

Homogenisation of Representations

Edited by Modjtaba Sadria



Aga Khan Award for Architecture

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Acknowledgements

The second of two Knowledge Construction workshops organised by the Aga Khan Award for Architecture was held in Vancouver on the 26–28 February 2009. The workshop, on the topic of ‘Homogenisation of Representations’ was conceptualised and implemented on behalf of the Award by Professor Modjtaba Sadria, member of the 2007 Award Steering Committee.

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Preface

FARROKH DERAKHSHANI

The social, cultural and economic life of a society is manifest in its built environment. An analysis of that environment can provide insights about the lives of the people who inhabit its spaces. One difficulty in making such an analysis stems from the fact that the physical environment changes shape at a slower pace than the lived environment. It is thus important to assure at the outset that material forms are flexible and adaptable, so that they can serve their users through a long period of time. Architects and planners are some of the many actors who shape the built environment, and the importance of their role becomes evident when their built work is able to transcend the period and the generation in which it was conceived and constructed.

The role of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture since its inception in 1977 has been to foster a better built environment for societies in which Muslims live. Its core activity is to present recent, exemplary schemes that benefit their users and respond to the aspirations of their clients. Every three years, projects are selected to receive the Award through a meticulous process of nomination, documentation and expert evaluation. By juxtaposing projects of different scale, programme, location and style, the Award tries to showcase the plurality that exists within our societies. The common factor in choosing these projects is 'excellence' – in the approach of the architect in designing the most appropriate solution. As architectural solutions have moved from local to global, it has become clear that homogenised solutions are seldom the most appropriate response to local needs.

The series of 'Knowledge Construction Workshops' of which this publication is an outcome, were organised by the Aga Khan Award for Architecture in order to create a body of research that could assist the Award steering committee and master juries to better understand the contexts of the projects that they are asked to assess. The Award also has a programme of specialised and thematic colloquia and seminars that bring eminent scholars and professionals together, all aimed at creating a body of knowledge for practitioners and researchers looking for inspiration and tools.

Professor Modjtaba Sadria, who served on the Award's master jury in 2004 and was a steering committee member from 2005 – 2007, proposed the Knowledge Construction Workshops to address and build upon the discussions taking place at the Award at that time. The first workshop was held in London in 2008 entitled 'Multiple Modernities in Muslim Societies' and its proceedings were subsequently published in a separate volume. The second workshop was held in Vancouver in 2009 to explore the tangible elements of modernity, focusing on the issue of representation in architecture.

This event was organised in collaboration with the Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations (AKU-ISMC) in London. Following the workshop the papers presented were further developed under the editorial direction of Professor Sadria and edited by Rebecca Williamson of AKU-ISMC. The volume was prepared for publication by Nuha Ansari, Project Officer at the Award. I would like to express my thanks and warm appreciation to these individuals and all those who participated in the workshops and contributed their research.

Geneva, April 2012

List of Contributors

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Ian Angus is Professor of Humanities at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, Canada. He emigrated from England to Canada in 1958. His most recent book is *Identity and Justice* (2008). He is also the author of *A Border Within: National Identity, Cultural Plurality and Wilderness* (1997), which was widely reviewed in both the academic and popular press, *(Dis)figurations: Discourse/Critique/Ethics* (2000), *Primal Scenes of Communication* (2000), and *Emergent Publics: An Essay on Social Movements and Democracy* (2001) as well as several edited collections. Professor Angus has also recently published long essays on the viability of Socratic inquiry in a contemporary context, the relation between Athens and Jerusalem in Western civilisation, the concept of modernity, and the ethic of philosophy.

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Anthony D. King is Emeritus Professor of Art History and Sociology at the State University of New York, Binghamton, and has published extensively on the impact of colonialism, postcolonialism and globalisation on architectural and urban form, most recently in *Spaces of Global Cultures: Architecture, Urbanism, Identity* (2004) and essays in *The Global Cities Reader* (eds. N. Brenner and R. Keil, 2006); *Urban Imaginaries: Locating the Modern City* (eds. A. Çinar and T. Bender 2007); and *Re-Shaping Cities: How Global Mobility Shapes Architecture and Urban Form* (eds. M. Guggenheim and O. Söderström 2009). Now living in the UK, he co-edits, with Thomas A. Markus, Routledge's Architext series on architecture and social/cultural theory.

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Modjtaba Sadria was a member of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture Master Jury (2004) and Steering Committee (2007). From 1990–2007 he was a faculty member at the Graduate School of Comprehensive Policy Studies at Chuo University, Japan, after which time he was a faculty member at the Aga Khan University – Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations in London. He has taught and conducted research in a number of universities in Japan and Canada, including Tsuda University, Sophia University, Tokyo University and the University of Quebec, Montréal.

His publications include: *De la modernization de la société à la modernization des religieux (Le cas de l'Iran)*; *Interaction and Autonomy of Culture and Religion*. Most recently he has published a chapter entitled 'Hegemony, Ethics and Reconciliation' in *Pathways to Reconciliation: Between Theory and Practice* (Rothfield, Fleming, Komesaroff, eds, 2008) and has edited the volume *Multiple Modernities: Tangible Elements and Abstract Perspectives* (I.B.Tauris, 2009). His research interests include cities and urbanities, the notion of modernities, knowledge construction and socio-cultural transformation in contemporary Muslim societies.

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Edward Soja is a Distinguished Professor in Urban Planning at the University of California Los Angeles, and faculty at the London School of Economics. After starting his academic career as a specialist on Africa, Dr. Soja has focused his research and writing over the past 20 years on urban restructuring in Los Angeles and more broadly on the critical study of cities and regions, bringing together traditional political economy approaches and recent trends in critical cultural studies, and focusing on what he calls the spatiality of social life. His publications include *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (1989), *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (1996), and *Postmetropolis: Critical Studies of Cities and Regions* (2000).

