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Editorial: Sustainable housing for sustainable future growth of Middle East Cities

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Editorial on the Research Topic

Sustainable housing for sustainable future growth of Middle East Cities

The Middle East is currently going through a period that involves significant re-evaluation concerning sustainable urban development. Planning, creating, and inhabiting residential areas are currently significant issues as cities within the region develop. In order to create a coherent vision for housing that is ready for the future, the Research Topic *Sustainable housing for sustainable future growth of Middle East Cities* brings together interdisciplinary contributions that can make sense of this complexity. The findings integrate energy consumption, material culture, affordability, aging populations, and governance. This collection of articles examines how residential settings influence belonging, resiliency, policy, and social inclusion rather than defaulting to an understanding of housing sustainability as purely a technical or environmental issue. The Middle East faces specific challenges, including water scarcity, extreme climatic conditions, rapid population growth, and socio-political instability, which often differ in scale and urgency from those experienced in other parts of the world. The highlighted articles come from various backgrounds and approaches. However, they all show how housing can be a key component in creating similar, adaptable, and culturally focused societies in the Middle East and other similar regions. In the remainder of this editorial we present a synopsis of each of the papers in the Research Topic, before considering their collective implications for research on sustainable housing in the Middle East.

Affordability and sustainable building systems

Sustainable housing options must remain accessible and expandable despite growing expenses, population expansion, and environmental restrictions. To satisfy the rising demand for high-quality housing without compromising environmental objectives, the study “Promoting sustainable communities through affordable housing. A case study of Beirut, Lebanon” describes how regulatory frameworks, building techniques, and material advancements might be used. Focusing on low- and middle-income categories, research promotes integrated planning strategies that balance affordability with longevity, climate responsiveness, and lifespan cost savings. The study offers a road map for Middle Eastern Cities to create inclusive

housing markets within frameworks for sustainable development by linking affordability to community planning and urban density (Mazzetto et al.).

Policy, governance, and urban regeneration

Sustainable housing options must remain affordable and adaptable despite rising costs, rising populations, and environmental limitations. To fulfill the growing need for high-quality housing while maintaining environmental objectives, the study “Assessing the impact of social housing on urban regeneration in South African cities” explores how laws and regulations, construction techniques, and new materials might be used. The research emphasizes low- and middle-income groups and promotes integrated planning strategies that balance affordability with durability, climate responsiveness, and lifespan cost savings. The study presents a road map for Middle Eastern Cities to establish inclusive housing markets within frameworks for sustainable development (Ngema et al.).

Housing happiness, social sustainability, and subjective wellbeing

It is becoming more widely acknowledged that social and psychological aspects are essential to sustainable housing. The authors of “GROW-J: an empirical study of social sustainability, sense of place, and subjective well-being in Jordanian housing development” explore the methods by which cultural identity, social networks, and feelings of belonging impact housing satisfaction among Jordan’s low-income citizens (Ebbini and Bleibleh). Beyond traditional environmental and financial variables, the study highlights the importance of social cohesion and neighborhood dynamics in promoting wellbeing using qualitative interviews and interpretive phenomenological analysis. According to the research, housing policies must consider subjective wellbeing characteristics, including collective belonging, place attachment, and dignity, to ensure long-term community resilience. This work offers an important paradigm for incorporating social sustainability into housing assessments and policy-making in the Middle East experience.

Adaptation, aging, and inclusive design

Population changes significantly impact housing demands, particularly in culturally varying nations where aging in place is common. The study, “Older adult supportive environment at home—a case study in Jordan: overall sense of control associated with home modification,” addresses this frequently neglected component of sustainability by demonstrating how home enhancements have an immediate effect on older adults’ wellbeing and sense of control. Small-scale, culturally sensitive interventions, such as renovating living rooms, kitchens, and reception areas, can significantly improve the quality of life for senior citizens,

according to research conducted using a mixed-methods study across many Jordanian governorates (Al-Homoud). The low- and middle-income groups constitute the focus of the research. Conclusions stress the importance of age-sensitive regulations, performing design, and integrating social values in residential planning to allow sustainability spanning all stages of human life.

Cultural heritage and sustainable material practices

Traditional expertise and local materials can form the basis for sustainable housing. The authors of “Beyond materiality: mud as a living material in heritage preservation” explore how mud is employed in the Bayt Isa restoration project in Saudi Arabia, as a culturally relevant practice and sustainable building material (El-Khoury et al.). The study reveals how heritage preservation may satisfy environmental, social, and economic sustainability goals by emphasizing mud as a semiotic material connected to location, identity, and collective memory. This contribution exemplifies how the Middle East’s historical traditions cannot be neglected in the search for a sustainable housing strategy. In addition to providing ecological advantages, local materials like mud promote cultural continuity, encourage community involvement, and defend the standardizing impacts of globalization. In urban development, the paper promotes enhancing private initiatives while developing supporting legislative frameworks that respect local knowledge systems and historical values.

A future agenda for sustainable housing in the Middle East

The research papers stress the importance of inclusive and multidisciplinary approaches to sustainable housing strategies for future needs. While the research focuses on various areas such as social housing policy, eldercare, heritage conservation, and urban planning, they all believe housing represents and drives societal change. Sustainable housing should consider economic affordability, human integration, cultural belonging, and environmental aspects. It must also satisfy the environmental requirements and its inhabitants’ social, political, and emotional needs. By adopting local materials and traditional techniques, following inclusive laws and regulations, engaging communities, and establishing urban planning approaches for various life phases, housing regulation should be built on resilience, equality, and identity to influence the future of Middle Eastern Cities. This Research Topic shows that sustainable housing needs to move beyond technological solutions to encompass the social, cultural, and policy facets of urban life. Middle Eastern Cities deal with rising urbanization, climate-related challenges, and populations. The collection of diversified contributions operates as an encouragement for communities, scholars, planners, and legislators to collaborate on housing plans that are inclusive, flexible, and firmly anchored in place. We can develop housing models that provide shelter and give society more power by fusing innovation with tradition, resilience, and equity.

Author contributions

SM: Methodology, Writing – review & editing, Supervision, Conceptualization, Writing – original draft, Visualization. RE-K: Writing – review & editing, Supervision, Visualization. JM: Visualization, Supervision, Writing – review & editing.

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Conflict of interest

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