

reorientxpress



reorientxpress

Reorientxpress is a journey of dialogues with designers and a wide range of other actors involved in the process of transformations of ‘urban’ environments. It is an itinerant project across South and East Asia to implement interdisciplinary debate about the changes propelled by globalization and by the increasing struggle for perpetual growth at a turning point after modernism and its full deconstruction. The dialogues focus on few specific topics that are key in the ‘urban age’, outlined by dichotomies of concepts that usually reveal different approaches between East and West. By putting them on equal level it tries to reconsider crystallized positions and envision potential futures. Through the collection of fragments and their conjunct interpretation ‘a posteriori’ it aims to give a more holistic view and consider a ‘bigger picture’ in this critical moment in urban dynamics, claiming a deep re-think of the designers and planners role in society, and promoting a collective reflection between a transnational network of professionals and thinkers.

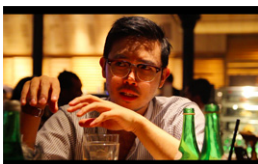
development

REORIENTXPRESS has been developed along a journey, mostly over land, started in Singapore in January 2015 and ended in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia in July 2015, with a preliminary chapter in Java, Indonesia in November 2014. Travelling through 13 countries (Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, India, Hong Kong, China & Mongolia) for more than 20000km, reorientxpress has collected the point of view of 90 contributors of different backgrounds, cultures, disciplines, ages, races, etc., trying to grasp some elements of the particular evolution of this fundamental region. Within the relatively contained circle from Jakarta to Beijing lives more than half of the world population and are located most of the metropolises with over 10 million inhabitants. Closely related to these records are the growing environmental unbalances and the extreme inequality of societies, which have seen their habits getting deeply transformed in an incredibly short time-span. From experimental urban research, to the creation of new high-end lifestyles, to a deep engagement in community development and cooperation, or to the necessary confrontation between global influence and local identities, the disciplines of design and their contiguous fields, divided in multiple diverse trajectories, are undergoing a very dynamic moment in every region of Asia, gathering more attention from foreign information channels, which too often have obvious difficulties

to penetrate below the surface. Discussing with designers on ideas and points of view rather than about specific works and projects is generally not frequent in the East for a number of different reasons, but that’s exactly what is important to approach, in order to help understand the logics behind the change of realities that rarely follow the paradigms that are familiar to the western world.

encounters

The project is consciously unfocused, or better multi-focused, directed to multiple different specific topics rather than having a predetermined common framework that would have necessarily been reductive. The suggested dichotomies of themes served as an echo of ongoing reflection threads, but brought the conversations to span across a very heterogeneous landscape of ideas. For instance the fundamental role of information and its technologies was touched with Etienne Turpin, who built a platform to use Twitter as a tool to instantly map flooded areas in the most vulnerable neighborhoods of Jakarta, or with Laki Senanayake, who, with his 78 years old, from his wall-less studio within the jungle in central Sri Lanka, receives the latest albums of contemporary French jazz via email on his computer, that sits on a pedestal in a washbowl, to prevent insects from nesting in the circuits. Technological innovation and traditional craftsmanship have been discussed from the most extreme positions, if in Bangkok Space Popular always pushes to exceed the boundaries of our understanding and perception, designing and testing environments through ‘virtual reality’, and in Bandung, Indonesia, Hokky Situngkir, tries to blend them, digitally analyzing the ‘philomemetic’ evolution of cultural objects, like Batik dying patterns, from which he also developed a fractal algorithm to design them, named ‘Computational Batik’, on the other hand of the spectrum, in Chiang Mai, northern Thailand, a very young studio, called Yangnar, consciously decided to dedicate themselves to design and build traditional timber houses, carefully drawing every document by hand and building detailed models from raw timber logs. Social and anthropological aspects were highly relevant when reflecting on the disappearing social fabric of the ancient ‘lilongs’ (small alleys) of Shanghai with Non Arkaraprasertkul, who conducted an immersive ethnographic research living in a substandard room without private bathroom while teaching in a prestigious foreign university, but also while talking with Lilian Chee about her recent documentary ‘3 flats’, that looks with deeper intensity at the supposed ‘normality’ of everyday life through cinematographic techniques. Also the psychological sensibility of dealing with communities and clients were key in the conversation with Eko Prawoto, a locally very renowned architect of Yogyakarta in central Java,





who never rejects a defect on site and is reducing the control over its works, as a form of compromising more with reality. At a completely different scale others pointed directly at the overview on bigger scale systems, which are highly related with everyday life in many fast evolving countries, like Sanjay Prakash, from Delhi, who identifies a 'small' lesson that Asian capitalism can give to the rest of the world in the power of aggregators of micro-scale economies, or Milica Topalovic, who develops research on the cross-boundary condition of some contemporary urban systems, like Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia.

The framework shifted also to actual global scale when considering new arrangements of design practices that even at mid-small dimensions can explode into multi-national branches across continents, like Serie Architects, with studios in London, Mumbai, Singapore and Beijing.

The focus got even pushed to global strategic issues, like the 'silent' yet incredible Chinese urbanization in various African countries, researched by Daan Roggeveen through his 'think-tank' in Shanghai.

Through this informal wandering across scales and points of view, a picture of this fragmented landscape of transformation slowly emerged, sometimes blurred, yet fascinating, because it put in question various preconceptions of the way Asian design is portrayed in the media.

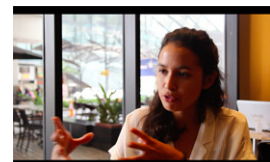
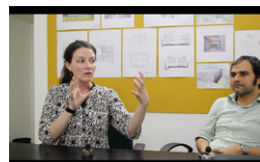
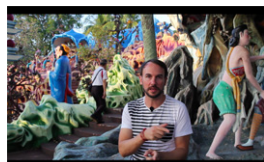
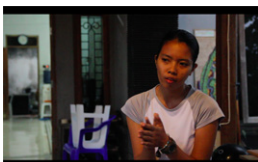
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One of the aims is to encourage avoiding a naive mystification of the recent transformations of Asian cities as pure passive consequence of an ambition for development and blind accumulation of capital, trying to consider them within a wider and more complex perspective.