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Introduction

MODJTABA SADRIA

In the last thirty years, the Aga Khan Award for Architecture has created an important body of people, thought and networks involved in evaluating the challenges and achievements of architecture in Muslim societies. Meanwhile, in the field, many of the arguments concerning knowledge and practice in the built environment in Muslim societies continue to be made within the limited dichotomy of modernism versus tradition. The Award, with its long experience, wanted to show how aspects of these arguments could be made in a more sustainable way, both for the Award's constituencies, as well as for a broader spectrum of people involved with the issues of the built environment. Bringing the notion of 'multiple modernities' into the conceptual frame for understanding the built environment provided an alternative way to understand the transformations in Muslim societies, beyond narrow dichotomies. Using this as a foundation, in 2007 the Award inaugurated the first Knowledge Construction workshop, which invited scholars to think about, understand and explain 'Tangible Elements of Modernities' in non-Western societies.

A key issue that emerged from this session was related to the processes leading to the homogenisation of representations. During the discussions it became clear that if homogenising processes do exist, and to the extent that they exist, they become a limitation – even a denial – of pluralism in general and the plurality of modernities in particular. Thus, the possibility of the homogenisation of representations was identified as a major issue in the evaluation of what is happening in the built environment and its impact on the way people live in different societies. This problematic became the theme of the second Knowledge Construction workshop, entitled 'Homogenisation of Representations', upon which this volume is based.¹

It is possible to identify, even at a superficial level, several factors that contribute to the argument of homogenisation in relation to the built environment and architecture. Firstly, the increasing mobility of scholars teaching in faculties of architecture and urbanism leads

¹ The successful organisation of the workshop, as well as the preparation of the manuscript for this volume would not have been possible without the intellectual rigor and generosity of the participants, the intelligent support of Farrokh Derakhshani, the Director of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture, and the assistance of Rebecca Williamson.

to a cross-fertilisation of ideas which tend towards a universalised approach in institutions, regardless of the social, economic and cultural contexts within which these centres of learning are situated. While improving the quality of teaching, this trend may also contribute to homogenisation. Similarly, one could argue that scholarly networks and journals, through strong editorial policies, influence the production of certain types of knowledge in these fields. The growing presence of symbolic buildings conceived and built by largely the same networks in different locations across the planet, and the vertical integration, as well as horizontal articulation, of construction industries and offices of architecture in many parts of the world also highlights a homogenisation of representations. Moreover, trends towards homogenisation can be glimpsed in governments' understanding of and desire to implement a certain mapping and organisation of urban space that is seen as necessary for major cities to be considered 'global cities'.

Another contemporary factor potentially impacting upon this issue is the temptation to accept a generated reality of cities and buildings – and thus architecture and urbanism – as one dominated by form rather than human beings and social relationships. In other words, forms become characterised by subjectivity, while human beings and their relationships are rendered as objects that rotate, willingly or not, around these forms. Forms are given even more substance as subjects by the integration of technologies required for their creation. In this sense, we may begin to look for the presence or processes of homogeneity in the forms-as-subjects in the urban landscape, buildings and design, and conversely, in the objectification of people and social life in relation to these forms.

These issues are of great importance for the Award. By recognising certain architectural projects, is it also playing a role as a homogeniser? In addition to the above factors, however, there are certainly also present resistant, contradictory and opposing trends, which consciously look for originality, locality and insertion in specific social, cultural and physical fabric. Thus, it is also possible to consider where there have been movements towards differentiation, resistance and a heterogenisation of representations. The papers presented at the workshop, the dialogue amongst scholars, and the subsequent contributions in this volume all attempted to problematise the concept of a homogenisation and heterogenisation of representations in the built and lived environment.

I feel that the wider significance of these issues is perhaps even more salient in the present historical moment, which brings an opportunity to reflect on the trends of the past few decades, and also to pause for a moment and look to where we are heading once we are 'out of the crisis'. It presents an opportunity to explore new territories in scholarship, new concepts, theories, methodologies and cross-disciplinary interactions, that can adequately grasp the ever-mutating dynamics between the built environment and social worlds. Although some very rich scholarly contributions have emerged recently that focus on issues around the social dimensions of architecture, very few have dealt in

any substantial way with the possibility of homogenisation and heterogenisation from the perspective of the lived and built environment. The papers in this volume are divided into three sections: *Foundations*, *Building Blocks* and *Building Bridges*. The arguments in the first section provide, from different perspectives, broad theoretical discussions on the topic of the homogenisation of representations. The second section features essays that explore the homogenisation of representations through the framework of the built environment and urban form. The papers in the third section also build on these themes, but focus to a larger extent on exploring the homogenisation of representations from the perspective of both the lived environment and the built environment. These chapters explore the interrelationship between social issues, the public sphere and the urban environment.

In the first chapter, architectural historian Anthony D. King draws on recent literature to address a series of questions concerning the relationship between globalisation and the presumption of a homogenisation of architectural representation in urban contexts worldwide, and its putative effects on the economic, social and cultural order. King addresses the origins and nature of the debate on the question of homogenisation, the contexts and manner in which such processes are identified, and alternative meanings and connotations of the term 'homogenisation'. The author also draws attention to the need to consider these issues comparatively, and within a long term, historical as well as broad geographical perspective, particularly one that takes note of the distinctive processes of imperialism, colonialism, neo-liberalism and the architecture of 'corporate capitalism'.

