



INFORMAL MARKET WORLDS II

HKU-SSC November 8&9, 2012

How to build participation in the **ECONOMY of SPACE | SPACE of ECONOMY**

A 2-day event of presentations and discussions on urban informality, a new political economy and initiatives in art and architecture

Political Equator
of global economy

Urban Villages
Shanghai

Networked
Occupations
Hong Kong

Pirate
Media Markets
India

Fractured City
Jakarta

with

**Pascal Berger / Teddy Cruz / Laurent Gutierrez / Lawrence Liang /
Peter Mörtenböck / Helge Mooshammer / Bert de Muijnck /
Valerie Portefaix / Daan Roggeveen / AbdouMaliq Simone /
Brechtje Spreeuwers / Matias Viegner and others**

When:
Thu November 8, 2012
Fri November 9, 2012

Where:
University of Hong Kong
Shanghai Study Centre
298 North Suzhou Road
Hong Kou, Shanghai

Further info:
<http://fac.arch.hku.hk/ssc>
www.othermarkets.org

Co-organized by:
University of Hong Kong
Shanghai Study Centre

Other Markets
FWF research project

Supported by:
University of Hong Kong
Goldsmiths College London
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TOWARD A NEW POLITICAL ECONOMY OF INFORMALITY

1) There is growing recognition of informality's significance in the organization of human co-existence, both in terms of social relations on the ground and, increasingly, on the level of global interaction, with the informal sector estimated to account for half of the world's economic activities.

2) There is also growing interest in the creative power of informality, with the prestigious Golden Lion of the Venice Architecture Biennale 2012 awarded to a project that recognizes the transformational strength of informal societies. An interest that is not least geared toward its capacity to mitigate the crisis-ridden logic of the capitalist system. In fact, the area of micro-finance is currently being targeted as a prime emerging market by the financial industry following the collapse of the real estate bubble and the debt-mongering associated with it.

3) An integration of informality exclusively geared to hegemonic economic and political paradigms raises the dual threat of augmenting the exploitative dimensions of informality while eroding the social and cultural wealth of informal relations.

4) How can we develop a more critical as well as more productive approach toward the problematics of informality that takes into account a multitude of different perspectives well beyond the narrow framework of official state and industry actors?

Such an endeavour involves, amongst others:

- to recognize the fact that the parameters of informality are not a given but a matter of definition; that the value systems attached to the informal is an issue of framing and perspective, of interest and intention.

- to challenge standard responses to informality. What defines the informal as inferior to the formal? What justifies the call for improvement, for intervention by external experts?

- to unhinge these narratives requires to liberate the notion of the informal from being conceived solely in opposition to and depending on the formal.

- to address informality not as something born solely out of concrete local circumstances but as embedded in a global politico-economic logic. The reference points for analyzing as well as for engaging in informality thus originate not only in the realities on the ground but also in distant sites of decision making, such as multi-national trade associations, global nodes of the financial industries and elite forums of international politics.

- to develop ways of encroachment that can interrupt the logics of solely profit-oriented markets without emulating capitalist entrepreneurship themselves. For example, how can collaborative initiatives that aim for the development of more sustainable structures in the informal city avoid spearheading the privatization of the urban realm?

5) Opening up to the complex, fractured and contradictory nature of informal systems - acknowledging the voices of irregular lives, engaging in sites of informal exchange and in experiments of collaboration - while also critically reflecting upon today's political, social and economic dynamics, can bring us closer to a genuine 'Learning from Informality'. To connect with this intelligence constitutes the challenge for practicing a new political economy in line with both the agency of local populations as well as the vectors of global ecologies.

A two-day research forum on the trading places of urban informality, co-organized by the University of Hong Kong's Shanghai Study Centre and the FWF Science Fund research project Other Markets

INFORMAL MARKET WORLDS II

programme

Thursday November 8th, 2012 PRESENTATIONS

- 10:00 Welcome
- 10:15 Opening remarks
Pascal Berger, Shanghai Study Center
- 10:30 Informal Market Worlds, Introduction
Peter Mörtenböck, *Helge Mooshammer*, TU Vienna & Goldsmiths College, University of London
- 11:45 The Market & the Territory
Bert de Muynck, Shanghai Study Center
- 12:30 *lunch break*
- 14:00 How the City Moved to Mr Sun
Daan Roggeveen, Shanghai Study Center
- 15:00 Fate or Free Will? Yudaishan urban village in Chongqing, a case study
Brechtje Spreewers
- 16:00 *break*
- 16:30 Pirate Media Markets: From national to recycled modernity
Lawrence Liang
- 17:30 Domestic Helper: Mapping a critical spatial occupation of Hong Kong CBD
Valerie Portefaix & Laurent Gutierrez, MAP Office Hong Kong
- 18:30 *break*
- 19:30 Districts as Relational Markets - Central Jakarta
AbdouMaliq Simone, Goldsmiths College, University of London

