

Two-day International Conference on the Challenges of Governance in Mega Cities

October 25-26, 2018, ISEC, Bengaluru, INDIA

Concept Note and Call for Papers

Centre for Research in Urban Affairs and RK Hegde Chair, ISEC

The world attained its tipping point for urbanization in 2007, when half of its population became urban, even while half of the world is rural. Typically, urbanization is associated with rising economic growth and incomes, and there are very few countries in the world that have become high income without becoming urban. Urban areas are important for macro economic growth because while scale economies are the basis of new towns, agglomeration economies are the basis of benefits that explain the existence of large mega cities. Developing economies that ignore their cities, cannot grow fast or equitably.

As per the United Nations, cities with more than 10 million inhabitants are often termed “megacities”. In 2016, there were 31 megacities globally and their number is projected to rise to 41 by 2030, as per the UN. Further, in 2016, 45 cities globally had populations between 5 and 10 million inhabitants, but by 2030, 10 of these are projected to become megacities, as per UN estimates. Hence there is no way mega cities can be ignored in a country’s overall growth trajectory, in the same way that rural areas also cannot be ignored.

However, there are costs associated with urban and mega city growth in rapidly emerging economies, which takes its toll in the form of poor public services with limited finances, given the political problems with decentralization to local governments in developing countries. Further, urbanization and mega cities are blamed for climate change, food security, pollution, water and air quality, and traffic congestion, because of the need for mobility to access jobs. A lot of societal changes are also occurring with mega cities in the hitherto rural world. Some undesirable outcomes are the onset of poverty, crime, and terrorism which undermine the benefits from urbanization. Studies show that urban poverty is more challenging than rural poverty for a variety of reasons, such as inadequate food security, social exclusion, and housing vulnerability, hence there is need for more research into this hitherto ignored area, especially in the context of mega cities.

While both the natural growth rate of urban population and migration contribute to increased urbanization, and the growth of mega cities, migration has its own merits and disadvantages. Rural and semi-urban migrants to urban areas and mega cities provide the much needed services, at the lower end of the value chain such as driving, cooking, cleaning, construction, and retail services, which are not offered by the natives of the city for whatever reasons, but they also impose costs on the city in the form of increased burden of public services which they do not always compensate for.

Further, estimates are that close to 15 percent of the world's population lives with a physical disability. India's 2 percent of the population, and China's 6 percent of the population, most of whom live in poverty as per some estimates, will constitute the world's largest disabled population. In the context of emerging economics, the already poor infrastructure often

means that access to basic services such as sanitation, water, health care, and transport is severely restricted not only in urban but also in rural areas. The specific needs of physically disadvantaged groups, including the elderly, need to be included in design and development of urban and rural services, and infrastructure so that they are able to contribute to society and the economy. It should be mentioned that physically disadvantaged groups are better off in the urban, when compared with their counterparts in rural areas. In this context, it is important to explore if there have been proactive policies for the physically disabled in mega cities. However, community cohesiveness may be more prominent in the aftermath of urbanization and economic growth, and social integration may also be occurring in mega cities which some recent research supports.

Further, as we are already observing, the changing face of the city and wider urban landscape will place new and extreme pressures on the environment, which will result in policy makers and citizens facing ecological dilemmas. These dilemmas will need to be considered from a socio-political-economic perspective to ensure questions regarding ecological governance, conflicts and possible trade-offs are probed and understood. Possible research questions could include considering how the urban ecosystem provides wider social benefits through exposing citizens to green spaces.

A large number of solutions are being proposed to tackle these problems, which range from integrated regional planning and policies, to information and communications technology (ICT), which is being increasingly resorted to. While research is being done on institutional coordination for better delivery of urban as well as rural public services, where relevant, the use of ICT is also pertinent as mobile phones and more recently, smart phones have become increasingly ubiquitous, and they have the potential to solve problems in a scientific manner. Nonetheless, a lot of urban poor in mega cities and towns in general, do not have access to basic public services, even while urban public services are sometimes better than those in rural areas, let alone ICT and smart phones. Hence there is a lot of debate regarding the digital divide created by ICT, and whether ICT divides more than it helps.

Taking into account the above context, we are inviting broad empirical papers that address these issues, in a developing/emerging economy context, to deliberate in this Conference:

- i. Urban public services including those for the physically challenged.
- ii. Urban finances in mega cities versus smaller towns
- iii. Ecological dilemmas: Urban environment & pollution in mega cities.
- iv. Urban and regional planning & policies
- v. Urban metropolitan governance
- vi. Urban societal transformation
- vii. Migration into mega cities and their associated benefits and problems.
- viii. Urban poverty in mega cities
- ix. ICT & mega cities

This two-day international conference on the challenges of governance in mega cities and peri-urban part of rural areas will debate the above mentioned crucial issues in depth, and will explore not only the nature of urbanization, but also its associated benefits and problems, in addition to examining the relevance of appropriate policies to target the problems. We solicit

original unpublished papers in the above thematic areas, not necessarily limited to these topics.

Conference Scientific Committee

Siqi Zheng, Samuel Tak Lee Associate Professor of Real Estate Development and Entrepreneurship, Center for Real Estate (CRE) and Department of Urban Studies and Planning (DUSP), Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA

Guanghua Wan, Director, Institute for World Economy, Fudan University, Shanghai, China

George Mavrotas, Senior Research Fellow, Development Strategy and Governance Division, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) & Head of IFPRI Nigeria Office, Abuja, Nigeria

M.P.Madhukar, Assistant Director,
Incharge, International Collaboration and National & International
Seminar Division, Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi

Arup Mitra, Institute of Economic Growth (IEG), and Director, National Institute of Labour Economics Research and Development (NILERD), Delhi

Debolina Kundu, Associate Professor, National Institute of Urban Affairs, New Delhi, India

Shyama Ramani, Professorial Fellow, UNU-MERIT (United Nations University) and Professor at Maastricht University, Maastricht, The Netherlands.

Saikumar C. Bharamappanavara, DAAD Research Fellow, Humboldt University Berlin

Submission deadlines

June 15th: An abstract of 500 words or less;

June 30th: Decisions regarding selection of abstracts;

August 15th: Deadline for submission of full paper for selected abstracts.

Please submit abstracts to megacitiesconference2018@gmail.com