

ASIAN CITIES



Edited by Marie Gibert-Flutre and Heide Imai

Asian Alleyways

An Urban Vernacular
in Times of Globalization

Amsterdam
University
Press

A
X
U
X
P
X

Amsterdam
University
Press

I
A
S
International
Institute for
Asian Studies

Asian Alleyways



Amsterdam
University
Press



Publications

The International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) is a research and exchange platform based in Leiden, the Netherlands. Its objective is to encourage the interdisciplinary and comparative study of Asia and to promote (inter)national cooperation. IIAS focuses on the humanities and social sciences and on their interaction with other sciences. It stimulates scholarship on Asia and is instrumental in forging research networks among Asia Scholars. Its main research interests are reflected in the three book series published with Amsterdam University Press: Global Asia, Asian Heritages and Asian Cities.

IIAS acts as an international mediator, bringing together various parties in Asia and other parts of the world. The Institute works as a clearinghouse of knowledge and information. This entails activities such as providing information services, the construction and support of international networks and cooperative projects, and the organization of seminars and conferences. In this way, IIAS functions as a window on Europe for non-European scholars and contributes to the cultural rapprochement between Europe and Asia.

IIAS Publications Officer: Paul van der Velde

IIAS Assistant Publications Officer: Mary Lynn van Dijk

Asian Cities

The Asian Cities Series explores urban cultures, societies and developments from the ancient to the contemporary city, from West Asia and the Near East to East Asia and the Pacific. The series focuses on three avenues of inquiry: evolving and competing ideas of the city across time and space; urban residents and their interactions in the production, shaping and contestation of the city; and urban challenges of the future as they relate to human well-being, the environment, heritage and public life.

Series Editor

Paul Rabé, Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA) at International Institute for Asian Studies, the Netherlands

Editorial Board

Henco Bekkering, Delft University of Technology, the Netherlands; Charles Goldblum, University of Paris 8, France; Xiaoxi Hui, Beijing University of Technology, China; Stephen Lau, University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong; Rita Padawangi, Singapore University of Social Sciences, Singapore; R. Parthasarathy, Gujarat Institute of Development Research, Gujarat, India; Neha Sami, Indian Institute of Human Settlements, Bangalore, India



Asian Alleyways

An Urban Vernacular in Times of Globalization

*Edited by
Marie Gibert-Flutre
and Heide Imai*

Amsterdam University Press



Amsterdam
University
Press



Publications

ASIAN CITIES 15

Cover illustration: An ordinary morning in an alleyway of Bình Thạnh district in Ho Chi Minh City

Photograph by Marie Gibert-Flutre

Cover design: Coördesign, Leiden

Lay-out: Crius Group, Hulshout

ISBN 978 94 6372 960 4

e-ISBN 978 90 4854 401 1 (pdf)

DOI 10.5117/9789463729604

NUR 740

© Marie Gibert-Flutre & Heide Imai / Amsterdam University Press B.V., Amsterdam 2020

All rights reserved. Without limiting the rights under copyright reserved above, no part of this book may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise) without the written permission of both the copyright owner and the author of the book.

Every effort has been made to obtain permission to use all copyrighted illustrations reproduced in this book. Nonetheless, whosoever believes to have rights to this material is advised to contact the publisher.



Amsterdam
University
Press

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	13
Asian alleyways	15
An urban vernacular in times of globalization <i>Marie Gibert-Flutre and Heide Imai</i>	
Asian alleyways fading in the shadow of towers	15
Asian cities upside down: Turning the theoretical approach to global cities on its head	18
Asian alleyways: A cross-cultural approach	19
An urban vernacular in times of globalization: Common ground and core issues	25
Alleyways as liminal spaces and time reservoirs	26
Alleyways as appropriated and multifunctional spaces	27
Alleyways as contested and political spaces	28
Reconsidering the versatility of the alleyway in times of globaliza- tion: What does the future hold for Asian alleyways?	29
1 Between ‘network’ and ‘territory’	33
Ho Chi Minh City’s alleyways as challenged liminal spaces <i>Marie Gibert-Flutre</i>	
Introduction	33
Understanding the alleyway at the interface of ‘network’ and ‘territory’	34
The case of two alleyway neighbourhoods in District 3 of Ho Chi Minh City	36
Research methodology	37
Alleyways: Standing on the threshold of the metropolis	38
At the crossroads of planned and spontaneous historical development	39
The alleyway as a multifunctional urban object	40
Alleyways in times of metropolization: Towards a disrupted balance of network and territory?	44
New challenges	44
‘Civilizing’, ‘modernizing’, and widening alleyways	46
Metropolitan Vietnamese alleyways: Towards a hybrid model	49
The new urban practices of the emerging middle class	49
When the <i>riveraineté</i> strikes back in the alleyways	51
Conclusion	52



