



## Editorial

Architects and development specialists often live in different worlds and it is difficult to create a public awareness for the development dimension of innovative architecture. This special issue of the ATDF Journal aims to change this by bringing the two worlds closer together showing a variety of innovative projects and discussing their impact on African development in general and sustainable urbanization and local entrepreneurship in particular.

The papers in this issue cover a wide range of topics and activities dedicated to the improvement of the overall quality and sustainability of the built environment for people with lesser means. As architecture is concerned with the translation of theory into practice and therefore dependent on the continuous interaction with practitioners and scholars from other disciplines, this issue pursues an integrative approach. It addresses aspects on the a macro level (urbanistic concepts, global sustainability, new construction economies, capacity building strategies), the medium level (housing requirements, structural systems, in-door climate control) and the micro level (material research) and links them in efforts to find comprehensive solutions to sustainable architecture and urban design.

This important field of applied research, discussed and illustrated in many different facets in this issue, has the potential to become an important model for implementing new building technologies in the developing world. The beauty of the portrayed projects is that they may allow a country like Ethiopia to turn scarcity, one of its perceived weaknesses, into an asset, generating sustainable growth through innovation. Ethiopians have already great expertise in finding more efficient ways to use scarce resources and make better use of manpower; but they could further enhance the value of their expertise by combining it with innovative new techniques to improve the quality and affordability of their products and services. Its very constraints, therefore, could become its saving graces, as Africa could become a leader in dealing with innovative low-cost solutions to climate change adaptation. The methods and techniques shown in this issue could serve as a benchmark of sustainable building practices and help initiate research and projects that pursue a sustainable approach on all levels, from the choice of materials to the construction design and its implementation and finally to challenges related to operation and maintenance.

I take this opportunity to thank the editors of the ATDF Journal for inviting me to edit this issue. It is a great opportunity to bring our field of research and practice to the attention of a new and wider audience. Changes need to happen to address the acute challenges of Africa, and I am hopeful that this publication can spread the awareness of this urgency. Last, I would like to thank all contributors for being part of this special issue and writing their insightful papers despite their many other commitments.



Philippe Block, PhD  
Institute of Technology in Architecture  
Swiss Federal Institute of Technology  
(ETH) Zurich, Switzerland