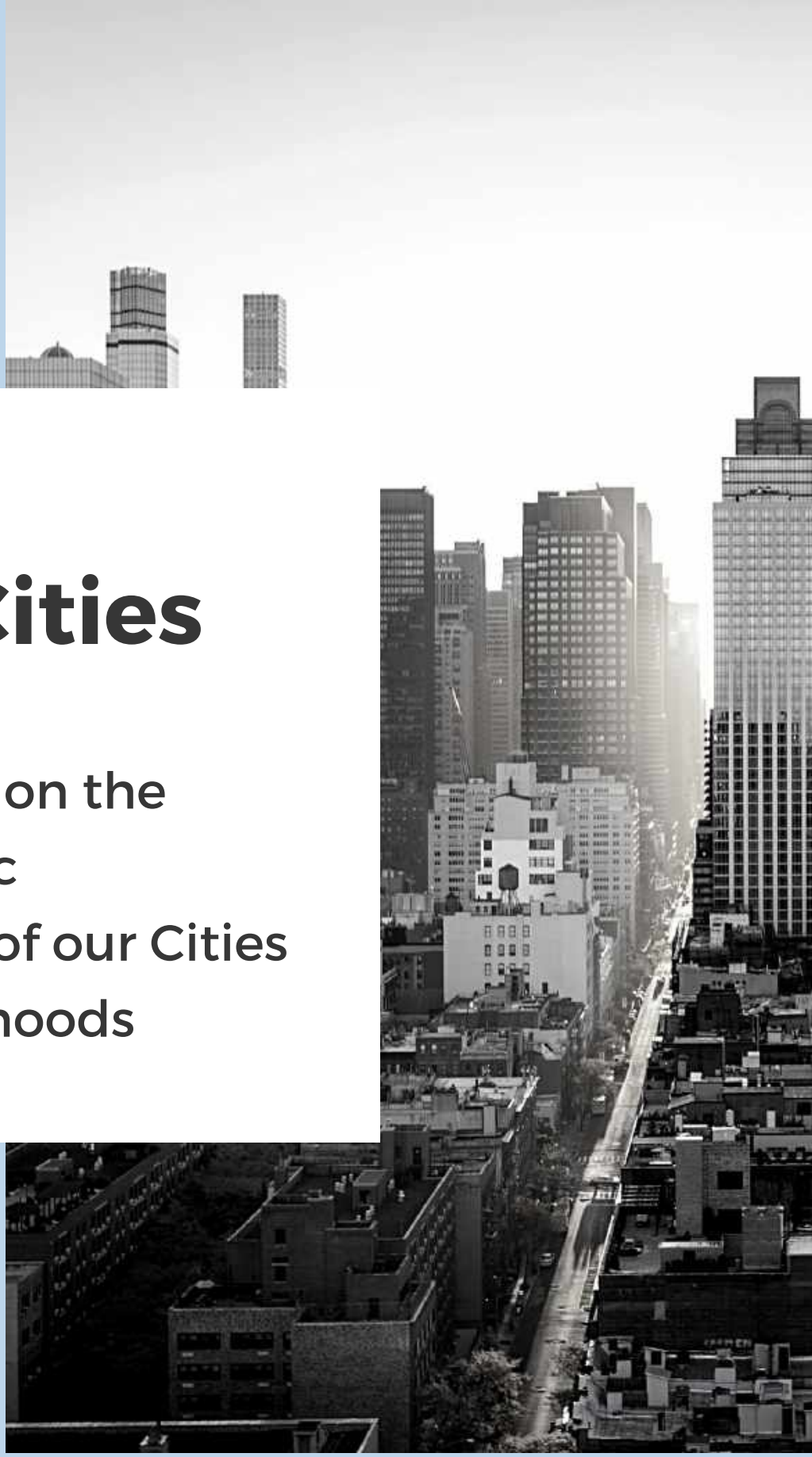
AUGUST 2020

Future Cities

20 Reflections on the Post-Pandemic Reawakening of our Cities and Neighborhoods



FINN
PARTNERS

Introduction

This pandemic has inexorably changed the way we view density and urbanization, while also making a resounding case for the environment.

What should architects, urban planners, developers, civic leaders, and governments be thinking about now as they envision our future cities and the viability of our neighborhoods and communities?

In this white paper, we pose a single question to 20 architects and designers, urban planners, and thinkers based in various cities, from Hong Kong and New York to London, Singapore, and Shanghai. The prompt elicited a diversity in responses, informed by their respective experiences, locations, and expertise.

In probing what the future of our cities ought to look like—in a world now redefined by a pandemic, economic recession, and widespread social unrest—reassessing the present state of society is essential. Equally crucial will be the steps we take, in all our different roles in our communities, to ensure that we are entering a world that is not simply changed but drastically improved; a world that is progressive in how it views design, sustainability, and socioeconomic inequality.

Covid-19 was the disruption no one saw coming. And with millions around the world in a state of limbo or working to recoup losses, there is much ado about the future, unknowable as it may be. All there is to do, after all, is to look forward.

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Aric Chen

Independent Curator; Professor of Practice at the College of Design and Innovation, Tongji University

It goes without saying that we shouldn't underestimate the coronavirus and its impact. But we should also be careful not to overestimate them, especially when thinking longer term. There has been no shortage of prognostications, speculations, and predictions about what "new normals" we'll have to adapt to, and all that has been "changed forever" by the pandemic. However well-intentioned, much of this has seemed a bit overwrought and extreme.

To be sure, the virus has caused horrible human and economic suffering. And it has, and will continue to, accelerate processes that were already underway, whether it's events and businesses shifting online, or growing inequality and deglobalization (the geopolitical fallout of the pandemic is what I fear most). Meanwhile, many governments will no doubt use public health concerns as justification for building even more expansive tools for surveillance than they already have. Airports and hospitals will certainly see some changes. And in the medium-term, some public spaces may be designed to be more adaptable for social distancing when and if needed.

But beyond that, in the urban realm, I think we're looking at relatively minor changes of the kind Hong Kong implemented after SARS: perhaps more hand sanitizer stations; plastic covers on elevator button panels for easier wipe-downs; dedicated serving utensils for shared dishes at restaurants. We'll probably see more facial recognition, touchless payment systems, and automatic doors, too. Hopefully, some cities will make their social distancing-prompted street closures—which have banned cars in favor of pedestrians—permanent. But in essence, I do not see the pandemic ushering in any radical changes to the way we design, build, and inhabit our cities—unless we somehow find ourselves in some sort of permanent state of pandemic, which I suppose is possible, but unlikely.

This does not mean that we shouldn't totally change the way we design, build, and inhabit our cities. In fact, we must. Not because of the pandemic, but rather in response to the even more serious problems of climate change, mass extinction, biodiversity loss, and all the other ways in which we are destroying the environment (of which the pandemic is, of course, just one consequence). What should we do? We should be looking at the massive, unprecedented financial packages that governments all over the world have been unleashing to prop up their economies at such astounding scale and speed, and asking them: Why can't you do this to save the planet, too?

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Susan Rockefeller

Award-Winning Documentary Filmmaker and Environmentalist; Founder and Editor in Chief, *Musings Magazine*

This pandemic has changed the way many will view space and acceptable social distancing in the future. City planners, designers, and civic leaders will now have to think of how to create safer ways for congregating in urban settings, and technological monitoring to ensure safety for the masses whether through testing, tracing centers, and monitors in designated locations. I also think there will be a repatriating of rural communities, as well as ways that suburban and rural communities can become hubs for regenerative food and innovation. The future of cities will be one of adaptation and resiliency as we face climate and pandemic challenges. It will be up to the most enlightened thinkers, and business, medical, and civic leaders to create communities that care for and achieve acceptable social norms that benefit the health of the city and all its inhabitants.

