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Title: Local identity in the form production process, using as a case study the

Multifunctional Administrative City project in South Korea

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Abstract

This paper argues that many of those changes to the built environment brought about through economic and cultural globalization have resulted in a blurring of national identities expressed through city form, worldwide, including South East and Far East Asian countries. As a reaction to this, local identity has emerged as a central concern amongst both academics and many built environment professionals for setting the 21st century urban development agenda. The focus of this paper is to explore place-making in relation to the role of different actors within the form production process, and the implications of globalisation for local identity. The article explains how the central concepts underpinning the notion of local identity are operationalized within the form production process, particularly in relation to the morphological elements of built form and the different understandings and motivations of the key actors involved. The paper presents the findings from an extensive research project which combined both theoretical analysis, and empirical case study work. It is intended to lead to a better understanding of how local identity and the needs of local culture could be incorporated, sustained and developed in contemporary new town development in the South East/Far East Asian context.

Key words: local identity, decision-making process, community engagement, New town development

Introduction

Rapid urban transformation and globalization have resulted in an increasing trend towards aesthetic and morphological uniformity within the built environment, leading to a loss of local cultural identity, particularly in rapidly expanding urban areas as well as new cities which aspire to global status Peter Hall (2008) and others (Umbach, 2009; Mansell, 2009; Yang; 2011; Brooks, 2011). This links to recent debates about local identity and the role of urban design in setting the 21st century development agenda, particularly for large scale urban projects such as those appearing in China and the Middle East in recent years. A key issue within this debate is that of an apparent tension between the global aspirations of emerging states, such as China and the United Arab Emirates, and the need to give space and expression to local cultural practices and built form. .

The paper is in three parts. The first summarises the key theoretical issues focused around the question of local identity within the current conceptualization of globalized urban development, specifically in the context of the Far East. We then sketch out the two central dimensions of local identity – the tangible (built form|), and the intangible (the occupation and use of space) – drawn from the theoretical literature. This discussion provides the basis for the second part of the paper, which examines a specific example of contemporary and large scale urban development: the Multifunctional Administrative City (MAC) in South Korea. This example is used, in the third part of the paper, to illustrate the challenge for new town development of

satisfying, on the one hand, the drive for global status or recognition, and on the other the need to make a place that has local cultural relevance. The MAC is taken, in this paper, as an opportunity for exploring alternative methods (based on an Inquiry by Design approach (Zeisel, 2006) which might be employed in the development process, and which was empirically tested by the authors in their field work with potential residents of the MAC.

Background

The tension between global aspirations and local cultural needs

Many cities are increasingly influenced by the forces of globalization, resulting in significant changes to their social and spatial structure. Since the 1990s and as a consequence of these forces, a degree of homogenisation in design and planning has resulted. In practice this means that consciously or otherwise, many planners, urban designers, and architects have reproduced stereotypical layouts, buildings and masterplans, bearing little if any relationship to traditional, local or place specific built form. This is epitomized in the newer parts of cities such as Dubai and Shanghai, driven by economic competitiveness, and a perception that the local is not global. The cost of this has been to downgrade or ignore altogether the specificity of local cultures to the degree that this is bound up with local built form.

It has been argued, that is, that the global trend towards homogenization in design and planning represents a threat to the social, cultural and political practices of hitherto culturally distinct regions. This has resulted in a counter-trend, led by certain scholars, focusing on ideas of *locality* and *place* (McDowell, 1997; Jacobs and Fincher, 1998; Lewis, 2002; Adam, 2008) and theoretical speculation about how the notion of local

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identity might be interpreted in a way which fits the contemporary global context of urban growth.

We argue that the development of South East Asian regional architecture, which looks at local identity in this way, could provide an opportunity for a shift away from the dominance of design by often commercially driven forms of development based on North American typologies towards a form of cultural emancipation. Abel (1997) used such regional trends and possibilities to emphasise the drawbacks of modernized homogeneous 'Western' forms, and categorized these emergent alternatives under the name *eco-culture*. Abel posited the viability of differentiated typologies in relation to different forms of economic and cultural development. Eco-culture, under this perspective, stands for the co-existence of global models of development (synthesized) with colonial and traditional types without significant loss of locally specific character. He saw this evolution in typological characteristics as based on multi-layered cultural diversity, capable of providing a new definition or version of local identity, which includes both rootedness and evolution in urban form. In essence, the local informed the global and vice versa (Abel, 1997:201).

