

## **SEMINAR**

**jointly organised by Department of Civil Engineering and CICID, HKU**

### **UN-FIXING THE SMART CITY**

by Professor Alessandro (Alex) Aurigi

Head of the School of Architecture,  
Design and Environment  
Plymouth University

Date: December 4, 2013 (Wednesday)

Time: 11:30 am – 12:30 noon

Venue: HW6-12B, Hoking Wong Building,  
The University of Hong Kong, Pokfulam Road, Hong Kong

### **ABSTRACT**

The multi-million driven concept of the smart city is often described as a long-awaited programme of studies and actions which can ‘fix’ increasingly large, wasteful, chaotic and unsustainable urban environments across the globe. The emergence of the ‘internet of things’ and the ‘addition’ of sensing and intelligent functions to urban space will – it is argued – change cities for the better. This seminar will look at the widespread limits of the smart city perspective and conceptualisation, and will do it reflecting on its major selling point: successful urban management. It will argue that prevalent smart city visions tend to be based on hierarchy, centralised control, ‘good’ management based on economy of scale efficiencies, and expert algorithms, whilst making only few, tokenistic concessions to what Sassen describes as the need to ‘talk back to the city’. I will consider an alternative vision that considers the city as a ‘learning’ organisation that needs trial-and-error to thrive. Once the need for highly adaptable, pluralistic and context-rich cities is taken into account, the ‘smart’ way to go about them can change from what is normally proposed at present.

## **ABOUT THE SPEAKER**

Alessandro Aurigi (Laurea (Arch), PhD) is Professor of Urban Design and Head of the School of Architecture, Design and Environment at Plymouth University. Alex has previously worked at Newcastle University and at the Bartlett School of Planning and the Centre for Advanced Spatial Analysis, At UCL. His research focuses on the relationships between our increasingly digital society and the ways we conceive, design, and manage urban space, to enhance and support place quality. Alex has published *Augmented Urban Spaces* (Ashgate, edited with Fiorella De Cindio), and *Making the Digital City* (Ashgate). He has also written in international journals, including the *Journal of Urban Technology*, the *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research*, *Urban Design International*. He has given speeches in Brazil, Japan, South Korea, The Netherlands, Belgium, Finland, Portugal, Spain, as well as the UK and Italy.