

Wednesday, October 8, 2014
Boston University Metcalf Trustee Center
One Silber Way, 9th floor

Conference Agenda

8:30-9a.m. Registration and light breakfast

9-9:15a.m. Welcoming Remarks

Anthony Janetos, Director, Frederick S. Pardee Center for the Study of the Longer-Range Future, Boston University

Graham Wilson, Co-Director, Initiative on Cities, Boston University

Eugenio Menegon, Director, Center for the Study of Asia, Boston University

9:15-10:45a.m. Panel 1: Idea of the City: The Asian Challenge

Moderator:

Deepti M. Nijhawan, Director, Global Programs India Initiative, Boston University

Speakers:

Bish Sanyal, Director, Special Program on Urban and Regional Studies, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Urbanization and Technology: An Experiment in Evaluation Methodology

This presentation constitutes six interconnected propositions. First, what explains the aspirations of new nation states after decolonization regarding urbanization and technological changes. Second, the conceptual links between such aspirations and theories of modernization of the economy, polity, and society. Third, what led to the questioning of modernization theories? Fourth, the emergence of the Alternative Development paradigm and the “appropriate technology” movement. Fifth, the limits of appropriate technologies. And, finally, new kinds of evaluations necessary to make the benefits of such technologies reach the growing number of urban poor? The presentation will conclude by highlighting the current research at MIT’s newly established Center for Comprehensive Initiative on Technology Evaluation (CITE).

Annette Kim, Director, Spatial Analysis Lab (SLAB), Price School of Public Policy, University of Southern California

Asian Urbanization and Reconstructing the Idea of the City

As humanity increasingly urbanizes, Asian cities are at the forefront of pushing us to reconceive the urban. The scale and density of Asian cities are at unprecedented levels, resulting primarily from rapid migration to urban centers, which should require us to reconceive the ideal city and urban life. However, our planning paradigms and visioning are still decades behind this reality. This talk focuses on the need for confronting actual contemporary spatial practices by developing new methods of visualization and constructing narratives for how so many diverse peoples are to live in cities together.

Adil Najam, Dean, Frederick S. Pardee School of Global Studies, Boston University

Why Cities are Cool in the Age of Global Warming

The age of global warming – climate change, to be more precise – has made us look anew at many things, including cities. We have begun to look at cities as repositories of efficiencies, innovation, and concentrated action, but more and more we will also have to look at them as the frontline in the battles – even wars – of adaptation. This will force us to look beyond the shiny and the new in the city and into the depths of the dark and the disturbing. In particular, our conception of the city in the developing world is likely to be seriously shaken as a consequence.

10:45-11a.m. Break

11a.m.-12:30p.m. Panel 2: The Politics of the City

Moderator:

Julian Go, Professor, Sociology, Boston University

Speakers:

Gavin Shatkin, Associate Professor, School of Public Policy & Urban Affairs, Northeastern University

The Politics of Land in Contemporary Asian Cities

In the late 1980s, the geographer Neil Smith posited that the emergence of rent gaps, or the difference between actual rents and the potential rents to be gained from redevelopment, was leading to a push to redevelop central cities in the U.S. and Europe that was leading to significant displacement and spatial change. In the past quarter century, the massive growth of Asia's urban regions and increasing flows of global capital have given rise to substantial rent gaps that present a unique set of opportunities and challenges to real estate investors and fiscally challenged governments. Shared interests between corporate real estate developers and government actors have given rise to a range of policy responses, including the formation of public-private partnerships in land development, the sale and lease of government land to corporate developers, and the use of state powers of compulsory purchase to acquire land and transfer it to corporate developers. This presentation will explore the varied ways in which urban political actors have strategized the state-corporate nexus, and the implications of these strategies for the politics of access to urban space.

Abidin Kusno, Director, Centre for Southeast Asia Research, University of British Columbia

Turning Time, Collective Desires, and the Ghost of the Past: Some Notes from Jakarta

Since the collapse of the authoritarian regime of Suharto, the city of Jakarta has become an arena of ideological struggles by different social groups to find a suitable norm and form of social life. A spectrum of cultural imageries ranging from religious discourses to those associated with liberalism and populism as well as traditions of the past regime have marked the urban landscape registering thus a long period of fragmentation and uncertainty. This talk will consider some of the recent attempts by the new Governor of Jakarta to show that the future is now by way of uniting collective desires and overcoming the legacy of the past in the context of the city's historical uncertainty.

Mona Serageldin, Vice President, Institute for International Urban Development

Collaborating for Access, Equity, and Inclusion

For residents of cities, access to urban land is the cornerstone of asset building and upward mobility. Lack of access to land lies at the core of marginalization and the erosion of social cohesion that lead to protests, civil unrest, and turmoil. Inclusive solutions require collaborative approaches that must overcome the confrontational attitudes and distrust brought about by opaque decision-making that appears fraught with political considerations, lack of participation and accountability, and pervasive corruption among local officials.

12:30-1:30p.m. Lunch

1:45-3:15p.m. Panel 3: The City and its Environment

Moderator:

Edward Cunningham, Assistant Professor, Earth & Environment, Boston University

Speakers:

Karen Seto, Professor, Geography and Urbanization,
Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies

Urbanization in India and China: Problem or Panacea to Environmental Sustainability?

By 2020, China's urban transition will largely be complete. In contrast, India's urbanization will peak in the second half of this century. Drawing on nearly two decades of research, this talk will compare and contrast patterns of urbanization in both countries and discuss their implications for local and global environmental sustainability.

Madhu Dutta-Koehler, Adjunct Professor, Metropolitan College, Boston University

Climate Change and Contingent Adaptation: Lessons from a South Asian Mega City

Planning for environmental sustainability in the face of climate change is a daunting challenge. The need for such planning is clearly greatest in the resource-constrained mega-cities of Asia, where almost two billion urban dwellers face escalating risks from the environmental, economic, and societal impacts arising from unsustainable development patterns. In evaluating these cities' responses to climate change, this talk draws from a comprehensive analysis of the wetlands systems of one of the region's most endangered mega-cities, Kolkata, India, to identify less resource-intensive strategies suited to the context of Urban South Asia.

Susan Foster, Professor, School of Public Health, Boston University

Promise and Peril: Urbanization and Public Health in Asian Cities

The rapid urbanization happening in Asian cities comes with both benefits and costs. Benefits include increased access to education, health services, electricity, water (even if of dubious quality), income-earning opportunities, and the sense of being at the social center of things. But costs include some important health problems brought about by the changes in lifestyle which urbanization brings — a more sedentary life, access to cheap and plentiful energy-dense foods, and exposure to advertising for products such as alcohol and tobacco. This presentation will focus on the impact of the rapid increase in type 2 diabetes in India and of widespread tobacco use in China, where tobacco taxes account for about eight percent of government revenues. In both cases the majority of the costs of the resulting illness are borne by individuals and their families, which can be devastating for middle and lower income households.

3:15-4p.m. Wrap-Up Discussion and Closing Remarks

Moderator:

Anthony Janetos, Director, Frederick S. Pardee Center for the Study of the Longer-Range Future, Boston University

4-5p.m. Reception



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