Urban Design and Planning Editorial

Urban design is the future. Or, rather, urban design is *about* the future. Being part of this important discipline and profession, we imagine and deliver designed urban environments that embody the desired, required and suitable needs of a diversity of users (Margolin, 2007). This involves envisioning how things could be (the future), but also crucially includes an understanding of what was (the past) and what is (the present). While we might not think of urban designers as future-oriented per se, by very nature of what we teach, research and practice, we are.

With this knowledge of past and present, and the ability to imagine the future, urban designers are being called upon more and more to actively participate in, and shape, possibilities for cities. It is not enough to know about urban form: we increasingly are expected to have an intimate understanding of the 'organised complexity' of urban environments (Romice *et al.*, 2022). This means being cognisant of, and engaging in, a range of issues, including sustainability, resilience, health and wellbeing, inclusion, inequality and injustice.

The contributions in this issue of *Urban Design and Planning* do exactly that: they tell us something about the past and present of our diverse urban environments, and then offer possibilities for the future. They explore complex issues involving belonging (inclusion), land use (sustainability) and COVID-19 (health). They highlight problematic patterns in our human behaviour and demonstrate how design – whether education, policy or practice – might be complicit in perpetuating these patterns. Significantly, they also offer ideas, interventions and solutions to break those patterns and establish new ones that can lead to improvement.

In our first article, we are introduced to refugee camps in Al Baqa'a, Jordan. Aburamadan (2023) posits that camp design often does not consider the diverse experiences and requirements of refugees, and that a different approach to capturing needs is fundamental. Through fieldwork comprising questionnaire interviews and surveys of 76 camp residents between 2014-2018, the author reveals that a majority of camp residents struggled with basic, physiological and safety needs; they did not feel a sense of belonging or community; they did not feel respected by other cultures within the camp, and; they did not feel confident about improving their home infrastructure. Respondents also said that humanitarian organisations, who provide the shelters, appear to prioritise cost and time management above other factors. Based on these findings, Aburamadan proposes a multidimensional model that captures refugees' needs across three levels, taking inspiration from Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs: (1) Safety, security and human comfort; (2) Socio-cultural appropriateness and wellbeing; (3) Sustainability, time and host community differentiation.

In our second article, Patil and Gupta (2023) outline an approach to analysing past patterns of urban development and predicting future land transformation. The authors adopt a five-step framework involving Geographical Information System and Remote Sensing

technologies to develop land use land cover (LULC) maps that show what humans are using in terms of land and what is still natural. By incorporating Artificial Neural Networks into this process, potential future scenarios can be created that move beyond typical LULC approaches. Patil and Gupta apply their framework to Jaipur, India, which has experienced rapid physical and demographic growth between 1990-2020. They show that urban areas have expanded by almost 47% during this time, and that this will increase by around 13% more by 2030. The authors conclude that such approaches to understanding the density of developed land in urban areas, like the one they used, could help local authorities when planning for future development projects.

In the final article, Titiloye and Jin (2023) examined shopping patterns among adults in Florida, USA, during the early vaccination phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. To understand how shopping experiences might influence shopping behaviours in the long-term, they undertook a survey of over 2200 residents, gathering data on the frequency and cost of recent purchases, distance to shops and attitudes toward online versus in-person shopping. Their findings demonstrate that, despite the rise in online shopping for essential items, an overwhelming majority of respondents chose to purchase groceries in-store. However, in-store shopping was not necessarily motivated by a need to interact with others; rather, price, safety and parking availability were the main factors in deciding to shop in-person. In contrast, those who shopped online were motivated by the ability to find and compare products, but there were concerns about putting personal information online, shipping costs and an unclear returns policy. Furthermore, Titiloye and Jin found that women made longer shopping travels and liked to take their time, even though they spent less than men and found in-store shopping more stressful. From this, they suggest that urban planners could be doing more to promote mixed-used developments in which shopping is integrated with other uses, thereby reducing the need to make separate journeys.

Returning to the main idea of this editorial, the three contributions to this issue undoubtedly are about the future. Although they each speak on different topics and explore them in different ways, the authors have taken significant steps to understand what was and what is in order to contemplate what could be. Whether it is about the design of refugee camps in Jordan ignoring the multi-dimensional needs of residents, that natural land in Jaipur is being lost at an alarming rate or that shopping behaviours in Florida during COVID involved a lot of in-person groceries, there also is a sense in these articles of possibilities for the future. These possibilities can take many forms, including new courses, frameworks, methods, models, policies, practices, plans and theories. It is our job as urban designers to harness these possibilities for the future and act as agents of change for cities.

Please visit the Virtual Library homepage on the *Urban Design and Planning* website to read the articles discussed here as well as the most recent articles Ahead of Print.

References

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