dichotomies

planned metropolis / wild megalopolis

Now fully entered in the 'urban age' many megacities of the global South are growing in the lack of traditional urban planning, replaced by 'visions' packaged by multi-national consultant companies. Cities, as embodiments of globalization itself, exemplify many growing problems like inequality and expulsions and serve as case-studies to test strategies also for different territorial scales.



global displacements / end of distance

Global economy is provoking unprecedented migrations mostly towards cities, causing the reinforcement of frontiers and the appearance of new borders, while information technologies enable simultaneous connection with the rest of the globe 24/7, dissolving physical distances and creating virtually connected communities.

collective memory / 'rendered' society

The marketing industry is manipulating the imaginary of societies to direct its lifestyle aspirations towards packaged models to purchase. These are often imported and inadequate to local contexts, like the notable case of the countless glazed high-rise condominium in tropical cities. Nonetheless they serve as status symbol and promise irresistible and idealized lives, which are literally exclusive, therefore free from the contrasts everyday realities.

historic preservation / brand-new development

Preservation mostly concentrates on exceptional objects, without considering the generic and immaterial qualities of the built environment, generally lost during 're-development' processes together with the related collective memories. On the other hand also pure conservation generates uncertain consequences, as renovation is necessary to avoid atrophy. Radical stasis and radical development coexists today without a strategy to negotiate their encounter.

vernacular evolution / technical innovation

Vernacular architectures respond to local environments while embodying cultural references and slowly evolving through collective feedback. Under the 'modern imperative', instead, innovation has developed mostly through an exclusive dialogue between industry and designers. Recognizing the fundamental relevance of these technical advances, it is important to review the role of innovation itself, expanding the debate to users and context.

modernity steadiness / vulnerable realities

Modernity, with its 'dominating' approach, has always rejected vulnerability as cultural principle and language but, paradoxically, it has contributed to its formation exploiting the environment to sustain the growth of modern apparatuses. With global crisis its time to promote a wider sense of ecology that supports also the qualities of fragile realities like resilience, adaptation and impermanence.



progress fuel / exploited landscape

In the Anthropocene, the era where human activities have substantial tangible impact on the planet ecosystems, the net division between natural and artificial, set by modernity, has to be deeply reconsidered. It's necessary to culturally and critically reconnect to the landscapes that have been altered to sustain our development, usually far from our comfortable cities and invisible to the most, and to speculate on their (and ours) possible futures.

overview future

'The future is already here, but it is just not very evenly distributed'

William Gibson

Considering the scenery and imaginary of Blade Runner we could argue that Ridley Scott could have thought that future was already happening in Tokyo and Hong Kong.

In 1994, the same visionary sci-fi genius William Gibson had ironically criticized the other peculiar Asian city-state of Singapore. In his well-known article "Disneyland with Death penalty" he briefly highlighted the awkward mixture of leisure, 'softness' and strictness of its organisation.

Many argue that the tiny island-state on the equator, which is now one of the most active hubs of global finance, is a very peculiar experimental laboratory of social and system engineering, where we might find the materialization of a possible 'future'.

Singapore becomes the starting point of an exploration around South and East Asia to collect visions, reflections, evidences, strategies and all suggestions that could help understand the present dynamics and visualize potential scenarios as a critical act rather than predicting a doomed evolution.

The journey takes place in Asia as a continent with extreme characteristics of density and scale, which is now constantly facing deep and fast transformations, hosting half of the world population and more than half of the global cities exceeding 10 million people.

change

According to some scenarios of the famous projections in 'The limits of growth' by MIT in 1972, oil and mineral resources would be in deep scarcity by now. The world could have actually ended in 2012 according to Maya astrological predictions, and the carbon emissions of the developed countries could have halved if the Kyoto protocol had been attended.

None of these happened, but since the past decade several radical changes are taking place around the world at unprecedented rhythms, especially in Asia, where the speed and

scale of environmental transformations are unprecedented.

The banal comparison of average consumption rates around the world, e.g. between Nevada and Inner Mongolia, that populated any article about the future of the planet in the past decade, used to end with terrific scenarios in the unfortunate case that the habits of the so-called 'developed world' were embraced by a consistent portion of the world population.

Now those possibilities are becoming real.

Consumerism is highly contagious and, under the incentive of the West, it is expanding to the entire globe and this doesn't seem to raise particular concern in the vast majority, despite the raising awareness of certain information channels. Nonetheless the effects are becoming consistent on everyone, deeply transforming habits and relations until the scale of everyday life.

holistic view

Given the extreme complexity of today's reality and the continuous multiplication of superimposing system that are shaping everyday life, it is very hard to have an holistic point of view about the multiple transformations of all environments, but it is somehow even more necessary. Any attempt to achieve it implies consistent simplifications that are usually not accepted by a cultivated audience.

In this era of high specialization we might need to make an effort to read across the scales from everyday life to the whole system and back and cities are very useful environments for this purpose as heuristic fields, microcosms of wider transformations, beyond the urban scale.

Rigor is not a priority if the overall objective is the awareness about the consequences of broad, but deep changes.

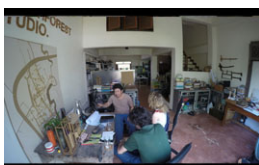
europe/west/rest

For more than 1000 years the West has monopolized the process of 'modernization' building up a paradigm of certainties with clearly defined objectives, like continuous and endless progress, that for long time have never been questioned in their core principles, as the undoubted supremacy of rationality.

The governing principles have later been substituted only by the unbeatable logics of profit, which measures everything in purely economical terms and has rapidly extended to the whole planet with the advent of globalization.

From the '80s, the supposed 'progress' is finally not led by the West alone, but the global polycentric world seems to be only driven by the 'apparently' self-organised system of neo-liberalist economy in a sort of spiral process that is escaping any form of control.

As Bruno Latour sharply analysed, the concept of western 'modernity' had been idealized and artificially organized to be a unitary and complete paradigm of certainties with the sole monopoly of progress and it has always been opposed to all the 'rest', the outside world, that was considered as a plurality of heterogeneous cultures, totally external to any modernization.





That vision naively tends to reduce all cultures to matters of historical heritage against a common global present, but it is necessary to search and consider their contemporary aspects to enrich and diversify the view.

production of objects and buildings using the same abilities of orchestration, scale management, detailing, strategy, contextualization, abstraction, communication and decision-making. A challenge for the future is to drive the creative synthesis expertise towards wider objectives.

turning point

For a few decades post-modern thought has questioned the previous paradigm and criticized its foundations and principles by acknowledging the complexity and fragmented multiplicity of reality that had previously been over-simplified.

