Catalysts of Urban Potentials: Cases in Singapore and East Asia

ZÜRICH – Globalisation has had a profound impact on the shape and dynamics of cities. This impact can be felt both in the historic urban centres as well as in rural peripheries. While comprehensive historic centres may remain important, today they have to be reconnected with multiple centres, hubs and nodes. Together, these eccentricities are drawn together in a network of communication infrastructures to form complex polycentric urban systems serving whole regions. The scale, reach and network quality of these urban configurations have generated both positive and negative forms of urbanization at the local, regional and global levels. This module examines these emergent urban conditions by focusing on sites that concentrate spatial, economic, social and cultural activity. Thus these eccentricities are stimulated by the interaction of local sites (topographically) and trans-local networks (topologically). Particular attention is paid to the catalytic circumstances or specific resource-potentials that give rise to these productive and sustainable forms of urban coexistence. The module will focus on two exemplary and significant urban centralities: the urban breeding ground, which is the emergence of diverse, culturally significant neighbourhoods as generative nodes in the urban fabric; and the airport as the driver of a particular kind of urbanization. Zürich, Singapore, Shenzhen/Hong Kong and Shanghai. Combining empirical field-work, analytical approaches and projective scenarios the module will try to deliver policy recommendations and design guidelines for these areas.

KEES CHRISTIAANSE

Biography. Professor Kees Christiaanse (1953) is internationally recognized among today’s foremost researchers and practitioners in the fields of urban design and architecture. He studied architecture and urban design at TU Delft. From 1980-1989 he was a partner at OMA in Rotterdam and subsequently founded KCAP Architects & Planners with offices in Rotterdam and Zürich. From 1996-2003 Kees Christiaanse was Professor of Architecture & Urban Design at the TU Berlin; since 2003 he has been Head of the Institute of Urban Design at the Network City Landscape of the ETH in Zürich. In addition he is a visiting Professor in the Cities Programme of the London School of Economics. He curated the fourth International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam on the theme of Open City: Designing Coexistence in 2009-10. He is actively involved in concrete urban projects such as the revitalization of port areas in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and Hamburg. In addition, for the Olympic Legacy Masterplan in London, he is designing an ‘urban breeding ground’ with delicate systems of public spaces on which interactive cultures of mixed use can unfold, catalysing the redevelopment of the surrounding city.

Creativity as Catalyst: The Hong Kong and Shenzhen Cases

Keywords. Hong Kong, Shenzhen, open city, creative sectors, socio-economic development, sustainable urban development.

SINGAPORE – Hong Kong and Shenzhen are economically coexistent twin cities which are differentiated from each other in terms of social and urban practices. This can be seen in their own urban ‘breeding grounds’. Within a free market environment, Hong Kong, a former British-administered territory and is currently a Special Administrative Region of China, has developed a high-density approach to urban construction and renewal on its limited buildable land. During the last few years the overgrown commercial capital and the improper governmental enthusiasm have intensified the gentrification pressure on the city’s several creative neighbourhoods. Nevertheless, the well-established democratic urban development process, based on a reliable legal and judicial system that guarantees the contribution of non-governmental agencies, has helped in securing energetic urban breeding grounds. Within a much more controlled market economy, Shenzhen, an experimental fast-made city in Mainland China, has been learning from the experiences of Hong Kong and Shenzhen.

Ting Chen, was born in Zhuzhou, Hunan province of China. She was involved in concrete urban projects such as the revitalization of port areas in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and Hamburg. In addition, for the Olympic Legacy Masterplan in London, he is designing an ‘urban breeding ground’ with delicate systems of public spaces on which interactive cultures of mixed use can unfold, catalysing the redevelopment of the surrounding city.

Making Future Cities

First International Conference 12-14 September, Singapore

1. Catalysts of Urban Potentials: Cases in Singapore and East Asia

SINGAPORE – A key feature of a city is the diversity of opportunities it offers to its inhabitants. Fuelled by economies of agglomeration and twisted by historic traces and territorial conditions, those opportunities tend to cluster together. Investigating the centralities and their interconnections both within and across cities is the focus of the research presented in this Gazette issue.

Ting Chen

Cultural Production and Elements of Urban Potentials: The Singapore Case

Keywords. Singapore, cultural industries, open city, heterogeneity, sustainable development.

