The general nature of the fellowship was to study contemporary, high-density cities in Asia and Southeast Asia. During my formal education, European and American cities were the primary focus of study, without discovering the cities of Asia. Before my trip I felt a gap, a missing part in my own greater understanding of cities through time and cultures. One goal of my fellowship was to use this trip as a missing course in the history of cities in Asia.

In my interview before I was awarded the fellowship, I talked of cities like Hong Kong, Hanoi and Singapore with only a small frame of reference and understanding. I talked of cities not growing in small steps but through grand visions, unchallenged planning and uncontrolled growth. I was prepared to see new cultures and new lands but I could not fully envision their real differences or similarities to our own culture. As the built environment is a reflection of our own cultural values, I indulged in the fascinating cities of Asia and Southeast Asia with open eyes.
Proposed Travel Concept

The general nature of the fellowship is to study contemporary, high-density cities in Asia and Southeast Asia. The basis of the study is to look into the results of post-colonialism as a way to view today’s Westernization of many Asian cities. In Asian cultures Westernization has no longer become an exclusive domain, an objective forced onto a culture, but a condition of universal aspiration. As the aspiration to become “western” increases, Asian cities are being transformed to a more “universal city”. (This is my current view before I travel; a view I have adapted through images, articles and conversations but not through experience or observation.) As the Asian city grows towards contemporary aspirations, traditional values once embodied in the historical neighborhoods seem to be replaced by a modern ideology. Asian cities do not rely on the historic city, but the aspiration to become “western”.

By traveling through Asia and Southeast Asia I plan to investigate the modern Asian city, challenging my perception of what these cities have become.

Primary Objectives

1. To gain an understanding of the Asian culture and Asian cities, comparing and contrasting their differences from American and European cultures as a way of understanding the city.
2. Gain an understanding of Asian history, both general and architectural.
3. Study Asian cities through historical growth, recent development and future plans.
   (Because of the overwhelming size of many of the cities I will be traveling to, I plan to investigate the city through sketching, photography and writing. I also plan to make contacts where possible to understand more of the local culture, city and planning/design issues.)
Expected Departure Date:
First week in June, 2001

Fellowship Travel Period:
3 months

The general outline for travel through Asia is to start in Tokyo, one of the largest cities in the world, then fly to Beijing. After studying Beijing, travel by train down along the eastern coast of China, through Shanghai, Guangzhou, Hong Kong, and Guilin. After days 30 in China I will continue through Southeast Asia to Hanoi, Hue and Ho Chi Minh City, over to Bangkok and down through Thailand to Kuala Lumpur and finish the fellowship in Singapore. Most of my travel will be done by train to experience the landscape, people and culture.

**JAPAN**
Tokyo (1 week)
Tokyo Bay, Old city vs. the contemporary city, Imperial Palace, Shitamachi, Meiji-jingu, Harajuku, Tsukiji Shinkjuku, Tsukudashima, Odaiba, Kasai Rinkai-koen, downtown, Southern and Northern Tokyo

**CHINA**
Beijing (1 week)
Summer Palace, the Forbidden City, and The Great Wall, old residential neighborhoods, Beihai Park (classical gardens), Tiananmen Square, everyday life and culture, Historic Beijing vs. Modern Development

Shanghai (1 week)

**VIETNAM**
Hanoi (1 week)
French Quarter and colonialism, high-rise development, Old quarter, satellite towns, Imperial City, tube-houses, Dong Xuan Market
Hue (2 days)
Historical capital of Vietnam, designed around a grid of streets and canals
Ho Chi Minh City (1 week)
French Districts (city planning), historic pagodas and memories of the Vietnam War intermixed with new construction, symbols of commerce and modernization.