To take an example of what happens when such a synthesis has not occurred: in the case of the redevelopment of **Shanghai** in China that began in the 1990s, an acceptance of economic globalization has resulted in rapid development (Wang, 1996)**,** and provides a useful insight into both the local identity of the city and the broader question of the evolving national identity of China. The physical transformation of Chinese urban form is a consequence of social and economic change, such as the restructuring of employment and investment patterns and transport and housing

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alternatives. As these economic and social changes have taken place, a new Chinese urban structure and a new morphology has begun to emerge, transforming the city/country relationship, as a of the increasing mobility of the population and transformations in family structure

The establishment of alternative forms of housing and high-tech industries, together with increased foreign investment and regional, national and international tourism have contributed to a strengthening of Shanghai's distinctiveness.

As a result, one of the largest of Shanghai's development zones, centred on the Pudong district, is geared towards foreign markets and the utilization of foreign investment funds (SPNAA, 1993). This new focus for foreign investment has empowered the Shanghai region as a global place, largely indifferent to, although not entirely obliterating local place identity.. This development has meant that Shanghai has been transformed, with its central districts given dramatic emphasis (Wang, 1990). This globally inspired urban form has been privileged over any consideration for place specific identity, based on any real sense of human attachment rooted in local culture and tradition. . Traditional neighborhoods have literally made way for high rise towers occupied by multi-national companies.

In contrast to the hyper -modernism that can be seen in Shanghai, the neo-traditional colonial styles of architecture produced in colonial Asian cities are the outcome of a process in which an expatriated colonial government and community created familiar environments in alien locations. Through this a colonial, foreign identity developed in the architectural built form and planning of colonial cities (King, 2004). The transformations that specific styles of built form, particularly architectural typologies,

undergo in their relocation to the colonial country reveals an inner core of stability and a certain logic enabling the original style to be recognized within the colonial style. The differences between the original and the colonial style reveal the processes of adaptation to the new environment which the original style has undergone (Abel, 1997).

Urban development in South East and East Asia reveals an evolving cycle that takes account of traditional/colonial culture, consumer culture, and more recently, eco-culture. Whilst recognising the immense symbolic power of Western and colonial models, it is at the same time also important to understand how local identity is defined and valued in urban development at international, national, and regional levels.

Local Identity

As many scholars have argued (Butina Watson and Bentley, 2007; Sack, 1997; Twigger-Ross and Uzzeell, 1996; Korpela, 1989; Winkel, 1981; Relph, 1976), the multi-dimensional concept of local identity includes historical, geographical and cultural experiences over varying time periods. As a consequence the definition of local identity has been developed and interpreted with reference to key sociological, anthropological, environmental and urban design theories (Butina Watson and Bentley, 2007; Carmona, 2007; King, A., 2004; Lee, 2002; Knox, 2000; Healey,1998; Abel, 1997; Hough, 1990; Frampton, 1985; Proshansky, et al, 1983; Whyte, 1980; Lynch ,1960) Under this view, any identity changes continuously in different situations and environments, through people, events, ideologies and urban development, and the identity of particular places is strongly related to memory and

experience (Lynch, 1960).

Local identity is also deeply related to the social, economic, and political pressures influencing decision makers' power and control over urban development and urban settings (Lynch, 1981). In essence,at a macro level, the approach to local identity in the urban policy that a government pursues can also be used to represent the identity of a nation or a state (Giles, 1999). Urban anthropology and urban political theories in particular (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell, 1996; Deffner, 2005; Bentley, 1999; Healey,1998; Jacobs and Fincher, 1998; Abel, 1997) usually describe the significance of decision makers' needs and desires, from the perspective of design ideology, asserting that the built form of the city is the product of such ideology, only partly modified by key decision makers. For example, Brasilia in Brazil and Putrajaya in Malaysia are both cases that are the results of different political and economic ideologies, expressed in policy and geared towards a particular new national identity.

At the micro level, local identity is an interwoven pattern of form, space and usage. When studying local identity this range of scales and influences requires a study of both the links between the meanings of cultural engagement on the one hand, and human identities on the other (see Table 1).

