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Fifth International Urban Design Conference on Cities, People and Places ICCPP- 2017

Colombo, Sri Lanka

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Urbanization Futures: Policies, Strategies and Implications of Densifications of Cities

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ICCPP conference in 2017 is special for two reasons. On the one hand, with the 2017 event, ICCPP would complete five years of continuous existence. With this huge achievement ICCPP qualifies to be recognized as a well-established conference. Through the five conferences, we have brought to surface numerous issues confronting the cities. In so doing, we have gathered together a willing and energetic group of participants who have followed us in this endeavor in finding solutions to the complex issues of the city.

On the other hand, in the ICCPP-2017, we challenged the participants to look at what will be the future of urbanization; the process that brought about the city. What would density do to the cities; its people and places? That is a difficult but a fundamental question. Density is an unavoidable aspect of cities around the world. Density bringsin the character of urbanity and makes the city possible as a seductive alternative to the rural hinterland. However, it also poses the biggest challenges in the city. From the micro to the macro levels, density and overcrowding poses serious issues at physical, social and psychological levels.

There is no doubt that this conference will throw light on some of the critical aspects of density, crowding and help understand the multi-faceted ramifications of urbanization; the fundamental process of city making. Many have pointed out that urbanisation is evil and results in not only urbanity but the most contested issues in the city too. Nevertheless, will there be an alternative to urbanisation? This is the question that we would like to see answers during the discussions of the conference.

We are grateful to the conference organizers, especially those at the University of Moratuwa for toiling continuously for five years to bring this conference as a well-established international conference. As usual, the conference papers have been carefully reviewed by an international review paneltwice: first examining the abstracts and then the full papers. This is not an easy task and we must express our sincere gratitude to the International Review Panel for shouldering this mammoth task to maintain the standards; not just this time but for five years at a stretch.

Local conference organizers; the Faculty at the University of Moratuwaand their support staff have done an excellent job as they always do.University of Moratuwa has extended their fullest support and their contribution cannot be measured and acknowledged sufficiently. Our special thanks also goes to the co-organiser of this event, The National Science Foundation, Sri Lanka. Without this institutional support, ICCPP would not have come along for five years.

Finally, the authors have been tremendously hard working, and rigorous in their responses to the comments and criticisms of the papers. Upon refinement, the papers have reached very high standards. They owe our great admiration for their desire to participate and excel. That is our biggest strength which ensures that the ICCPP continues and flourishes as a meaningful and intellectually rich endeavor. Thank you all for your great support. Together we have done it again and will continue to contribute to the intellectual understanding of the cities people and places.

Janaka Wijesundara and Ranjith Dayaratne

FOREWORD

There is no argument that the future belongs to the city. With more and more people moving to cities across the world, the so-called peri-urban areas, are slowly being absorbed by the cities. Urbanization is one process of the cities that has never stopped since it began some half a century ago. But what would be the future of urbanization? Is it really unstoppable, until all rural areas are gobbled up by the cities? Or would it suddenly come to a halt with the explosion of the city? Would people give up the city and look for the simplicity and pleasantness of the village that once was the adobe of the majority of populations? These are pertinent questions to ask, given the fact that despite the attractiveness of the cities that prompted urbanization, cities have also become largely unlivable for most people. Indeed, this is more so in the newly emerging Asian cities and mega cities, which have pursued spontaneous and uncontrolled urbanization, unplanned and allowed to spread ad-hoc.

One of the most significant issues of this alarming rate of urbanization has been the everincreasing density in cities. Today, with modern high rises, it has become possible for thousands of people to live on small footprints. Communities by themselves, vertical urban apartments have been dubbed the filing cabinets of people, and there is no stopping of them rising higher and higher in most cities. However, with densities rising up, there are also less and less open social spaces, where people can find solitude, be with Nature or relax on their own.

Density and densification is a double-sided driving force of the city. On the one hand, the greatest asset of the city is density itself. It is this density that can deliver services to thepeople in cities with miniscule costs of infrastructure per person. Without the density, city becomes not viable because everything will cost so much more and that is what has pushed the rural areas to the back compared to the cities. However, this same densification is also the greatest evil of the city because, when it comes to garbage, area per person for living and so on, density becomes a serious problem. Most importantly, density and crowding have serious social and societal implications for the people.

Crowding is synonymous with strangers and the city dwellers find that they are constantly and continuously demanded to deal with unknown and unexpected; people who one cannot know closely and therefore cannot construct social relationships with. As it appears to be, cities with continuous urbanization and ever-increasing densities pose serious problem for the future city, for which planners and architects need to find creative and convincing strategies and solutions. In this conference, we posed the questions to those who have been dealing with these issues and it is encouraging to see the wide variety of approaches they take to understand and devise planned interventions to address the issues. After all, urbanization futures will not be as bad as it is assumed, and with the help of the researchers such as those who have presented papers at this conference, we will certainly be able to surmount all obstacles.

Janaka Wijesundara and Ranjith Dayaratne

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