

STUDIES ON ASIAN MIXED USE URBAN BLOCKS AND THEIR APPLICATIONS ON THE MONO-FUNCTIONAL OFFICE DISTRICTS IN THE NETHERLANDS

Tsaijer Cheng & Changfang Luo**

*Boundary Unlimited
www.boundaryunlimited.com
198-2V, Govert Flinckstraat, 1073CB, Amsterdam
Email: tsaijer@boundaryunlimited.com

ABSTRACT: The analysis part of the study scans through mixed use urban areas located in East Asia, including East District, Taipei; Mongkok, Hongkong; Kangnam, Seoul, and Omedesedo, Tokyo. These models adopted small scale businesses and grey economy while facilitating the need to attract big businesses during urban transformation processes.

Points those are important in this study:

- These urban models allowed small scale and informal businesses to change the physical building layouts of their urban environments, they were not gentrified, and on the contrary, they reacted strongly to the growth of the area.
- These urban models allow the co-existence of formal and informal economy, offering great range of diversity in culture and consuming pricing.

Design implementation:

We can extract mixed use design models that lead to the empowerment of small enterprise and grey economy. One of the models leads to a proposal that bring in new lives for the mono-functional office towers in Amsterdam Sloterdijk.

The study proposes new models for urban development; we are arguing that these models are able to guide the processes of extension and transformation of cities and regions, without erasing the small and the informal. They can become so attractive that they appeal to the world of business, fashion and creative industry.

KEYWORDS: mixed use urban area, informal and grey economy, small businesses, East Asian cities, urban transformation, vertical mix

1. MIXED USE AREAS IN EAST ASIAN CITIES

1.1 General background

In East Asia, lively and flexible urban environments exist and function in cities such as the East District, Taipei; Kangnam, Seoul; Shibuyan, Tokyo and Mongkok, Hong Kong. Most of these areas emerged after the Second World War and experienced an explosive growth of urban development where agriculture lands were transformed into industrial and residential land in a very short time. Without sprawling, supply, demand, consumption, and production exist all in the same piece of territory. Today, creativity emerges by combining former urban functions.

The Mongkok area in Hong Kong, for example, is a 24-hour city with extreme frequency of human flows and embodies various types of settlements, both long term and short term, by the local and international residents. After the year 2000, young entrepreneurs started to occupy some of the former immigrant labors' small living units, changing the interior into creative offices. They also connect their design output with the remaining manufacturing factories and sell their products to the retails close by. A highly concentrated 24-hour supply of amenities offers the creative people a time-used variation, from which they can build up lifestyles that are connecting to different time zones in the world through the Internet. The re-using of former labors' small living units provides cheap working spaces for starters.

The possibility to connect to the manufacturers and retailers turns creativity into a creative economy.

Different kinds of informal and flexible user contract systems in housings and offices also allow global entrepreneurs to re-locate easily.

There are three important factors why we are looking at East Asian cities:

- 1) Mixed use areas in East Asian cities have concentrated their production lines in a close proximity. Today, creative entrepreneurs can connect their creative outputs with the former production lines (manufacturers and retailers) easily in a concentrated urban area.
- 2) Small sized and privatized spatial ownerships allow entrepreneurs to make complete and permanent use of their own spaces without worrying about being gentrified after the land value of the urban area raises.
- 3) Various small sized and temporary spatial ownerships accommodate entrepreneurs and small scale investors on the move, therefore attracting international short term entrepreneurs and small investors.

2. MIXED USE URBAN BLOCKS AND THEIR BUILDING TYPOLOGIES

2.1 Tsim Sha Tsui, Hong Kong and the Chungking Mansions (CKM)

Tsim Sha Tsui is an urbanised area in the Yau Tsim Mong District in Southern Kowloon, Hong Kong. Geographically, Tsim Sha Tsui is a cape on the tip of the Kowloon Peninsula pointing towards Victoria Harbour. Several villages had been established in this location before Kowloon was ceded to the British Empire in 1860. Tsim Sha Tsui remains tertiary sector from colonial days to present. In early colonial days, transport, tourism and trading are main business of the area. As port and rail facilities moved out of the area, the major industry falls on the later two. Tsim Sha Tsui, like Central, contains several centers of finance. After Kai Tak Airport closed, the height restrictions on buildings has dropped and now larger taller skyscrapers, parallel to those of central are in the beginning stages of development in the area. Different ranks of hotels and inns are present in the area. Tourists and traders from six continents stays in the area.