However, the antithetical nature of postmodern thought prevents it from being able to become the foundation of 'new paradigms'. Latour has outlined an interesting potential evolution in the recognition of multiple and heterogeneous complexes of cultures and rationalities that would dialogue without strictly defined hierarchies.

This kind of interactions would require more 'diplomatic' positions for all thinkers and practitioners, extending the concept of political mediation to other fields and crossing the boundaries of traditional debates.

dialogues

"I thought the twenty-first century would be, hopefully, more like a dialogue, more like conversation, and maybe that in itself is a kind of manifestation or whatever. I am very careful in even using that word. I just think the twentieth century was so sure of itself, and I hope that the twenty-first century will be less sure. And part of that is to listen to what other people say and to enter into a dialogue, to not stand up and immediately declare one's intent."

Tino Sehgal, quoted by Hans Ulrich Obrist in Manifestos for the Future

The age of grand narratives is arguably over, to describe realities it is necessary today to identify a genre able to be flexible, more informal and agile, without becoming necessarily too fragmented.

Dialogue has been used since ever in the most diverse contexts from Plato's dissertations to contemporary journalism, giving the unusual possibility of shaping the arguments variably and it is therefore very suitable to cover highly heterogeneous subjects. Interviews are one of the most frequent forms of dialogue in the communication era, but they are too often reported without reorganization and comment, in search of a widely-acclaimed objectivity, but that is probably not what is needed at this point in time.

big re-think

Architects, designers and planners, despite a growing presence in the media, compared to just a few decades back, tend to have less and less relevance in the key decisions regarding the shaping and organisation of the built environment.

The information industry has happily absorbed and celebrated the fields of design, but pulling them towards the sectors of lifestyle or even fashion, while on the other hand the increasing weight of economy and private investments contributed to diminish, if not fully eliminate, the role of guidance and conceptual overview.

It's time to re-think the foundations of design practice and its objectives within the society to become more politically relevant and to redirect a consistent amount of research energies that now too often are spent on epidermic aspects.

focus

In the era of hyper-specialization, which constantly prefers to zoom on defined issues, it is necessary to make an effort to acquire a broader overview in order to relate phenomena. The temptation is to look with a wide-angle and analyze the overall systems, but for matters of such amplitude it would become dispersive and pointless. It could be better to propose a dolly-cam view, a section through vast territories and vast arguments.

This section across Asia would be cross-culture and cross-climate, opening up multiple suggestions for comparison and understanding. Therefore the dialogues, in the form of interviews, would revolve around a few more specific macro-themes, while giving a wider picture of the big transformations that the region is experiencing. These would be 'Oppositions', topics where it's hard to clearly define a 'right' position and where there is a consolidated difference of opinions between East and West or between modernism and beyond, to stimulate debate about subjects that are too often given for granted.

designers & co

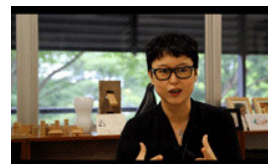
"[Design is] ...the ability to think holistically about problems as opportunities and apply a systematically critical method to create and explore solutions."

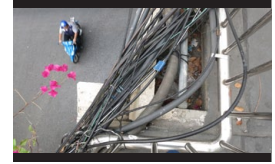
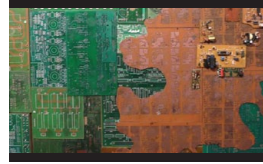
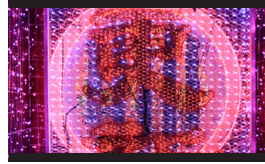
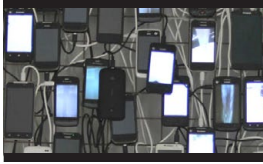
Bruce Mau

How do people feel about transformations and, especially, how do the actors engaged in the changes see them and their consequences?

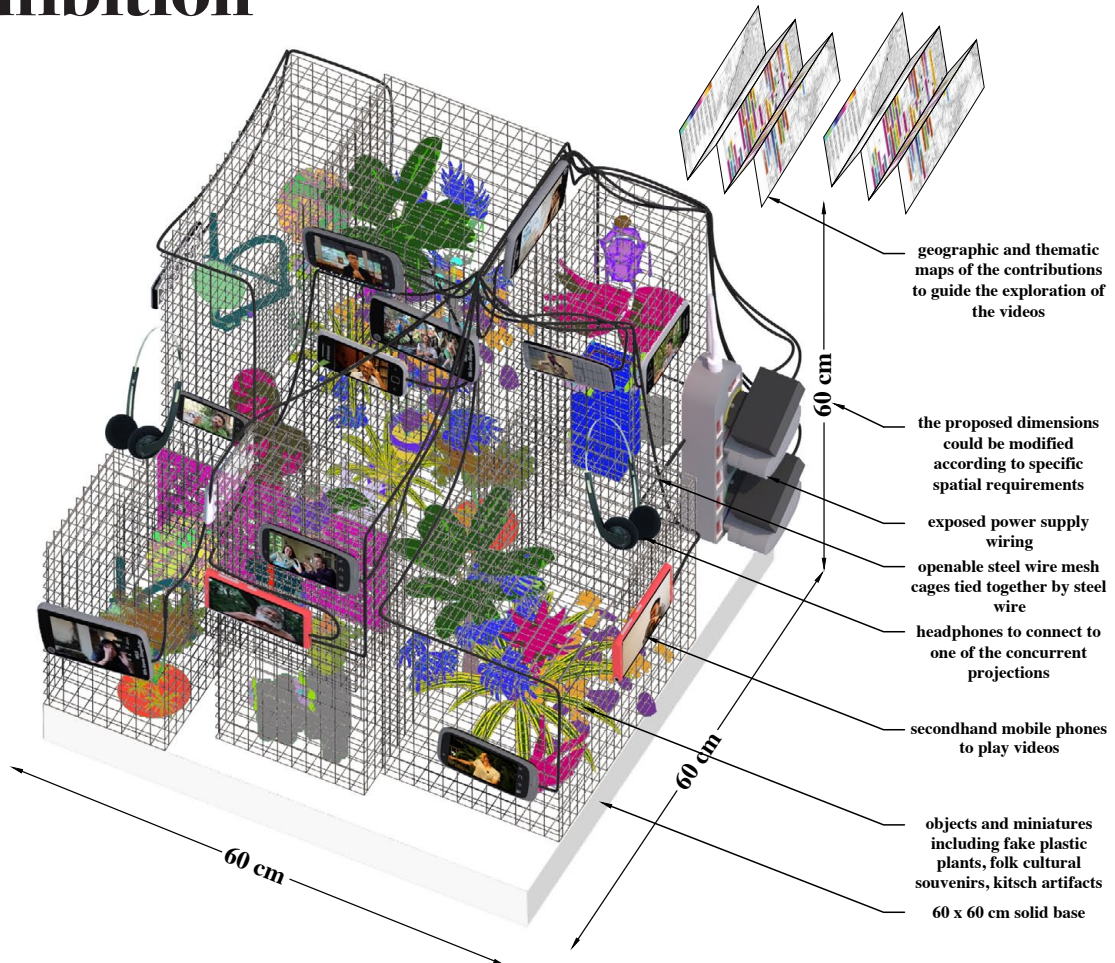
Designers, utilizing the widest sense of the term, and the multiple figures at the edge of design disciplines, have the ability to approach questions in broader terms, to elaborate alternative points of view and to synthesize.

