The World in 2020

The 2020 Congress of the International Society of City and Regional Planners – the 56th World Planning Congress – is an online conference bringing urban experts and practitioners together virtually from around the globe. It challenges us to reflect on the Post-Oil City and how Urban Green Deals can contribute to global and local agendas for sustainable, resilient and equitable urban development.

However, 2020 has been marked by the Covid-19 pandemic, imposing on the Congress a much broader and more complex agenda. The pandemic has triggered a public health crisis, has claimed over one million lives worldwide, and unleashed a devastating economic crisis with far-reaching impacts that will probably contribute to even more in-depth changes in our lifestyles.

These simultaneous crises – climate, environment, health, social, economic – are demonstrating the fragility of our world. For planners, this is highlighting the need for integrated solutions, as we realise that we cannot put the climate agenda and planning for a post-oil future aside while we take on unprecedented challenges like the current pandemic. Likewise, human, economic and environmental cost of slums and marginalization, expose the need of inclusive urbanization approaches as decisive for our future cities. They all pose the question: how resilient is the physical, social and political infrastructure of our urbanised, globalised, ecologically imbalanced world? Is more change necessary than previously thought?
The World Planning Congress and the UN urbanisation agenda

Since its inception in 1965, the International Society of City and Regional Planners (ISOCARP), as a global organisation, has been bringing together recognised and highly qualified, cross-sectoral planners from more than 85 countries worldwide. Members of the Society share a common interest: international cooperation and inclusive knowledge-sharing in support of innovations in planning practice, training, research, and education.

In 2020, urban and regional professionals are charged with being key players in moving the world from goals to action. They support both decision-makers and communities to shape the essential frameworks, plans and design of urban form that will make cities inclusive, resilient, and sustainable and will also protect and restore the world’s ecosystems. Urban and regional planning has a history of more than 100 years of integrating policies, plans and designs to find solutions for complex problems through global collaboration. In 2015 the Governing Council of UN-Habitat adopted the International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning IG-UTP, followed in 2016 by the New Urban Agenda (NUA) of the United Nations, and professional and political organisations across the globe have adopted charters and development agendas to deal with arising issues.

In the face of monumental issues challenging sustainable urbanization at the global scale, the role of urban actors in achieving all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (in particular SDG-11 concerning cities) is urged for effective, collaborative, and immediate action toward the 2030 agenda and beyond! This is an opportunity for innovative new approaches to Planning and for forging of daring Green Deals, which will address at once the climate crisis, the post-Covid economic recovery, and the provision of adequate living conditions for all.

A Shared Global Message

Energised by the congress theme, Post-Oil City, and the many challenges of our time, the 2020 World Planning Congress hereby calls for developing together — via inclusive process over the course of the Congress proceedings — a Declaration of shared values and collectively identified opportunities for transformative action.

The following working Congress Declaration Draft has been prepared by the International Society of City and Regional Planners, and honored Co-hosts of the 56th Annual World Planning Congress, the Urban Economy Forum and UN-Habitat, and is hereby presented the 2020 ISOCARP World Planning Congress.
This Declaration opening draft, prepared by the 2020 Congress Delegation, is hereby presented at the beginning of the Congress on 9 November 2020.

In the spirit of inclusion, all Congress Participants will be invited to contribute to the Declaration over the course of the Congress, starting on 10 November 2020! A final shared Declaration will be presented at the closing of the 2020 World Planning Congress.

CONNECTED in a world-wide community of city and regional planners, planning researchers, urbanists, city officials and administrators, and experts in many fields;

HAVING collaborated and learned from each other during the 56th World Planning Congress of the International Society of City and Regional Planners;

HAVING focused on the challenges of the congress theme, Post-Oil City, and the radical potential Urban Green Deals;

INSPIRED by our shared values and the opportunities for transformative action that we collectively identified;

WE, the 2020 Congress Delegation, present the following draft declaration:

We call upon all national and local governments to collaborate and promote urban research and knowledge-sharing to advance global sustainable urbanisation goals, including advancing carbon-neutral and water-sensitive urban development and the protection of global natural resources and ecosystems, through science-based policy and data-driven planning that accounts for differing and disproportionate impacts across global regions.

