

EDITORIAL

MORE KNOWLEDGE FOR A NEW ERA

Pandemic and climate change: two events that are mixed and, often, seem to be the same. The events of recent years, and especially 2021, have jeopardized the certainties which up until now, were grounded on that scientific knowledge could lead humanity along a safe path. For a while, we thought that the results of multiple theses, and the accumulated efforts to understand phenomena and solutions based on the concept of sustainability were in vain, given the threats of a ferocious pandemic, along with the frustrated attempts to contain climate change. The goals sought up until now have been greatly challenged.

Facing a new and unexpected reality, architects, urbanists, engineers, and other professionals and researchers connected to the built environment, began to question their certainties. Countless questions arose. For example, how to think about mass-scale public transportation, if this entails crowding, alongside possible unsuitable energy use? And what to do now with urban public spaces, like squares and parks, that were historically considered as meeting places that added quality to cities and their inhabitants? And how to contain -if it has to be contained- the boom of the home office, which has interfered with traditional living spaces, and has emptied commercial and educational buildings? What happens with the increased use of air conditioning and all its environmental consequences, given the growing need to stay in controlled indoor environments? And how to consider spaces for large events, symbols of crowded meetings, and mass-scale events? In this new context, what happens with smart cities? And, after all, what does it mean for a city to be smart when facing this reality?

When the focus turns to the issue of impacts, whether caused by the COVID-19 pandemic or inherent to climate change, it is inevitable to consider the effects these have on the most vulnerable communities, which become even more fragile under this scenario. There is no way to keep a family who lives in a single room apart, nor it is possible to demand that they

leave areas at risk of flooding and landslides, on facing the inevitable increase of natural disasters, which have been widely felt in recent years.

The world was shaken in 2021, and from this change, we discover that we have to reinvent ourselves. The individual can no longer achieve well-being, facing the need that the entire community is vaccinated to overcome the pandemic. Thus, it is essential to deal with the social differences, but the formulation of public policy to face this goal cannot be treated as "charity", as the expansion of these differences tends to lead society to a state of barbarism, undesirable for all segments. So that everyone has a dignified quality of life, with greater security, less violence, less environmental impact, better transport conditions, education, and so on., the need to reduce social disparities is evident. Without this, people with better economic conditions will be confined to gated communities and the old citadels may reappear, governed by their own laws, and isolated from urban coexistence.

It is pressing that we keep fighting in the search for an environmental, social, and economic balance. Topics like energy, housing, comfort, and efficiency, which are addressed in this issue of HÁbitat Sustentable, will always be among our concerns about what we want to do to make our planet a greener place to live.

The pandemic we have lived through, as well as the 2021 United Nations Conference on Climate Change, held in Glasgow, have made us realize that the world is not just globalized by technology. The planet's survival depends on common comprehensive actions, whether to fight something microscopic like a virus, or something as gargantuan and invisible as the climate. We are all in the same boat, whose course depends on how we use knowledge.

May the works published here be a part of the path towards new, better, and happier times!

Cristina Engel de Alvarez
Doctora en Arquitectura y Urbanismo
Profesora Titular e investigadora del Departamento de Arquitectura e Urbanismo
Presidente de la Fundación de Apoyo a la Investigación y la Innovación de Espírito Santo
Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo, Vitória, Brasil
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3898-8515>
cristina.engel@ufes.br