2	Street-corner society and everyday politics in the Beijing <i>hutong</i>	57
	Ethnographic perspectives	
	<i>Judith Audin</i>	
	Street-corner politics in Beijing: Political control, everyday creativity, and social change in <i>hutong</i> alleyways	57
	The politics of placemaking: Local appropriations and social differentiation in the <i>hutong</i>	63
	Three imbricated spaces (house/yard/lane) producing a sense of place	63
	Living through spatial proximity and social distance	68
	The politics of interactions: Temporalities and spatialities of <i>hutong</i> use	71
	State control and subaltern forms of resistance	74
	Biopolitical Beijing: Sanitizing, reshaping, and civilizing the alleyways	74
	Resisting through inhabiting? Neighbourhood attachment and the <i>pingfang-loufang</i> opposition	78
	Marginalization of the 'collective' and exit from the <i>hutong</i>	80
	Conclusion	82
3	Alleyways between urban renewal, cultural innovation, and social integration	87
	The cases of Tokyo and Seoul	
	<i>Heide Imai</i>	
	Introduction	87
	The alleyways in Tokyo and Seoul: A realistic revival of the alleyway?	88
	The case of the roji in contemporary Tokyo	89
	The case of Tsukuda and Tsukishima, Tokyo	90
	The case of the <i>golmok</i> in contemporary Seoul	93
	The case of Insadong and Ikseondong, Seoul, Korea	95
	Urban narratives of everyday life in Tokyo	98
	Urban narratives of everyday life in Seoul	103
	Discussion	108
	The case of Tokyo	108
	The case of Seoul	109
	Conclusion	109

4	The transformation of ‘urban ordinaries’ into creative places	115
	A case study of Bangkok’s alleyway neighbourhoods	
	<i>Wimonrart Issarathumnoon</i>	
	Introduction	115
	Creative places formed from a bottom-up approach	116
	Spontaneous creative places in Asian contexts	117
	Chapter outline and research methodology	118
	Transformation processes of ordinary neighbourhoods in the cultural quarter of Bangkok	119
	Modernization and urbanization	120
	State-led urban regeneration, tourism, grassroots conservation efforts, and creative city policies	122
	Gentrification of the Phra Athit-Phra Sumen area	124
	Narratives of local residents and shop owners	127
	Nopparat Cuisine & Gallery	127
	Passport Bookshop	129
	Dialogue Coffee and Gallery	130
	Kope Hya Tai Kee, at Phanfa	131
	Head in the Cloud	133
	Conclusion	134
	Acknowledgements	136
5	Shanghai <i>lilong</i>	139
	From everyday life to conceived space	
	<i>Jiayu Ding and Xiaohua Zhong</i>	
	Introduction	139
	<i>Lilong</i> : Narrative of the Shanghai alley	142
	Arrival of migrants in the modernization of Shanghai (1900s-1950s)	142
	Cramped units and equalized everyday life in the industrialization of Shanghai (1960s-1990s)	144
	Imagined built heritage in a market economy and the globalization of Shanghai (post-2000)	145
	Locating Tianzifang in the Shanghai <i>lilong</i>	146
	Spontaneous creativity: Transforming the abandoned factories into galleries	148
	Communal entrepreneurship: Transforming residences into stores	148
	Legitimizing space: Official rezoning and governmental management	149



Discussion	150
Conflicts within conceived space: Cultural asset or 'hot land' for real estate?	150
Conflicts within lived space: Home to live in or rental income?	151
Conflicts among conceived and lived space: Top-down regulation or self-governance?	153
Conclusion	154
Acknowledgements	156
6 From conflicts to commoning	159
Alleyways as sites for social innovations in Taipei	
<i>Jeffrey Hou</i>	
Growing up in the alleyway	159
Alleyways as urban commons in East Asia	161
Alleyways in evolution in East Asia	162
Changing alleyways in Taipei	164
From conflicts to commoning: Shida Night Market and the Gufeng neighbourhood	166
Xiaobaiwu as a social and spatial experiment	168
Branching out through the alleyways	171
Alleyways as space of commoning and innovations: Lessons and implications	174
Acknowledgements	176
7 Magic Lanes	181
A placemaking approach for laneway spaces in Hong Kong	
<i>Melissa Cate Christ and Hendrik Tieben</i>	
Introduction	181
The lack of open space in Hong Kong's high-density urban areas	183
Placemaking, the right to the city, and the lack of citizen power	184
The role of placemaking and asset-based community development	185
Existing open space conditions and issues	186
Conditions and potentials of Hong Kong's alley, laneway, and terrace open space network	189
History of alleys and lanes in Hong Kong	190
Use, significance, and types of alleys and lanes in Hong Kong	193
Magic Lanes, a pilot project for Hong Kong's lane spaces	196
From Magic Carpet to Magic Lanes	197
Funding the Magic Lanes project	198



