

## **Global Holcim Awards Jury Meeting 2009**

### **Project appraisal**

#### **Global Holcim Awards Gold 2009**

##### **River remediation and urban development scheme, Fez, Morocco**

This is a multi-sited, multi-functional project that is centered upon the recovery of a river. Work on restoring it triggers a range of interventions in the Medina. Outstanding features of this project are the strong emphasis on process and on the use of what is there. Core components are the rehabilitation of the old city's architecture, revitalizing public spaces and traditional tanneries, and creating new pedestrian zones. Each step in the project is part of a longer chain of recoveries, which also allows for future interventions. And it all starts with what is there now. Recovery of the river is conceived of as an interactive process. At one end, river recovery includes a return to original ecologies, notably promoting the growth of wetlands and biodiversity. At the other end, river recovery feeds into the rehabilitation of economic, social and civic activities: the potential for rehabilitating older craft industries, the sensitizing of the population to ecological issues and a clean city. This is a phased project, with an initial phase of river recovery under way and the support of the city (urban government?) of Fez. This phased approach opens up the project to the incorporation of further work. One critical aspect of further work that will have to be dealt with is the risk of flash floods that can surpass the absorption capacity of wetlands; there are simple and low-cost interventions that have been successful elsewhere. Given the open design of this project, such an addition should not be a problem: it would build on the river recovery work in process now. What marks this project is its wisdom: it works with what is there and uses it as a platform for upgrading and keeps the process open to future possibilities.