



6th International Conference on the Built Environment in Developing Countries

Fragmented Futures: The Built Environment in a Volatile World

Editorial

The past one hundred years has witnessed the onset of the built environment as the dominant space within which the human race lives and through which human life is organised and experienced. The magnitude of this transition is breathtaking. United Nations data reveals that in 1950 an estimated 29% of world population lived in urban areas. By the year 2000 this had increased to 46% and within the following decade exceeded 50% of world population. Current projections estimate that by the year 2050 some 70% of world population will be urban¹. Numerically, this will equate to some 6.3 billion people. A more nuanced consideration of this data reveals that the most rapid rates of urbanization are occurring within those countries and regions classified as developing. The World Health Organisation estimates that during the decade from 1995 to 2005, cities within developing countries were growing by some 1.2 million people per week² and that, while the evidence suggests these growth rates have declined slightly, by the year 2050 the urban population of developing countries globally is estimated to swell to some 5.2 billion people³. The challenges that such growth embodies are complex, diverse and pressing.

However, living in the built environment is but simply one part of the equation. Arguably what is more important is the pursuit of improved life opportunities in and through the built environment for all. Issues such as economic resilience and prosperity in the face of global economic fluctuations, poverty reduction and equality despite increasing geopolitical disparities, social cohesion and vitality in times of political uncertainty and sustainability and adaptation as a response to resource depletion and climate change are emblematic of the challenges faced by nations, their governments and peoples and the world community. These challenges are complex and so demand nuanced, trans-disciplinary insights and approaches to identify address and confront them. As our lives become increasingly interwoven with the urban, the built environment provides an increasingly critical space within which these issues and challenges can and must be addressed.

It is in this context that the 2012 International Conference on the Built Environment in Developing Countries (ICBEDC) adopts the theme *Fragmented Futures: The Built Environment in a Volatile World*. Building upon the highly successful 2011 ICBEDC theme of *Re-Humanizing the Built Environment*, we continue our commitment to fostering an intellectual forum that explores and strives to propose innovations in policy, research, governance and development that promotes more sustainable and resilient built environments within developing countries.

Nicholas Chileshe
Matthew Rofe

University of South Australia.

1. See <http://esa.un.org/unpd/wup/index.htm>.

2. http://www.who.int/gho/urban_health/situation_trends/urban_population_growth_text/en/index.html.

3. DESA, (2011), Population Distribution, Urbanization, Internal Migration and Development: An International Perspective, Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population Division (DESA). United Nations Publications (<http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/PopDistribUrbanization/PopulationDistributionUrbanization.pdf>).