Project aims	198
Process of the project	200
Conclusion	203
Acknowledgements	205
The future of Asian alleyways	211
Towards integrated and diverse alleyways	
<i>Heide Imai and Marie Gibert-Flutre</i>	
The cycle of the alleyway	213
Common shared place or alternative landscape of reminiscence?	213
The alleyway as marginal place	214
The alleyway as everyday place	215
Realities and possibilities of public places: A more sensitive urban design approach?	216
Recognizing the role of marginal places	217
Outlook	218
List of contributors	221
Index	223
List of figures and tables	
<i>Figures</i>	
Figure 0.1 Map of Asia	20
Figure 1.1 The alleyway as a metropolitan liminal space	35
Figure 1.2 Location map of Wards 1 and 3 of District 3 in Ho Chi Minh City	37
Figure 1.3 Bàn Cờ alleyway and its bustling market in Ward 3 of District 3 in Ho Chi Minh City	41
Figure 1.4 The production of comfit (<i>mứt</i>) in the alleyways of District 3 in Ward 1 of Ho Chi Minh City	43
Figure 1.5 A sign rewarding the neighbourhood as part of the 'cultural neighbourhood' campaign, in Ward 3 of District 3	48
Figure 2.1 Map of Shichahai area in 2019	61
Figure 2.2 No more courtyard in Shichahai	64
Figure 2.3 Hanging the laundry outside is a common practice in Shichahai	66



Figure 2.4	<i>Lao Beijing</i> residents install chairs and tables to play chess, go, cards or mah-jong in Shichahai	72
Figure 2.5	Resisting with Spring Festival poems (<i>chunlian</i> , 春聯) in Shichahai; <i>left</i> 'Those who implement the law don't guard the law'; <i>top</i> 'New spring'; <i>right</i> 'Those who know the law don't respect the law'	76
Figure 3.1	Map of Tsukishima-Tsukuda, Tokyo	91
Figure 3.2	Contested urban landscape in Tsukuda and Tsukishima, Tokyo	92
Figure 3.3	Contested urban landscape in Seoul	94
Figure 3.4	Map of Insadong and Ikseondong, Seoul	96
Figure 3.5	Alleyways in Tsukuda and Tsukishima, Tokyo	99
Figure 3.6	Alleyways in Ikseondong and Insadong, Seoul	104
Figure 4.1	Map of Banglamphu and Baan Phanthom in Bangkok	121
Figure 4.2	Map of the Phra Athit-Phra Sumen area showing the variety of its cultural and creative sites	126
Figure 4.3	<i>Left</i> Nopparat Cuisine & Gallery, a refurbished restaurant serving Thai cuisine in an intentionally nostalgic atmosphere; <i>right</i> Passport Bookshop, a pioneering bookshop and retailer of lifestyle goods, which also hosts a co-working space and cultural activities	130
Figure 4.4	<i>Left</i> Dialogue Coffee and Gallery, a well-known meeting place for educated youth, artists, and international tourists; <i>right</i> Kope Hya Tai Kee, at Phanfa, a cafe that blends reminiscence of the past with a celebration of modern lifestyles, presented as a Bangkokian <i>sapa kafe</i>	132
Figure 4.5	Head in the Cloud, a mixed-use venue that serves young people interested in arts and cultural activities in Bangkok's Old Town	134
Figure 5.1	The layout of a <i>shikumen lilong</i>	143
Figure 5.2	Map of Tianzifang	147
Figure 5.3	Interior view of Tianzifang	147
Figure 5.4	Overview of <i>lilong</i> houses in Chunyangli. The two rows of <i>lilong</i> houses in the front have been renovated. The houses in the rear row will be renovated soon.	153
Figure 6.1	Shida Night Market became a site of neighbourhood conflicts in 2011	161
Figure 6.2	Map of the Shida Night Market and Gufeng neighbourhood. 1. White Hut; 2. Mango Herb Garden; 3. 'Black-Gold Plaza'; 4. Skyline Alley	167

