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Editorial Article

Resilient Urbanism: Reimagining Cities for a Sustainable Future.

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Abstract

This inaugural editorial introduces the first issue of the International Journal of the Nigerian Institute of Architects (IJNIA) under the theme "Resilient Urbanism: Reimagining Cities for a Sustainable Future." It reflects on the growing urgency for cities to develop adaptive, inclusive, and sustainable systems in response to climate change, rapid urbanisation, infrastructure deficits, social inequalities, and technological transformation. The editorial examines resilience as a multidimensional framework that extends beyond disaster recovery to encompass urban adaptability, innovation, and long-term sustainability. Particular attention is given to the African and Nigerian urban context, where rapid urban growth presents both significant opportunities and critical challenges for planning, housing, mobility, governance, and environmental management. The discussion highlights the evolving role of architecture in shaping resilient urban futures through sustainable design, digital innovation, and human-centred development. It also introduces the thematic contributions of this inaugural issue, which span smart cities, digital infrastructure, urban renewal, mobility systems, climate resilience, and inclusive development. Finally, the editorial outlines the vision of IJNIA as a scholarly platform dedicated to bridging research, professional practice, and global architectural discourse in advancing resilient and sustainable urban futures.

Keywords: Resilient Urbanism; Sustainable Cities; Urban Resilience; Smart Cities; Climate Adaptation; Urban Planning; Sustainable Architecture; Digital Infrastructure; Inclusive Development; Nigerian Cities

Highlights

- Cities must become more resilient to respond effectively to climate change, population growth, and infrastructure challenges.
- Rapid urbanisation in Africa and Nigeria creates both opportunities and major sustainability challenges.
- Architecture and emerging technologies play an important role in shaping sustainable and resilient urban futures.
- Collaboration between researchers, policymakers, and practitioners is necessary for building inclusive and liveable cities.

Introduction

It is with great pleasure that we present the inaugural issue of the International Journal of the Nigerian Institute of Architects (IJNIA) under the theme "Resilient Urbanism: Reimagining Cities for a Sustainable Future". The launch of this journal represents an important milestone for architectural scholarship and professional discourse, providing a platform dedicated to advancing research, innovation, and critical dialogue within architecture and the wider built environment. As cities continue to expand and evolve, they increasingly find themselves at the centre of some of the most pressing challenges of our time. Climate change, rapid urbanisation, infrastructure deficits, environmental degradation, housing shortages, mobility constraints, and social inequalities are reshaping urban environments across the world (Buzási & Csizovszky, 2023; Essien et al., 2026). These challenges require us to rethink how we plan, design, manage, and sustain cities. The theme of this inaugural issue reflects both the urgency and the opportunity associated with these transformations. Resilient urbanism provides a framework through which cities can adapt to change, respond to uncertainty, and create more sustainable and inclusive futures for generations to come (Xi et al., 2025; Sáenz de Tejada et al., 2024).

Resilient Urbanism in a Changing World

Urban areas have historically served as centres of economic activity, cultural exchange, innovation, and social development (Buzási & Csizovszky, 2023; Kong et al., 2022). Today, however, cities face unprecedented pressures arising from demographic growth, environmental challenges, technological disruption, and increasing demands on infrastructure and public services (Okonta et al., 2025). The concept of resilience has therefore become increasingly important within urban planning and development (Kong et al., 2022; Saptono et al., 2025). Resilience extends beyond the ability to recover from disasters or environmental shocks. It encompasses the capacity of cities to adapt, learn, transform, and thrive in response to changing social, economic, environmental, and technological conditions (Xi et al., 2025). A resilient city is one that can accommodate growth while maintaining functionality, equity, environmental responsibility, and economic vitality (Sáenz de Tejada et al., 2024). It is a city capable of responding to both immediate challenges and long-term uncertainties while continuing to support the wellbeing of its residents (Buzási & Csizovszky, 2023; Okonta & Vukovic, 2023). As climate-related events become more frequent and urban populations continue to rise, resilience is no longer an optional aspiration but a fundamental requirement for sustainable urban development. Consequently, governments, researchers, practitioners, and communities are increasingly seeking innovative approaches capable of strengthening urban resilience at multiple scales (Saptono et al., 2025; Xi, 2025).

