Participants from International Scientific Conference on THE e-FUTURE OF CITIES Between Temptations of Exponential Technology Growth and the Concept of Human City, 24-25 October 2019, University of Belgrade, Belgrade

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Globally, interest in democracy is growing but faith in democratic institutions is dwindling. David Van Reybrouck, Belgian cultural historian, therefore asks if elections are “bad for democracy”. The main thrust of his argument is that elections and democracy have become synonymous and today even Western democracies are suffering from “democracy fatigue syndrome”. Frequent elections and absence of decisive mandate by the electorate are becoming the new normal. Spain has held four elections in four years and yet no party got majority. Even coalitions are hard to come by. After the 2010 elections, Belgium could not produce a government for 541 days. Netherlands had no government for 208 days after elections and Sweden could find a formula to form government after more than four months of talks. Recent trends suggest that elections don’t automatically foster democracy. As Van Reybrouck argues, “elections are the sacraments of the new faith, a ritual regarded as a vital necessity in which the form is more important than the content”.

Democracy in the west is facing its greatest crisis in decades. What went wrong? Many analysts focus on economic problems. Slow growth, rising inequality, and welfare-state cutbacks have made life more insecure for the working and middle classes and spread economic risk, fear of the future, and social divisions throughout western societies. Dissatisfaction with democracy is rooted in the belief that democracy is not working. It is not able to deal with citizens’ demands and concerns. Scholars like Max Weber, John Rawls, Jurgen Habermas, Joshua Cohen and Amartya Sen view representative democracy with great suspicion. Limited accountability of the political players and institutions account for this deficit. This growing gap between citizens and state institutions explains why we witness what American political scientist Theda Skocpol calls ‘diminished democracy.’

Deepening democracy is democratizing democracy. It is a process which makes democracy meaningful and relevant to the lives of citizens. Democracy is expanding and is widely admired, but it appears increasingly as an embattled ideology. The challenges of rapid economic growth require new forms of governance and citizenship. There is need to deepen democracy in ways so that ordinary people can effectively participate in and influence policies that directly affect their lives. The participation and capacities of ordinary people can only be reached at the local government level. The growing disconnect between demos and cratos has to be addressed. The concept of zombie democracy is unacceptable in which citizens are reduced to passive bystanders. Decentralised governance has to be understood in terms of effective devolution of power. Local participation is the best way for improving the accountability of state and strengthening the ties between citizens and the government.

Democratic deficits undermine democratic legitimacy. The decline in the quality and substance of democracy is in evidence across the world. There is a serious questioning of democracy being able to deliver on problems of extreme poverty, growing inequality and social injustice. And yet, the problems of democratic deficits can be addressed by having more democracy. This can be done by getting the institutions and procedures of democracy right. The challenge is to extend democracy from a “democracy of voters to a democracy of citizens”. There is no need for either unwarranted gloom or exaggerated optimism.

— Ash Narain Roy
Asker Municipality modelled on the UN Sustainable Development Goals

Hurum, Royken and Asker municipalities in Norway are going to merge into one municipality to be known as Asker in 2020. In a series of local municipal reforms underway in the country with the objective of building bigger and stronger local authorities this initiative is being seen as the “next practice” rather than a “best practice”. Working on this as early as when the seventeen UN SDGs came into force in 2016, the three municipalities thought it as an apt starting point to use the UN framework to plan for their respective municipalities emerging and sustainable future. Beginning 2017 the three municipalities began to work on the municipal master plan (to be completed in 2020) and other subordinate plans through the SDG framework. In this process both the elected officials and the respective administration representatives teamed up together as they worked out a method for making the plans practically feasible and relevant. Moreover, the local politicians too worked together blurring respective political lines and traditional sectoral thinking in search of shared sustainable positions. The teams finally chose 84 of the 169 targets envisaged under the 17 SDGs relevant to them after a realistic assessment and the challenges they would have to face in reaching these for the new Asker municipality. Further the municipalities involved local interest groups, businesses, youth and other stakeholders involving them in a participatory process for outlining the strategies and in the implementation of the planned next steps. A peer to peer learning approach to was formulated wherein they worked with the other municipalities of Norway and various citizens’ groups and local communities. In a novel approach all the primary and secondary schools in the municipalities carried out teaching programmes relevant to the UN SDGs also organizing an innovation camp for all their 8th grade students.

