



The Department of Anthropology
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

presents a seminar

by

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on

Deliberate Design or Accidental Abuse? Misappropriations of Applied Anthropology in Global Design Consulting

Friday, 20 Oct 2017

1:00 – 2:30 pm

Room 11 Humanities Building

New Asia College, CUHK

A light lunch will be served at 12:30 pm. First come first served.

Abstract:

Since the 1970s, there has been hype in design consulting about the use of what they call “design research” -- a form of social science research that begins with empathy by putting the researchers in the shoes of their prospective customers to create demand for yet-to-be realized needs. These companies boast prestige, high remuneration, and “fun work-live-play” environments similar to companies such as Google. Inspired by a new generation of “engaged urban anthropologists” who not only observe remote communities but use their skills wherever they are needed, undergraduate students from elite universities aspire to work for design consulting firms which have become alternatives to “morally dubious” companies in the finance sector. Based on six months of ethnographic research in a major global design consultancy and open-ended interviews with undergraduate students across several universities, I present a picture of design consulting’s appropriation of anthropology as their key research method in delivering consumer products and experiences. I shed light on the superficial and problematic use of anthropological research methods in the design industry and how we might re-think the future of anthropological training and its “engaged” applications.

Bio:

Dr Non Arkaraprasertkul is Senior Lecturer in Urbanism at the University of Sydney School of Architecture, Design, and Planning. His research interests include urbanisation and development, housing and urban settlements, and anthropology of space and place.

ALL INTERESTED ARE WELCOME