

WORKSHOP TITLE

Inter-Referencing Asia: Urban Experiments & the Art of Being Global

WORKSHOP DIRECTORS

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The 21st century will be an urban century and more significant, it will be a century of Asian urbanization. The growth of Asian cities prompts the need for a research agenda that pays careful attention to the processes and forms of urbanism that are forming at such sites. The analytical framework of “global cities,” which is in currency, fails to capture the role of Asian cities as “worlding” nodes: those that create global connections and global regimes of value. In particular, it fails to notice the ways in which Asian cities produce global urbanism through experiments of inter-referencing whereby urban elites borrow, copy, and articulate city-making across national borders. In the dynamic context of such inter-Asian aspirations, Dubai, Singapore, and Shanghai emerge as “models” while aspiring cities undertake slum demolitions, invest in premium urban infrastructure, woo investors through special economic zones, deploy high-style architecture to create an urban brand, and compete for professionals in the bid to create world-class economies. Such a production of space has profound implications for the future of Asian cities: to whom will the city belong? What will be the relationship between cities and citizenship?

We propose a workshop that focuses on the urban experiment that is the Asian city. We invite paper proposals that address the following issues:

- The “worlding” role of Asian cities in the age of late capitalism with a particular emphasis on the inter-city borrowings, linkages, and competitions that drive globalization across Asia. How is such inter-referencing driven by elite actors, by the state, and by the circulation of professionals and managers? What are the aesthetic icons and symbols associated with Asian urban aspirations? In other words, what is the “art of being global” that is being cultivated at the site of the Asian city?
- The types of displacements that are emerging in such Asian cities, ranging from the flows of labor that service the success and prosperity of cities to the displacement being engendered by the development of enclave urbanism. What are the social and political limits of such displacements? How is the politics of displacement mediated by civil society actors that operate both within and across particular Asian cities? What are the forms of urban mobilization that are coalescing around the modality of displacement?

International Conference on Inter-Asian Connections
Dubai, UAE: February 21-24, 2008
CALL FOR PAPERS

The sheer political ambition of their urban experimentations suggests a focus on the United Emirates, India, China, and Southeast Asia, but not exclusively. We invite scholars from anthropology, urban planning, architecture, sociology, geography, and cultural studies, as well as civil society actors, cultural producers, and professionals who are directly engaged in projects of inter-Asia city-making. Paper submissions can be focused on a single city or can be comparative and transnational in nature. Our workshop will foster interactions that can lead to collaborations, resulting in a new field of Inter-Asian Urban Studies. We plan an edited volume that will be the first study of this new South-South urban renaissance and the worlding ambitions of Asian cities.

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