Deadline 2020 – C40 and the Climate Action Planning Resource Centre

Deadline 2020 is a commitment from the leading cities in the world to pursue and implement climate action plans to be able to successfully deliver on the Paris Agreement. One of the key objectives of Paris Agreement, “holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2 degrees [Celsius] above pre-industrial levels, and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees [Celsius] above pre-industrial levels” requires that all cities take transformational actions to reduce transportation emissions, improve building energy efficiency, increase the supply of green energy, and change consumption patterns, while strengthening the ability to deal with the impacts of climate change through adaptation. In line with this objective, Deadline 2020 lays down the levels of ambition and urgency needed to ensure cities are moving in the direction of the deliverables of the Paris Agreement. The C40 cities grouping that is home to more than 700 million people and which drives 25 per cent of the world economy is striving to be in the forefront for implementing inclusive climate action plans by the end of next year. The science-based climate action plans aim to put cities on the path to reduce greenhouse gas emissions thereby leading to becoming emissions neutral by 2050. In parallel this will also enable cities to be more resilient to the impacts of climate change benefitting citizens socially, environmentally and economically. The C40 leadership also encourages national and state governments, businesses, civil society and other stakeholders to act now for the creating a sustainable and equitable future for everyone. To this end, the C40 through the Climate Action Planning Resource Centre is putting out its frameworks, tools and resources on public platforms for free and open access.
An important learning event was held by the Cities Alliance Joint Work Programme (JWP) on Cities and Migration in Bern, Switzerland from 9-10 September. The objective of the workshop was to explore migration within the context of a system of cities and to understand how local actors can support and be a part of the global agendas. Specifically the program aimed to improve cooperation and peer learning among city and migration stakeholders - local, national, and international to enable an improved management of migration to cities. The workshop incorporated firsthand experience by cities that are dealing with migration, with a specific focus on the JWP’s identified partner cities (Arua and Jinja in Uganda, Jendouba and Kairouan in Tunisia, Jigjiga and Adama in Ethiopia, and Kakuma-Kalobeyei cluster in Kenya). The discussions highlighted the tremendous impact migration was having on secondary cities and the challenges they faced in providing basic services for existing and new residents. The most critical issue raised was that the secondary cities need support and want their voices to be heard at the national level in order to meet the residents’ needs and to drive growth. Some of the key messages from the event were:

(i) Migration to secondary cities has a significant impact on poverty reduction and reduced inequalities, even more than migration to primary cities.

(ii) Support to secondary towns can make a significant contribution to national poverty reduction and reduced inequalities because of the sheer number of migrants settling there.

(iii) It is important to develop systems of secondary cities because improving connectivity, networking, and most importantly collaboration among them would significantly lower disparities in levels of regional development, increase national productivity and prosperity, and reduce the pressure of rural-urban migration on the development of large metropolitan regions.

(iv) The Cities Alliance has worked for many years to conceptualise secondary cities and explore how these systems of cities can be connected and in order to achieve this, partnerships need to be built at the global, national and local levels.

(v) It is important to listen to local administrations who have requested greater involvement in national-level discussions and more accurate data on the number of residents to better inform national fiscal transfers and aid allocation decisions.

(vi) Local governments in Ethiopia, Kenya, Tunisia, and Uganda all enjoy greater mandates as a result of the decentralisation processes, but more actual decentralisation of mandates and funds are needed.

(vii) Uganda is lauded globally as a success story for its open-door refugee policy that provides refugees the rights and freedoms to settle, live, work, do business and even own property in the country. However, its overstretched cities are struggling to support the host and migrant communities.

(viii) Kenya’s Kakuma-Kalobeyei experience shows how towns can leverage large numbers of refugees for sustainable development.

(ix) The experience of Ethiopia offers valuable lessons in engaging a city’s diaspora to raise funds for sustainable development.

(x) Tunisian cities are exploring innovative ideas to help address the issues of migration and regional disparities in economic growth, such as a solidarity fund in which wealthy urban areas would contribute a portion of their budgets to support cities in lagging regions and help them attract workers and to provide for them.
Localizing the SDGs - Venice city solutions 2030

The second edition of the “Venice City Solutions 2030” event took place in October 2019. As a critical part of the localizing SDGs initiative, this event aims to address key issues for the implementation of the SDGs. The focus was on the role of local authorities as critical players in the 2030 agenda. Following the first SDG summit, international leaders were called upon to strengthen the actions of cities by empowering local authorities and elected representatives. The title theme for the latest edition was “creating citizenship: the SDGs an opportunity for everyone.”

