URBANISATION AND ITS EFFECT ON DOWNTOWN PUBLIC SPACE IN SINGAPORE

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Abstract

Singapore has gone through a large degree of transformation of its urban built environment. This transformation was a result of attempts to meet the needs of a rapidly urbanizing and industrial nation and the development of a city-state. It is fascinating to witness the transformations in our urban environment through the changing nature of public spaces and the resultant public life of the city. Public life and public space change in response to forces that shape the urban environment, but through its various transformations, public spaces still continue to hold the public life of a city, which will always be central to our sense of community living and culture. It is thus important to begin with a historical understanding of both public space and the life it supports, as well as studying the change in public life as a city progresses and explore the types of public space that exist in our society today.

Singapore has faced a rapid pace of economic and social change in our open society and new forms of public life and new types of public spaces have emerged. Therefore, it is the objective of this study to review the transformation of Singapore’s central area and summarize the changes that have taken place, by exploring the different forces that conditioned Singapore’s central area over significant periods from colonial times till today. The next objective will then be to assess the influence of these forces towards the design, use and perception of public space over these years of transformation. The study will then focus on Raffles Place, the financial and commercial heart of Singapore since colonial times, and its surroundings as a case study to review this transformation and the resultant effect on public spaces. The study will conclude with an analysis of the changes in the way public space is designed, perceived and used.

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