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Planning in the Middle East, moving toward the future

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Abstract

This paper, summarizes the lessons learned in this special issue of Habitat International on Planning Issues in the Middle East. After summarizing the highlights of the papers included in the issue, the paper looks ahead to the challenges facing the region's planners. These include coping with the rapid growth of cities, developing stronger planning institutions, integrating events in urban areas with the rural hinterlands, incorporating consultation with the public in the planning processes and meeting the inevitable challenges that will accompany globalization.

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Over the last 30 years, the Arabian Gulf countries have experienced a construction boom that has been fueled by increase in national revenues from exporting highly priced crude oil. This construction boom resulted in an unprecedented expansion in the size of cities. In responding to this phenomenon, urban planning practice was geared towards physical aspects of the fast urban growth and the rapid changes in the built environment. Its emphasis was on land use, land subdivisions, building regulations and dealing with urban sprawl.

This is quite evident from essence of the papers presented in this issue. Yasser Mahgoub's paper on 'Globalization and the Built Environment in Kuwait' emphasized the architecture aspects of the built environment in Kuwait and the conflicts between global and local forces in shaping it. Mustapha Ben Hamouche's paper 'The Changing Morphology of the Gulf Cities in the Age of Globalization: The Case of Bahrain' discusses the effect of exogenous and indigenous variables on the urban morphology in Bahrain. Faisal Mubarak's paper on 'Urban Growth Boundary Policy and Residential Suburbanization: Riyadh, Saudi Arabia' attributes the dysfunctional pattern of

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limited to location and production advantage alone, but will extend to competition in the provision of support for entrepreneurial enterprise. This will put heavy pressure on urban planning and management institutions to be more creative in improving urban governance.

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