Figure 1 CKM Urban Situation

Chungking Mansions, is a 18 stories building located at 36-44 Nathan Road in Tsim Sha Tsui, Hong Kong. The building is well known as nearly the cheapest accommodation in Hong Kong. Though the building is supposedly residential, it is made up of many independent low-budget hotels, shops, and other services. The strange yet vibrant atmosphere of this building is sometimes called by some "the scent of Kowloon's Walled City". Chungking Mansions features a labyrinth of guesthouses, curry restaurants, African bistros, clothing shops, sari stores, and foreign exchange offices. It often acts as a large gathering place for some of the ethnic minorities in Hong Kong, particularly South Asians (Indians, Nepalese, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and Sri Lankans), Middle Eastern people, Nigerians, Europeans, Americans, and many other peoples of the world. The building was completed in 1961, at which time Chinese residents predominated. Now, after more than two decades of use, there are an estimated 4,000 people living in the Mansions, the

amount remained until now (2009). According to professor Gordon Methews, anthropologist who lived in the mansions for 200 nights in the year of 2008, there are a mix of 125 nationalities living in the building. Time magazine has reported the mansion on 2007 as “Best of Asia” and “The perfect example of globalization”.

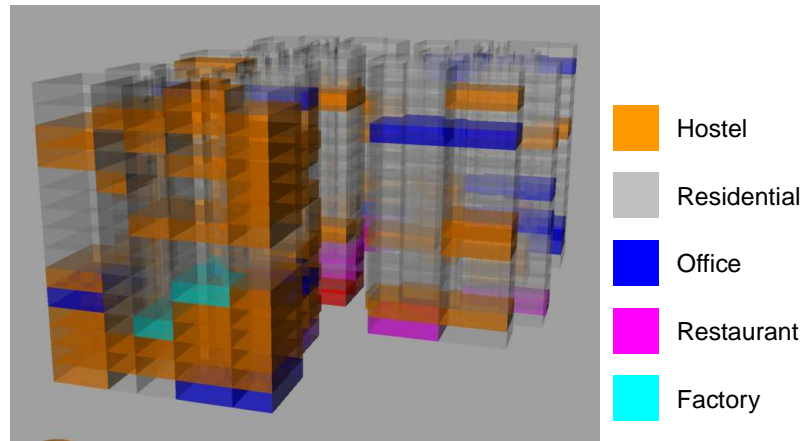


Figure 2 CKM Program mix

We see the transformation process of the Chungking mansions the result of situating in its urban location, First, it is located in the center of a transport hub, therefore, there area a lot of traders and short-term visitors in the area, contributing to the self-initiated hostels to emerge in the building. Second, similar transformation exists in other residential towers as well, providing low cost accommodations and daily services to the urban visitors, supplementing the price range that the neighbor 5 star hotels can not provide. Therefore, we can conclude that the mix – up of high class hotel towers and housing towers can result in the self-initiated transformation process of functional change within the residential tower, if there is a sufficient level of critical mass.

2.2 East Distirct, Taipei and the Tung Ling Plaza

The East District Area in Taipei city was developed in the 70s with housing units for middle class families mixed with office towers for big companies. After the 1990s, some housing units started to give way to working spaces for entrepreneurs, the short term working units suddenly attracted a lot of different retails and kiosks into the area, whereas the former office towers were partially transformed into small and short term knowledge immigrant workers' living units, lighting up the night time black-out office buildings into a serviced leisure tower. These operations led by small scale entrepreneurs transform the original mono-functional area into a vibrant 24-hour economy.

Tung Ling Plaza is the building located on Chung Shaw East Road, the main street crossing the East District. We discovered that the vertical mix typology inter-related with the urban block's mixed use formation. TLP has 14th floors and is currently occupied by commercial programs on the ground floor and the first floor, the largest disco in Taipei on the 3rd and the 4th floor, ex-offices still remain to function on part of the 7th and the 8th floor, other parts of the middle level floors are occupied by cheap shops, brands retails targeted to special target groups (brand users, design buyers, or teenagers) and karaoke rooms, serving lower-middle class (ex: truck drivers from other cities who doesn't live in Taipei and can not afford the Taipei's entertainment price).The top floor is transformed into high class service apartments and hotels, with a nice urban view, serving the needs of immigrant workers from other cities. Due to the functional transformation, diverse users of different income groups and cultural background are mixed within the same tower.