Ian Angus approaches the topic of homogenisation from the perspective of philosophy and a critique of modernity. Angus explains why the anxiety concerning cultural homogenisation is an unavoidable problem in modern societies and thereby defends its relevance to issues of social inequality and power. He argues that modernity can be understood as the predominance of a conception of reason throughout all areas of human life. Angus explores how this concept of reason has come to a position of global dominance, looking in particular at the global culture industry and the anxiety generated around cultural difference and 'authenticity'.

In my own contribution, I consider the implications of 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' processes of globalisation in urban life. To do so I look at three key dimensions of these trends: the relationship between modernisation, homogenisation and the public realm; the modernisation of urban space in contemporary cities; and the life politics that can bring about the possibility of heterogeneity in the built and lived environment. Building on the insights of Henri Lefebvre, I investigate the way in which desire and body politics act as dialogical forces shaping, constructing and transforming both the public realm and the built environments in cities. I also argue that the processes of homogenisation and heterogenisation are fundamentally dialogical processes that emerge in response to a

specific context. The paper concludes with a challenge to academics to move beyond the existing parameters of the scholarship around urban life.

The second section of the book, *Building Blocks*, begins with an architectural approach to the issue of homogenisation. In his essay, George Baird demonstrates how aspects of homogenisation processes in architecture can be discerned through the use of analytical techniques of interpretation derived from semiotics. He goes on to argue that despite the social, political and economic power of homogenisation processes in the contemporary world, design possesses some capacity to resist such processes. In order to demonstrate these claims, Baird explores a number of architectural examples, both contemporary and historical, which sometimes illustrate homogenisation, and sometimes successful resistance to it.

Urban scholar and architect Nezar AlSayyad focuses in his chapter on urban form in relation to the Muslim world. He explores the rise and dissolution of specific urban forms in the 20th century, which accompanied the transformations brought about by modernity. He suggests that during the era of colonialism, specific hybrid forms developed that captured the complex relationship between the dominant West and the dominated Muslim world, and points to the way in which anti-colonial resistance used the same modernist, colonial ideologies to create forms for the new nation states. The author argues that pseudo-modern and post-modern forms in the current era of globalisation reflect neither homogeneity nor heterogeneity, and cast doubt on urbanism's ability to represent the cultures in which it exists.

James Holston looks at a model of architectural modernism in Brazil to explore its effect on the country's urban landscape. Focusing on the problem of 'copying' and transplantation in architecture, Holston contrasts two modes of producing CIAM modernist architecture in Brazil, that of master planning and total design with that of urban layering and contingency. Using several examples by Oscar Niemeyer to illustrate his points, the author explores how these modes produce different building forms and spatial characteristics that reflect both the homogenisation of the urban environment, and at other times, the creation of diverse publics.

In his contribution, Nasser Rabbat invites us to focus specifically on contemporary Islamic architecture as a way to view aspects of homogenisation. To do this, he explores the profound shifts that have occurred in architecture in the Islamic world in the last two centuries. In particular, he examines the way in which architectural expressions were framed through modernity and nationalism in the middle of the 20th century, and through the discourse on Islam as cultural identity in the last three decades. He argues that architectural responses to these processes risked regressing to a narrowly defined and homogenised 'Islamic architecture.' The author focuses on the theory of cultural

autonomy as one significant factor contributing to this trend. Rabbat reviews the history of this theory, and demonstrates how its promotion, but also resistance to it, affected the orientation of architecture in the Islamic World.

In her chapter, architect and academic Mari Fujita proposes a new research agenda that challenges existing frameworks in architecture. In particular, Fujita problematises two parallel processes: the either-or logic that frames architecture as either 'global' or 'local' and the symmetrical construction of built form to ideas that asserts that architecture is the embodiment of 'a' world-view. Using the example of Thames Town, Songjiang City, China, she argues that these processes work in tandem to produce impoverished readings of urban developments of this kind. At the root of her paper is the belief that our socio-historic bias for categorisation, bounding and for assuming a static place-ness (urban form as noun) produces a limited reading and representation of space, experience, and urban subjectivity.

The final section, *Building Bridges*, begins with an essay by Jyoti Hosagrahar, who draws on the fields of architecture, planning, cultural heritage and history to reflect on the central questions of the homogeneity of representations through the paradoxical urbanism of India. The author notes the extreme contrasts of Indian cities, which are at the forefront of modernity and globalisation, and the 'transitional' spaces in between that are as yet 'modernising'. She looks at three seemingly disparate aspects of urbanism in India to reflect on some of the ways that history, place, and locality have engaged with modernity and globalisation. It is argued that what appears homogenous is not a simple rejection of locality and tradition, but instead represents various subaltern adaptations, appropriations, and contestations of urban forms, practices, and identities.

In the following chapter, Abidin Kusno reflects on intellectual and political questions that have been raised by the issue of homogeneity of representations. He suggests that one way to think about discourses of homogeneity and heterogeneity is to reflect on the historical conditions out of which they emerged: colonialism, Cold War arrangements, US-led globalisation, and the responses and counter-narratives that emerged as a result. In particular, the temporal dimension of homogenisation and its implications for the politics of space across colonial and postcolonial political regimes is explored. The last part of Kusno's essay explores a specific example of the spatial politics of differentiation and the emergence of political consciousness in colonial and post-colonial discourses, and their articulation in relation to the forces of homogenisation and modernity.

Architectural historian Mohammad al-Asad takes the issue of cross-border homogenisation in the built environment as his starting point. The essay explores the wide variety of complementary and oppositional forces that give rise to this form of homogenisation, ranging from globalisation and Americanisation on the one hand, to

diversity and fragmentation on the other. Drawing primarily on personal observations, the essay examines the flow of social, economic, political and cultural models between the Middle East and North America in order to better understand the forces connected to cross-border homogenisation and their role as creators of both similarity and difference in the built environment.