The theme was to reinforce the fact that it was important to involve the citizens in realizing the SDGs. The Venice event was organized in the backdrop of an increasing challenging world situation in terms of global warming and climate change goals and the SDGs that were still far from being achieved according to the latest world reports. With the World Economic Forum (WEF) Global Risk Report presented in Davos stating that the world was sleepwalking towards a major crisis, it was imperative like never before to mobilize everyone to take on the challenges in a collaborative and multi-stakeholder approach. It has also been highlighted by the Sustainable Development Report that no country is on track to achieve all the 17 goals, further casting a shadow on how to move forward. One of the most pressing issues is the problem of climate change.

In a report by the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel of Climate Change), the scientific committee of the UN, it is stated that “climatic consequences will lead to the desertification of entire areas of the planet with a notable increase in migrations and with the aggravation of social, cultural and political tensions. Therefore, there is need for a general alliance involving all institutions, from global to local ones, passing through the involvement of companies, schools, and universities up to the entire civil society, driven by a common will.”

The Venice edition focused on the youth, with the concept note for the event stating that it is “particularly important that young citizens understand what SDGs are and how, through the latter, they can participate in the planning of the cities in which they will live.” The fact was also stressed that the youth would also be at risk of exclusion from jobs and with millions facing unemployment if the immediate challenges were not addressed.

“Venice City Solutions 2030” is an annual event co-organized by AICCRE, UNDP, UN-Habitat, UN-SDG Action Campaign and United Cities and Local Governments in the context of the Platform Project.

Turkey’s ruling party suffers setback in Istanbul Mayoral race

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s party candidate lost in Istanbul ending a 25-year dominance in the country’s largest city. In the mayoral re-election, Binali Yildirim conceded defeat early to his opponent Ekrem Imamoglu who was backed by a string of opposition parties. The election to the post of Istanbul mayor was conducted once again after the Justice and Development Party (AKP) contested the election victory of Imamoglu on 31 March with the High Election Council ordering a repoll to be held once more.
Cities at risk due to Climate Change

Many cities are not taking concrete steps based on the environmental data being disclosed and are in danger of facing climate hazards points out a new report titled, “Cities at risk”, by the CDP. It states that less than half of the 530 odd cities that came out with important environmental data were not following through with vulnerability assessments as required. The report divides hazards faced by cities into three categories: floods (71 percent), extreme heat (61 percent), and drought (36 percent), based on a data analysis done in 2018. It also points to the fact that scientific and data-based evidence is corroborating what many have documented anecdotally with relate to climate change effects. It stresses that cities that implement vulnerability assessments are better prepared than those that don’t however only 46 percent of all the reporting cities have completed these critical assessments. Moreover, those cities that have done vulnerability assessments are more than twice as likely to report long-term hazards and therefore are taking almost six times as many adaptation actions thereby being in a better position to build resilience. Some of the major roadblocks in undertaking vulnerability assessments are budgetary capacity (87 cities), poverty (66 cities) and infrastructure conditions (59 cities) according to CDP, for example in Europe and North America poor infrastructure and budgetary capacity are the two main constraints that cities face. The report reiterates that quality information is one of the key enablers that help cities to take action on the issue of climate change further highlighting the need for cities to understand and measure their respective risks and opportunities. The “Cities at risk” report persuades cities to conduct vulnerability assessments that look beyond short-term risks and to focus on medium and long term ones to be able to plan for the right actions and ensuring investments for the future.

WorldCities Day highlights digital innovations and better service delivery

While the general theme of World Cities Day is ‘Better City, Better Life’, each year a different sub-theme is selected to promote successes of urbanization or highlight and address specific challenges resulting from urbanization. For 2019, the United Nations has selected the theme “Changing the world: innovations and better life for future generations” to discuss how urbanization can be used to achieve sustainable development. The objective is to promote the international community’s interest in implementing the new urban agenda globally and in enhancing cooperation among countries in meeting opportunities and addressing challenges of urbanization in cities. With over half the world’s population living in cities and the number expected to double by the year 2050, urbanization is seen as one of the world’s most transformative trends. Urbanization too poses several sustainability challenges related to the various sectors of housing, environment, climate change, infrastructure, basic services, food security, health, education, decent jobs, safety and natural resources. Urbanization can also present great opportunities and is a critical tool for sustainable development if it is done right. On 31 October, World Cities Day this year, some of the main goals highlighted were to increase awareness of how digital innovations can be used for urban service delivery to enhance the quality of life and improve the urban environment; showcase new frontier technologies that can create more inclusive cities; present opportunities for renewable energy generation in cities and to explore how frontier technologies can promote social inclusion in cities. The key event was hosted by the City of Ekaterinburg, Russian Federation and was jointly organized by them along with UN-Habitat and the Shanghai People’s Government.
What’s New

