

RESILIENCE, SUSTAINABILITY AND QUALITY

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The world is in the midst of a disquieting period of increasing consumption, population growth, and environmental degradation, and the resulting environmental trends such as global warming, urban sprawl, and land consumption are truly terrifying. The major challenge for cities is in their ability to respond to climate change, peak oil, and decline of ecological regions. Cities need to move away from the idea of reducing their impact on their ecological region to actually enhancing it ecologically.

Factors that drive risk in cities are unplanned urban development, inappropriate construction, weak urban governance, concentrations of economic assets, a lack of available land for low income citizens, rising populations, and increased density. The big question is how to meet the needs of urban systems and urban quality of life. Quality of life can play an important role in addressing these problems, particularly by minimizing the ecological footprint of the general public, saving energy, providing a car-free environment, recycling water, using sustainable building materials, and incorporating renewable energies through green technologies. Meeting needs in the local market is a key factor in resilience, as purchasing local goods and materials from local shops will keep money circulating locally. Diversity of the local retailers strengthens the viability of the local economy and vitality of the local community. Businesses will be more viable and resilient if they have adaptation plans in the event of unexpected crisis.

A resilient city is one that is envisaged and planned following a participatory approach. It has a competent and accountable local government that cares about sustainable urbanization and is well served by good infrastructure, services and structures. It has a strong database and as such is able to minimize both physical and social losses in the event of setback. A resilient city is committed, possessing the necessary resources and organizational capacity for before, during and after a disaster. It can quickly restore basic services and social, institutional and economic activity after a disaster. This leads to a holistic approach in understanding the functioning of the whole system, embracing its

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complexity and dynamics. Transition to this level is difficult, in that it requires a complete reorientation of industrial society to a different set of technologies related to renewable and distributed small-scale water, energy and waste systems.

Post-carbon, climate responsive, city planning will require a shift in our current way of thinking, as many practices of car-oriented, single-zoned planning will no longer be viable. For the ideals of sustainable development to be achieved in developing countries, the various manifestations of poverty, urbanization, and urban transformation need to be carefully considered, analyzed, and incorporated into strategic and local policies geared toward sustainable development.

Globally, sustainable development is recognized as a potential pathway for building ecological cities, reducing poverty and unemployment, and safeguarding the natural environment. With the aim of achieving a symbiotic relationship between the economy, society, and ecology, the concept of sustainable development should be increasingly focused on fostering adaptive capabilities and creating opportunities to maintain or achieve desirable social, economic, and ecological systems for both present and future generations.