

Rethinking Asian Studies

The Idea of the City in Asian Contexts

A research network supported by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

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BARNARD



Workshop Program

City Theory for the New Millennium

20-21 October 2015

Venue: Conference Room 113

Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences

7-622 Huaihai Zhong Lu, Shanghai, China

Day 1: Tuesday, 20 October 2015

0930-1000 Introduction

Moderator: professor Qiyu Tu

Welcome address by SASS leader

Introduction *Rethinking Asian Studies Programme* by Dr. Philippe Peycam

Introduction to the workshop by Dr. Paul Rabé and professor Anupama Rao

Group Photo at SASS Building Lobby

1000-1200 Session 1: Understanding Asian cities

Moderator: Dr. Paul Rabé

Guiding questions and possible interventions by participants:

- Is there such a thing as the “Asian city”? What are its characteristics?
- Is there anything unique about Asian cities that requires special knowledge and methodologies?
- What new identities do Asian cities produce these days?

1200-1300 Lunch at SASS faculty club (first floor)

1300-1330 Side Event: UKNA scholar’s new book release at SASS café (sixth floor)

Moderator: professor Qiyu Tu

Address by SASS Press Co. leader

Author’s address by Prof. Gregory Bracken

Address by UKNA Chief Coordinator Paul Rabe

13:30-15:30 Session 2: The state of our knowledge on cities and urbanization

Moderator: professor Anupama Rao

Examples of guiding questions and possible interventions by participants:

- What are the main disciplines in current urban studies programs, and what are the present limitations?

Day 1: Tuesday, 20 October 2015

- Overview of main urbanization trends, with a focus on Chinese/Asian cities: challenges for planners, local economic development, environmental challenges
- How can and should the humanities enrich city theories?

1530-1600 Coffee Break**1600-1800 Session 3: City Theory Contributions to Asian Studies**

Moderator: Dr. Philippe Peycam

Examples of guiding questions and possible interventions by participants:

- Is the urban phenomenon making the whole project of area studies (as adopted especially in the U.S. after World War II) less relevant?
- How can area studies benefit from knowledge and methodologies pertaining to cities?
- Can we speak of “city theory” as such, or are cities too diverse, and local circumstances too fluid, to produce any one meaningful body of knowledge?

From 1800 Reception and Dinner at SASS Faculty Club

Day 2: Wednesday, 21 October 2015**0930-1130 Session 4: City Theory Contributions to the Humanities**

Moderator: professor Qiyu Tu

Examples of guiding questions and possible interventions by participants:

- How are cities and urban life affecting culture and lifestyle trends?
- Approaches to “heritage”
- What future for the humanistic studies?

1130-1200 Concluding Remarks

Dr. Paul Rabé, professor Anupama Rao and Dr. Philippe Peycam

1200-1300 Lunch at SASS Faculty Club**1300-1600 Walking Tour in Shanghai Lilong**

Guided by Dr. Jiantao Zhang & Dr. Jérémy Cheval

Programme Objectives

The overarching objective of the “Rethinking Asian Studies” program is to reconsider conventional area studies and (as part of this effort) to enrich area study disciplines by fostering a greater appreciation for the humanities, to overcome what is considered to be a “general devaluation of the analytical and comparative intellectual pursuits of the humanistic disciplines” in the U.S., Europe and many parts of Asia. This translates into the following general objectives:

- To engage with new theoretical developments in the humanities (including: area studies; law; the arts, history, literature, anthropology, archaeology, sociology, and philosophy);
- To cultivate a newfound appreciation of the “past” through the introduction of historical, social and cultural studies and explore how a better understanding of the “past” can contribute to new thinking about current area and urban studies questions;
- To overcome rigid geographic and spatial categorization in area studies and in urban studies;
- To broaden our geographical notions of “Asia” and go beyond traditional Western approaches to the study of Asia.

The justification of Forum 4 of the “Rethinking Asian Studies” program, which is focused on urban studies (<http://rethinking.asia/forum-4>), is that cities constitute distinct domains that are certainly as important to study as conventional geographical areas. Our knowledge of cities and their complexities needs to evolve in line with the growing importance of cities worldwide. This knowledge must not only be top-down but also bottom up. Cities are being re-imagined everyday by their residents, commuters, immigrants, civil society groups, planners, politicians, businesses, investors and visitors—all of whom bring with them their own identities, aspirations and demands on urban resources. These “ideas of the city” transcend all conventional disciplines and they are shaped and informed by the past as much as the present and future.

Workshop Objectives

The workshop in Shanghai on “City Theory for the New Millennium” is the third and last workshop to be organized in the context of Forum 4 on urban studies. It follows on two earlier workshops that focused on specific urban challenges: the future of urban planning (New York, August 2014); and the persistence of urban poverty and slums, and with it, forms of resistance to top-down models. (Mumbai, December 2014).

As the last workshop in the Forum 4 series, the focus of the Shanghai event will be our knowledge about cities (research approaches, theories, curricula, literature), specifically cities in Asia. At issue is how urban expertise can be framed in a more integrated fashion, by joining social sciences with humanities-based knowledge, to inform applied expertise, and vice versa.

