



4. Longevity and the Future of Aging

Image by Rod Long via Unsplash.





Photo by Robs on Unsplash.

Designing an urban future for the “longevity society”

By Sheng-Hung Lee

As we enter an era shaped by disruptive demographic change, people are not only living longer but striving to live better. Economist and

longevity expert Andrew Scott argues that we are shifting from an “aging society” to a “longevity society,” where the focus is no longer on decline but on the possibilities of extended, healthier life stages. MIT

AgeLab director Joseph F. Coughlin further describes this transformation as an evolution from a service-based economy to a “longevity economy,” one centered on meeting the needs of a society that spans multiple generations. Meanwhile, Peter Attia, physician and author of *Outlive*, explores the science and art of living longer and better, emphasizing a scientific approach to health.

These expert perspectives and academic research reveal a broader truth: longevity is not solely about living longer, but about living well across physical, financial, emotional, and social dimensions. Supporting this shift demands more than advances in healthcare or policy—it requires a rethinking of our social infrastructure. We need to address often-overlooked dimensions such as social wellbeing, intergenerational relationships, and a sense of community belonging. We can understand the essence of longevity tech—technology extending both lifespan and healthspan—as a holistic approach and attitude to designing systems and services that empower individuals to thrive at various stages of life. This vision can extend into our city and urban planning.

What might a LongevityTech City look like?

While the answers are multifaceted, two critical concepts—slow data and the soft city—can offer compelling starting points. Urban futurist Anthony Townsend introduced the concept of slow data, which he contrasts with the more familiar concept of big data. While big data helps optimize systems and reduce inefficiencies, slow data—gathered intentionally, not opportunistically—invites reflection. Townsend writes, “Big data may make us lean and mean. Slow data will speak our souls.” By capturing nuanced, qualitative insights into how people live, slow data enables us to navigate the social trade-offs and behavioral shifts essential for designing age-inclusive urban environments.

Architect and urbanist David Sim advances the notion of the soft city. This is a city

AS WE SHIFT FROM AN “AGING SOCIETY” TO A “LONGEVITY SOCIETY,” OUR FOCUS IS SHIFTING FROM DECLINE TO THE POSSIBILITIES OF EXTENDED, HEALTHIER LIFE STAGES. SYSTEMS AND SERVICE DESIGN TO EMPOWER INDIVIDUALS THROUGHOUT LIFE CAN EXTEND INTO OUR CITY AND URBAN PLANNING.

shaped by human-scale design, rich in density, diversity, and delight—considering people, places, and planet. As societies become increasingly multigenerational, cities and the environment must accommodate a broader spectrum of needs. That means designing public spaces, transportation systems, and services that are intuitive, accessible, and respectful across all ages. It means seeing age not just as a number, but as a reflection of varied life stages and evolving aspirations to impact and change people’s behavior and interactions in the LongevityTech City.

Building a LongevityTech City is not simply a technological challenge—it is a cultural, ethical, and design imperative. By combining the precision of big data with the empathy of slow data and blending hard infrastructure with the soft textures of people’s daily life, we can shape urban futures that are not only smart but deeply human.

About the author: Sheng-Hung Lee, PhD is a researcher and designer at MIT AgeLab.

DIPLOMATIC COURIER

A Global Affairs Media Network

2025 COMMEMORATIVE EDITION

UNGA 80

A WORLD AT THE EDGE, A FUTURE STILL IN REACH



SDG 3

LONGEVITY AND THE
FUTURE OF AGING

SDG 4

TO WHAT END, LEARNING?

SDG 5

THE NEXT PHASE FOR
WOMEN'S ECONOMIC
EMPOWERMENT

SDG 9

INNOVATING TO SURVIVE,
THRIVE AMID INSECURITY





MASTHEAD

CEO & PUBLISHER
ANA C. ROLD

EDITOR
JEREMY FUGLEBERG

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
SHANE SZARKOWSKI

BOOK REVIEWER
JOSHUA HUMINSKI

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER
PAMELA KELLEY LAUDER

MULTIMEDIA MANAGER
WHITNEY DEVRIES

ART DIRECTOR
MARC GARFIELD

PHOTOGRAPHER
MARCELLUS MCINTOSH

EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

ANDREW M. BEATO
FUMBI CHIMA
KERSTIN COATES
DANTE A. DISPARTE

SIR IAN FORBES
LISA GABLE
GREG LEBEDEV
ANITA MCBRIDE

CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS

NIKOS ACUÑA
KHADIJAH CHANG
BEBEL DEMOURA NILO
CHERI-LEIGH ERASMUS
ELYAS FELFOUL
LISA GABLE
IMANE KENDILI
LESLEY-ANNE LONG
SHENG-HUNG LEE
YASMEEN LONG

JAHNAVI KUMARI MEWAR
VONGAI NYAHUNZVI
PRZEMEK PRASZCZALEK
STACEY ROLLAND
JAMILA-AISHA P. SANGUILA
SEAN SLADE
ROD SMITH
LOUISA TOMAR
EUAN WILMSHURST

Copyright© by Diplomatic Courier_{TM} and Medauras Global Publishing 2025. All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. Published in the United States by Medauras Global and Diplomatic Courier.

LEGAL NOTICE. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form—except brief excerpts for the purpose of review—without written consent from the publisher and authors. Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of information in this publication; however, the authors, Diplomatic Courier, and Medauras Global make no warranties, express or implied, in regards to the information and disclaim all liability for any loss, damages, errors, or omissions.

EDITORIAL. The content represents the views of their authors and do not reflect those of the editors and the publishers. Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of information in this publication, however, Medauras Global and the Diplomatic Courier make no warranties, express or implied in regards to the information, and disclaim all liability for any loss, damages, errors, or omissions.

CITATIONS & SOURCES. All articles in this special edition have already been or will be published on the Diplomatic Courier website, including relevant hyperlink citations.

PERMISSIONS. This publication cannot be reproduced without the permission of the authors and the publisher. For permissions please email: info@medauras.com with your written request.

ARTWORK. Cover design via AdobeStock. Artwork and design by Marc Garfield for Diplomatic Courier.