

their own rural-to-urban shifts, at numbers and rates not previously experienced, as the world in total acquires the equivalent of a new city of one million residents every week. Oil-rich Middle East countries are creating virtually instantaneous city-scale developments. Those in economies rich in natural resources, intellectual talent, and increased consumer spending look with cautious optimism to an urbanized future. But for everyone, those growing and those shrinking, the unrelenting corollaries of the new urban patterns are incredible opportunities—education, jobs, health services, consumer status, and social mobility are near-universal objectives increasingly within reach for stunningly large numbers of urban dwellers—and daunting challenges.

What does the discipline of urban design have to offer to twenty-first-century urbanization? The primary tenet of urban design, as my generation of urban designers has tried to practice it, is that the character of urban place, at local, regional, and even national scales is determined by a number of differentiating factors, including geography, climate, culture, religion, political history, role in war, and opportunity in economic markets and trade. Is this still the premise of our work? Are these sources of difference and identity being registered in the urban developments we see popping up around the globe? Are European and North American models, some outmoded, others irrelevant, being too readily imported by China, the Middle East, and India? Giant urban blocks ringed by highways defining mega-islands of development are springing up from Las Vegas to Dubai. Not only are they questionable as spectacle now, they also stand in such splendid isolation that one doubts that they can ever be connected by transit or walkways in the future. Nor are the exurbs being better treated. Land is being consumed as special economic zones (in India) and other large and available undeveloped tracts (in China and the Middle East) become economically and physically gated communities, often with little or no relationship to transit. A hallmark quality of sustainable cities is their ability to evolve and sustain vitality across centuries; the single-minded, single-purpose developments described above have little potential for such evolution.

Wherever we practice, urban designers bring the ability to nudge the powerful forces of urbanization toward human scale, resilience, competitive advantage, and distinctive identity. Success in our endeavors increasingly depends on the recognition that the essence of designing for urbanism is collaboration, a close intellectual and practi-