A second objective (corresponding to the “Rethinking Asian Studies” program objectives) is to explore how these new forms of city knowledge and theory can contribute to re-shaping humanistic higher education including culturally and historically-grounded “regional studies”. Investigations will thus go in two directions:

- Knowledge production for cities
- City theory contributions to (humanistic) knowledge production

The main questions the workshop seeks to address are as follows:

Objective 1: Knowledge production to better understand cities:

1. How are Asian cities different from other cities in the world, and what particular knowledge and approaches are needed (if any) to study cities in Asia?
2. What are the current limitations in urban studies knowledge (theories, curricula, literature) and methodologies (institutional educational models, practical approaches, policies) in Asia, in the West and beyond?

Objective 2: City theory contributions for knowledge production:

3. How does the study of cities help us to better study Asia (i.e. how can city theories help us improve regional studies)?
4. How can new forms of knowledge about (Asian) cities enrich the humanities?

Workshop Format

The workshop will take the form of a roundtable, to maximize discussion between participants. There will be no formal (PowerPoint) presentations – only open discussions around guiding questions. A rapporteur (to be identified) will take notes and be responsible for writing a final report summarizing the discussions.

There will be four main sessions in total, spread out over 2 days, consisting of one morning session (before lunch) and one afternoon session (after lunch). Each session will last approximately 2 hours. The discussion in each session will revolve around a number of clear questions. There will be two moderators per session: one of the workshop co-conveners (Paul Rabé or Anupama Rao) joined by one representative of the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, as local hosts.

Workshop participants will be asked to submit a brief concept note (2-3 pages). The concept note should address some of the main themes and questions of the workshop, drawing on the author's scholarship and practice. The justification of the concept notes is to make sure participants come prepared to the workshop, and to give each participant the opportunity to provide a contribution to the written output of the workshop. Participants will be asked to verbally present (i.e. without using PowerPoint) their concept notes at the roundtable, at relevant moments in the discussion.

List of participants

Host & Conveners

1. Prof. Qiyu Tu
Director, Institute of Urban and Demographic Studies, Shanghai Academy for Social Sciences (SASS), China
Email: qiyutu@sass.org.cn
2. Dr. Paul Rabé
Coordinator Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA) at the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS), Leiden, the Netherlands
Email: paulrabe@gmail.com
3. Prof. Anupama Rao
Associate professor of History, Barnard College, Columbia University NYC, USA
Email: arao@barnard.edu
4. Dr. Philippe Peycam
Director, International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS), Leiden, the Netherlands
Email: p.m.f.peycam@iias.nl

Participants

5. Dr. Rita Padawangi
Senior Research Fellow, National University of Singapore
Email: ritapd@nus.edu.sg
6. Dr. Neha Sami
Consultant, The Indian Institute for Human Settlements (IIHS)
Email: nsami@ihs.ac.in
7. Dr. Rohit Negi
Assistant Professor, School of Human Ecology, Ambedkar University Delhi, India
Email: rohit@aud.ac.in

List of participants

8. Prof. Besnik Aliaj
POLIS University – International School of Architecture and Urban
Development Policies, Tirane, Albania
Email: besnik_aliaj@universitetipolis.edu.al
9. Prof. AbdouMaliq Simone
Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity,
Goettingen, Germany
Email: abdoumalisimone@gmail.com
10. Prof. Michael Douglass
Professor and Leader of the Asian Urbanisms Cluster at the Asia Research
Institute, National University of Singapore
Email: michaeld@nus.edu.sg; arimike@nus.edu.sg
11. Prof. Janice Reiff
Professor of History, University of California, Los Angeles
Email: jreiff@ucla.edu
12. Prof. Jonathan Bach
Associate Professor and Chair, Global Studies Program, The New School, NYC
Email: bachj@newschool.edu
13. Prof. Mark Frazier
Director of the India China Institute, New School for Social Research NYC
Email: frazierm@newschool.edu
14. Dr. Amita Bhide
School of Habitat Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, India
Email: amita@tiss.edu
15. Prof. Chen Xiangming
Dean and Director of the Center for Urban and Global Studies, Trinity College,
Hartford USA
Email: xiangming.chen@trincoll.edu

List of participants

16. Dr. Gregory Bracken
Department of Architecture, Delft University of Technology
Email: gregory@cortlever.com
17. Mr. Non Arkaraprasertkul
Harvard University and Fudan/NYU in Shanghai
Email: narkarap@fas.harvard.edu
18. Mr. Jérémy Cheval
Paris-Belleville and Tongji University, Shanghai, China
Email: jeremycheval@hotmail.com
19. Prof. Yueming Nin
Center for Contemporary Chinese City Studies, East China Normal University
Email: ymning@re.ecnu.edu.cn
20. Prof. Dajian Zhu
School of Economics and Management, Tongji University
Email: dajianzhu@263.net
21. Prof. Shougui Luo
Antai School of Economics and Management, Shanghai Jiaotong University
Email: sgluo@sjtu.edu.cn
22. Dr. Zhituan Deng
Associate Professor, Institute of Urban and Demographic Studies, SASS
Email: dzt@sass.org.cn