Figure 6.3	Xiaobaiwu occupies a corner of an alleyway intersection, providing it with a prominent location to engage users	170
Figure 6.4	The vacant space was transformed into an active makerspace and community hub with excellent visibility from the adjacent alleyways and street	168
Figure 6.5	Mango Herb Garden – an unused dormitory facing an alleyway was transformed into a welcoming garden and community space	170
Figure 6.6	Yishientian (一線天) Passageway – greening of a back alleyway with an irrigation system that can be controlled remotely via a mobile app	171
Figure 7.1	Sheung Fung Lane, Sai Ying Pun, Hong Kong	180
Figure 7.2	Third Street Playground, Sai Ying Pun, Hong Kong, 2018	185
Figure 7.3	Public space in private development – Wang In Fong East Lane, Hong Kong, 2018	187
Figure 7.4	Typical Hong Kong alley, Sai Ying Pun, 2019	189
Figure 7.5	Sheung Fung Lane steps, City of Victoria, Department of Public Works, 1897	190
Figure 7.6	Sheung Fung Lane, Sai Yin Pun, Hong Kong, 2018	193
Figure 7.7	Toi Tei Kung Shrine, Sheung Fung Lane, Sai Ying Pun, Hong Kong, 2018	197
Figure 7.8	Mid-Autumn Festival in Sheung Fung Lane, 2017	199

Tables

Table 0.1	The diversity of Asian alleyways	24
Table 5.1	Proportion of leased houses in Tianzifang, 2004-2013	149





Amsterdam
University
Press

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to all the contributors of this collective volume for their precious cooperation throughout the editing process. This work benefited from the logistical assistance and financial support of the Asia Research Institute (ARI) of the National University of Singapore (NUS), the International Institute of Asian Studies (IIAS) and University College London (UCL). This publication also benefited from the generous funding of the East Asian Studies Department (UFR LCAO) of the University of Paris, which allowed for a high-quality language editing of the manuscript.

We thank the anonymous reviewers for their careful reading and suggestions which sharpened individual chapters and the volume overall. Any errors remain our own.

Within the International Institute of Asian Studies, our gratitude goes to Paul Rabé in his capacity as Asian Cities Series editor for his encouragement and his cogent comments on this volume, Paul van der Velde, the IIAS Publications Officer, and Mary Lynn van Dijk, our careful and very reactive Assistant Publications Officer, and all the people at AUP involved in the project, such as Saskia Gieling, the Commissioning Editor, and Jaap Wagenaar, the Production Editor.



Amsterdam
University
Press



Amsterdam
University
Press

Asian alleyways

An urban vernacular in times of globalization

Marie Gibert-Flutre and Heide Imai

I hear the roaring and honking of cars, trucks, buses, motorbikes, the ringing of temple bells, shouting street traders selling their food. Perhaps I cannot read their signs, yet once getting lost in the maze of little street stalls lining up along the alleyway, I am totally submerged in this dense microcosmos. Turning right into a narrower alleyway, I encounter deteriorating structures, signs of poverty, and ordinary people working hard to make a living. A parked motor vehicle is blocking my way. I step into an obscure fluid gathering in little potholes and, trying to step aside, I almost crash into an old man sitting on the doorstep in front of his shophouse. Standing right beside him, I smell a heady odour: sweet garlic and a light dash of smoky tea, mixing with the aroma of fried oil coming from a small street stall. Behind a small counter, a tiny lady is wrapping some freshly fried rice cake in an old sheet of newspaper, handing the package over to a small girl who runs off as fast as she came. Trying to follow her, I trip over a stray cat lying beneath the stall. Immediately some kids surround me, edging me aside to check on the cat but not me. [...] Observing the scene for some minutes, I realize that I'm sitting on the ground of this narrow alleyway, now not only dirty and sweaty but feeling the real pulse beat, the everyday life streaming through the veins of this city.

Asian alleyways fading in the shadow of towers

Although a ubiquitous feature of cities in East Asia, alleyways remain often nameless places. These labyrinths, which function like inward spaces with their casual language, improvisation, and marginal uses, differ markedly from the more foreseeable main streets and boulevards that are designed with emphasis on order, control, and tidiness, according to the criteria of modern planning.

