

# Editorial

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There is little room for ambiguity in the United Nation's Global Development Goal number 11 'Sustainable Cities and Communities', which sets three clear targets relating to the needs of disabled and vulnerable users in urban areas.

- 'By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons.
- By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries.
- By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities' (United Nations, 2015).

Taking up this challenge, this themed issue on 'Disabilities and vulnerable road users in the urban environment' draws on insights from European research leaders and campaigners.

By 2050 urbanisation will have intensified, with over 80% of the populations of Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand living in urban areas. Due to rising life expectancy and a higher birth rate in some countries, the cities of 2050 will include more people at both ends of the age spectrum. An ageing population will lead to more age-related conditions – notably, eye disease, dementia, physical disability and mental health conditions – with implications for urban access, health, safety and wellbeing. At the same time, more children in urban areas will create other challenges for the pedestrian environment: more buggies, child-related road safety issues and access to childcare facilities and schools.

The growth of urban areas around the world will create particular pressures for city planners and policymakers. Although the need to promote social inclusion through planning and design is becoming more widely recognised, some other trends are making that goal more difficult to attain. One example, highlighted by the recent report from Lord Holmes of Richmond (Holmes, 2016) is shared space, the deliberate removal of demarcations between vehicles and pedestrians. Shared space was originally promoted as a means of improving

the pedestrian environment but a growing body of evidence demonstrates that it can create an environment that is hostile to vulnerable pedestrians (Moody and Melia, 2014), particularly visually impaired pedestrians (Norgate, 2012).

Improving the urban environment for these vulnerable and excluded groups will be a key challenge for the planners of the future. So how can any interested readers reflect this in their own work? We argue here that the design of urban land use and public transport access for such heterogeneous populations demands collaborative multi-professional working between urban designers, urban planners, users, researchers, campaign groups, policy-makers and managers.

Reflecting the research angle, within this issue, the perspectives taken by our authors on will enable readers to consider particular groups – in particular, blind and partially sighted (Sochor and Nikitas, 2016; Bates, 2016), disabled cyclists (Hickman, 2016) and older people (aged 65+ years) (Curl *et al.*, 2016).

Wherever you practice, we sincerely hope that you will envision ways to further expand or deepen your multi-professional partnerships to create new models of urban design.

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