Resilient Urbanism in the Anthropocene –
The Rise of Progressive City Regions in Asia's Urban Transition

Mike Douglass
Asia Research Institute – Asian Urbanisms Cluster
National University of Singapore

Abstract. This discussion weaves together 5 main dimensions of resilient urbanism in Asia. The first is that Asia's urban transition is part of planetary "globopolis" processes of citymaking and governance that are no longer making cities, with cities understood as theatres of social action and political community. The neo-developmental globopolis with its high inequalities and erosion of the city as polis of public decisionmaking is not only unable to keep pace with rising vulnerabilities and frequencies of disasters, it is substantially abetting them as well. Second, as rural areas are increasingly absorbed into a global matrix of urbanization and as urban form radically changes into rural-urban mixes of land uses, rather than continue to use rural-urban dichotomies to frame spatial development issues, focusing on city regions offers the most salient frame for policy and action. Third, the position is taken that the currently ascendant idea of resilience is inadequate in terms of these same processes are generating new landscapes that are making rural-urban distinctions anachronistic. Fourth, when critically examining the idea of resilience in the Anthropocene and from a perspective of compound disasters, the pursuit of resilience is not so much about recovery from a disaster, though important, but rather about governance. Fifth, as Asia transitions to highly urbanized society, resilience as process and outcome rests on the rise of progressive city regions, some of which are already appearing.

1. Planetary Urbanization without Cities – Neo-developmental Globopolis at Risk

As the world fully enters the age of planetary urbanization (Brenner and Schmid 2014), we are no longer producing cities as they have been conceived for most of human history, namely as social, cultural and political theaters of life that produce urban economies. From the 1980s onward, neoliberal formulations extolling the city as endlessly competitive engine of growth and maker of wealth for the few have been relentlessly promoted and adopted as national development ideology. Following this ideology has allowed for a massive corporatization of cities that also drastically changes urban form and social content. While people continue to gravitate toward huge agglomerations, what they encounter are functional spaces mostly produced by and for corporate interests on ever-enlarging scales. The main components of these fragmented cityscapes are: shopping centers, strip malls, gated housing, business hubs, sports franchise stadia, very tall buildings that instantly privatize urban space. These are displacing vernacular neighborhoods, locally owned shops, smaller streets and lanes, public and civic spaces, and the commons.

This destruction by corporatization of "the city's lived spaces" of social meanings and community bonds (Friedmann 1999:4) has been described by Sassen (2015:1) as a process emanating from the pace and scale of corporate mega-projects that is eliminating the "urban tissue" of publically accessible spaces, concluding that corporatization is "de-urbanizing" citymaking as it "alters the historic meaning of the city". From the perspective of the idea of

resilience, the loss of public and common spaces in which social capital is produced, and the shift from a public city to corporate managed urban archipelagos seriously undermines capacities for resilience as a social learning and political decisionmaking process.

Global neoliberalism appeared in Asia in the 1980s. Promoted and enforced by powerful international lenders, corporatization of government began to substantially limit the scope of government in pursuing remedies to social concerns. Deregulation of control over urban land development, accelerating privatize public spaces, and blurring corporate-government lines through "public-private partnerships" all contributed to a new era of corporatization of cities that proceeded without political accounting (Flyvbjerg et al. 2003). Corporatization recast the city as an ultra-competitive engine of growth socially justified by a simplified version of trickle-down economics (EIU 2012).

Many scholars have coined terms for corporate globopolis (Douglass 2009): geographies of nowhere (Kunstler 1994), the city as a theme park (Sorkin 1992), secessionary urban spaces (Graham and Marvin 2001), de-socialized spaces (Gleeson 2006). In East and Southeast Asia, the corporatization of cities is proceeding at an astonishing pace. Cities in some countries are becoming "tabula rasa" of comprehensively erased histories through megaprojects and privatization.

Figure 1 East Asia Super Urban Corridor

source: author

Thinking about rural-urban linkages continues to be mostly out of date as well. We can no longer conceive of rural as being composed of agriculture plus village. Nor can we understand

either rural or urban as opposites. Rural Asia is massively shifting to post-agrarian economies in which migrant remittances and the cell phone are linking households across territorial borders through flows of information, goods, services and money. In East and Southeast Asia these trends are producing a magnificent super urban corridor of spatially polarized development into giant urban regions that extends from Tokyo to Surabaya.

