

RESEARCH SEMINAR

DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

Socially engaged municipal statecraft? The Shenzhen Biennale (UABB) as situated planning experiment

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Considering the Xi Regime's focus on people-oriented urbanisation, what is the potential for socially engaged municipal statecraft in urban China? This talk introduces the situated planning experiment as a mechanism through which municipalities practise socially engaged statecraft. The situated planning experiment foregrounds place-based innovative planning practices which allow municipal officials to act endogenously while incorporating the participation of citizen intellectuals who act as advocates for marginalised groups in China. I frame the Shenzhen Biennale (UABB) as a situated planning experiment, tracing its influence on the municipality's shift in approach to planning for the redevelopment of chengzhongcun (villages-in-the-city). I show how the UABB is leveraged as an instrument for the municipality to connect social and economic objectives in development, presenting differentiated opportunities for migrant residents to make viable urban lives. The situated planning experiment represents one way in which studies of municipal statecraft can consider the variegated logics and forms of emerging post-growth state programmes and politics in China and beyond.

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Shaun Teo is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Geography, National University of Singapore. His research interests entail critical urban governance and politics in Asia, with a particular focus on informality. He has done work on the micro-regeneration of informal settlements in Shenzhen and on temporary urbanism and placemaking in Singapore. Shaun will embark on a new project in Taipei, looking at the governance of night markets (yeshi) and street vending. Shaun is also interested in the methodological and tactical foundations of urban theorisation, looking particularly at how to theorise comparatively.



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