Constructing an Urban Future: The sustainability and resilience of cities – infrastructures, communities, buildings and housing.

• Paper / Proposal Title:
Research in formal and informal spaces: An insight into the social and physical aspects of residents' usage of public spaces in Abu Dhabi Island

• Format(s):
In-person presentation / written paper

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• Abstract (300 words):
Climate change, waste production, natural resource depletion etc. that contribute to the physical dimensions of cities, are being discussed widely and intensely to better understand urban sustainability. It is important to remember that along with these physical dimensions, the social dimensions equally contribute towards the construction of a sustainable urban future. Public space is a factor that plays a vital role in both, the social and physical aspects of future cities. They provide opportunities for social interaction (Whyte, 2010). Public open spaces will serve as the ‘breathing lungs' (Carretall, 1992), where people would be able to break away for brief moments from their daily busy lives in the cities. Likewise, since Abu Dhabi’s beautification drive, which had gained full momentum in the eighties starting with Corniche, different types of formal public spaces have been integrated into the city’s system.
But, besides these few formal public spaces, the needs of a cosmopolitan city like Abu Dhabi have spontaneously produced countless informal spaces, scattered throughout the city.

This research is aimed at answering the question, are these existing formal public spaces sufficient to cater to the needs of this diverse community and if there is a deficiency, then could this be leading to the formation of informal spaces? The hypothesis is that informality could be a way to cope with the insufficiency of formal offer. The daily routine of a resident along with variables like proximity, weekday or weekend, preferred activity, weather etc. have an influence on the usage of public space (Palacky, 2015). A survey conducted among Abu Dhabi Main Island residents belonging to different groups of ethnicity, age, gender, working class etc. helps to understand different lifestyles (Gehl and Svave, 2014). A mapping of the informal spaces done from the study conducted at selected public spaces is compared to the existing system of formal spaces. The research had enabled to build a typology of different public spaces, as it is these spaces which contribute to the city’s identity. The comparison between formal and informal spaces will help to conclude if the existing network of formal public spaces is sufficient for the residents. And this, in turn, will help to discuss how it adds to the social sustainability of the city.

• **Author(s) Biography (200 words each):**

Hanu S. Dilip was a Masters student in Urban and Regional Planning at Paris Sorbonne University in Abu Dhabi. Her master thesis studied public spaces at the scale of Abu Dhabi Island, which throws light into the detailed social and physical aspects of public spaces. As part of this research, she has conducted the survey of a major percentage of the formal spaces across the island. Hanu also works as an architect with a well-known international consultancy by the name of RW Armstrong. She has been working in Abu Dhabi for the past nine years and has worked on several landmark projects which also includes a range of large-scale public realm projects. This became one of the major reasons for opting to study public spaces in depth. In this paper, she is identifying how public spaces play an important role in a resident’s life and how informal spaces become formal spaces. She is looking forward to contributing more towards the community by helping to design spaces which will give optimum experience to its users.