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Urban Health,
Sustainability,
and Peace in the Day
the World Stopped

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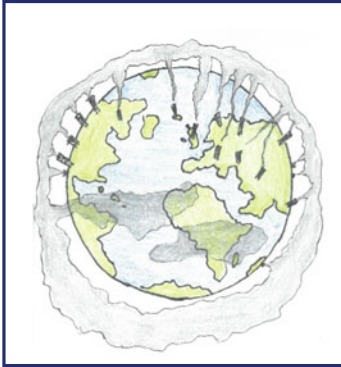
ISSN 2523-3084 ISSN 2523-3092 (electronic)
Sustainable Development Goals Series
ISBN 978-981-16-4887-8 ISBN 978-981-16-4888-5 (eBook)
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-4888-5>

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Nature Singapore Pte Ltd. 2021

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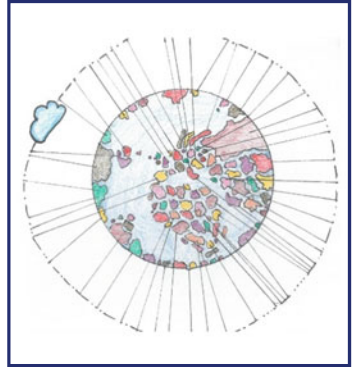
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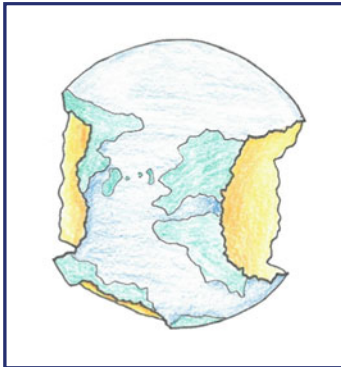
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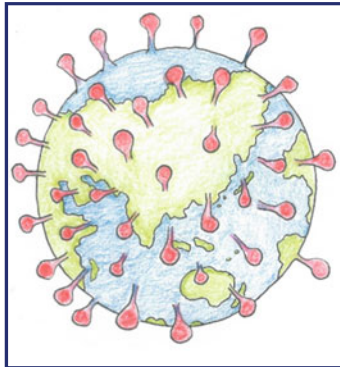
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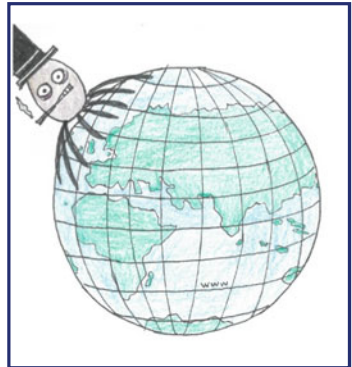
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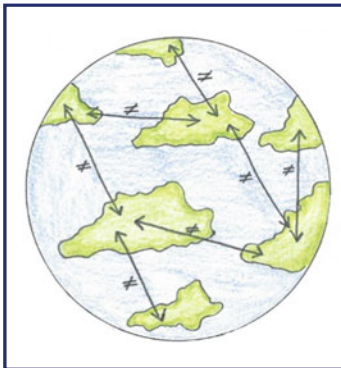
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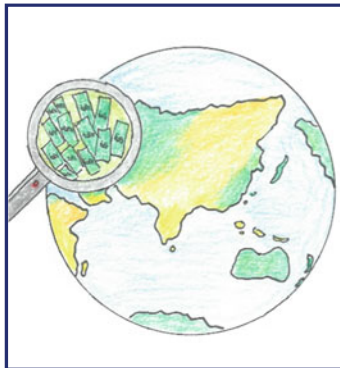
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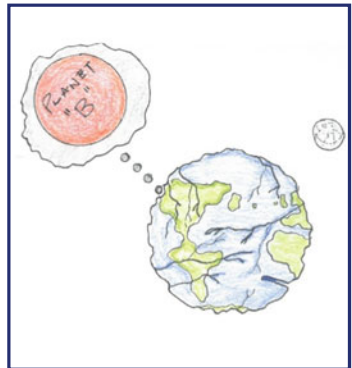
The World-Wide-Web



Unjust Globalisation

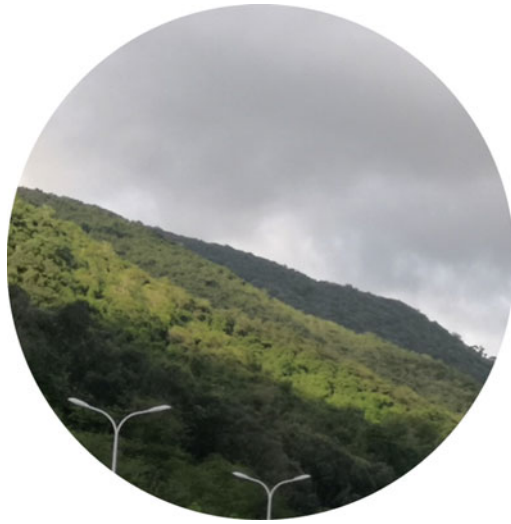


Pseudo-Green Prosperity



Unhealthy Prospect ...