Design has the potential to solve problems beyond the



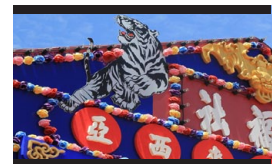
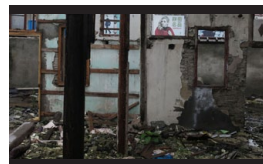
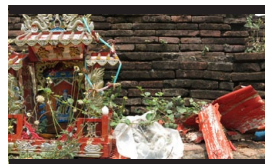
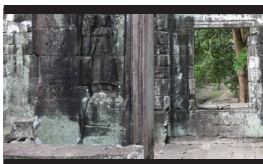


exhibition



The project has been organized in order to be communicated and displayed in multiple ways, in the form of interactive webpage, publication or exhibition. Since the beginning it has been related to a growing online platform (www.reorientxpress.com) that contains an unsorted archive of some fragments of reflections collected through the journey. They have the form of edited short videos that are mostly complemented by visions (pictures and footage) of the cities and spaces related to the speaker, in order to give an approximate perception of the dialogues background environment, both physical and cultural. Through the selection of topic, geographical area, discipline or keyword, the visitors could create their own fragmented itinerary and reconstruct a personal journey through the project, partly intentional and partly random, experiencing unexpected associations and encounters as it actually happened during the development of the journey itself. The content would be better exhibited in the form of an installation of approximately 60x60x60cm (the proposed dimensions could be modified according to specific spatial requirements), an aggregate of wire mesh cages, resembling a sort of construction site of clustered blocks. These structures will be colonized by eclectic 'squatter' settlements made

up by objects and kitsch souvenirs of different size, including cutouts of pop lifestyle and real-estate magazines, collected from various countries along the journey. They will also accommodate a series of secondhand smartphones, with the only purpose of playing videos on their displays. All spaces and devices will be connected by a very informal network of cables, disorderly arranged around the structures. These characteristics of the installation would serve as a visual and performative conjunction of multiple layers of debate: a technologic one, related to the abuse of information technologies and the subsequent environmental problems of e-waste; a cultural one, represented by the ubiquitous presence of aspirational images that aim to intentionally distort the perception of collective imaginary all throughout East Asia; and an ecosystemic one, connected with the instant decay of the built environment, always very evident in the regions of the global South, mostly located within the tropical strip, like the whole South East Asia and bottom part of China. The visitors could navigate around the installation and find references and fragments of conversations, accessible by plugging in a pair of cheap headphones provided together with jack plug splitters for collective listening.





contributors

Below are the synthetic biographies of the 90 contributors who have dialogued with reorientxpress, listed in chronological order.

Danny Wicaksono is a young Indonesian architect based in Jakarta, running the practice studiobasar. He's one of the founder and main current figure of Jongarsitek!, independent magazine and 'collective' around an extended and comprehensive vision of the world of architecture and design.

Alvin Tjittrowirjo is an Indonesian product designer head of the Jakarta based firm Alvin T, one of the first young independent brands in the region, which promotes new encounters between tradition and new forms of design, both in products and interiors.

Csutoras & Liando is an architecture and design studio, with main office in Jakarta, led by Laszlo Csutoras and Melissa Liando. They dedicate to different scales, including ephemeral interventions (like the successful Kineforum in Jakarta) in the public space, which is a field very little approached in Indonesia.

Djuhara + Djuhara is a studio based in Jakarta and very active in the architectural scene and debate in Indonesia. Among his most famous works are a few house realized with extremely constrained budget, making use of recycled materials not as a symbol of sustainable concern, but as the most substantial factor in the actual parameters of the outcome.

Joshua Simandjuntak is the founder and director product design studio and brand Karsa in Jakarta. His numerous collaborations with the most important architecture studios in the country highlight the presence of Karsa's works in the growing world of Indonesian design. Its wide international background and experience is the base for a solid exploration of the contemporary potentials of traditional craft techniques.

Rumah Asuh is an alternative movement to save and preserve the local wisdom of Indonesian architecture. It is an association led and promoted by the established Jakarta based architecture firm Han Awal & partners and it puts a lot of effort to create the conditions for remote local communities to hand down knowledge to the next generations while renovating and creating buildings that are useful and meaningful to them.

David Hutama is the dean of the Faculty of Architecture University Pelita Harpan in Jakarta, one of the most active courses in the design scene in a country, Indonesia, which counts over 150 schools of architecture.

Hokky Situngkir is a data scientist, researcher and professor based in Bandung, Indonesia, where he founded the 'Bandung Fe Institute for Complexity', which, among various researches, is digitally analyzing the 'philomemetic' evolution of cultural objects, like Batik patterns, music, architectures, etc. He's also an advisor for the smart city committee of Bandung.

Andrea Fitrianto is an architect that works with communities implementing participatory methods and the use of endemic & culturally embedded materials, focusing in urban disadvantaged and disaster contexts. He is based in Bandung, Indonesia, and affiliated with ACHR – Community Architects Network.

