CITIES IN A CHANGING WORLD:
QUESTIONS OF CULTURE, CLIMATE AND DESIGN

• Paper / Proposal Title:
Towards a Heliocentric Urbanism? Reconsidering Sunlight Through the Prism of Los Angeles Olympics 2028

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• Abstract (300 words):
Both the city and the Olympic Games turn out to be too costly, too spectacular, and too wasteful. As a result they are facing major challenges concerning ability to meet the requirements for sustainability and prove essential value for the urban dwellers. Our paper examines the prospects of city and lighting through the lens of Los Angeles Olympics 2028 and its theme “Follow the Sun”. We intend to inquire how light can be used, shaped and perceived in the inclusive and responsible cities in the future, and what are the implications of redefining the significance of light (both as a metaphor and material culture) within a given urban space. We are particularly interested in how LA seeks the balance between displaying its rich heritage of manmade lighting, but at the same time also advocates for active engagement with daylight. Indeed, among many light phenomena and technologies present in the city, the sunlight is central to its existence,
and yet it has become unnoticed. “Follow the sun” campaign can be approached as a broader attempt to remind us that the lightscapes designed and assembled by humans, and often celebrated to a great extent in city branding, are late and minor additions, if not harmful distortions. Illuminated nocturnal skylines tend to impose an illusion that we control nature and head for a beautiful and safe future, while the truth is very different, and changing climate conditions begin to affect natural lighting of the cities and their seasonal appearance. In our paper we will discuss how the sun brings into the city more than just solar energy ensuring its functioning, but can also be closely associated with different forms of cultural energy, and as such allow cities to maintain continuity in their distinct identities.

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

G. Thomas Goodnight is a professor at the Annenberg School of Communication, The University of Southern California, Los Angeles CA. A senior Fulbright Scholar, he has conducted research and the development with communication issues in Asia, Africa, South and North America. His main areas of study include the cultures of argument, the transitions from print to digital cultures, and the urban well-being. He has delivered a dozen, different lectures at major universities in China on Globalization and the City. He is recognized as one of a few career distinguished scholars in the field of Communication.

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