



# DOSSIER TRANSLATIONS

## TO FIND ARCHITECTURE

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It was during my endless fieldwork walks through Tokyo that I started to love the metropolis and its people. Because the more you walk, the more you observe and the less you understand this 34-million-people metropolis. The city has a tradition of scrap and built. Small, two-story buildings are pulled down and turned into perfect temporary parking lots overnight. New constructions are done so efficiently, that you only notice when the completed building is revealed to the public. Together with the extreme density, and small plots it gives Tokyo an ever-changing urban landscape without any context to rely on. In order to grasp the context of their design, Tokyo architects came up with a research method that thoroughly studies the character of a place. By discovering the charm of a city, the architects find their own 'urban rules' to rely on. I came across this research method during my studies at The University of Tokyo. But a similar fascination is found among the Japanese architects. Although the urban landscape is utterly congested and seems somehow inadequate to work with, designers agree that it is utterly packed with inspiration. Though very close to Japan, the situation in neighbouring China is completely the opposite. In China, the scale of construction is large if not huge.

Complete new cities are constructed at a very fast speed, so rapidly that young Chinese architects complain that there is too little time to investigate or analyse the situation and its problems. In China research is relatively new. Chinese developers are eager to build, now. The result, entire cities are built from scratch at a tremendous speed without truly questioning the identity of the cities. By combining the best of both countries, the detailed research method of Japan and the speed of constructions in China, this issue would give a clue on how to shape our future cities at a more human level.

The dossier investigates the morphology of typical urban patterns, the spontaneous and informal events happening in the street, and human behaviour happening in the rapid-growing cities of China. It favours the phenomena and behaviour of what makes a city come to

life. In order not to lose the typical identity in a city, or to provide a city from scratch with a typical character, this issue explores the possibilities of using the existing, local culture. It triggers designers to look around their own environment and find architectural qualities that are already present.

The dossier opens with an interview with young Chinese architect Ma Yansong from MAD design in Beijing. Yansong draws a picture of the current building speed in China, and its chances for young architects in this country. He also warns about the dangers of just designing with speed and what foreign architects can contribute.

In the five essays that follow, the authors were asked to explain in detail the fieldwork they have executed on the Chinese streets. All investigations have a correlation between the top-down imposed master plan, and their own, bottom-up view of the actual social life in the cities. By precisely looking at the minuscule details - its winding backstreets, distinctive building typologies, neighbourhoods' morphology, infrastructure, community sense, and typical human behaviour - each of the authors discovered an urban charm. With the results of their research, they provide architects and planners with ideas - ranging from methodologies to reinterpretations of existing building typologies - how to shape the future of our cities.

The third part of the dossier introduces five built examples of infill projects in the city of Tokyo designed by Suppose Design, Atelier Tekuto, Mount Fuji Architects, Ryo Abe and TNA Architects. The residential projects show how architecture can communicate with its surroundings. In spite of the small plots, extreme high density and the strict building regulations of Tokyo, the architects come up with surprising solutions for single-family houses. Rather than putting a stance towards a not so beautiful or not so ideal living situation, the architects emphasize the qualities of the city, and with that keep the charm.