
Foreword

Prof Carlos Brebbia, the joint editor of the *International Journal of Design & Nature and Ecodynamics* at WIT Press, asked me to launch this special issue of the journal on the “Vision for Sustainable Urbanism”. The theme is chosen for its timeliness, namely that, according to the UN 2010 World’s Urbanization Prospect report, by the middle of this century the population of the urban areas in the world cities will increase by 6.3 billion, which is an estimate much larger than had ever been witnessed before. What is more remarkable is that much of this population growth will be centered on the large global cities of the world; cities already overburdened by overcrowding but vested with global potential and market opportunities. Global cities with populations larger than 5 million is an image of the future urban environment that will be the center of attraction for generations of people. The newly emerging urbanites and their aggregation in cities will have a dramatic effect on the design and functioning of the urban environments, inevitably having a profound impact on the shaping of communities and global ecology as a whole.

Throughout human history, cities have been the backbone of prosperity and have generated economic and social freedom for its citizens. They have also fostered a higher form of cultural expression that enhances the life and wellbeing of communities. Cities of the past existed with many scales and complexities that enjoyed a sustainable relationship with their surrounding ecology. They took advantage of the natural systems for their energy, space, and material uses and their symbiotic relations with land and climate kept adverse effects to a minimum.

By contrast, the cities of the contemporary era due to their excessive and wasteful consumption of the scarce natural resources, and with the use of modern technology, to shape and change the built environment, have resulted in much environmental degradation. Modern cities and buildings today are the biggest consumers of the non-renewable energy capital on earth and they contribute to as much as 70% of the greenhouse gasses worldwide, which forcefully drive the global outcome on climate changes. The phenomenon of global warming and its ill effect on the land, sea, and atmospheric temperature will wreak a profound social and environmental implication on the cities of the world.

In the globalized millennium ahead, cities will play a strong role in creating the ground on which cultural and economic opportunities can be cultivated for the growing world’s population. This is where innovative and creative solutions to community design will necessarily be played out to help foster a fertile environment for business to grow and for the larger economy to advance. Advancements in science, technology, and the world of cyber-information will no doubt come to play a supporting role as well, helping find solutions to our increasing environmental problems and elevating the art of urban living to a sustainable capacity.

Despite the drag of contemporary cities, there are signs that good practices in planning and design of the built environment are underway. The lessons gained through them can serve as inspiration and guides for the next step. We see them evolve through national and international leadership, including those that emanate from grass roots community dialogues. Sustainable practices should become a life cycle agenda for the world’s urbanite and should involve the present as well as the future generations.

The collection of essays in this edition are an up to date research and investigation by invited authors who enthusiastically accepted to contribute to this special issue of the journal. The essays include valuable topics, viewpoints, and examples of good practices in an attempt to inspire the journal's readership in this area of study. Their work however is not exhaustive and should not be taken as conclusive of the daunting tasks still ahead of us in the 21st Century, but rather as an attempt to arouse further exploration and deliberation.

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