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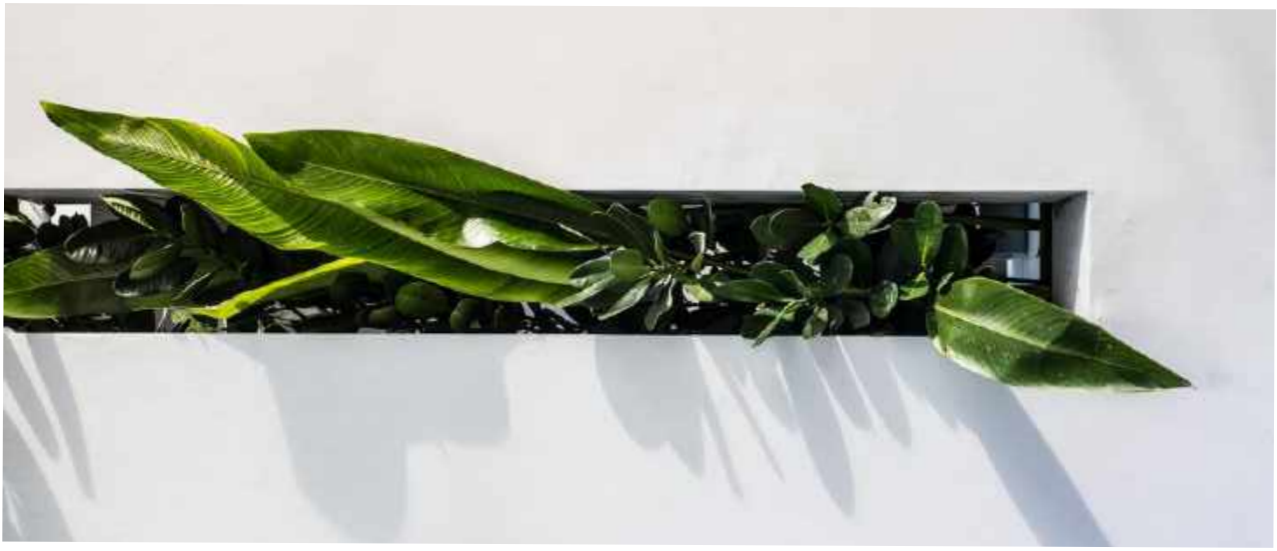

Janice Lao

Global Sustainability Expert; 2019 Edie Sustainability Leader Awardee

As an environmental scientist and economist, I love analyzing data and trends to future-cast. While we have been using the words “unprecedented” and “difficult times” more often than we ever have, if we looked at the data, this pandemic was waiting to happen. With the trend of increasing urbanization and development in the past 30 years that has led to significant encroachment into nature, a zoonotic virus such as Covid-19 was inevitable. The statistics are staggering—up to 1 million species are now threatened to be extinct, with more than 60 percent of forests and marine habitats severely altered by human action. This is worrying because humans rely so heavily on nature for our sustenance and livelihoods. As we prepare for our new normal post-pandemic, we should plan for cities not to put considerable pressure on nature’s resources. We have to rethink the way we design cities with more open spaces and allowing for safe interaction with nature. We need to create no-go development zones to allow for wildlife species to remain wild and reduce human encroachment. We must develop an economy that works within nature’s constraints and allows for everyone to reap in its benefits fairly.

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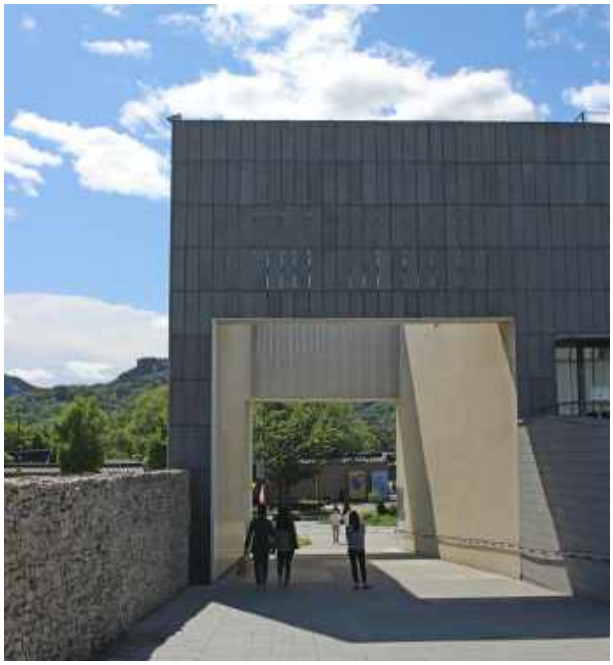
Haewon Shin

Founder, Lokaldesign; Lead Curator of the Korea Pavilion, 17th Venice Biennale 2020

From a global and local perspective, I believe the whole notion of the neighborhood and public space will change and evolve. Here in South Korea, what is integral and part of the city planning is the concept of local community centers which include learning, fitness and health, libraries, and cultural venues. The whole concept of the neighborhood and public spaces in Korea will have to evolve. These community centers have closed as a result of the pandemic, not being able to function even at minimal capacity. As there is such great emphasis on these community centers in Korea and for the local residents to live their normal daily lives, we need to rethink how we are to formalize such spatial concepts in a different way. We need to take a holistic creative view and relook at how we define communities in the present world we live in. And we are not only talking about the idea of physical closeness but a sense of community linked to a field of network—for example, having a stronger link to an online community. The pandemic has brought these issues to light and we need to address these problems. It also brings the question of how we can be present together but still practice social distancing spatially. A good example of how museums are addressing this issue is by scheduling opening hours in certain time slots and tracking visitor numbers and data as one way of operating on a functional level. We should rethink how to continue and maintain services and spaces for cultural events.

Fundamentally, it all comes down to education and how we are to think about our environment as a whole. We cannot continue to live as we did and think and function from practicality, and the answer is not always just about efficiency. We need to take the environment as priority and approach our methods and solutions from the perspective of an inhabitant of this earth. It is time to have a planetarian mindset and live together in unison with the earth and our environment.



National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul

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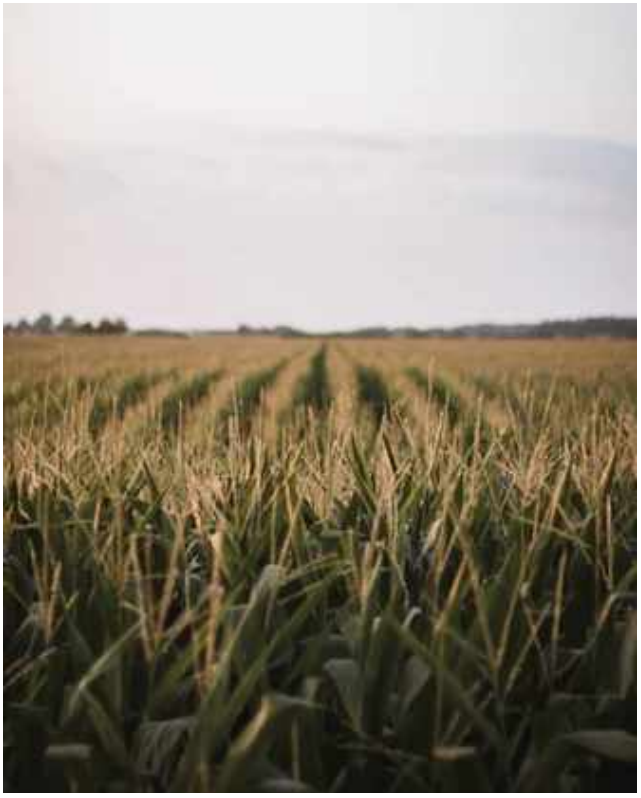
Patricia Dwyer

Founder and Director, The Purpose Business

Access to farmers and the broader agricultural communities needs to be prioritized and changed to the point where they can rival traditional mass market food providers.



Go local! Plan for how cities and districts can have easy access for connectivity, walkability to and from work, school, and recreation. Traffic jams and long hours on the road should be a thing of pre-Covid-19. We should design cities where parents can get to work in 30 to 45 minutes, where kids have ample time to play outdoors, etc.

Access to farmers and the broader agricultural communities needs to be prioritized and changed to the point where they can rival traditional mass market food providers. Collaboration and partnerships should comprise the instinctive approach to designing cities. Architects cannot afford to work in isolation even if it means hatching creative designs. They need to work directly with contractors for practicability and governments for regulations, or work hand in hand with civic leaders for aspects of accessibility, equitable housing, and overall inclusion.