As the figure above suggests, the future of urbanization in East Asia will substantially be contained within this corridor, which by mid-century will account for at least 1 billion people. Most of the city regions in this corridor are found to be highly unprepared for environmental disasters such as flooding. This raises the question of resilience in the face of mega-trends that operate well above the capacity of a locality to control but nonetheless pose immense threats and vulnerabilities to all localities.

2. Questioning Concepts of Resilience

Pursuing resilient urbanism is embedded in Asia's urban transition and the corporatization processes producing urban regional forms while diminishing the public sphere. Yet most discussion of resilience focuses on post-disaster recovery as an engineering problem with short-term humanitarian assistance. It also implicitly centers on returning to a previous status quo, or "building back better" without transforming the larger processes that incubate disasters. In brief, five questions are begged by this kind of approach: When does a disaster begin? How do we know when it has ended? At what scale do we try to answer these questions – personal, household, neighborhood, city region, global? What phenomena or variables are to be included in the understanding of "disaster" before, during or after one occurs? How does a society anticipate the future of disaster occurrence? Without building a concept and creating a process for applying the term resilience that can address these questions, its use is not only quite limited, it can reinforce the status quo.

Seven propositions serve to stake out the position taken here with regard to these questions:
1. In the Anthropocene, disasters are increasingly "incubated" by human interventions in nature well before a "natural" disaster event occurs.
2. Post-disaster resilience has greater possibilities if pre-disaster resilience is high.
3. Disasters occur in political space. Marginalized populations tend to remain marginalized when disasters occur.
4. Disaster resilience is significantly impacted by megatrends that intersect in specific settings and moments – both structural forces and context matter.
5. Disasters have compound disasters effects, which are difficult to anticipate but must be included in concepts of resilience.
6. Resilience is a social learning process, not the sole application of expert knowledge.
7. Most of disaster resilience rests on actions not directly related to a disaster event, but is instead embedded in progressive city region governance.

Spatial Scales and Time Frames of Resilience – Compound disasters and megatrends

To begin with the first two questions, in an era in which most disasters have anthropogenic sources, answers takes us to points in time that are well before and can last far after a disaster event such as a flood or earthquake. Disasters are no longer simply acts of nature that we can project occurrences into the future through historical analysis of their probabilities. With the advent of what is being called the Anthropocene, i.e., the current age of intensive and long-lasting human alterations of nature (Crutzen and Stoermer 2000), environmental disasters can

arise from combinations of previous human decisions about remaking the world that encounter an event such as an earthquake or a tsunami. A dam failure from unusually heavy rain, a tsunami hitting a poorly built nuclear power plant sited next to the ocean, or massive movements of people into environmentally fragile areas due to lack of housing elsewhere are examples of "disasters waiting to happen" that are incubated by human decisions about using the world and its resources. Resilience in this context calls for action well before a disaster occurs by creating transparent processes of governance to identify and track accidents waiting to happen.

Compound disasters are a series of component disasters that continuously overwhelm existing abilities to respond in changing configurations through time. Their sources are incubated long before a disaster and can continue long after a disaster through cascading effects. Three types of compound disasters can be identified. Type 1 follows the ways in which a disaster event such as an urban flood leads to evictions, loss of social support and livelihoods and, for some people, long-term destitution that can include mental health deterioration.

Type 1: Neighborhood community
Flood ⟹ eviction ⟹ loss of social support & livelihoods ⟹ destitution

Type 2 considers multiple cascading of a so-called natural disaster into other such disasters, as was the case in 2011 Japan when an earthquake generated a tsunami that led to a nuclear disaster with unknown very long-term consequences.

Type 2: Cascading "natural disasters"
Earthquake ⟹ tsunami ⟹ nuclear disaster ⟹ long-term devastations

Type 3 is most well known and studied by economists who follow the impacts of a disaster in one location on global supply chains and distribution networks. In the July 2017 explosion of warehouses in Tianjin, for example, stocks of consumer goods for Christmas shopping in the U.S. were projected to be insufficient. Similarly, when the 2011 flood in Bangkok occurred, Toyota Motors in Japan encountered critical shortages of car parts for global car assembly.

