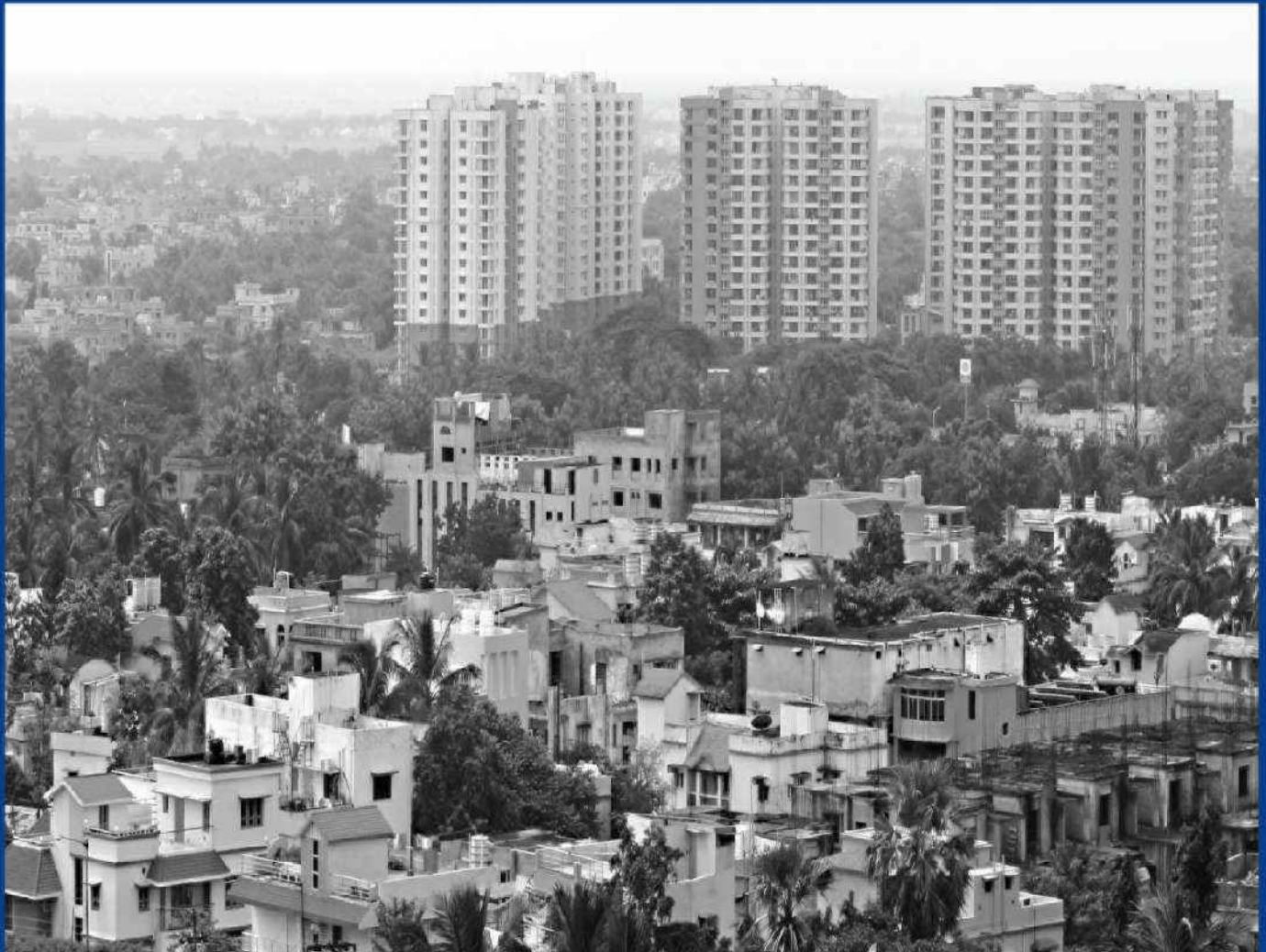


Environment and Urbanization ASIA



**Special Issue: Changes in Land Use and Land Cover in
Cities of the Global South – Patterns and Driving Forces**
Guest Editor: Scott Hawken

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Aims and Scope

Environment and Urbanization ASIA journal aims at:

- (i) Supporting the exchange of ideas, research outputs, intervention strategies and innovative solutions in the fields of urbanization, environment and human settlements across Asia, and
- (ii) Informing and initiating dialogue and debate among researchers, policy makers and civil society on various subjects relevant to urbanization and environment in Asia.

