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 augmented 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 cities 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 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 them 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.

Creative as – Catalyst: The Hong Kong and Shenzhen Cases

Keywords. Hong Kong, Shenzhen, open city, creative sectors, socioeconomic 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 government 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 protection 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 city planning through the hurried urban practices under an oriental patriarchal will. Since a few years ago, the city has endeavoured to greatly accelerate the ‘upgrading’ of its socioeconomic structure, not only through creating several socially homogenised ‘optimised’ clusters of tertiary industry, but also trying hard to eliminate dimensions, diminish or gentrify its old, not so bright neighbourhoods, which should nonetheless be a strong demonstration for an open city with real potential for creativity.

Through the comparative study of these two cities, we try to discuss how effective urban strategies in different socioeconomic environments might be developed, taking the advantage of existing systems, to trigger, maintain, and strengthen urbanity as well as creativity.

TING CHEN

Biography. Ting Chen, was born in Zhuzhou, Hunan province of China. She studied architecture at Tsinghua University from 2003 to 2009 in both the Bachelor and Master programmes. Within this period, she took part in several projects including historic research, architectural design, urban design and research. Subsequently she went to ETH Zurich to work as a researcher in the Chair of History of Urban Planning. She took up a PhD post in the Future Cities Laboratory at the beginning of 2011.


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.

Taking Richard Florida’s claim that ‘human creativity is the ultimate economic resource’, productive potentials for urban development have been primarily sponsored by the state in the selective rejuvenation of existing parts of Singapore and in the creation of new nodes for creative hubs. Urban criteria such as openness and heterogeneity, along with scalar graduation, adjacencies and edge conditions will be part of an analysis for selected sites in the Singapore case to identify the elements of the design ecosystem, its agents, policies, processes, along with the urban morphologies, which provide the ground for development. The cultivation of cultural industries into creative economies is also examined from the perspective of the agents of cultural production for the potentials of intersection between the private agents and the state.

TING CHEN and YING ZHOU

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 its diversity of opportunities and its ability to attract people to those opportunities. 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 Issue.

Ying Zhou focuses on Shanghai (the city she calls her home town) within the eventful planning and economic history of that city. Hong Kong, the city that once profited from Shanghai’s (policy induced) decline, and its mainland twin Shenzhen, constitute a second site where contemporary economic, social and urban practices are manifest. Ting Chen investigates. We are looking forward to see how Alex Lehrner’s analysis of urban excess informs discussion of these East Asian cities. In the age of globalisation, airports are significant not only as infrastructures of connectivity but also as urban centres in their own right. Max Hirsh extends Ting’s account of Hong Kong/Shenzhen by analysing patterns and infrastructure of cross-border commercial realities of air traffic hubs, BRU and SIN.

ALEX LEHRNER, YING ZHOU
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 better life, systematic opportunism is the urban strategy of survival, where typological resilience becomes inscriptive from globalised heritage, and cultural capital is re-calculated as part of the new economy. Shanghai spearheads and exemplifies this condition. Previous scholarship on 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 the upgrading of post-socialist urban development through the rejuvenation of industrial buildings as a strategy to visualize future expansion scenarios.

YING ZHOU


Academic Qualifications. BSE Princeton, MArch Harvard.


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.

The increase in cargo and passenger traffic in recent years has magnified the impact of airports on their regions. Airports have become magnets for commercial and industrial enterprises as they seek to benefit from the excellent air and ground accessibility, and enhanced marketing exposure that airports offer. Airlines generate employment and support real estate values. While industrial, logistics and exhibition parks are emerging around airports, new infrastructures, mostly more forms of a metropolitan centre are extending out of the terminal, including botanical gardens, glamorous shopping streets, hotels, offices buildings, upmarket restaurants, and even cultural and entertainment facilities. Airports increasingly take on functions previously linked to private organisations, spatial typologies formerly reserved to cities, and transport connections usually associated with metropolitan downtowns.

As a gateway to the land where it sits, the airport region is central in the prospering of both the city and the airport, reflecting and exemplifying the larger transformation of the country where it is located. The aim of this research is to analyse and compare the urban forms of layers around Changi International Airport and Brussels Airport, to derive accurate guidelines and criteria for promoting good-quality airports, principles of regional development and to visualise future expansion scenarios.

ANNA GASCO

Biography. Before joining FCL, Anna Gasco practiced architecture and urban design for 7 years. She worked on a range of projects from the Lower Manhattan layer of the London Olympics to a strategic regional planning study in Paris and various competition entries for redevelopment of Dublin Central, London, and St Petersburgh. 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, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Belgium.


Epilegmenes

Guest: How come that ancient shop house stands next to this uber-fancy shopping mall selling all those luxury goods from abroad?

Host: Well, it is the same with food. Some people like it the old-fashioned way, some need always to taste the latest thing. But most people love to have the choice and pick the favorites out of the whole spectrum, every day.

Guest: Right, I understand. But what if I don’t have time – I’m leaving the day after tomorrow?

Host: Try Swiss quality roti laksa.

Anna Gasco

ON, ON, ON: The Politics of Excess

Keywords. Urban design, excess, politics, research.

CHICAGO – The lecture will focus on the exploration of the politics and culture in the excess economy, tying the discourse on the contemporary metropolis and its potential form and future. Although the zeitgeist might expect the contrary, the discussion is on the basis of the 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 as well as apologetically 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). This research is an attempt to take a systematic and systematic approach of urban phenomena concerning the culture of excess within the discourse on the contemporary metropolis and its implications for architecture.

ALEX LEHNERER

Biography. Alex Lehnerer is an architect and urban designer, received his 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 Zurich, and founding director of the De- nmark’s urban think tank, exarch. His practice SALE (alexlehnerer.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.

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


Transborder Infrastructural Mapping: Air Passenger Flows in the Pearl River Delta

Keywords. Airports, infrastructure, mobility, East Asia.

CAMBRIDGE, MA – Around the world, the number of air passengers has quadrupled since 1980. During the same time, air traffic in the Pearl River Delta has increased by a factor of 50. Architects have typically studied the expansion of global aviation by analysing mega-projects like ‘starchitects’ passenger terminals and high-speed airport railways. Yet they have ignored the emergence of parallel transport systems designed for travelers whose movements across international borders is limited by their citizenship or income. Cheaper, rarer, and more geographically dense, these ‘transborder’ networks – and the incipient air travelers who use them – have radically recentered the cross-border flow of goods and people in the Pearl River Delta.

MAX HIRSH

Biography. Max Hirsh is currently completing his PhD in Architecture at Harvard. His dissertation – Airport Urbanism: The Urban Infrastructure of Global Mobility – investigates the expansion of international air traffic and its implications for architecture and urban design. Max has been a visiting lecturer and design critic at Harvard, Yale, University of Washington, Technion, and École Nationale Supérieure d’Architecture. He has also been a fellow of the Social Science Research Council, the

Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies, and the German Research Foundation.

Academic Qualifications. BA Harvard, Magister Technical University of Berlin, MA Harvard, PhD Harvard.