Commission on Revenue Allocation (CRA) and National Treasury of Kenya officials visit Local Governments in India

At the invitation of the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP), based in New Delhi a delegation of Government of Kenya officials from the Commission on Revenue Allocation (CRA) and the National Treasury, visited India in August-September. The delegation was led by Dr. Jane Kiringai, Chairperson, Commission for Revenue Allocation (CRA), Government of Kenya and team’s key interest areas lay in fiscal decentralization and how revenue and expenditure allocation took place in a federal set up like India. The visiting team undertook study-visits were arranged to Tripunithura Municipality and Mulamthuruthy Gram Panchayat in and around Kochi Corporation in the state of Kerala in India. The team had extensive discussions with elected representatives and local officials of the local bodies on a wide range of issues from planning, financial reporting, transparency and accountability mechanisms, women’s empowerment and revenue and expenditure allocation and spending. During New Delhi leg of the study program, the team were hosted by the National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) and the Institute of Social Sciences (ISS). Domain experts held intensive sessions on revenue and expenditure across urban and rural local governments, institutional frameworks in place for the local governments, issues of transparency and accountability and the key challenges being faced in urban and rural planning.

Commonwealth Local Government Forum backs the Penang Platform

The Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) has committed to be part of the Penang Platform for Sustainable Urbanisation, an important new body that aims to tackle the rapid expansion of cities in the Asia Pacific region. The Penang Platform is a major outcome of the 7th Asia-Pacific Urban Forum (APUF7) that took place in Penang in October. This dynamic new partnership seeks to leverage the strengths of cities and leading urban development organisations to support local, regional and national governments in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and New Urban Agenda in Asia and the Pacific. As most people in the Asia-Pacific region live in urban areas, cities are crucial as focal points for SDG acceleration and achievement. Though the Local government is already tasked with providing opportunities for livelihoods, education and poverty reduction, they also have to now prepare for the increasing and inevitable demands on public services, infrastructure and the environment due to the spike in urban growth. The Penang Platform unites together an alliance of partners to address these multi-faceted issues, to collaborate and accelerate implementation of the SDGs in cities; integrate the use of tools, models, research and evidence of good practices; transform access to innovative sources of urban financing through new partnerships, and increase political commitments for sustainable urbanisation. One of the concrete actions under the first phase of the Penang Platform from 2019 to 2023 is the Asia-Pacific Mayor’s Academy, which supports newly appointed mayors with access to expertise, greater awareness of regional resources and a support network to assist in the acceleration of urban sustainability initiatives. Mayors at the beginning of their term are well-positioned to benefit from the Academy’s resources, which include week-long intensive boot camps together with ongoing peer-learning. Moreover, CLGF has been successful in ensuring that sustainable urbanisation is on the main agenda for the biennial summit of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in June 2020.
Cities are among the greatest human inventions and treasures in history. Their roles are pervasive in shaping civilizations, cultures, paradigms and innovations. Their influences cut across time, space and generations. Yet, at the heart of all these profound dynamics of cities are people. People are the architects of what cities are and people are the victims of all undesirable dimensions of cities. Two other components of cities are space and systems. Space embodies the natural resources, land, air, water, fauna and flora, which interact to provide the energy that powers all life forms and their functions and activities. Systems are the institutions and infrastructure established or built by people to serve their needs and facilitate their activities. The relationship among these three components of cities determines the health and ability of a city to function efficiently and effectively.

