competing interest.

The results of investigation show that the rules of the peer review process have been observed by the reviewers, who acted in full compliance with the journal policies, and none of the other conditions required for retracting the article from *Urbanism Architecture Constructions* are not met.

Thus, we would invite those issuing the complaints to submit their viewpoint under the form of a scientific article or letter to the editor. We remind everyone that our journal includes scientific articles, published under the "Archive of research papers", and other materials, such as project or conference reports, editorials, letters, research news etc., under "Archive of news and editorials".

We would like to conclude that the article "*On urban safety in the occident: Some relevant observations*", authored by Tom Kauko, and published by *Urbanism Architecture Constructions* in vol. 12(1) of 2021, pp. 67-72, expresses the view of

authors and does not reflect the position of our journal, or of its Chief and Associate Editor, but has been published according to the editorial policies of the journal, and cannot be retracted.

### REFERENCES

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