

Centre for Critical Heritage Studies / Curating the city - Seminar

Clare Melhuish : *The real modernity that is here': understanding the role of digital visualisations in the production of a new urban imaginary at Msheireb Downtown, Doha*

Tuesday April 4th 13-15 Clare Melhuish Senior Research Associate and Co-Director of UCL Urban Laboratory as well the Curating the City research cluster at UGOT/UCL will present her paper "*The real modernity that is here': understanding the role of digital visualisations in the production of a new urban imaginary at Msheireb Downtown, Doha*" co-authored with Monica Degen (Brunel University) and Gillian Rose (The Open University) and winner of the "Yearly Prize for Best Published Paper in *City & Society*" 2016, SUNTA (Society for Urban National and Transnational/Global Anthropology)- <http://anthrosource.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/hub/issue/10.1111/ciso.2016.28.issue-2/>

Abstract

This paper explores how Computer Generated Images (CGIs) have enabled the visualisation and negotiation of a new urban imaginary in the production of a large-scale urban development project in Doha, Qatar. CGIs were central not only to the marketing but also the design of Msheireb Downtown. Our study of their production and circulation across a transnational architectural and construction team reveals how their digital characteristics allowed for the development of a negotiated, hybridised urban imaginary, within the context of a re-imaging and re-positioning of cities in a shifting global order. We suggest that CGIs enabled the co-production of a postcolonial urban aesthetic, disrupting the historical Orientalist gaze on the Gulf region, in three ways. Firstly, they circulate through a global network of actors negotiating diverse forms of knowledge from different contexts; secondly, they are composed from a mix of inter-referenced cultural sources and indicators visualising hybrid identities; and thirdly, they evoke a particular urban atmosphere which is both place- and culture-specific, and cosmopolitan. The study emphasises the importance of research into the technical and aesthetic production processes which generate new urban spaces in the context of global market-led growth; and, by considering the circulation of CGIs between sites, contributes to the development of "a more properly postcolonial studies" (Robinson 2011, 17). [Urban Development; Digital Visualisation; Doha, Postcolonial Studies]

The seminar will be held at HDK April 4th 1300-1500 in 206B - please notify henric.benesch@hdk.gu.se if you plan to attend - we have a booked a smaller space but might try to relocate if necessary - and please forward to people who might take an interest!

You'll find more info of Centre for Critical Heritage Studies / Curating the City at:

<http://criticalheritagestudies.gu.se/clusters+and+heritage+academy/curating-the-city>