

Chapter **Introduction: World Cities —**
1 **Challenges of Liveability,**
 Sustainability and Vibrancy

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World cities compete in the global arena on the basis of connectivity and their contributions to the international networks and flows of goods, services and finance which constitute the world economy. More focus has been on the economic vitality of these cities rather than the impacts of rapid population growth and territorial expansion generally through sprawl and unplanned development. Increasingly, however, world cities are emphasising the importance of competing on the basis of liveability and quality of life that are on offer. This book documents the presentations and discussions that took place during the inaugural World Cities Summit held in Singapore, 23–25 June 2008. The theme of this inaugural Summit was “liveable and vibrant cities.”

The World Cities Summit series was established by the Singapore Ministries of Defence, National Development, Environment and Water Resources to examine one of the growing urban issues: governance and sustainable development of cities around the world. Urban growth projections by the United Nations indicate that the world’s urban population will grow from 2.86 billion in the year 2000 to 4.98 billion by 2030; two-thirds of the world’s population will be living in towns and cities in the next 50 years. Asia is urbanising rapidly; 66 of the world’s 100 fastest growing cities with population of more than one million are located in Asia. Its urban

settlements are growing on a scale never seen before. By 2015, 12 of the world's 26 mega-cities will be in Asia. Before 2025, one of every two Asians will live in cities. Some of the important implications of this growth are its consequential impact on the availability of jobs, housing and infrastructure, and urban management.

Asia's urban challenge is enormous. Asia is home to 70 per cent of the world's absolute poor (those living on less than US\$1 a day). The population in Asia's slums is growing at an estimated average rate of 110 million people per year. Developing countries in East Asia are estimated to need to spend more than US\$1 trillion over the next five years on roads, water, communications, power and other infrastructure to cope with rapidly expanding cities and increasing population. The challenge for national and local governments is not only to attract business investments and global talent to maintain city competitiveness but also to address key issues of poverty reduction, infrastructure development, affordable housing, governance, environmental and ecological sustainability, social inclusiveness, and financial solvency, among others. City governments more often than not have to face fundamental development dilemmas in maintaining economic growth and ensuring sustainable communities. Meeting these challenges will require innovation in policies and institutions.

LIVEABLE AND VIBRANT CITIES

Under globalisation, cities have become more, not less, important. Cities around the world are re-examining their urban assets and remaking themselves to enhance competitiveness. Liveability and vibrancy of the built environment are discussed increasingly on a global scale. Greater attention is given to quality of life. There is a growing body of research that suggests quality of life is becoming an increasingly important factor in modern business location decisions, especially among high technology and knowledge firms (Glaser and Bardo, 1991; McNulty *et al.*, 1985). McNulty *et al.* (1985) in assessing the links between quality of life and the economic success of cities concluded that cities that are not liveable places are not likely to perform important economic functions in the future. If we agree with McNulty *et al.* (1985), enhancing liveability would then be a central objective in every city's economic transition strategy. It is no surprise that the

elements of liveability are increasingly employed as economic development tools. Visions of a liveable city are growing in their relative importance. Liveability-oriented urban planning has emerged in recent decades around the world, including South Korea and Singapore.

According to *The Economist Global Liveability Index 2007*, the world's top 10 liveable cities are in Canada (Vancouver, Toronto), Australia (Melbourne, Perth, Adelaide, Sydney), and Western Europe (Vienna, Copenhagen, Geneva, Zurich). The world's 10 worst liveable cities are in Africa, Asia and Latin America — Algiers, Dhaka, Lagos, Karachi, Kathmandu, Abidjan, Dakar, Phnom Penh, Tehran, Bogota. Asia, Africa and Latin America with their fast growing population, large urban centres and hosts of urban challenges are comparatively weak in liveability. The cities that have high liveability rating are those that have reinvented themselves, and managed growth and change to provide their citizens with a vibrant and liveable environment.

What makes a liveable city? Liveability is generally defined by performance in three main areas: environmental quality, neighbourhood amenity and individual well-being (Lennard and Lennard, 1995). The key elements of a liveable city often include attractive public spaces, walkable, mixed use, higher density neighbourhoods that support a range of green infrastructure and transport, affordable housing, vibrant, exciting, sociable, human-scaled pedestrian experiences. It prioritises walking, bicycling and the use of public transport. These attributes help make places pleasant and easy to live. Liveability initiatives often meet environmental, economic and equity goals, which are also the elements for the transition to sustainability. At its most basic, the core principle of sustainable urban planning is that we should plan for a better future. In short, liveability and sustainability agendas overlap substantially. Sustainability initiatives can improve liveability.