Ronaldiaz Hartyanto is a designer and enthusiastic activist for the promotion of agriculture and natural products through design and media. He's one of the founders of **Crowbox**, a startup that creates boxes containing spores to grow edible mushrooms at home.

Etienne Turpin is the principal director of Anexact Office, a design research practice committed to interventive multidisciplinary urbanism, artistic and curatorial experimentation, and applied philosophical inquiry, based in Jakarta, Indonesia. Etienne is also a Vice-Chancellor's Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the SMART Infrastructure Facility, University of Wollongong, Australia. He is co-director and co-principal investigator of PetaJakarta.org, an applied research project on urban risk, data collection, and infrastructure adaptation.

Adi Purnomo is a well-known Indonesian architect founder of **Mamostudio** in Jakarta. His sensitive approach to design and to the relationship with his clients always generates very unexpected results.

Paulus Mintarga is an unusual contractor, who, also in collaboration with many important local architects, designs and builds projects, which experiment in various directions, from material recycling to urban farming, to different forms of living and working spaces.

Eko Prawoto is a renowned Indonesian architect and educator, based in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. He combines contemporary design with local knowledge, commenting that he views his works as social entities as much as physical objects. **IIVA (Indonesian Visual Art Archive)** is an independent association whose mission is to create an open, accessible and comprehensive source of information about local art, to promote awareness and exchange of ideas.

Arkorn is a non-profit organization with a branch in Yogyakarta (Indonesia) who collaborates with local vulnerable communities promoting collective effort to improve the living environment.

Erik L'Heureux is an American professor based in Singapore and principal of Pencil studio. He has co-curated the Singaporean pavilion at Venice Biennale in 2010 on questions of density. His interests include a very broad spectrum of topics, often related with the particular conditions of the nation state, which he develops in courses, publications and exhibitions.

Michael Lee is a Singaporean artist, whose works often include focuses on the city, its architectures and their preservation, in connection with the controversial notion of collective memory.

Kho Peng Beng is a partner of Singapore based Arc Studio Architecture + Urbanism, internationally renown for the public housing complex Pinnacle@Duxton in SG. His fields of exploration include density and high-rise residential among various other topics.

Lai Chee Kien is an architecture historian and professor based in Singapore, who is also very active in the political debate in the region, especially concerning matters of heritage conservation.

Post Museum (Jennifer Teo & Woon Tien Wei) is an independent cultural and social enterprise, which aims to encourage and support a thinking, caring and pro-active community in Singapore.

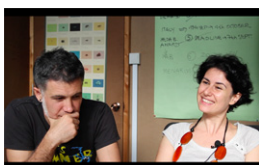
Sara Lenzi (Lorelei productions) & **Juan Sadaba** (Nerei) are an Italian sound designer and a Spanish architect focused on interactive product design for public spaces, they are based in Singapore and are occasionally collaborating on some projects in the framework of an effectively 'smarter' city environment.

Callum McCulloch & Richard Outhwaite are two engineers of Singaporean creative engineering firm WebStructures, specialized respectively in structural and environmental design (WebEarth), they have dealt with developments of various scale and typology in many Asian metropolises. Within the philosophy of the team that defines itself as a pioneer in "fusion engineering": fusing design sensitivity with cost consciousness, erasing the traditional separation between architectural design aesthetics and structural efficiency.

Ying Zhou is an architect and researcher of the Future Cities Laboratory (FCL), Singapore ETH, who focuses on Shanghai's city center transformation processes as potential strategies for the future and studying the set of 'loophole' conditions that have eased economic transitions, foster creative industries development and abet urban system resilience.

Pedro Santa-Rivera is a Puerto Rican designer and project manager, who coordinated the Water Management Team of strategic landscape and planning firm Atelier Dreiseitl in Singapore, where he moved to study and understand the pioneering integrated policies and systems of water management implemented in the island.

Karen Tan is a co-founder of Pocket Projects, a creative development consultancy and management company based in Singapore, with multidisciplinary background in real estate finance, design and urban planning. The practice conceptualizes, consults on, and manages niche urban development projects, focused on adaptive reuse of distressed urban areas and heritage buildings.





Chang Huai-yan is an eclectic landscape designer and lecturer based in Singapore, founder of the studio Salad Dressing that explores and tries to redefine the language of tropical landscape typologies.

Alan Tay is a partner of Formwerkz Architects, a Singapore based architecture practice specialized in high-end residential projects.

Grace Baey is a Singapore-based photographer with an interest in social issues. A human geographer by training, her interests span questions of place, identity, and belonging. Her current work deals with issues of social marginalization, with particular focus on low-waged migrant workers and the transgender community in Singapore.

Milica Topalovic is Assistant Professor of Architecture and Territorial Planning of ETH Zurich Darch. She has been based in Singapore at the ETH Future Cities Laboratory.

Lilian Chee is Assistant Professor of the Singapore NUS Department of Architecture. Her research areas include interiority and domesticity representation. One of her last works is 03-Flat, a documentary that describes the life of three women in Singapore Public Housing.

Aurel von Richthofen is the Module Coordinator at the Chair of Architecture and Construction at the Future Cities Laboratory Singapore, leading the Sand Lab, a research project on alternative uses of sand in construction. Before moving to Singapore has taught and lectured in various universities around the world, residing a few years in Oman, where he conducted various researches on sustainable urbanization patterns in the region.

Michael Douglass is an American urban planner and social scientist, based in Singapore, where he is Professor at the LKY School of Public Policy and at the Asia Research Institute, where he is Leader of the Asian Urbanisms Cluster. He's noted for his analyses of rural-urban linkages, migration and international economic competition, globalization and the rise of civil society in Asia.

Matthias Roth is an experiential researcher and professor of the National University of Singapore who seeks to understand how land-use changes affect local climates with a particular focus on cities and the role they play in climate change and the application of such knowledge to climate sensitive urban design.

Kelley Cheng is a Singaporean designer, with architectural education background, dedicating mostly to publishing and graphics, among various fields. She runs the design consultancy The Press Room and in her free time, she engages in activities that saves the earth and promotes human rights.

Oscar Carracedo is Assistant Professor at the Department of Architecture of the National University of Singapore (NUS), where he teaches urban design and planning and directs the Master of Urban Planning (MUP). One of his main focuses is related to informal settlements and the vulnerability of contemporary urban environments.

