



FLEXIBILITY, MOBILITY & HOUSING

Intercultural project of European and Asian institutions on the future of housing.

Increasing globalisation has made most of the housing models and housing from the past two centuries appear outdated. In the 19th and 20th centuries housing was predicated on occupants who mostly lived and worked in the same place all their lives. The worldwide restructuring of conditions of work (liberalisation of labour markets, the decline in long-term employment, the decrease in subsistence economy etc.) is however today creating new modes of living in Europe and Asia alike which are predicated on the increasing flexibility and mobility of the inhabitants of both continents, not least as regards housing. But what demands do these 'flexible' 'mobile' individuals make on their homes?

This central question will constitute the point of departure for an interdisciplinary project (focusing on housing, urban planning, sociology, interior design etc.) and lead to reciprocal analysis of and reflection on European and Asiatic 'answers' – i.e., housing models – by teams of experts. While the above-mentioned trends are to some extent developing at very different economic and social levels in Europe and Asia, nevertheless the depth of the problems resulting from the dramatic changes in Asia can provide valuable experience for European experts. The aim of the project is to examine both situations and by exploring the respective 'foreign' forms of housing to gain insights for the further development of housing in the experts' own countries.

In this connection it would seem meaningful to explore the following questions:

- What impact will the changes in people's lifestyles adumbrated above have on urban planning in the 21st century?
- What qualities (relationship to natural setting, environmental considerations, affordability, feasibility etc.) will and should new housing models orient themselves on?
- What other possible or conceivable alternatives exist to present-day understanding of flexibility in housing (reduction of fixed elements, reduction to smallest possible dimensions of constructional components etc.)?
- What viable future housing models are possible in European nucleated cities, the majority of which developed in the 19th century or earlier?
- To what extent can the anonymous vernacular architecture of South-East Asia (houseboats, 'mobile architecture' etc.) be transformed to correspond with contemporary needs?
- What demands does a more flexible and mobile mode of living place on the interior of a dwelling? How does this influence interior design?