

EDITORIAL

Since the founding of the seminar on vernacular settlements in 1999 and the setting up of the International Society for the Study of vernacular settlements (ISVS) afterwards, theoretical explorations of vernacular settlements have steadily expanded to include multi-faceted issues that not examined before. The recently concluded ISVS-8 held in Makasaar, Indonesia is an example of these new developments where the unique settlement issues and ideas related to the coastal vernacular were amply explored. In this issue, we first present the paper of Klara Puspa which won the best paper award. As she points out, the vernacular coastal communities today are facing the forces of globalization arriving in the name of Coastal Tourism that have begun to influence their attitudes and values sustained over generations. She shows how the specific transformation in Alor Kecil vernacular society in Indonesia have resulted in the erosion of local skills, as well as the rupture in the relation between inhabitants and their natural cycle. Moreover, there is evidence of the decay of vulnerable marine ecosystems, and the rise of social inequality in the cultivation of natural resources. However, the locals also demonstrate a tolerant attitude towards what comes from outside absorbing them to their daily life, a way in which vernacular settlements have always evolved.

In the second paper, Ina Helena explores a similar issue. Although not about coastal settlements, this paper draws attention to the deep-seated spatial concepts of spiritual consciousness, which she argues are often over looked in the contemporary approaches to planning. She demonstrates the presence of such spiritual notions in a community in Indonesia, where esoteric traditions are central to their existence. Her argument that new ways of thinking are needed to preserve and support such communal life systems. In fact they need to be carefully attended to, in the modern planning and development practices if we are to help such communities to retain their values in the process of progress.

Marwa's paper on the desert vernacular is in the same spirit where she points out the internal processes of change that are sweeping many vernacular settlements. While she looks at the situation in the Egyptian deserts, the issue is undeniably same across many other situations and is a perennial question posed to those who are looking at vernacular settlements. In her paper, Marwa offers a vision and a practice for preserving the desert vernacular and help them adopt them to the needs of the modern world.

In the final paper, Manal Khalaf draws our attention to another dimension that is worth being pursued. That is the seemingly parallel development, taking place in Heritage Studies and Vernacular Studies which to date appear to exist separately and separated. There is no doubt that a bridge is needed and cross-fertilization is likely to enrich both vernacular studies and heritage studies. Indeed, the Vernacular settlements need to remain and be supported to prosper, if not by preservation but by the means, Marwa is advocating in her paper. This journal issue thereby paves the ways for a number of new directions to pursue research on vernacular settlements.