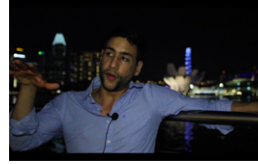
Jonathan Rigg is a development geographer and professor, based in Singapore, concerned with highlighting and explaining patterns and processes of social, economic and environmental change in the Asian region and the impacts of such changes on ordinary people and everyday life.

Chris Parry, after a design career in big fashion brands, moved back to the Malaysian city neighboring Singapore and founded the association Johor Green, which promotes a more conscious and sustainable future for one of Malaysia's most problematic cities.

Ng Sek San is a well-known landscape architect based in Kuala Lumpur, with a profound respect for nature, the environment and a belief in committing to making works that reflect an egalitarian lifestyle, affordable and not overtly finished. He eschews the principle of treading the land lightly as possible, being irreverent to manmade rules and conventions, and advocates extreme restraint in design.

Ec Soon Wei, grandson of Ec Lay Swee, the family patriarch of the Royal Press, a printing company founded in 1938, embraced a mission to revive and enliven this beautiful dusty printing haven, evolving it into a museum. In Kuala Lumpur, he's now transforming a family printing factory doomed to decline, in a vibrant hub for creative people.

Yasmin Lane is one of the researchers of **Bettercities #BetterKL** that was initiated as a grassroots campaign to improve urban living and environment in Kuala Lumpur through creative, grassroots and participatory methods. Their projects



aim to highlight and explore issues pertaining to urban activism and participatory urbanism.

Boonserm Premthada is a Bangkok based architect and lecturer at the Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University. His unusual approach to design brought him to realize an outstanding contemporary Film-making Institute built of more than 600,000 traditionally hand-made bricks, obtained from Thailand's last brick-producing village.

Patama Roonrakwit is the founder of Community Architects for Shelter and Environment (CASE) in Bangkok. The group works with a humanitarian and anthropological approach to creating appropriate housing for the urban poor in informal settlements.

POAR is young research/design studio, based in Bangkok, that aims to combine traditional, local and modern architecture, promoting a new generation of designers who combines international education and experience with local knowledge.

Space Popular is a multidisciplinary design and research practice operated from the House of Spop, Bangkok, and led by architects and professors Lara Lesmes & Fredrik Hellberg. Its activity is directed in multiple trajectories including architecture, products, furniture graphics, interfaces and research, always pushing the boundaries of design disciplines towards novel approaches.

all(zone) is, as they would say, a 'group of happy design professionals' who joyfully collaborate with specialists across the borders of their fields and country, fascinated by the ever-changing mega metropolis they're based in (Bangkok) and by contemporary vernacular design solutions.

Kong Vokkal is a young Cambodian visual artist based in Phnom Penh, whose connection with the traces of the tragic history of his nation is intimately connected with the natural elements.

Pen Serey Pagna is a freelance architect and urban researcher based in Phnom Penh. In 2010 Pagna began an online architecture journal, Lumhor, which focuses on architecture, urbanism and design in Cambodia. He has collaborated with the Vann Molyvann Project especially conducting research regarding the housing complex 'White Building' in Phnom Penh, designed by avant-garde modernist architect Vann Molyvann.

Building Trust is a non-profit charity founded in 2010, currently based in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, which promotes the skills of design for problem solving and creating better solutions also through the development of community oriented projects, by organizing architectural competitions and the crowd funding campaigns to realize them.

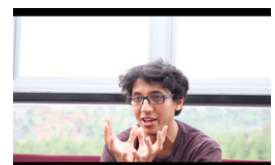
Malyn Neang is a researcher and professor of the Royal University of Agriculture (RUA) in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, who is leading ECOLAND research centre (Ecosystem Services and Land Use), whose research is actively engaged in topics related to ecosystem services, rural development, land use management, and conservation, primarily in Cambodia rural areas.

a2i studio is a young practice based in Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon), Vietnam, very actively promoting a new generation of Vietnamese architecture and gathering important media attention through its outstanding and unexpected projects.

Tropical Space is an architecture firm based in Ho Chi Minh City, founded by Nguyen Hai Long and Tran Thi Ngu Ngon. With a deep understanding of Vietnamese culture and climate, Tropical Space is committed to create environmental friendly building through the use of traditional techniques and careful material selections.

Tran Minh Duc (Duc Flyingbay) is a visual artist based in Ho Chi Minh City, who reflects about the impact of stranger insertions in society and in the city. Through heterogeneous media and diverse trajectories, Duc's works reflect a sense of discomfort and slow violence that is seldom acknowledged.

Hoàng Đức Minh is one of the founders of Vietnamese activist association **Action For the Future** that promotes transformations in society starting from individual change of people. It supports numerous campaigns and initiatives, while also organizing workshops and retreats to raise self-awareness in new generations. He has participated to various international summits for teenagers representing Vietnam and facing the difficulties of creating common grounds.





Tung Pho Duc is one of Vietnam's leading experts in urban planning based in Hanoi. He completed his doctoral studies in Germany developing a comparative framework between a Vietnamese and, more generally, Asian understanding of space and Western Modernism, which seems to be now commonly accepted as the default way towards development in the fast changing country.

Salvador Pérez Arroyo is a Spanish architect, urban planner and chair professor at Madrid Polytechnic. He's been teaching in Spain and in London at UCL always promoting the highest level of experimental approach in technologies and in the very foundations of architecture. He's now based in Hanoi, where he's the co-founder and director of Sdesign firm that deals with large scale projects both in architecture and master-planning.

Luang Prabang **UNESCO Heritage House** is the institution dedicated to implement and ensure the proper preservation of the town that was classified in the World Heritage List in 1995. They revise and release permits for any project of modification of the built environment within the perimeter of the city center, originating an ongoing process of "purification" of the idealized image of the city's atmosphere.

Kon Jai Baan is a group of community architects, based in Chiang Mai, who are interested in the process of collaborative design and use that process to implement creativity in issues related to housing, community culture, the environment and cultural heritage.

Julaporn Nuntapanichis is an architect, building and forestry consultant and lecturer at Faculty of Architecture, Chiang Mai University, and the founder of Northforest studio. He promotes ways of living in harmony with nature and his way of teaching focuses on understanding fundamental ideas and local wisdom by learning from experience.