**THAILAND**
Bangkok (1 week)
Capital of Thailand, bustling metropolis, China town, Banglamphu, Wat Phra Kaew and the Grand Palace, Buddhist Temples, and floating markets

**MALAYSIA**
Kuala Lumpur (1 week)
More racially mixed with Colonial roots (Portuguese, Dutch and British). Colonial architecture mixed with modern buildings, Petronas Towers, Chinatown, and the Indian Quarter

**SINGAPORE** (1 week)
Colonial District, Chinatown, Financial District, Little India and the Arab Quarter and Orchard Road
Actual TRAVEL Itinerary

Departure Date: June 4th, 2001 for three months

Tokyo
Imperial Palace East Garden, Central Tokyo, Tokyo International Forum, Ginza, Central Wholesale Fishmarket, Hamarikyu Gardens, and Ueno Park, Tour of Sumidagawa River, Asakusa, Tsukiji, Shinjuku, Tokyo Metropolitan Gov't Center, Harajuku, Shibuya, Mejiro Japanese Gardens, Nat'l Stadium, Akihabara Electronic district, Yuraku area, Kenzo Tange Fuji TV at Tokyo Teleport, Nagoya

Beijing
Tianamen Square, Forbidden City, Summer Palace, Beihei Park, the hutongs, Temple of Heaven, Peking Opera, Mao Mausoleum, Great Wall, Chang'an Avenue, Oriental Plaza

Shanghai
Bund, Nanjing Lu (Pedestrian Street), Pudong (District), Shanghai Urban Planning Exhibition Center in Peoples Square, French Concession, Old Chinese City

Hangzhou
West Lake and surrounding park

Hong Kong
Kowloon Peninsula, Kowloon Park, Hong Kong Cultural Center, Nathan Road, Hong Kong International Airport, Repulse Bay, Hong Kong Convention Center, Central Escalator, Victoria Park, Central Hong Kong (District), Hong Kong Shanghai Bank, Peak Tower, SCM Hong Kong, Typhoon Shelter Development Area

Guilin
Yangshou and the LiJiang River

Nha Trang
South China Sea, Dam Market, Old Quarter

Bangkok
The Grand Palace, China Town, Wat Pho, Banglamphu, Democracy Monument, Patpong, Lumphini Boxing Stadium, Tanayong Railway

Ayuthaya
Beug Phra Ram, Ancient Wats

Penang
Georgetown, The Esplanade and Chinatown

Kuala Lumpur
Petronaas Twin Towers, Kuala Lumpur City Center, China Town, Central Market, Little India, Golden Triangle, Merdeka Square, KL Railway Station, Putrajaya New Town, Batu Caves

Melaka
Tower Square, Parkson Grand Mahkota Parade, China Town

Singapore
Urban Redevelopment Authority, China Town, Boat Quay, Singapore River, Central Business District, Cultural District, Little India, Orchard Road, Suntec City, Lau Pa Sat, Raffles Hotel, Chinm, Marina Bay, Sentosa, Far East Square, Singapore Zoo, Woodlands, Expatriate community
Where do we end up after we have traveled so far and what do we do with all of our experiences?

A professor I met in Sydney after I completed my travels in Asia mentioned that he took his students to India to learn about their own country, not the country they were visiting. I think this insight holds true for my own travels, but only by traveling through Asia could I understand this.

A week visit in each city gave me enough time to understand major issues facing each Asian city, but not enough time to truly understand the historical and cultural significance through time. The time in each city was valuable for hitting upon significant cultural buildings and districts, visiting museums of history, discovering local parks and special places only used by residents, discovering how people actually use the city in which they live, stumbling over new additions to the city, falling victim to the weather and the effect it can have on cities, stumbling into tourist traps, dining at local restaurants, and discovering the essence of each city. Unlike studying a specific building, a city holds back its secrets and requires time and experience to understand. Only by traveling to Asian cities can one begin to understand them. In each city I sought to find a defining characteristic by which the city could be defined.

My original intentions expressed in the interview of contrasting my understanding of North American & European cities with the cities of Asia exceeded my expectations. Each city I traveled to - whether it be Tokyo or Quillen - revealed new problems and solutions not faced by other cities throughout North America and Europe. Cities like Shanghai, Kuala Lumpur, and Ho Chi Minh are challenged with issues such as an expanding population with limited means for growth, undergoing globalization while incorporating the city's history and culture, and balancing population demands with open space and developing new infrastructure within existing confines.

