

"TERRITIZE!"

—A Personal View on Today's Cities (#339)—

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*Think Tank — Ideal City of the 21st Century*

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*A Personal View on Today's Cities*

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Title: Team #339 17 IMG\_2366 (in-between space stuck in time)

Caption: No, not Marilyn Monroe. The idols of a past, besides a bust, a busted branding of a defenseless force. Virtual shrines without any worshiping in sight; without bystanders; without its followers. Or am I too absent here as well? It is a space stuck in-between time: a past—knowing its larger context—can not be let go of; a present showing the absence of community, activity, interaction, immersion in to the story being told or the story that could be told. I have my story there, which other paragraphs could my story sit in-between?



Title: Team #339 19 IMG\_2368 [in-between territorialization]

Caption: This is the center of the business in Beijing. This prime in-between real estate is territorialized by sleeping buses. Simply sitting there. The space, under the immensely large bridging complex do not cater to the local residence or citizens. It does not even cater towards those in transit. The standing buses (Besides the subway, it symbolizes to be THE tool for the public and for transportation) accentuate a not being: they are not moving, there is no public; they do not transport. They occupy without being occupied. In the background is 'Jianwai Soho,' a post-hip

*business and consumer area. Behind the photographer are several high-end office buildings (i.e. the Metropolis, Beijing Exchange, the Motorola building, etc). The space in-between does not cater towards the participants of the area. Why must its function be as it is?*



*Title: Team #339 20 IMG\_2372[in-between territorialization)*

*Caption: A different angle of "Team #339 19 IMG\_2368 [in-between territorialization)." This is taken on the Jianwai Soho side (the western side of the north to south part of the third ring road; up above). In the upper left corner one can see the destination of this excursion (the Guomao buildings).*



Title: *Team #339 22 IMG\_2376 (islands seen from in-between)*

Caption: *A different angle of "Team #339 19 IMG\_2368 [in-between territorialization]." This is taken on the Jianwai Soho side (the western side of the north to south part of the third ring road; up above). It shows road structures on either side up ahead. On the left one can see a part of the Jintai building (supposedly one of the more expensive office and residential real estate in the Beijing center). Up ahead one can see the destination of this excursion (the Guomao buildings)*



Title: Team #339 21 IMG\_2374 (horizontal in-between reterritorialization)

Caption: These structures are as to facilitate not being there (i.e. be there, wait, get on the bus, be gone). This strip is in-between Jianwai Soho and the third ring road (as shown in earlier photographs from an opposite point of view). People stream onto the street as if the structures push them to do so (i.e. they are too small to hold them all). These citizens are and they are not: they probably have no intention to be there; rather they most likely have all intention to be at their destination. They are in an in-between state. They reterritorialize the pedestrian area as well as parts of the road. Every day, an extreme number of people wait here (in this image one can see relatively few). Although they are there every day, these bus stops at which they wait offer them no comfort.



Title: Team #339 25 IMG\_2381 (in-between landscape for whom?)

Caption: This landscape is at the foot of the Jintai building; north of Jianwai Soho (West from the 3rd ring road). It is an in-between space seemingly catering towards no one. For whom is this? The lower one-level structure on the right side behind the thin trees is a subway station entrance. On the front stage of the photograph one can see the entrance road into the Jintai complex. At the end of this no-man's land one can see a hint of a McDonald's logo. The landscape architectural artifacts (those cubes) seem to lure me towards it.



Title: Team #339 26 IMG\_2384 (in-between bunker-type consumer goods)

Caption: An in-between bunker-type consumer goods location. Down the stairs one can find a McDonalds. This is located on a strip of pavement between the road complex and besides the Guomao bridge structure. This is fast food taken rather literally (stuck between roads for fast moving vehicles).





Title: Team #339 28 IMG\_2392 (below-bridge in-between infinity)

Caption: The Guomao bridge's core at pedestrian scale; a below-bridge in-between infinity. Where does it lead me? Is it here for me or for my fellow pedestrians? Are those white fences holding me physically back or only psychologically? Does this showcase a maximization of in-between territory; if so who's territory?



Title: *Team #339 29 IMG\_2393 (is this in-between function and form?)*

Caption: *is this in-between function and form? This is a close up of the image captured in "Team #339 28 IMG\_2392 (below-bridge in-between infinity)"*



Title: *Team #339 27 IMG\_2386 (anachronistic royal gate to nowhere)*

Caption: *"Team #339 28 IMG\_2392 (below-bridge in-between infinity)" showed the structure seen towards the west. Here I turned around 180 degrees looking westwards. I find an anachronistic royal gate to nowhere. Royalty under the bridge. Who is it for? Why here? Why this aesthetic? This gate is stuck in-between concrete, in-between no-where; in-between being out of place. It accentuates the absence of community; an absence of consideration and thoughtfulness.*



Title: Team #339 30 IMG\_2394 (re- & de- territorialization shot#01)

Caption: Still at the same in-between location as where "Team #339 28 IMG\_2392 (below-bridge in-between infinity)" was shot, I look northwards and witness a typical Beijing detail scene. I find this urban poetry. Some people print/write/paint one or other "service" number on walls, on pillars, on sidewalks. Other people follow with out-of-tone and watered-down paint to quasi-cover up these same numbers. Instead of masking them, they are actually highlighted into an abstract mural patchwork. It highlights the idiosyncrasies of a defunct totalitarian dismissiveness creating the

*opposite of the intended. Indeed, I do find this a beautiful urban poetry of reterritorialization and deterritorialization.*



*Title: Team #339 31 IMG\_2396 (re- & de- territorialization shot#02)*

*Caption: a close up of the image captured in "Team #339 30 IMG\_2394 (re- & de- territorialization shot#01)"*



Title: Team #339 32 IMG\_2400 (Koolhaas from in-between context)

Caption: From in-between; a Koolhaas.