Type 3
Network effects ⟹ global supply chains

As the above types of compound effects show, the quest for resilience encounters varying social and spatial scales of action. Figure 2 shows three scales that are almost always in play. Rhythms of recovery at one scale do not necessarily follow at other scales. For example, at the city region scale actions might be taken to widen canals or create more open spaces for flood control, which might work for the region as a whole. But these same action can be disguises for demolishing slums and evictions, with long-term and often devastating impacts on families and their neighborhoods. There is thus a need to understand how actions at any one scale impact upon other levels. This need is encapsulated in the idea of progressive city regions discussed in the last section of this paper.

While most attention is given to engineering solutions and city level (though rarely city region level) attempts to (re-)gain resilience, the macro level is rarely discussed. Yet it is the most powerful of all in terms of resilience. In the case of Tohoku's 2011 triple disaster, for example, the region was already substantially incapacitated by Japan's "miracle" economy that concentrated public and private resources along the Tokaido corridor, which resulted in chronic "kaso mondai" (emptying out problem) of most of rural Japan to the point that even before the disasters struck villages were abandoned and cities were drastically shrinking. Coupled with the "Lehman shock" of 2008 that saw municipal finance in Japan collapse due to heavy investments in the failed Lehman Brothers, when the disasters occurred the idea that most of the affected region could "bounce back better" had no traction.   It still does not hold great promise for recovery even 5 years after the events.

Figure 2 Scales of Resilience
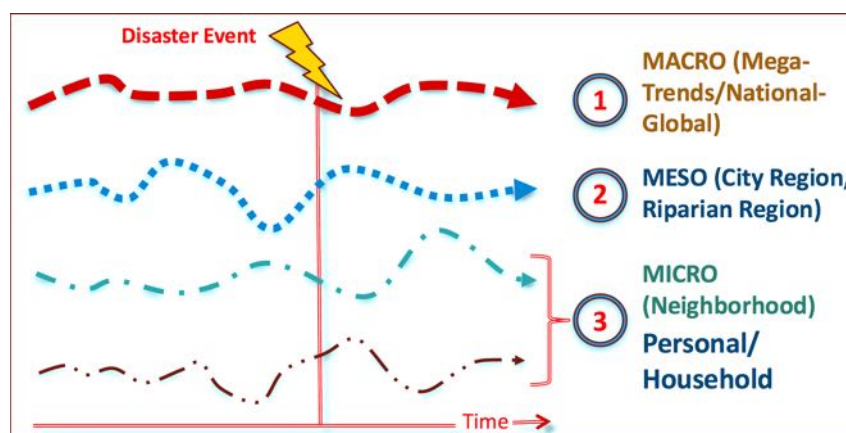
Governance and the Rise of Progressive City Regions

Redefining the concept of resilience necessitates its placement in processes of governance. Disasters and other undesired events occur in political space, and whose voices are heard in these spaces determines the kinds of responses and outcomes that are to occur. In East and Southeast Asia inclusion of civil society in the public sphere is a history of contestations and, in several countries, substantial political reform that has enabled city regions to respond to grassroots aspirations for human flourishing. However, the record is partial, and in the post-911 world of anti-terrorism used as a means for regime maintenance, democracy is in retreat in many places.

In the first decades of national independence after World War II the idea of the city in most of East and Southeast Asia was constructed by newly created developmental states that promised gains in material welfare in exchange for compliance to centralized authoritarian rule (Woo-Cummings 1999). Stunning records of economic growth were achieved in several "tiger economies". However, by the 1980s urbanization and the rise of civil society witnessed rising contestations over negative impacts and uneven distribution of benefits that resulted in democratic reforms in several countries. Along with these reforms, cities also began shifting from command economies toward what Friedmann (1962:76) summarizes as "a form of collective life" and as a polis of participatory public decisionmaking.

