The Everyday Sublime: a Probe into Singapore's Domestic-scapes

by

Goh Chin Yen [Wu Xinyan]

HT00-4013L

Submitted to Department of Architecture
on 141201 in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Degree of
Master of Architecture

Abstract

This dissertation basically draws inspiration from Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* and aims to present an alternative perspective on the subject of spatiality in the local public housing scene of Singapore. Being an island-nation with its consequential space constraints, almost 90% of the population is driven to inhabit high-rise public housing. With the help of conducting a historical trace of the Singaporean domestic-scapes, it is hoped that the incongruities concerning the spatialisations of capitalist imperatives and nationalistic ideals will surface. In other words, the dissertation serves to demonstrate how the capitalist mode of production has led to the commodification of housing spaces and further misconstrued the state initiatives of 'nation-building'.

In the *Production of Space*, Lefebvre attempted to demystify the capitalist social space through the means of exploring how space gets *actively produced*. To a certain degree, it is legitimate to say that in the postmodern condition, architecture is 'capitalism inscribed in built space' [Abbas, 1997:79]. Thus the Singaporean domestic-scapes is built space that bears more than one inscription and is over-inscribed [Lefebvre, 1991:142], often irreducible to a singular meaning. Tying it back to Lefebvre's notion of the 'lived' space, it becomes pertinent to reach an understanding of spatialisations not simply through its spatial forms but its social and cultural production. Therein lies a potential of investigating into the 'lived' which gets crushed by 'an abstract conceived space' [Crang & Thrift, 2000:171] especially via representations in HDB upgrading, and whether the notion of misrecognition and disappearance as posited by Abbas serves to bridge the gap between the socio-spatial dialectic in past, present and future living spaces. Thus a probe into the architectural artifact of the local domestic-scape: the Housing Development Board Estate, may help uncover a Singapore contemporaneity extending beyond mere physicalities and intruding into social attachments and implications.

Total number of words: 11,156

Dissertation Supervisor: Dr Li Shiqiao
Title: Assistant Professor