

Report on **The International Geographical Unions Commission on Urban Geography: Emerging Urban Transformations** meeting & international conference - Multilayered Cities and Urban Systems 30th July - 9th August 2009 in Hyderabad, India, in collaboration with the Osmania University.

This conference was held in keeping with the commission's tradition of organising annual meetings and international conferences in different countries of the world. The conference brought to the fore the fundamental and applied research on various aspects of urban geography. The objective was to provide a common platform to the stakeholders from India and abroad to interact and exchange knowledge, share experiences of success stories in Urban Planning & Development, and discuss constraints, which will mutually help in evolving sustainable perspective and strategic plans for Urban Development.

The conference in Hyderabad was the 35th meeting of the Urban Geographical Commission and was the first meeting of the Urban Geographical Commission in India. The theme of the conference was "Multilayered Cities and Urban Systems". The concept is spear-headed by an innovative approach to understand the complex urban world from historically old 'Urban Enclaves' to contemporary 'Urban Networks' in all dimensions of existence and transformations in their structures, functions and transactions. The definition and concept fits Hyderabad most perfectly as much as the Indian urban system is an exemplary case of multilayerism.

The conference was organised by professor Geetha Reddy Anant, Osmania University, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, India and her energetic and dedicated team in cooperation with a series of partners and sponsors and with the university staff and leaders actively participating. The pre-conference book of abstracts (IGU Urban Commission 2008-2012 (2009): Emerging urban transformations: International Conference. 66 pages) contained 59 presentations, which with a few exceptions were presented at the conference. The proceedings of the conference (IGU Urban Commission 2008-2012 (2009): Emerging urban transformations: Multilayered Cities and Urban Systems. 857 pages) comprise 44 full papers, and is now added to the list of 22 books produced by the Urban Geography Commission since its establishment 1976. The conference was attended by 65 delegates from 19 nations. It must be noted that the meeting has comprised the best balance between male and female participants in the history of the Urban Geography Commission (38:27).

Presentations and discussions took their basis in identification of different monitoring patterns on urban structure change, urban system change, new types of urban spaces / places / flows and new analytical tools. Types of processes and measures of change comprise continued migration flows from rural to urban and continuation and extension of natural increase. Both processes are highly active in wide parts of the world. Land demand for urban purposes is increasing, car ownership is rising and continued suburbanisation/de-urbanisation is on the agenda. So is network development of multinational firms, production- and innovation-chains. We experience rapid social, economic, political and cultural change, and rich is still dominating poor. We identify new processes of marginalisation, isolation and establishment of urban enclaves, and we identify new drivers and innovations behind growth and change. Climatic change and its urban consequences is more and more given priority on the research agenda. Systems collapse, the planning system failure to deliver effective solutions, environmental thresholds is surpassed, and the actual financial crisis demonstrates that neo-liberal globalisation is in jeopardy. System collapse actual have new

consequences in the forms of peri-urban degradation, declining / shrinking cities and new regulations (e. g. financial markets: nationalisation).

New processes give rise to new responses. The role of local government and governance in solving urban problems must be improved. Metropolitan government needs to correspond with (greater) functional urban region. Urban leaders must have much better accessibility to capital. They must initiate the use of new technologies, and their impact on urban environments at different scales must be understood. Environmental regulation enforcement is in demand if sustainability policies on land consumption inclusive of supply restrictions shall have a lift, and if local urban concentration and diversification policies shall outweigh urban sprawl. Smart growth (growth based on collective traffic) must be given high priority. Re-cycling of "used" areas, urban restructuring and regeneration policies must be activated (especially on shrinking cities in affluent regions).

Other papers and discussions laid their focus on how national urban systems again might overrule international patterns, how strategic planning could be further incorporated and how planning without re-distribution is on the increase. The commission has always had a focus on new regulation and planning on many levels: urban, regional, national and supranational and this focus were hold during the conference.

Field trips during and after the conference were interesting, and the participants got a good empression of the colourfull and dialectic country of India.

During the conference the decision on our next meeting to be hold in Tel Aviv 7. -16. July 2010 was confirmed with professor Izhak Schnell as local organizer. For the 2011 meeting Santiago, Chile was discussed (with the IGU regional conference) and 2012 it is decided to have our meeting with the IGU congress in cologne and with professors Ludger Basten and Lienhard Lötscher as local organizers. 2013 we further pointed at Canterbury with professor Dan Donoghue and Beirut with professor Liliane Buccianti-Barakat. The commission is planning for four books:

- Book on different types of cities (Wayne Davies)
- Book on world urbanization: theoretical, empirical (Petros Petsimeris)
- Epistemology of the former members of the commission (Petros Petsimeris)
- Book on the geography of crime (Andre Horn)

The commissions group of young scholars was encouraged to take, and took the responsibility for planning for a workshop at the next meeting with the theme: the dual city.

In summary first of all many of the presented papers were of high quality and some were at the very spearhead of urban geography. This has been the real achivement of the conference, which has contributed to forwarding research. Second there were many very good scientific discussions and a series of fine and original observations to many papers. Third it was good that so many young and younger researchers contributed and it must be noted that the commission has been very satisfied with many of the contributions from newcomers. Fourth the commission had an important impact on the local geographers as it stimulated the participation of a good number of presentations and papers by Indian colleagues.

Christian Wichmann Matthiessen (August 2009)

President of the International Geographical Unions Commission on Urban Geography