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Empathy as a pathway to resilience

The world is urbanising rapidly, particularly in those regions where most people live. This results in sprawling, informal settlements and expansion of the built environment. To respond to these challenges sustainably, architects and designers have an important role to play. The environments and spaces that they create also shape the people who inhabit them. Creating sustainable, resilient and locally rooted built environments requires the inclusion of local inhabitants in the design process. When working in low- to middle-income countries, prevailing social distances often make participatory work challenging. It is possible to overcome these challenges by applying a broad spectrum of empathy as a mindful attitude to the design process. This enhances horizontal collaboration. Empathy is a profound ability that we need to cherish and develop. Through designing with empathy, awareness and love for life the spaces we create will support quality encounters between people.