

Editorial

Global Built-Environment with a human face: The mismatch between international economic systems and the goals of sustainable development

Some twenty years ago, the distinguished Urban Studies scholar Manuel Castells suggested that ‘the fastest and most dramatic process of urbanisation is taking place in the squatter settlements, and slums of metropolitan areas of developing countries.’ (Castells 1983). Since then, while headline news from such locations has occurred on and off, probably one of the most dramatic international events of recent times took place during the Johannesburg Conference where demonstrators from the black township of Alexandra (South Africa) were joined by an extraordinary mix of people from Palestine to Tibet on a protest march to the wealthy suburb of Santon, a World Summit venue, chanting slogans denouncing ‘Capitalism, George Bush, Genetically Modified Food (GMR) and Israel’ (BBC World Service 2002).



Not surprisingly, at the end of the summit environmental groups issued statements suggesting that the conference discussions had failed to recognise the prime importance of human dignity, not to mention the plight of those living in the shanty towns of South Africa, the Philippines and Brazil (*for more details of the Johannesburg Summit see Ayyub Malik's compilation under this issue's Listing Reports Books and Events section*). To the embarrassment of the post-apartheid South African government, several thousand protesters (including landless people from the crowded townships) demonstrated their unhappiness with the failure of the ANC towards their electorate since their accession to power in 1994. However, the conditions of slums and squatters are not better in other developing countries (*see Maheswaren's Delhi workshop report 'Social Segregation and slums'*). While today up to 15,000 people die each year because of poor sanitation - 690 million people have no access to proper sanitation to India alone – the Johannesburg summit committed itself to halve the number of people in Africa lacking such basic sanitation by 2015.

This issue contains three commentaries. The first is based on the important outcomes of six days of negotiations at the fourth Ministerial Conference in November 2001 held in Doha, Qatar, and is written jointly by Kamala Dawar (Consumer International) and Michael Hindley, an international consultant on trade issues, both based in the UK. Whether we like it or not, Globalisation (or, if you prefer the term, World Trade) is likely to continue to dominate the thoughts, lifestyles and political activity of many people for the foreseeable future. There is nothing new here. Under similar conditions, architecture, planning, development and environmental concerns have been influenced by international trade many times in the past, but arguably much more now than at any time since the Industrial Revolution, and even more so in this post-modern information age. Not surprisingly, the 2002 Johannesburg world summit ended up in a series of heated, often bitter, unresolved debates over corporate actions in relation to environmental and social issues. While global attention was mainly focussed on the main South African summit what was less known were the actual negotiations on World Trade, generally carried out in low profile restricted entry meetings. In this connection Dawar and Hindley provide us with sharp insights in their very

informative commentary 'Implications of the Doha WTO Ministerial meeting for developing countries' capacity building, trade and environmental negotiations'. 'Capacity Building' is the 1990's buzz word for third world development, and this commentary, analysing the main objectives of the Doha agenda, also critically examines the tricky subject of 'Trade and Environment' and its practical implications for developing nations' capacity building. Michael Hindley, a member of the European Parliament between 1984-1999, has a vast experience of negotiating development aid for developing countries. He was commissioned by the British Department for International Development to act as a consultant on capacity building strategies of developing countries at the Doha meeting and this commentary is based on his report to DFID.

The second commentary, a short report by Miranda French concerns a recent visit to Marrakesh and the High Atlas mountains of Morocco undertaken by members of a university geography department, staff and students, from the north west of England. French gives us her first impressions of Morocco and examines the validity of contemporary stereotypical western images of Marrakesh. She compares her impressions with conventional life styles in western Europe and considers whether a short trip by a westerner to Morocco can really live up to the expectations of the first time visitor.

The final commentary / article is a report looking at proposals to upgrade the historic Ottoman empire capital city of Edirne (western Turkey) by Nevnihal Erdogan (Trakya University, Turkey) and her sixth semester architectural design students. The proposal was submitted to the International Competition / Exhibition on 'Ecopolises: Settlements for Sustainable Development', an initiative deriving from Habitat 2 (Istanbul) undertaken by the International Academy of Architecture (IAA). Programmes to upgrade slums and squatter settlements in developing countries were an important 'Development Mantra' from the 1980's and were carried out in several cities from Manila to Santiago. Less known are projects to upgrade the historic parts of cities in developing countries. In the past organisations like UNESCO or the Aga Khan Award have identified and recognised a number of potential locations (in places like Havana or Samarkhand). However, due to very high costs involved in such development work such mega-projects have seldom made substantial progress. Erdogan identifies attempts to protect and upgrade the historic city of Edirne from the adjacent river, while raising concerns that the inner city is increasingly becoming a derelict area. Needless to say, Turkey's future admission to the European Community might put these kinds of projects higher up the agenda of EU development aid programmes.