Even though liveability is primarily a subjective experience, there is a growing consensus on the attributes of a liveable city for designing for liveability. As early as the 1960s, Jacobs (1961) has called for the sociability and liveability of dense, mixed-use urban areas. These qualities included a clear demarcation between public and private space, 'eyes on the street' of the local community, streets and sidewalks in constant use and streets with attractions on them that encourage people to linger. Lynch's (1981) good city form theory with its emphasis on qualities such as legibility, vitality,

congruence, sense, access, efficiency has further influenced urban liveability planning among urban designers in the 1980s and 1990s.

Several urbanism researchers have investigated how liveable streets are created (Appleyard, 1981; Jacobs, 1993) and how to design people-friendly housing developments and public spaces (Cooper-Marcus and Sarkissian, 1986; Cooper-Marcus and Francis, 1990). In the 1990s, the new urbanism and smart growth movements in the USA have further promoted the principles for planning more liveable places. Although from different perspectives, the various research and movements contribute to an emerging synthesis of urban design knowledge of how to make cities more liveable, and how to base that design on the experience and input of the community who will use the places. Different areas will require different solutions.

Designing for liveability is not just an abstract theory. Most recently, the US Local Government Commission Centre for Liveable Communities has defined its liveability agenda as helping local communities to “increase transportation alternatives, reduce infrastructure costs, create more affordable housing, improve air quality, preserve natural resources, and restore local economic and social vitality.” The desired outcomes of liveability should be measurable. In other words, there should be measurable improvements such as becoming less car-dependent with more trips taken by bicycles, public transit and walking, a better pedestrian environment, improved air quality and increased greenery. The implication is that the plan for a more liveable city while visionary will need to be realistic. While quality of life remains high on the agenda, challenges that remain include increasing population growth and its concomitant development pressures on affordable housing, infrastructure, etc.

It requires effective leadership to start and sustain a liveable city. Leadership provides impetus and direction. According to Landry (2000), successful leadership “aligns will, resourcefulness and energy with vision and an understanding of the needs of a city and its people. It has coherent ideas appropriate to local circumstances and professional traits such as charisma, spirituality . . . Leaders must develop a story of what their creative [liveable] city could be and how to get there.” A combination of approaches — regulatory and incentive-based — will be necessary. Perhaps most importantly, enhancing urban liveability will also require

liveability-oriented planning processes that are inclusive and participatory, which can help achieve sustained, longer term results.

What makes a vibrant city? Like liveability, the notion of vibrancy is subjective. It is dependent on the individual's past experiences, reference points and value judgements. In most cases, vibrancy of the city is enhanced through two key elements: its population and attraction. As the East Asia Liveable Cities Conference 2008 pointed out, people are the city's best potential asset. The city's population — social and cultural environment — and unique physical and favourable economic environment provide opportunity to improve its urban life and relative attractiveness. The image of the city and its local identity has become a key concern as cities attempt to raise their profile in the international marketplace. For many post-industrial cities, selling the city on the basis of image and place-marketing presents a promising future-oriented growth that facilitates economic and spatial survival.

Landscape features aside, the city's cultural content enhances identity and the value of locations. Much has been written about these 'landscapes of power' (Bianchini *et al.*, 1988; Zukin, 1991; Kearns and Philo, 1993). Entrepreneurialism has emerged as an important element in the place-marketing repertoire, leading to a change of philosophy in urban governance (Harvey, 1989). In exploring creative action for future-oriented urban economic development, a growing number of urbanists have postulated that creative cities will require creative governments (Landry, 2000; Florida, 2002). More and more, cities are recognising the importance of entrepreneurs and risk experimenting in creating vibrancy. Focus is on creating a city that is full of variety and vitality, providing a multitude of experiences.

