

'A p p r o p r i a t e H o m e'  
Can we design 'appropriate' residential environments?

Joint International Symposium  
Housing & Building National Research Centre  
IAPS-CSBE 'Culture and Space in the Built Environment' Network

Edited by  
Dina Shehayed - Hulya Turgut Yildiz - Peter Kellett

19<sup>th</sup> IAPS International Conference  
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Housing & Building National Research Centre  
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HBRC & IAPS-CSBE Network Joint Symposium under the umbrella of **The 19<sup>th</sup> IAPS International Conference** on Environmental Health & Sustainable Development.  
September 11-16, 2006 Alexandria, Egypt

Joint Symposium

**HBRC – Housing & Building National Research Centre**  
**CSBE – ‘Culture & Space in Built Environment’ Network**

Title:

**'Appropriate Home': Can we design 'appropriate' residential environments?**

Designing the 'appropriate home', and even more challenging the appropriate residential environment, has been and will continue to be a prime objective of designers, planners, and housing specialists all over the world. The design of the dwelling unit, the grouping of those units, the vehicular and pedestrian circulation patterns, near home open spaces, and the distribution of non-residential uses, are all decisions that shape the residential environment. Attempting to make sure it will be socio-culturally 'appropriate' makes this task harder; it raises questions like appropriate for what, appropriate for whom, and how can we measure this appropriateness? This symposium addresses these old challenges with a renewed optimism. It includes contributions to the theoretical, methodological, and substantive aspects of this design problem, aiming to outline a more efficient framework that would help designers overcome persistent shortcomings in professionally designed residential environments, whether in new mass housing projects (private and public), informal settlement upgrading schemes, or the design of new neighbourhoods and new cities. In Egypt and other countries professionals, policy makers and officials face a range of problems including increased crime and fear of crime; increased economic burdens on low-income populations; neglected and wasted open space and public amenities; slow development, even lack of a sense of community; and lastly, the most annoying phenomenon to professionals, the mushrooming of informal, non-planned structures, uses, and accessories that gradually modify the designed residential environment to something more 'appropriate' to the current users' lifestyle and priorities. But is this a real problem, besides the designer's disappointment in the 'mutilation' of his or her visual compositions? Residents, especially in lower income groups, cannot afford to satisfy all their needs and requirements, therefore these transformations are frequently the result of trade-offs, expressing users' priorities at the expense of other needs. In some circumstances, this natural growth process of increasing the use-value of an otherwise 'inappropriate' residential environment can lead to increased health hazards such as, reduced ventilation and lighting in the dwelling, contamination from poultry and livestock, and the hazards related to certain income generating activities (e.g. air pollution, fire hazard). However it is vital to keep these problems in perspective and balance them against the gains which can include greater use of resources and tighter cultural fit.

**Keywords:** Appropriate, Neighbourhood, Housing, Environment, Home

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# 'Appropriate Home': Can we design 'appropriate' residential environments?

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## Acknowledgment

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We also would like to express our special thanks to Mostafa K. Tolba, Salah Soliman & Aleya Abdel-Hadi, the co-chairs and members of the organizing committee of the 19<sup>th</sup> IAPS International Conference: Environment, Health & Sustainable Development held in September 2006, in Alexandria, Egypt. And the chair of the conference Prof. Ismail Serageldin who gave us the opportunity to organize the CSBE-HBRC joint international symposium under the umbrella of the conference.

We want to thank research assistant Maha Abdel Sattar for her diligent efforts to ensure the success of the symposium as well as Assistant researcher Nour El Refai who worked very hard in the compilation, layout, & design of this publication.

## From the Chairman of HBRC...

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The Housing and Building National Research Center, HBRC, as a part of the national system of Egypt to fulfill housing goals, is a pivotal player in outlining the housing and building strategies, guidelines and implementation standards nationwide. Throughout the 50 years of basic and applied research HBRC has been keen to maintain international collaboration taking a leading role in the exchange of knowledge between Egyptian researchers and international experts in the corresponding fields.

It comes as no surprise that we welcome the idea of organizing this joint international symposium with one of the leading multi-disciplinary research networks CSBE, of the esteemed International Association for People and Environment Studies to share our research findings that address the most elusive, yet imperative, challenges in the provision of housing and that is the question of “appropriateness.” Beyond the quantifiable construction costs, user’s affordability, and number of dwelling units needed, there are looming questions like: how to stratify the housing demand? What type of housing suits what type of user groups? What layouts promote community building? and what detailed plan would grow into vibrant sustainable neighborhoods? These questions constitute the challenge that faces policy makers, designers and researchers not only developing countries, but also in the developed world. They are hard to answer and require creative researchers with multi-disciplinary knowledge and skills who venture out of conventional discipline boundaries in search of more integrative theories and methods to better address these challenges.

I therefore, have the pleasure to introduce, in this publication, the work of 29 such researchers from 8 different countries who are contributing today in this symposium. I am confident that the fruit of this valuable opportunity for exchange of ideas will deepen the understanding and further each participant’s progress towards solutions that aim at a more sustainable future for residential environments in their diverse contexts.

**Prof. Dr. Amr Ezzat Salama**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A. E. SALAMA". The signature is written in a bold, slightly slanted, sans-serif font. Below the signature, there is a thick, horizontal black line that extends across the width of the signature.

Chairperson,  
Housing and Building National Research Center  
Cairo, Egypt

## Preface

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This book is a collection of all the papers to be presented in the joint symposium organized by HBRC; Housing and Building National Research Center, Egypt and the IAPS-CSBE 'Culture *and Space in the Built Environment*' Network under the umbrella of IAPS 19: Environment, Health and Sustainable Development, held in September 2006, in Alexandria, Egypt. This is the first **joint** symposium held by the Network, after a series of three international symposiums.

The reason for organizing this symposium jointly between CSBE-IAPS Network and one of the leading research bodies in Egypt, HBRC, is to link and overlap the subjects and objectives of the network and the topic of IAPS 19 with pressing local issues of imperative importance, in this case, it was "the design of appropriate residential environments"; culturally appropriate, economically appropriate, and socially appropriate to the different groups in Egypt who need to improve their housing and living conditions.

As with all symposiums of our network, our aim is to open up discussion and debate amongst international scholars in order to more fully understand **multi-dimensional factors that ought to guide design and planning decisions in residential environments**. Therefore, scholars and practitioners from a range of disciplines including architecture, urban design, planning, psychology, sociology, anthropology – from different countries and cultures – have been invited to participate and attend this symposium.

Within the main theme of the symposium "the design of the appropriate residential environment" the symposium is organized with two objectives in mind. The first objective is to draw as many as possible quality scientific research on the issue by researcher from different cultures with different experiences and to share them through presentations and discussions. The second objective is to present the findings of a national research study on the issue whose findings are currently being transformed into guidelines and codes to inform housing policy in Egypt. The idea behind dedicating one of the symposium sessions entirely to this purpose is to capitalize on the IAPS 19 Conference as a potential forum for scholars interested in interdisciplinary exchange, to verify these research-based housing implementation directions by discussing them with the some of the world's leading theoreticians and practitioners in the field of housing as well as the housing experts in Egypt from government, universities, research centres, and leading private practices. We hope that such an exchange of ideas and expertise will benefit all parties that take part in this event, as well as those who catch up on some of it by reading this book.

**Dina Shehayeb**, *Housing & Building National Research Centre, Egypt*

**Peter Kellett**, *Co-ordinator of the IAPS-CSBE Network*

**Hülya Turgut Yıldız**, *Co-ordinator of the IAPS-CSBE Network,*

*September 2006*