Big data on protests find that politically significant protests globally reached a record number over the past decade (Carothers and Youngs 2015). In Asia these contestations are increasingly

urban-based and focus on the seven faces of corporatization identified in Table 1. These include privatization of basic services and public spaces, dispossessions of land and assets for mega-projects, displacement of local shops and public markets by chain stores, mini-marts, shopping malls, private new towns in-town and in peri-urban areas that eliminate entire urban districts and villages, and precariatization of labor (Douglass 2014).

Table 1. The 7 Faces of Corporatization of Cities in East and Southeast Asia

Dimension/Face	Main characteristics	Impacts	Examples
1 Corporatization of Government	Deregulation; privatization of public institutions, services, land; public-corporate partnerships;	Unequal access to basic urban services, uncoordinated land use planning	Privatization of higher education, water, transportation, postal services; private new towns on prime agricultural land.
2 Appropriation of Public space	Selling public land to corporations for private use.	Permanent loss of public spaces	Loss of public parks, promenades, public markets, streets and lanes
3 Land Dispossessions	Government assisted takings of land for corporate projects	Loss of neighborhoods, homes, cultural spaces, livelihoods, social support networks	Peri-urban land grabs, use of eminent domain to evict residents from low-income neighborhoods
4 Megaprojects	Huge spatial footprints, wholly privatized spaces, massive displacement of pre-existing uses and activities.	Elimination of the "urban tissue" of lanes, common spaces, spaces of daily encounters, civic spaces, political gathering places	Mega-malls, tourism complexes, very tall buildings, sites for global spectacles such as the Olympics, business hubs, "smart" U-Towns.
5 Replacement of local business	Replacement of locally owned shops by corporate chains and franchises	Loss of sociability of local economies; immense economic leakages from localities	Big box stories, shopping malls, mini-marts, food franchises, chain stores.
6 Corporate housing and new towns	Exclusive enclaves with limited or no public access or public spaces.	Accentuates social inequalities and class/ethnic divisions.	Peri-urban housing enclaves, eco-cities and new towns in Asia
7 Labor relations	End of life-time employment, Precariatization(sub-part-time work), withdrawal of pensions and other benefits from employers.	Perpetually impermanent employment, lack of savings or retirement support, incomes below levels needed for maintaining basic levels of living.	End of life-time employment in Japan; precariatization of labor in Korea following 1998 IMF crisis.

Source: author.

These contestations between the corporatized globopolis and the resident driven promise of cosmopolis are playing out in Asia today. In some cities, progressive forms of governance are appearing in response. Speaking about the rise of progressive cities in Asia would have been improbable even 25 years ago when urbanization levels were low, democratic institutions were the exception, and devolution of government to local levels was rare. In contrast, as urbanization and political reforms have proceeded into the 21st century, we are now witnessing cities becoming important sites of governance that are invigorated by the rise of civil society.

These possibilities are, however, unevenly spread among cities. As urbanization proceeds in Asia, differences among cities in performance become more visible. While some advance toward more progressive forms of governance, many others remain far behind or are even becoming less hopeful. In focus on city governance underscores the growing importance of the local state in creating an accessible political sphere – *polis* – for meaningful public participation in policymaking and planning. Although still understudied in much of Asia, where substantial devolution of power to local governments in countries has occurred, cities have increased their potential for more progressive governance.

Research on progressive city regions illuminates urbanization as a dynamic process that has no single destiny, but is instead open to collective human agency in making history. This understanding stands in contrast to both more structural arguments about the hegemony of the world system as well as developmentalist formulations of a single linear development path for all societies. Using human flourishing as a central concept contributes to further opening discourse by broadening the idea of the city as a theater of social action and multifaceted experience of "becoming human", including social and cultural relations as well as material ones.

Ideas of what constitutes a progressive city have many lineages and equivalent terms that are as old as the city itself. In the West, utopian formulations of what can be called progressive cities reach from Plato to Thomas More and on to the utopian socialist reactions to the horrific conditions of the industrial cities arising with capitalism in 18th and 19th centuries, which culminated in Ebenezer Howard's Garden Cities (Fainstein 2005, Flank 2009, Cabannes and Ross 2013). In Asia, the idea of progressive cities, city-states and empires can be found in religious and spiritual relations between heaven and earth, with good governance underpinning the moral authority to rule (Abu-Lughod 1991, Short 1996). Emperors serving under the Mandate from Heaven in China is one of the more well known examples. The building of cities and their designs typically reified these relations in street layouts or geographical orientations of cities.