Images drawn by Ali Cheshmehzangi



To Mr. Maziyar Ordoobadi, a good old friend who had a very short life. His early departure was a sudden tragedy for those who knew him. He was a true-hearted young lad who just liked the shades of clouds making colours on mountains, on a partly cloudy day. He had a pure heart, he offered peace, and he was vulnerable. His resilience was admirable, and his weakness was the main challenge. His sincere attitude reminds me of a peaceful time, a cold look at his palm, a moment of pause. I remember I had to tell him a white lie to give him hope and keep his peace. His health was already deteriorating, and our ephemeral friendship was not sustainable.

He left us 22 years ago.

I also dedicate this book to those believers, activists, and innovators who continuously seek peace against the corrupted cycles of everyday life. I genuinely hope our peace-makers could remain as peace-keepers, too.

Acknowledgements

This book is an early outcome of the project funded by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT), Japan, and Hiroshima University, Japan. I thank the funders and the university for their support in giving me the opportunity to study peace and sustainability. While I wish I could have conducted more workshops in Hiroshima during this time, I hope I get the opportunity to further extend my collaboration with them after the ongoing pandemic. In this recently funded programme, we study ICT-mediated platforms for smart-resilient cities and communities. Part of the work is focused on evaluating positive peace and urban health. I also acknowledge the National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC) for funding project numbers 71850410544 and 71950410760, used for material purchase and recruitment of local research interns in China.

Lastly, I acknowledge those who give and take away peace from us. Both groups are equally important. When we have peace, we can see the values it offers us; when we do not, we value it more. All we have to say is the following for those who should remember well. “There is absolutely no neglect apprehended; there are no guarantees. Life opposes viciousness endlessly, yet our unity faces other retaliation; equilibrium verifies, & explications revive. Otherwise, universal reactions connect obedience, neglecting never-ending eruptive concerns, & the illusions of nature. Interestingly, sabotaging battles exist & yield our neutral destiny. This harmonisation is special for unified circumstances, knowledge, intelligence, & nonstop growth, where our reactions long divergence. Having optimal prosperity & equity yearn outstanding ubiquitous kindness, not opting wantedness in treasures...May your lives obey valued existence, may your best extracts amity & unlocking thriving years”.



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About This Book

Urban Health, Sustainability, and Peace is the first book that attempts to put these three critical areas together. This novelty approaches the subject matter by delving into evaluating what works, what does not work, and what should be done to achieve healthy cities. We believe this book will be beneficial to a wide range of stakeholders, particularly policymakers, planners, and developers, who continuously shape and reshape the structure and environments of our cities and communities. Unfortunately, in most cases, the healthiness of the cities may not be of their immediate concern. Nevertheless, it is the concern of the end-users, citizens, or simply those who live and work in cities and communities worldwide. To safeguard peace in cities, one has to consider sustaining urban health; that is the main aim of this book.

The ongoing pandemic gives us an excellent reason to study cities' health. During such a disruptive time, we detect many flaws in cities and communities around the world. We primarily identify the negative impacts on sustainability and peace in cities. In order to sustain a healthy city, this book evaluates six sustainability dimensions of physical, environmental, economic, social, institutional, and technical. It then utilises eight primary dimensions of positive peace, evaluating critical areas for future considerations in urbanism. These considerations include making cities smarter, more resilient, and more sustainable. The book's ultimate goal is to highlight how we should progress to maintain and sustain urban health.

As a continuation to *The City in Need*, this book covers the nexus between urban health, sustainability, and peace. Furthermore, by reflecting on the ongoing pandemic crisis, metaphorically labelled as "The Day the World Stopped", we delve into some key areas beyond the usual planning and policy guidelines. Lastly, the book intends to highlight what has not been studied before, i.e. the relationship between urban health, sustainability, and peace.

Prologue

The most essential thing in life is peace, and yet, we continuously and falsely seek everything else. We choose our wrong quests, we seek for the wrong, and we chase the wrong. All without knowing how to find peace, without knowing how to keep it, and without knowing how to cherish it properly. With peace, there is continuity. But it may not be sustainable, and it may not be healthy. We have to seek more. We have to aim higher—much higher than this.