As cities grow in population, so do people’s needs and activities, from the areas needed to accommodate people, grow food for them, to the enterprises to serve needs. All human needs and activities are met and carried out primarily by exploiting or using the natural resources of the city, or resources from elsewhere by way of trade and some forms of mutual partnerships. How well cities use and manage their resources is critical in how their economies and people prosper. Where the demand for, and pressure on the natural resources outstrip supply, the quantity and quality of resources depreciate and the prosperity and quality of life in the city decline. The population-resource imbalance is of particular concern for future cities in light of the explosion of the population of most cities worldwide and the fierce threats to the world’s natural resources due to overpopulation, climate crisis, overexploitation of resources, and many other severe political, economic and social problems that are concentrated in cities.

Concern about future cities has intensified debates and investigation about feasible initiatives and models of governance for future cities. At the international level, the United Nations is leading the discourse and research about sustainable models of urban development and governance. At the national level, initiatives are being implemented to make cities happy, healthy, resilient, smart places for people. Corporations, foundations and universities worldwide are collaborating with governments and with each other to pursue the same cause for current and future cities. It is in this context that humanopolis is proposed in this paper to enable cities to see clearly through and effectively manage the complex challenges that lie in their future. Humanopolis is grounded in and by the fact that cities are people, and people must be the pivot of functional, sustainable and liveable cities, especially future cities where the threats of overpopulation climate crisis and resource constraints will require all stakeholder sectors to deploy their creativity, skills and resources to govern cities cost-effectively and sustainably for their own and future generations.”

- The e-Future of Cities
THE e-FUTURE OF CITIES
BETWEEN TEMPTATIONS OF EXPONENTIAL TECHNOLOGY GROWTH AND THE CONCEPT OF HUMAN CITY

EDITOR:
BORISLAV STOJKOV
Trinidad and Tobago provides an impetus to Gender Mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming in Trinidad and Tobago’s local government was given a huge boost through a joint training initiative held in October. In anticipation of the impending local elections, Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) along with the Caribbean Women in Leadership (CIWiL) organized training workshops in Chaguanas, Tunapuna and San Fernando. The aim of the sessions was to provide women with the skills and knowledge to become agents of social change, as well as to empower and enable them to participate in the political process. CLGF also plans similar workshops in Tobago to build the capacity of women leaders in the Tobago House of Assembly. Promoting the sustainable development of Caribbean societies through transformational leadership - including gender equality, equity, economic and social justice, and environmental sustainability - is a vision shared by CLGF and CIWiL and aligned to SDG5, the UN Sustainable Development Goal that aims to ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life. The workshops emphasised both the key role that women play and the importance of gender-responsive local governance in the achievement of sustainable development. Even though women are increasingly represented at the highest levels of political leadership in Trinidad and Tobago, 2016 estimates showed that female representation in local government were still low. CLGF’s partner, CIWiL, is a non-partisan network of women in politics and leadership across the Caribbean, committed to monitoring and strengthening women’s political participation and leadership in the region. The training was hosted by CIWiL as part of the Promoting Women’s Political Leadership in the Caribbean funded by the Canadian Government and part of a Latin America & Caribbean regional project.

October 7 as World Metropolitan Day

The World Metropolitan Day is celebrated every year on October 7th, marking the anniversary of the Montreal Declaration on Metropolitan Areas of 2015. The Declaration had stated in 2015 that, “amid growing urbanization and suburbanization, cities are now often part of larger metropolitan areas with high population densities and where the development of transportation infrastructure has boosted trade, as well as commuting distances. Social, geographic, economic, cultural and institutional context help define metropolitan areas which vary worldwide. Metropolitan areas are usually made up of one or more central cities with high population densities and large pools of jobs. These areas form a large labour pool where most of the population lives and works. Relatively autonomous, they nevertheless interact with other metropolitan areas and other communities. The population living in these areas is continuously growing.” Therefore in the backdrop of this declaration the day provides an unique opportunity for communities from across the world to come together and to make visible the reality of the metropolitan areas they live in, and also to highlight the growth of the world’s urbanized areas beyond the jurisdictional boundaries of municipalities, generating complex urban systems where the world’s greatest transformations are taking place. The World Metropolitan Day campaign calls for local and regional authorities across the world to organize an event on October 7th to bring together the representatives of the different levels of government that operate in the same metropolitan area to promote open discussions about the pressing issues that they face together, as part of a metropolitan community.