Daven Wu

Singapore Editor, *Wallpaper**

It's not just the architects, urban planners, and governments who should be thinking about these issues. It's Ordinary Joe and Jane who need to step up and add their voices to the dialogue.

Fundamentally, what's at issue is the whole notion of land and what it means. The long-cherished dream of owning your own plot of earth and a backyard has to be shelved for now. It has created unbridled expansion, land grab, and urban sprawls, which leads to inefficient use of resources and land degradation. The way our population is increasing, cities need to rise upwards, not sideways. In this way, utilities like sewage, electricity, and water can be consolidated, and the landscape isn't scarred by highways and roads.

Design-wise, architects also need to abandon this need to create buildings that are energy-inefficient. Asia, in particular, is blighted by glass skyscrapers and odd-shaped buildings that take no account of the climate—sun, rain, shade, heat, cold—simply because if it gets hot, we can always turn on the air-conditioning. Passive cooling features, deep eaves, cross ventilation, internal landscaping—these were all once standard design features in the tropics, for instance, and they need to be brought back into vogue. Our reliance on air-conditioning and central heating is so devastating to the environment. It's not to say we can't have any air-conditioning, but that they should not be the solution to an overheated glass box just because the building looks fabulously sexy.

And the aspirational mania to have huge houses or apartments is also leading us down a path we should be avoiding. Big rooms means you need more stuff to fill them with. More stuff means more debt. It also means the production of more disposable good, the cheaper the better. Most of the stuff we buy today will be in landfills within the year, if not sooner. This means designers especially need to play a part in encouraging consumers to buy less, but to buy well. Creating a huge walk-in wardrobe, for instance, is completely counter-intuitive since we wear 30 percent of our clothes 70 percent of the time. Two-thirds of our wardrobe is literally a waste of money and taking up space for no obvious reason other than an ego trip.

This all sounds incredibly hysterical and judgmental, but if this pandemic is teaching us anything, it's that we are finally facing, as an entire race, the repercussions of our collective unconscious behavior. We need to start thinking organically, ethically, responsibly, consciously. And we need to do it quickly. What can each of us start doing to improve the way we live and the way our future unfolds? It cannot be that we wait for the government or an architect to show us the way.

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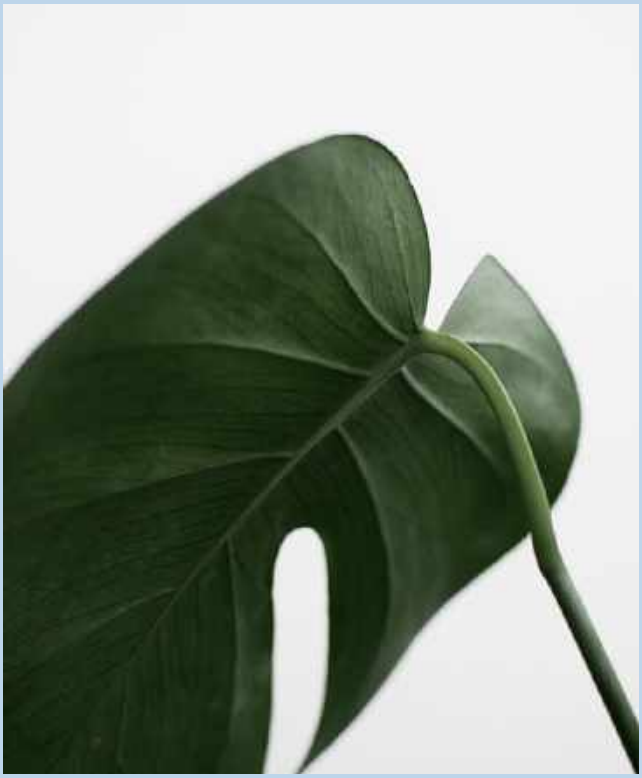

Singapore Changi Airport

Charmaine Chan

Author, *Courtyard Living: Contemporary Houses of the Asia-Pacific;* Design Editor, *South China Morning Post*

Sunlight can kill pathogens. That should persuade us all to try to spend at least some of our time outside, even, or especially, during self-isolation and social distancing. Coupled with the knowledge that exposure to the sun (in moderation) also promotes the synthesis of vitamin D, which bolsters the immune system, it's clear that our homes must incorporate safe, outdoor areas.

In Hong Kong, where land prices are exorbitant and most people live in apartments, it's incumbent on developers and their architects to provide housing that takes the above into consideration. As cities go vertical, and with them neighborhoods and communities, we need to consider how to connect people via not just technology but also in analog (meaning lo-tech) ways. One feature that could help is the courtyard, which allows residents to go out without going out and be in the presence of others without the threat of contagion.

The health benefits of such protected outdoor areas—increasingly seen in well-designed residential developments in Singapore—have long been recognized. In 1901 the New York State Tenement House Act stipulated that buildings of that type should incorporate courtyards (in addition to windows facing outwards from every room). One of a number of housing reforms effected during the Progressive Era, it derived from, among other things, fear of the spread of smallpox.

Cities and infectious diseases have always gone together; fortunately, that has led to improvements in sanitation and importance placed on good ventilation and light. Courtyards offer these in spades.

Dense cities are the most efficient way to live and the least environmentally destructive (making mass transit viable, for example, although there is still a need to address energy usage in buildings). But we must lean on developers to give us better-designed and better-constructed buildings that take wellness into consideration and are humane places to live. A patch of outdoor space should be a given.

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Oslo Opera House

Suzy Annetta

Editor in Chief, *Design Anthology*

My feeling is that the key to the success of future cities lies within a balance of density, regulated apartment sizes, and generous public spaces.

I think urban planners, governments, and private developers have their work cut out for them at any given time, but now more than ever. It's become clear that the argument about density and urban living is not so straightforward anymore. My feeling is that the key to the success of future cities lies within a balance of density, regulated apartment sizes that accommodate a family in a way that is conducive to mental health, and generous public spaces that give citizens of any city the opportunity to enjoy the great outdoors.

English Garden, Munich

Victoria Whenray

Partner, Conran and Partners

As a studio that builds on the ethos of our founder Sir Terence Conran, that good design improves the quality of people's lives—no matter the scale of the project—we feel that the current situation has pushed the door wide open to a new mindset and raised awareness with clients, consultants, and city stakeholders to enable deeper and improved discussions on the power of healthy urban living within the city. Underpinned by the notion of localism, there are three key themes on which the current situation has shone a spotlight, and which should form the basis of this dialogue.

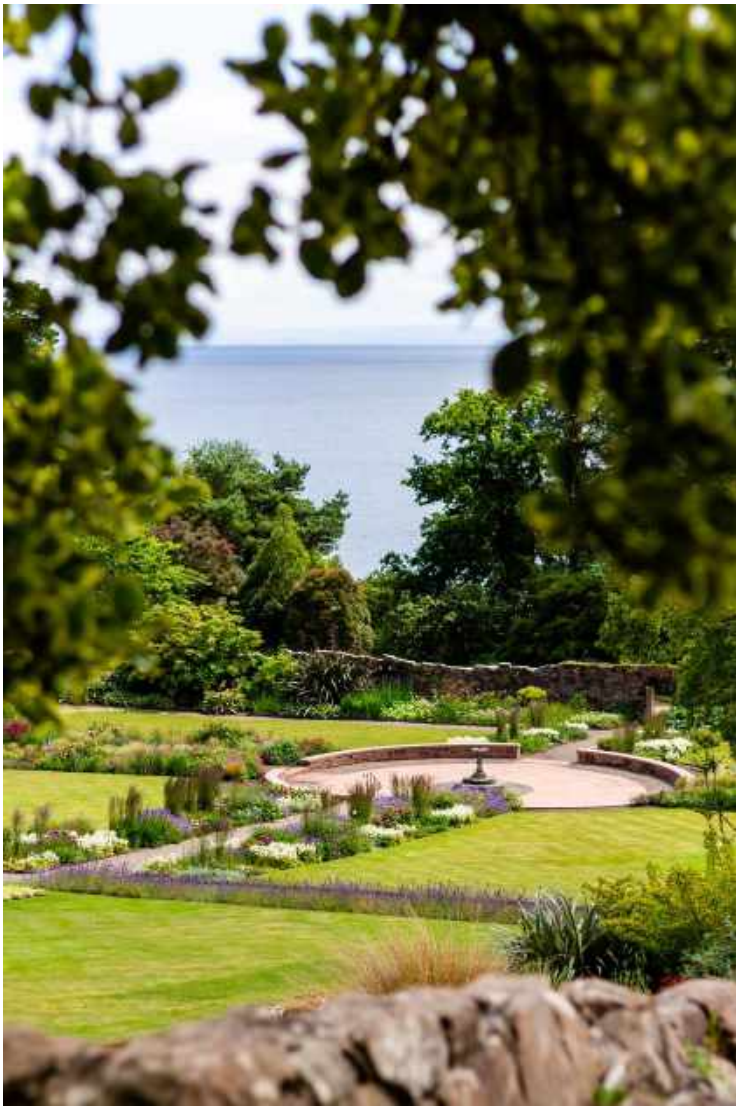
The high street. One of the few positive outcomes from the pandemic has seen the increased use and appreciation of the high street as a local hub for carrying out our day-to-day activities. Previously struggling independent grocery stores selling local produce are now doing a roaring trade, cafes are offering takeaways and becoming purveyors for their favored suppliers, and the local bakery has expanded its repertoire by selling its flour, giving away bread recipes, and passing on baking tips. There is a real sense of entrepreneurial energy and camaraderie, and —dare I say—community, with people's paths crossing frequently. All this, with less plastic packaging, fewer airmiles and reduced car use. As an urbanist and architect, I understand the crucial role of the high street in either supporting existing neighborhoods or in creating new communities such as our Portobello Road project in London. This current situation has raised awareness and highlighted its necessary role in the community. Planners and local governments, please take note.