As part of the bid to reinvent them, cities have highlighted visions of change and progress, liveability and positively valued images. Learning the approaches to creative urban development (Landry, 2000; Florida, 2002), and the successful transformation of such cities as Bilbao (Guggenheim Museum), Baltimore (urban waterfront) and Glasgow (cultural planning), many cities have started to enhance their cultural imagineering and vibrancy. The strategies include upgrading the urban environment, redeveloping redundant sites, and actively fostering the development of events and activities which focus on having significant attractions, activities and events

that are a visitor attraction for both tourists and locals; cultural industries which focus on art gallery, museums, performing arts, media, etc; and the buzz quotient which focuses on enlivening the city, providing the city with more high energy places and spaces, and more options for living and recreation. Such a task is complex, and must take the full gamut of local cultural capital as its point of departure if cities are to remain distinctive and vibrant. The danger is frequently the manufacture of sameness. We have to work on it. This book though not the last word on the subject brings together considered reflection on the current state of play and critical issues in creating liveable and vibrant cities.

CHALLENGES OF LIVEABILITY, SUSTAINABILITY AND VIBRANCY

Reflecting the thematic sessions of the World Cities Summit 2008, this book covers 11 areas of concern among world cities. These range from good governance, well-being, inclusivity, waste management, sustainability, creative cities, financing to behavioural economics covered in 16 chapters. The volume of essays offers not just the highlights of the discussion during the Summit but also the learned perspective and analysis from leading experts, including academics, professionals and practitioners.

Following the introductory chapter, Theme 1 on Good Governance and Sustainable Cities is explored in the chapter by Giok Ling Ooi. The critical role of good governance in urban sustainability is discussed. Sustainable urban development has not occurred spontaneously. It will require effective leadership. Most successful cities have good governance and increased responsiveness to changing needs and circumstances. The success factors for developing cities that are liveable (i.e. good infrastructure, clean environment, good quality of life) and vibrant (i.e. economic competitiveness), the formulation of effective policies to address such key issues as water, energy and environmental sustainability are also discussed. It offers a timely reminder that good governance — the improvement of forms and modes of governance as well as the quality of the interrelationships between the parts — is critical to urban growth and development.

Well-being creates vibrant cities and further amplifies the discussion on quality of life. Thai Ker Liu revisits the Summit discussion on subjective

well-being, including happiness and life satisfaction, and how this is influenced by the society and city in which a person lives among other factors. A behavioural economic model for societies is discussed to illuminate some of the key factors for a well-functioning and competitive city — law and order, food and shelter, work, economics, health, well-being, engaged citizens, brain gain, gross domestic product. Therefore, a good physical environment while providing the foundation for physical and economic vibrancy is but one development area. Developing economic and mental vibrancy is equally important. It challenges cities to think of citizens' well-being and happiness.

Using findings from a study on happiness and the provision of environmental vis-à-vis other public goods in Singapore, Euston Quah and Qiyang Ong extend the argument by including consideration on the value of public amenities and environmental goods. Most life satisfaction studies are revealing results that indicate environment and public amenities to be important dimensions in well-being. The postulation is that the city that enhances well-being creates the desirable conditions that can help cities attract successful businesses and talent.

Peter Hall discusses these conditions in his chapter on *The Age of the City: The Challenges for the Creative City*. Reflecting the theme of *Urban Planning and Conservation: Planning for a Distinctive and Vibrant City*, the discussion dwells on the urban challenges cities in history and around the world face when competing to attract and retain global investments and talents. What steps can be taken to develop the creative city, and put in place the elements that will form the foundation of the creative city in the context of new economy challenges and opportunities? Hall persuasively argues that cities function as 'incubators' of creativity and innovation. Globally, there has been extensive effort to make the city more distinctive, exciting and liveable to enhance their competitive edge and safeguard their growth and relevance in the world economy. An increasingly frequent formula is the expansion of the creative and cultural sector. Hall cautions against the creation of a city of cultural consumption. He argues that cities must promote urban innovations that will improve the quality of life in their cities, and make them models of sustainable urban living.

While solid waste collection, disposal and recycling may not be the most visible of activities in cities, they are crucial in sustaining a quality

living environment. This is the thrust of concern about solid waste management: sustainable waste management choices, which is the basis of the chapter by Anne Scheinberg. Cities need to plan for the longer term to manage waste and conserve resources in order to be environmentally sustainable, socially progressive and economically competitive. The notions of integrated solid waste management and modernisation of waste management are introduced to frame the discussion. The discussion of urban specifics is carried through in the following chapter on Land Transportation.

