Guest Editor Introduction

Asia is the epicenter of rapid urbanization and by all indications will remain so over next decade. According to an Asian Development Bank projection, the region will add another 1.1 billion people in its cities by 2030.[1] Already Asia boasts the largest concentration of megacities with its 12 urban concentrations of more 10 million inhabitants, most of which are among the largest in the world. Since the ADB's 2008 projection, steady rural migrations through the region has powered urban growth. Clearly, the opportunities anticipated in growing cities serves as the attraction for migrants, especially when climate change and natural disasters undermine rural communities. But not to be discounted is the urban development process itself, as Asian megacities have swept over adjacent agricultural lands and villages in the search for cheap buildable lands to extend the city's footprint. So when we speak of rapid urbanization in Asia, it needs to be understood not simply in demographic terms but also as a process of rapid land transformation.

Historically the peripheral areas of Asian cities were home to the rural poor. But the urban transformation underway in the urban periphery since the 1990s has targeted the growing middle class market. Industrial and office parks, new town and in some cases, entire new cities have pushed urbanization deep into the periphery. As Sheng (2019) notes in the case of Southeast Asian cities, the periphery "is converted to urban use to accommodate the city's expansion," a process led by private developers and "unburdened by urban plans and environmental regulations." The cost of this indifference is borne not only by the environment but especially by the poor and lower-middle income who are displaced.[2] Firman and Fahmi (2017) suggest that this pattern of urban development in the extended Jakarta metropolitan area mirrors the "post-suburbanization" underway in Western society. In the case of Jakarta, the periphery has experienced increasing densities with a concurrent decrease in the center city's share to just one-third of the 30 million metropolitan population. And this imbalance continues to grow especially as dense inner city neighborhood are cleared to accommodate new commercial and high-end residential development. Echoing Sheng's observations, Firman and Fahmi contend that the planning of development and provision of services in the periphery is dominated by the private sector, with the acquiescence of local governments but not necessarily in conformity with local plans and public policy objectives. The benefits that peripheral developments bring to the urban region are offset by the costs to the environment and to the conditions of those who livelihoods are swept away in the process.[3]

Rapid urban development is not without profound implications for the inner city as well. Elevated land prices have encouraged conversion of lands historically occupied by low-income residents to higher value commercial and residential uses. Displacement from rural areas has triggered population growth in under-served slum areas in city center which at the same time have contracted where skyscrapers replace older buildings to make more profitable use of the land. Redevelopment in the inner city areas typically has been embraced by land owners who benefit from higher returns on their property, although the majority of the poor who are renters or who lack recognized land titles pay the price. Typically, urban plans are not fine grained enough to take into account the existence, ongoing processes of change, or even basic rights of those living in informal settlements. These residents are typically treated as occupiers of space ultimately designated for some other use. Much like the farmers confronting displacement in the rural fringes

[1] Asian Development Bank, Managing Asian Cities, June 2008.
[2] Sheng, Yap Kioe, "Peri-Urban Transformations in Southeast Asia, in Rita Padawangi, ed. Routledge Handbook of Urbanization in Southeast Asia, unedited preprint version. London: Routledge, p. 17 (1-26)
[3] Firman, Tommy and Fahmi, Fikri Zul (2017) The Privatization of Metropolitan Jakarta's (Jabodetabek) Urban Fringes: The Early Stages of 'Post-Suburbanization' in Indonesia, *Journal of the American Planning Association* 83(1), 68-79.

to make way for new development, inner city informal settlements typically lack standing in the planning and policy framework of Asian cities.

Understanding the planning challenges and appropriate responses to the rapid urban transformation processes underway in Asian cities is the intent of the selections included in this issue. Two articles examine center city informal settlements that occupy that precarious and ill-defined place in local plans. Suhartini and Jones examine the planning and regulatory processes in Lebak Siliwangi, a dense informal settlement in the heart of Bandung, Indonesia. Situated alongside the Cikapundung River, these formerly agricultural lands during the Dutch colonial era now accommodate a settlement of self-built structures which lack formal standing within the city's current spatial plan. Although Bandung's plan regards the space occupied by Lebak Siliwangi as a green corridor and without official recognition as a community, Suhartini and Jones demonstrate that the community has its own planning, a set "formal" and "understood" rules that shape it underlying spatial and social dynamics and practiced governance mechanisms. This internal planning process enables Lebak Siliwangi to grow and change in an ordered way to meet the evolving needs of its inhabitants. Within the context of Bandung's accelerated development of largely middle class housing along its periphery, Lebak Siliwangi offers an affordable and convenient habitat that has served its West Java migrants for over one-half century. The planning and governance processes of Lebak Silwangi examined by Suhartini and Jones help us to understand how informal settlements persist and indeed thrive under conditions of change and uncertainty.