I always believed the two sides of humanity's spectrum are “peace” and “corruption”. I am confident we are currently far from the former. We are so tangled with our incessant progress and growth, without questioning the limits, not reaching the stability that is needed, and continuously sabotaging the balance that is vital to our existence. Given the significance of the COVID-19 pandemic impact on our society, we cannot just move forward without questioning the range of deficiencies, inactions, incapability, corruption, and inequalities around us. Our unceasing silence is an injudicious crime, feeding the violence against the peace we desire. We ought to reflect on the situation more considerably and responsibly to know what worked and what did not work during this almost never-ending pandemic. Nonetheless, this particular event is just a test for us to realise the depth of corruption and greed that have made us focus on continuous growth and unsustainable progressions. The harms we have caused become larger stones in our path towards a healthy and peaceful sustainable development. These have just happened, and we are at fault since the inception.

The bottleneck to our progress to achieve sustainability and sustainable development is ourselves, “the human beings”. There is a lack of collective and global push, scarcity of political will, and many other insufficiencies representing our voracity and egotism in our behaviours. Our unsustainable preferences dictate us continuously, and we choose to select destructive behaviours. Such behaviours eventually become cravings, values, and patterns of our disregarding actions. The discarded minds cause adversities, not knowing that our values keep changing for the worse, and our goals and targets have no clear end to ensure stability and peace for all. Our over-reliance on technologies is growing fast in the so-called digital age, at a time where our neglect would lead to further inequalities, injustice, and imbalance. The latter is of our concern, i.e. the lack of balance between human and the environment, which is simply caused by us for years, decades,

and even centuries of neglect, inactions, misbehaviours, and short memories of the past. Our history keeps repeating itself as we fail to learn and reflect on our preceding failures. We fail to become better as we feed our corruption and greed, as we think of everlasting growth, and we (often) do not see the end with a conscious mind. The harms we continue to cause are the ones that hit us back throughout this so-called progression. Yet, we get further away from humanity and the balance that is requisite of having healthier living environments.

Over the years, we have engineered everything. Not only so, but also that we have engineered everything for ourselves, pinpointed around our needs and demand—an endless enigma to our not-so-looked-after cradle. This paradox is not necessarily for the best. Our shift from ecoism to egoism concerns very little of the other beings of our ecosystem, without whom our decline is inevitable. Our investments are wrongly made, and our harmonious living is disrupted. Thus, we see growing challenges and some that we are yet to witness and experience. I do not suggest acts of entreating for celestial miracles nor do I suggest believing in such hysterical magic. Instead, I advocate nurturing humanity beyond just being humans. I recommend putting health with sustainability and peace and towards a more all-inclusive future. Our take on this ought to bring back the health and well-being of our environments, as we must become more considerate about our surroundings. After all, this is our colossal home, and we are not necessarily alone. We have to redefine our sustainability plans and agendas and start with game-changing ideas, more than just the already many reports of neglect. Lastly, we have to nurture peace as it could cultivate better humanity in future. Alas, we claim to be civilised, but we just pretend to be.

As we progress, we have a collective vision of a better future—but at what price? Besides, how do we define a “better future”? How do we create orderly progress that could sustain in a healthy way? And what values and targets shape our goal of a better future? As we continue to progress, we note many disorders, discrepancies, and distortions. Our minds are filled with greed and agony, a sort of inevitable chase that suggests an unhealthy development cycle. This leads to our egoism, which keeps us away from our inner peace and the outer peace that we could (possibly) offer. We believe in superficial pathways, weakening our minds for insecurity and praising the wrong. Then, our procrastination to make the right step forward becomes the cause of selecting the wrong choices, making immoral decisions, and focusing on false aspiration. All these together may just keep us away from the peace that we continuously seek—and we hope we could wake the mass by at least finding the right path(s) ahead. I believe this may just happen, but the question is when?

We trust this book is a good starting point to bring together the three key themes of health, sustainability, and peace. This novelty is (hopefully) a foundation for future research that must entail revisions, reforms, restructuring, and reconsideration in and of many things. The book holistically explores six dimensions of physical, environmental, economic, social, institutional, and technical, an approach that has been rarely seen in academia and scholarly work. Thus, we are rest assured the book could serve as a

comprehensive example of scrutinising the health–sustainability–peace (HSP) nexus in cities and communities. We believe this direction is more meaningful than those recurrent rusty strategies, which have (so far) failed to advocate peace and prosperity in our society. The reason for this book is to expand on HSP research, develop new thinking, and help us reconsider the effectiveness of earlier agendas, guidelines, and strategies. After all, to achieve healthier and more sustainable living environments, we ought to put peace in the heart of our progress and development. If we fail to do so, we risk our humanity. If we succeed, we know that we have learned enough from the day the world stopped.

