

Introduction

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This 50th issue of **docomomo** Journal honors a proud milestone for **docomomo** and **docomomo** Journals. Auspicious in its timing, it coincides with the 13th International **docomomo** Conference that will take place in Seoul, South Korea, under the theme “Expansion and Conflict”. In honor of this symbolic alignment, the 50th issue offers its editorial platform to the special and relevant theme of Density with a special focus on Asian urbanism.

The 50th issue aims to expand and explore the relevance and definition of conservation and documentation through the lens of urbanism and density. Therefore within an urban context, can conservation and documentation of urban fabric become agents of growth rather than a static and an enclosed act? Can it instigate layered and colliding programs and meaning? If great city dynamics emerge from these complex integrations of differing fabrics, does the existence of past environments promote the very activity that makes cities so relevant?

In this issue, the parameters for the conservation and documentation of the city are defined through multiple lenses of economy, culture, politics and history reflecting critical and acute positions within the 2014 global hegemony. Following **docomomo**'s focus, this issue expands the Modern Movement legacy by advocating that the holistic understanding of architecture must include the study of urbanism. Unlike architecture, urbanism is an open-ended organism and its *raison d'être* is reinforced through layers of history. It is through these layers that we advocate for conservation and documentation.

In broad terms, modern Asian urban development, especially in the Far East, are shaped by two extreme forces: colonial wars and aggressive economic growth. The wooden cities of Asia became instant *tabula rasas* in the face of modern warfare as fire carpets incinerated 95% of the cities. Absolute ground zeroes were created overnight in all the major capitals of Asia. The urban scholarship of **docomomo** into Asia — especially the Far East Asia — deals with this physical erasure of the city's fabric. An open canvas has been created for aggressive strategies for growth in city planning, housing development and modern infrastructure. As accelerated development inspire new typologies to respond to the increasing urban density, this recalls Europe's urban challenges 100 years ago. Therefore, as scholars and champions of the Modern Movement aspirations, values and strategies, it seems entirely appropriate and relevant to examine these similar issues of urban density in this new context and era.

The last two decades have seen enormous urban growth for the cities of Asia, as many city populations have grown

exponentially and Asia has moved up as a global economic power. Financial and economic potential have caused international companies to acquire offices on the continent, often more than one. The high migration of people from the countryside as well as from other countries further adds to the economic possibility of the city as well as its physical growth. The speed and magnitude of development of the fundamentals of society — housing, health, education, and infrastructure — were realized from Seoul to Tokyo.

What remained of the traditional low-density fabric were quickly razed and replaced by structures of *Hilberseimeresque* housing slabs in Japan and Korea. Beijing and Shanghai saw *hutongs* that had belonged to the urban landscape for centuries replaced by super block towers in the fashion of Le Corbusier. The cities of Asia are growing and will continue to grow at great speed and modernity. Though the preservation of even a single building is difficult within the chaotic and high-speed energy of development, it is not enough to preserve the single structure. The urban fabric, what creates each city's dynamic individuality, is not a single sheet but quilted and layered fabrics — pieced together over centuries of cultural shifts and historical eras.

The essays in this issue frame the controversies and opportunities that have challenged modern development in Asia, and worldwide, through very different lenses. Andrew Liang's economic pathology and Young Min Koo's criticism of the global political machinations reframe the growth of Asian urbanism. Miles Glendining's ontological analysis of Hong Kong's housing, and Renato Anelli's survey of São Paulo's aggressive growth, chart two great cities and provide a dynamic global comparison. Other essays focus on strategic interventions, from Inha Jung's insightful expose on Swoo-Geun Kim's surgical urban redevelopment, as well as Vinayak Bharne's sobering depiction of a local community's resistance toward new development, despite the integration of vernacular language. Peter Ferretto and his team offer a poignant and critical photo essay (as well as the cover image) of Seoul that touches on the collisions between East and West and the unrelenting march of housing. Finally, a pair of essays on the Metabolists revisits this stalwart group in a new perspective, as Souhei Imamura's study on the larger aspirations of the group provides a firm foundation alongside with the interviews with Fumihiko Maki and Peter Land on the group's first and only built project ever done, for a low-income social housing in Peru, the *PREVI*. These essays layer our own understanding of the dense city — in particular Asian cities — and help us establishing the patterns and peculiarities that form the urban fabric. ■