Asian cities have been the centre of the world’s attention lately, due to its economic resurgence in the last decades. This magnificent urban growth has induced incredible changes, at an unprecedented rate and scale, to both the social condition and physical landscape. It is in this context of accelerated change that this dissertation sets out to understand the city and its dynamics, its planning mechanisms, and their relationship to one another. At a time when humanity is about to cross the threshold into the next millennium, it will be beneficial to examine how contemporary urban planning has performed hitherto.

First, a few questions will be asked and investigated. What is a “plan”? What is urban planning and what does it set out to achieve? This will be followed by an attempt to map their origins and mode of operation, somewhat simplistically. Next, the characteristics of the resulted urban plan will be highlighted. The intention is to establish a framework of discussion at this stage by asking fundamental questions.

Within the framework set up, one can then proceed to talk about the relevance of the “plan” in today’s world of intensified and pervasive changes. What is a city in essence? How does one arrive at a city that really works? Has current planning methods failed? In this brave new world, what is the planning ideology / urban strategy? Is a new way of looking at the city needed?

Lastly, this dissertation seeks to open up further discussion on the role of different players in this context of change. What is the role of planners and architects when designing in these modern cities? How about the end-users, the residents of the city? How do they fit into the city-building process?