What can contemporary cities contribute toward improving the human experience? The concept of human flourishing provides the core focus in attempting to answer this question.
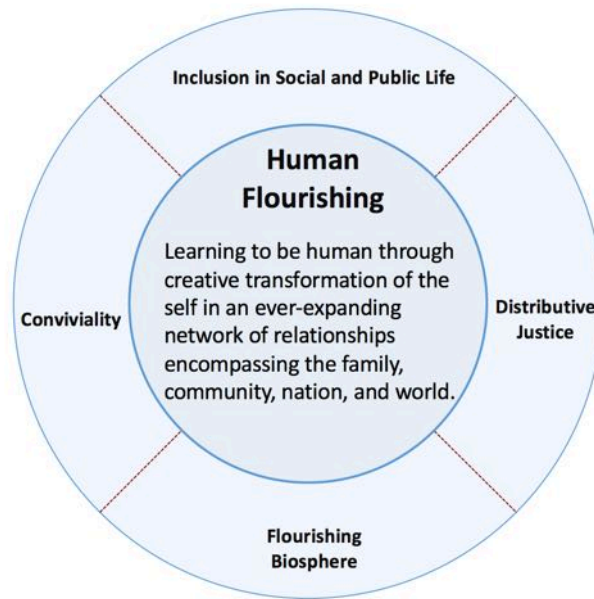
Human flourishing

Often drawn from Aristotle's 4th century BCE concept of *eudaimonia*, the idea of human flourishing is not unique to Western philosophy. Confucianism also speaks of human flourishing as "learning to be human" through continuous "creative transformation" of the self in "an ever-expanding network of relationships encompassing the family, community, nation, world and beyond" (Tu 1993:142). In Aristotle's as well as Tu's and other interpretations (Rasmussen 1989, Lacey 2015), human flourishing concerns well-being derived from the capacities to strive, validate personal potential, gain self-fulfillment and cultivate love and friendship, all of which emerge from engagement with others in society. In contrast to "happiness" as a state of satisfaction, human flourishing "conveys the idea of a process, of both a personal project and a goal for humanity" (Triglav Circle 2015). Flourishing is thus a "communal act", with the self "never an isolated individual but a center of relationships" (Tu 1993:142). This understanding echoes the idea of the right to the city as a collective rather than individual right (Harvey 2003).

Friedmann's (2000:466) more recent formulation of human flourishing presents it as a fundamental human right to the "full development of intellectual, physical and spiritual potentials in the context of wider communities." It is a process experienced differently by each person even as it is a collaborative expression of capabilities and aspirations for "another city" (Lacey 2015). It thus rests on enhancing individual capacities and the differences that result from them.

For a city to provide nurturing political, economic, social, physical and ecological relationships for human flourishing (Friedmann 2000:468), advances must be made in four dimensions of a progressive city: inclusion, distributive justice, conviviality, and the global biosphere.

Figure 1. Urban Dimensions of Human Flourishing in Progressive Cities

Inclusion in Social and Public Life

Human Flourishing

Learning to be human through creative transformation of the self in an ever-expanding network of relationships encompassing the family, community, nation, and world.

Conviviality

Distributive Justice

Flourishing Biosphere

Source: author

Inclusion in social and public life – cosmopolis versus globopolis

The inclusion of residents in public decisionmaking is an essential pillar in defining and building progressive cities. The contribution of political participation to feelings of personal efficacy is worthy itself, and unless people who reside in cities are included in decisionmaking processes about their cities, the uses of political power will continue to marginalize and ignore the voices of many. Recent reports indicating that democracy is diminishing in more than half of UN member states is a worrying reminder that sustaining inclusionary political systems is a never ending task (Deen 2015).

Inclusion in spaces of community and social life is also both desirable on its own terms and as a source of civil society engagements that often link with political participation. Of particular interest is the capacity of civil society to gather in civic spaces to engage in political discourses at arms distance from either the state or private business interests (Douglass, Ho and Ooi 2010; Daniere and Douglass 2008). Public and community spaces, the commons, and some privately owned spaces with traditions of community life are essential for inclusionary social and political life to flourish in cities.

