

Report

Attending and Speaking at ICONHIC 2022 (3rd International Conference on Natural Hazards and Infrastructure)

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In early May this year, the subject international conference was held in Athens, Greece, to provide a forum for the enhancement of infrastructures' resiliency in the face of ever-increasing natural disasters, which often destroy infrastructures. The conference organizer was the Athens-based Innovation Center on Natural Hazards and Infrastructure. The National Technical University of Athens and ETH Zurich (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich) provided supervision over organizing the conference with the support from the ASCE (American Society of Civil Engineers), the Hellenic Association of Insurance Companies, the Resilient Cities Network, and the Hellenic Society for Soil Mechanics and Geotechnical Engineering. The size of attendance was approximately 300; primarily from Greece, the rest of Europe, and the United States with a few from other parts of the world. It was going to be held last year, but was postponed for a year in order to deal with the Covid-19 situation.

Overall, it was well prepared and very smoothly run with the employees of the organizer and a group of volunteers (primarily local students). A large number of invited speakers and theme lecturers were apparently internationally recognized experts in their respective fields (most of whom spoke in person) while some of them participated remotely due to travel restrictions and last-minute flight cancellations. Representatives from the banking and insurance industries were also present in addition to engineers to share their standpoints with a notion that large-scale infrastructure projects of the PPP (Public-Private Partnership) type which they would finance and/or insure could be severely impacted during their service lives if lacking a certain level of resiliency. Here, the author believes that the press-in piling method could become a key to achieving a high level of resiliency in some major infrastructures; likely resulting in easier financing and with lower insurance premiums.

The discussions made at this conference appeared to symbolize the elevated sense of urgency for a higher level of infrastructures' resiliency to be achieved in Europe and the U.S. While attendees from Asia were limited, multiple speakers emphasized that the experience in infrastructure resiliency enhancement in Japan and some other regions of Asia should be learned and promulgated for the rest of the world. It was also noted that further participation by the government sector would be essential for a future forum like this one since their presence appeared minimal at this conference.

Representing Giken Ltd., the author presented a paper titled "Landslide Mitigation for Bridge Piers on an Unstable Slope with Rows of Pressed-in Pipe Piles" on a project in Japan in front of an audience of approximately 30. Kubota Corp. of Japan held a booth as one of eight exhibitors on their earthquake-resistant ductile Iron pipes. The organizer discussed the next conference to be held in two years at a different venue. More information on the conference can be found at the following link.

<https://iconhic.com/2021/>

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Fig. 1. Megaron Athens Concert Hall (Center) and International Conference Center (Semi-underground structure to the left of the Concert Hall)



Fig. 2. Panel Discussion at the Conference