

RESPONSE TO THE CLIMATE CRISIS – A CALL FOR ACTION

After weeks of smoky skies, crazy temperatures and bushfire devastation, there was cause for much more deliberation than celebration on NYE to end the 20-teens. As this real reality show of apocalyptic scenes has unfolded, any doubts about a climate crisis should certainly be dispelled in most educated minds!



A kookaburra perches on a burnt tree in the aftermath of a bushfire in Wallabi Point, Australia, on Nov. 12, 2019. ADAM STEVENSON/REUTERS

So much has been said questioning how we got to such desperate times, whether through a multitude of news coverage, social media and rallies about climate change or an extinction rebellion. But there can be no doubt that radical action is necessary to adapt urgently and mitigate through all possible means. So, my 2020 resolution is to find the positive angles in many recent articles on a very significant shift in the public mood on need for action at various levels.

Climate Crisis is the front-page heading of the December edition of Architecture Bulletin published before the latest dramas and looks at local and global *exemplars of carbon-conquering efforts...and...how we can practice active climate action...that needs to happen right now.*

Architects Declare Australia a Climate Emergency (au.architectsdeclare.com) was initiated in mid-2019, and numerous other organisations, councils and businesses have likewise announced intentions to act on climate breakdown and biodiversity loss. With the aim to see more regenerative design practice and supporting governance, ADA aims to *'harness, nurture and build collective will to advance the demand for knowledge and to catalyse it into action'*. (Caroline Pidcock, ADA spokesperson and chair of 1 Million Women). Such a response might be seen as a formula for creating resilience in the face of wicked problems facing us in dealing with necessary changes.

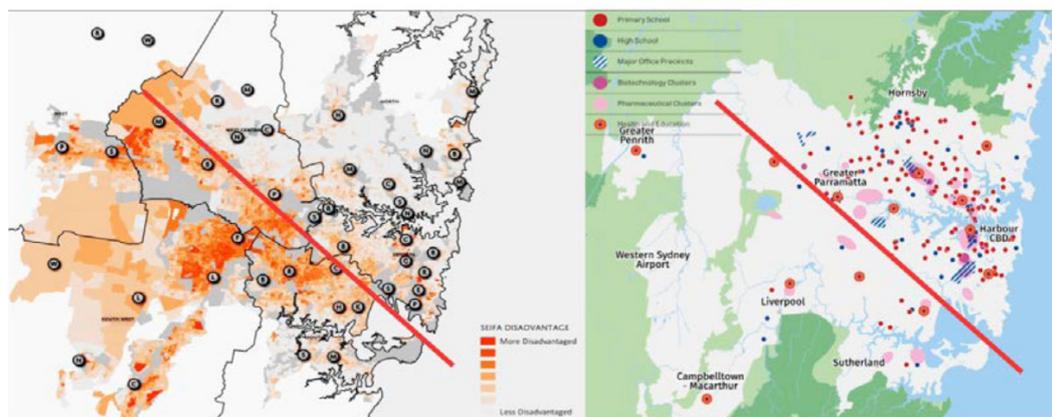
The United Nations Environment Program has established that construction contributes close to 40% of total global greenhouse gas emissions, so reducing the need for new buildings or infrastructure by adaptive reuse or recycling is an approach worth more consideration. Concrete in freeways, tunnels and car parks is also a very energy dependent culprit on the ledger of environmental degradation, adding to the fossil fuel tally racked up by our vehicle usage even if electric.

But there is also much potential for architecture to actually transform buildings to net zero carbon impacts and even beyond, to collect and redistribute emissions-free energy. There is evidence that through smart design buildings can both minimise and reuse energy from solar and wind, collect water (both fresh and recycled), and provide shade and wildlife habitats through landscape vegetation that can also insulate and reduce power needed for mechanical services. In conjunction with improved 'place-based' urban design the reduction of urban heat island effects is possible, improving the quality of shared public spaces that can become more attractive for pedestrian and

bicycle paths linking to public transport nodes with movement systems less reliant on traditional energy sources.

A paper at the IUDC 2019 in Hobart delivered by Rod Simpson, Environment Commissioner for the Greater Sydney Commission, referred to the 'emergence of place-based planning as a way of dealing with the complexity of the city.' Thus a 'narrative of the rebalancing of the city' was shown as urgent redress for an increasingly disadvantaged western Sydney suffering from severe climate change impacts among many others.

Disadvantage (SEIFA index), Knowledge jobs and high performing schools



4 the emergence of place-based planning roderick simpson greater sydney commission

Source: GSC

Lane Cove lies in the middle of the 'advantage zone' to the top right of these maps, an environment in which we enjoy many benefits such as proximity to jobs and amenities, tree canopy and water, good public transport and walkable public domain (around the village at least) – all often taken for-granted.

In this, we've got low carbon precincts, we've got precinct-based initiatives for renewable energy and so forth.....an empowerment of local government to talk about these things. And for planners to engage with their councilors, saying the state government expects us to look at these things. (GSC Commissioner: Rod Simpson)

What is envisaged by the GSC is cooperation between all of the state and local agencies responsible for our planning and infrastructure that can realise a more equitable sharing of the tools and resources to achieve the Zero Emissions 2050 target set by the NSW government – but over the past week this looks totally inadequate. Confronted with the magnitude of local and global challenges due to a changing climate, we desperately need 2020 vision for collaborative high-level governance and realistic targets to support social and environmental outcomes that can evolve from the bottom up to avoid ongoing catastrophes.

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