Friday November 9th, 2012 EXCURSION & DISCUSSION

- 10:00 Walking tour to construction workers' markets adjacent to SSC
led by Daan Roggeveen
- 11:30 Excursion (by coach, registration required) to Urban Villages in the Shanghai area
led by Steven Chen, Brechtje Spreeuwers and Daan Roggeveen
- 13:30 *lunch break*
- 15:30 return to Shanghai Study Centre
- 16:00 Beyond Improvement – How the informal challenges our notion of practice
panel discussion with all speakers
chaired by *Matias Viegner*, Fallen Fruit, Los Angeles

Saturday November 10th, 2012

- 9:30 'Informal Market Worlds' atlas and text book
Publications and future collaborations
Informal get together at Broadway Mansions Hotel
- 10:30 Shanghai State of Affairs
lecture series at Shanghai Study Centre
organised by Bert de Muynck

VENUE:

University of Hong Kong
Shanghai Study Centre
298 North Suzhou Road, near North Sichuan Road
Shanghai
<http://fac.arch.hku.hk/ssc>

This event is free and open to the public

Supported by



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INFORMAL MARKET WORLDS II

abstracts and bios

Pascal Berger, University of Hong Kong, Shanghai Study Centre

Born in Basel, Switzerland; he studied architecture at the ETH in Zurich, where he got his master degree. Pascal was working for Diener & Diener in Basel, Franz Oswald in Berne and mada s.p.a.m. in Shanghai. He is a founding partner of playze Switzerland and playze China and is currently living in Shanghai. Since 2009, Pascal has been teaching at the University of Hong Kong's Shanghai Study Centre. He holds the position of academic director.

Helge Mooshammer + Peter Mörtenböck, TU Vienna & Goldsmiths College, University of London

Informal Market Worlds

Recent practices in art and architecture reveal a widespread interest in informality, which is often praised for its resourcefulness and ingenuity, its flexibility and improvisation, as well as its colourful and creative appeal. However, when it comes to concrete terms of engagement, the most common responses to informal urbanism tend to centre on questions of improvement. In this sense, the relationship between architecture and informality seems to be a more or less clearly defined one involving the offer of expert support to help raising the living standards of the world's poor. In our introduction to this research meeting we will raise the question what is really at stake in the relationship between the profession of architecture and urban planning and the growing realm of informality: What value systems, economic and political interests are impinging on this process?

Helge Mooshammer is Director of the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) research projects Other Markets (2010-2013) and Relational Architecture (2006-2009) at the School of Architecture and Urban Planning at Vienna University of Technology and Goldsmiths College London. His research focuses on new forms of urban sociality fuelled by processes of transnationalisation, temporary and informal land use and new forms of government. In 2008 he was Research Fellow at the International Research Center for Cultural Studies (IFK) Vienna. He has been teaching, amongst others, at the Linz University of Art, at the Merz Academy Stuttgart and at Goldsmiths College, University of London.

His most recent books include: *Networked Cultures: Parallel Architectures and the Politics of Space*, (ed. with Peter Mörtenböck) Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2008 and *Space (Re)Solutions: Intervention and Research in Visual Culture*, (ed. with Peter Mörtenböck) Bielefeld: transcript, 2011.

Peter Mörtenböck is Professor of Visual Culture at the Vienna University of Technology and Research Fellow in the Department of Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths, University of London, where he has initiated the Networked Cultures project (www.networkedcultures.org), a global research platform focusing on translocally connected spatial practices. His current research projects, including amongst others Other Markets (2010-2013), Sea of Marble (2010-2011) and Supply Lines (2011-2014), investigate the potential

of networked ecologies and collaborative forms of knowledge production vis-à-vis the dynamics of geopolitical conflict and urban transformation. His essays on contemporary art, architecture and visual culture have appeared in international journals such as *Grey Room*, *Architectural Research Quarterly* and *Third Text*.

Bert de Muynck, University of Hong Kong, Shanghai Study Centre

The Market & the Territory

This short presentation delves into the opposite forces that shape the contemporary Chinese city. It will show a couple a case-studies from Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen to illustrate the shifting balance between formal and informal approaches to a developing megalopolis. It will discuss the notions of counter-geography, copying, infrastructure, peri-urban expansion, iconography, destruction instant cities and mobility so to depict a system of territorial transactions, of a world where informal markets and formal metropolitan worlds collide.

