

The City of Tomorrow after Corona

Don't we have the best arguments for change right now?

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Wasn't it amazing for all of us, how quickly changes are possible and have an effect? Where otherwise stinking convoys forced through the streets, the air from exhaust gases swayed coughing stimulus and the noise level is brewing motors from the house walls echoed, was suddenly calm. Birds returned with their fine singing and the air value and condition were significantly better. People were able to cross the road easily - with the appropriate social distancing, of course - and experienced urban greenery as a source of physical and mental well-being. Somehow, the Coronavirus has achieved overnight what the politicians, planners, and environmentalists were unable to do for decades. And, where do we go from here?

Our personal experience in the Coronavirus pandemic varies over a wide spectrum of factors - be it more leisure time or an increase in workload, financial and health worries to existential fears. But one thing is likely to be together: they experienced themselves and their surroundings. Instead of exclusively serving car traffic - suddenly other uses, which are also used in many have been taken. Urban spaces, especially green spaces and parks, are revived by pedestrians and cyclists. In the time of "Locked Down" there was a clear message that connecting with nature physically to stay socially and mentally healthy was essential. Our living rooms were also rediscovered with more creativity, above all, more greenery was injected into our apartments, balconies, roof- and house gardens, nurseries, flowers- and garden center, and many businesses had a branch contrary to the general trends boom. Somehow it was to feel that having a healthy environment with an abundance of greenery is a central basic need that belongs to people. We call this the Biophilia Effect - The Love for Nature and all Living Things.





1 The city according to Corona if City planners, Climate researchers and health professionals working together can result in looking green. Photo: Unless otherwise stated, Herbert Dreiseitl

2 Cities swept empty in Corona times. The crisis makes you think and prioritize reset.

3 Learning from the crisis: Lush green makes every living and working environment healthier and more livable.



New Discussion of Values

Obviously, a lot has changed. It is often said that we should not go back to the way things were instead we should use this opportunity to adopt a more sustainable lifestyle. The discussion, what is the quality of life, what we need and want, and on what consumption can it be dispensed with, is in full swing - although still mainly in the social circles that already have a secured livelihood.

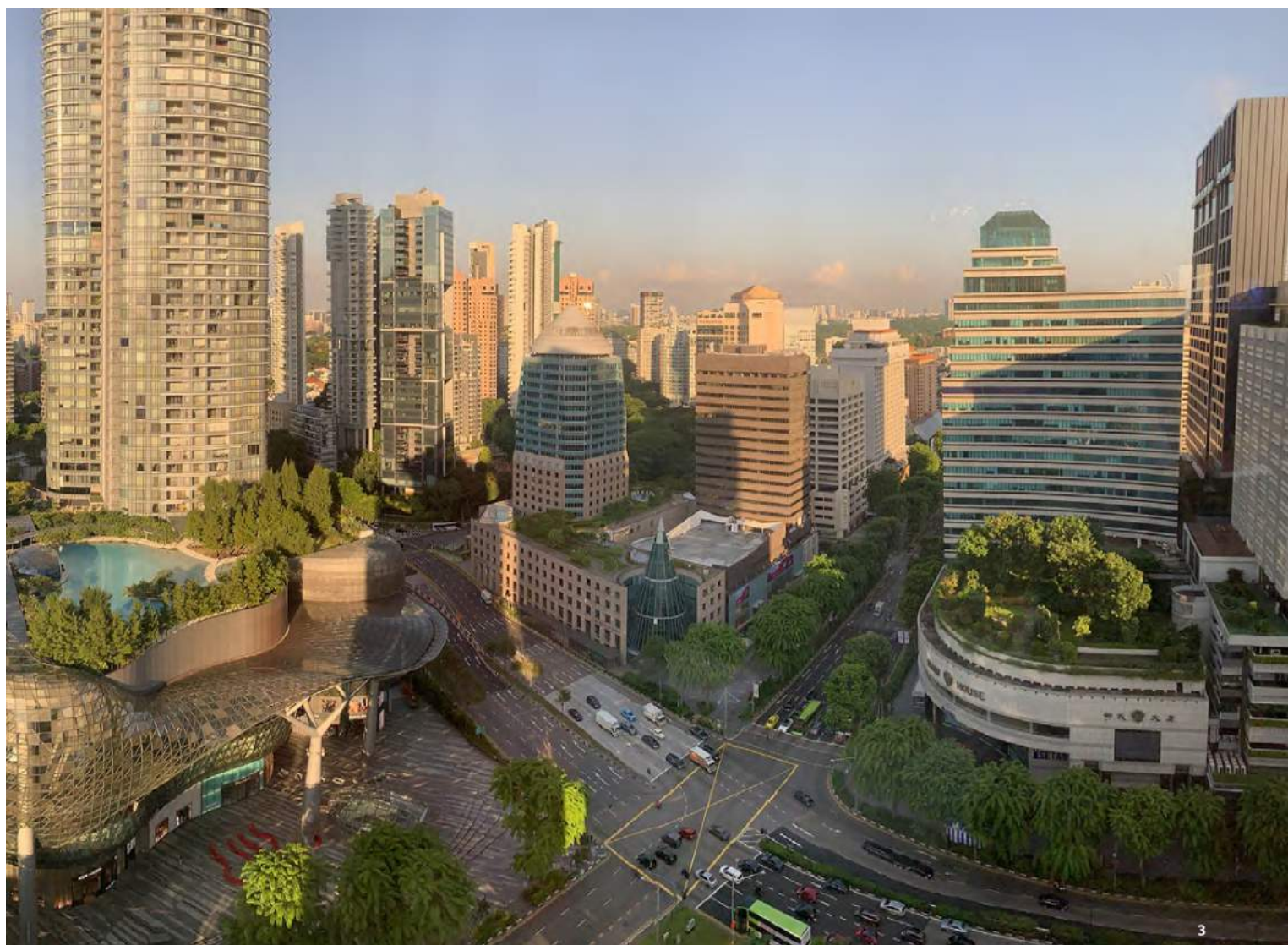
Additionally, the theme of a society based on solidarity and the cushioning of the less affluent has changed a lot, for example, through a general unconditional basic income flared up again in this crisis. It is astonishing how quickly in such crisis situations, new sets of regulations and behaviors are being enforced. This capacity for crisis management is called resilience (Psychic Resilience). The question is whether humanity thus also the far

