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Research Title: Transnational Models. A study on Tongzhou New Town

Abstract

Tongzhou New Town is rising as a pole of crucial importance in the Beijing Municipality network system. The once satellite town is now assuming a primary role in the vast area surrounding the Chinese capital, since in 2015 the Central Government chose it as the seat of the Beijing municipal offices. Observing Tongzhou on the field it is immediately perceivable that the rising city, its new urban spaces, are not clearly and immediately readable. The new town appears programmatically as an urban assemblage of different urban situations, deeply different among them, with a high level of fragmentation. Indeed, this condition is not exclusive of the Tongzhou case, but rather it is exemplificative of the transformation of the city spaces during the current worldwide globalising age. Therefore, by adopting Tongzhou as an exemplary case, the first objective of the research is to find a device able to investigate the production of the contemporary urban space in the globalised stage.

Thus, after an analysis of the contemporary debate on global urban phenomena and how to study them, this dissertation proposes to investigate the space of the rising town through the notion of “transnational models”, in order to answer to the following research question: may transnationality of urban and architectural models be adopted as a tool to read the contemporary urban space in Tongzhou?

As answer, the concept of “transnational model”, conceived as basic-unit of the globalised city, is therefore proposed as a device to enquiry the production of space in contemporary cities – their urban design – in the transnational context. This concept will be defined starting from the existing literature on the notion of models in architecture and, more in general, as a thinking strategy.

Tongzhou and its projects, read as an assemblage of operational models characterised by a transnational circulation, offer an opportunity to study the influence of global phenomena in the space production through the lens of transnational models. They may allow to reconstruct vectors of exchanges, retrace imageries and criticise the space construction.

In fact, besides the exemplary case of Tongzhou this thesis tries to answer the question whether the notion of “transnational models” may be a device to investigate globalising cities urban space, especially in China, more appropriate than others. The research would intend to test if models are just a medium for an

increasing global homogenisation or rather they even assume the role of actors of homologation toward an international image. Moreover, this work aims to verify if China is now knowing a new phase of appropriation of these models

In a nutshell, the transnational model, considered as the basic-unit of the contemporary urban space in the global stage, is adopted as a lens of investigation, a device for a phenomenological study in an exemplary case, to measure the influence of transnational imageries and the role of the architect in the contemporary era.