Vukan Vuchic puts forward the case that to be liveable, cities must ensure safe, convenient and attractive areas for pedestrian movement and public transport development. Pedestrian improvement and the experience of walking are at the heart of what makes a good city. Enhancement of the local transport system is a vital part of city growth strategy. In the current context of high oil prices, it seems reasonable to focus urban effort on sustainable urban transport that will decrease automobile use. Good governance and institutional framework are fundamental to sustainable urban transport management. Long-term planning and effective implementation of sound policies, strategies and infrastructure projects are equally critical to enhancing the quality of land transport in cities and ensuring convenient in-city and city-suburban-region mobility.

The role of the different actors and sources of financing in urban development is explored in the collaboration between the public and private sectors for urban development. Sock Yong Phang in her chapter reviewed the emerging popularity of public-private partnership in urban development, the main forms of public-private partnership and evaluated its usefulness. Cities are increasingly tapping on private sector expertise and funding for infrastructure and development projects. Even though some public-private partnerships are complex and costly, much of urban development public-private partnership remains an important instrument in urban development policy.

The general conclusion is that sustainability requires governments to stay engaged, public-private partnership to be appropriately designed and regulated to benefit the community. Examples abound on how city transformation is achieved with collaboration and partnership between the government and private sector. The gap in financial resources and capability for environmental infrastructure is highlighted by Ursula

Schaefer-Preuss. Schaefer-Preuss offers a succinct review of the state of financing of environmental infrastructure, especially in terms of climate change adaptation, water supply and sanitation. Drawing on the Asian Development Bank programme experiences from various cities, new financial structuring mechanisms, approaches to capability development and coordinating structures are discussed.

The role of the city in urban sustainability is addressed in the chapter on Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change. Victor Savage details the evolution of human settlement through time and its impact on the environment. How cities can implement and balance environmental sustainability with economic development, in particular addressing the emerging challenges such as climate change is a major preoccupation of our time. Mitigating climate change for urban sustainability is urgent. Several approaches and action plans are discussed as possible ways forward in addressing climate change.

Sustainability in the built environment has become a popular discourse. More and more cities are including sustainability on their policy and development agenda. As Chye Kiang Heng and Ji Zhang review, sustainable architecture, green building and eco-urbanism have entered the urban development vocabulary. Sustainability performance indicators and benchmarking have proliferated. The challenge of sustainability in the built environment is rooted in its multiple dimensions, issues, scope and actors. To achieve sustainability in the built environment requires the cooperation of everyone, from government to developers, from consultants to users. It is no longer sufficient to develop new buildings. Sustainability necessitates redevelopment and rejuvenation. It also calls forth greater attention on urban greening. In the discussion on design and management of green spaces, some of the issues raised concern the management and design challenges in resolving competing urban land use demands in the provision of green spaces. Loke Ming Chou expounds the biodiversity in sustainable cities, arguing for its value and the need to restore and re-introduce nature. The challenge is to plan cities around nature instead of artificially forcing nature into cities.

Achieving inclusive and sustainable growth centres on how economic growth in cities could build vital social networks, and create scope for the individual and community to be involved and productive. Emiel Wegelin

and Michael Lindfield address the role of the government and society in generating and sustaining growth. The main contention is that cities must plan strategically for inclusive development, and involve communities in the planning, design, finance and implementation of urban development. In their discussion, Wegelin and Lindfield also draw lessons from the key findings of the Commission on Growth and Development. The key agenda of the Commission is growth dynamics, the causes, consequences and internal dynamics of sustained high growth, especially sustained high inclusive growth.

Time and again, the critical role of city leadership in urban growth and sustainability has been underscored. As the Commission on Growth and Development pointed out, growth is the result of market forces and private sector investment operating in an environment created by effective government. Andrew Tan in the penultimate chapter highlights the key learning points, strategies and priorities from the East Asia Summit Conference on Liveable Cities that was organised in parallel with the World Cities Summit. The East Asia Summit Conference was focused on the interrelated issues of governance, urbanisation, climate change and the environment with a dedicated plenary session for mayors and governors. A final concluding chapter rethreads the various thematic discussions, emphasising the key lessons for cities in the area of governance and sustainable development.

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