

THE CULTURAL ECONOMY OF PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT: FIGURING 'ASIAN URBANISM' IN CENTRAL SYDNEY

13 March 2015 (Friday), 3:30pm
FASS Research Division Seminar Room (AS7 06-42)

OPEN TO ALL

Please RSVP with the title "MCNEILL"
to fasscities@nus.edu.sg by 1 March 2015



Donald McNeill is Professor of Urban and Cultural Geography at the Institute for Culture and Society, University of Western Sydney. He has published widely in human geography and urban studies. His books include *The Global Architect: Firms, Fame and Urban Form* (Routledge, 2008), *New Europe: Imagined Spaces* (Arnold, 2004), and *Urban Change and the European Left: Tales from the New Barcelona* (Routledge, 1999).

This seminar seeks to expand the theoretical repertoire of cultural economies of property development by applying the Latourian idea of 'figuration' as a means of capturing the elusive nature of Asian commercial property identities in central Sydney. As a starting point, it brings together existing scholarly work on Chinatowns, on the one hand; and theorisations of central business districts on the other.

Prof. McNeill considers five specific property development events in which Asian cultural economies 'figure', including: the negotiation of a council approved 'heritage Chinatown' as set against other modes of Asian urbanism such as a Hong Kong influenced volumetric urbanism; the promotion of 'supertall' development norms by mainland Chinese property developers, most notably Greenland; the presence of Chinese philanthropic capital via the endowment of a new building for the University of Technology Sydney; the development of casino proposals aimed at "Asian high rollers"; the repositioning of the World Square megablock within a set of contemporary Asian commercial vernaculars. The paper explores different modes by which a post-positivist application of the urban geography legacy term 'central business district' can provide an ontological basis for working through what can be understood by a cultural economy of 'Asian urbanism'.