This year, the World Metropolitan Day campaign focused on the implementation of specific Sustainable Development Goals at metropolitan scales with each host selecting which SDG(s) will be the focus of discussions.
Gender Justice Plan of Barcelona

Under the partnership of the UCL City Leadership Lab and Michelin Foundation, the city of Barcelona took the leading step in collecting gender-disaggregated data with the objective of building an institutional gender expertise as well as to drive gender-inclusive climate action. As part of the C40 case studies that aim to empower city officials with data and information and to better understand the practical dimensions of gender while framing urban and climate policies these go a long way in addressing critical issues in the urban sphere with an inclusive approach. The second in the series by the Women4Climate initiative, the case study was developed between November 2018 and January 2019. In 2016, the city had launched a ‘Plan for Gender Justice (2016-2020)’ - an action plan working towards the elimination of gender inequalities. The plan has four strategic areas:

· Institutional change: increasing institutional gender expertise via gender training or gender budgeting, for example.
· Economy for life and time management: promoting gender equality in employment and entrepreneurial support programmes, as well as promoting a gender-equitable division of domestic work.
· City of rights: addressing structural barriers that infringe upon human and social rights in the city.
· Liveable and inclusive neighbourhoods: ensuring that urban public space is safe for and inclusive of women and girls, that emphasises the need to address gender-based violence.

Barcelona City has prioritised sustainable mobility and started gathering gender-disaggregated data to understand women’s mobility behaviour, patterns and needs. Some of the key findings related to this strategy is that there are gendered differences in modes of transport as women tend to commute more sustainably than do men. There is also a gender gap in cycling, as there are three male cyclists for every female cyclist in Barcelona. This contrasts with the city’s cycle hire scheme where there is more gender parity. Moreover, there are gendered differences in journey times, reflecting the gendered distribution of care work.

The following recommendations have been provided to incorporate a gender perspective in urban mobility as part of the Barcelona City case study:

1. Need to gather gender-disaggregated data on urban mobility, including gendered perceptions of safety in public space and on public transport and to understand how different people travel in the city.
2. Bring in a gender perspective in urban mobility planning and policymaking, for example, what percentage of transport plans includes a gender perspective, or what percentage of key transport projects includes a gender perspective?
3. Need for a gender perspective in the reporting and evaluation of urban mobility policies. For example, how many travel surveys have a gender perspective, do they look at specific needs for women mobility and the mobility needs associated with daily child-care.
4. Provision for training and mainstreaming awareness to improve preventive action against gender-based harassment and violence in urban public space and the importance of carrying out campaigns against gender-based violence.
“Channeling Change” 2019 in Europe

This year’s annual conference of Major Cities of Europe (MCE) was hosted and organized together with the Municipality of Venice, the Ca Foscari University in June. With over twenty countries participating on the theme, “Channelling Change - Digital cities in a changing world - Explore more, Discover more, Create more” the conference provided an opportunity for interaction and open exchanges with various European municipalities to discuss on issues relating to the challenges of digitization. The conference also saw participation from digital leaders from Europe who showcased products and services with the aim of involving citizens in designing and achieving better outcomes. The focus of the exchanges was to focus on enabling citizens to be better informed and at the same time to be challenged using data and information at hand more effectively with the objective of finding the truth. Some of the key themes on which the conference deliberated on were the following:
(a) Viewing cities as service hubs - Keeping citizens at the centre, how their local governments take on the role of integrated service providers while partnering with other public and private players.
(b) New and Emerging Technologies - Ensuring that innovative technologies add value to the lives of the citizens and to leverage Blockchain, Artificial Intelligence and other emerging technologies in this process.
(c) Navigating the moral maze of social media - Discussing how local governments can ensure that the use of technology is in an ethical manner and that citizens’ participative initiatives especially through social media are managed in an ethical and protected way.
(d) Following good procurement practices - Using cutting edge solutions and technologies for taking efficient and good procurement decisions and ensuring organisations take and implement the right and strong foundations to avoid project stand offs and delays, and;
(e) Changing roles, change management and digital transformation - to face the dangerous chasm between the existing managerial and professional skills and the new required skills and abilities.

On the final day a World Café was held where several topics were proposed to the various discussion sessions and parallel tables as a final opportunity to share views and experiences. The next edition of the series is planned to be held in the city of Larissa in May 2020.

