NARRATIVISED PLACES
Urban Dialectics In Singapore Tourism Landscapes

by

HO WENG HIN
HD99-1290N (727)

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Abstract

This dissertation is premised upon the hypothesis that the Singapore Tourism Board [STB] is gaining significance as a powerful state agency in shaping the physical environment, and consequently the social and cultural histories embedded within the cityscape of Singapore. This emerging trend has been observed from high-profile thematic "enhancement" projects undertaken by the STB to redevelop key imageable and culturally significant landscapes. One such case is the controversial Chinatown Enhancement Plans in 1998. By steering a gradually maturing physical landscape from its early production-oriented stage to a consumptive phase, STB enforces its particular "narratives" on the physical and social spaces. This undoubtedly has wider urban and cultural signification. The thesis attempts to locate how the state tourism development agency has, since the mid '80s, evolved from a marginalised position to become an active producer of symbolic meanings and landscapes in Singapore. Inevitably, these narrativised places are contested spaces. The control by state agencies - first the Housing Development Board, then the Urban Redevelopment Authority, now the Singapore Tourism Board - has come full cycle in the continual socio-spatial re-configurations of our urbanscape for the past decades; now seeking to transform it even further: via the medium of advertising, perhaps the most potent form of symbolic production, for the world market.

Dissertation Supervisor: Dr Wong Yunn Chii
Title: Assistant Professor

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