

Öffentlicher Vortrag

11. Juli 2018, 18.00 Uhr

Leibnizhaus

Holzmarkt 4-6, 30159 Hannover

From Garden City to Biophilic City: The idea of tropical nature in post-colonial Singapore

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Singapore is considered the greenest among the hyperdense metropolises of Far East Asia. The lecture will discuss how this image of a green city was accurately forged in the years following the island's independence from British colonial rule gained in 1959.

The formation of a national identity in post-colonial Singapore was a complex operation: urban open spaces, considered one of the expressions of local distinctiveness and cultural uniqueness, were used in the new nation to support narratives of self-representation. In reaction to practices of colonialism and to colonial culture, Singapore aimed at recovering its original tropical landscape by reintroducing tropical trees in the urban scene and by extensively using the lush vegetation of the rainforest in the design of urban open spaces.

Associated with freedom from colonial rule, indigenous plants were considered as fundamental elements of the country's original cultural heritage, while tropical nature and the tropical forest became the expressions of the local natural landscape, heavily altered during colonial dominion.

Focusing on the relationship between tropicality, ethnicity, and the city the lecture will discuss the crucial role of tropical vegetation in expressing and reinforcing Singapore's unique image through open space making. Through a discussion of projects designed from 1960s onward, the lecture will show how the idea of the tropical forest has been translated into public open spaces in Singapore. It will argue that the physical transformation of Singapore through the reintroduction of tropical vegetation was part of the formation of a new social, cultural, and economic identity for the island, based on the construction of its image as a "green" and environmentally aware city – an image that the city-state is still promoting.

Bianca Maria Rinaldi is an Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture at Politecnico di Torino and serves as co-editor of *JoLA-Journal of Landscape Architecture*. Her research is at the intersection of landscape architecture history, theory, and design, with an emphasis on Far East Asia. Bianca was a fellow in Garden and Landscape Studies at Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, Trustees for Harvard University, in Washington DC, and is currently a recipient of an "Alexander von Humboldt Fellowship for Experienced Researchers" awarded by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. She received a J.B. Jackson Prize by the Foundation for Landscape Studies, New York, in 2012 for her book *The Chinese Garden: Garden Types for Contemporary Landscape Architecture* (2011).