Before I departed for the trip I expected to find more universal cities, or cities with generic international architecture and organization not dependent on a specific location. What I found was far from what I expected. Most of the Asian cities were rich with history, influenced in some way by colonial British, French or Dutch governments, showing distinctive characteristics, unique districts and new development with a combination of Asian and Western influences.

Of the all the cities I visited, Singapore was the most western because of the city's general organization, cleanliness, and access to consumer goods and services. On the flip side, Beijing was the most different because of the city's scale, the poor state of public transportation, and my own lack of knowledge of Chinese history.

I would say that Asian cities are becoming more Western but I would not agree with my earlier statement that they are being transformed into a more "universal city". The ideal of being anywhere but nowhere seems far off when you look at all of the cities I have traveled to, taking into account their history, location, climate and future. Cities like Beijing, Ho Chi Minh, Shanghai, Putrajaya and Singapore are becoming more Western because of a demand for more and cleaner space. In Beijing acres of Hutongs are being torn down to make "modern" apartment towers with spacious apartments, parts of Saigon South have succumbed to demands for gated communities, Shanghai is growing as Western style suburban housing is built, Putrajaya incorporates overdone European and American city planning and Singapore is too clean without the grit that makes cities feel real. Singapore discovered after tearing down old Chinese shophouses to make way for
Western skyscrapers and office buildings that it needed old buildings because of their historical value and identity. Singapore originally aspired to become Western through shiny modern buildings; the city has now decided to preserve buildings of the same type as those once torn down.

The trip was an incredible experience and in my opinion a successful endeavor. Traveling by train and bus from Beijing to Singapore gave me time to understand the relationship between each city, soak in the landscape, culture, and history while picking up a few stories along the way. Receiving the fellowship was a life-changing event. I only wish more students had the opportunity to experience such a trip. The entire process of putting together a portfolio focused on urban design to apply for the fellowship, the interview and the now-complete travel allowed me to reflect on my own studies and knowledge of urban design. The interview tested me beyond any expectation while the trip further expanded my own studies and understanding of the cities in which we live.

To travel is to experience and understand. The SOM Fellowship was the only thing that could have made this trip possible for me. Thank you.

Philip W. Wilkinson
Kent State University
URBAN DESIGN TRAVELING FELLOWSHIP  The Asian City

Philip Wilkinson Jr.
Kent State University
Largely rebuilt after WWII, Tokyo is made up many individual districts. These very distinct districts break the city down into smaller neighborhoods, responding to the end users while creating a city small in scale but large when viewed as a whole. Despite the large population, the city feels remarkable in scale at the pedestrian level.

Narrow lot sizes also contribute to a rich built environment within these districts. The largest building and development takes place around subway/train stations, creating a necklace of development which defines the city of Tokyo. Parks and gardens scattered throughout the city provide relief from the streets.

Since a large portion of the population uses mass transit and the complex city grid was not redesigned after WWII, walking is the easiest way to navigate the city. Buildings respond to the pedestrian and are scaled to work at the sidewalk level.
Street level in Ikebukuro, the Imperial Palace Garden and a modern building in Ikebukuro showing small lot size.
Interior, exterior and figure ground of the Tokyo International Forum
Inside the Hama Rikyu Garden. Modern skyscrapers seem to peer into the garden.
Creative use of space under and between rail lines at Ueno and pedestrians crossing an intersection in Shinjuku East.
Three gardens of different scales; a small reprieve from the city in the Golden Gai Park, the Meiji Shrine and the Meijro Garden.

Sketch: Temple at Asakusa
Contemporary architecture defines the streets of Tokyo. Below, a residence hall at the Tokyo International Exchange Center and two storefronts in trendy Shibuya.
Gates define the entrance into pedestrian districts in the same way gates originally defined the entrances to temples and sacred spaces.
Images from the Tokyo Bay Area. Telecom center Observatory is one focal point of the main axis on which other office buildings are planned. Below, Kenzo Tang’s Fuji TV building and an elevated rail for an automated metro line down a main boulevard.
A residential street, Metropolitan Government Center and shopping street leading up to the shrines at Asakusa

Sketch: Metropolitan Government Center
Electronic shops in Akihabara contrast against the temples and shrines at Asakusa.
Compared with Tokyo, Beijing is monumental in size and spirit. As the capital of China, Beijing is designed for grandeur with the masses, not the individual, in mind. Major streets radiating out from Tiananmen Square encounter a series of ring roads which encompass the center of the city. Mega blocks with mega buildings define the major transportation arteries. The city’s design is rooted in history but also reflects Communist views of the masses and not the individual.