"Insert Table 1"

In summary, the creation of designed local identity and the characteristics of the built environment takes place primarily via decisions made by form-givers, such as landowners, developers, builders, politicians, and members of the design professions.

Knox (2000: 21) has suggested that 'the built environment should be achieved through a design production with an organizational framework that involves all of these key actors. These key actors should be identified, in order to define their motivations and objectives, their interpretations of market demand, and their relationships with one another'. Following this argument it is essential to consider the design and production of the built environment in terms of who are the key actors that establish local identity, and how can local identity within the production of the built environment be defined?

A South Korean Example: THE MAC

TheMAC (Multifunctional Administrative City) construction project in South Korea is sited in this paper to provide some insight into how global and local forces can interact to avoid the eradication of locally-influenced built form and cultural identities. The analysis presented in the following pages is based on original research into the MAC by the authors during its design and development phase in 2009. The key questions asked in this research, which this article focuses on were first, to what degree and in what ways is local identity constructed by the key actors involved in the development process? And second, beyond this, how might local identity be incorporated into contemporary new town development in such a context? In other words, the MAC was used as a live project in the research for testing a new approach to using local identity in the design process..

Research approach and methods

In order to understand the urban design process in the new place making of the MAC project, information was collected using a variety of methods. The primary method involved a series of semi-structured interviews aimed at gaining a clear insight into

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the perspectives of different key actors involved in the MAC project; the interviews focused on building up a comprehensive narrative of their knowledge, experience, and sense of identity and sustainability in new place making. The interviews were conducted with government, local authorities, public and private producers, developers, non-governmental organizations, and residents. Other methods of obtaining information involved direct observations within the field, and gathering archival material such as government documents, newspapers, reposts, previous research work and policy documents.

The MAC

History of urban development in South Korea

Urban development in South Korea is informed by the local and cultural identity of the region. Korean history begins in 2333BC with the founding of Gojoseon, the first Korean Kingdom. Three Kingdoms existed across the Korean peninsula until unification in 668 AD. The Korean peninsula continued as one nation until the end of the Korean Empire in 1910, when it was annexed by Japan. After liberation by Soviet and U.S. forces at the end of World War II the nation was divided into North and South Korea, with the latter established as a democracy in 1948. (Central Intelligence Agency, 2009)

"Insert Figure 1"

Since the end of Japanese rule in 1945 and as a consequence of urban migration and economic development South Korea has seen a steady growth in the size of its urban population. The contemporary urban development where much of this urban

population live can generally be characterized as consisting of monotonous and uniform built environments,   and following a broadly functionalist and modernist design ideology, determined by the power and ambition of the decision makers in place. This phenomenon of non place-specific transformation represents a threat not just to the local identity, but also to the vitality and stability of the built environment in Korea, as developers and city planners turn away from local resources with developments that lack a rooted connection to their locality. In the case of South Korea, and as defined by Abel (1997), this urban development combines traditional culture, colonial culture, and consumer culture.

To understand the evolving values of local identity and cultural development, it is important to understand how local identity is defined and valued in urban development from economic, social and cultural perspectives.

Throughout the current era of urbanization in South Korea, (beginning in the early 1970s) policies in urban planning and development have been implemented through the heavily controlling hand of successive governments. These urban planning policies included the introduction of greenbelts in the 1970s, followed by development leap-frogging across the green belt, particularly into satellite cities around Seoul, which grew rapidly, resulting in a redistribution of the population into the wider metropolitan area. This over-concentration of development within the Seoul metropolitan area caused social problems and unbalanced national development. Between 1971 and 1992, the Korean Government adopted policies and plans to reduce the regional disparities and disperse the industries concentrated in the Capital region. From 1992 to 2001, the overall focus of the national plan was to control the

over-concentration of population and industrial activities in large cities, while at the same time promoting local development in rural areas. This led to the introduction of decentralized planning policy and new town development proposals, including the initiation of the Multifunctional Administrative City (MAC) project in 2003.