Arijit Sen approaches the issue of homogenisation from the perspective of architectural design, urbanism and the concept of cultural landscape. His chapter explores 21st century ethnic and immigrant landscapes, and argues that the homogeneity of representation of ethnic spaces across the world can be conceived of as resulting from forces of globalisation and the commoditisation of ethnic objects, signs and symbols. However, he argues that despite the banality of these spaces, they represent places where immigrants sustain their social and cultural life, and are important nodes within a large and globally dispersed transnational ethnic network. Using the example of the cultural landscape of South Asian communities on a street in Chicago, Sen's paper suggests a methodological strategy and analytical frame which provides a way to identify and evaluate quotidian architecture and lived environments, and allow us to look beyond the narrow homogenising tendencies in the built environment and their impact on the lived environment.

The next chapter takes the form of a commentary presented at the Knowledge Construction workshop by distinguished urban geographer Edward Soja. His paper argues that accompanying the accelerated globalisation of capital and labour over the past forty years there has been the diffusion of a particular belief system or 'global culture', associated with a broadly definable neoliberal capitalism, which has had a certain homogenising effect. He notes that it is easy to identify a repetitive sameness in architectural features in nearly all the world's major cities, which is more pronounced today than at any other time in at least the past 300 years. Soja posits that while many observers, scholars, and practitioners stop here and dwell entirely on this homogenisation process, this approach is misleadingly superficial. At the very least, he argues, homogenisation and its opposite, differentiation or heterogenisation, need to be seen as simultaneous processes. Focusing too narrowly on the homogeneity of representations can lead to a failure to see the dramatic changes that have been taking place in cities and urbanism as a way of life.

The final chapter in the volume presents a summary of the rich discussions that emerged over the two-day workshop. The key themes and exchanges, and their protagonists, are included in order to offer the reader a more nuanced understanding of the multiple approaches and complex arguments that arose in response to the question of homogenisation and heterogenisation of representations in the built environment.

Globalisation and Homogenisation: The State of Play

ANTHONY D. KING

Introduction

A central theme in the debate on globalisation is that contemporary social, economic, political, cultural, technological and other forces subsumed under that term are, according to one viewpoint, leading towards a homogenisation of all aspects of social life worldwide. These also include the built and spatial environments in which such social life occurs, on which it depends, and by which it is also influenced. Others reject this view. They claim, on one hand, that heterogenisation in these realms is much more likely to be taking place, not least in the form of active resistance to the processes of homogenisation. Yet others suggest that both processes develop in society simultaneously, though not necessarily in parallel. My aim in this paper, therefore, is to examine recent literature pertaining to this topic. This includes those authors that support the contention (that globalisation is encouraging the homogenisation of representations) and also those who contest it.

First, however, we need a clarification of terms. By globalisation, I refer to what Held has called 'the speeding up in world-wide connectedness in all aspects of social life' (Held et al., 1999: 2) and by homogenisation of representations, I refer especially to the idea that what we see in cities – the urban landscape – is becoming increasingly visually similar, particularly as a result of the similar ideologies and concepts of modernity being brought to bear upon it. In referring to the effects of globalisation on the built and spatial environment, I also include its effects on architecture, urban design and form and on the built environment in its widest and most general sense. This, in turn, we recognise as part of a larger process of the globalisation of, for instance, the economy, culture, knowledge, politics and language.

Finally, if our particular concern is the supposed 'homogenisation of (architectural) representations' we also need to acknowledge that architectural firms (who produce most of the designs) are by no means autonomous, being dependent on clients, the public, media, builders, politicians, civil servants and fund managers, among others. Most obviously – and here I refer especially to so-called 'global architects' whom I discuss below – their expanding activities round the world are linked to the expansion of transnational

companies (McNeill, 2009). My argument takes the form of addressing some basic questions relevant to these issues, the first of which aims to locate our problem within a larger historical perspective.

1. *Since when, by whom, and why has the 'homogeneity of representations' come to be seen as a 'problem'?*

These are interesting and important questions which demand more space than can be afforded here. Numerous statements affirming the apparent homogenising effects on cities of what, since the mid 1980s, has been called globalisation (or processes which we would today accept as part of that process) can be found, many of them certainly made earlier than those cited here. For example, in *A Geography of Urban Places* (1970) Murphy writes, 'With the creation of a global commercial network, the spread of industrialisation and the technological revolution in transport and transferabilities, cities everywhere are becoming more like one another...' (Murphy, 1970: 32). In 1973, David Harvey writes, 'What is remarkable is not that urbanism is so different but that it is so similar in all metropolitan centres of the world in spite of significant differences in social policy, cultural tradition, administrative and political arrangements... and so on' (Harvey, 1973: 278). Fast forward three decades to 2007 and we read 'A growing volume of literature documents the spread of spatial concepts and urban forms: garden cities, green belts, new towns and, more recently, water fronts, megamalls, and new urbanist "villages", have found their way into every city in the world, creating high levels of physical homogeneity' (Watson, 2007: 68). Others, such as Michael Cohen (1996) speak of 'urban convergence' between cities of the north and south.

What we see here is that while each quotation offers various explanations for what is supposedly causing homogenisation (the spread of industrialisation, imported transport technologies, the spread of spatial concepts), the statements are imprecise. What, exactly, is meant by 'urbanism', 'garden cities,' 'new towns' or 'new urbanist "villages"'? Do these authors imply that these particular urban phenomena are identical wherever they exist? What other transformations in economic and social life, values and lifestyle have brought about these physical and spatial changes?