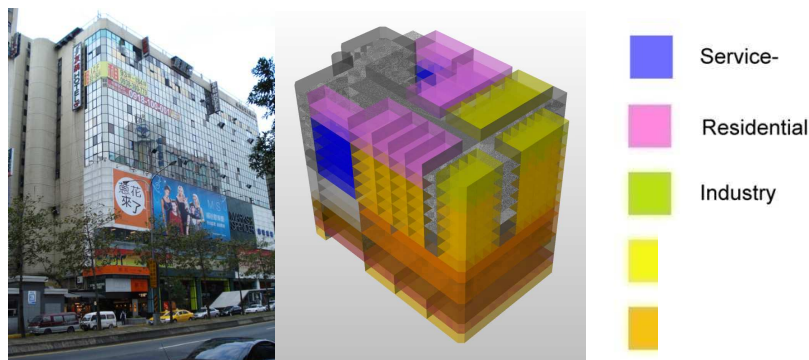


Figure 3 & 4 TLP program mix

We can conclude that the block layout of the East District, having office towers along the main infrastructure and housing units within the inner urban block encourage a mix of workers and residences in the same area. After the 20 years, the office buildings can start to accommodate urban dwellers who can not afford the apartments, and the apartments can accommodate creative offices who can not afford an address in the office tower along the main infrastructure.

Vertical mixing within the office tower allows the co-existences of diverse user income groups, age groups, and people with different cultural backgrounds.

3. SLOTERDIJK_A MONO-FUNCTIONAL OFFICE DISTRICT CLOSE BY AMSTERDAM CURRENTLY IN NEED OF RE-VITALIZATION

3.1 Background

Spaamdammerdijk, the remaining fragment of the old Sloterdijk village, was used to be the only connection between Amsterdam and Haarlem. In time, the village and its neighboring areas have undergone major restructuring process which transformed the environment drastically into a landscape of infrastructure and office buildings. Today, Haarlemmerweg separates Sloterdijk from the residential neighborhood in the south, enhancing the scale and the programmatic contrast. The outdoor space is characterized by railway, tramline and motorway to programmatic contrast. The outdoor space is characterized by railway, trams lime and motorway to serve the transit population. Today there are only 222 residences living in the Sloterdijk neighborhood, but there are 15,966 workers commuting everyday from other places to Sloterdijk. The office buildings are filled up with influx during the day, but are empty out beyond working hours. The local community is missing; the space for pedestrian is absent. Sloterdijk was used to be and still is a node on the by-passing route.

3.2 Economical transformation

Sloterdijk was a small village situated at the by-passing route between Amsterdam and Haarlem. Before the Second World War, the Sloterdijk station, the railway and the tramline have been laid down due to the expansion of the city. In the post-war era, there's fundamental economical shift from the production of goods to the production of service. This resulted in the scale enlargements in the service industry, especially in the financial service sector. From 1950 onward, a spatial hierarchy has been developed, namely, the historical center for small-scale business and the periphery locations for large-scale ones. In 1970s, Amsterdam has undergone considerable economic restructuring; the employment in the service sector has countered the decline of industry from about 30% of total employment in the 1960s. Another important drive for the development of large-scale offices was the discovery of office buildings' as an investment object. It is remarkable that in the end of the 80s, the large-scale office buildings were flourished resulted in many homogenous office districts, including Sloterdijk.



Figure 5

From the beginning of the 90s, an office vacancy rate was amounted to around 10% in the region of Amsterdam. According to DRO, this is a structural problem and even with the economic upturn, the vacancy rate will only decrease slightly. According to a recent research on office properties, there's a rising value of the small-scale office space comparing to the large-scale office. One of the main reasons for this is that much of the small-scale office space is located in the center of Amsterdam, and the scarcity of these spaces has caused the rise of value. Besides, the growth of self-employ individuals, the decrease in office personnel and the outsourcing of work have all contributed to a high demand for small-scale office space (smaller than 250m²)

3.3 Current urgency

Sloterdijk has a stock of mainly large-scale space at this moment, and more than 50% of the buildings are older than 15 years old. This means that more than 50% of the buildings no longer meet the requirements of today's office users and have no chance to compete in the property market. Concerning the types of economy, the business service and financial service is the major sector in Sloterdijk, and the activity of starters is quite absent here. This might be due to the homogeneous typology of office space, the lack of urban amenity and the disconnection to the city center.