The MAC project

The site of the MAC is 150 km south of Seoul, in the Chungcheongnam-do region. Initiated in 2003, the plan for the administrative decentralization to the MAC site included the relocation from Seoul of 45 governmental units, including 12 ministries, four agencies and two government-run organizations. The relocation of these central administrative operations was intended to play a pivotal role in balanced national development (Ministry of Construction & Transportation Master Plan for construction of the Multifunctional Administrative City, 2006). The published MAC project proposals, articulating the planners' and other key actors' vision,   states that the purpose of the project is to produce balanced national growth with 'harmony and innovation'. In addition, the intention of the MAC is seen as creating an economic hub that is competitive within the wider Asian region, whilst reducing over-development of the Seoul metropolitan area (Multifunctional Administrative City Construction, 2003). The aim is for self-sufficient growth within the MAC region. Over time, and following the first stage of administrative decentralization, the plan is for the Seoul metropolitan area to shift its development focus away from quantitative growth and towards qualitative improvement (Multifunctional Administrative City Construction, 2003).

"Insert Figure 2"

Design Concepts, Policies and Strategies

The MAC area is 72.91km², with a peripheral area of 223km². The projected

population is 500,000, the equivalent of 68 people/ hectare, compared with 173

people / hectare in Seoul, and 47 people / hectare in London (MACC 2008).

The MAC site is surrounded by a mountain range with the Gum river running through

the central valley (happycity2030, 2009). Prior to the MAC the site was mainly used

for farming, with a small local community that originated in the 15th Century. This

site was selected based on a set of criteria including accessibility to Seoul and a

central location that could support balanced national development. (see Fig 3)

The project is being constructed district by district. The masterplan of each district

was determined through an international competition, a method the organizers felt

would produce the best and most diverse ideas and concepts.

"Insert Figure 3"

With regards to green, open space and parks, the MAC place-making concept was

structured as a narrative sequence. The city's location in relation to the mountains, the

flowing water of the river and the prevailing wind, are consistent with the principles

of fengshui.

The ring-shaped masterplan for the MAC was central to the competition-winning

entry by Spanish architect Andres Perea Ortega. Ortega's concept represented a 'city

without limits', a 'constant city', a 'city of cities', meaning a city made up of 25 smaller cities each housing 20,000 people. According to the architect, these would be 'Cities with social organization, facilities, activities and dwellings bonded together by the interstitial general facilities.' Ortega's design concept proposed a ring shaped masterplan with a green core, designed to remove the traditional hierarchies found within the centralized densities of urban activities and form, with the form of the ring intended as a new environmentally and socially sustainable 'democratic' future-oriented city. As such the city's concept might be considered as an 'eco-cultural' approach to place-making, as defined by Abel (1997) . The decision of the South Korean government to hold an international competition and to select the Ortega scheme as the winner, clearly illustrates their intention to look to international design firms for innovative ways to create distinct localities within a coherent overall plan.

"Insert Figure 4"

In order to provide a level surface for the MAC construction site, much of the original geography and landscape contours have been cut and leveled. a semi-structured interview with one of the author's of this paper, an advisor from the MAC Agency (07.2009), explained that changing the landscape and transforming mountainous terrain to provide flatter, economically useable sites was necessary in Korea, in order to deliver the high densities central to the plan. Conversely, in his book *Monument and Niche: the architecture of the new city,* urban theorist Juel-Christiansen (1985) argues that a new urban totality needs to integrate forms of the past. These two opposing views beg the question: is it necessary to cut and fill and erase away the local life and habitat in the MAC site, in order to create an ideal artificial place? Will

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this simply result in the same kind of homogeneity that can be found in the majority of contemporary built form within Korea?

In an unbuilt proposal Malaysian architect Jimmy Lim offers an alternative to this traditional 'cut and fill' approach, in which he proposes a development that accepts and adapts to the site's natural terrain as a way to construct without erasing the indigenous local landscape (see Fig 5). This physical built environment can have an important role in community life and can enhance the users' satisfaction, experience and enjoyment of the city. In order for the facilities and spaces of the MAC to be fully utilized and enjoyed by its future inhabitants it is important to understand the desires and needs of this future local community. As Carr (1992; 91-92) has argued, 'it is important to examine needs, not only because they explain the use of places but also because use is important to success. Places that do not meet people's needs or that serve no important functions for people will be underused and unsuccessful'.