Gibert-Flutre, Marie, and Heide Imai (eds), *Asian Alleyways: An Urban Vernacular in Times of Globalization*. Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press 2020

DOI: 10.5117/9789463729604_INTRO



Amsterdam
University
Press

An alleyway¹ is 'a narrow lane or path for pedestrians', as defined by the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (2006), but its morphological characteristics and width may differ from one urban context to another. Etymologically, the word 'alley' comes from the French *allée* ('a way to go'), which came to be used in the Anglo-American and German contexts. The related terms 'blind alley' (cul-de-sac), 'back alley', and 'back street' have negative connotations of illegal dealings or crime, dating back to their use in the eighteenth century. An alleyway is commonly found in an urbanized area, behind or branching off from main or side streets, or located behind or in between built structures, forming a shortcut, side-track, or dead-end. As alleyways are narrow and not always paved, it is often difficult to discern whether they are public or private property. This semi-public, semi-private character allows informal or even illegal uses of alleyways, which can result in their image as dark and dangerous places where a person might be attacked. Lacking an apparent order, alleyways follow an underlying hidden logic that makes these awry spaces difficult to capture.

Moreover, in the current metropolitan transformations in East Asia, alleyways tend to hide more and more literally in the shadows of towers. It is often unclear to whom they belong, as they can be situated in between two premises, or used by different people for different purposes. Thus, they can be defined as 'intermediate zones' (Kurokawa 2006) or 'liminal places' (Jones 2007), being in the theoretical and spatial sense a place situated 'in-between' (Entrikin 1990). They can also be defined as hidden. Not having the spatial definition of streets or the importance of prominent landmarks, they are difficult to indicate as 'specific places' (Lynch 1960). As many voids and scars in the metropolitan matrix, they are spatially unstable and dependent on the existence of other places and boundaries for definition, a characteristic indicating the liminality of a place (McIntosh 2005).

Alleyways also tend to fall into 'the folds of the maps' (Lancret 2001, 86), being often under-represented on official city maps, where they figure as many blank spaces. They remain out of the focus of the contemporary approach to urban planning, falling into disrepair and disappearing from the urban landscape (Martin 2001). As such, they might be referred to as the 'interstices of global urbanism' (McCann, Roy, and Ward 2013, 585).

The lack of consideration and value attached to ancient neighbourhoods in many cities of Asia has led them to often be radically transformed by urban redevelopments, while their residents have been or are being displaced. With

1 In this volume, the terms 'alleyway' and 'alley' are used interchangeably to avoid a monotonous usage of language, if not stated otherwise.

these massive changes, much of the local vernacular – such as communal life experiences and knowledge of the city – are being wiped out forever. Alleyway neighbourhoods are at substantial risk of fading into history, as global mega-projects with vast footprints, master plans, and large-scale privatization are killing much of the urban tissue of smaller urban spaces. Pursuing the ‘art of being global’ (Roy and Ong 2011), cities in Asia fall more and more within what can be called an ‘urbanism of projects’ (Goldblum 2015, 374), which leads to a rupture with their historical, organic urban growth. In that context, urban figures are given priority over urban texture. As noted by Renee Chow (2015, 4), ‘while the pieces of cities are occasionally spectacular, the parts do not add up to anything larger nor do they contribute to the extended setting’.

The urbanism of projects also acknowledges the primacy of a ‘super urban network’ over local urban territories, opening the way for a ‘splintering urbanism’ (Graham and Marvin 2001). Once low rise and organic, cities in Asia have engaged in a verticalization process from a functionalist perspective, especially in new urbanized areas flourishing at their edge. These steady transformations affect social cohesion and lead to recompositions of the historical forms and structures of alleyway neighbourhoods (Gibert 2018b).

These preliminary observations were the basis for the first international conference dedicated to ‘Lanes and Neighborhoods in Contemporary Cities in Asia’, at the Asia Research Institute (ARI) in Singapore in July 2016.² This event found an urgent need for a humanistically informed approach to studying urban Asia, stressing the importance of a more localized, historically and culturally contextualized knowledge. Many aspects of urban experience – including those of history, heritage, urban populations, ways of life, and livelihoods – are indeed defined and shaped at the neighbourhood level. Yet, much of it remains overlooked by policymakers and many urban studies academics: the story of Asian cities remains largely recounted by dominant actors in urban redevelopment (i.e., central governments and real estate developers). After this conference, the International Institute of Asian Studies (IIAS) founded the Southeast Asia Neighborhoods Network (SEANNET) to stimulate alternative ways to read Asian urban environments and to disentangle a less-known city, a situated ‘urbanity’ that is currently under

2 This international conference was organized by Marie Gibert-Flutre and Mike Douglass and jointly funded by ARI at the National University of Singapore, the International Institute of Asian Studies (IIAS), and the University College of London (UCL). It brought together 30 scholars around the concept and social meanings of one of the smallest social spheres of the city, the neighbourhood.

threat. The publication of this book owes much to the efforts and findings of these two pioneering scientific events in addressing this urgent issue.