The planning document from DRO (Dienst Ruimtelijk Ordening) "Herziening stedenbouwkundig programma van eisen Teleport AmsterdamDeel1 " from 2005, shows the government's interest in boosting the skyline of the Sloterdijk station area, however, due to current economical crisis, one can hardly image that the development can attract sufficient business investors. We therefore see the urgency of alternative urban planning strategy being recognized.

3.4 Design implementation

Urban zoning

By applying mixed use design guidelines extracted from East Asian urban areas, we suggest to density the area close to the train station area for a mix of high rise hotels, housings, schools, educational functions to increase the critical mass of the area. The targeted market will be conference tourists, international students, and international middle and small scale enterprises. We suggest each office buildings to have a flexible bestemmingplan to allow the buildings to transform into mul-ti functional mixed-use buildings and allow small scale businesses to emerge by paying affordable rent. For further eastern area, we suggest to mix office buildings with low rise housings, to increase the amount of local residences. The development will provide job opportunities to the people living in the southern Bos en lommer area.

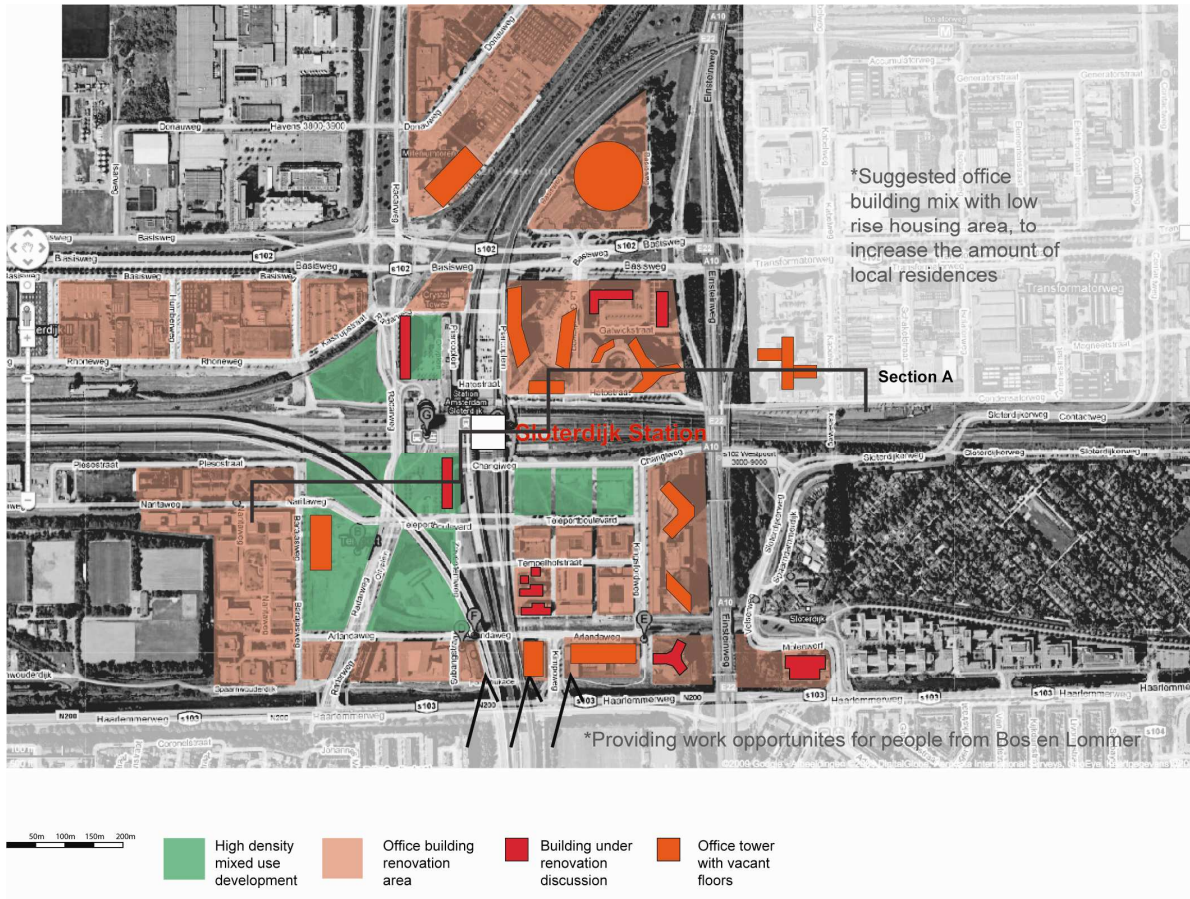
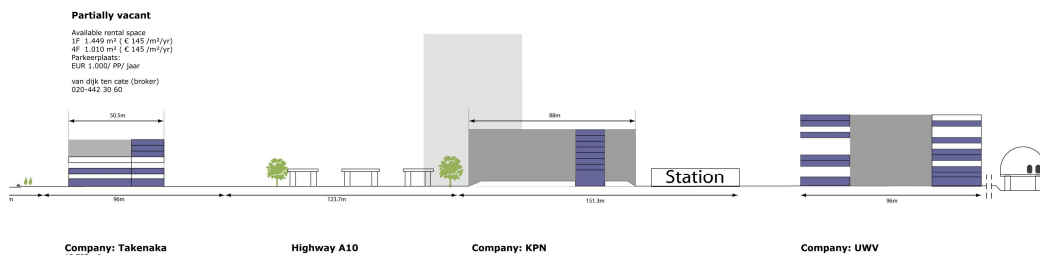


