



Urban Asia: Futures Past, Present and Yet to Come

**22 - 23 February 2016
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
National University of Singapore**

**Organised as part of the MOE Tier 2 Grant-funded
project, Aspirations, Urban Governance, and the
Remaking of Asian Cities**

**In collaboration with the Cities Cluster of the
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences**



NUS
National University
of Singapore

URBAN ASIA: FUTURES PAST, PRESENT AND YET TO COME

**JOINTLY ORGANISED BY THE URBAN ASPIRATIONS RESEARCH GROUP AND THE FASS
CITIES CLUSTER, NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE**

**VENUE:
RESEARCH DIVISION SEMINAR ROOM (AS7 06-42),
AS7 SHAW FOUNDATION BUILDING
10 KENT RIDGE CRESCENT
NUS KENT RIDGE CAMPUS
SINGAPORE 119260**

What urban futures does Asia conjure? What role do forms of the future play in urban lives and material transformation in Asia today?

Until the middle of the twentieth century, dominant imaginings of many parts of Asia were not urban at all. And to the extent that specifically *urban* futures were imagined for Asia, prior to the past couple of decades these were often fashioned in the image of various (capitalist and communist) elsewhere. Today, in contrast, urban futurity is commonly located within Asia – demographically (having become the ‘centre of gravity’ of the world’s urban population), economically (as presenting miraculous growth and emerging opportunity), as a leading edge of innovations in urban governance (subaltern as well as ‘formal’), and in the realm of urban theorization (as a region from where responses have been made to the call for ‘new geographies of theory’). Even Ed Soja who famously cast greater Los Angeles as the most ‘advanced’ form of late twentieth century urbanism -- which could supposedly be seen in earlier stages in every other metropolitan region in the world -- later decentred urban theory to cities in Asia: ‘We can learn as much if not more from understanding what is happening in Mumbai, Delhi, Singapore, and Shanghai than we can from Los Angeles, New York, London, and Paris’ (cited in Harris, 2012: 6). Similar spatio-temporal remapping is evident in popular cultural depictions of urban futures. Much of the backdrop to an LA of the ‘slight’ future in Spike Jonze’s 2013 movie *Her*, for example, was filmed in Shanghai.

This workshop brings together a diverse range of scholars examining the urban and Asia’s futures – past, present and yet to come. Extending from and funded by the ongoing Singapore MOE-funded research project ‘Aspirations, Urban Governance and the Remaking of Asian Cities’, our interests span: historical forms of Asian futurity and associated legacies; contemporary (re)imaginings of Asian urban futures; and the active, constitutive role of various forms of the future in and beyond urban Asia.

DAY 1 22 FEBRUARY 2016	
09.30	REGISTRATION & COFFEE
10.00	OPENING REMARKS
10.00	<p>Tim Bunnell <i>Department of Geography, National University of Singapore</i></p>
10:20 – 12:00	SESSION 1 – HERITAGE FUTURES
	<p>CHAIR & DISCUSSANT Daniel Goh <i>Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore</i></p> <p>SPEAKERS & PAPERS</p> <p>Envisioning Futures Past: Spectacle, heritage, and emergent activism in postcolonial Macau and Hong Kong Cecilia Chu <i>Department of Urban Planning and Design, The University of Hong Kong</i></p> <p>Engineering Urban Futures: The Technopolitics of Housing in Late Socialist Vietnam Christina Schwenkel <i>Department of Anthropology, University of California, Riverside, USA</i></p> <p>Genealogy of White Building Pen Sereypagna <i>Cambodia, Independent Architect</i></p>
12.00 – 13.00	LUNCH

13.00 – 14.20	SESSION 2 – HIGH-TECH SPACES AND SUBJECTS
	<p>CHAIR & DISCUSSANT</p> <p>Elaine Ho <i>Department of Geography, National University of Singapore</i></p> <p>SPEAKERS & PAPERS</p> <p>Building Bengaluru from the bottom: Aspirations and realities in India's silicon valley</p> <p>Becky Bowers <i>Department of Anthropology, London School of Economics</i></p> <p>Geographies of Future and Singapore's Technopreneurship Aspirations</p> <p>Zane Kripe <i>Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences, Institute of Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology, Leiden University, The Netherlands</i></p>
14.20 – 14.50	COFFEE BREAK
15.00	NUS → HOTEL (Transport is provided)
16.30	WALKING TOUR
	To join the walk, please gather at 4.20PM at the Lobby area, Park Avenue Rochester Hotel. Refer to the map for more details on the walk. The walk will end with dinner at Biopolis.
18:30	DINNER
	<p>Dinner venue: Bodacious Restaurant, 70 Biopolis Street, #01-05, Singapore 138547</p> <p>* Transport from the hotel is provided for those not attending the walk.</p>
20:30	DINNER → HOTEL (Transport is available)

DAY 2 23 FEBRUARY 2016	
08.30	REGISTRATION & COFFEE
09.00	SESSION 1 - SOUTH ASIAN INFRASTRUCTURES OF FUTURITY
09.00 – 10.20	<p>CHAIR & DISCUSSANT Till Mostowlansky <i>Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore</i></p> <p>SPEAKERS & PAPERS</p> <p>Coding the Future: Hindu Extrastatecraft and the Infrastructural Inertia of Indian Urbanism Asher Ghertner <i>Department of Geography, School of Arts and Sciences, Rutgers University, USA</i></p> <p>Thinking/planning futures in/beyond the city: states, borders, infrastructures, connectivities Nausheen Anwar <i>Department of Social Sciences, Institute of Business Administration (IBA), Karachi, Pakistan</i></p>
10.20 – 10.40	COFFEE BREAK
10.40 – 12.00	SESSION 2 - UTOPIANISM: IDEAS AND EFFECTS
	<p>CHAIR & DISCUSSANT Jamie Gillen <i>Department of Geography, National University of Singapore</i></p> <p>SPEAKERS & PAPERS</p> <p>Future Visions Of Tokyo That Mattered: How utopian concepts shape urban outcomes André Sorensen <i>Department of Social Sciences, University of Toronto Scarborough</i></p> <p>Creative urban interventions: recuperating utopianisms in Singapore Olivia Tan <i>Department of Geography, National University of Singapore</i></p>
12.00 – 13.00	LUNCH

13.00 – 14.20	SESSION 3 - GROUND-LEVEL POLITICS
	<p>CHAIR & DISCUSSANT Eric Thompson <i>Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore</i></p> <p>SPEAKERS & PAPERS No Future Here: (Non) Futures in Thailand Eli Elinoff <i>Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore</i></p> <p>Open Secrets: Tracking the Political in Chinese Urbanization Mary Ann O'Donnell <i>Urban Village (CZC) Special Forces, Shenzhen, China</i></p>
14.20 – 14.40	COFFEE BREAK
14.40 – 16.00	SESSION 4 - ALTERNATIVE MODELS AND REIMAGININGS
	<p>CHAIR & DISCUSSANT Michelle Miller <i>Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore</i></p> <p>SPEAKERS & PAPERS Seoul's Situated Aspiration: Seoul Style Urban Governance Model Lee Yong-Sook <i>Department of Public Administration, Korea University</i></p> <p>An antipodean perspective on contemporary Asian urban imaginaries Trevor Hogan <i>Humanities and Social Sciences, College of Arts, Social Sciences and Commerce, La Trobe University, USA</i></p>
16.00 – 17.00	FINAL DISCUSSION
	<p>Tim Bunnell and Daniel Goh <i>National University of Singapore</i></p>
17.00	END OF WORKSHOP