Asian cities upside down: Turning the theoretical approach to global cities on its head

Our book reframes Asian alleyways in the context of globalization, at the interface of large-scale restructuring processes and micro-scale processes. It critically explores ‘global Asia’ and the metropolization process specifically from its alleyways, which are understood as ordinary neighbourhood landscapes providing the setting for everyday urban life and place-based identities being shaped by varied everyday practices, collective experiences, and forces. This turns the traditional approach to ‘global cities’ upside down and contributes to a renewed conception of metropolization as a highly situated process, where forces at play locally, in each alleyway neighbourhood, are both intertwined and labile. Beyond the mainstream, standardizing vision of the metropolization process, our book offers a nuanced overview of urban production in Asia at a time of great changes.

Theoretically, our aim is to question the everyday nature of the urbanization process, from the specific perspective of cities in Asia, which are historically characterized by the ‘smallness’ of their plot division and the richness of alleyway appropriations, both leading to a specific sense of local territoriality (Gibert 2018a; Hou and Chalana 2016; Imai 2010, 2017). This focus allows for an original, multilayered portrait of contemporary urbanization in Asia beyond its spectacular aspects, providing multiple and alternative narratives of urban changes. It makes it possible to understand how vernacular places are transformed and helps us to renegotiate the function of different public spaces in cities. The American architect Michael Martin (2001, 79) stated:

The character of alleyscapes transcends mere utility as they evolve over many years as odological environments of much richness, diversity and meaning because of their peculiarly intimate and highly variable relationship to the handful of dwellings inhabiting just one block. [...] [T]he back-alley may have considerable importance as an interconnective social landscape.

In an earlier study, Martin (1996) argued that the qualities of an alley – ‘utility’, ‘hiddenness’, and ‘revealiness’ – draw people to make use of alleys and



develop a hybrid approach to urban design that can incorporate the physical, social, and cultural values of the city. He also discussed the importance of other qualities of an alley, such as human scale, distinctive character, everyday usability, and cultural value (Martin 1996).

The urban potential of alleyway neighbourhoods is at least threefold. First, despite their invisibility, alleyways remain the backdrop of the Asian city: their network guarantees the connectivity of most urban tissues in the region. Thus, they constitute the fine grain of the urban fabric. Second, an alleyway-based geography of the city provides an acknowledgement of diversity, in which marginalized populations are able to assert their agency in city-making (Sassen 2015). Third, as blind spots and relatively hidden spaces, alleyways offer the possibility of innovative 'loosening spaces' (Franck and Stevens 2007) and potential creative transgressions. Indeed, alleyways often work as places where regulations are less likely to be enforced.

In this context, we conceptualize the alleyway as an 'ordinary landscape' shaped by different fields, actors, and users, framing it as a contested urban form (Groth 1997). They provide a good sample for assessing physical, corporeal, and social relations in the processes of micro-scale placemaking. The urban alleyway can be seen as a locus of historical and cultural knowledge regarding the personal encounters between people's spatial routine of walking in and experiencing a small, enclosed urban place (Demerath and Levinger 2003). They are also the material expression of broader social struggles and the locus for generating, proclaiming, and negotiating different cultural subjects as aspects of contemporary urban life in Asia. Studying alleyways thus contributes to an alternative epistemology of the city (Boudreault-Fournier, Wees, and Radice 2017).

Asian alleyways: A cross-cultural approach

Despite sharing common morphological settings and fostering a vivid social and cultural life, Asian alleyways are diverse, in terms of their historical development, as well as their architectural and social organization. They are versatile, particular places that vary in their typology and the extent of their usability, comfort, quality, size, scale, and form. For instance, the planned development of the Beijing and Shanghai alleyways in China (called *hutong* (胡同) and *lilong* (里弄), respectively) contrasts greatly with the self-production logic of the alleyways of Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam. The housing conception of the developers of Shanghai's *lilong* districts also contrasts with individual initiatives in the production, and perpetual