Istanbul signs on to confront Global Climate Emergency

On 11 October at the G40 World Mayors Summit in Copenhagen, the city of Istanbul signed onto the Deadline 2020 initiative, a programme that calls for cities to commit for developing and implementing ambitious climate action plans in line with the Paris Agreement. The citizens of Istanbul reinforced their commitment to be part of the global initiative to fight the climate emergency and had made this a serious issue in their previous two local elections. The concern of 16 million Istanbulites for the future generations to be able to live in a fair, green and creative city was voiced clearly and now formally translates into action as they become part of the Deadline 2020. This step makes Istanbul the 104th city to join the Deadline 2020 program, which provides practical insights and solutions proven to reduce emissions and put cities on a path toward achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement. Mark Watts, the G40 Executive Director stated that while the Mayors Summit was a platform for celebrating climate action, at the same time it was an opportunity to take stock of how much more needs to be done. It is here that the Deadline 2020 programme provides a unique moment to navigate the climate crisis with science-based insights and data to enable cities to enter into a resilient future.
Global News

Safe Cities Index (SCI) 2019 report from the Economist

To highlight urban security and resilience in an interconnected world, the SCI index ranks 60 cities across 57 indicators covering digital security, health security, infrastructure security and personal security. The report puts Tokyo first in the overall rankings with Asia-Pacific cities claiming six of the top ten spots. Singapore, Osaka, Sydney, Seoul, Melbourne, Amsterdam, Copenhagen (Europe) are some of the cities with top scores along with Toronto and Washington D.C. A key takeaway from the report is that even while having many elements, city safety is indivisible. This is borne out by the fact that the different kinds of security covered by the SCI 2019 need specific interventions by various agencies ranging from health systems for medical care to the police for maintaining public order. In this diverse universe, the statistical analysis of the SCI 2019 results reveals that performance in each of the targeted pillars correlates very closely with each other. The conclusion was that cities tend to do perform good, better or worse across every security pillar rather than having good results in one and lagging in others. Areas with population with higher incomes came out with better results, while at the same time it also reflected the need for cities to invest hugely in sectors of high-quality infrastructure and advanced healthcare systems. Twin issues of transparency and accountability too figured highly for cities to plan and develop secure and safe cities the report showed. The Safe Cities Index 2019 is a report from The Economist Intelligence Unit, sponsored by NEC Corporation.

Second Forum on SDG Summit – ‘Connecting global ambition and local action’

Officials from local and regional governments upped the ante on the need to have a broader representation at key discussions related to the SDG initiatives. They also stressed the fact that capacity constraints limited the implementation of initiatives in cities and regions related to the 2030 Agenda. These were some of the main concerns during the second local and regional governments’ forum held in New York that was hosted by Cameroon and Morocco, and organized by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the Global Task Force of Local and Regional Governments, and Local 2030. This is a follow up to the first edition of the event organized in July 2018, on the sidelines of the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). The Forum considered the theme, ‘Connecting global ambition and local action,’ and included sessions on triggering the transformation needed to address climate challenge, good practices and experiences on implementing the 2030 Agenda at the local level and commitments for accelerated SDG implementation. During the discussion participants stressed and noted the weak progress on the 2030 Agenda and called for a stronger involvement of regional and local governments. A sense of misunderstanding of internationally agreed decisions at the local level including the SDGs and the need for appropriate capacity building including public and private investment was also pointed out during the event. Politicians have a responsibility to the public and therefore they have to be transparent and accountable even at the cost of losing their political seat was the common refrain of the participants. Many leaders spoke of the potential of local and regional governments to be game changers in the pursuit of the SDGs and at the same time creating opportunities and arresting environmental devastation. Mayors from various cities updated their commitment and actions in the field of climate change by sharing initiatives in the transport sector making it energy efficient, making public transport accessible and using e-transit networks; shared initiatives aimed at increasing climate finance expertise; shared initiatives to drive local action on climate and sustainability; using the Agenda 2030 framework to cover municipalities and provinces as a platform for action.
On 5 August 2019, the Government of India changed the status of Jammu & Kashmir State to two Union Territories: 1. Ladakh 2. Jammu & Kashmir. By this, the special status the Jammu & Kashmir State had since India’s independence, was withdrawn. Now the Union of India has 28 states and 9 union territories. The states and union territories in India have districts, blocks and village level local governments. The Block Development Council is the link between the village council and the district council.

The elections conducted to the Block Development Councils in Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh on 24 October was the first election held after the abrogation of its special status. The major political parties in Jammu & Kashmir are: National Conference (NC), Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Indian National Congress (INC), Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP), and the Jammu & Kashmir National Panthers Party. There was 98.3 per cent voters’ turn out in the polls.
The election was boycotted by the mainstream political parties - Indian National Congress, National Conference and the Peoples Democratic Party - because of continued detention of their leaders since August 2019.