2. *What do we mean by the 'homogenisation of representations'?*

The charge that 'globalisation means homogenisation' is one that is more frequently made in relation to the media and popular culture, such as films, advertising or dress codes. When made in relation to peoples' visual perception of the urban landscape, it usually refers to their observation of one or more features in the city, e.g. the similarity of skylines or the proliferation of similar building types worldwide (shopping malls, high-rise towers, multistorey car-parks, mosques or primary schools). What people

see, and make a note of, is that which is different from what was there before, what for them was familiar. Seeing is also a selective act of 'cultural appraisal'. We recognise what we already know and overlook what is unfamiliar. Other common features frequently remarked on might include types of urban design (waterside re-developments, gated communities, heritage landscapes); particular architectural styles (neo-vernacularism, postmodernism); similar materials (glass, concrete) and technologies (suspended roofs, curtain walls); ideologies and urban policies (preservation, squatter upgrading), signature architecture and 'branding'; and especially logos of multinational chains (McDonalds, Starbucks), to name some of the most obvious. At a different (and perhaps more abstract) scale, perceptions of homogenisation might also, as Soja (2009) suggests, refer to the overall spatial structure of the city itself: the business district, inner and outer suburbs, 'edge cities'. The global circulation of all these phenomena – from building types to styles, materials and ideas about cities – forms the subject matter of Guggenheim and Söderström's recent book (2010) on the influence of global mobilities on the architecture and urban form of cities worldwide.

These features are all phenomena that are added to the urban landscape. The alternative charge is of familiar ('traditional') forms disappearing. Both may transform the urban landscape but they result from the differential exercise of power by different constituencies and authority figures in the city. We need to distinguish between these different phenomena and identify the particular economic, social and political forces behind them. Some (multinational logos, luxury shopping malls, or the gentrification of some old historic district) may signal a national or local governmental shift to neo-liberal urban policies, including the opening up of the urban economy to foreign inward investment; others (primary schools, squatter settlement upgrading, public transport initiatives) could be the outcome of radical protest from urban social movements. Upgrading squatter settlements not only provides essential shelter, creates employment, and increases consumption but also, in generating banks of voters, changes the political process.

In discussing whether globalisation leads to the increasing homogenisation of the built environment, Hans Ibelings' book, *Supermodernism: Architecture in the Age of Globalisation* (1998) is one attempt to make the charge more specific. He suggests it was the 'big hotels' and 'glass box' office buildings of the 1950s and 60s which sparked off the global 'architectural homogenisation' thesis.¹ Ibelings maintains that 'uniformity and standardisation' also manifests itself in 'singular structures like conference halls, theatres, exhibition complexes, churches and stadiums'. Yet difficult as it is to believe, he does not address the enormous social, economic, religious and cultural changes behind the appearance of these building types and what they mean for the growth of

¹ The following paragraphs are taken from my book: Anthony D. King (2004) *Spaces of Global Cultures: Architecture Urbanism Identity*. Routledge: New York and London, p. 41.

civil society, employment opportunities or any other aspects of social development; for Ibelings, 'worldwide standardisation' [sic] is to be (simplistically) explained in terms of 'economics, similar architectural principles as well as construction systems' (1998: 42). In the context of Ibelings' comments, therefore, we need to ask:

3. *How is the quality of 'similarity' and 'homogenisation' identified and who is making the judgement?*

Who is the critic and from where is the critique being made (geographically, socially, and not least, politically)? Which reference groups does the critic defer to, or distance her/himself from, in evaluating and applying their own criteria of judgement? What are the power relationships between different institutions commissioning these projects and the general public?

Ibelings, an 'outsider' and 'non-local,' does not acknowledge his own position, not only as a member of the globe-trotting elite but also as an architect and critic whose gaze (unlike that of an often architecturally indifferent public) is invariably drawn to architectural objects. He ignores the agency of the state, or institution, or patron, or public, to resist what he describes.

It is now conventional wisdom that when ideas about architectural styles, building types and forms are transplanted from one place in the world to another, they are invested by the local population with different cultural, social and ideological meanings (and often given different uses). Transplanted objects and ideas are invariably located in different cultural, spatial and historical settings. Historical studies of building types reproduced in different cultural sites, such as the villa or bungalow (King, 2004) invariably reveal transformations in use, form and meanings. The innovative idea of the 'garden city' housing estate, used in early 20th-century Britain to provide democratic social housing for the working class, was transferred to British colonies overseas where it was used to maintain strict racial segregation between white and non-white subjects (Home, 1997).

4. *What do we mean by homogenisation and what meanings can it have?*

Homogenisation, the idea of some or all things becoming or being made the same, can be understood from various viewpoints. To imitate or copy, in a conscious act of mimesis, can be a form of flattery, of admiration for that which is copied. As mimicry, it can also be mockery – in which case, what is copied is deliberately distorted, made fun of or made 'almost the same but not quite' (Bhabha, 1992: 89). The point of mimicry is to acknowledge the presence of others and yet simultaneously assert one's own presence and identity.

Imitation can also be used to create an equivalence – whether between buildings, cities, countries or cultures – if only in ironic fashion. Advertisements for luxury villa developments in Beijing, for example, are marketed as being ‘just like Long Island in New York, Just like Beverly Hills in California, Just like Richmond in Vancouver’. (King, 2004: 118). Images of Beijing’s new commercial centre, the Sun Dong An Plaza, are published alongside those of London’s Canary Wharf, New York’s Manhattan and Tokyo’s Ginza development, implying that they are of equivalent architectural or aesthetic standard with equal economic and symbolic value (King and Kusno, 2000: 45).

When ‘homogenisation’ is used in referring to the urban landscape, in most cases it can be assumed that criticism is implied. Homogenisation is *ipso facto* ‘bad’. Yet homogenisation in the sense of making things similar by eliminating difference, for example, reducing social conflict and creating harmony, would, for most observers, be seen as desirable. Urban landscapes that manifest massive difference in scale between the size and costs of buildings, between the gross provision of luxury housing for the rich and the dismal squatter conditions of the poor, present obvious opportunities for more homogeneous development.