Green space. Let me be very clear on this point. We need more public space, not less. It is especially important for those in a dense city with little or no private outdoor space to call their own, and we know that those who have been able to enjoy green space within a short distance of their home are faring better in this current climate, with reduced levels of stress and increased activity, than those who haven't. Nantes, France, offers a great example of a city that has "brought the country into the city," where every resident is within a very prescriptive 500-meter distance of meaningful green, open space. Whilst for some of the densest cities such as Hong Kong, Tokyo, and London, this may appear to be too big a challenge, use this as an opportunity to be creative and reconsider development policy. Follow the example of our Futako Tamagawa masterplan in Tokyo in which the development is intensified by building tall to create space for an urban park (not simply more development). Consider how empty infill sites can become temporary neighborhood parks, make use of rooftops, and where it's not possible to create public space, at the very least use architecture as a green stepping stone for nature.

Go car-free. For years now, cities around the world have looked to the Danish and Dutch car-free city model with some envy—practicalities, local politics, and endless reams of red tape seem to prevent this happening at pace elsewhere. The pandemic, however, has offered an unprecedented glimpse of car-free life, with the constant hum of motorized traffic receding as people take to the streets as pedestrians, joggers, and cyclists.

Walking around my home city of Brighton, I have enjoyed seeing a natural, new order evolving, with many of the city's streets, previously clogged with tourist buses and traffic, taking on a new lease of life, clearly functioning better in the absence of cars and effectively becoming public open space.

On this point, I say to government and decision makers: Be opportunistic and be bold. We know that fewer emissions are better for the planet. We know that walking and cycling is good for us. We know that trading businesses along a pedestrian and cycle route are more profitable. Use this time to observe the ebb and flow of your city and simply prevent cars going back onto the streets that have clearly benefited from being re-wilded during these unprecedented times. Don't worry about the practicalities. In the first instance, a simple barrier—or better yet, a length of red tape—will do.



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Futako Tamagawa, Tokyo

Khee Poh Lam

Provost's Chair Professor of Architecture and Building, and Dean of the School of Design and Environment, National University of Singapore

Urbanization will continue to drive city growth globally. However, we have to think more holistically about cities as complex eco-systems. In Singapore, how we have conceptualized and implemented town planning since the beginning of nation building remains a viable paradigm. The notion of spatially distributed and self-contained towns, each with a hierarchical structure—from neighborhood to precinct to town center—works extremely well to address many pandemic-related issues. Residents can access essentials for daily living in an organized manner within walking distance, including nature, through the Park Connector system. We can still embrace density in our future cities to conserve scarce land resources but we need to adopt a people-centric approach in dealing with high density. For too long, we have conceived our cities in 2D gross floor area rather than in 3D volumetric space. However, health is related to the volume for each inhabitant, both outdoor and indoor. The challenge is to rethink the 3D physical manifestation of our built environment. Besides offering visual delight, it should provide city-level ventilation by creating unobstructed urban wind paths and integrated with indoor ventilation of individual buildings to promote overall wellness while mitigating energy demands. I envision a "Well and Green" future that marries environmentally friendly, sustainable design to the well-being of inhabitants. The WELL Building concept is relatively new, but it has attracted tremendous interest worldwide, especially during this Covid-19 pandemic. Cities must keep people healthy so that they can be more resilient against current and future viral attacks. The way we plan, design, build, and operate our buildings and urban infrastructure will have significant impact on the success of that mission.

National University of Singapore's SDE4 building. Credit: Rory Gardiner

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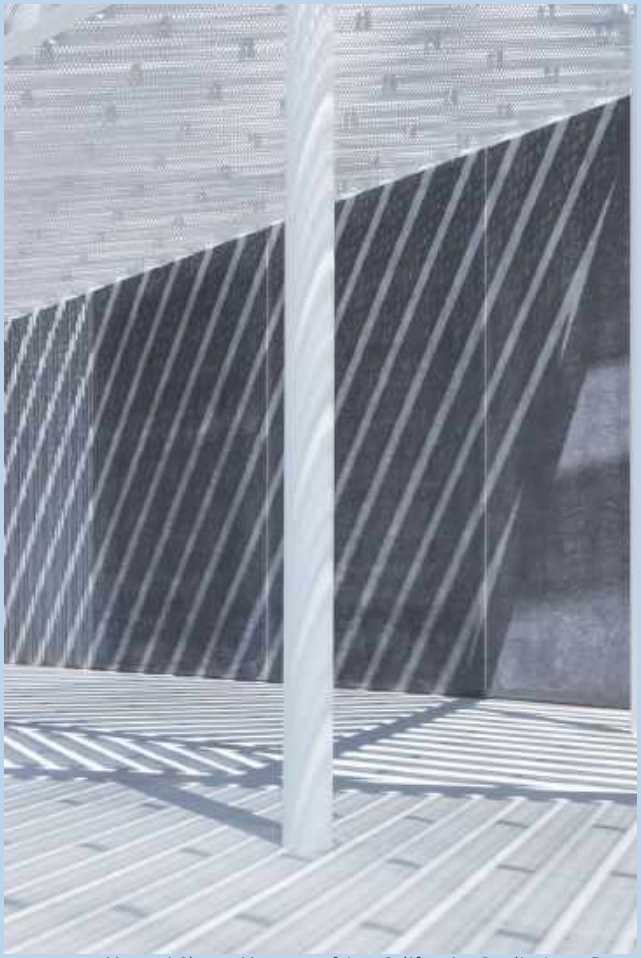

Manetti Shrem Museum of Art, California. Credit: Iwan Baan

Florian Idenburg and Jing Liu

Principals, SO - IL

How to live amongst each other? The pandemic has intensified two lingering forcefields. One of these fields is centrifugal; it drives apart. It thins out. It's induced by fear. We are fearful of the other, the infected, the poorer, the foreign. We isolate in our homes, board up our institutions, close our borders, and turn on our screens, staring into others' anxieties from behind our masks and shades. The second field moves centripetally. It brings us together; it consolidates and condenses. In our unwillingness to accept the fear we see around us, we rejoice in action. We collect ourselves on the streets to say, "Enough!"