Bert de Muynck is an architect, writer and co-director of MovingCities. Since September 2011, Bert de Muynck holds the position of assistant professor at the University of Hong Kong, Faculty of Architecture, and at the HKU Shanghai Study Centre. More info: <http://movingcities.orgmx>

Daan Roggeveen, University of Hong Kong, Shanghai Study Centre

How the City Moved to Mr Sun

Chinese cities have been developing unprecedentedly. People from all over the world look with awe at skylines that seem to pop up out of nowhere. China's top down development model seems to be the main force behind this urban transformation. What most people do not realise is that the single most important driver behind this enormous growth is the creativity and entrepreneurship of individual Chinese; people like Mr Sun. Mr Sun is one of the millions of farmers who transformed from a rural to an urban citizen. His story is emblematic for the current shift from a rural to an urban society, where top down models and bottom up models meet – and clash. Finally, China will see itself confronted with the question whether large numbers of farmers living in skyscrapers will become world cities.

In his lecture Daan Roggeveen will combine insightful analysis and deeply human stories of modern city life with photography and data from the cities discussed. His talk challenges assumptions about the nature of Chinese society, and asks the question: can China transform its triumph of brick and concrete into a model that will conquer the world?

Daan Roggeveen is a Shanghai-based architect. Together with journalist Michiel Hulshof, he founded and oversees the Go West Project, a multidisciplinary research and design studio focusing on emerging megacities. The studio has a deep interest in urban cultures and wants to understand and contribute to them through research, architecture and media.

The body of work produced by Go West Project over the past years is extensive and varied: lectures, blogs, (photo) essays, installations, performances, events, architectural designs, urban plans, books and policy proposals. The work has been widely published in both China and Europe and won various awards. Go West works in an international network of writers, designers, architects, researchers and journalists and has offices in Shanghai and Amsterdam. Go West Project lectures at international universities on a regular basis.

Daan Roggeveen studied architecture at Delft University of Technology. Next to his work as founder and director of Go West Project, he is the Curator of the public programme at University of Hong Kong/Shanghai Study Centre. He is an often-asked contributor to the debate about urban development in China.

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www.gowestproject.com

Brechtje Spreuwers, Shanghai

Fate or Free Will? Alternative Development Strategies and Design

Yudaishan urban village in Chongqing, a case study

Urban villages (城中村, *chengzhongcun*) are former peasant villages that in China's recent urbanization process got enclosed by neighboring growing cities. An enormous demand for affordable housing in the Chinese city of today thereupon ensures consolidation and growth of urban villages. Indigenous residents of urban villages, most of them originally farmers, satisfies this demand for affordable housing by renting out their inexpensive, but often illegally and poorly constructed extensions to their family homes (Liu et al., 2010; Zhang et al., 2003). Hence, the rental housing market in an urban village reflects 'a mutual beneficial support between two groups of peasants [indigenous farmers and rural migrants] during the course of economic transformation' (Zhang et al., 2003). Other roles of urban villages lie in providing spaces for small-scale open markets as well as human interaction. Moreover, residents often mention 'human scale' and intimacy as strong qualities of their direct environment. However, in the transition from a farmer village to a fully grown *urban village*, lack of planning and building regulations in combination with villagers' pursuit of maximum profits often lead to extremely high densities and dilapidated environments. Therefore, local governments tend to refer to the phenomenon of urban villages as 'cancer in the city', places of crime and an agglomeration of all sorts of illegal activities (Du, 2010). In combination with a profit-led real-estate market and central locations of most urban villages, this attitude often results in a massive short-term demolition strategy, thus also obliterating the social and spatial characteristics of these villages. Current research around urban villages mainly evolves around analysis and offers few if any practical alternatives to prevent short-term demolition strategies. Hence, the gap between research, urban planning and design widens, while the actual interplay between them potentially offers more than just the sum of its parts. Based on a specific design proposal in Yudaishan urban village in Chongqing and by conducting 'research by design', this study aims at bridging this gap.

Brechtje Spreuwers recently graduated in both Architecture (MSc) in Delft and Sinology (MA) in Leiden. Her graduation project focused on the emergence of urban villages in China and provided an intervention of Yudaishan urban village in Chongqing. Her final thesis is currently under review for publication. In the past few years she participated in a range of international design workshops and seminars in Delft (INDESEM), Chengdu (Urban Emergencies), Beijing (IFOU) and Wuhan (ISOCARP YPP Workshop). She also collaborated in the Chinese – Dutch translation of a collection of short stories by Su Tong that is forthcoming from publishing house 'de Geus' in January 2013. At present, she works on a full-time basis as a researcher at the Go West Project in Shanghai.

Lawrence Liang, Alternative Law Forum Bangalore

Pirate Media Markets: From national to recycled modernity

My presentation will look at the career of informal media markets in India. Focusing on a pirate media market in Delhi and in Bangalore, I seek to examine how these markets emerged in the context of the electronic revolution of the eighties that took place in much of South East Asia and spread to India. A number of these markets that began as nationalist fantasies of creating global spaces transforms into pirate media havens and now stand at the cusp of a globalizing India with its focus on intellectual property protection and simultaneously the stubborn symbol of an incomplete modernity. My paper attempts to understand these markets in the context of contemporary conflicts between the quotidian mediascape that they are a part of and fantasies of global integration that informs much of urban discourse in India.

