SITINGS

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ABSTRACT

The present moment occupies a position along the line of symmetry between the realisations of the Concept Plan (1967-71) and the Revised Concept Plan (1991), bearing witness to the achievements of decentralisation and embarking on a project of concentration. From an architectural point of view, the issue of land supply still persists, arising from the irrational pairing of a finite, even negligible, landmass, with an ambition for infinite urban growth. The resultant convergence of island with city, produced by the original Concept Plan, was decisive and deterministic, implying that the entire territory of Singapore would be known, accounted for, and utilised for urbanisation. In pragmatic terms, the intersection of the increasing urban substance with the decreasing supply of buildable land is to be constantly avoided.

This dissertation offers an investigation into the theories and strategies employed in the urban evolution of Singapore, which is interpreted as an experiment to overcome the quantifiable geographic constraints of the island’s territory, escaping “death”, and prolonging its survival. The means by which this is achieved is through territorial manipulation, both physically and conceptually. The objective of this investigation is to uncover the pre-conditions for the production of architecture, namely the provision of building sites. This investigation is carried out by deriving a hypothesis from the stated intentions that led to the drawing up of the Concept Plan, followed by the documentation of the inventory of strategies and parameters conceived to nurture urban growth, and finally to verify it against a backdrop of physical evidence. The material of study would consist of issued statements, the urban history of Singapore, and the physical environment itself.

While urban studies often overlap with political, economic, and social history, the focus of the dissertation remains fixed on the architectural implications. Through this undertaking, it is hoped that some knowledge regarding the conditions of architectural activity can be attained, and the contextual forces that inform and influence the architectural enterprise will be brought into focus.