

Session 4

Human Settlement and Planning



Chairpersons : Prof. Yukio Nishimura, Prof. Atsushi Deguchi

Keynote Speaker : Prof. Hans van Ginkel

Speakers : Prof. Chu-joe Hsia, Dr. Lai-Choo Malone-Lee,
Prof. Karen C. Seto, Prof. Zhiqiang Wu

Opening Comment

Megacities are characterized by having large population, and the question is how to accommodate this population in Asian megacities. It is necessary to review planning and envision the existing problems in order to find out the specific solutions. In this session, we expect to share the information and ideas on our researches and pragmatic projects based on the innovative and feasible propositions for human settlement in megacities.

Summary of Panel Presentations

- 1) Megacities could be much better understood on the basis of their contextual characteristics, but the question is how to recognize megacities? Most of the definitions are based on population size; however this large concentration of population derives on unequal distribution of resources since many megacities' own resources are not enough to cover the entire population needs where goods importation increases abruptly. Asia, with 204 cities over one million population, is 47.5% of total world urban population. Problems can not be solved by taking general strategies or considering them as general for all megacities, and the idea should be to start first from solving smaller cities problems based on their own cultural characteristics. Compared with Latin America and Africa, the number and proportion of urban dwellers without adequate water and sanitation is considerably high in Asia where low income slum dwellers are foreseen to increase to 340 million by 2020. Usually, problems are associated with megacity size and how to use the space in the most rational way. To solve this, the idea should be illustrated on the example of a soccer field where tactic determines triumph. Urbanization and planning could be based on different experiences as the example of the Netherlands through cluster de-concentration in core patterns. UNU's new urban program focuses on seven main keys: urbanization through re-conceptualization of human occupation of earth, identification of urban nodes and networks, driving forces shaping urban areas, identification of core challenges, individualization and attractiveness of urban milieu, creating responsible urban societies, and finally, development of targeted responses.
- 2) The economic performance of Taiwan's specific model as a developmental state has caused not only rapid urbanization but also serious social and environmental consequences. Taipei and Kaohsiung have considerably increased due to urban migration. Number of new street vendors, as part of infor-

mal economy, has increased in urban areas due to rising unemployment rate since 2001. There is an urban continuum of megacity that links up cities, suburbs and towns along the western seashore from Taipei to Kaohsiung. Land use policy became uncontrollable after 1970s as a result of creative destruction of land development. Ecological crisis derives on unsustainable cities. Is the age of new poverty coming? Problems are challenges for the trans-border governance of a megacity. Indigenous settlements are the most extreme case since subsidies for these groups were transferred to local county governments, which cut infrastructure investment based on population criteria, explicitly, and local politics, implicitly. The topic is very sensitive to discuss during the process of political power restructuring.

- 3) If cities can be designed and managed in such a way that resource use and pollution is reduced, then a major contribution to the global environment can be achieved. In order to obtain urban sustainability, it is necessary to re-focus on the city creating sustainable development models considering environment, social and economic aspects. Green Paper on Urban Environment calls for a return to compact city, however there are arguments against compact cities in megacities as congestion, overcrowding, poorer environmental quality, loss of open spaces, higher costs of accommodation in inner city areas, etc. Most of these arguments are valid for megacities in Asia. An important alternative strategy can be decentralized concentration, and make the compact settlements linked by public transport. Places have meaning for people, and they are linked with each other psychologically and emotionally. Familiar places can have strong qualities of social sustainability, and potentially could be argued to enhance environmental and economic sustainability. New towns have been a preferred development strategy since the 1960s, and comprehensively planned with a hierarchy of town and neighborhood centers to provide the social and community services. The twinning strategy consists of each new town paired with an adjacent familiar place will construct a more sustainable polycentric urban network integrating these places into future development programs.
- 4) What is urbanization? It consists of anthropogenic drivers and ecosystem changes; two processes often used interchangeably. The usage of the remote sensing data of urban areas enables traditional urban mapping, consistent and recurrent observations, and synoptic views of landscape or explicit patterns of land use. The satellite remote sensing allows global observations (AVHRR, MODIS), high spatial resolution (Landsat TM, IKONOS) and long observational record. The study on Chengdu, Sichuan Province of China, enables identifying spatial patterns of urban growth and three trends in urban form: reorganization around multiple sectors, district specialization for residential, industrial, and commercial activities, and peri-urban growth. The findings evidence the local, regional, national, international drivers and disparity between planning objectives and the reality on the ground.
- 5) Which is the contribution of Asian cities to planning of human settlements in the future? Nowadays megacities in Asia are highly populated. Density in Shanghai is higher compared to Paris, New York and London. The urban land use pattern is characterized for mixture of uses. However, these mixed functions are not only represented horizontally but also vertically. For instance, there is higher function mixture in Asia than Europe. Megacities lack of a very important component, “harmony society”,

and this is the concept for Expo 2010 Shanghai where themes such as building the world of tomorrow for peace and freedom, building the world on a human scale, human life in the space and time, and peace through understanding are some of the main consigns for the Expo. The concept “Better city, Better life” based on the oriental thoughts of humanity, ecology and city renaissance will be realized in the Expo. by constructing the harmonized architectures with the new building technology.

Questions and Comments from the Floor

Q: Who was the responsible to lead Expo 2010 Shanghai, or who has initiative to promote the organization?

A: The idea is a concept of new revolution in order to change the conventional form since the failure of previous events. We want to show it worldwide since the importance of Expo., and a number of participants has decreased in the previous events. It must be changed; it needs a new view and must begin in Shanghai.

Q: Are you proposing a new government approach in Taiwan?

A: No, but it is important to propose a highly de-centralized administration, and there is still a long debate on national law. Megacities should have regional government, but this is almost impossible in Taiwan from the point of view of how politics are managed. The theme is very sensitive to touch; we are talking about a power re-structuring.

Q: How can the familiar places be created? How can “harmony” be created?

A: First of all, we look at special features and important meaningful places for people. As if we knew the difference and understand what black is as well as what white is, we identify them and link with the urban fabric. Before starting something new, it is important to pay attention to what we can share in future vision, and to open up the planning decision process to community.

Concluding Remarks

Through the presentation, we can point out the five main keywords identified in order to approach to the planning solutions; physical urban model, strategies and organizations, human relation, harmony, and tools. First, we need “physical model” of sustainable megacity as shown in the case of the Netherlands which could work out as a basis to share the clear goal for planning. Second, the “strategies and organization” of the metropolitan-scale governance should have initiatives in planning as well as in integrating and unifying local municipalities from the view of sustainability of megacities in the context of de-centralization process in Asian democracy. Third, the “human relation” shown in case of Singapore could mean the semantic integration of new town and old neighborhood in re-forming a compact megacity from social aspects. Forth, the “harmony” between natural elements and built environment or between cultural historical elements and future functions are needed in realizing sustainability and might be realized in architectural challenge shown in Shanghai Expo 2010. Fifth, the “tools” for realizing and analyzing the rapid and dynamic growth of urbanized area and the change of land use, such as the usage of remote sensing data, could identify the unique characteristics of urban growth and physical trends and patterns in urban growth, which enables us the scientific approach to solutions to control the dynamic growth of megacities.