

Critical reflections on the future of planning

Public City, Private City workshop
27-28 August 2014, New York City

Paul Rabé

ON 27 AND 28 AUGUST 2014, Paul Rabé, Coordinator of the Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA) at IIAS, and Anupama Rao, Associate Professor of History at Barnard College/Columbia University, convened a workshop entitled *Public City, Private City* at the Institute for Public Knowledge, New York University.

The workshop was the first of three to be organised as part of the urban component of the *Rethinking Asian Studies in a Global Context* programme. Funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in New York and coordinated by IIAS, this programme aims to generate new humanities-focused research and knowledge in the field of Asian studies and urban studies by stimulating discussions between a range of different scholars and researchers in Asia, the United States and Europe.

The overarching theme of the New York workshop was the role of planning in the production of the built environment. Traditionally a public task, justified by the assumption that government is better able to protect the public interest, urban planning is increasingly being devolved to private parties, particularly in many South and Southeast Asian cities. In this context, the workshop considered the impact of these new planning forms, many of which are accompanied by high degrees of speculation and the privatisation of public space. The workshop conveners sought to analyse the implications of these shifts through structured discussions around four main topics:

1. The rise of the 'generic' city: the long-term consequences of modern city-making in Asia and beyond
2. The past and future of planning
3. Alternate modes of city-making
4. What role for urban knowledge?

Discussions centred on the politics of planning (from the physicality of plans to their modes of 'visibilization' and on the way in which historical legacies of planning, spatial segregation, and informality challenge contemporary arguments about urban convergence. The focus was on contemporary Asian cities, but insights on comparative urbanism from other parts of the world – especially the United States – featured prominently in the analyses.

The participants

Workshop participants comprised a mix of architects, planners, academics in the humanities and social sciences, lawyers, artists and PhD students (for the full list of names please refer to www.rethinking.asia/event/public-city-private-city). The workshop also featured two prominent special guests: Ritchie Torres, member of the New York City Council representing the Central Bronx; and Arjun Appadurai, professor of Media, Culture, and Communication (NYU).



Public housing in the Bronx

Council member Ritchie Torres (left) was elected to office in November 2013 and is the youngest member of the New York City Council. Torres applied the discussions on the crisis in planning very concretely to the situation of public housing in the New York borough of the Bronx. His message was two-fold: first, that public housing in the Bronx is too big to fail – with over 600,000 people living in New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) public housing developments in the Bronx alone – and second, that it is in fact failing, due to severe fiscal problems besetting NYCHA and 'catastrophic', long-term disinvestment in public housing units. As a citizen of the borough who grew up and lived most of his life in NYCHA developments, Torres explained that his upbringing in the area and his personal experience propelled him to office with a mission to address the problems facing NYCHA and, more broadly, to advocate on behalf of public housing in a political climate of mounting criticism of government services and public agencies.



Global finance

Arjun Appadurai (left), a world renowned author and expert on the cultural dynamics of globalisation, delivered the workshop's keynote address on

Asian Cities: Connectivity and Comparisons.

The thought-provoking keynote outlined Appadurai's current interests in the sociology and ideology of global finance and its impact on housing markets in the West and, more recently, Asia. The monetisation of risk, through the growing use of derivatives, has a very direct impact on the health and growth of cities through the sub-prime mortgage market. As is well known by now, this led ultimately to the financial crises in the United States and Europe in the late 2000s. What is less well known, Appadurai explained, is that this industry and culture of 'numerically manipulable risk' is now spreading fast in China and India as well. The consequences of this, Appadurai suggests, are spectacular housing booms (particularly in China, for now) and massive urbanisation driven by housing developments – rather than the other way around. The result is a bi-polar world characterized by a high-end global financial economy, on the one hand, and an underclass of millions of labourers, on the other, and a wealth production machine that represents an almost completely different economy from the larger economy.

Next workshop

The theme of the bi-polar economy will be further explored in the second workshop to be convened by Paul Rabé and Anupama Rao in the context of the *Rethinking Asian Studies* programme. The second workshop will explore current thinking, research and practice on 'subaltern urbanism' in the global economy and will be held at the Columbia Global Center in Mumbai, India, on 10-11 December 2014.

For more information about the *Rethinking Asian Studies in a Global Context* programme: see page 45 of this issue as well as visit the website www.rethinking.asia



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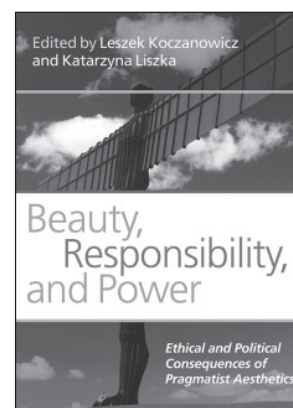
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Beauty, Responsibility, and Power

Ethical and Political Consequences of Pragmatist Aesthetics

Edited by
Leszek Koczanowicz
and Katarzyna Liszka



This book addresses the interrelations between aesthetics, ethics, and politics in the framework of pragmatist aesthetics, offering a comprehensive panorama of the ways and fields in which pragmatist aesthetics ties in with vital social and ethical problems of modernity. Most of the contributors refer to the model propounded by Richard Shusterman.

Following in Dewey's footsteps, Shusterman

has elaborated and expanded his concept, adding new dimensions to it. The most important supplement is the idea of aesthetic experience being constituted by our bodiliness. In *somaesthetics*, pragmatism has acquired a new dimension – a fully developed, comprehensive aesthetic theory. Pragmatist aesthetics with its essential notion of the body engages in critical dialogue with many key concepts of modernity which locate the body in social and cultural frameworks. The articles collected in this volume illustrate the complex range of pragmatist aesthetics and its impact on the understanding of crucial issues in social and moral philosophy.

Amsterdam/New York, NY
2014. VI, 195 pp. (Value
Inquiry Book Series 277)
Paper €43,-/US\$60,-
E-Book €39,-/US\$54,-
ISBN: 978-90-420-3879-0
ISBN: 978-94-012-1162-8

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