The subtle differences between the concepts of copying, mimesis, mimicry and imitation discussed above by no means exhaust the rich vocabulary prompted by a consideration of the blunt concept of ‘homogenisation.’ This provides a veritable buzz of analogous or cognate terms, each of which creates possibilities for differentiating between different parts of what some describe (with negative assumptions) as our increasingly ‘homogenous’ urban and architectural environment: we can speak, for example, about affinity, analogy, approximation, cloning, comparison, emulation, facsimile, replica, reproduction, resemblance, simulacrum, verisimilitude (Roget and Roget, 1967), each with subtly different meanings. Some of the distinctions can be used to fill in the conceptual space which Soja implicitly suggests there exists between the binary concepts of homogeneity and heterogeneity (Soja, 2009). Poets or novelists often know better than many social scientists not just what and how we see, but especially how we articulate what we see. Visual perception depends on our own sensibilities and the richness or poverty of our vocabulary to express it.

5. *The homogenisation of representations: What can we learn from an historical perspective?*

The fact that similar types of buildings, used for the same purpose and frequently bearing a similar name, appearance and spatial form, can be found in different places in the world is well known. The oldest examples are probably buildings of worship – the temples, churches, mosques, synagogues, shrines, and also religiously-related schools, madrasas, hospitals, monasteries – resulting from the spread of the major world religions. The phenomenon may result from population migrations, and also

include the diffusion of technologies and the establishment and spread of regional and later global empires (see below) which continued the process. As trade routes were expanded, migrating populations simultaneously transferred beliefs, values, institutions, practices, and the complementary architectural forms, spaces and styles in which they were accommodated, around the world. In all cases, such architectural forms have played a key symbolic as well as socially functional role in establishing the presence of diasporic world religions.

Today, secular shifts away from religion in some parts of the world transform both the form and use of what were once religious buildings. In Britain, for example, urban churches have been turned into apartments, gyms, circus and climbing schools, community centres but also, with the changing ethnic and religious demographics of the urban population, into mosques, gurdwaras and temples. In Rio de Janeiro, and many other Brazilian cities, the rapid growth of Pentecostalism has transformed empty cinemas into places of worship.

Modern European empires have adopted – and, equally important, also adapted – the forms and styles of ancient ones (especially from Greece and Rome) in extending their political reach – in Asia, Africa, the Americas, and also elsewhere. Architects in contemporary cultures, such as China and India, have, in adopting modified versions of postmodernism, appropriated the neo-Classical styles of their European predecessors, modifying them in the process. Probably the most visually and structurally similar building form, used for palaces, parliaments and post offices in colonial cities round the world is the Classical columned portico of the Greek temple, popularised by the Palladian villa (King, 2004: ch. 7). In all these cases, however, the political and social meaning invested in the design has been that of those who have used it.

From medieval times, technologies of warfare and gunpowder have ensured a comparability (and similarity) of defensive installations, with forts and castles, transplanted by Spain and Portugal from Europe to South America and the Caribbean. Transportation technologies have largely determined the representational architecture of docks, railroad stations, airports, and automobile parks. 19th and 20th century developments in building materials – iron, concrete, steel, glass, plastics – have been combined with Modern Movement ideology, originally from Germany's Bauhaus (Baumeister, 2007; Ray, 2010), to bring a specific form of representational homogeneity in cities all over the world, from Brasilia to Chandigarh, Addis Ababa to Jakarta (Holston, 1989; Prakash, 2002; Fuller, 2006; Kusno, 2000), long before the recent present. Yet as Baumeister (2007) and Ray (2010) point out, the principles behind Bauhaus practices have been adapted, in each case, to local political and geographical conditions and prevailing ideologies. As the cited sources indicate, Modernist architecture has been

used to sustain regimes of democratic socialism (Germany), colonial oppression (Italy), and postcolonial nationalism (India).

In all of these cases where apparently similar architectural and spatial forms have been transplanted around the world, bringing with them, especially for the 'outside' observer, an apparent visual homogeneity between the places where they exist, nowhere can it be said that the process has erased, or submerged, the distinctive identities of the populations which have occupied these places. There are, of course, some worldwide commonalities which must be acknowledged, for example, the sense of religious belonging among adherents of particular world religions, of sharing a language in common among a postcolonial population, or of experiencing an ethnic identity. Yet as sociologist Roland Robertson (1992) has written, globalisation has usually 'exacerbated' a sense of individual and ethnic identity, not erased it.

If we ask what makes the present 'global situation' distinctive and different from the past, it is the recent spectacular speeding up in communication, the compression of space and time (Harvey, 1989), generated by the rapid growth of jet air travel from the 1970s and the instantaneous projection of images through the internet, television, as well as film and photography; for those born since 1980, this has mostly happened during their lifetime. For this particular cohort, an impression has been conveyed that the global circulation of urban and architectural forms is somehow a recent phenomenon.

6. *The greatest force in 'homogenising' the built environment: Imperialism or Globalisation?*

As earlier citations suggest, the processes of what, since the late 1980s, we have called 'globalisation', were there long before the word entered our vocabulary. Imperialism and colonialism as forerunners of the present phase of globalisation are addressed in historian John Darwin's book, *After Tamerlane: The Global History of Empire* (2007). Darwin argues that empires are the rule, not the exception in world history, referring not simply to the European empires of the 19th and 20th centuries, but also earlier ones in Asia (Qing Chinese, Korean, Mughal etc.), Central and South America (Inca, Aztec), and elsewhere. It is these and especially later empires which laid the foundations of contemporary globalisation.