After many years of studying sustainability and sustainable development, I realised the missing part, i.e. peace. Not too late, but I realised this now. I now can verify that peace is more important than sustainability, and everything else is pinpointed around it. Sustainability alone is meaningless, and with peace-making thinking, we can complete it for the best. Unfortunately, most of our sustainability agendas either do not target peace or vaguely include it as one of the targets, goals, or indicators. However, now that I studied the HSP nexus in more detail, I realised that sustainability is mainly a greenwashing ideology without considering peace. Now I can confirm that, without peace, we are just deceiving ourselves of an ideal future far from reach. We cannot continue to manipulate our minds without having peace at the heart of sustainability and sustainable development progression. After all, it is only in a peaceful environment that one can achieve sustainability, or else, we are chasing the wrong thing. If we do so only in a peaceful environment, we will certainly reach health and (can) sustain it for a better future. So, let us find inner peace and offer a better outer peace for everybody and everything else. Let us learn from this day before it is late, and let us learn from the day the world stopped.

May 2021

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Contents

1	Urban Health During the Pandemic: Why Does It Matter?	1
1.1	A General Overview of Urban Health in the Day the World Stopped	1
1.2	A Brief Discussion About “Urban Health Equity”	3
1.3	Urban Health and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	4
1.4	Structure of the Book: Maintaining Health, Sustainability, and Peace in Cities	5
	References.....	6
2	Signifying the Correlation Between Urban Health, Sustainability, and Positive Peace	9
2.1	The Significance of Inequalities and Facing the Pandemic	9
2.1.1	Beyond the Three Primary P’s: Planning, Policies, and People.....	10
2.2	Introduction to Positive Peace for Healthy Cities	11
2.2.1	Positive Peace Pillars or Domains	11
2.2.2	Positive Peace Dimensions and Sustainability	13
2.3	Introduction to Sustainability Dimensions for Healthy Cities	14
2.4	A Summary: Correlation Between Health, Sustainability, and Peace (HSP)	16
	References.....	37
 Part I Sustainability and Peace: “Urban Health from the Physical Dimension”		
3	The Role of Urban Density and Land Use Planning in Keeping the Cities Healthy	41
3.1	A General Overview of Urban Density and Land Use Planning.....	41
3.2	Reflecting on How Cities Reacted During the Pandemic	42

3.3	Addressing the Flaws	43
3.4	A Summary.....	44
	References.....	45
4	Resilient Urban Form: There is No Myth in Enhancing Resilience Through Urban Morphologies.....	49
4.1	A General Overview of Resilient Urban Form and Morphologies	49
4.2	Reflecting on How Cities Reacted During the Pandemic	50
4.3	Addressing the Flaws	51
4.4	A Summary.....	52
	References.....	52
5	Critical Infrastructures and Safeguarding the City’s Sustainability and Peace	55
5.1	A General Overview of Critical Infrastructures in Cities	55
5.2	Reflecting on How Cities Reacted During the Pandemic	56
5.3	Addressing the Flaws	57
5.4	A Summary.....	58
	References.....	59
 Part II Sustainability and Peace: “Urban Health from the Environmental Dimension”		
6	Well-Functioning Government and Peaceful Living Environments.....	63
6.1	A General Overview of Well-Functioning Government for the Urban Environments	63
6.2	Reflecting on How Cities Reacted During the Pandemic	64
6.3	Addressing the Flaws	66
6.4	A Summary.....	66
	References.....	67
7	The City Needs Its Essential Systems: Sustaining the Primary Operations.....	69
7.1	A General Overview of Urban Essential Systems from the Environmental Sustainability Perspective	69
7.2	Reflecting on How Cities Reacted During the Pandemic	70
7.3	Addressing the Flaws	72
7.4	A Summary.....	72
	References.....	73

