

## Conference Report

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### **Book Launch at the House of Lords, 8<sup>th</sup> December 2005: Introducing ‘Cities in Transition: Transforming the Global Built Environment’**

Over recent years there has been much discussion around urban studies, but there has been a lack of literature focusing on the built environment. The book *Cities in Transition: Transforming the Global Built Environment* edited by Tasleem Shakur fills this gap. In the book Shakur (2005, pvi) argues that literature relating to ‘global built environment’ and the ‘north-south built environment’ seems to be ‘minimal’.



The initial concepts of the book were as a direct result of contributions to the journal *Global Built Environment Review (GBER)* which was set up in 2001 by the International Centre for Development and Environmental Studies (ICDES). Since 2001 the journal has provided informative, well researched and qualified papers, which formed the basis of the content of the book: *Cities in Transitions*.

The book was launched at the House of Lords on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2006. Prior to this the book was launched on the international market in Istanbul, Turkey (see Halsall, 2005) Lord Patel of Blackburn, who hosted the event, opened the launch by congratulating the hard work of the editor and the contributors to the book. A number of guests from universities, Government representatives at both local and national level and private organisations were invited along to listen and participate in the launch. The panel consisted of Lord Patel of Blackburn, Jenny Crawford, Royal Town Planning Institute, Noha Nasser, University of Central England, Kevin Brice, Open House Press, Omer Khattab, Kuwait University, Tasleem Shakur, Edge Hill University, Ayyub Malik, author and architect and a BBC journalist (see figure 1).

**Figure 1: The Panel Members at the House of Lords.**



**Source:** (Edge Hill University)

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The panel discussed the key themes initially. Tasleem Shakur said that the built environment is a complex subject to research and gave his reasons why the book has five sections: (1) Cultural Identity in Transition; (2) Transforming Participation and Community; (3) Redefining the Design Institution Interface; (4) Contested Space and the New World Order and (5) From Multiple to Multicultural Built Environment. Furthermore Shakur added, the book offers a snapshot of the dynamics and changing faces of many world cities – from Preston to Cape Town, Karachi to Oldham.

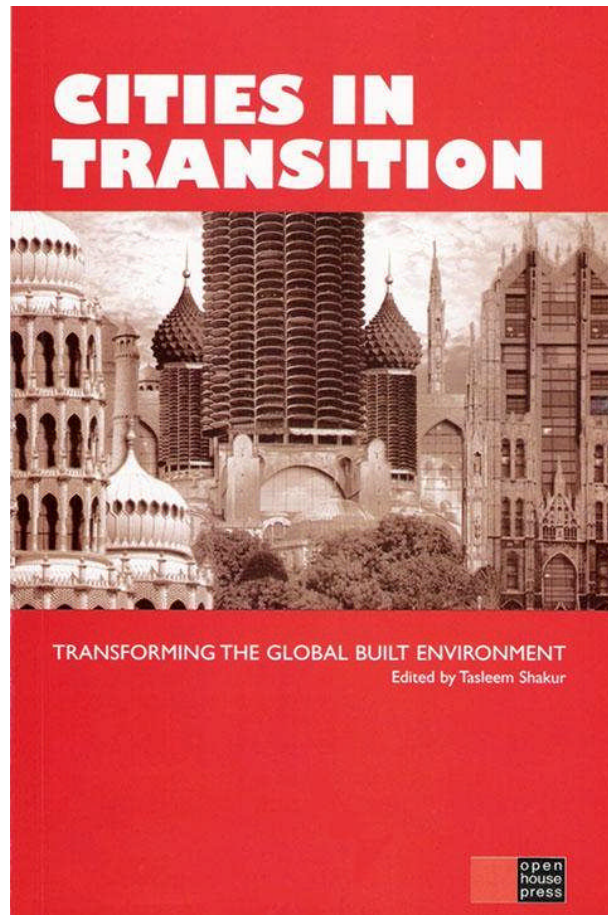
Since 2001, following the disturbances in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham, the importance and significance of community cohesion has become paramount. Jenny Crawford made particular reference to the article in the book by Iain Jackson going on to say that the article showed a critical examination of community and social cohesion. Describing the book in general she said that it is a valuable contribution to the ongoing debate on the perceptions of the impact of spatial planning policy and practice in areas of the UK characterised by high levels of ethnic diversity. In summary she added: “Cities in Transition brings added dimensions to the recognition of the very complex issues of governance that urgently need to be addressed throughout the world’s cities.”

Historically research on architecture and planning has not matched the reality of the built environment, with particular reference to the west and the developing world. Moreover, the concept of the built environment fails to meet the needs of the fast changing nature of the inner city, specifically inhabited by a population from non western cultures. Omer Khattab made the comment that this publication addresses the key relationships in the built environment by using case study approaches, for instance, Birmingham, Liverpool and Oldham in the UK and Amsterdam, Cuba, India, South Africa and Turkey globally.

The book deals with current debates within the context of humanities and social sciences. The issues addressed within the book generated some interesting discourse from the leading figures from the world of politics, architecture and education that were present.

The content of the book lends itself as a research resource into several genres and disciplines as the architect, the planner, the geographer, the historian, the sociologist and the anthropologist can all draw on the references and research findings on the global built environment in the urban context.

**Figure 2: Cities in Transition is printed by Open House Press (www.openhousepress.co.uk) and priced at £14.99.**



## References

Halsall, J. P. (2005) 'Conference Report: Third International Symposium, IAPS-CSBE Network at XXIIInd UIA World Congress of Architecture, July 2-7 2005, Istanbul Turkey' *Global Built Environment Review* GBER Vol 5(1) pp74-76.