The themes and topics covered in the journal include governance, finance, land, infrastructure, housing, migration, sprawl, climate change, green growth, inclusion and sustainability, and the inter-relationships between these aspects of urbanization and environment.

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Special Issue: Changes in Land Use and Land Cover in Cities of the Global South –
Patterns and Driving Forces

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Editor's Note

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Urban sprawl, a spatial phenomenon first witnessed in the developed countries, is gradually becoming more widespread. In fact, the rate of horizontal spread of built-up, either through dispersed urbanization or peri-urbanization, is becoming a global phenomenon. The built-up areas are growing faster than their population, thereby consuming more land for urban development. This characteristic is more prevalent in the developing countries as compared to their developed counterparts. The uncontrolled expansion of urban areas has profound implications on energy consumption, greenhouse gas emissions, climate change and environmental degradation, all of which would exacerbate the impending climate crises.

Projections indicate that the expansion of urban areas in developed and developing countries would grow by a factor of 1.9 and 3.7, respectively, between 2015 and 2050 (UN-Habitat, 2020¹). However, if urban areas are effectively planned, managed and governed, then the urban expansion in both developing and developed countries are expected to grow at a projected factor of 1.1 and 2.5, respectively. The World Cities Report 2020 indicates that by 2030, cities would cover three times as much land as they did in 2000, with much of the expansion occurring in relatively undisturbed key biodiversity hotspots. These projections indicate the quantitative value of well-planned urbanization, which can restrict conversion of cultivable land from peri-urban redevelopment.

In this context, I am happy to introduce this special issue of *Environment and Urbanization ASIA* on 'Changes in Land Use and Land Cover in Cities of the Global South—Patterns and Driving Forces'. It is supplementary to the main volume 12.1 (March 2021). I have the honour of having on board Dr Scott Hawken, from the School of Architecture and Built Environment, University of Adelaide, as the guest editor of this issue. This special issue, which makes an important contribution in the field of urban studies, highlights the patterns of spatial growth of cities in diverse geographies of the global south, deviating slightly from the journal's usual focus on Asia. Importantly, it focuses on African cities as well, highlighting the prospects for knowledge transfer between fast urbanizing cities of Asia and Africa. The researches on eight cities, which form the focus of this publication, are case studies of a United Kingdom Research and Innovation (UKRI) supported Global Challenge Research Fund (GCRF) project on Sustainable, Healthy and Learning Cities and Neighbourhoods (SHLC). Importantly, this volume tries to answer the need to study urban expansion/sprawl and land use changes in Asia and Africa. It also studies the trend of urban growth of the case study cities, pattern of urban expansion as well as land use changes, their drivers and implications. In addition, this issue analyses the challenges of fractured and piecemeal planning efforts in developing countries to regulate expansion and sprawl and emphasizes the importance of policy interventions based on research on land use changes and changing dynamics of urban neighbourhoods.

One important strand of this volume, which cross cut all articles, is the application of remote sensed data to understand the actual urban footprints of urban expanse which more often than not, spills out of administrative boundaries and disguising the true extent of cities. Further, the articles highlight the

importance of evidence based planning and urban design approaches to translate remote sensed analyses to practical ways of improvement of livability of cities. The articles also reaffirm the significance of multidisciplinary research to make cities more sustainable. In fact, one of the important policy lessons thrown up by the study is the need for multidisciplinary research among scientists specializing in remote sensing, planners, urban designers and other social scientists in creating sustainable cities.

The articles in this issue highlight the fact that inadequate planning structures in the sprawling cities of Asia and Africa continents hinder the development of agglomeration economies and the efficient provision of public goods and services. Since most of the infrastructure to accommodate rapidly expanding urban areas is yet to be built, planning for urban expansion provides a promising opportunity to plan city growth in a manner that generates social and economic returns from agglomeration economies and enhances inclusive prosperity.

This special issue takes cognizance of the fact that the spatial expansion of cities is an inevitable phenomenon and consequence of urban population growth and other contextual factors. The challenge for planning is to devise appropriate mechanisms for directing or controlling the timing, rate and location of urban growth. Urban sprawl—whether peri-urbanization in Africa or metropolitanization in Asia—are all products of either inappropriate or ineffective planning regulations. This volume is a timely reminder to planners and policymakers for adoption of more sustainable urban growth management policies where both planned expansion and planned infill play key roles in shaping future growth.

Note

1. UN-Habitat. (2020). *World cities report 2020: The value of sustainable urbanization*.

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