YangNar Studio is based in Chiang Mai and made up of young designers/craftsmen who mostly dedicate to design and build traditional timber architecture. They conduct the entire process of design through hand drawings and detailed models that they create from raw materials and they participate actively in the construction of the works, creating very careful and paradoxically "unusual" results.

Jan Glasmeier is the co-founder of **a.gor.a Architects**, an architectural firm based in Mae Sot on the Thai-Myanmar Border, which aims to provide a sustainable and innovative response for developing communities and for unprivileged people. Collaborating with few of the many NGOs present in the area a.gor.a addresses through the means of architectural discipline the complex social issue of Myanmar refugee and immigrant settlements in Thailand.

Aung Soe Min is a co-founder of renowned eclectic **Pansodan art gallery** in Yangon centre. It comprises multiple spaces in different locations in the city, including an open photographic archive representing a different perspective on the history of Myanmar. The gallery has always provided a space for sharing ideas and debating with frequent open gatherings, becoming a reference point in Yangon's artistic and activist scene.

François Tainturier is the Executive Director of Yangon based **Inya Institute**, a non-profit organization that seeks to build research and intellectual capacity for young local researchers. His research specializes in the study of past and present built environments and in the question of built heritage and its conservation, especially concerning vernacular heritage.

Palinda Kannangara is a Sri Lankan architect with a background deeply rooted in the different generations of the country's notable tradition of tropical modernist architecture. In his words his practice respects tradition without being restricted by it, exploits technology without letting it incarcerate feelings, and is strongly focused on the incorporation and creative use of nature.

Narcin Perera is a Sri Lankan architect who runs a small practice, which prides itself in the degree of innovation and holistic applicability of its architectural solutions, each with a specific set of social, climatic, contextual and technological nuances. He's a Senior Lecturer at University of Moratuwa, with a teaching and research focus on climate sensitive design at both building and urban scales.

Laki Senanayake is an imaginative artist in many fields and one of the focal figures of Sri Lankan creative scene. He belongs to the generation that emerged in the 1950s, a period as innovative and creative in Sri Lankan art, literature, music, theatre and film as any that has followed since. Sacked from his first job as an architectural draughtsman, within a year, for starting a trade union. He was fortunate to be re-employed as an assistant to Geoffrey Bawa, Architect.



He created many sculptures and murals for Bawa's buildings and drafted many of his most famous drawings. His work includes painting, drawing, sculpture, architecture, landscape gardening, silkscreen printing, batik, and recently even digital art.

Kapil Gupta is the co-founder of **Serie Architects** and Principal of Serie Mumbai. He was a Director of the Urban Design Research Institute in Mumbai for few years. He lectures widely and the works of Serie has been exhibited as a travelling solo exhibition around the world.

Incepted by **Kalpil Ashar** and **Mayuri Sisadia**, **MAD(E) IN MUMBAI**, is a young international design practice that draws from diverse national and international exposure of its principals and their involvement with design academia. It takes its shape in madness of Mumbai city, this crazy patchwork of ideas, experiences and materiality forms repository and laboratory for the studio. Rather than conforming to good ways of building architecture and cities, it believes in radical approaches that transcend the norms of design.

Himanshu Burté is an architect by profession who has occupied teaching positions at various institutes of architecture and social studies in Mumbai and written extensively on art, architecture, and urban design from a markedly liberal and reflective point of view.

Dr Anita Patil-Deshmukh is the executive Director of **PUKAR**, an independent research collective and an urban knowledge production centre based in Mumbai that conducts multi-sectoral, cross-disciplinary, community-based participatory research on issues related to urbanization and globalization. A physician by profession, Anita received her Masters in Public Health from Harvard University and worked as a faculty Neonatologist in a teaching institution in Chicago for 20 years.

banduksmithstudio is an architecture practice based in Ahmedabad, India, founded by architects **Sachin Bandukwala** and **Melissa Smith**, that combines a materially sensitive approach to design with respect for its context through a considered relationship with the physical and social condition of its surroundings. It intends design as a series of systems, which add to a whole that works in conjunction with human created, urban or rural networks, and with the natural systems of sun, wind, rain, growth and decay that permeate our lives.

Rajeev Kathpalia is partner at **Vastu Shilpa Consultants**, a professional consultancy practice in architecture, urban planning and design, based in Ahmedabad and founded by famous Indian architect **Balkrishna V. Doshi**. Rajeev is also a Trustee and Director of the **Vastu Shilpa Foundation**, a non-profit research organization in environmental and habitat design.

Sanjay Prakash is a renowned Indian architect based in New Delhi, who has influenced many practitioners in the region with his ideas and explorations. He's the founder and Director of **Shift Architects**. His area of practice and research over the last 30 years includes passive and low energy architecture and planning, hybrid air-conditioning, autonomous energy and water systems, bamboo and earth construction, community-based design of common property, and computer-aided design.

Born and raised in Hong Kong, **Gary Chang** lived his childhood in a tight subdivided unit of only 32m2 with his parents and three sisters. Later on as a designer he developed a highly reconfigurable 32m2 apartment for himself, named 'Domestic Transformer', which granted him a significant position in the Hong Kong architectural scene and put him in the vanguard of the growing global phenomenon of compact living. He's the founder of **EDGE Design Institute** and is also a 'sophisticated travel fanatic' who spends most of his nights in hotels around the world.

Tom Verebes is Associate Dean (Teaching & Learning) and Associate Professor in the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Hong Kong. Formerly Co-Director of the AA Design Research Lab (DRL) in London, Tom is the founder and Creative Director of **OCEAN.CN**, a consultancy network of specialist design consultants based in Hong Kong. Tom has written, published, exhibited and lectured extensively in Europe, North America, Asia and the Middle East. His pioneering research in computational design methodologies and adaptive master planning is a fundamental reference in the academic and professional fields of novel and advanced approach to urban design.

Pimpim de Azevedo is a director of **Tibet Heritage Fund (THF)** is an international non-profit organization committed to preservation of architectural heritage in general and Tibetan heritage in particular, and to improvement of the lives of people living in traditional and historic settlements through sustainable





development. THF is active in various parts of Tibet and neighboring areas across China, Nepal and India.

MAP Office is a multidisciplinary platform devised by Moroccan and French artists/architects **Laurent Gutierrez** and **Valérie Portefaix**. This has been based in Hong Kong since 1996, working on physical and imaginary territories using varied means of expression including drawing, photography, video, installations, performance, and literary and theoretical texts. Their entire project forms a critique of spatio-temporal anomalies and documents how human beings subvert and appropriate space.