larger countering threats such as climate change can. Unlike the coronavirus, the climate crisis was not immediately life-threatening, but in its effect all the more dramatic and irreversible.

The European Union launched a crisis, the "Green Deal" and renowned Climate researcher Hans Joachim Schellnhuber, the founder of the Potsdam Institute, calls for a very obvious basis based on this a "Climate Corona Treaty", by mentioning: "At the moment, it is very rightly of the younger group of the population solidarity with the elderly, which is much more endangered by the virus. Conversely, the elderly should stand in climate solidarity with the younger ones, the latter will be able to deal with the consequences of the Earth heating in their lives feel much stronger."¹

The climate commissioner of the European Union, Franz Timmermann, would like one to Rethink Investments: "We have to ensure that government bailouts can also be invested sustainably: in the dismantling of climate-damaging industry, in the regional and climate-friendly economy and renewable energies."²

The dogma of the infinite must be right, questioning economic growth will. "Degrowth by design" is now necessary, i.e. conscious and planned growth reduction. According to peace researcher Josef Mühlbauer (Varna Institute for Peace Research) are responsible for the design of the change to a post-growth society alternative indicators of prosperity (e.g. time prosperity), ecological fiscal policies, emission controls, communal infrastructures, and, last but not least, funding regional self-sufficiency is crucial.³



Urban Building in Transition

But what are the questions that the Coronavirus pandemic in the architecture, landscape architecture, and urban planning industry triggered? Here, too, there is uncertainty, but also the courage to change. While some associations of the more conservative construction industry develop great fears and face a looming recession, a handful of innovative companies, developers, planners, and architects are driving forward and already looking for new possibilities. Hoping to bring about a paradigm shift in sustainable urban development, ecological buildings, and blue-green infrastructures on buildings and intensify the usage of open spaces.

The American Urbanist, Richard Florida noted: "The crisis could affect our priceless, hyper-gentrified cities which offers a short window of opportunity to reorient themselves and their creative scene to revive.

Predictions about the death of cities always follow on shocks like this. But urbanization has always been a greater force than contagious diseases."⁴

Additionally, architecture professor Niklas Maak sees the Coronavirus crisis as a wake-up call and an opportunity to ask ourselves fundamental questions: "How do we actually want to live? In loveless box architecture, in poor or profit oriented investor architecture? In residential forms, which for many older or single parents just visible lead to loneliness?" Maak works alongside with his students at Harvard, diving and exploring into vacant shopping malls or unnecessary remodeling offices, for any opportunities to develop such spaces in novel uses." There's no doubt many interesting young architects who have excellent ideas", Maak said.⁵

The topic is not an academic discourse but has long since reached people. Due to the somewhat drastic exit restrictions in the Coronavirus pandemic, people value both their own living space as well as urban green spaces for personal physical and mental well-being. This may be the strongest where they are temporarily even the experience of the immediate urban environment, such as in Italy or Spain.



