The architecture of Southeast Asian cities: how do architectural and urban expressions of modernity relate to heritage?

Adèle Esposito

The conference examined this idea as a hypothesis in light of the history of each city, the persistence of ancient urban morphologies, and heritage policies promoted by various Southeast Asian nations. The conference was organized around five thematic panels, where papers presented reflected upon how agents responsible for physical changes, and the operational tools employed in urban development interact in the designing and implementing of architectural and urban projects. They retraced the circulation of models and their reception by different kinds of agents - particularly by the inhabitants - who appropriate, transform, and conceptions, which play a part in 'regular' or normative urban planning cultures. The papers analysed the social and spatial transformations in Southeast Asian cities. They not only focused on architectural and urban creation, but also on projects, which aim to conserve and/or enhance inherited urban forms and spaces. The conference addressed the question of urban models and their assumed standardisation via the deter of techniques, agents and conceptions, which play a part in 'regular' or normative urban development. It did not neglect eventual confrontations, 'spill-over' or combinatorial associations with other circuits of knowledge, and the control of urbanisation for the safeguarding of cultural heritage sites. The papers questioned the cultural backgrounds associated with plans and projects for heritage conservation, as well as the control of urbanisation for the safeguarding of heritage: heritage representations, tourist images, analytical frameworks (heritage concepts and theories) and operational principles. Lessons from heritage conservation projects are often shared on an international scale, as they are disseminated by the international organisations. The papers questioned the appropriation and the application of these projects and plans in particular contexts where they interact with local societies. The papers analysed the social and spatial transformations of 'historic' cities. They scrutinised the effects of heritage policies. They questioned the role of tourism in these processes, evaluated relevant management proposals and examined spatial configurations created either by inhabitants and/or real estate promoters who benefit from tourism development. Authors investigated new urban forms and spaces created by projects situated at the margins of heritage sites. The papers presented the conception and implementation of projects in Southeast Asian cities. They presented alternative visions of heritage. The papers presented the conception and implementation of projects in Southeast Asian cities. They presented alternative visions of heritage.

IIAS Reports continued

The Panels

Building the Southeast Asian city in the era of internationalisation: cultures of projects, urban ideals and other ingredients of urban shaping in Southeast Asia

Coordinator
Charles Goldblum (Emeritus Professor, University Paris 8)

IN THE LAST FEW DECADES, Southeast Asian cities have experienced rapid urban development, which has dramatically changed their forms, scales and social compositions. Beyond these dramatic transformations, these cities are still marked, at cultural and social facts, by their diversity, which is one crucial peculiarity of the region. However, against this background, urban development strategies and the processes of projects' implementation operate in these cities. These projects are often large-scale (mega-projects that activate mega-urbanisation); they are frequently driven by economic rationale and shared professional cultures (conveyed by the same categories of agents, sometimes by the same people, e.g., developers, international experts, architects, urban planner, engineers, tour operators, etc.). Through these new regulations, these powerful movements draw on common sources, extend beyond the ASEAN's geographical and political framework and are echoed in both East Asia and South Asia. This interplay is based on exchanges and is crossed by hierarchical networks (e.g., international urban cooperation and international donors). In this context, the long distance creates a network in every form, shaping urban spaces such as the dissemination of concepts and techniques, knowledge and know-how of the international cooperation collide with (and not as a short distance circuits) which convey models of consumption and images through various media, including the Internet. These dynamics deeply impact urban practices, and especially idealised housing types.

The topic of the panel was situated within the field of comparative urban planning cultures. It examined new urban shapes established at different scales of metropolises and territories, analysing the specific conditions in which these shapes emerge in the cities ('grafs', 'plating', but also de-foundation, expropriation, elimination or exclusion of certain forms), and relating them to pre-existing urban realities, the phases and the contexts that have preceded urban development. The papers crossed three introductions to the subject, depending on the cities of reference, the project rationale and the types of strategies: the new architectural and urban shaping in Southeast Asian countries, which convey models of consumption and images through various media, including the Internet. These dynamics deeply impact urban practices, and especially idealised housing types. The conference examined this idea as a hypothesis in light of the history of each city, the persistence of ancient urban morphologies, and heritage policies promoted by various Southeast Asian nations. The conference was organized around five thematic panels, where papers presented reflected upon how agents responsible for physical changes, and the operational tools employed in urban development interact in the designing and implementing of architectural and urban projects. They retraced the circulation of models and their reception by different kinds of agents - particularly by the inhabitants - who appropriate, transform, and conceptions, which play a part in 'regular' or normative urban planning cultures. The papers analysed the social and spatial transformations in Southeast Asian cities. They not only focused on architectural and urban creation, but also on projects, which aim to conserve and/or enhance inherited urban forms and spaces. The conference addressed the question of urban models and their assumed standardisation via the deter of techniques, agents and conceptions, which play a part in 'regular' or normative urban development. It did not neglect eventual confrontations, 'spill-over' or combinatorial associations with other circuits of knowledge, and the control of urbanisation for the safeguarding of cultural heritage sites. The papers questioned the cultural backgrounds associated with plans and projects for heritage conservation, as well as the control of urbanisation for the safeguarding of heritage: heritage representations, tourist images, analytical frameworks (heritage concepts and theories) and operational principles. Lessons from heritage conservation projects are often shared on an international scale, as they are disseminated by the international organisations. The papers questioned the appropriation and the application of these projects and plans in particular contexts where they interact with local societies. The papers analysed the social and spatial transformations of 'historic' cities. They scrutinised the effects of heritage policies. They questioned the role of tourism in these processes, evaluated relevant management proposals and examined spatial configurations created either by inhabitants and/or real estate promoters who benefit from tourism development. Authors investigated new urban forms and spaces created by projects situated at the margins of heritage sites.
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The circulation of spatial cultures: criss-crossed receptions and cultural-mix process