In a similar vein, in *Globalisation in World History* (2002), Anthony Hopkins argues that globalisation has a much longer history than is often acknowledged. Not only does he emphasise the non-Western phases and experiences of globalisation (including those of Islam) but he also draws attention to its earlier historical forms, which he terms the archaic (prior to 1600), proto (from the 18th century), modern (from the 19th century, and including the imperial phase) and postcolonial globalisation (after 1950 or 1970). As Said (1991) shows in regard to language, literature and the arts, and many other

scholars have shown in relation to the architecture, space, urban design and planning of cities, different forms of colonialism have had a massive, and often continuing influence on innumerable cultures and territories, not least in creating the structural similarity of 'dual cities' in Asia, Africa and the Middle East. These histories are part of an extensive literature on this topic that has developed in the last thirty years (AlSayyad, 1991; Çelik, 2008; Fuller, 2006; King, 1976 and 1990; Scriver and Prakash, 2007).

What Salvatore (2009: 21) calls 'the three big Islamic empires of early modernity, Ottoman, Safavid and Mughal' informed by specific religious beliefs, brought different forms of civilisational modernity to conquered territory than those brought by the later empires of Europe. This is a theme recently explored in Çelik's comparative study of the urban and architectural modernisations in the French colonies of the Maghrib and Ottoman Arab provinces in the Middle East (Çelik, 2008).

Imperialism brings to its territories both similarities as well as differences. First is the spatial mark of conquest, of political and military power: the imposition of barracks, parade grounds, armouries, prisons, and the implementation of institutional authority expressed in buildings and spaces of social control. But then each empire is characterised by its own cultural (and often religious) values such that, to a certain degree, French colonial urbanism in Algeria may have features in common with that in Vietnam just as British planning laws in Southern Africa have something in common with those in the West Indies (Home, 1997). On the other hand, not only are the indigenous cultures and landscapes of colonised territories all very different but the cultures and practices of imperial powers are also dissimilar.

Of most importance, the political and cultural influences of imperialism were not just instances of a one-way traffic; they have, in turn, been resisted, accommodated, adapted, and transformed over time by many local agents (Chattopadhyay, 2006; Hosagrahar, 2005; Nasr and Volait, 1999; Yeoh, 1996). The outcome has been a vast range of urban landscapes of hybridity, diversity and innovation (AlSayyad, 2000; Pieterse, 2004).

How have these historical colonial cities impacted the contemporary everyday lives of the postcolonial societies where they exist? This is a massive question which would need to be addressed at the level of the individual city. The remnants of the 'dual city' certainly continue to divide the rich and poor in many states, with the initial colonial structure of the city still determining the shape of its contemporary development, influencing the nature and type of social and political relationships, and contributing to the maintenance of social hierarchies. This phenomenon of imperialism, however, is only part of a larger question:

7. *How are questions of homogenisation and heterogenisation affected by different social, political and economic formations?*

As representations, buildings, architectural styles, spatial forms, belong to specific modes of production, systems of meaning and modes of expression. As such, they are part of the city's visual culture. These images, however, are epiphenomenal; that is to say they are secondary symptoms of larger economic, social, or political formations, forms produced by different distributions of power and divisions of labour. We need to understand what social institutions and functions buildings accommodate and spaces contain or display (Markus, 1993). If there really is 'architectural homogenisation' in the world's cities, what are the economic, social, political and cultural forces behind this?

Throughout history changes have taken place in the political and social formations that have produced different forms of building, planning and architecture, different skylines and urban cadastres, giving cities and their inhabitants distinctive identities. In medieval Europe, for example, the principal forces (and patrons) were the church, monarchs, ducal courts, religious foundations and guilds of wealthy towns. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, patronage lay with imperial, colonial and national governments, banks, national and international corporations, and the military and industrial knowledge complex.

And as suggested earlier, changes in the forms of architecture and urban space have as much to do with the disappearance of particular types of patron and user as much as the appearance of others. Moreover, particular modes of production and ideologies, some global in scope, such as socialism, fascism and capitalist consumerism, with different forms of patronage, have challenged the role of the nation-state as the major influence on architectural identity (Smith, 1990). Yet as a force in forming the space of modern cities, the nation-state cannot be so easily dismissed. Most recently, neo-liberal governments, by privatising public services and handing public space to multinational corporations, are accused of eliminating cultural differences everywhere and introducing similar consumer innovations: suburban shopping malls, gated communities, multiplex cinemas, franchised food outlets and theme parks. How do these processes take place in the contemporary world?

8. *The 'corporate city': the epicentre of contemporary homogenisation?*

According to recent critics, it is the 'corporate city' that preserves and promotes the hegemonic and homogenising discourses of globalisation and consumerism (Daskalaki et al., 2008: 53). Utilising glass-faced, anonymous office blocks, capitalism's corporate forces 'convert places that could encourage difference and interaction into "non-

places” of homogenisation and indifference’ (ibid.). Environments which previously encouraged cultural diversity and encounter have been replaced by those encouraging alienation and passive consumption. These critics cite the Swiss Re building and its surroundings in the City of London and the public space of Berlin’s Potsdammer Platz, as having been designed to have ‘maximum visual impact’ on their surroundings. They suggest that such buildings become ‘manipulative adverts’ of corporatism, ‘outlawing space for difference and social interaction’ (ibid.).

According to Arif Dirlik, global architectural firms ‘seem to derive their aesthetic legitimation... from their ability to represent global capitalism, and the clientele it is in the process of creating’ (Dirlik, 2007: 38, referring to China). The local is commodified and made over. In the case of China, the political power responsible for these developments is the (undemocratic) national government.

