ABSTRACT

The concept of “waterfront” in Singapore is a carefully fabricated construct and its development and actualisation is never left to chance by the planning authorities. However, the existing and envisaged coastal landscapes contains super-impositions of transported foreign waterfront concepts which may not be entirely relevant nor reflective of Singapore’s cultural, urban, climatic, and natural context and conditions.

In a visionary statement made by the planning authorities in 1991, an idealised notion of an island city was conceived:

"An island with an increased sense of 'island-ness' - more beaches, marinas, resorts and possibly entertainment parks as well as better access to an attractive coastline and a city that embraces the waterline more closely as a signal of its island heritage."

This statement illustrates the simplistic deduction that land-use provision of water-related activities by the coast and a greater physical accessibility to the water-edge would automatically ‘embrace the waterline more closely’ and induce a greater inter-relationship between land and water. There exists a problematic divide between such visionary notions of “island-ness” and their architectural realisations.

This dissertation deals with this problematic divide and the lack of sea-land interface in Singapore’s coastal landscape. It also attempts to examine strategies that can help define a new paradigm that would heighten our consciousness of living at the water’s edge. This consciousness involves a deepened awareness of our rich coastal resources with its unique coastal eco-system, a greater public participation with the water, and a coastal landscape that has an authenticity very much related to the context of place at the water edge.

This dissertation attempts to find a resolve between the separated elements of water and our built environment, and possibly how architecture and landscape planning can mediate these two polarities and celebrate man’s delicate coexistence with nature, as was with the indigenous South-east Asian coastal settlements of yester-years.

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1 Urban Redevelopment Authority of Singapore, 'Living the Next Lap', Singapore 1991, p4.