



NAVIGATION

AT LAST

SEARCH



Beam me up Scotty

Holographic transport on the cards?

Looking at current trends in society, urban planning and its influences may be one of the key sources of the shape of things to come.

By the year 2040, with an expected urban population in excess of 6.5 billion, approximately two out of three people globally will be living in cities. For this to happen in an environmentally, socially and economically sustainable way, urban planners and designers will have to conceive and plan cities based on two key elements – transportation and communication.



The past concept of sprawling cities will diminish, as land becomes scarcer and demand for resources increases. The cities of the future will be based on the concept of a 'planned-opolis' – a term conceived to reflect urban development, based on a 'hyper-efficient' use of resources.

Future cities will also, out of necessity, be more energy-efficient, green and eco-friendly. One possible scenario is that self-sustaining neighbourhoods reducing the need for commuting. The cities of the future will also be highly networked, as communication systems become ever more instrumental to the functioning of their economies. With travel restricted, there will be an evolution of systems, allowing one to transport virtually to any part of the world via technology, such as holographically, conducting meetings and leading businesses, without moving beyond one's house or neighbourhood.

The increased risks, as seen by the recent nuclear disaster in Japan, demonstrate a clear need for not just clean but safe energy sources, becoming more important. Cities and even neighbourhoods may brew their own bio-fuels and cities and buildings will be designed to allow not only for function, but also to maximise solar and wind energy.

Cities of the future will be concentratedly dense and vertical, made possible as a result of advancements in materials, construction, transportation and communication technologies. Such an idea was first conceived in the 1950s by the well-known Italian architect Paolo Soleri, in his utopian 'Mesa City' concept, housing two million inhabitants in a high-technology vertically-dense urban environment. More recently Eugene Tsui expanded on this idea in his proposal, the 'Ultima Tower', a two-mile-high green tower, consisting of a multi-dimensional eco-system, combined with a mixed-use development, created as a vertical neighborhood. However, this may not happen in our life-time but the idea is not unattainable with future technological advancements.

Mass transit systems, accordingly, will not just be horizontal, but one will see vertical or multi-layered systems allowing the movement of people and goods in every which direction – think Roald Dahl's 'Charlie & the Great Glass Elevator' and beyond... China is already experimenting with the development of a multi-level transit corridor, where a giant bus will straddle two lanes of the road running on

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rails, underneath which private vehicles can still drive. Alleviating traffic congestion, allowing the carriage of more passengers within one 'vehicle' and helping the environment.

The future cities will also see an increased use of electric and more energy-conscious, environmentally-friendly vehicular solutions. Cue 'Back to the future Part 5' and we may even see, in the next three to four decades, private jet cars with the ability to fly short distances, thus by-passing road congestion. Therefore, what we have seen in the movies and read about in sci-fi books is not far from becoming the reality of the layout and pulse of our future cities.

ON TREND

In the second of a series of pieces for Middle East Interiors, Saeed Zaki, PhD, managing director of architecture and interior design firm dwp (design worldwide partnership) looks to the future.

Zaki has more than two decades of experience with local and multinational firms in property and real estate development. An architect, urban designer and planner by trade, he has a proven track record of successful project planning design, development and implementation throughout Asia. Zaki holds a PhD in urban planning and also guest lectures at international institutes, having authored research papers in design and planning.

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