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Next Steps

These are the first results of our ongoing discussions. In the coming months the IFHP and DAC will undertake a number of initiatives based upon this work. Look for them on the IFHP and DAC's sustainable cities websites:

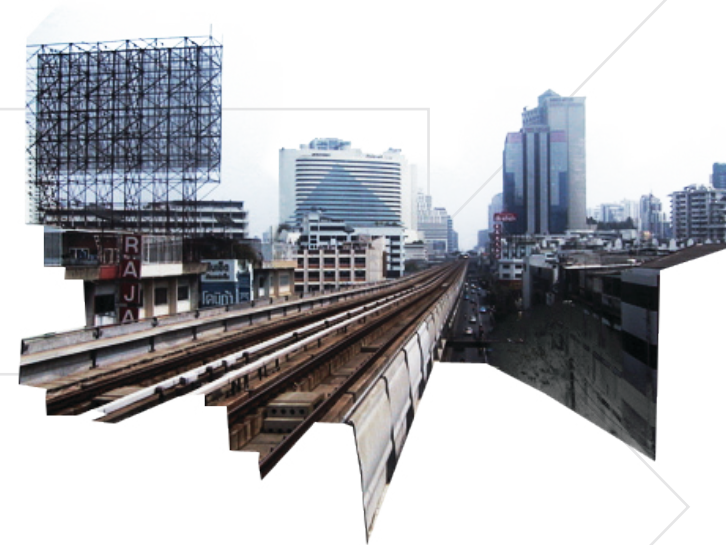
www.ifhp.org

<http://sustainablecities.dk/>

Different conditions, realities
and cultural settings signify
different notions of what is
to be valued.

Pedro Gadanho

ANOTHER URBAN FUTURE



A Realdania - IFHP Think Tank Series
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been made possible with support from Realdania



DAC | DANISH ARCHITECTURE CENTRE

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Our Challenge

Cities are facing unprecedented challenges on their ability to cope with global shifts & change.
How can we focus and address these challenges? The IFHP aims to contribute.

Is There “Another Urban Future”?

This is an important time in the history of human settlement. We face big structural shifts in the natural and man-made environments.
How can we inform urban practice better?

Our Objective

The IFHP wants to help us to focus on the most significant issues facing the well-being of urban life and cities.
This Think Tank Series starts the dialogue.

Urban Change

The Think Tank has been working to define various dimensions of urban development issues that are not a big part of the current dialogue. We feel these burning issues will challenge traditional planning and design when viewed through the lenses of *complexity, urgency and uncertainty.*

Challenging Practice

Our urban development problems challenge all the professions related to them to do better.

How can we significantly realize improvement in the face of increasing uncertainty and complexity?

After identifying the most difficult issues before us, can we devise better processes and create more innovative tools to address them?

“The future is now,
and we have to catch up...”
Modjtaba Sadria

EMERGING ISSUES

Complexity – The challenges to achieve true diversity and address the political, economic, social equity and ethical dimensions of urban development are complex. Yet, there is a tendency to be intimidated by complexity. In doing so we often seek simplification when it is not possible or appropriate to the kind of problem we are trying to solve. This is a crisis of both education and professional practice.

Livability – Current discourse often misses the need for attractiveness and non-design related urban quality in both formal and informal urban settlements. In many cases, the qualitative aspects of urban life not easily expressed by design or engineering are overlooked.

Infrastructure - Social, economic and physical resources are declining in cities facing drastic decline as well as those experiencing dramatic growth. Managing, maintaining and restructuring urban infrastructure to adapt to these realities are likely to dominate our urban development choices and efforts. Understanding urban networks, their complexity and scale are essential components to addressing these trends.

The Public Realm – There is a slow, but growing appropriation and shift in the control of public space and place. Cities are increasingly challenged to maintain the amount and quality of their public resources and amenities. Accessibility to them is also under threat due to privatization. When both public and private space are compromised, urban well-being is compromised as well. The impact of technology and changing socio-cultural norms are also altering our attitudes towards public space, its meaning and use.

Radical Change, Response & Resilience – Our urbanized world is likely to continue to experience more dramatic change with bigger consequences than ever before. Such change may be sudden or incremental but will be increasingly difficult and irreversible. Such change can easily occur due to human action (i.e. political and economic shifts, war, disease, social unrest or poverty) or natural forces (i.e. floods, storms, earthquakes, tsunamis, fires, water shortages, soil productivity or natural resource depletion). Our ability to cope with such dramatic change relates directly to the growth and intensity of our human settlements.

Mobility - Our ability and need to travel has shifted across scales and time. Our concept of distance and the time associated with it has changed with technology and our movement options. Mobility is therefore important at all scales. Our need vs. want will begin to be questioned as energy costs begin to compromise current choices. Rethinking social cost and benefit, and the need to personally slow down are not part of the current debate but should be. There is pressing need to think in terms of integrated systems rather than optimized single modes of transport.

Resources – We can no longer separate physical resources from personal, social and knowledge based resources. Human capital and the ability to leverage it is just as important, if not more so than the physical resources necessary to support our current needs and pace of consumption (i.e. quality of life expectations). We know materials, knowledge and health all face the challenges of equity at the global scale. The true impact of technology on these issues in the face of growing imbalances between sources and need/want will increasingly dominate our actions and reactions.

Is planning now a tool
of neglect or control?
Izabela Mironowicz

THE POLITICS OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT & PLANNING

- As cities are forced to re-calibrate their priorities, the means and methods for success will largely depend upon their leadership and governance. Increasingly, resource intensive planning activities in cities are being done without professional planners, new change agents are emerging, and planning as a power structure unto itself will either help or hurt progress. It is not entirely clear why the successes we see in some cities cannot be copied well. Clearly we need to understand the political and cultural realities that influence good and bad outcomes better.

"The provision and the quality of public spaces will play a very important role in meeting new demands generated by changes in society combined with the climate challenge and widespread health concerns.

Jan Gehl