ABSTRACT

McGee and Armstrong (1970) maintain that the economic structure of the Third world city is divided into two parts: a firm type economy and a bazaar type economy. These two sectors do not fall into distinct parts and they are interlaced. McGee and Armstrong extend this argument by investigating the bazaar sector. They borrow a term "involution" from Geertz (1963) to describe the characteristics of the bazaar sector. It has the capacity to undergo a process of involution as in Geertz's Javanese town despite its radically different ecological base. From here, McGee and Armstrong prescribe the theory of urban involution.

The work of McGee and Armstrong stimulates the writer to ask several questions. Firstly, is there urban involution in Singapore? Secondly, whether the bazaar type economy and the firm type economy exist in the same space and time? Two hypotheses are formulated to help solving the research problem:

(1) There is urban involution in the bazaar sector in Singapore.

(2) Bazaar type economy and firm type economy exist in the same space and time.

McGee and Armstrong use five reasons to explain the phenomenon of urban involution. Under the first hypothesis, the writer examines the validity of these five reasons of explanation. Examination of the second hypothesis is based on three sets of criteria for distinguishing firm type economy and bazaar type economy.

Changi and Joo Chiat markets are chosen to examine the hypotheses. Information is obtained by the use of a fixed questionnaire.

The two hypotheses have been accepted in the thesis. McGee and Armstrong reveal that urban involution acts as an inhibitor to revolutionary change. Is it an inhibitor to revolutionary change in Singapore? Further discussion and analysis is needed which is outside the scope of this thesis.