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Editorial

The Resilient Metropolis: Planning in an Era of Decentralization

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Abstract

This thematic issue of *Urban Planning* focuses on recent transformations of the built environment, the economy, and society around the world. The articles examine how planning processes and policy responses can adapt to the transformation of metropolitan areas in the pursuit of a more just and resilient society. Key themes are centered on socio-spatial processes that drive the uneven growth, the economic globalization of cities and the pursuant human migration, and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Collectively, the authors engage in a scholarly conversation about the future of the resilient metropolis in an era of decentralization.

Keywords

economic restructuring; pandemic; population change; resilience; urbanization

Issue

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1. Introduction

In response to recent transformations of the built environment, the economy, and society around the world, this thematic issue of *Urban Planning* focuses on how planning processes and policy responses can adapt to the transformation of metropolitan areas in the pursuit of a more just and resilient society. The spatial decentralization of human settlements and economic activities is a key theme as patterns of metropolitan living continue to evolve and planning adapts as a response. These impacts are widespread, and three broad trends stand out. First, socio-spatial processes drive the uneven growth and development of cities and suburbs, thus exacerbating socioeconomic inequalities. Second, the economic globalization of cities and the pursuant human migration leads to further decentralization from the urban core to the metropolitan fringe. Finally, the Covid-19 pandemic has further disrupted patterns of metropolitan decentralization. Questions abound about the future of cities and suburbs. Urban planners and policymakers will be faced with a multitude of challenges and opportunities as society charts the future for recovery from the pandemic.

This thematic issue brings together 28 scholars from around the world, spanning a dozen countries. They offer a comparative lens on the conversation about metropolitan resilience. Across 13 original articles, the authors engage in a timely conversation about multiple, intersecting policy and planning issues about what makes cities and suburbs resilient. Moreover, the authors represent a diversity of voices, experiences, and perspective across the Global North and the Global South. A final feature is the multi-generational nature of the research teams that bring together senior scholars, junior scholars, students, and practitioners alike. Let us now synthesize the key themes.

2. The Thematic Issue: The Resilient Metropolis

The thematic issue opens with four articles that examine the myriad impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on cities and suburbs. Building on a global conversation about the future of urban centers, the pandemic revealed enduring spatial injustices *within* and *among* metropolitan areas—challenging the resilience of these places (Banai, 2020). Questions abound about the future of work (Kahn,

2022), the future of downtown (Batty, 2020), the role of extended urbanization (Connolly et al., 2020), the question of density of cities (Keil, 2020), and the impact on suburbs (Anacker, 2021), among many other questions. Indeed, the concept of resilience in the context of cities, suburbs, and regions calls on scholars and practitioners alike to think differently about governance by making deliberate decisions that both mitigate risk and respond to new challenges as they happen (Meerow & Newell, 2019). The thematic issue seeks to further our understanding about challenges and opportunities of the unique nature of urbanized areas across time and space boundaries (Pendall et al., 2010).

In the opening article, Vicino et al. (2022) confront these questions by articulating an analytical framework for understanding the disparate impacts of the pandemic on metropolitan resiliency. They argue that the analysis of shocks to the systems warrants a mode of analysis along temporal, spatial, and dimensional characteristics and outcomes. Spatial differences emerge within cities and suburbs and among metropolitan areas along dimensions of density, population, socioeconomic structure, transportation patterns, and economic base of the region. This framework can serve as analytical guidance for scholarly analysis and a planning tool for practical application. Next, Moser et al. (2022) examine how the phenomenon of working from home shocked the urban system. Drawing on the case of Munich, Germany, the authors collect and analyze data about location choice of residence and work and the corresponding transportation patterns. They find that the pandemic resulted in a gradual yet discontinuous decay from the region's urban core to the surround suburban fringes as working from home increased. Then, Howe (2022) dives deeply into the lived experiences of residents of the Gauteng City-Region of metropolitan Johannesburg, South Africa. Using an innovative mixed approach that combines ethnography and smartphone location data, Howe (2022) demonstrates the uneven impacts of the pandemic across the "gender-poverty-mobility nexus," finding that vulnerable groups carried a disproportionate burden of household management, childcare, and mobility. Finally, Vigiola et al. (2022) turn to the case of metropolitan Sydney, Australia to investigate the impact of the pandemic on commercial and residential property trends. They find that during the pandemic, central city commercial real estate vacancies increased and residential demand in the suburbs increased.

The following articles build on the key theme of uneven patterns of urban development that have produced disparate socioeconomic outcomes through a series of case studies. Reflecting on the case of metropolitan Saint-Etienne, France, Pinoncelly (2022) demonstrates the historical roles that planning processes play in shaping and reinforcing socioeconomic inequalities in a time of population and economic shrinkage across the region. Next, O'Farrell and Zwicky (2022) argue that the "just devolution" framework can make regions more

resilient through spatial justice and equitable planning practices, as evidenced in the cases of Birmingham, England and Lyon, France. Then, De Vidovich (2022) illustrates that the provision of welfare services across the metropolitan areas of Milan, Rome, and Naples results in uneven socio-spatial polarizations from the urban core to the suburban fringe. Turning to the case Tokyo, Japan, Ohashi et al. (2022) extend the analysis of population shrinkage in the suburbs to explain the role of inter-municipal cooperation across jurisdictions in coordinating resilient planning approaches. Csizmady et al. (2022) demonstrate how unplanned suburbanization in Hungary results in class segregation, social injustice, and environmental degradation. Rodrigues (2022) compares the role of housing and the built environment in Lisbon, Portugal and Luanda, Angola to assess neighborhood resiliency and explain adaptation to current conditions. Losonczy et al. (2022) consider the case of metropolitan Budapest's suburbanization through a development typology and planning history to explain the role of centralized planning systems. Following this case, Lorens and Gołędzinowska (2022) explain the role of polycentricity and its impacts on resilient planning in the Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot metropolitan area of Poland. Finally, turning to the case of Jakarta, Indonesia, Aritenang (2022) examines the impact of socioeconomic inequality on travel behavior, finding that residential economic structure shapes peripheral travel and development on the suburban fringe.

3. Conclusion

This thematic issue invited scholars to consider the many facets of metropolitan development and their impacts on resilient planning in an era of decentralization. The collective contributions in this thematic issue demonstrate that the social, economic, and political processes shaping the decentralization of people and activities across the landscape endures throughout the developed and developing city regions of the world. These insights, both theoretical and empirical in nature, further contextualize our understanding about what makes cities, suburbs, and regions resilient. We have learned that the nature of shocks to a metropolitan system can come in many forms—from pandemic to poverty and beyond. The consequences of uneven patterns of development across cities and suburbs challenge planners and policymakers to think about endemic shocks over time in different ways. Spatial justice practices and equitable planning approaches offer us the frameworks and tools to confront inequalities of all types. We invite you to join this timely, provocative conversation in this thematic issue.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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