> **As architects, planners, and city makers, we draw borders, sections, edges. We divide. As we draw, we should take the utmost care in balancing these forces. We should calibrate these layered divisions with sensitivity, ensuring people come together as closely as possible, as safely as possible.**

Both forces are deeply human. Both create intolerable tension within ourselves and within society. Both are fed by the ever-widening gap between rich and poor. As architects, planners, and city makers, we operate within these fields. We author their dimensions. We draw borders, sections, edges. We divide. We decide, or at least represent, who is in and who is out. As we draw, we should take the utmost care in balancing these forces. We should calibrate these layered divisions with sensitivity, ensuring people come together as closely as possible, as safely as possible. We should work on the elasticity of our comfort zones, expanding them bit by bit. Living with each other on this ever-shrinking planet demands commitment and energy. We need to advocate for inclusivity and resourcefulness. We should use our imagination not towards consumers but citizens in all their heterogeneity. We should infuse our shared spaces with pockets of air, sites of shelter, hollows of repose.

Kukje Gallery, Seoul. Credit: Iwan Baan

Joyce Wang

Principal, Joyce Wang Studio

This period has offered us an opportunity to reflect on ourselves more than ever before. It's time that would have just flown by otherwise. It's important to harness the collective lessons learned by the different sectors—architects, urban planners, etc.—at every level and to share those lessons with each other. We've long thrived on a competitive environment and kept lessons learned to ourselves to edge each other out of the game. I've noticed more people in my industry banding together for the first time to share and help. A designer friend has been hosting online tutorials for graduating students whilst a hospitality client has written and shared a guidebook on how best to deal with this pandemic from a business perspective. Podcasts alone of people sharing advice have been endless.

As an interior designer in the hospitality field, there's been a shift toward mixing of typologies, such as combining co-working spaces with gyms or a bookstore that also has a cafe; we've received some interesting briefs from clients already looking ahead of this pandemic. There's been a previous obsession with making social spaces out of restaurants and hotels, through which the idea of the social club was born. Now that the idea of social-distancing has become our way of survival through this pandemic, and some of us will have surprised ourselves how well we have coped or even thrived, we might want to hold on to this valuable time where anti-social behavior is accepted and respected. This change in behavior will certainly breed new typologies of space for our communities.

Through this time of personal reflection, we have seen a rise in personal wellness—whether it be meditation, fitness, or diet.

In the past month, I for one have cooked up 30 recipes shared by celebrity chefs and renowned restaurants. It's made me more aware of the quality of ingredients and how sustainable my food sources are—knowledge that will impact things like how I shop, where I would eat out, and how often these activities would happen. I think people have also come to embrace the power of not being together physically, and that a lot can be accomplished through online tools and platforms.

Even as we have learned to cope with the pandemic, I think we all yearn for human interaction. Like never before, people will expect interaction to be planned responsibly and to be deeply meaningful. It's our role as designers to create space to facilitate this, and perhaps to ease society back into socializing more spontaneously.

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Christopher Law

Founding Director, The Oval Partnership

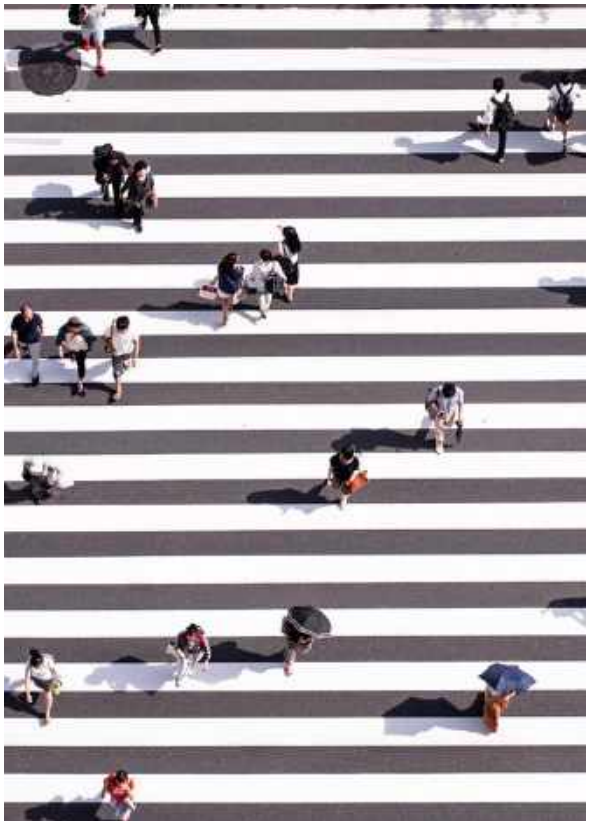
Major upheavals often have a tendency to accelerate ongoing societal changes. Covid-19 has so far contributed to at least four major impacts on our society.

People of nearly all ages now accept and even embrace the use of information technology—for work, shopping, leisure, socializing, healthcare, security, pretty much everything. This has escalated the transition process to online dominance by several years, at the very least. Secondly, the deglobalization process, much maligned by liberals, has now gained new currency and imperative for personal and national security reasons.

Thirdly, numerous small- and medium-sized enterprises around the world are going bankrupt. Large corporations, state-owned enterprises, and government agencies are the organizations with the resources or connections to weather the storm. And fourthly, Covid-19 has rendered the inequalities in societies ever more apparent. The poor, Black, and ethnic minorities, the elderly, vulnerable, and those with disabilities suffer much more under Covid-19.

The combination of these four ongoing trends has created a potent mixture, full of risks and uncertainties. It is far too soon to predict what will come of the post-coronavirus world. Much depends on how quickly the world can find a vaccine or an effective cure for the disease.

While one often likes to hope something good can come of such tragedies, this is not necessarily inevitable. The only thing we do know is that compassion and the spirit of collaboration are in short supply, and that all of us—in government, in business, and in the professions—should treasure and nurture those qualities.



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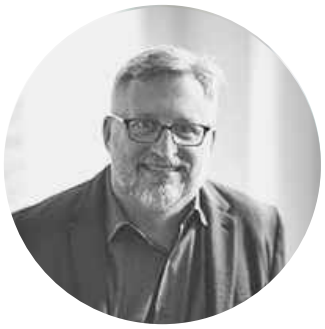
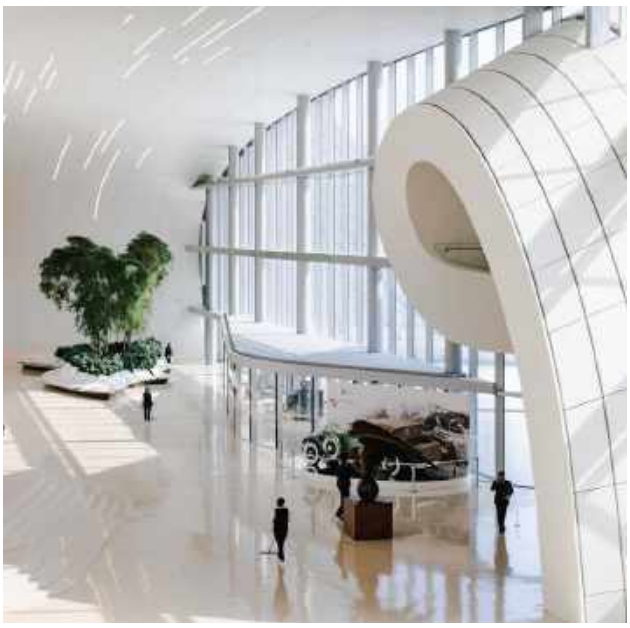


Ed Bakos

CEO, Champalimaud Design

The debate about cities and risks to personal health are old ones, and the pandemic has definitely made us feel more vulnerable and skeptical about density. But humans are fundamentally social animals, and I believe our urge to be together, to share common experiences, see and be seen, and take part in the cultural attractions that cities make possible will ultimately outlive the threat of this particular virus.

In the meantime, however, it will be increasingly important—not just for people's emotional needs, but in fact for our collective health—to bring our best ideas forward. At the macro level, factors such as scarcity of land and resources remain, so questions about how we cluster development and the quality of what we build will become even more important. I don't see that we will abandon density, so much as we will find new value in density clusters that utilize variable orientation and achieve semi-privacy through clever packaging.



At the micro level, the essential need for hygiene will be even more important than before, and one might expect to see the incorporation of hand washing stations into arrival experiences for everything from restaurants, airport gates to the front doors of our homes. In addition, I think we will see touch-free controls become much more integrated into building systems—everything from Bluetooth door locks, self-opening doors, and sensor-activated faucets. I think we will look more closely at how we configure seating in public spaces like restaurants and hotels that still embrace social space, but with seating configurations that prioritize smaller clusters and sub-groups within larger spaces.

