

Sun Yat-sen Memorials, Postcolonialism and Global City-Making in Hong Kong, Penang and Singapore

Abstract

In recent years, there has been a surge of official and popular interest in memorializing Sun Yat-sen's revolutionary activities among the diasporic Chinese communities around the South China Sea. Through the 2000s, memorial halls and museums in preserved historical buildings dedicated to the nationalist were opened in Hong Kong, Penang and Singapore. Films portraying Sun's escapades, particularly romantic adventures and attempted assassinations, and the intimate urbanscapes of Hong Kong and Penang have been made in the last few years. Why has there been a surge of interest in Sun in these three Chinese-majority city-states in recent years? Why are intimate urbanscapes important in the representations of the halls, museums and films? I argue that the surge of interest is not merely coincident with but related to the three city-state's self-conscious promotion and attempted transformation of themselves into global cities in the shadow of China's rise to economic and political prominence. For different reasons, the three cities did not complete the postcolonial transition to nationhood and, set in a multicultural and cosmopolitan setting, the Chinese identities of the population are still on contested cultural terrain. I show that this postcolonialism shared by the three cities provides the impetus for memorializing the founding moments of Chinese nationalism in colonial urbanscapes to express the dreams and anxieties of contemporary global city-making and, as such, prepare the citizens for the transformation. I show that the differences in representations among the three cities are linked to the varying conditions of sovereignty that the city-states are in.

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Hong Kong's Industrial Heritage: Envisioning Asia's World City through a(n Almost) Lost Lens

Abstract

Hong Kong, as a post-industrial 'Asia's World City', seems to have forgotten its industrial past. This paper challenges current perspectives on Hong Kong heritage that are based predominantly on dichotomous traditional Chineseness vis-à-vis postcolonial romanticism juxtaposition, and argues for a deeper appreciation of its industrial history and identity. Textured narratives that highlight the socio-economic relationships that were/are essential components of the industrial story are proposed. Specifically, the paper identifies the time/space dimension as unique, and hence should be valorised with context-sensitive, well thought-through and executed approaches. The paper puts forward an 'other Hong Kong heritage story' that foregrounds the time-space compressed nature of the city's industry history, the spatial organisation of industrial work and the dynamic spatial stretch the industrialisation process has taken. Furthermore, a stretching of governance space for the identification, (re)presentation and conservation of heritage using a participatory approach is proposed. In the face of rapid deindustrialisation and pressure for urban renewal, prompt, well-conceptualised and time/space-sensitive efforts to valorise, preserve and manage this fast-disappearing heritage in Hong Kong are vital.

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