ABSTRACT

SINGAPORE AS A CYBER-CITY

From here on, urban architecture has to work with the opening of a new "technological space-time."...Instead of operating in the space of a constructed social fabric, the intersecting and connecting grid of highway and service systems now occurs in the sequences of an imperceptible organisation of time in which the man/machine interface replaces the facades of buildings as the surfaces of property allotments.

Paul Virilio.1

This paper deals with the spatial problems and opportunities within land-short Singapore, where development is still carried out very much within the physical realm. With limited land, physical planning and construction are restricted and will soon reach saturation point. Meanwhile, Information Technology (IT) has become an increasingly powerful force behind many structural changes in modern cities. Taking Singapore's physical and information infrastructures into consideration, as conceived in the 1991 Revised Concept Plan and the IT2000 Report, it is possible to envisage Singapore as a virtual city-state in the 21st century.

Through IT, Singapore may be able to create more 'usable space' whether physical or virtual for an increased population in the near future. This however involves urban spatial restructuring to accommodate new production and consumption patterns influenced by the rapid development of information technologies. The future city has to be built on new definitions of space and not fall into the trap of nostalgic historical reconstruction which may not be compatible with new patterns of urban life.

The IT revolution is changing the way in which information itself is used while global communication networks have reduced the perceived effect of spatial displacement. New information technologies are displacing conventional notions of boundaries between cities, economies and cultures through an interdependent and virtual matrix comprising social, economic and telecommunications networks. Ideas of 'location' and 'place' will undergo redefinition. Future urban communities will be virtual in nature, their boundaries not being dependent on the physical limits of the city, region, or nation.

This paper attempts to study the effects and impacts of IT on spatial perception and implication, with particular reference to Singapore, in anticipation of future population growth. The framework focuses on virtual spatial urban structures within or outside the geographical boundary of Singapore, with the help of advanced physical as well as information infrastructures.

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