
Editorial

Shane Epting

Department of Philosophy and Religion Studies,
University of North Texas,
1155 Union Circle #310920,
Denton, TX 76203-5017, USA
Email: shane.epting@gmail.com

Biographical notes: Shane Epting has published articles in *Philosophia*, *Science and Engineering Ethics*, *Contemporary Justice Review*, and *Interdisciplinary Environmental Review*. His research interests include philosophy of the city, environmental justice, applied ethics, and philosophy of technology. He is the Vice President of the Interdisciplinary Environmental Association and a founding member of the Philosophy of the City Research Group.

With the majority of the world's population now living in cities, we can expect that the kinds of problems that urban planners, engineers, and architects face today will increase in the future. Yet, current problems remain. One could argue that some challenges require a shift in how we think about urban environments. Such considerations include thinking about cities and their relationships with non-human environments (if such places exist) and with each other. Bearing in mind that cities put enormous demands on natural resources, several facets of urban life require examination to determine their ecological impacts, along with the social and political dimensions of such issues. While we cannot anticipate all of the problems that will arise, one can hold that mitigating harm requires interdisciplinary thinking.

As an interdisciplinary topic, the city provides unending avenues for study. The articles in this special edition count as humble contributions in the quest to understand it. Although they rely on different approaches to interdisciplinary research, the authors exhibit how the city provides common ground for conversation. Several of the authors in this special edition have been involved with the emerging research area, 'philosophy of the city', a subfield that remains inherently interdisciplinary. For example, Jason Matteson in his article, 'Close-knit cities', examines the relationships between cities in terms of environmental stewardship and human flourishing, appealing to Aristotelian frameworks of urban constitution. In 'Nature in the neighbourhood: rethinking the urban environment', Amy Ihlan zeros in on the urban neighbourhood and the benefits of breaking down the nature-culture divide, maintaining that such engagements provide new neighbourhood-centred approaches for environmental consideration.

In terms of current (and future) challenges for the built environment, one concern rests with the shortcomings of proposed solutions such as sustainability. Such instances often concern individual cases while other areas address larger 'big-picture' issues. For an example concerning the former, in, 'Identifying opportunities and hurdles for food security: a critical examination of the City of Edmonton's food and agriculture strategy',

Lorelei Hanson and Deborah Schrader, by using survey data and semi-structured interviews, show how residents and stakeholders regard sustainability, pinpointing the advantages of transforming the local food system.

Regarding the latter, Brian Elliott, in 'Urban sustainability: from neoliberal governance to the right to the city', gives a critique of neo-liberal agendas that promote unjust versions of sustainability. Instead, he offers an alternative to such ill effects through directing attention toward the right-to-the-city scholarship rooted in Henri Lefebvre. Elliott's article highlights the complexities bound to urban sustainability, nudging researchers to work towards an account of urban sustainability that does not neglect paramount social elements.

While megacities such as Beijing must come to grips with massive environmental problems and resource allocation concerns, smaller communities have to wrestle with local resource management issues also, along with environmental degradation. A pressing subject, water holds steady as a concern to numerous locales. For instance, Adail Alicea-Martínez and Rafael Rios, in 'Vulnerability assessment of small community water systems in Puerto Rico', remind us that there are different kinds of threats to water systems that require interdisciplinary collaboration.

Bearing in mind that several of the world's cities have yet to be built, we cannot begin to understand all of the problems that will stem from their eventual existence. Although the concerns addressed in this special issue are by no means exhaustive, they illustrate how interdisciplinary thinking benefits understanding the scope of problems facing the cities of today and tomorrow. If there is one take-away from considering these articles as a collection, it maintains that as cities continue to change, the manner wherein we conceptualise them must keep pace.