At the macro level, factors such as scarcity of land and resources remain, so questions about how we cluster development and the quality of what we build will become even more important.

Catherine Shaw

Architecture, Art, and Design Critic;
Author, *André Fu: Crossing Cultures with Design*

We will need to start thinking about linkages and hierarchy of services within cities and countries, particularly since the pandemic has exposed the inequalities in income, gender, and race.

There is no doubt that the global pandemic will make a mark on cities. We know this because cities have always reflected major cultural and sociological trends from the cholera epidemic that led to new standards of sanitation to the industrial revolution and public housing. However, this current crisis is especially complex because it adds a global, ultra-connected context. That means urban planners and architects can no longer plan for one neighborhood or city as one single thing, treating their projects in isolation.

As an environmental urban planner and writer on architecture and design, I think the pandemic has already started to alter how we live. At the core, it has made many of us think about densities in cities and urban services such as open space and healthcare.

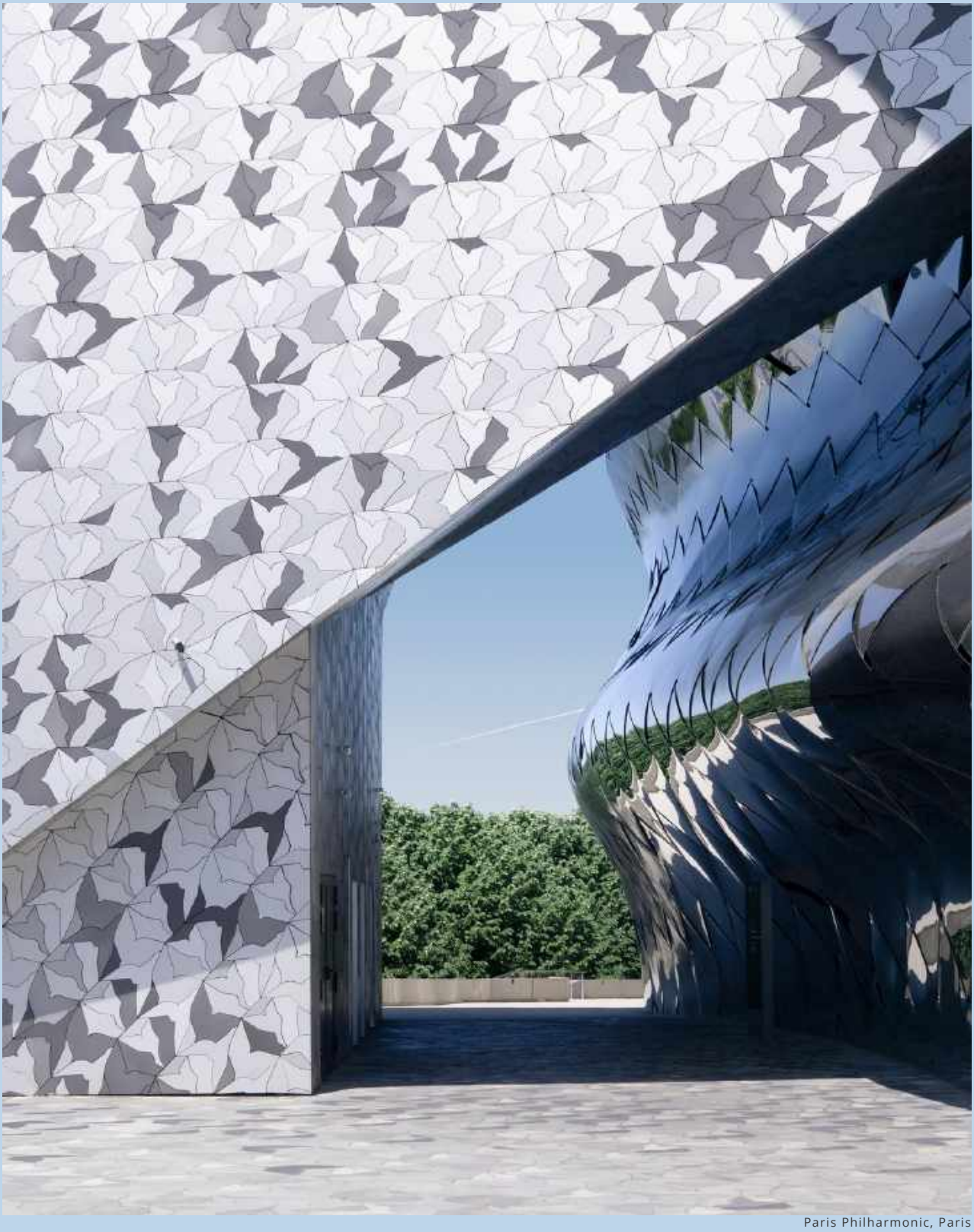
Urban planners will therefore need to think more carefully and creatively about how public spaces like parks, shopping malls, and sports centers operate in a new world of social distancing and beyond. For instance, how open spaces can be repurposed during emergencies.

We will also need to start thinking about linkages and hierarchy of services within cities and countries, particularly since the pandemic has exposed the inequalities in income, gender, and race. Reliable information has become even more essential, so designers must start thinking about using smart architecture and materials to feedback information. Should all buildings scan people's temperatures automatically?

There is now no doubt that we can't afford to ignore our environment. Certainly, it is already evident in our cleaner skies and improved air quality how our usual way of working and living affects the environment.

For architects, materiality will become very important: smooth surfaces are easy to wipe and antimicrobial materials to which organisms have difficulty adhering will predominate. The post-pandemic office will look very different—the concept of hot-desking is likely to be affected, while the physical touching of things like elevator buttons and door handles will be reduced through sensor-activated controls. Remote working will continue so the design of homes is likely to change too.

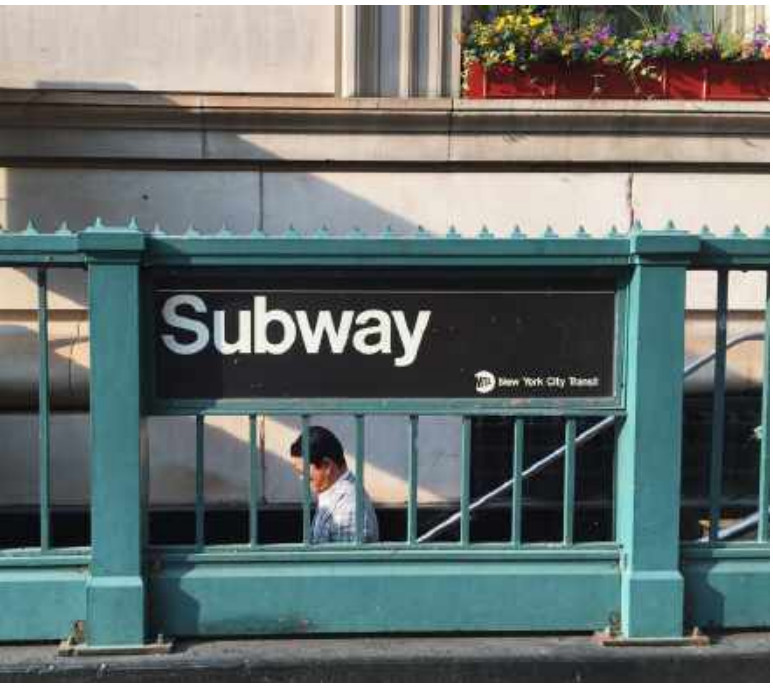
Most important of all, we will need to expand our preconceived ideas about urban planning and architecture from the physical realm to include the digital where information is king.



Paris Philharmonic, Paris

Moshe Adler

Author, *Economics for the Rest of Us*;
Adjunct Professor, Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation, Columbia University



New York

If Zoom eliminates cities' raison d'être, their density will decrease and no anti-density policy will be necessary. But if large cities continue to be places where incomes are higher and there is an abundance of restaurants and culture, then anti-density planning will further limit the ability of middle-class and poor people to live in the city and benefit from these advantages. Equitable anti-density planning is, of course, possible, but a fight to replace the rich by the poor will not be won easily. In fact, the mechanism that housing activists, economists, and planners alike recommend for increasing equity is to increase density.