The African and Nigerian Urban Context

The importance of resilient urbanism is particularly evident within Africa, where urban growth continues to occur at an unprecedented pace. The continent is expected to experience some of the highest rates of urban population growth globally over the coming decades, presenting both significant opportunities and complex challenges (UN-Habitat, 2022). Urbanisation has the potential to stimulate economic growth, technological advancement, social mobility, and cultural development (Buzási & Csizovszky, 2023). However, when growth outpaces planning and infrastructure provision, cities can become increasingly vulnerable to environmental risks, social inequalities, housing shortages, transportation inefficiencies, and declining quality of life (Li et al., 2023).

Nigeria represents one of the most dynamic examples of these urban transformations. As Africa's most populous nation, the country continues to experience rapid expansion across both major metropolitan centres and emerging secondary cities. Lagos, Abuja, Port Harcourt, Kano, Ibadan, Enugu, and many other urban centres continue to confront challenges associated with population growth, housing demand, infrastructure provision, environmental management, and urban governance (African Development Bank, 2022). At the same time, Nigerian cities possess enormous potential for innovation, creativity, entrepreneurship, and sustainable development (African Development Bank, 2022). The challenge lies in harnessing this potential through evidence-based policies, strategic planning, resilient infrastructure systems, and inclusive urban development approaches capable of supporting long-term prosperity.

Architecture, Innovation and Sustainable Urban Futures

Architecture occupies a central position within efforts to create resilient and sustainable cities (Okonta et al., 2025a). Beyond the design of buildings, architecture contributes to the shaping of urban environments, public spaces, community identity, environmental performance, and human wellbeing (Elmqvist et al., 2019). Architects increasingly encounter themselves responding to complex challenges that extend beyond aesthetics and functionality. Contemporary practice requires engagement with sustainability, climate adaptation, social inclusion, resource efficiency, digital transformation, and community resilience (Liu et al., 2023; Okonta et al., 2025b). As a result, architecture has become an important vehicle for advancing broader urban development objectives.

The emergence of technologies such as building information modelling, digital twins, artificial intelligence, geographic information systems, urban analytics, and smart infrastructure solutions is transforming the way cities are conceived and managed. These technologies offer new opportunities for improving decision-making, enhancing efficiency, supporting sustainability goals, and strengthening urban resilience (Boke et al., 2020). However, we must ensure that technological advancement aligns with human-centred values. Sustainable urban futures require not only smarter cities but also more inclusive, equitable, healthy, and liveable communities (Buzási & Csizovszky, 2023). Resilience ultimately depends upon the successful integration of social, environmental, economic, and technological considerations within urban development processes (Batty, 2024).

About this Special Issue

The articles presented in this inaugural issue explore a range of themes that collectively contribute to contemporary discussions on resilient urbanism. Contributions address critical issues including smart cities and digital infrastructure, urban renewal, informal settlements, mobility systems, environmental sustainability, climate resilience, inclusive urban development, and land-use policy reform. Together, these studies demonstrate the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration in addressing complex urban challenges. They also highlight the growing role of research and innovation in informing policy, guiding professional practice, and supporting sustainable urban transformation. While the specific contexts and methodologies vary across contributions, each article reflects a shared commitment to improving the resilience, sustainability, and liveability of urban environments.

The Vision of IJNIA and Looking Forward

As the official scholarly publication of the Nigerian Institute of Architects, IJNIA has been established to promote excellence in research, professional practice, education, and policy engagement within architecture and the built environment. The journal seeks to bridge practice, research, and global architectural thought by providing a platform for scholarly exchange among researchers, practitioners, policymakers, educators, and industry stakeholders. While grounded in the Nigerian and African context, the journal embraces an international outlook and welcomes diverse perspectives capable of enriching contemporary built environment discourse.

We extend our sincere appreciation to the authors, reviewers, editorial board members, Editorial Advisory Board members, and the leadership of the Nigerian Institute of Architects, whose dedication and support have made this inaugural issue possible. As we launch this first volume, we invite the global architecture and built environment community to join us in advancing research and practice that contribute to resilient, sustainable, and inclusive urban futures. We hope that the discussions initiated within these pages will inspire further inquiry, innovation, and collaboration in addressing the challenges and opportunities facing cities in the twenty-first century.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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