LIMITLESS CITIES AND URBAN FUTURES: PLANNING FOR SCALE

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TOPICS
- Reasons why megacities and city regions are growing and leading planetary urbanisation
- Global influence and competitiveness: the role of megacities
- Megacities as leaders in low impact energy, food, and resources consumption
- Linkages, relationships, disparities, synergies and connections: opportunities for the whole and its parts
- Prospects, visions, futures, predictions, forecasts and scenarios for megacities in the future

Through holistic exploration, this track will provide an opportunity to discuss why megacities are emerging, how they are influencing the world (positively and otherwise) and how planners can think ahead about their future. Megacities and city-regions are challenging the notion of the traditional city and even the metropolis. Larger and more powerful than countries, they become global nodes of migration, trade, knowledge exchange and innovation that seem to be limitless. Are megacities unstoppable and the fastest way to a prosperous future? The track also explores the needs and impacts of megacities, from infrastructure to food and waste, and the range of strategies needed, imagined or already being explored, to make them lead the way towards efficiencies of scale and innovative resource management. Are they part of a global interconnected network that can lead planetary change or a threat to life on Earth?

How best to plan ahead for an efficient, livable and regenerative megacity? What lessons can already be learned from the leaders in this journey?
How Big is Auckland?
Planning City-Regions for Resilience and Regeneration

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Auckland’s isthmus has been formed by many volcanic eruptions in distant past = the city is a volcanic field.
Mt Eden - Maungakiekie
More landscape – two harbours
Waitemata Harbour
The NZ coastal landscape is a national icon.
The modern reality...

Malls & Motorways
Auckland: a “desperate collection of suburbs”?
Most of Auckland is made of the metropolitan sprawl, shaped by landscape/geography/nature
Pollen Island Reserve is in the midst of the city.
Reality...
What the “90% “gets...
The Council is promoting denser living – the “intensification” policy as part of the “compact city’ vision in the Plan.
Auckland University Precinct
Scale?

Style?

Material?
• New Zealand’s local authorities and planners have embraced the ‘compact city’ model as the magic formula for the livability-sustainability agenda. Yet, the evidence is weak that policies of stopping urban expansion and densifying the exiting urban fabric deliver better quality of life or lessen impacts on the ecosystem.

• Overall, compact city policies have been more effective in aggravating the housing land price inflation and irritating local residents in intensification zones, than in actually containing urban sprawl.
• On the other hand, as global warming is accelerating, the risk of urban disasters and crises threatens to affect high density areas more severely, due to their high dependency on traditional, centralized urban infrastructure.
• PLANNING

2010: Auckland amalgamated
2012: The Auckland Plan
2016: Auckland Unitary Plan
Auckland Council – both city, and regional council
• PLANNING
The Auckland Plan

CREATING THE WORLD'S MOST LIVEABLE CITY...

... by pursuing the policy of urban containment, i.e. adopting the “compact city” model (70% - 30% split between in-city and out-of-city development)
The Vision: ‘the worlds most liveable city’
The Plan: ‘compact city’
The policy: ‘intensification’
Auckland Council rejects density changes

5:16 PM Wednesday Feb 24, 2016
• Ten years later, the Compact City vision is in trouble...
2018-2019

- Auckland, New Zealand’s largest metropolitan area, illustrates these dilemmas very poignantly. Its recent tumultuous process of preparing and adopting the new long term plan has shown that the politics of compaction and intensification is divisive and expensive, while the economic and ecological efficiency gains are uncertain, if not meager. The city keeps growing through market-driven and opportunistic development, mostly ignoring the arbitrary Rural Urban Boundary which was supposed to arrest urban sprawl.
• The centrifugal forces which fuel the horizontal growth of the metropolitan area range from technologies of transport and telecommunications, to energy generation and waste disposal. At the same time, climate change trends suggest that the resilience agenda (adaptation) is now more pressing than the sustainability agenda (mitigation) and that further concentration of people and assets is unwise.
Urban sprawl is a problem... but it is also an opportunity!
Compact City – neither realistic, nor desirable for Auckland!

An alternative proposition:

- regional city ...
- linear city ...
- water city...
- polycentric city...
AUCKLAND: linear city-region
regional city + linear city = Linear City-Region
Why the compact city model is NOT appropriate for Auckland?

4 reasons:
• geography (landscape)
• technology (infrastructure)
• culture (lifestyle)
• affordability (housing)
1. Geography
The direction of growth is very clear....

...and the overall linearity very pronounced.
For Auckland, urban sprawl of this type is extremely unlikely!
AUCKLAND = THE SUPER-EFFICIENT LIFESTYLE CAPITAL OF THE WORLD
The ‘Spine’
2. Technology
New technologies make it possible to reduce the suburbs’ heavy energy dependence and massive carbon footprint. Instead of being insatiable consumers of resources, the suburbs could become net producers.

