

Editorial

From Cities of Culture, Trade and Prosperity to the Cities of Ruins, Plunder and Riots?

Since September 11th last year, there have been many hundreds of articles in the British press, some of which included in-depth political analysis of the rationale for the attack and its implications. However, in the absence of publicly disclosed documentation on background intelligence and firm evidence of the atrocities, people all over the world will continue to work through various conjectured scenarios based on their own agendas and analysis of these recent events.



As an international journal devoted to the global built environment, GBER cannot fail to address the consequences of this hugely significant event, perhaps the most spectacular global event for several decades. It seems inevitable that the events in New York last September will have massive implications for people engaged in researching and developing the built environment. The shockwaves emanating from New York are still reverberating around the ruins of historic cities like Kabul, Major-e-Sherif and Kandahar. Beyond the warzones elsewhere in Asia and Europe there have been riots, killings, demonstrations, civil disobedience, some violent, beatings and repression, vigils and countless public and private meetings to discuss or voice opinions about the New York events and the implications for the future of Afghanistan, South and South East Asia, the Middle East and elsewhere. In Britain new knee-jerk reaction anti-terrorist laws have been formulated by government which, according to many civil rights activists (including some members of parliament), will infringe an individual's human rights in a democratic society. On behalf of the GBER the editorial staff would like to extend our heartfelt sympathies to the relatives and the friends of all the innocent victims of the attacks of late in the US, Afghanistan, Pakistan and other parts of the world.

The latter part of 2001 also saw a significant deterioration in ethnic relations in the U.K., with riots and civil disorder in Belfast in northern Ireland, generated over the route catholic children take home from school and the location of protestant housing estates along the way, and more general ethnic violence in the northern English towns of Oldham, Bradford and Burnley, towns with no real previous history of ethnic tension. We await the official report investigating the causes and nature of the disturbances in these towns with interest and anticipation. Then there were the massive forest fires in Australia, the global effects of a new El Nino, and the huge displacement of populations caused by volcanic eruptions in eastern Congo to name but a few other disasters of late.

It is set against such grim political, social and economic events (unprecedented numbers of people have lost their jobs in the aviation industry and travel industries especially as a consequence) that we offer our third issue of GBER.

Readers will not be surprised that we begin this issue with an in-depth commentary devoted to the World Trade Centre. Ayyub Malik, an experienced international architect,

worked with the late pioneer structural engineer Fazlur Rahman Khan (whose tube in tube high rise structural concept of John Hancock Centre, Chicago was used in the New York's twin tower) provides us with a detailed description of the building and attempts to analyse the causes of the massive structural failure that we all saw on our televisions. The commentary is based on the available literature on the building design and the recent reports in the press, local and international, and the internet. We hope in subsequent editions of GBER to offer more in-depth analysis of the September 11th events and its impact on New York and its surroundings. Contributions in this regard are invited from readers, particularly those who live in, or who are familiar with, the metropolitan area of New York City.

This issue of GBER contains two other extended commentaries. The second commentary comes from Hisako Koura, an academic architect from Osaka University (Japan) who writes on the renovation of historical urban centres in three Japanese cities (Osaka, Kyoto and Kobe). Koura takes us back to the eighth century former capital of Kyoto (where the much debated international convention on climate took place a few years ago). The pre-industrial seventeenth century urban centre of Osaka is briefly analysed, addressing the difficulties in maintaining the city's economic and cultural values. The author provides us with a timely reminder of the situation of other similar large cities in Asia which underwent rapid urban change, developing a high-rise built environment, and abandoning traditional housing stock in the process. This short illustrated commentary also touches upon issues relating to the sustainability of local identity, renovation of the traditional townscape, the historical background of the old settlements and associated cultural values.

In the last issue Belkis Uluoglu (Istanbul Technical University) reviewed a volume entitled 'Women in Architecture 2000 plus', commenting that the main purpose of the book was not to explore gender issues but to discuss about the practice of the female architects, especially the praxis architecture. In this issue Sumita Sinha-Jordan (a UK-based Chartered architect) writes a commentary focusing on 'inclusiveness' in current architecture practice and education in UK. With the British Home Secretary David Blunkett's controversial statement urging ethnic minorities to be taught about their local community, in light of the race riots last summer in the cities of Oldham, Bradford and Burnley, Sinha-Jordan's commentary ties in with current debate about the nature of identity and the meaning of this for ethnic minorities in Britain and elsewhere following the outbreak of war in Afghanistan. In her article 'Can diversity make a difference?' the author attempts to highlight the emerging issues of ethnic minority architects in Britain and her contention that there are serious shortcomings in contemporary architecture design education and theory. She also addresses multi-cultural architecture, regeneration projects and architecture for women. The writer also addresses the issue of architecture for the disabled and the aged (which still remains a neglected sector in many developing nations). The article represents a significant contribution to our understanding of a more inclusive architecture.

