Future Cities Symposium 2025 Successfully Held in Hong Kong and Dubai

The **Future Cities Symposium 2025** concluded successfully after four days of high-level discussions, presentations, and cross-regional exchange held from **14-15 November in Hong Kong** and **17 November in Dubai**. Funded by the **Prosit Philosophiae Foundation** and jointly organised by **HKU's Joint Lab on Future Cities (JLFC)**, the **Royal College of Art's Future Cities Lab**, and **Dubai Chambers**, the symposium brought together an international community of policymakers, academic leaders, industry practitioners, and investors. With **over 300 participants**, **more than 40 international speakers**, and **over 30 exhibitors**, the event reinforced the role of digital transformation, spatial intelligence, and interdisciplinary collaboration in shaping future cities across Asia, the GBA, China, the GCC region, the UK, and Europe.

Opening in Hong Kong: Keynote Speeches Delivered by Senior Government Officials and Global Academic Leaders

The Hong Kong programme opened at CyberArena, Cyberport, beginning with Welcome Remarks by *Dr Rosana Wong, MH*, Founder of the Prosit Philosophiae Foundation, who highlighted the significance of long-term investment in research-driven, human-centred

innovation. This was followed by a Welcome Speech by *Mr Simon Chan, BBS, JP*, Chairman of Cyberport, who underscored Hong Kong's role as a global hub for smart-city technologies and digital innovation.

A Ribbon-cutting Ceremony was held, marking the formal opening of the symposium, followed by an MoU signing that established new partnerships in urban innovation research.

The Guest of Honour, *Ms Winnie Ho, JP*, Secretary for Housing of the HKSAR Government, delivered the Opening Speech, acknowledging the symposium's contribution to advancing sustainable urban development, cross-sector innovation, and talent cultivation. A photo-taking session and MoU signing formalised new partnerships in urban innovation research.

Thematic Sessions Highlight Global Advances in Mobility, AI, Sustainability, and Space Technology

The symposium's five Hong Kong sessions reflected the breadth of challenges and opportunities facing contemporary cities.

Session 1: Sustainable Design, Mobility & the Low-Altitude Economy

Keynote speeches were delivered by *Mr Liu Chun San, JP*, Under Secretary for Transport and Logistics of the HKSAR Government, and *Prof Adrian Lahoud*, Dean of the School of Architecture at the Royal College of Art. Discussions centred on Hong Kong's evolving mobility landscape, smart transport infrastructure, and emerging low-altitude economic applications such as autonomous aerial mobility and AI-assisted inspection technologies. Industry speakers

including *Mr Michael Law* (Thinkpower2), *Mr Desmond Ho* (Alpha AI), Mr Henry Ng (ArcRite), and *Dr Stella Zhu* (ASTRI) shared applications of digital engineering, drone technology, and AI-powered mobility optimisation.

Session 2: Digital Transformation & Computational Intelligence

This session brought together experts in robotics, computational design, and reconfigurable computing. *Ir Dr Ted Suen*, CEO of ASTRI, outlined the future of digitalised public services, while *Dr Sina Sareh*, Academic Lead of the RCA Robotics Laboratory, discussed frontier robotics for extreme environments. *Prof Hayden So* of HKU, hosting as keynote speaker and moderator, highlighted the research potential of computational intelligence in city-scale innovation. Panelists examined digital twin applications, automated construction technologies, and AI governance.

Session 3: Spatial Data, AI, and Data-Driven Urban Intelligence

Keynote speeches by *Prof Thomas Ng* (City University of Hong Kong) and *Dr Sam Jacoby* (Royal College of Art) addressed how geospatial data infrastructures and AI-powered spatial analytics are transforming city planning, infrastructure monitoring, and public-sector decision-making. *Dr Winnie Tang, MH, JP*, Founder and Chairman of Esri China (HK), moderated a panel with government and academic leaders, exploring opportunities in data standards, CSDI development, and cross-department spatial-data integration.

Session 4: Infrastructure Sustainability & Carbon Neutralisation

Prof Becky P.Y. Loo, Co-director of JLFC and Professor of Geography at HKU, delivered a keynote speech on decarbonisation and the future of sustainable mobility and urban form. She was joined by *Prof Paul Chamberlain* of the Royal College of Art, who introduced design-driven approaches to wellbeing and urban resilience. Panelists across engineering, carbon consulting, and environmental technology discussed carbon accounting, climate transition pathways, and urban infrastructure adaptation strategies.

Session 5: The Space Economy

The final Hong Kong session explored urban innovation through the lens of the expanding space economy. *Prof Gregg Li* (OASA) and *Prof Quentin Parker* (HKU) presented opportunities arising from satellite analytics, space entrepreneurship, and cross-border R&D. A panel featuring *Mr Zulfikar Zafari* (OASA), *Dr Kudakwashe Ndhlukula* (SESAF), and *Mr Alfred Lee* (ASTRI), highlighted investment trends, interdisciplinary collaboration, and talent development for the rapidly growing space sector.

Throughout the Hong Kong programme, Startup Presentations provided a platform for early-stage innovations in AI mobility analytics, digital construction automation, and spatial

computing. The day concluded with Symposium Connect, a networking reception designed to facilitate industry–academia partnerships.

Dubai Session Extends the Dialogue to the Middle East's Rapidly Developing Innovation Landscape

The Dubai session, held at Palace Downtown, reflected the region's growing role in global innovation. *Dr Rosana Wong* opened the session with remarks on cross-regional collaboration,

followed by a scholarship signing ceremony signalling expanded opportunities for academic exchange.

Panel discussions gathered over fifteen speakers from fields including urban mobility, digital governance, ESG investment, AI systems, and space-related technologies. Speakers examined the GCC region's strategic priorities in sustainable planning, resilient infrastructure, autonomous mobility, and future-city indicators. This also included discussions on responsible AI deployment and the role of green finance in accelerating sustainable urban transformation. The programme also discussed benchmarking Dubai against global cities using Future Cities indicators.

International organisations and industry associations participated actively, exploring new partnership models between Hong Kong, Dubai, the Greater Bay Area, and broader global networks. Exhibitions and networking sessions allowed attendees to engage with regional innovation ecosystems and identify opportunities for follow-up collaboration.

Building a Global Network for Data-Driven, Sustainable, and Future-Ready Cities

Across its Hong Kong and Dubai programmes, the Future Cities Symposium 2025 demonstrated the increasing urgency and promise of digital transformation in shaping urban futures. By bringing together experts across mobility, AI, spatial data, sustainability, construction technology, and the space economy, the symposium highlighted the value of interdisciplinary and cross-regional collaboration.

As Hong Kong, the GBA, the GCC, the UK, and Europe continue to strengthen innovation corridors, the symposium established a foundation for ongoing partnerships and scalable real-world solutions. Organisers and participants affirmed their commitment to continuing this dialogue, advancing data-driven, human-centred, and sustainable approaches to building the cities of tomorrow.