

Vertical Cities Asia Symposium – Abstracts of Jury

Title: A Vertical Theory of Urban Design

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Abstract:

Must tall buildings have the same floor-plates monotonously stacked as trays one on top of the other? Must the internal spaces, whether commercial or residential be homogeneous? The answer is 'no' - yet many do. Most high-rises have repeated similar floor plates because their designs have been dictated by engineering expediency rather than by the demands for socially meaningful spaces. Tall buildings today are also so intensive in built-up space that many have within several hectares of builtup space stuffed in a single tower built form, placed over a small footprint.

Yet if the same designer were to design the same built up spaces as medium or low-rise built forms, the approach would be more akin to urban design with all the usual considerations in good urban design. This paper presents the case for designing the tall building as 'vertical urban design', to have more humane, livable and pleasurable spaces.

The usual horizontal considerations in urban design are now flipped vertically, as 'vertical urban design'. For instance the same consideration given to 'place making, to creating communities, to providing vistas, to multiple linkages, etc. are now brought to bear on the designing of the tall building type. This paper presents a 'vertical theory of urban design', illustrated by examples from the author's design and built work.