Lawrence Liang is a researcher and lawyer at the Alternative Law Forum, Bangalore. He works on issues of law and culture and has been working closely with Ravi Sundram, CSDS: New Delhi on comparative media piracy with a focus on media markets.

Laurent Gutierrez + Valérie Portefaix, MAP Office, Hong Kong

Domestic Helper: Mapping a critical spatial occupation of Hong Kong CBD

Departing from a site of geo-economical collision, the Filipino occupation of the HSBC undercroft every Sunday and public holiday, we will engage in a reflection on the potentials and effects of networked spatial practices on the local economy.

MAP Office is an open platform conceived by Laurent Gutierrez (1966, Casablanca) and Valérie Portefaix (1969, Saint-Etienne) to reform our daily practices and to reconstruct our life-world. Based in Hong Kong since 1996, both architects epitomize a new breed of architects who are rethinking the socio-political agencies of architecture. Their projects involve critical analyses of spatial and temporal anomalies and documentation of the ways in which human beings subvert and appropriate spaces for their own uses. A sense of play exists in much of their collaborative work, through a practice that includes text, drawing, photography, video and the creation of new platforms of communication. Running counter to the local architectural circle, MAP Office's mission is to bring forward a set of fresh alternatives to a region mainly preoccupied with "just-in-time" industrial production and efficiency.

Laurent Gutierrez is a co-founder of MAP Office. He is an Associate Professor at the School of Design, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University where he leads the Environment and Interior Design discipline and the Master of Design in Design Strategies as well as the Master of Design in Urban Environments Design programs. He is also the co-director of SD SPACE LAB.

Valérie Portefaix is the principal and co-founder of MAP Office. After receiving a Bachelor in Fine Art, and a Master of Architecture degree, she earned a Ph.D. in Urbanism. She is a Visiting Assistant Professor at the School of Design, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

AbdouMaliq Simone, Goldsmiths College, University of London

Districts as Relational Markets—Central Jakarta

This presentation analyzes the emergence of new frontiers of global capital accumulation, notably how spaces of informalized poverty are transformed into global markets. It traces the actual practices of global capital through which the world's "bottom billion," the billion or so people living under conditions of extreme poverty, are reimagined as assets, and even as an asset class of global investment. However, such an assemblage is fragile, subject to both contradiction and contestation, and this fragility makes possible new formations of the political.

AbdouMaliq Simone is an urbanist with particular interest in emerging forms of social and economic intersection across diverse trajectories of change for cities in the Global South. Simone is presently Professor of Sociology at Goldsmiths College, University of London and Visiting Professor of Urban Studies at the African Centre for Cities, University of Cape Town. Key publications include, *In Whose Image: Political Islam and Urban Practices in Sudan*, University of Chicago Press, 1994, *For the City Yet to Come: Urban Change in Four African Cities*, Duke University Press, 2004, and *City Life from Jakarta to Dakar: Movements at the Crossroads*, Routledge, 2009.

Matias Viegner, Fallen Fruit & CalArts, Los Angeles

Matias Viegner is a Los Angeles based writer, artist and critic who works alone and collaboratively in the fields of writing, video, installation and performance art. His work has been exhibited at The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, Ars Electronica, The Whitney Museum, The Kitchen, The Drawing Center, LACE, Machine Project, the LA Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA), and the La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art. He is a co-founder of Fallen Fruit, a participatory art practice focusing on fruit, urban ecology and public space, which has shown work internationally in museums and galleries.

Viegner is the author of *2500 Random Things About Me Too*, a book of experimental writing, and has co-edited two books, *The Noulipian Analects* and *Séance in Experimental Writing* with Christine Wertheim. He is the editor and co-translator of Georges Batailles' *The Trial of Gilles de Rais*. His fiction and non-fiction can be found in *Afterimage*, *American Book Review*, *Artforum*, *Art Issues*, *ArtUS*, *Artweek*, *Black Clock*, *Bomb*, *Cabinet*, *Cargo*, *Critical Quarterly*, *Fiction International Framework*, *High Performance*, *The Journal of Aesthetics & Protest*, *Paragraph*, *Radical History Review*, *Semiotext(e)*, *Suspect Thoughts*, and *X-tra*, for whom he writes regularly on visual art, as well as numerous anthologies. His academic criticism appears in *Writing at the Edge: The Work of Dennis Cooper*; *Queer Looks: Lesbian & Gay Experimental Media*; and *Camp Grounds: Gay & Lesbian Style*. Literary executor for the writer Kathy Acker, he has written and lectured extensively on her work, and edited a volume of her letters for Chiasmus Press. He is currently completing an academic study of her books.

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