8	Resource Efficiency and Distribution: Healthy Environments for Healthy Cities	77
8.1	A General Overview of Healthy Resource Efficiency and Distribution	77
8.2	Reflecting on How Cities Reacted During the Pandemic	78
8.3	Addressing the Flaws	79
8.4	A Summary.....	80
	References.....	81
Part III	Sustainability and Peace: “Urban Health from the Economic Dimension”	
9	Healthy Business Environment and Facing Intolerable Disruptions	85
9.1	A Brief Exploration: Healthy or Sound Business Environment in Cities.....	85
9.2	Reflecting on How Cities Reacted During the Pandemic	86
9.3	Addressing the Flaws	87
9.4	A Summary.....	88
	References.....	88
10	Low Level of Corruption: A Crossover Between Economy and Institutional Structures	91
10.1	A Brief Exploration: Low Level of Corruption in Achieving Economic Sustainability.....	91
10.2	Reflecting on How Cities Reacted During the Pandemic	92
10.3	Addressing the Flaws	94
10.4	A Summary.....	95
	References.....	95
11	The Role of Supply Chain Resilience in Contemporary Age	99
11.1	A Brief Exploration: Supply Chain Resilience and Healthy Economies	99
11.2	Reflecting on How Cities Reacted During the Pandemic	100
11.3	Addressing the Flaws	101
11.4	A Summary.....	102
	References.....	103

Part IV Sustainability and Peace: “Urban Health from the Social Dimension”

12 Information Sharing for a Healthier Society: More Than Just Big Data and Information-Based Platforms	109
12.1 A Brief Exploration: Information Sharing and Healthy Society	109
12.2 Reflecting on How Cities Reacted During the Pandemic	111
12.3 Suggestions Against the Common Flaws	112
12.4 A Summary	113
References	113
13 Human Capital and Equity: When the City Needs Its People	117
13.1 A Brief Exploration: Human Capital and Equity in People-Centric Cities and Communities	117
13.2 Reflecting on How Cities Reacted During the Pandemic	118
13.3 Suggestions Against the Common Flaws	119
13.4 A Summary	120
References	121
14 Social and Public Life During Disruptive Times: A Public Realm Perspective	123
14.1 A Brief Exploration: Public Life, Social Life, and Public Realms of Cities	123
14.2 Reflecting on How Cities Reacted During the Pandemic	125
14.3 Suggestions Against the Common Flaws	126
14.4 A Summary	127
References	127

Part V Sustainability and Peace: “Urban Health from the Institutional Dimension”

15 Public Rights and Maintaining the City’s Social and Public Services	131
15.1 A Brief Exploration: Public Rights and Achieving Healthy Public Services	131
15.2 Reflecting on How Cities Reacted During the Pandemic	132
15.3 Suggestions Against the Common Flaws	133
15.4 A Summary	134
References	135

16	Good Relations with Neighbours: Sustainability of Cities Beyond Their Borders	139
16.1	A Brief Exploration: Good Relations that Matter the Most	139
16.2	Reflecting on How Cities Reacted During the Pandemic	140
16.3	Suggestions Against the Common Flaws	141
16.4	A Summary.....	142
	References.....	143
17	Public Networks and Keeping the Support: Exploring a Better Governance for a Healthier Future	145
17.1	A Brief Exploration: Public Networks for Healthy Society	145
17.2	Reflecting on How Cities Reacted During the Pandemic	146
17.3	Suggestions Against the Common Flaws	147
17.4	A Summary.....	148
	References.....	149
Part VI	Sustainability and Peace: “Urban Health from the Technical Dimension”	
18	Technology Availability and Accessibility: Dealing with the Issues of Digital Divide	153
18.1	Knowing More About Technology Availability and Accessibility.....	153
18.2	Reflecting on How Cities Reacted During the Pandemic	155
18.3	Addressing Issues of Digital Divide	156
18.4	A Summary.....	157
	References.....	157
19	Asset and Facilities Management from the Technical Perspective	161
19.1	Knowing More About Asset and Facilities Management	161
19.2	Reflecting on How Cities Reacted During the Pandemic	162
19.3	Dealing with Shortfalls and Shortages in Cities	164
19.4	A Summary.....	164
	References.....	165
20	Smart Platforms and Technical Solutions: Can We Really Achieve Smart-Resilient Models?	169
20.1	Knowing More About Smart Platforms and Technical Solutions.....	169
20.2	Reflecting on How Cities Reacted During the Pandemic	170

20.3	Achieving Smart-Resilient Cities and Communities	172
20.4	A Summary.	173
	References.	173
21	From “The City in Need” to “The City We Need”	177
21.1	Reflecting on the Missing “Balance”	177
21.2	Learning from the Day the World (Almost) Stopped	178
21.3	Future Research on the Health–Sustainability–Peace (HSP) Nexus.	181
21.3.1	Sustainability Transitions.	181
21.3.2	Scientific and Critical Peace Education	182
21.3.3	Peacebuilding Processes and Action Plans.	182
21.3.4	Smart-Resilient Perspectives, Pathways, and Practices	182
21.3.5	Responding to the Deteriorating/Missing Balance	183
21.4	Towards the City We Need.	183
	References.	184
Index	187

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