Opening Comment of
2007 Annual Conference on Urban and Regional Design

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National Cheng Kung University

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"***Hmmm, I wonder whether "having smiles on the population faces" is one of the criteria of regional and urban planning***!"

Professor Hopkins, Professor Feng (not me), Professor Hsia, Professor Chen from NCKU's College of Planning and Design, Colleagues and Distinguished Guests:

My name is Da Hsuan Feng, and since September 1, 2007, I became Senior Executive Vice President of National Cheng Kung University. Today I represent my boss Academician Michael M. C. Lai to be here to welcome all of you to NCKU and Tainan. Unfortunately, he is unable to attend this exciting Conference of intellectual and economic value.

For Professor Hopkins, I hope you will also have the opportunity to wander outside of the campus. As you can sense already, NCKU and Tainan essentially melt together. As a new comer to Tainan, I have found this historical city to be, forgive me for using the cliché, warm and very friendly. But there is more. I am especially pleased to find the people of this city not only friendly, but they all seem to possess a healthy sense of humor in their language and attitude. Besides being hustling and busting as in any modern fast paced urban areas, I also find people of Tainan always wearing beautiful smiles on their faces. Such characters make, I am confident, the city a fascinating place to explore.

Hmmm, I wonder whether “having smiles on the population faces” is one of the criteria of regional and urban planning!

Also, if you have time, I think you will find it most interesting to at least visit the Southern Taiwan Science Park (STSP), which I believe is truly an exciting case study of regional planning and its economic impact!

To my colleagues in the College of Planning and Design, I have been informed by people of literally all walks of life that your urban and regional planning team is one of the best in Asia, if not the world. Having read the very impressive resume of your keynote speaker, Professor Hopkins, this meeting which could attract him as the keynote, is certainly a testimony of this fact. So, allow me to use this occasion to send congratulations from the administration of the university to you.

I have to also tell you that I am really enthusiastic, well beyond what an administrator in these occasions would say in a perfunctory manner, that I have the opportunity to say a few words of welcome here.

Slightly more than a decade ago, I was a heavy-practitioner of theoretical physics, in fact a cocoon professor, if you like, and therefore if you were to ask me then about urban and city planning, my answer would have been “*say what*?”

Then quite by serendipity, I was introduced to a gentleman who later became a good friend. I hope you would not mind if I “drop his name” here, because his expertise is, I believe, akin to the subject matter of today’s conference.

The gentleman is Dana Tomlin. Dana is professor of landscape architecture at the University of Pennsylvania. By all accounts, Dana is one of world’s great geographic information systems (GIS) experts. He is author of *Geographic Information Systems and Cartographic Modeling*, developer of the Map Analysis Package software, and originator of Map Algebra. He has global reputation in the use of digital cartographic techniques in spatial pattern analysis and land use allocation. As in any creative and active scientist, his great love of the subject drove him to even tell someone as ignorant about the subject as me all the exciting

developments of GIS, and many of the points he touched on are precisely in urban and regional planning,!

As a theoretical physicist, I was absolutely fascinated by GIS, especially by how incredibly clever, innovative and almost artistic ways GIS practitioners leverage and utilize the fast growth of modern high performance computations and 3-D visualization, spatially and temporally. Hence, technology and applications of GIS are robust. As a former Vice President for Research and Economic Development, I was also fascinated by how profound the use of this technology can impact the economic and intellectual arenas of the region.

In the past couple of decades, I was informed that there is tremendous revitalization of the study of geography. I hope I am not being too bold or wrong by saying that prior to GIS, geography was probably not a subject which could excite a vast number of inquisitive minds. After GIS, it is! Spatial and temporal GIS applications are ubiquitous today. They range from the subject matter of your conference, namely urban and regional planning (seeing the chaotic traffic in Taiwan, it seems to me that spatial and temporal GIS could play a role in mitigating the situation,) to population movements, to health informatics such as detecting genesis of infectious diseases and last but not least, to what the military now refers to as network-centric warfare.

I look forward to learn more about the development of GIS in the College of Planning and Design.

The latter part of the 20th century, I believe, gave the world examples and examples of how regional and urban planning can bring, or not bring, prosperity to a region and enhance, or reduce, the “quality of life”, it is now self evident that any region that does not wisely plan the usage of land is heading towards economic and probably intellectual failure. For Asia, with nearly one half of the world’s population living in this continent, and a high percentage of this population living and working in urban areas, it makes the subject matter of this conference goes far beyond academic interest. It must have enormous and immediate economic implications. How exciting.

Since being “relevant” must be part of the blueprint of a modern 21st century research university, and that relevance should and must be measured by how proactive is the university willing to be an economic engine of the region, and the subject matter of this Conference is surely one of the most important aspects of being such an engine, that is why I am so very excited to note that NCKU is strong in this field.

Finally, as an incurable teacher, I cannot help but to give my audience a homework. As you know, Taiwan has the latest and most up-to-date high speed rail. In my mind, this rail should and could be one of the most important ingredients in planning anything in Taiwan, and that it surely has the possibility to be an equalizer of Taiwan’s north and south, intellectually and economically. I would love to see some definitive studies of its impact, especially in the southern part of Taiwan. Thank you so much for your indulgence in my curiosity.

So, I wish you great success for the conference. I also look forward to work closely with colleagues in our College of Planning and Design so that together we can make NCKU one of the most exciting research universities in the 21st century.

Please let me know if there is anything you think I can help! I am at your service.