

## 20<sup>TH</sup> BUILT ENVIRONMENT CONFERENCE

### BUILDING ON OUR PAST, CREATING OUR FUTURE

15-16 JULY 2026  
PRETORIA, SOUTH AFRICA



## CALL FOR PAPERS

The Association of Schools of Southern Africa (ASOCSA) celebrates its **20th Built Environment Conference** on the 15&16th July, 2026, in Pretoria, South Africa.

In celebration of this milestone ASOCSA has selected as the theme for this conference, ***Building on our Past, Creating our Future***. This theme provides the opportunity through a retrospective, progressive, transformative and visionary lens to examine through empirical research the historic, persistent and critical challenges and debates that face the construction industry locally, regionally and globally. The intent is that by reflectively looking back we may seek responses to the following questions:

- What does a resilient, future-ready construction industry look like in the face of deep technological, climate and regulatory uncertainty?
- How can all stakeholders embed adaptability, sustainability, innovation and foresight into design, planning and engineering of the built environment?
- What tools, data, and frameworks can help the construction industry to respond dynamically to climate, societal, and technological change?

Past conventional planning and engineering approaches are ill-suited in a dynamic and rapidly evolving landscape to respond to the challenges presented by, for example, extreme weather events, resource and skills shortages, health and safety crises, energy transitions, and workforce development. Emergent themes include consideration of adaptive and responsive design, resilience thinking, scenario planning, nature-based solutions, smart construction, robotics, artificial intelligence, and machine learning. Consequently, construction can no longer only be about durability, but must also take cognizance of flexibility, redundancy and responsiveness – all the while recognizing that there is no 'one-size-fits-all' response or solution.

In 2003, David Perkins at Harvard University in the opening lines of his article, *Making Thinking Visible*, stated the following:

*Consider how often what we learn reflects what others are doing around us. We watch, we imitate, we adapt what we see to our own styles and interests, we build from there. Now imagine learning to dance when the dancers around you are all invisible. Imagine learning a sport when the players who already know the game can't be seen. Bizarre as this may sound, something close to it happens all the time in one very important area of learning: learning to think.*

Therefore, Building on our Past, Creating our Future, challenges us to learn to think – and re-think about the construction industry as a living system amid uncertainty.

The construction industry must continue to deliver in terms of the following:

1. Increased profitability and efficiency
2. Environmental sustainability and compliance
3. Customization and competitive advantage
4. Adaptability to market dynamics

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The 20th Built Environment Conference to be held on the 15th and 16th of July 2026 in Pretoria, seeks responses to questions related to current conversations, debates, and empirical research on the challenges of and opportunities presented by the theme Building on our Past, Creating our Future. To aid researchers in identifying relevant research for the conference, the following sub-themes are provided.

### SUB-THEMES

- Innovative use of technology
- Sustainable construction and environment
- Construction industry transformation and development
- Sustainable infrastructure design and delivery challenges
- Procurement innovation and transformation
- Smart cities and sustainable human settlements
- Innovative waste management
- Public and private sector procurement and contracting
- Legislative and regulatory challenges
- Labor challenges and issues
- Transformative education, training and skills development
- Construction health and safety innovation
- SME development
- Women in construction
- Government role in transformation and sustainability
- Project management in Construction
- Skills development
- Workforce diversity and development
- Nature-based solutions
- Near zero design and construction

The conference invites papers within the context of its theme & sub-themes that address, *inter alia*, in both the public and private sectors

- Past and current trends and developments
- Innovation
- Opportunities and challenges
- Policies and procedures
- Legislation and regulations
- Practices
- Case studies

Papers will be reviewed according to:

- Relevance to the conference theme
- Objectives and outcomes of the conference
- Originality of the subject matter
- Rigor and robustness of empirical research
- Research design and methods

### CASH PRIZES FOR BEST PAPERS: SPONSORED BY MODENA

Top Paper: R6,000 • 2<sup>nd</sup> Paper: R3,000 • 3<sup>rd</sup> Paper: R1,000

**Selected papers will be published as book chapters and indexed in Scopus**

It is intended that these papers will contribute significantly to the existing body of knowledge relative to the science and practice of construction not only in South Africa but everywhere where the products of construction are produced.