We begin this issue's article section with Pedro Moctezuma Barragan's (Mexico) very interesting research on what broad participation from community members and the stakeholders actually means. Participatory planning is often held to be the way forward in the disordered massive popular settlements of Mexico. As often seen in many developing nations, amid corruption and autocracy there is an unholy liaison between the one party state and the irregular urban dwellers in the study area. However, the Mexican study shows how this notorious phenomenon is being actively challenged by a community-based organisation.

Here we find that the organisation and the University members involved have promoted participatory planning on a massive scale. Moctezuma-Barragan also provides us with the current practice of other innovatory planning tools, e.g. the use of GIS (Geographical Information System) and Eco-tourism, apparently to the benefit of the local community.

Following participatory planning in Mexico, Michael Clark, an academic from the University of Central Lancashire provides us with an update on a cybernetic approach to sustainable development, based on his Planning case study in the North West of England during the 1990's. This is timely research on the much talked about 'Sustainable Development' post-Rio Summit now being debated by a host of developmental environmentalists around the world this year as 'Ten years after Rio'. Clark argues that unlike many other countries the planning and environmental management initiatives in North West England (Lancashire) during the 1990's has moved away from rhetoric to more practical proposals and actions. The aspects of cybernetics and its relationship with the environment and its institutional / political mechanism for sustainable development are clearly explained in this article. There are plenty of planning lessons to learn from this special case study.

From Norway Hoshiar Nooruddin, an architect working in Oslo explains the issues relating to 'In-between space: Towards establishing new methods in street design', a subject often ignored or neglected by planners, urban designers and the architects. Nooruddin draws his theoretical input from the Norwegian Planning and Building Act (he is currently based in Norway) and then attempts to reflect on its cultural appropriateness in other non-European nations. In particular the author examines the historic cities of the Middle East where new streets are being built next to old ones and all the important consequences in changing the character of the in-between space.

The final article comes from Peer Smets (Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam) focusing on the Indian housing finance alliances and the urban poor. Basing his case study on one of the largest urban slums in the world (Dharavi in Mumbai/Bombay), Smets attempts to revive old wisdom suggesting that the non-governmental agencies (NGOs) and community-based organisations (CBOs) can play an important role in housing the urban poor. While in the capitalist third world the aspects of self-help are limited, more recently there has been an upsurge of growing literature on urban poor financing. Peer Smets' current article provides fresh insight into future link programmes between financial institutions and the slum dwellers of the developing world.

As to the other sections, we are pleased to inform readers that our Book Reviews, Exhibition / Seminar Reports and Listing sections (Books and forthcoming events) continue to expand. Our thanks go to the growing number of contributors which is obviously a very good sign. We must also acknowledge the hard work and co-operation of the newly formed Co-editors (Ayyub Malik, Peer Smets and Magda Sibley). Dr Sibley has very recently moved to the Liverpool Architecture school, down the road from GBER's base here in Lancashire. We would also like to welcome academic architect Rajat Ray from TVB School of Habitat Studies, Delhi to our International editorial board. Ray will be able to coordinate information from India for GBER, an area much underrepresented to date. Due to the new grouping of the co-editors and the inclusion of new members (including Clive Grey, Language Consultant) within our editorial team, Melanie Boyd, our Assistant Editor, has revised the list of editors page, which you can access by viewing the cover pages.

With this issue GBER enters into its second volume in its second year. Reflecting the past year's activities it looks as if, with our current resources and commitments, we should be content with three issues a year (January, May and September). With the steady increase in readership and contributors suggestions have been made that specific issues be dedicated to a particular theme or region. The proposal of having guest editorships for such special editions is also under consideration. Readers are therefore requested to relay any suggestions or ideas in this regard through our GBER mailbase, the membership of which has also happily increased. A printed version of GBER using a suitable established publisher is still under consideration, hence the delay.

Now that contributions have increased significantly the editorial article may reduce in size to free up more space. As always, feedback is essential for maintaining the quality and standard of this journal, and all readers are kindly requested to feed back their views on this and past GBER issues through JISMAIL, or to the editorial team directly.

Wish you all a very happy and a prosperous New Year!

Tasleem Shakur

January 2002

**International Centre for Development and Environmental Studies
Edge Hill, Ormskirk, Lancashire L39 4QP, UK**

Tel: (+44) (0) 1695 584551 or 584573

Fax: (+44) (0) 1695 584573 or 57997

Email: shakurt@edgehill.ac.uk

Websites: www.edgehill.ac.uk/icdes

www.edgehill.ac.uk/gber