





Department of Architecture University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka















Cities, People and Places

'Transforming Cities through Place-Making; From Communities to Mega Cities'

> Oct 30th - 31th, 2016 Colombo - Sri Lanka

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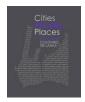
Fourth International Urban Design Conference on Cities, People and Places ICCPP- 2016

Colombo, Sri Lanka

Theme: Transforming Cities Through Place-Making' 'From Communities to Mega Cities'

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Yet again, ICCPP conference is taking place in Colombo in 2016. This time, we are talking about big cities: so called Mega cities, and how local communities may create, facilitate or invent them through place making. The theme is very apt given the fact that the Sri Lankan government has, since it came to power a couple of years ago, embarked upon an ambitious program to transform Colombo to a Mega City. The conference organizers, in proposing this theme this year, has shown their willingness and desire to contribute to this process, and help build Colombo, and Sri Lanka in turn, to face the challenges of tomorrow. There is no doubt that this conference will throw light on some of the critical aspects of place, place making and their role in the making of cities: small and big. We are grateful to the conference organizers, especially those who capitalized on the opportunity presented by the government decision to focus on Mega City making, and bringing into focus also the role of the communities in that process. The ICCPP's parallel annual event, the Urban Design Workshop 2016 focuses to provide students to have an intellectual dialog on the issues of place making and cities taking case studies from three different countries.

As usual, the conference papers have been thoroughly vetted; reviewed by an international review panel, who have gone through the papers twice over: first by examining the abstracts and then the full papers. Not many conferences do so and can demand a small group of international reviewers to be so stringently on the refinement of the papers presented. This is a great asset ICCPP has nurtured from its beginning and surely will provide a solid base and strength to its proceedings. We are grateful to the distinguished academics on the Review Panel, who have never refused to help when the need arose for reviewing many papers and to comment upon each aspect of them to bring them to a level of perfection.

The same spirit of perfection prevailed among the local conference organizers; namely the Department of Architecture at the University of Moratuwa together with their support staff. They have toiled over a year to get this event to a fruitful outcome. Their efforts are making an impact not only in the conference and its day-to-day organization, but also in the development of the country. The papers that come out of the conference will surely become contested, and provide much needed intellectual inputs in the progression of ideas that will fashion the Mega City. University of Moratuwa has been always fully supportive of this event and their great contribution cannot be measured and acknowledged sufficiently. Without this institutional support, also mainly from other institutions such as National Science Foundation, University Grant Commission, Ministry of Education and also other sponsors, ICCPP would have come to an end long time ago, but UOM is an intuition with people who go beyond the call of duty to support intellectual endeavors.

Last but not least, the paper presenters have been tremendously tolerant, willing and rigorous in their responses to the many comments and criticisms of the original papers and research that, upon refinement have reached very high standards. They owe our great admiration of their pursuits and the desire to participate and excel. That is indeed our biggest strength which ensures that the ICCPP continues and flourishes as a meaningful and intellectually rich endeavor in the calendar of the Sri Lankan academic scene.

Thank you for all for your great support. Together we have done it again.

Dr. Janaka Wijesundara and Prof. Ranjith Dayaratne

Mega cities and in fact cities themselves are human inventions; Mega Cities more so. In the contemporary modern world, "mega" has become so seductive that from coca cola bottles to urban development, 'bigger' is being perceived to be better. However, in a recent book titled 'World until Yesterday' written by Jared Diamond, the very ideas of non-traditional societies or rather the modern ways of life are questioned even before 'mega' developments. Becoming 'mega' particularly in development is diametrically opposite to what the traditional societies did and achieved. There are huge questions of the achievements of the 'mega world' as compared to the traditional societies, although at a casual glance, the mega cities are both seductive and highly appealing. It is no wonder that a developing country like Sri Lanka recently wanted to transform the entire urban geography of its main urban threshold to a Mega City. There is a feeling today that if a country does not have a Mega City, then it is somehow backward and lagging behind. Around the world, there is a race to produce mega cities, in addition to the ones that have come into being by mere migration of rural populations attracted by urbanity, urban spaces and urban lifestyles. Alarmingly in China, it is said that there are a number of such mega cities, designed and built with skyscrapers and all the paraphernalia, but without people, because they have not yet moved in there. In other words, mega cities have been created not as an eventual outcome of people's own centralization, gathering and subsequent development. It is forced down upon people. In many places, cities are becoming mega, not because people wanted them, but some visionaries have thought that it is necessary to have at least one Mega City so that they can be on par with Tokyo, Shanghai, Jakarta, Karachi, Seoul, and Mexico. Ironically, in Jakarta, the cars do not move for hours because of endless traffic jams. The city is too huge to manage, planners are bewildered.

This is where the ideas of place making and communities become relevant and in fact central to the whole notion of mega city development. To put it another way, if cities are about people: spaces for people to live, care for, and grow in, then whether it is a mega development or not, people matter and by default the communities. Indeed, whether a city is big or small, mega or otherwise, it is constituted of 'places'; and the places do not come into being because they have been planned and constructed. Chinese mega cities tell us that those cities did not 'become cities' because there were no people to transform the spaces, to occupy and make them on their own. There are two ideas here, 'places by people' and 'becoming places'. In fact, the first idea is also problematic because there are no places, unless they are created and lived in by people. So to put it bluntly, there is no meaning in this term although we use it often and I have cited it myself. 'Becoming Places' is really an interesting concept and one that most people including those who are in the business of planning those mega cities have not come to understand. Space becomes place through the processes of human habitation, and place becomes other places over time and everyday happenings. In all these, there are individuals as well as groups of people acting; the communities. Thus it is imperative that the Mega Cities are guided by a serious understanding of how space becomes place and place becomes places. In this conference, on cities people and places, this reality is focused so that we can learn lessons to guide our own actions in city building and enabling their fruitful and meaningful transformations.

Dr. Janaka Wijesundara and Prof. Ranjith Dayaratne

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