As used here, one of the theoretical bases for inclusion is the concept of cosmopolis. Sandercock's (1998, 2003) exposition of what can be called "grassroots" cosmopolis provides that echoes Conley's (2002:129) definition of the world as city in which inhabitants "can assert their differences and negotiate them in a productive and affirmative way'". Conley continues to contrast cosmopolis with globopolis (Douglas 2009), by declaring that cosmopolis "differs from the homogenizing global city that silences many of its citizens." From this perspective, the city is not only for and by its "citizens" but is also more broadly a welcoming provider of rights of inclusion to "the stranger" (Kristeva 1993, Holston 2001, Falk 2003). As with all dimensions of a progressive city, a cosmopolitan polity rises from social encounters in public

and common spaces in which people are able to use their agency to negotiate and make tacit agreements on how to accommodate each other.

Distributive Justice

Literature on currently existing conditions of cities throughout the world shows an overarching concern for a socially just city that includes redistribution of wealth, assets and income to those who are marginalized, poor, oppressed, dispossessed, made invisible or are otherwise not included as beneficiaries of a city's economy and services. The theoretical building blocks and debates about distributive justice are many. One major stream flows from Marxist and post-Marxist writing, beginning with Harvey's (1973) landmark book, Social Justice and the City, that currently gravitates to the work of Lefebvre's (1991) well known concept of the right to the city (Harvey 2008, Brenner et al. 2009, Marcuse 2009, Soja 2011).

A key element of this positioning is the relationship between social justice and the production of urban space, which reaches beyond earlier attention to collective consumption (Castells 1977; UCLUL 2015) to the right to make and change the city itself (Lefebvre 1991, Fainstein 2005). The importance of this extension is to view a progressive city as a continuous process of inclusive engagement that intertwines redistribution and citymaking.

As Harvey (2008) notes, having the right to the city is hollow without having the means to realize it in practice. This opens the discussion to the concept of empowerment, which diverges into many intellectual streams but has a common focus on going beyond identifying victims to proposing progressive ways forward through collective self-empowerment. Strands range from Freire's (1993) classic Pedagogy of the Oppressed to Friedmann's "whole economy" concept of Empowerment (1992) and on to the focus on specific tools that are circulating around the world, such as research by Cabannes (2004) in tracking the global spread of participatory budgeting. Each contains elements of resistance, the creation of new spaces, and pursuit of alternative community projects that can readily be seen in contemporary cities throughout Asia and the world (Friedmann 2011, Harvey 2012, Padawangi et al. 2014).

Conviviality

Human flourishing is inseparable from the vitality of social and cultural life for itself rather than being instrumental to economic competitiveness or other ends. Inspired by Ivan Illich (1972) and further interpreted by Lisa Peattie (1998), this dimension moves into ideas of human creativity, efficacy, and self-awareness that are not simply the result of individual acts but are also a process of validation through interpersonal relations. Human flourishing from this perspective is not an end to be enjoyed at some future point in time, but is instead an on-going practice of engagement of people with people. In Peattie's (1998:247) words, "In human happiness, creative activity and a sense of community count for at least as much and maybe more than material standard of living."

In Illich's view (1972:18), the way forward is that "society must be reconstructed to enlarge the contribution of autonomous individuals and primary groups". He warns, however, that "as conviviality is reduced below a certain level, no amount of industrial productivity can effectively satisfy the needs it creates among society's members." Peattie (1998) interprets Illich's thesis in terms of the city as a site for pursuing the conviviality of human relationships. She posits conviviality to be the ultimate purpose of citymaking, which requires a plentitude of shared public and common spaces in which "conviviality is, indeed, the very nourishment

of civil society itself" (p. 250).

Sustaining the Environment to Reach a planetary biosphere scale

The advent of the Anthropocene inaugurates a new planetary era in which human beings have become the principle determinants of the state of the environment and the world biosphere (Fieldman 2011). The 21st century presents a crisis of rapidly increasing proportions that is not only manifested in global climate change and sea rise but also in environmental disasters of unprecedented scale and frequencies, many of which are occurring in city regions in Asia (Douglass 2015).

