

State of the Profession 2018

International Society of City and Regional Planners

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Equilibrium & Convergence

Sustainability

Intergenerational equity is the foundation of contemporary planning, and is most often associated with the definition, “Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” (Brundtland Commission) This concept has evolved over the past decades to address concerns regarding anthropocentrism, arbitrary standards, and the omission of an aspirational vision.

Sustainability, resilience and regeneration must converge as a model for planning intergenerational equity, disaster preparedness, and visioning

In 2016, HABITAT III introduced global Sustainable Development Goals that span the three spheres of sustainability: *society*, *environment*, and *economy*. A movement to also merge these spheres within the context of *culture* was also promoted. For the first time, the 17 goals were applied to developed as well as developing countries.

ISOCARP was an organizer and thought-leader for HABITAT III, and began actively implementing the Sustainable Development Goals in conjunction with the *New Urban Agenda*. These efforts included collaboration with the 2017 World Urban Forum, the 2018 World Planning Congress and other site-specific activities.

The sustainable development spheres and

encompassing culture are experiencing contemporary challenges unique to each element:

- ⊗ **Society**—global population growth
- ⊗ **Environment**—global climate change
- ⊗ **Economy**—global fiscal crises
- ⊗ **Culture**—globalization

It is essential that we consider each of these spheres and challenges for **all** programs

and projects: infrastructure/ services, climate action and environmental conservation, economic development, and

cultural preservation respectively.

The concept of sustainable development is interconnected and interdependent on each of these spheres, and a balance—or equilibrium—is the ideal.

Resilience

Resilience is the ability of a system—whether a tide pool or township—to withstand environmental flux without collapsing into a qualitatively different state. (Maywa Montenegro) Whereas sustainability is the “long view,” resilience focuses on immediacy. With the convergence of sustainable development impacts, disasters will become more frequent and severe. Cities and regions must adopt resilience planning policies and

practices to respond to both natural and man-made disasters. We must address specific equilibrium impacts such as displacement, climate adaptation and mitigation, economic instability, and culture shock. Collectively, these and many other changes will redefine the concept of “continuity” for urbanism. The concept of “building back better” is questionable in light of the dynamic shifts in society, environment, economy and culture that are occurring today. There is no “going back,” and—even if that was possible—we have the ability to plan a much more vibrant, and meaningful future. It is important to consider that risk management includes the identification, assessment, and prioritization of risks followed by coordinated and economical application of resources to minimize, monitor, and control the probability and/or impact of

unfortunate events
or to maximize the realization of opportunities.

Resilience planning must not only recognize the imperative of

“continuity,” but plan for regeneration. In short, we must be the agents of change to create a **desired** “qualitatively different state.” It is vital that the Society incorporate urban resilience and disaster planning in its programming.

Regeneration

Neither sustainability nor resilience are in and of themselves aspirational. There is no compelling vision for an intergenerationally equitable or resilient future. This omission can be best filled by *regenerative design* which “introduces into Ecological Design at least two additional streams—the Science or Art of Place, and the science of living systems. Regeneration is far more than simple renewal or restoration.

Definitions of the word ‘regenerate’ include three key ideas: a radical change for the better; creation of a new spirit; returning energy to the source.” (Pamela Mang)

ISOCARP has been a leader in visioning since its foundation in 1965. The 2016 edition of The Review’s theme was *Envisioning Future Cities: Ideas and Examples*. This was followed by the promotion of *Smart Communities* in 2017, and *Climate Change Planning* in 2018.

Smart Eco-Cities

The convergence of the smart city and green city movements creates smart urbanism. The ISOCARP *Smart Sustainable City* white paper considers a wide spectrum of topics related to this hybrid. Futurists

also predict another convergence that will be so consequential, it has been named the *technological singularity*.

Inevitable and increasingly complex changes may make a new equilibrium impossible. We must become more flexible, innovative and responsive in planning for sustainability, resilience and regeneration

Smart urbanism merges information and communications technologies; energy, resource and infrastructure technologies into networks that create sustainable, resilient, regenerative, urban-rural ecosystems with vibrant communities, thriving economies and biodiverse environments.

Smart urbanism is inevitable, and we must develop concepts and practices that will create a shared, regenerative vision. Smart urbanism is ISOCARP’s defining and definitive purpose: “Knowledge for better Cities.”

Wishing you every success and happiness,