A monumental ideal is continued in the city’s parks, civic and institutional buildings, neighborhoods and new construction projects. Some streets and districts are more human scale but largely the city is designed to impress and to reflect the ideals of the country.
The monumental scale of Chang'an Avenue connects Tiananmen Square and the Forbidden City with the rest of Beijing. Chang'an Avenue runs directly east-west through the center of the city.
Inside the Forbidden City looking at Taihe Hall.

Sketch: The north-south axial orientation of the Forbidden City
The internal court yard of a Hutong, the traditional Chinese home. The tree top view showing the tangle of Hutongs in Beijing and the lack of space between homes.

Sketch: Typical arrangement of the Hutong
Behai Park and The Summer Palace contrast and provide relief against the density of the city.
The Temple of Heaven and Great Hall of the People are two of the numerous parks and monuments that define Beijing’s grandeur.

Sketch: Outside the Temple of Heaven
The Great Wall surrounds and protects while also embodying the physical size and symbolic importance of Beijing.
Urban redevelopment could not contrast more then in the city of Tianjin, just outside of Beijing. The European style shopping streets contrast heavily against the new residential towers that take the place of a labyrinth of hutongs.
SHANGHAI A City of Contrast

100-story skyscrapers, neon lighting, spacious streets and dramatic structures are cast against winding lanes, neoclassical buildings and cramped living conditions. These images define the city of Shanghai. A city of contrast is directly evident in the differences between the Bund and the Pudong, and other areas around the Shanghai.

Once a gateway for European influence within China, Shanghai now represents China’s emergence into the 21st Century.
The two sides of the Huangpu River could not contrast more than the Bund, an area of colonial strongholds, pictured on the left, and the Pudong on the right.
Nanjing Donglu, the main pedestrian shopping street, is the center of the city connecting the Bund and Renmin Park (The People’s Park).
Despite the high class of Nanjing Donglu and the Pudong, most of the city is still distinctively lower class residential dwellings. Where new offices are developed, pre-existing homes are relocated in the spirit of modernization.
Pudong represents China’s desire for financial importance in the global marketplace. Only developed in the last 25 years because of a lack of infrastructure, the district is better to gaze at from across the river than to experience on foot. When the master plan is fully realized, the district will be home to several of the tallest buildings in the world.
In the Old Chinese City, a district in the original city center, the Yuyuan Bazaar attracts Western tourists with an idealized version of the ancient Chinese city. Outside of the Bazaar (not pictured), densely populated narrow streets offer more adventurous travelers the real face of the city.
Hong Kong is defined by lights and skyscrapers densely positioned between ocean waters and mountain tops. This rich landscape influences all infrastructure and building, whether in the numerous outdoor escalators, cavernous streets or the constant shrinking of the harbor due to the reclamation of land.

Controlled by the British for the last 99 years, the city is now officially part of China but remains a Special Administrative Region which allows a form of capitalism to continue. Pieces of British culture still remain but largely Hong Kong falls somewhere between the British and Chinese, characteristic of both cultures but not distinctively one or the other.
Situated dramatically between the water’s edge and Victoria Peak, the city of Hong Kong has a constant interaction and response to the geography in which it lies. Below, views of the harbor and the skyline.
Because the density of the city is omnipresent, relief at the water’s edge is always welcomed.
The outdoor escalator is unique to Hong Kong. Cutting and weaving up streets, stopping and starting, the escalator makes its way from the edge of Central District up into a forest of multistory apartment buildings overlooking the harbor.
Kowloon city, facing the island of Hong Kong, offers spectacular views of the island along the public pier and cultural center. Kowloon is largely overlooked since for many the ultimate destination is the island. Modern infrastructure keeps the pace of the city alive.
Connecting and expanding the city with modern infrastructure keeps up growth and international importance as the city looks ahead to the future.

