

## The Theme of 16<sup>th</sup> Urban Research Plaza Forum 2018

### "Contesting Social Space in Urban Context"

Urban area is a highly dynamic and complex socio-cultural 'organism'. The complexity of urban area develops along with the development of society itself, which is often characterized with conflicts rather than a compromise; competition rather than cooperation; contestation rather than harmony. It is natural that urban area becomes geographical space for contestations, in which different kinds of groups of society and/or interest groups seek their places and later establish their own marks through different kinds of symbols, cultural or arts. Yet, recent literature has observed that urban area is not only a physical space, but it has also social spaces – where people can gather and interact. The social space is often associated with the sense of 'public' and as an opposite of 'private', which often constitutes the construction of identity, both at individual or communal levels. Henry Lefebvre has argued that 'all space is basically social; it involves assigning more or less appropriated places to social relations... social space has thus always been a social product' (Lefebvre 2009: 186-187).

Following this argument, urban public spaces (highway, street, market, shopping mall, community center, park, playground, and neighborhood space in residential areas) play a determinant role in the social life formation of local communities. Public spaces are contested spaces: an arena of struggle for social control (for the authority to impose what is and what is not properly public) among state authorities, private managers, and public users. Some scholars formulate three distinct mentalities in conceiving social spaces: "by us", "for us", and "up to us" mentalities (Reyes 2016). Therefore, the contestation process of social spaces may rely on the way people adopt, use and manage the space. In this regard it is important to discuss whether 'people make places or places that make people'.

In order to understand this issue, the 16th Urban Research Plaza Forum 2018 is designed to discuss the following theme: "Contesting Social Space in Urban Context". The forum will investigate how cultural and artist communities in urban Asia formulate and produce their works as their strategies to claim and protect their 'social spaces' in their neighborhoods. The forum will bring a comparative view and experiences from Japan and Indonesia in the forms of policy reports, evaluation reviews, and/or idea exploration.

By taking this theme, the forum seeks to investigate the effectiveness of arts and cultural initiatives in revitalizing or even harmonizing the contestation process of social spaces. This is an important step to learn and understand how arts and cultural initiatives can provide a significant contribution to promote a wide access for the community to share and solve the highly complex social issues in urban area.

## Terms of References

### 16<sup>th</sup> Urban Research Plaza Academic Forum

- Time : **March 15, 2018**  
Venue : **Sasana Ajiyasa Faculty of Visual Arts, Indonesia Institute of Arts Yogyakarta (ISI) Jl. Parangtritis, Yogyakarta**  
Time : **08.30am – 03.00pm**  
Speakers : 5 persons
1. 1<sup>st</sup> Speaker (OCU, Japan)
  2. 2<sup>nd</sup> Speaker (ISI Yogyakarta)
  3. 3<sup>rd</sup> Speaker (UGM)
  4. 4<sup>th</sup> Speaker (UGM)
  5. 5<sup>th</sup> Speaker (ISI Yogyakarta)

The forum will be divided into 2 (two) sessions, the first session will be chaired by a UGM representative, and the second session will be chaired by a ISI representative.

- (1) Each speaker will give a 20 minutes presentation in English.
- (2) The abstract and the CV should be submitted to the committee on February 26<sup>th</sup> 2018 at the latest to **urp.fib@ugm.ac.id**

### Condition

The committee covers accommodation during the seminar.

Please kindly send your confirmation to participate in **urp.fib@ugm.ac.id**

Alternatively, contact person: Wulan Astuti (081 227 173 32), or Dyah Ayu (081 126 926 83)

## Urban Research Plaza (URP) of Osaka City University

The Urban Research Plaza was established in April 2006. It is a brand-new research center created by Osaka City University. The University has put its energy into urban studies and produced results befitting a metropolitan university.

As its name indicates, the strongest feature of Urban Research Plaza is its framework, based on the image of a 'public square.' Unlike ordinary graduate schools and research institutions, Urban Research Plaza does not house permanent facilities or staff members who do research within the facilities and contribute to society with their research results. Instead, the Urban Research Plaza features small, re-locatable satellites ('field plazas' and overseas centers) to be opened in Osaka and foreign cities, in addition to the small number of staff and core facilities (Takahara Hall) located at the university campus. Its staff members constantly go out into the field and go abroad for research and activities for community development. The Urban Research Plaza serves as the center of networks for research and urban revitalization, or an open forum where people gather and meet around the theme of 'cities.'

Cities are supposed to be an arena where new knowledge and culture is created through encounters and discourse amidst a gathering of many people unknown to each other. The Urban Research Plaza is aimed at creating a research organization in urban settings of the 21st century that will implement a wide variety of endeavors with its unique structure and approach.

Osaka is currently a 'city of suffering', which faces the greatest problems in Japan in many ways. The philosophy of the Urban Research Plaza is to be a research institution in accord with Osaka City's communities and to share pain, pleasure, and rage with the citizens.

### **Urban Research Plaza Yogyakarta Office**

The Urban Research Plaza (URP) Yogyakarta Office was established by Osaka City University in cooperation with the **Indonesia Institute of the Arts (ISI)** and **Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM)** as one of the overseas satellite centers of URP-Osaka, Japan. Its secretariat is located in **The Faculty of Cultural Sciences UGM**, which was first known as *Urban Culture Research Center (UCRC)*. Yet, the cooperation had actually been started since 2003, but the sub-center had just been effectively running only after 2006 following the shifting of its name from UCRC into *Urban Research Centre (URP)*.

Despite having a limited number of officials, the office has been very active in inviting local scholars, practitioners and governmental elements to meet together to discuss various urban issues. The sub center annually holds an international forum to discuss urban issues aiming to spread the spirit of urban studies and to find the best possible solutions for urban problems.