The case of Salak Selatan New Village (SSNV) in Kuala Lumpur examined by Hassan and Lim has a different origin. This settlement was constructed in 1952 as part of a formal planning initiative by the British colonial government to isolate Malaysian Chinese to prevent them from providing support to the Malaysian National Liberation Army. It has persisted since then as a low-income and ethnically cohesive community, one now surrounded by more affluent enclaves who have access to the amenities it never received. Because of its central location and affordable housing, SSNV has experienced in-migration and growing ethnic diversity that challenges is social cohesiveness. Hassan and Lim seek to understand what holds the community together, what factors influencing social trust, and where interventions to enhance community stability need to be undertaken. They accomplish this through an examination of various shared spaces and neighborhood amenities to help identify how urban planners and local authorities can best respond to its unserved needs.

Tokey's exploration of the potential for redevelopment of the old jail section of central Dhaka offers another perspective on center city community transformation. Here the focus is on potential redevelopment in the Begum Bazar area, one of the densest sections of "old" Dhaka where the "old jail" (actually a former 17th century Mughal fort) was removed in 2016 and that created an opportunity for much needed regeneration. Utilizing the processes of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and social mapping, Tokey identifies what the community regards as the essential needs to be accomplished through redevelopment in order to enhance conditions in this mixed use area. As in Lebak Siliwangi and Salak Selatan New Village, there has been no input by Begum Bazar residents or its commercial interests in planning for redevelopment. Tokey demonstrates how the participatory processes he utilized to evaluate the study area provide data on the building stock, the location of businesses, key social institutions, traffic flows and environmental conditions. The output from these processes is data that the community has to react to and prioritize to inform potential redevelopment for regeneration. Tokey's analysis demonstrates the power and necessity of participatory tools to guide urban change.

In Abhinav Alakshendra's examination of linkages between urbanization and climate, the discussion shifts from the community to the metropolitan regions in India. No country is experiencing more intensive and expansive urbanization than India. Alakshendra reminds us that

there are no fewer than 53 urban agglomerations in India boasting populations in excess of one million and that so much of the migration from India's still majority rural regions has been fueled by impacts of climate change. Floods, droughts, and other cataclysmic natural events have become routine and continually undermine the resilience of rural life, thereby pushing people to cities. But what he adds to the discourse is a set of interlinkages between climate change and urbanization, including rising poverty levels and growing inequality and also the elevated incidence of gender-based violence, in addition to the obvious environmental manifestations that underscore the broader social impacts, especially for low-income communities. He identifies an increasing array of interventions at the local, state and federal levels that if sufficiently funded will help to create a much-needed "climate budget" that India and other urbanizing nations must turn to for enhanced resilience in the context of rapid urbanization.

A new variable affecting both rapid urbanization and the quality of life in cities across the globe has been the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. The reduction or, in cases, shutting down of basic urban services to curb the spread of the virus, triggered organizational, political and social changes that, as Jacek Szoltysek argues, potentially impact long term functioning of cities. Szoltysek, whose research focuses on social logistics in city management and health care, demonstrates how the failed global response to the 1918 Spanish flu, which informed Albert Camus' novel, The Plague, can be approached as a blueprint for continuing challenges in the 21st episode when necessary restrictions on mobility are needed but ignored. As he notes, public trust has been challenged, the economy in the previously rapidly growing cities has contracted (and without a sense of certainty when and how it will recover), but even positive impacts on the environment from economic slowdown are not certain in the long run. In a word, the future of city life, the so-called "post-pandemic city," is a matter of speculation, and Szoltysek offers his take on it especially in terms of urban mobility. As he notes: "Ensuring mobility (in addition to safety and continuous mediation) will be one of the main components of the strategy for building quality of life in a post-pandemic city, in a situation of a probable prolonged economic crisis, high unemployment and growing social tensions." To prepare for this, he urges urban decision-makers as well as urban theorists to wrestle with implications of the post-pandemic city in order to properly plan in order to reduce the losses.

Taken together, the contributors to this issue of the JRCP offer critical insights and salient research strategies to support more inclusive planning in Asia's rapid growing cities. Each in its own way offers new directions in research that is both necessary and long overdue. Most important, these are research models that have the potential to bring positive results to lives of people facing profound challenges in the most dynamic urban region of the world. It should be noted that as this issue goes to press, the Covid-19 epidemic is spiking to record levels across the globe.

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