CRITICAL PRACTICE IN AN AGE OF COMPLEXITY - AN INTERDISCIPLINARY CRITIQUE OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

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Sense of Place, Habits of Citizenry

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• Abstract (300 words):
Fluid transnational and internal migration of populations have created conditions of complex demographics in many urban centers across the world. In such demographically diverse places, placemaking practices are often unconsciously enacted through cultural practices and habits of citizenry imported from other places. With popular political discourse around the ‘assimilation’ and ‘integration’ of migrant populations, the agency of these groups at an individual and communal level ‘to live inside with difference’ is threatened. How can architects engage in such complex and uncertain conditions? The social sciences have investigated how cultural differences are lived and spatialized in everyday life, and yet, little of this knowledge informs design thinking. I argue that one reason for this is that the output from these disciplines are primarily text based and in disjunction with the traditional methods of engagement in architecture. This paper presents the application of a multimodal mapping methodology that attempted to materialize and spatialize the embodied knowledge associated with placemaking. It is a method that adopted Henri Lefebvre’s concept of rhythmanalysis.
supplemented by a specific approach to ethnography framed by the senses. The paper begins by analyzing selected mapping episodes from its application in the inner-Melbourne suburb of Footscray. The findings reveal socio-spatial parameters that acknowledge identity, plurality and engender social equity in urban space. Importantly, because the methods proposed were also time-based, the understanding emerged that the phenomena observed created their own space-time generated epistemic spaces. These are nested spatial and temporal scales generated by specific bodies that differed in their capacities and cultures, where specific constructs of knowing and being are enacted. The paper concludes by exploring the implications for design, by drawing thematic strands from the mapping findings to analyze two graduate level student projects that engaged with the mapping method to generate critical design responses in demographically diverse contexts.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):
Dr Kelum Palipane currently holds the position of Early Career Academic Fellow in Architectural Design at the Melbourne School of Design, Faculty of Architecture Building and Planning, University of Melbourne. She is a graduate architect with experience in Melbourne and overseas practices. She obtained her PhD by Creative Works from the University of Melbourne. Her research uses creative ethnographic methods to explore migrant experience and identity, examining how unprogrammed place-making practices can inform design.