"Insert Figure 5"

When considering the formation and foundation of a new city, as Leon Krier has suggested, it is useful to consider that in essence the masterplan is to the construction of a city what the constitution is to the life of a nation (Krier, 1992). As such, establishing a masterplan is much more than a specialized technical instrument, it is also the expression of an ethical and artistic vision. In the case of the MAC, this vision can be seen in the continuous loop that forms the basis and core of the masterplan, intended as both the legislative form and a geometric expression. The overall development strategy for controlling the development includes a series of

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design guidelines the MAC decision makers have proposed for landscape design, street pattern and color coding, in an attempt to give the city a distinctive identity. The MAC design proposal does include consideration of the issue of local identity, but more as a means of 'branding' the city, than as a response to its particular and culturally irreducible physical and intangible components. In the course of a semi-structured interview with the Chairman of the Korea Planners' Association,, carried out as part of the research, he stated 'We tend to relate 'local identity' to the context of place marketing (2009).'

The value and role of local identity for key decision makers

For the development of the MAC planning and design policy, the South Korean government has established dedicated departments, and masterplan and project management teams. A special law of urban planning from the Ministry of Construction in Korea has been put in place for the MAC, with executive powers to exercise its authority in delivering the project. As such, the MAC project is under the direct control of the central government. The semi-structured interviews carried out for the research with key actors involved in the development of the MAC, including members of the MAC construction agency and advisory committee, revealed diverse views about this special law. On the one hand, some felt that the MAC new town would not be able to evolve in a 'natural' way, through consultation with the local community and private interests, because the local authority does not have any power to ensure this. On the other hand, others felt that since the MAC new town is a special project with complex administrative and multifunctional objectives, this special power is needed to provide a clear direction for the new city's density and structure.

In addition, detailed analysis revealed that the agency structure, the relationship of agency power and the roles of the different key actor groups in the decision making process to be hierarchical, rather than interactive. In detail, interviews with those actors in the planning and development process who might be defined as decision makers for the MAC project suggest that most had not clearly considered or were not aware of the possible value of local identity in designing or masterplanning . Local identity was something too conceptual and abstract for them, particularly to understand how it might be incorporated into their design, planning or development thinking. In general, they again saw local identity as a matter of image and brand – the external message – rather than something which might influence design and development.

Carsten Juel-Christiansen (1985) argues that the formulation of notions of local identity must evolve from a precise understanding of the social context.The dream of realizing a new city must likewise be related to the existing city –to the new language that expresses itself in the types of buildings and installations produced by changes in the social context. It is relevant to ask how carefully the spatial quality and liveability of the new city is being conceived or conceptualized by the actors who have the power to address these issues. Will the design and urban form of the new MAC be sufficiently symbolic or iconic to stimulate civic pride and self esteem? Key to this is the question of how design and planning encourages community participation and governance in the Korean context.

The MAC as an opportunity for addressing issues iof local identity

Given that it was as yet incomplete, it was evident for the research that the MAC project represented an opportunity for an innovative approach to new town development in relation to the implementation of local identity within South Korea. It was also very clear in the design concept that the power and roles of the decision makers in implementing its urban planning and design have so far been influenced by global market-driven aspirations and that the notion of local identity has been considered more in relation to city image and 'branding' than in design terms.

So, the research tested some alternative proposals that might better incorporate design elements reflecting local identity in the process of built form production, and better integrate a stronger sense of a traditional Korean built form geared towards the 21st century. As such, a survey was designed to suggest what these proposals might be. This included a question in which representatives from the four key actor groups within the decision making process, including controllers, producers and residents, were asked to choose their preference for what kinds of local identity they considered important and why, selected from a series of local and comparative design concepts at a range of morphological scales. Crucially, this testing helped to highlight differences between the different key actor groups' tastes and preferences.

The findings from the survey were also helpful in revealing to what extent alternative design concepts, strategies and policies could be adopted to establish local identity within the delivery of the MAC. The survey should be seen as a mechanism by which alternative design concepts, strategies and policies were informed via testing with both users and decision makers. A series of alternative physical components at the different morphological scales were presented in the form of a matrixfrom which the

key actors surveyed were requested to select preferences. These components included such items as traditional and contemporary architectural typologies, paving and lighting details within the city, and different examples of digital infrastructure within the city. Thepreferred components were then assembled into a collage or composite overall proposal of findings (see figure 6).