Melissa Cate Christ is a landscape architect and founding director of **transverse studio**, a collaborative practice that intersects trajectories of landscape, culture, urbanism and infrastructure through a documentary process of investigation, design and activism. The studio is committed to developing collaborative mechanisms of critical intervention to enable communities and individuals to realize their agency and role in the occupation and transformation of the urban environment and public spaces, both physical and virtual. She is also a Research Assistant Professor at Hong Kong Polytechnic (PolyU).

Xiaodu Liu is a founder and director of **Urbanus** studio in Shenzhen, which is recognized as one of the most influential architecture practices in China. It is also a think tank that aims to formulate architectural strategies from the urban environment in general and the ever changing urban conditions. The Urbanus Research Bureau (URB), which is primarily concerned with urban research, focuses on the contemporary urban Chinese phenomenon to conduct a series of research projects, including: creative city development, post-urban village development, typologies for hyper-density and others.

Trained as an architect, urban designer, historian and ethnographic filmmaker, **Non Arkaraprasertkul** is currently a PhD Candidate in Anthropology at Harvard University and Professor at New York University branch in Shanghai. He has published widely in the fields of urban studies, architectural history, and urban anthropology, with specific reference to the situation of Shanghai. His research interest lies in the crossroad of transdisciplinary research between architecture and the social sciences.

MovingCities is a Shanghai-based think-tank investigating the role that architecture and urbanism play in shaping the contemporary city. Established in Beijing in 2007 by **Bert de Munnick** and **Mónica Carriço**, it publishes, collaborates, talks and walks, and operate as embedded architects. During the past years MovingCities has conducted research, lectures, creative consultancy and workshops in China, Israel, Sweden, Netherlands, Finland and Indonesia.

Pascal Berger is a Swiss architect and a founding partner of **playze**, a network of local architecture studios in Berlin, Shanghai and Zurich. It is a project to explore the possibilities of mobility, intercultural exchanges and global market niches. His activities in spatial design range from teaching and research to the classical execution of the practice of architecture. Since 2009, Pascal has been teaching at the university of Hong Kong and later he acted as academic director of the HKU Shanghai study center.

Daan Roggeveen is an architect and co-founder of **MOREarchitecture** a studio for design and research based in Shanghai. Together with M. Hulshof he collaborates on the Go West Project, a think tank on emerging megacities. They are the authors of 'How the City Moved to Mr. Sun – China's New Megacities'.

Harry den Hartog is an independent critic and urban designer, based in Shanghai. He's the founder of research practice **Urban Language** that gives advice on urban planning and design issues. The office has a special fascination for metropolitan problems such as urban-rural relationships, changes in the meaning and use of public space, globalization and the different spatial effects that result from the rapidly changing economic and climatic conditions.

Ercument Gorgul is a Turkish architect and professor based in Shanghai, who worked as senior designer for SOM in the US. He has been the first and only non-Chinese full-time faculty at Tongji University College of Architecture and Urban Planning (CAUP) in Shanghai. His academic interests lie on teaching creativity by developing different methods and mechanisms of abstraction. Ercu is also interested in design and development of experimental curricula on parametrics; digital crafting; performative and lenient design thinking in architecture, with a special focus on individual development of next generation college and pre-college level students interested in the field.

Beatrice Leanza is an Italian art writer, independent researcher and co-founder of curatorial, design and editorial office **BAO**, based in Beijing, where she's the main director of **Beijing Design Week**. In the early 2000 she joined the China Art Archives and Warehouse (CAAW) directed by artist Ai Weiwei, where she was curator and manager until early 2005. Her critical practice articulated both theoretically and practically in the exploration of artistic processes of production and representation, evaluates the way these inform historically and conceptually specific cultural perceptions of the contemporary.

Che Fei is a Chinese architect based in Beijing with an international background who developed doctoral research in Germany, conceptualizing what he defined as 'socio-spatial transitions' in Eastern cities. He's co-founder of **CU OFFICE** and **CU SPACE** gallery in 798 art zone Beijing.

James Shen is a co-founder of **people's architecture office (PAO)**, located in the heart of Beijing's historic central ring, whose projects engage in a wide variety of building typologies and are not limited by form or scale, but instead focus on human interaction and the enhancement of people's daily lives. The firm also runs people's industrial design office (PIDO) in parallel to their architectural endeavors and they have developed an innovative experimental cheap and dry system for rehabilitation for typical Beijing old courtyard houses.

Founded by Chinese architect **Li Han** and designer **Hu Yan** in Beijing, **Drawing Architecture Studio (DAS)** is a creative platform integrating architecture, art, design, urban study, and pop culture, aiming to explore the new models for the creation of contemporary urban culture. Their technique to inquire the transformation of the city through large scale high-detail axonometric drawings of Beijing's neighborhoods, which they continue to develop experimentally, gained them international recognition and attention.

David Bellatalla is an Italian researcher and academician in cultural anthropology, based in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia since early 90s, prior to the country opening to market economy. He conducted numerous scientific explorations all throughout Asia and South America and, since 1992, he has started a continuous scientific research on nomadism in Mongolia. He also promotes and directs various cooperation and aid initiatives for which he has received the Silver Medal for humanitarian merits from the Red Cross.

Christopher Lee is the co-founder and principal of **Serie Architects** London, Mumbai, Singapore and Beijing; and leads the design of Serie across all four offices. He is Associate Professor at Harvard Graduate School of Design and was the Director of the AA Projective Cities MPhil and AA Diploma and Intermediate Unit Master. The practice is known for its theoretical position, which emphasizes the study of building typologies and their evolution. Thus, Serie advocates careful study of historical building precedents as a basis for speculating on very novel solutions.

biography

reorientxpress has been developed by **Antonio Bernacchi** & **Alicia Lazzaroni**, two Italian architects, who attended half of their studies in Spain, obtaining a post-graduate Master degree from Madrid Polytechnic (ETSAM).

They've been working in Singapore for four years, collaborating on a wide variety of architecture and design projects in South East Asia, and later started an overland journey across 13 countries from Singapore to Mongolia, along which they developed reorientxpress.

They are currently adjunct professors of architectural design and co-coordinators of the third year course at INDA, International Program in Design and Architecture of Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, Thailand.