ISOCARP supports the theme of this year's World Habitat Day focused on housing access, 'Housing for All: A Better Urban Future'. We stand with UN-Habitat, recognizing that decent housing and inclusive urbanisation is a global concern and additionally a frontline defense against Covid-19. For 1.8 billion people living in inadequate housing and informal settlements or facing homelessness, basic safety measures like hand-washing and social distancing are impossible. Socially inclusive urban environments and the provision of housing must not only be a shared goal, but a shared responsibility that is acted on collectively, across sectors and around the globe.

We acknowledge that amidst the current pandemic cities and towns have moved quickly to provide emergency shelter and quarantine spaces; to postpone evictions; and to truck in water. It is imperative that our short-term response and recovery is leveraged to advance and inform long-range planning, and is integrated with long-term sustainable development agendas. A dynamic approach will be essential for adaptability and resiliency of cities.
We advocate that good urbanisation and sustainable cities are the engines of prosperity, opportunity and a better quality of life for all people and their nations. The Planning Profession, in collaboration with allied design and engineering professions, should educate and advocate for the implementation of the International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning (IG-UTP) and its 12 key planning principles. They should all play a central role in the Pandemic response and recovery, and in shaping pandemic-resilient urbanism.

We take note of the recent report\(^1\) of the chief economists in the United Nations system who have jointly identified climate change and nature degradation, inequalities, urbanization, rapid population changes and technological revolution as the five “megatrends” that will shape our world over the course of this century, and urgent concurrent and integrated policy interventions are needed to be taken by the international community now to put the world on a more sustainable and prosperous path.

We acknowledge that in the face of global crises we need to move from agenda to action and implementation — scaling up solutions to meet critical global goals. This will require accountability today for environmental costs that will be felt tomorrow; must take into account that different regions will be impacted differently; must address the informal “majority world”; and will rely on systems level change and innovation — such as in digitalisation, big data, and new global economic models — as well as multilateral Green Deals to get us there.

We recognise that global crises and challenges — climate change, environmental degradation, pandemics, economic crises — have disproportionate impacts on the most vulnerable global populations. Addressing widening digital divides, wealth gaps, inequitable access to basic resources, and rapid informal urbanisation, needs to feature prominently in all urban solutions.

In the search for better policy coordination, we recall that national urban policies can rally and coordinate various actors for a common vision that can promote transformative, productive, inclusive and resilient urban development for the long-term. While such policies can be tremendously supportive and efficient, it is important to consider our responsibility for advocacy and for holding governments accountable when they ignore the public voice, inclusive and transparent processes, equity in communities, data or science.

To respond to multiple crises and to build back better and greener requires not only planning expertise from national and local governments, NGOs, and academia, but must include all communities and local stakeholders. Therefore, we call for a sufficient funding of planning institutions and for capacity building for all stakeholders, and inclusive planning practices that embrace indigenous and local knowledge.

We call for public space to be a priority issue, and for the rethinking of the public realm. Not only is well-designed public space a matter of aesthetics and improved social interaction and well-being, but it lies at the nexus of sustainability, public health and social equity. To achieve greater climate resilience, sustainable mobility, health, social cohesion and justice, the post-oil era brings great opportunity for urban public spaces to play a strategic and pivotal role for an integrated approach to equitable and sustainable formal and informal urbanisation. Democratic public spaces —of and for all — must be central to our revisioning of the post-oil city.

---

More than any time in history, the problems facing our planet are dire and require definitive, urgent and decisive planning action at the local, regional and global scale; Planners and urban design professionals are uniquely positioned to lead communities in this work.