Self-sufficiency in food, water, sanitation, stormwater management, power, some fuel & fibre… becomes possible once the intensity of development (‘density’) drops.
Clean technology – slowly but certainly and irreversibly taking over the world...
Decentralisation
TT – the original driver of sprawl
CT – has been an additional driver
IT – is the current driver
ET – is emerging as a major ‘enabler’
3. Culture
The St Heliers ‘disaster’…
Are the locals ‘too sensitive’, or is this offensively out of context?
Proposed development plan of high-rise apartments at the Milford Shopping Centre under reconsideration. Photo / Supplied
Scale...
Grain...
Style...
4. Affordability
When you constrain the supply of land for urban development, the housing land market gets distorted and the price of residential property goes through the roof....

Auckland is one of the most expensive cities in the world!
Housing Crisis: property values - $$$
SUMMARY

The FOUR reasons why the ‘compact city’ strategy is struggling a decade after the Auckland Plan vision document:

• geography (landscape)
• technology (infrastructure)
• culture (lifestyle)
• affordability (housing)
• We suggest that Auckland Council has failed to recognise and acknowledge the unstoppable forces of regional decentralization and polycentric metropolitananisation, while at the same time underestimates the threat of climate change and Auckland’s overall exposure to hazards of various kind.

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• The Plan must be based on a more realistic concept of the size, extent and influence of Auckland. Auckland is no more a ‘city’; it is a ‘city-region’ - a linear city-region. It is emerging – and should be planned as – a linear conurbation, with one major central spine of key transport systems (motorway and railway) and many nodes of density.
• TEST
• Projects with students in urban design studio with landscape architecture students
• STUDIO 1: Growing Auckland peripherally eastward
• STUDIO 2: Growing Auckland peripherally northward
South East Auckland Growth Strategy
This new development is a portion of a larger zone within the wider catchment between Beachlands and Waiuku in North East Auckland. This portion of the proposed development contains medium density housing that will house approximately 150 people on both suburban style properties and terraced housing units.

The larger suburban properties are situated on the steeper land surrounding former landfills that have been revegetated to help retain and the ecological value of the area. These properties form communities based around the central vegetation area, creating an ecological buffer zone.

Within these revegetated areas are a series of walking and cycling paths that help to integrate amenity and recreation for the people in the area. These paths follow the streams out to the coast and provide a network that links the new development via walking and cycling.

The notion of communities based around high amenity areas is repeated in the terraced housing zone, with houses based around community parks and gardens.

The gardens enclosed by the terraced housing are private, owned and maintained by the inhabitants and serve the important purpose of dealing with stormwater run-off in the form of communal greenhouses and native vegetation plantings.

The terraced style section is based on an average plot size of 100m² with a 250m² building footprint, while the terraced housing is based on an average of two 100m² two story units on a plot size of 320m². These units are connected.
The North Auckland Project

Our test of the hypothesis that Auckland can grow outwards, in the linear fashion, without ruining the environment...
Waiheke Island
Waiheke Island Western Entrance Headland Landscape

NZILA Category Winner / Enduring — 2017

D J Scott Associates

Image Gallery

Back to the Showcase
“Regeneration”
Socio-ecological regeneration
Restored natural habitat, but also the local economy, resulting in a new purpose for local community
WESTERN WAIHEKE PROJECT:
Peri-urban development, when carefully planned and implemented, can result in spectacular landscape and lifestyle transformations, with multiple ecological, social and economic benefits
But the council persists with its intensification and centralisation Strategy...
While the market prefers the cheaper land at the periphery...
Despite the Unitary Plan promoting ‘compact city’, Auckland continues to expand horizontally.

AUCKLAND IS GETTING BIGGER,
No matter what the stated policy is.

It’s getting a bit denser too, but there is little evidence that it is getting more ‘sustainable’ or more ‘liveable’.

Meanwhile evidence is emerging that it is getting less ‘resilient’ as the dependence on urban infrastructure, and concentration of population and assets, grow.
• In fact, Auckland is even bigger than that, as its influence affects the entire upper, northern North Island. Auckland is at the centre of a triangle of three smaller cities – Hamilton, Tauranga and Whangarei. It is also a part of a 300km coastal arc of development along the northern, Pacific edge of New Zealand, ruled by four regional councils: Northland, Auckland, Waikato and Bay of Plenty.

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• In Europe, planning authorities have long ago realised the inevitability of urban sprawl, and of neighbouring cities and towns coalescing into conurbations. But they have strived to steer growth, rather than contain it, resulting in decentralised, polycentric, development which cover large areas, while including plenty of open space.

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Upper North Island: an emerging urban region
• Global ramifications
Urban sprawl: global phenomenon
Climate Change: the ‘game changer’!
World 'gravely' unprepared for effects of climate crisis - report

Trillions of dollars needed to avoid ‘climate apartheid’ but this is less than cost of inaction

Massive wildfires such as those in Bolivia have been mentioned as evidence that the climate crisis is here. Photograph: David Mercado/Reuters
GLOBAL CLIMATE EMERGENCY
Resilience

Regeneration
Resilience

Regeneration

Region