SINGAPORE – Singapore’s remarkable economic ascent in the recent past and its strategic location in the Southeast Asian region mark it as a unique case study for understanding the relationship between the role of the state in development and urban production. Central planning for Singapore to specialise in a high-end global service economy is paralleled by the state’s recent cultivation of creative industries to enhance a sustained competitiveness in the global knowledge economy.

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Cultural Capital, Spatial Productions, Protagonists, Landscapes: The Shanghai Case

Keywords. Post-socialist urbanism, modernity and industrial heritage, typological resilience, cultural production.

SINGAPORE – As China careens toward a better city life better, systematic opportunism is the urban strategy of survival, where typological resilience becomes inseparable from globalised heritage, and cultural capital is re-calculated as part of the new economy. Shanghai spearheads and exemplifies this condition. Precisely because of cultural production from the metropolitan region of Shanghai, this paper looks at the changing value of cultural capital in systems of spatial production intersecting with both the maturing of post-socialist urban development by state capitalism and the urban transition from manufacturing to service economy.

The state’s role in the cultural rehabilitation of industrial buildings as a strategy to rejuvenate urban fabric dilapidating since the entry of market economics is paired with private initiatives instigated by Shanghai’s cosmopolitan entrepreneurs and elites who have garnered from abroad the latest knowledge for packaging creative industries. The differing blend of top-down and bottom-up utilises ‘urban loopholes’ – systematic gaps that allow for the system to be exploited and in turn altered – as opportunities of pragmatism to harness cultural capital through spatial productions. Selected areas of urban potential are analysed to understand the contextual specificities, agents, and agendas that have proven to be and could be catalytic in their development as urban breeding grounds.


The Production of Space Driven by Airports: A Comparative Study of Singapore and Brussels

Keywords. Urbanisation, airports, guidelines, scenarios, Changi.

SINGAPORE – The subject of this research is the urbanisation of global air traffic hubs, taking Changi International Airport and Brussels Airport as two comparative case studies.

Biography. Before joining FCL, Anna Gasco practiced architecture and urban design for 7 years. She worked on a range of projects from the Landscape Master’s program at the London Olympics to a strategic regional planning study in Paris and various competition entries for redevelopment in Central London, and St. Petersburg. She also completed a series of public and private buildings. Italian, born in Kinshasa, she graduated as an Architect in Brussels and completed an MSc in Urban Design at the Bartlett School of Architecture in London. She has practiced in the United Kingdom, in Switzerland, in Belgium.


The Politics of Excess

The Politics of Excess is introduced as one of the core research topics of our team in Singapore and backed up by initial studies and projects currently undertaken in Chicago. With these projects we will also try to explain the way we envision research as projective speculation: generate and critically interpret the built environment in order to include our core research topics.

Biography. Alex Lehnerer is an architect and urban designer, receiver of the PhD from the ETH in Zurich and is currently Asst. Professor at the University of Illinois Chicago, School of Architecture. He is partner of Kaisersrot in Zürich, and founding director of the De-Apparat for Urban Speculation in Chicago. His practice SALE (alexeinhnerer.com) explores urban and architectural conditions – their forms, ingredients and rules. Such project- and product-oriented work addresses both the discipline’s academic and professional environment.

Accademic Qualifications. PhD (ETHZ), MArch (UCLA), Dipl.-Ing. (TU Berlin).


Chicagoland – The lecture will focus on the exploration of the politics and cultural phenomena in the discourses on the contemporary metropolitan and its potential form and future. Although the zeitgeist might expect the contrary, the discussion is based on the hypothesis that moments of excess, abundance and redundancy with regard to use and interpretation of any urban matter (whether: supply or demand) have been and will be the primary virtue of the city and its urban aggregations. The city is the one location where limits and thresholds are regularly transgressed to an extent, which continuously and adaptively challenges the balance among individuals and the collective. Moreover, it is exciting to see how limited or missing resources trigger the city to productively search for (artificial) substitutes in order to maintain its exuberant lifestyle(s). Condition is re-calculated as part of the new economy. CHICAGO – The city’s one location where limits and thresholds are regularly transgressed to an extent, which continuously and adaptively challenges the balance among individuals and the collective. Moreover, it is exciting to see how limited or missing resources trigger the city to productively search for (artificial) substitutes in order to maintain its exuberant lifestyle(s).

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