Title: Team #339 24 IMG\_2380 (sky-line seen from in-between)

Caption: sky-line seen from in-between. Still at the Guomao bridge. Closer to our destination.



Title: Team #339 23 IMG\_2379 (in-between no-mans land with out mines)

Caption: Here we can find an in-between no-mans land... Is this what the space between North and South Korea might feel like? Here hopefully without land-mines. Location: next to (east from) the Jintai 'garden'; the Third ring-road (left top: Guomao towers; right a small part of Koolhaas' CCTV tower and one of the older buildings in the area; a cylinder type of architecture)



Title: Team #339 33 IMG\_2405 (structural & semiotic tension)

Caption: structural & semiotic tension: The conditions of this plot of in-between land are appalling yet in stark contrast with the aesthetically displeasing signage 'furniture' showcasing even more contrasting imagery of what seems to be the exchange of wedding bands with the promise of real estate (traditional Chinese men do not get to marry their beloved unless they have a car, a job and 'own' a place to live) all the while with the Koolhaas as backdrop. This too is Beijing's CBD. Are we here in the presence of a phenomenon of urban consciousness? (Bachelard, p. xxvii, v) Where do I not see a 'human touch' here? What is missing, is not touch but rather communal spark.





Title: Team #339 34 IMG\_2408 (Guomao roof top; a vertical in-between)

Caption: I moved in-between start and goal. Here I arrived at my destination: the Guomao roof top; a vertical in-between. This rooftop is publicly accessible yet has virtually nothing to offer (though could). This area hides the vents from the kitchens below. It is winter now but with the high-temperature food odors oozing from the vents I could sit here with my t-shirt while feeling like an ingredient of a dead-zone urban fact: Beijing CBD's rooftops (as seen from top floor restaurants or offices) are not maximized. They are absent. They are in-between being (at least socially,

culturally, communally, or aesthetically). They territorialize without leaving anything of purpose.



Title: *Team #339 35 IMG\_2413 (empty space; an in-between state)*

Caption: *On my way back, I walked into Jianwai Soho. Here is one of the many empty spaces in Beijing; an architectural structure in an in-between state.*



Title: Team #339 36 IMG\_2419 (in-between the all-seeing)

Caption: *in-between we are being watched; There where nothing happens; there where space is yet is not lived; voyeurism without content. They might see me, they might not; Good morning Foucault (i.e. panopticon). Yet, they can not see this city is my home.*

3.

### *EPILOGUE*

Singapore's views, amongst others, showcase ethnic groups. although unique in nature and different from what one might consider (as a bias) to be "Singapore," yet their territory (spacial and probably also economic) is clearly framed within the larger city. The framing one might possibly speak of, in regards to ethnicity, is in useable tension with the de- or re-territorialization. One could speak of where one territory battles with another (i.e. The Beijing photography showing graffiti vs out-door signage; the badly masked phone numbers on the bridge pillar; the bicycle repair man on an in-between patch of land; etc ).

In Beijing areas labelled 'dead-zones' or 'no-man's land' were showcased. The reason why those small plots of Beijing land were labelled 'dead-zones' is intended to be made obvious from the drab feel one gets when viewing the images. Similar to Singapore's ethnic districts these 'dead-zone and in-between areas' too are clearly framed (i.e. the white or other fences around areas that have no activity). In stark contrast, Singapore's well-framed ethnic areas are social, human, with spirit and with economic potential.

Additionally, if under the condition the framing of Singaporean ethnic neighborhoods is sufficiently inclusive, one could argue those are islands of centralized activity. This is in contrast with what is shown here in an otherwise highly centralized-controlled city as Beijing. A few Beijing photographs highlighted decentralized 'economic' activity, for instance, the image showing recycling efforts as well as the bicycle repair man (two activities that return at several seemingly random locations around Beijing). These activities, the associated artifacts and their coordinating individuals have taken over areas that were initially not intended for such functionality; they territorialized these spaces. One might argue which economic model would create most social or economic success (see Lemann's quote above); Singapore's or this particular highlighted one in Beijing?

It seems, in the Singaporean setting, as shown above, any struggle is absent in regards to the ethnic neighborhoods (or those places where these Singaporean ethnic areas might transition into/ be stuck in-between other areas); or any other image captured above. Is this factually so, can this be extrapolated across the urban space, or, is this urban imagery patient and editorial in nature and potentially idealizing what is truly happening at the territorial/cultural/or other (intangible) fault-lines? Additionally, might Beijing have very different examples showcasing a rather opposite dynamic as portrayed in the constructed storyline here above? An overarching question floats to the surface: which filtering lenses shall be used to construct, promote and sustain the 'ideal' actualities of a near-future city?

4.

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