Figure 6

Building Typology

We suggest two kinds of building mixed use typology: 1) Office building tower typology that allows further program transformations. 2) Short-term housing tower typology that allows self-initiated program transformations by the property owners

NOW Figure 7 Section A_Sloterdijk as mono-functional office district



Section A

living
 commerce
 working
 hotel
 vacant
 Section A

FUTURE Figure 7 Section A_Sloterdijk as mixed use urban area



Company: Takenaka
13,705 m²

Highway A10

Company: KPN

Company: UWV

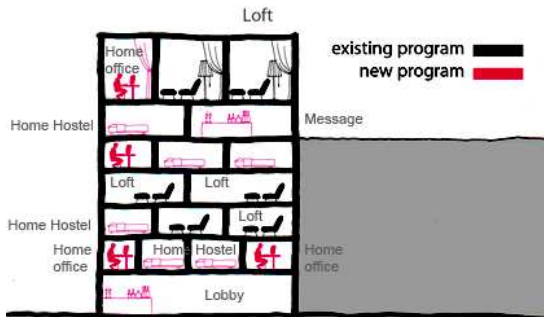


Figure 8

Short-term apartment accommodating self-initiated program transformations

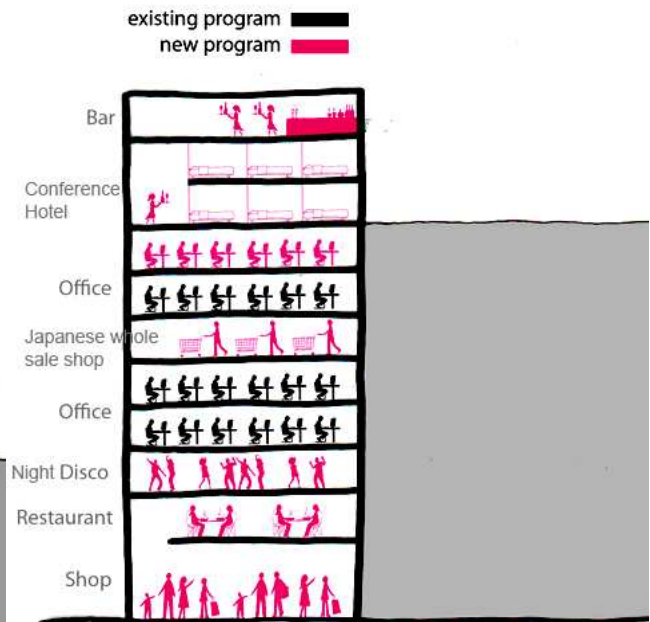


Figure 9

Existing office tower transformed into a mixed use tower, accommodating diverse user groups

By observing how successful mixed use areas in East Asian cities are transformed from mono-functional areas we can extract block typologies and building typologies that can accommodate the mix, generating even more cultural diversity and the empowerment of small enterprises and grey economy. We suggest vertical mixing building typologies for Amsterdam Sloterdijk area, in order to transform the current vacant and mono-functional area into a successful mixed- use area; we are arguing that these models are able to guide the processes of extension and transformation of cities and regions, without erasing the small and the informal. They can become so attractive that they appeal to the world of business, fashion and creative industry.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

The research is a continuation of the urban research “Urban Maker_Research on East Asian mixed use areas” made by Tsaijer Cheng. The observation and reflection is made possible with the expertise of Eriko Watanabe (Japan), Bokyong Lee (Korea), Yungyu Huang (Taiwan), Ting-Tseng Shen (Taiwan) and Gary Yeung (Hong Kong).

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