The Block Development Council forms the second tier of the Panchayat Raj (local government) system in Jammu & Kashmir. All the 23,629 elected representatives in the village councils and its 3,652 presidents voted to elect the chairperson of the Block Development Council. Although, there are a total of 316 block seats, elections were held on 283 seats only.

In Jammu and Kashmir, polls to elect chairpersons of Block Development Councils were held on 310 seats and 1,092 candidates were in the fray, of whom 27 were elected unopposed. Srinagar district recorded 100 per cent polling followed by Reasi (99.7 per cent) and Jammu (99.5 per cent) polling. There were 26,629 electors — 8,313 women and 18,316 men — for the polls to elect chairpersons of Block Development Councils.

It may be mentioned here that according to government figures, over 45 per cent sarpanch (President) seats in the Valley are vacant and of the 2,375 sarpanch seats, 1,558 have been elected, and only 1,311 notified.

The Block Development Council elections have paved the way for elections to the District Planning and Development Boards (DPDB), and thus spur development in the state. According to the Jammu & Kashmir Chief Electoral Officer Shailendra Kumar, “It is for the first time that DPDB would be emerging out of the popularly elected local self-governments.”
International Scientific Conference on

THE e-FUTURE OF CITIES
Between Temptations of Exponential Technology Growth and the Concept of Human City
24-25 October 2019
University of Belgrade, Belgrade

At the invitation of the University of Belgrade (Faculty of Geography) and the Academy of Engineering Sciences, Serbia, Om Prakash Mathur, Senior Fellow and Chair, Urban Studies (Institute of Social Sciences) took part in the International Scientific Conference on THE e-FUTURE OF CITIES. The Conference was held on 24-25 October, 2019 at the University of Belgrade, and was attended by over 40 experts representing the University of Belgrade, TU Delft/AMS Institute, Amsterdam, Institute of Spatial Planning, Wien; Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi; Slovak University of Technology, Slovakia; School of Architecture and Planning, The University of Auckland, New Zealand; Leibniz Institute of Ecological Urban and Regional Development, Germany; Technische Universität Dresden, Germany; Institute of Architecture and Urban and Spatial Planning of Serbia, Belgrade; University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Economics, Slovenia; University of Novi Sad, Serbia; Centre of Regional Science, Vienna; Universita degli studi di Milano Bicocca, Italy; Tekirdag Namik Kemal University, Turkey; and Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments, Serbia.

The Conference was organized in two parts; the first part consisted of 16 key addresses on different facets of technological growth and humane city. The second part of the Conference consisted of three working sessions, viz.,

(i) Exponential technology growth and city development in the future;
(ii) Smart city and opportunity of sustainable city,
(iii) Social aspects of new technologies in the cities of future.

The Conference centred around the following three propositions and the associated dilemmas.

**Proposition 1**: The increase and concentration of population in urban areas, especially in the big cities ad their metropolitan areas that will rapidly grow to dimensions of enormous conurbations.

**Dilemma 1**: Does new technology substantially contribute to enhancing rationality, efficiency, and reliability of public services or if not properly controlled especially in the developing countries, endanger the complex urban system?

**Proposition 2**: The amazing speed of exponential growth of technological advancements that will (a) change the behavior and relationship among populations and families, (b) take control and authority of people and sterilise the urban environment and fall in line with the idea of “brave new world”.

**Dilemma 2**: Whether and to what extent can the growth and development of new technologies contribute to sustainability and resilience, and to what extent, technologies can invade privacy and lead to social segregation.

**Proposition 3**: The relationship between people and technology is proceeding at a pace that is faster than its application to economic and social development with no or little information on its possible outcomes.

**Dilemme 3**: whether the relationship between faster urbanization and rapid development of new technology and application (smart city being one such case), can lead to the humane dimension of cities? Does new technology enhance urban cohesion or lead to technological segregation or even stigmatization?

The presentations made in the Conference have been published in a book titled as The e-Future of Cities Between Temptations of Exponential Technology Growth and the Concept of Human City. The book is edited by Professor Borislav Stojkov (Academy of Engineering Sciences of Serbia). An electronic version of the book is available on the Conference web-page.