The research articles for this issue deal with the built-environment of Southern Spain (Cordoba), North Africa (Algiers and Cairo) and Southern Africa (Zimbabwe). Najib Gedal, a practising consultant architect based at Manchester (also a doctoral candidate at Manchester School of Architecture), presents an architectural analysis of the great mosque of Cordoba, 'one of the masterpieces of classic Muslim architecture' (Stierlin, H, p89, 2002). As part of his doctoral thesis, through this article, Gedal digs deep into the geometric analysis of the mosque challenging the more accepted norms of the building. In line with similar Islamic architectural styles in Damascus, Syria, Stierlin suggests '... the reuse of building materials helped to dictate the construction of the mosque, in which the marble columns and capitals were retrieved from the ruins of ancient cities ravaged during the great invasions' (ibid). However, Gedal concludes that due to a series of extensive destruction and rebuilding over the centuries, it requires closer attention and suggests a more careful excavation programme so that archaeologists make use of geometrical analysis of the mosque. Those interested in

geometrical design of architecture (an important characteristic of early and medieval Islamic architecture) will enjoy this geometrical riddle and the rigorous explanations (including a detailed arithmetical check) by Najib Gedal.

Moving south into north Africa, Magda Sibley-Behloul's (University of Liverpool) research provides a comparative study of 'Informal transformations of formal housing estates in Algiers and Cairo'. Unregulated urban housing is more or less an accepted phenomenon in various parts of the developing world (Shakur, T et al, pp14-25, 2001). However, while many data are available from south Asia and Latin America, little is known of practices in north Africa. As such Sibley-Behloul's case studies should be treated as a significant contribution to the existing literature. What is interesting to note is that in line with the theories of 'self-help school of thoughts of the 1970s' (Turner, 1972), low-income households in Algiers and Cairo are transforming the nature of public housing in line with socio-economic needs. More importantly, despite the inherent differences in regional politics and economics, there seem to be striking similarities in the transformation processes between the two case studies in Algeria and Cairo.

Our final article is provided by Nicholas James (Open University, UK) and focuses on 'Malnutrition data, food security and the geography of food in a communal area of North West Zimbabwe'. James has very recently successfully defended his doctoral dissertation on '....' from Edge Hill (University of Lancaster) and this article is developed out of this thesis. More than five million people are now feared to need food aid in Zimbabwe and a further 850,000 people in urban areas are predicted as being vulnerable (The Guardian, 2002). Disastrous land management policies are held by many to be partly responsible for such a dreadful situation in the country (op cit, Famine in Africa:1). James's article examines the causes of food insecurity in some of the communal areas in the north west of the country, raising serious concerns of malnutrition within the region. Understandably, the research attempts to explain its findings with wider contextual discussions of poverty, political economy and the agrarian change in the region.

Michael Clark (University of Central Lancashire) has undertaken a mammoth task to carry out an extended, thorough and very appropriate book review (Bridge and Watson eds., 2002, 'The Blackwell City Reader', Blackwell, Oxford) for this issue. In order to do justice to this huge volume (containing more than fifty essays on the City), Clark's review is more of a researched article than a book review, and provides a sound insight to the ever complex emerging field of City engulfing a host of disciplines and genres including cultural geography, Marxism, feminism, postmodernism, aesthetic economy and of course, globalisation. Academics, professionals (architects/planners) and students of Urban Studies should find this review article thought provoking, particularly the cross discipline and cross cultural analysis (both from historical and theoretical perspectives) is stimulating.

G Maheswaran (Indian Social Institute,) has sent a Conference report from India on 'Social segregation and slums: The plight of Dalits in Delhi'. Today India, with the world's second largest urban population of around 250 millions, has about fifty percent of its inhabitants of five major cities of Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Hyderabad and Bangalore living in slum conditions (Mathews, M M, pp 108-111, 2001). While the physical characteristics of some slum communities in India are possibly the worst worldwide (where more than ninety percent of the urban population living below poverty level), Maheswaran's report focuses on a more sensitive social aspect of a particular migrant community (Dalits, also allegedly described as 'the untouchables') forming the bulk of the Delhi slum population. The Indian Social

Institute's workshop-based on the completion of a serious study on the social conditions of the marginalised 'Dalits' raises a set of tough resolutions including recognition of the '... prevalence and inhumane nature of caste structure that clothes the rich at the expense of the poor' (see page 62).

Readers should note Ayyub's enhanced listing section containing a number of country reports, briefing papers, research projects and annotated recently published bibliography. This section is consolidating with every issue and readers are most welcome to send information for inclusion in future issues to Ayyub (malik@yyub.freeserve.co.uk).

Preparation for the GBER 'Thematic Issues' volume is currently underway. Next year there will be an issue focusing on south Asia while other suggestions on north Africa, the Middle East and Sustainability are being considered. Our co-editors Peer Smets, Ayyub Malik and Magda Sibley-Behloul will be editing some of the thematic issues in the future while suggestions for 'guest editorships' and 'themes' are invited other members of the editorial board and readers. Also, as suggested before, I am compiling a volume bringing together several previous GBER articles only available electronically till now and these are expected to be in print by the end of next year.

Finally, I would like to express my deep gratitude to Gareth Thomson who has now left Edge Hill for pastures new down south at the University of Exeter. Gareth was instrumental in setting up the journal, particularly the technical aspects. His position has now been taken over by Dr. James Newman, Senior Lecturer in Media Studies, who has particular interest in issues involving urbanisation in Eastern Europe. Meanwhile, Joanne Christian has taken up the role of Assistant Editor.

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