Below, reclaiming land in Kowloon, the new city of Tung Chung and the new International Airport.
Below: looking at the Hong Kong skyline from Kowloon. Much of the city’s beauty comes from the island’s natural topography. The reclaimed land in the foreground is planned as expansion for Kowloon city. The mountain tops are preserved, distinguishing the city from the landscape.
This magical landscape in the depths of southern China only represents a fraction of the rich landscape in such a large country. The major city of Guilin and the nearby smaller city of Yangshuo are nestled between gigantic rock formations that shoot skyward from the flat plain of rice fields. The spacious countryside is almost entirely filled with rice paddies and other agricultural undertakings. Life in the countryside is extremely difficult under southern China's intense sun and heavy labor. Small cities like Yangshuo are used as market centers for the greater community of farmers.
A rich landscape rises above the streets of Yangshuo.
The hills of Yangshuo and Guilin cast a dramatic backdrop for the expansive fields of rice.
Even in tiny Yangshuo a separation exists between the tourist streets and the local streets. In just a turn of a corner, the business changes from very new, clean backpacker hotels to the typical Chinese market.
Hanoi: A City of Intimacy

Hanoi's quaint districts are a reflection of French planning and influence during the period of 19th century colonialism. Not only are French mannerisms, baguettes and cafe au lait prominent remnants of French occupation, but so are the tree-lined boulevards, the style of building, the district names and organization. The feeling of intimacy comes from all of these characteristics combined. Picturesque lakes within the city are surrounded by both French promenades and Chinese pagodas.

The largely three- to five-story city is positioned on the edge of the Red River, giving a hint towards what many pre-industrial cities must have looked like in the rest of the world. Intimate buildings, narrow streets, luscious green parks and shimmering lakes make for an exceptionally beautiful city.
Promenade around Hoan Kiem Lake and a typical street in the center of Hanoi.
French influence can be seen in the details, balconies and windows of buildings in and around Hanoi.
Hanoi’s Concert Hall and the Temple of Literature display the richness of Eastern and Western culture represented throughout the city.
From across the river Hanoi resembles what pre-industrial cities around the world must have looked like. Any recent high rise construction stands out against the three-to-five-story buildings.
HUE A City of History

The city of Hue was the old capital and royal city of Vietnam. The city still largely remains inside its protective walls. Only recently have hotels and multi-family housing taken the place of family farms outside the walls. A hierarchical system of streets, blocks and farmland within the city walls surround a series of inner walls protecting the royal palace. The city is comparable to The Forbidden City in Beijing but without the surrounding urban development.

The city is quiet with much activity other than tourism. The design and size of the city is virtually the same as when it was first built.
HO CHI MINH CITY A City of Promise

Even though Ho Chi Minh City is not the capital of Vietnam, it is a modern city with a vision for the future. Capitalism and investment are quite visible in foreign banks and companies in the center of the city. One of the largest Economic Development Zones in Asia is situated at the edge of the city. A new city plan for this zone, "Saigon South," was created to allow for western style housing, more open space and a new city design that will allow for growing infrastructure demands. Saigon South will increase the size of Ho Chi Minh City, providing better facilities for foreign investment and businesses, housing, cultural and other amenities the city does not currently offer. Ho Chi Minh City promises to be the gateway to Vietnam while offering increasingly favorable foreign development possibilities.
Bangkok is thick with smog from traffic, overcrowded streets and insufficient open space, making the city pulse with congestion. The river provides the only relief from the expanding city, even though it is hardly noticeable as an open space because it is confined by a dense wall of buildings. Buddhist temples almost litter the city, though their beauty is unimaginable until you have seen them for yourself. An elevated rail system attempts to alleviate the city’s congestion, though the system has not been as successful as imagined.

