Hong Kong geographer wins 2012 Young Researcher of the Year Award

International Transport Forum honours outstanding contribution to transport policy-making

Ms. Wing Yee Winnie LAM, a Chinese national, is the winner of the International Transport Forum’s 2012 Young Researcher of the Year Award.

Dr. Lam, who is a researcher in the Department of Geography at the University of Hong Kong University, received the prestigious award for her paper entitled “Building a seamless transport system through walking”.

The Award was presented today at a ceremony during the Annual Summit of Transport Ministers from around the globe in Leipzig, Germany.

Said Lam: “I feel very honoured to have been chosen for this prestigious prize. I hope that it will help to focus attention on walking, which is the most common but also most underestimated form of transport. But walking is a critical element of connectivity in transport.”

(Note to editors: A picture of Dr. Lam is available at www.flickr.com/photos/internationaltransportforum)

For the jury, Parliamentary State Secretary Andreas Scheuer of Germany, who presented the Award to Dr. Lam, said:

“Walking is a natural part of a holistic understanding of mobility. Because it is so natural, it is often not in the focus of media, research and politics. Dr. Lam’s research is giving an important impulse, therefore, to put the self-evident into the centre of attention.”

In her paper, Dr. Lam proposes a walkability audit as an assessment tool to evaluate the walking environment. This tool has clear, yet flexible criteria to adapt to diverse cultures and geography and can therefore be used globally and in different environments.

As a test, the audit was applied to the pedestrian environment surrounding three health centres for the elderly in Hong Kong. The results show that policy has given priority to pedestrian safety while neglecting aspects such as pedestrian comfort and convenience.

However, Dr. Lam argues, all factors should be fully considered if the objective is to promote walking as an active form of transport. Her paper recommends that planners use a “Plan, Do, Study, Act” cycle of the walkability audit for a strategic planning of a more seamless
transport system that includes walking.

The Young Researcher of the Year Award aims to highlight the importance of research for sound policy formulation and implementation. It is open to researchers under 35 years of age and carries a prize of 5 000 Euros.

The International Transport Forum at the OECD is an intergovernmental organisation with 53 member countries. It acts as a strategic think tank for transport policy and organises an annual summit of ministers. The mission of the International Transport Forum is to help shape transport policy on a global level and ensure that it contributes to economic growth, environmental protection, social inclusion and the preservation of human life and well-being.

For more information on the 2012 Summit and the International Transport Forum please visit www.internationaltransportforum.org/2012. A live webcast is available online.

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