The city designed at the territorial scale in order to manage its environment: a new field of inquiry and experimentation

Resiliency/resistance: the city is built, appropriated and defended by its inhabitants

TODAY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, the architectural and urban fields are experiencing diversified renewal processes. This panel analysed new situations and resulting changes introduced by architectural and urban projects. The panel asked the question in the projects and the expressions of modernity which, simultaneously, relate to local contexts? The panel focused on the analysis of projects and the degree to which they provide a full account of the negotiations and the individual decisions through which professionals or inhabitants shape space. The proposals focused on the spatial cultures, which give form to projects. They investigated the circulation of architectural and urban phenomena of criss-crossed reception, the cultural-mix processes and the introduction of innovative elements, all of which have implications on spatial conditions into account - the rooted local practices and the structural or cyclical conditions under which projects emerge; new spatial scales considered by them and their consequences on urban transformations; the instruments of management situated at the interface of these scales; and the influence of cultural specificities, local models, innovative knowledge and indigenous know-how.

Presenters

Lilib Hosian (Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology)
Housing in a shifting ecosystem in Keirong, a suburban area of Dhaka City

Prin (Ihearmonechotecha) (AUISER)
From the agricultural patterns to the city's form: the map of the Bangkok peri-urban to the Tha Chin River at the beginning of the 20th Century

Fang Yu Hu (AUISER)
Interaction between urban spatial organisation and flood risk: 'poor case study'

Anil Kumar Roy (CEPT University)
Revelating natural heritage through urban planning tools: the case of Suhartak riverfront development in Ahmedabad, India

The city is designed at the territorial scale in order to manage its environment: a new field of inquiry and experimentation

EVEYWHERE IN THE WORLD, because of rapid urbanisation and extension outside of their ramparts and historical frameworks, cities have recently colonised larger territories. This form of colonisation has taken different shapes: urban sprawl and extension of peripheral areas; suburbanisation, which has absorbed villages and created new neighbourhoods; and voluntarist policies, which have tried to manage urban extensions through the creation of satellite towns located a few kilometres away from the main city. Because of these kinds of urban territorial expansions, architects and urban planners have to face new challenges associated with energy-related crises, the will of responsibly using natural resources, climate change and CO2 emissions. Urban creations, which until recently had been confined to the field of empiricism and imagination, now require both scientific knowledge and traditional expertise. The main question posed by this panel is located at the intersection of two methods: traditions, which have been adapted to specific local conditions, and the experimentations of new practices which involve other disciplines. Although the topic will focus on the territory covered by ASEAN, the panel also accepted comparisons between projects situated in Southeast Asia with others located in neighbouring Asian countries such as India, China, Korea and Japan. This is because we cannot ignore the influences of the projects realised in countries situated beyond ASEAN on the historical and contemporary transformations of Southeast Asian cities. The papers analysed the conditions and conceptions under which projects emerge; new spatial scales considered by them and their consequences on urban transformations; the instruments of management situated at the interface of these scales; and the influence of cultural specificities, local models, innovative knowledge and indigenous know-how.

Presenters

Ariane Louvet-Pham (Institut Parisien d’Urbanisme)
Designing a Vietnamese village: a crossed of the Eastern and Western planning culture

Notes

1. AUISER is a research unit (CNRS, National Centre for Scientific Research/MCC, Ministry of Culture and Communication). The group consists of departments from IPR/AUISER (Parisian Institute of Research Architecture Urbanism Society), ACS (Architecture Culture Society XIX-th-XIII century), OCS (Observatory of the Suburban Condition), ARHTEP (Architecture, History, Techniques, Territory, and Heritage), and is hosted by the AUISER research unit (Architectural, Urbanism, Society: Knowledge Teaching Research). The scientific committee for this conference included 14 members coming from 10 different institutions.

2. The Urban Knowledge Network Asia, piloted by the International Institute for Asian Studies, brings together more than 100 scholars and professionals from 16 institutions in Europe, Asia, and the United States.