Bangkok’s beauty as a city lies in hard to find quiet streets, small temples removed from loud traffic and an appreciation for a busy pedestrian shopping street. Taken as whole Bangkok is beautiful but has overgrown its own infrastructure causing an overcrowded city without room for change.
Over-packed city streets contrast with peaceful Buddhist Temples.
Buddhist temples, known in Thailand as wats, shown in and outside the city. The quiet temples offer the only relief from the harsh, noisy city streets.
As one of the oldest British settlements in Malaysia, Georgetown is rooted in history with monuments, cultural buildings and green parks. However when compared with Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur, the town is sleepy and uneventful. Specific buildings do stand out from the repetition of traditional Chinese shophouses, such as the Menara UMP skyscraper, British colonial architecture around the Padang Park and a few unique mosques and temples. The city is largely a mix of traditional Chinese shophouses and mundane buildings.
Traditional shophouses make up most of the center city, which is positioned between the hills and the sea.
The character of Penang varies from the waterfront promenade to modern and environmentally sensitive architecture.
Kuala Lumpur: A City of Transformation

Most recognized for the recently completed Petronas Towers, Kuala Lumpur is undergoing a transformation to bring the city into the global marketplace. With new buildings, districts and infrastructure which includes a new airport, the city has reinvented itself from the inside out. Not only do the Petronas Towers stand as a symbol of modernization, but the towers act as a catalyst for additional development in an undeveloped section of the city.

Pedestrian-minded streetscapes, parks and efficient public transportation make the city enjoyable for a tourist, efficient for workers and liveable for the citizens.
Merdeka Square, the central market pedestrian street and the Masjid Jamek mosque in the heart of Kuala Lumpur.
The Petronas Towers stand as a statement while identifying Kuala Lumpur in the global marketplace. Surrounding the tower are other recently constructed offices and hotels arranged around a central park.
A small corner park, food streets and the Chinese Night market make the city intimate in scale.
PUTRAJAYA A New City

Planned as Malaysia’s new governmental center, the city takes great measure to be ecologically sensitive to the surroundings while emulating other capital cities. Grand axial organization and relationships between important buildings echoes Washington D.C., Paris and Rome.

Local ecology informs the designed landscaping while leaving hills and lakes always in view. The grand axis on which the city is planned finishes at the Royal Residence. Next to the Royal Residences is the State Mosque, which is almost as important in the hierarchical structure of the city’s design.

Located between Kuala Lumpur and its new airport, Putrajaya was sited in a beautiful area. Rolling hills and natural lakes give the city character even without the elaborate architecture. Putrajaya offers relief from the congested streets of Kuala Lumpur with plenty of open space and a vision for the growth of the city. However, what remains to be seen are the lasting effects of moving the capital out of Kuala Lumpur.
The new capital of Malaysia and the State Mosque are positioned with the greatest significance in relation to the rest of the city. The country's Islamic religion is dramatically stated with the new State Mosque at the edge of the central lake.
The new city is positioned in the center of rolling hills and lakes while using local vegetation throughout the landscape.
A City of Organization

Because of the size Singapore, the country and the city, all resources must be carefully managed and preserved to secure a prosperous future. Everything the island needs, from military training areas to land preserves to amusement parks, must be kept in balance since land is so precious. At only 401 square miles in size (about the size of Chicago) and with a population of 3.2 million, Singapore must balance the island’s resources to provide for all of its current needs without relying heavily on outside assistance.

Boat Quay works as a small example of how the entire island works. Business, pleasure and cultural uses are in balance with one another around the quay. A pedestrian promenade links the different zones to one another around the entire edge while sharing the natural beauty of the quay.

The organization of the city state could be seen as a perfect example of how a country can preserve and fairly allocate the country’s resources to secure a healthy and prosperous future. Because of Singapore’s lack of space, the daunting task of planning an entire country is perhaps less difficult than most other Asian countries, which are enormous by comparison.
Boat Quay is the center of the city, bringing together historic buildings, the central business district and bars and restaurants around the Quay’s edge. Colonial City Hall overlooks The Padang which backs up to Boat Quay.
Once torn down in the name of progress, the traditional shophouses are now being preserved as part of Singapore’s Chinese history.