In New York City at 7 p.m. every evening we now clap our hands in honor of those on the frontlines, including grocery store, delivery, and health care workers, who are literally keeping us alive. The pandemic has made the yawning gap between the value of work and its remuneration impossible to ignore, and our challenge is to narrow it.

The pandemic has made the yawning gap between the value of work and its remuneration impossible to ignore, and our challenge is to narrow it.

Sean Affleck

Director, Make Architects

Covid-19 is a pivotal point. As a truly global issue, it presents a unique opportunity for society to rethink its approach to design and the built environment and deeply ingrained typologies, that have resulted in a society with increased loneliness, anxiety, pollution, and climate change. More broadly, we are thinking to the future as to how design will change and the way firms will need to adapt.

Flexible built environment. People will want to work from home at least one day a week, equating to 20 percent less office space needed. People will be able to stagger their hours so they're not all commuting at the same time. Designers and developers will be thinking of how we can transform spaces quickly and how widely can they branch out. We'll see more pop-ups, farmers' markets, luxury brand launches, and collaborative projects bringing together fields like dance and design to maximize the range of income.

Air quality. With noticeably cleaner air in places like Hong Kong, London, and New York during lockdown, people may press governments to bring in stricter air pollution reduction measures. This pressure could increase due to the apparent correlation between poor air quality and higher coronavirus mortality rates. As one of the worst polluters, the construction industry could come under heavy scrutiny. To reduce its carbon footprint, the industry will have to look more closely at reuse, pre-fabrication and modular construction, material choices, and intensive landscape greening. More broadly, we'll also think more about sustainable food production and waste management. A decrease in transport and industry also makes for quieter cities.

Cleaner buildings and public spaces. Increased sanitizing and hygiene practices in public spaces will bring people greater peace of mind. Integrating hand sanitizers and ultraviolet sterilisers into public areas, seen already in Hong Kong and the US. We imagine other global cities will follow suit and that these measures will become part of the client requirement. Automation and technology will help reduce physical touch where possible.

Community and keeping it local. We'll see more self-sustained projects whose offerings are in collaboration with the local community, such as Tai Kwun, The Mills, and PMQ in Hong Kong. People will seek out locally produced and sourced food and drink, artists and craftspeople, and opt for staycations. Developments can link up with this trend. In hotels, guestrooms will become secondary and public areas primary, offering services to the local community that visitors can also take part in.

Healthy minds and bodies. During lockdown, people around the world have become acutely aware of the importance of keeping fit, and the connection between a healthy body and a healthy mind. We'll see more holistic, nourishing projects that positively affect the mind, body and community. The overall potential changes could result in a less frantic pace of life, where time spent with loved ones and doing things you love is appreciated as more precious.

> **We'll see more holistic, nourishing projects that positively affect the mind, body, and community.**

Kita Aoyama, Tokyo

Chris Panfil

Vice President and Director of Strategic Planning and Urban Design, WATG Singapore

"Urban dwellers will flee the big cities en masse as soon as they can"; "The countryside will be repopulated with urban refugees telecommuting and exclusively working from home"; "Life in the suburbs will regain significant appeal, despite millennials' preference for other models of home." Perhaps...

Some of these visions of our metropolitan future remind me of the prediction post-9/11 that no one would live in Manhattan again. And that people throughout the world would shun tall apartment buildings. Since 2001, urban development patterns in Asia, the Americas, Europe, and Africa tell a very different story.

There may indeed be some resettlement patterns in parts of the world where populations have the means, the space, and the infrastructure systems in place which allow such relocation. For most of the growing urban populations in the world, this simply won't be an option. Rather, governments will have to make permanent some of the behaviors and social distancing measures many in the world have gotten used to over the last few months. This raises even more questions and concerns about surveillance and privacy, as well as data protection. All those worries will be secondary to the narrative that the protection of public health is of the ultimate social importance. And, at least for a while, few of us will disagree.

As far as density management is concerned, there are a number of issues. Among them:

Public transport crowd managements. Those (few) cities with excess capacity will have a much easier time in managing than those that have always operated at the margin of full capacity. The latter will create even more additional choices for dwellers to move around their cities.

Planning regulations. These will have to change to ensure increased space allocation, whether open space per inhabitant at the neighborhood level, or private outdoor space for each residential unit. The kind of hyper-density accommodation of migrant labor in cities like Singapore or Dubai will hopefully be a distant memory.

Despite these inevitable measures, physical social interaction and the serendipity that cities have afforded us throughout history will continue to act as strong incentives to maintain, enhance, and reinvent urban life and culture. I look forward to our new stadia, theaters, and concert halls, equipped with hospital-quality air filtration systems. Or to the ingenuity of beautifully designed hi-tech batik face masks, which will not only filter the air we breathe but which might also pose unforeseen challenges to the latest face recognition technology.

> **Governments will have to make permanent some of the behaviors and social distancing measures many in the world have gotten used to over the last few months.**

JJ Acuna

Founder and Creative Director,
JJA Bespoke Studio

I imagine a world where architects and designers together with legislators would have to draft real laws regarding fresh air, daylight, greenery, and density requirements for every kind of space with every kind of program in order to get approved for building, operations, and service.

For example, to run restaurants of a certain number of people—what kind of outdoor environments do restaurants need to have access to, or what is the maximum number of people allowed to sit in a restaurant's front-of-house per square foot?

For residential planning, what is the minimum allowed area for one person to live in beyond the kitchen and bathroom? Do new restaurants and residential environments need to have a fresh air system, an ultra-violet germicidal system, and a hand sanitation system installed in private and public spaces? Do they need immediate access to an open-air space with greenery? It used to be that developers would think about these things just to win green certification for the sake of marketing, but I think the frequency of future pandemics will force legislative changes in building and licensing practices as design follows function, program, and the rule of law.

Hong Kong

> **I think the frequency of future pandemics will really force legislative changes in building and licensing practices as design follows function, program, and the rule of law.**

Marcel Padmos

Associate Vice President, Planning and Urban Design, WATG Singapore

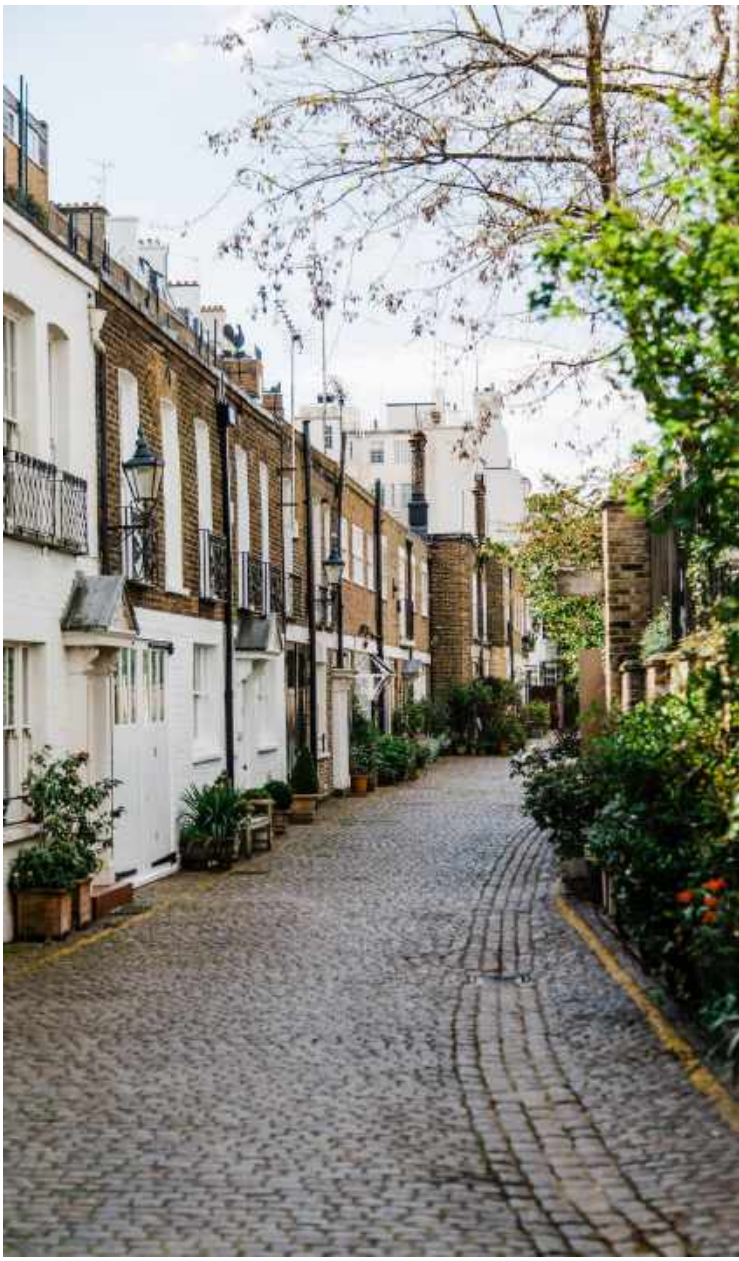
When you look at the origin of the virus, and how fast this has turned into a global pandemic, I don't think we are able to avoid these things from happening. People have always traveled and always will. The vast range of available and affordable public transportation modes is attributing directly to the great reach of the virus and the exponential and spiking infection rates. The frequency and speed of movement in combination with an incubation time of more than a few days means we won't be able to avoid this from happening again. It's all about immediate damage control and effective management and governance.