Cities have long been identified as the major sources of massive environmental destruction. An urgent need now exists to reverse these trends. To accomplish this, a new relationship with nature is an imperative that is particularly challenging to cities. Traditionally defined as agglomerations of non-agricultural production, cities and their residents lose contact with nature. Polluting industries can also be put offshore in distant locations, effectively exporting their negative externalities. In both experiential and economic ways, the impending crises resulting from anthropogenic transformations of nature has remained largely invisible to cities.

However, recent worldwide grassroots movements for urban farming, organic food production and low-carbon energy uses promises to be an irrepressible trend toward changing relations between city and countryside as well as reversing unsustainable human appropriation of environmental resources. At the heart of these transformative practices is a shift from the instrumental relations with nature advocated in the widely adopted UN Bruntland Report (1987) on *Our Common Future* that defined sustainable development only in terms of human wants. New principles for progressive approaches toward the environment call for going beyond sustainable development as "doing no harm" and toward the restoration and regeneration of nature by consciously returning more than is taken (Cho 2014).

Initial research on progressive city regions in East and Southeast Asia highlights the following:
- Surakarta (Solo) and Surabaya, which chose to stop evictions of low-income households from the city's waterways (Padawangi 2015);
- The adoption of participatory budgeting in Chengdu (Cabannes and Yi 2015);
- New forms of participatory governance in cities hit by the 2011 tsunami and nuclear disaster in Japan (Aoki 2015)
- Suwon's innovative green city environmental projects such as a car free month.
- Taipei's preservation of informal housing as cultural heritage
- Seoul's multifaceted programs for inclusion, just distribution, alternative economy, conviviality and environmental sustainability (Cho and Douglass 2015).

From the perspective of resilient urbanism in the Anthropocene, all dimensions of progressive city regions must be cross-referenced. If this is not done, impacts of the interplay and interdependences among all dimensions will be missed, and resilience will be compromised in unexpected ways. Raising incomes, for example, can increase the appropriation of environmental resources such as fossil fuels used by automobiles, leading to further environmental deterioration. Similarly, clearing slums to create green spaces for environmental management raises questions about social justice. Whatever progress is made along one dimension must also be judged in terms of its impacts on others.

Similar calls for holistic approaches to citymaking can be found in many parallel approaches

toward progressive cities. The Manifesto by Cabannes and Ross (2013) composed of 12 imperatives, Friedmann's (2000) idea of the Good City, and various concepts of livable cities (Ho and Douglass 2008), to name a few, move in this direction (Fainstein 2005). However defined, an unanswered question is how do progressive cities arise? Several theories are available, but research is as yet insufficient to validate one over another. A large body of literature, for example, points toward economic crises as the triggering mechanisms that can lead to needed political reform. Democratization in Indonesia in 1998, the proximate cause for which was a deep globally-linked financial crises, can be cited a case in point. Other formulations posit that economic growth is sufficient in generating a large urban middle class that eventually demands political freedoms and other progressive reforms. However, the real world shows that political reforms have come through more peaceful means and have appeared in lower and higher income economies alike. Moreover, as previously noted, political change at a national level does not spread evenly or to the same degree among cities.

A more fruitful starting point for answering this question draws from Clavel's (1986) pioneering research on progressive cities, which consistently found that histories of grassroots activism provided the social origins for progressive governments to appear. In addition, mayoral leadership is also crucial in its synaptic role of resolving conflict and using state apparatus to advance progressive agenda. The tentative position taken here as a starting point for further research is that a decisive factor in the rise of progressive cities is a progressive urban culture that, while perhaps not representing the entire populace, is able to bring unfulfilled aspirations of people into political spheres. Research is thus needed in every city on the histories of social mobilizations and the political openings they have or can make toward generating progressive cities from the ground up. The hope for resilience with human flourishing is underscored by Bell and *de-Shalit* (2011) who proclaim that as national level governments become more uniform under the hegemony of global capital, "cities may come to the rescue." Available evidence shows that progressive cities can emerge from non-crisis driven cultural and social forces and can prevail over long spans of time, which is the hope for the future, city region by city region.