"Insert Figure 6"

One of the key findings from this part of the research, was that participants in the survey had a preference for the character of the existing landscape topography, and by implication they wanted it to be retained and built within and around, rather than remodeled. It was also clear that they felt this would result in a better-integrated and more natural future development. One participant commented 'I prefer this as I like undulating and hilly towns more that flat ones. I get a better sense of place when I can review the hills around.'

At the district level, participants responded positively to the ad hoc street pattern that can be found within the oldest part of Seoul, due to its historic and unique character, and the incorporation of a loose, seemingly random and haphazard layout. One participant noted 'I prefer the organic nature of these street patterns, they give a great sense of character and identity for a city, and offer the chance for surprise discoveries for visitors'. In terms of building typology the old districts of Seoul also received positive feedback. The participants explained that they preferred the Hanok, the traditional timber courtyard house, because of how it represents both Korean identity and place-identity within its social and historical context. One participant commented

'I enjoy the tumbling nature of the stepped terraced roofing in the area, and the arrangement of houses encourages social interaction.'

Together with these traditional forms of architecture, participants also made positive comments about the free-standing multimedia outlets installed in Seoul and how they could be incorporated with other urban components to provide future-orientated and readily-identifiable street furniture.

The testing process highlighted the fact that users and decision makers had often quite different views regarding local identity, that reflect differences in their needs and interests.. As described earlier, figure 6 is a collage of images that bring together graphically the preferred choices from each of the morphological levels used in the survey, synthesised into a composite of key findings. This can be compared with Fig 7, a visualization from the current MAC proposals that describes the new local identity preferred by the MAC stakeholders.

"Insert Figure 7"

A comparison between the two figures highlights the influence that the key decision makers have within the decision making process, and the impact this influence has had over the design in relation to the creation of local identity. This comparison also reveals how the perceptions and values of key actor groups may differ, and makes clear that the current MAC proposals do not fully reflect or consider the desires and needs of the different key actor groups, particularly potential users and residents.

Discussion

The findings from the research presented in this paper show the current level of understanding and the limitations in delivering inclusive local identity within the urban design policies of the MAC. It also shows how important it is for users to participate in the decision making process, in order to achieve social sustainability and an evolution of local cultural resources. The cultural and social sustainability of development areas is dependent on the involvement of all groups of society in the process of urban development (A. King, 2004).

Considering this new place-making design ideology from the Korean government's perspective, the aim of this new public space was to combine the 'political-economic' and the 'cultural'. A. King (2004) argues that it is this kind of cultural pluralism that characterizes the cities of today, stating that where environments are modified according to the values of cultural groups, there is a power relationship or authority structure within which decisions are made. Changes in the built environment must be situated not only in terms of the structural transformation of economics and societies, but also in terms of the behavior of particular agents of change and groups of individuals in particular localities at a particular time (Knox, 1995).

Conclusion

New town developments, particularly within South Korea, seem to a large extent to disengage themselves from the development models of cultural context, which are considered outdated, inferior, and no longer able to cope with modern requirements,

and instead become strongly influenced by global development trends and market-driven aspirations. However, it is important to clarify that new town development needs to interact with and mediate these global forces and impact by linking to the local forces and translating and integrating local identity into contemporary urban development, as a means of reinterpreting the values within built form and expressing local cultural identities and heritage. Alongside global thinking, local context and regionalism are unique assets that can be utilized, drawing on tradition and culture while considering community aspirations, in order to produce developments that instantiate local identity.

South Korean urban development simply must face such a future with new thinking and methods for dealing with the challenge of globalization, in order to confront new circumstances and requirements, both at the local level within their frame of work and at the national level in which they interact. Stakeholders can play an important role in accommodating the requirements of the global marketplace without losing locality and cultural context. This can be achieved by encouraging stakeholders and designers to respect the dominant styles in the locality in order to achieve cooperation between stakeholders and users.

The analysis of the MAC project within this paper offers some lessons in how global and local forces can interact to avoid eradication of locally-influenced built form and cultural identities. This consideration of ways to unite approaches can sustain and develop a distinct local identity within the context of global forces in urban development, not only for 21st Century new town development in South Korea, but also the wider South East and East Asian context.

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