Migration to second- and third-tier cities, or even the countryside, could be one direction for some of us, but I think majority will stay put. Too many of us need the dynamic, diverse, opportunistic 24/7 lifestyle that comes with urban centers. However, if many decide to move away from the primary cities, this in turn may have a big impact on the rural environment—its agriculture and our food production. It will put even more pressure there and will force us to industrialize agriculture even further and quicker. Asia, especially, needs to catch up in this area. An interesting thought is that multi-story structures are the way to go for crops, and less so for people!

Social distancing or just proper urban planning and design and management? The issue we face today related to social distancing is very real and intense. Experts and governments are tripping over each other to announce great initiatives and measures to change the post-pandemic world. Some of the new initiatives are not that new, but others are very progressive and rigorous.

I'm a big advocate of compact and dense cities with an effective public transport system and a well-connected and safe open-space network. These cities are catering to people, which is in strong contrast with the many car-dominated cities we see in the US, Asia, and other parts of the world. Many of these so-called "new" initiatives are actually just part of proper sustainable urban planning and design or even common sense. More space for cyclists and pedestrians versus less for cars; more green spaces versus less roads; more trains and buses versus higher parking rates and downtown surcharges for cars—these are all no-brainers. Coming from the Netherlands, I always smile when I read that there's yet another part of the world who just has discovered this great invention on two wheels which moves people from A to B and keeps you fit at the same time.

One of the big reinvented ideas relate to "distributed urbanism" where decentralization is key. This principle is smart and seems to have merit, and to a certain degree, this principle is already applied here in Singapore and other places where governments have implemented strategies to create four mixed-use activity centers instead of one (like the classic CBD in many other typical planned cities). The city is then able to function as a self-sufficient, independent quadrant. In theory, when things go really bad, these quadrants could be put in lockdown independently to monitor and control the spread of a virus.



However, I'm more skeptical when I read about some rather rigorous proposed measures. Are we all—governments and taxpayers—committed to spend billions and billions (which we now don't have due to economic fallout) in the next five to 10 years on a total overhaul of our airports and airplanes, public or civic districts and cultural buildings, offices, shops, hotels, supermarkets, and even our homes and apartments? And are we willing to adapt to the massive lifestyle changes that come with it?

If the goal is job creation, then great, that's a worthy endeavor. But I would argue the money is better spent on the management side of things—to be better prepared for the next black swan event. Central and local governments should have robust crisis plans and strategies in place. And full-fledged emergency teams ready to deal with any pandemic or crisis. And more flexible and mobile medical facilities, better and more research facilities, better-trained staff and last, but not least, many more masks for those who need them most. All this will help effectively to flatten the curve, more so than separating a few benches in a park.

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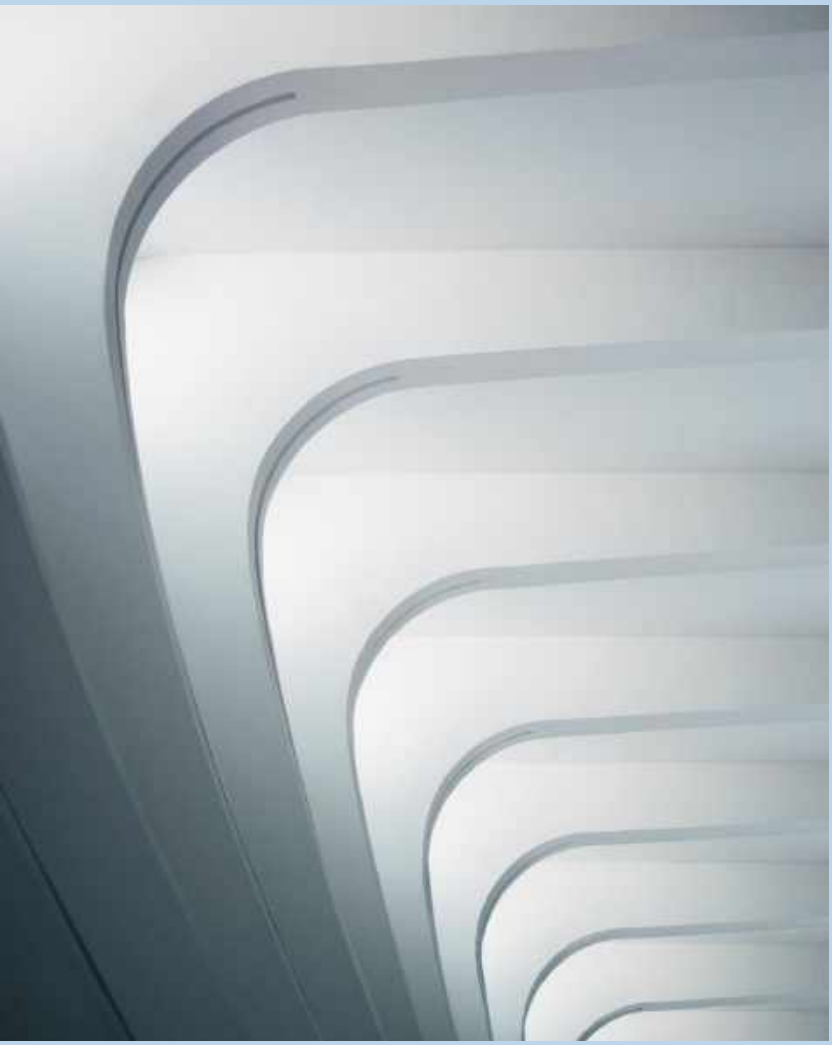

DISTRIBUTED URBANISM DENSITY **MIGRATION** SOCIAL DISTANCING **SUSTAINABILITY** HUMAN INTERACTION **RURAL COMMUNITIES** INDEPENDENT QUADRANTS **FUNCTION** LEGISLATIVE CHANGE **OUTDOOR SPACE** OVERALL WELLNESS **MATERIALITY** FLEXIBLE BUILT ENVIRONMENT **AIR QUALITY** HIGH STREET **CAR-FREE** CROWD MANAGEMENT **RE-WILDED** EQUITABLE HOUSING **DEGLOBALIZATION** WALKABILITY **COMMUNITY** AGRICULTURE **PLANETARIAN MINDSET** INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY **NO-GO DEVELOPMENT** INCLUSIVITY **REGENERATIVE FOOD AND INNOVATION** REPATRIATION **SITES OF SHELTER** CITY-LEVEL VENTILATION **SELF-CONTAINED TOWNS** COMPASSION **SPIRIT OF COLLABORATION** HOLISTIC **TRACKING** ACCESS TO FARMERS **DECENTRALIZATION** SECOND- AND THIRD-TIER CITIES **EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE** TELECOMMUTING **RESETTLEMENT** SPACE ALLOCATION

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