Green Works in many ways

Urban green spaces with parks and gardens, green building facades and terraces up to green roofs, and city urban farms offer numerous advantages for people as well as opening up new opportunities for companies. Diverse green serves biodiversity, i.e. the preservation of biodiversity of flora and fauna. It is not the only shelter for nature itself, but only enables their effect and thus maintains the important connection between humans and nature. The benefits of green are downright enormous. Green improves the microclimate and reduces air and water pollution as well as noise pollution, it also dampens and buffers the effects of extreme weather events and offers protection against floods, droughts, and heatwaves. Green on roofs also means protecting the building fabric as well as creating usable open spaces for valuable recreational activities to take place in many developments. The effects of extreme weather events and offers protection against floods, droughts and heat waves. Green on roofs also means protecting the building fabric as well as creating usable open spaces for valuable recreational activities to take place in many developments.

Go New Ways

In many advanced cities, the crisis set new food for thought, and worldwide implementation and initiatives are encouraged. So has the city of Singapore, amid the crisis new policies and programs one interdisciplinary approach to urban planning initiated. Khoo Teng Chye, the founder and head of the state CLC Singapore (Center for Liveable Cities) mentioned this in the current webinar Healthy Cities in a Post-Pandemic World: "The city should have a healthy life for EVERYONE. Hence, health professionals and urban planners need to work together much more closely." The car-dominant street space in Singapore could change and develop new forms of mobility because the crisis has the world of work, and mobility behavior would change greatly. "Home office" and video conferencing have reduced transportation trips tremendously and brought about zero-lesser traveling time. This has an impact under the required infrastructure in 20 City + Green 2021 cities. The Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo, for example, speaks of a "15-minute city" in which most residents have to cover their daily routes in a short time on foot, bicycle or public transport could cover. The

advantages of a well-planned dense city create shorter routes for commuters, cleaner air, and less noise pollution. The reduced consumption of fossil fuels and embracing energy says Esteban Leon, head of the City Resilience Global Program from UN-Habitat.⁶

European Programs for Urban Greenery

At the European level, new programs are being standardized and financing is in preparation. This is how the new European platform for the greening of cities includes planting trees in cities, also under the LIFE program, facilitate. To give nature more space again and reward community action calls on the European Commission Cities with more than 20,000 inhabitants until the end of ambitious plans for greening in 2021 of the cities. This measure plans to create biological diversity and accessible urban forests, parks and gardens, city farms, green roofs and walls, avenues, urban meadows, and hedges. These plans should also help the connections between the improved green spaces, decrease the use of pesticides as well as excessive

4 Especially during the Coronavirus "Lock Down" people felt how valuable green spaces in their immediate vicinity are. Photo: Competence Center Buildings - greening and urban climate e. V.

5 Urbanization, sealing and climate change: In metropolitan areas green areas are indispensable to the dramatic counteract of consequences. It's time to change! Photo: Competence Center Buildings - greening and urban climate e. V.



mowing of urban green spaces, and other practices that create biological damage, limits, and diversity. Such plans could be political, regulatory, and mobilize financial instruments. To facilitate this, the commission with cities and mayors made a new "agreement for green cities" in 2021 on an EU platform for the greening of setup cities. This will be in close coordination with the European Convention. One can only hope that the plans for greening cities are also a key issue role in awarding the title "Greens Capital of Europe 2023" and "Green Blatt Europa 2022" will play.

Last Chance

With all restrictions and all suffering, the coronavirus pandemic has also provided valuable lessons for everyone. It has the basic needs of people in cities clarify and redefine priorities. So far, green spaces and green systems on buildings such as facades and green roofs mostly seen by investors were less return and too few recognized the evaluability of greenery. That seems to be changing now because of the intensive greenery growth which articulates a clearer picture, especially through the growing proportion of greenery in urban areas living population.

Promoting healthy ecosystems requires infrastructures with nature-based solutions and these must be systematically included in urban planning: when planning public spaces, the design of buildings where infrastructure and the contextual healthy embedding in the environment. The aim is to create a livable and resilient urban landscape architecture. The willingness to do something new and for a change in society is in times of crisis at the greatest. If we have this mindset of not using this opportunity, we may have wasted one last chance to curb climate change. Today, we need to seize this opportunity to change our values, prioritizing towards a healthier environment especially in an urban setting, and, therefore, achieving societal benefits, for the health of our people and increase hope for future generations.

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