Daskalaki et al (2008) describe the resistance developed in response to the architectural culture and spaces of the corporate city. Starting in the Paris suburbs in 1988, ‘parkour’ or ‘free-running’ is a literal form of ‘embodied protest’. Activists use their bodies to resist the dominance of the faceless environment by ‘breaking the lines of the city’, challenging the given structures of space by running and leaping through ‘forbidden’ spaces. Their activities and philosophy act as a metaphor for active participation between the actual and possible structures of the world. Similar resistant practices include skate-boarding, the pervasive activities of graffiti artists or, earlier, the Situationist movement and its performances in Paris.

9. *How possible is it to speak of ‘global architecture’ or the ‘architecture of global capitalism’?*

The terms ‘global architecture’ or ‘the architecture of global capitalism’ have, in recent years, rapidly gained currency. Both terms suggest that there exists a unitary, ‘homogenous’ concept which also refers to a material reality. Yet while the term may legitimately function as a metaphor, logically, the idea of a literal ‘global architecture’ is just not feasible. This would either imply an architecture which could be found in every corner of the globe, which is impossible, or alternatively, an architecture which geographically, had developed from roots originating in every place on the globe, which is equally nonsensical.

As everything has to have a place of origin, and also the appropriate economic and political conditions in which to develop, what today is referred to as ‘global architecture’, as a form, practice and style, is derived from an adaptation in terms of materials and design, of 20th century notions of German, and subsequently Euro-American, Bauhaus design and its imitators (so-called Modernism), though today stripped of its original social commitment to egalitarianism (McNeill, 2009: 126). Its history is to be traced

partially in Europe but predominantly in the cities of the USA, where it was dependent on its corporate sponsors and immense economic resources; subsequently, it has been adopted by the emerging Asian economies. Though always adapted, indigenised, and given meaning by its location (Baumeister, 2007), in each instance it becomes 'local' even though it is connected to a larger historical tradition (see also Holston, this volume).

Referring to China and specifically to Beijing, Ren (2007) suggests that (in China) 'global architecture' refers to a capital-intensive form of design, produced by international architectural firms operating in cities worldwide and is identifiable by the fact that it eschews or refuses any reference to traditional local practice; it might even be defined as architecture that is beyond local economic and technological capacities. 'Global architecture,' in this sense, is defined primarily by its non-local nature. (This is similar to forms of imperial architecture of centuries ago.)

In a similar context, other scholars have referred to specific 'global types' of building or urban design: the high-rise tower, the stand alone, bourgeois suburban house or villa (Dovey, 2008) or the gated community (Genis, 2007) which today can be found in an increasing number of cities worldwide. Yet while they have some features in common, none of these phenomena can be described as totally alike. As for the idea of a 'global skyline', this is a concept that, if not lexically expressed as such until quite recently, has, from the late 19th century and then accelerating in recent years, become central to the competitive practice of constructing 'the tallest building in the world' (King, 2004). This phenomenon exists only in virtual reality and the realms of imagination.

10. Do 'global architects' contribute to 'architectural homogenisation'?

Many ideas about cultural homogenisation result from the diffusion worldwide of both social and urban theory, not least concepts about the 'world' or 'global city' (Sassen, 2000) and what are seen as the minimum spatial and symbolic requirements needed to achieve this status. What are the implications of this for both the built as well the lived environment? In terms of the built environment, this 'global city theory' is interpreted to mean not only what needs adding to the city (high-rise office towers, signature buildings, convention centres, 'world class' hotels, luxury apartments, flyovers, and not least, a 'modern' skyline) but also what requires removing from it, most notably, squatter settlements.

'Signature' buildings, and what has come to be called 'starchitecture', however, and the 'branding' of the city with the designs of 'global architects' (also part of the 'global city' agenda) requires commitment on the part of local, city (and national) sponsors to the value system of where this practice originates. The resultant collection of signature

'trophies' can reduce cities which were previously identified by their own architectural vernacular to imitative clones of each other.

In this context, as a contribution to 'global knowledge', the invention and proliferation worldwide of a particular notion of the 'global city' has had a disastrous effect. From the start, the definition of the term has focused almost solely on economic criteria, paying little if any attention to the historical, cultural, or religious context in which the world or global city developed in the West (King, 2006). This has resulted in attention being focussed especially on economic institutions in the city and also to its superficial physical and spatial attributes. As McNeill has suggested, 'Globalisation as a process of capitalist development has advanced quickest in the domain of symbols' (McNeill 2009: 96), most of them becoming known through the widespread circulation of 'promotional' architectural magazines and journals. As the global clamour greeting yet one more 'iconic' building is displaced by that of another, the idea of the 'icon', now part of every global architect's vocabulary, has transformed the spectacular into the ordinary.

Adams (2008) suggests that, as the majority of transnational companies are American, so are the global architectural firms which serve their interests: 'North American cash has brought North American architecture'. According to Adams, of the 50 major architectural firms with global business, 22 are from the US, 15 from the UK, and others from Australia and Ireland. Eighty percent are Anglophone. Their work sets the framework for global competition and 'clients are sold a uniform global brand' (Adams, 2008).

These architectural megapractices, with AEDAS, for example, employing 800 creative team members spread around six countries or SOM with another 800 producing standard architectural designs, that often have little reference to local cultures, have been responsible for creating the spread of 'a commercial brand of postmodernism' (McNeill, 2009) which has been used to brand particular buildings and cities.² The linking of some of these firms (and brands, such as Foster & Partners) to venture capital groups, and the tendency to sign up more deals in a specific geographical area to gain economies of scale and time (ibid.: 31), has contributed to a reduction in diversity and, for outside observers, created an impression of homogenisation.

Particularly associated with the notion of 'global architecture' is the rise of the phenomenon of the 'starchitect' from the 1990s, whose signature building marks him (or occasionally, her) as a celebrity. The assumption that a spectacular building can transform the economic fortunes of a city – the so-called 'Bilbao effect', following

² These figures are taken from sources published prior to the 2008 and ongoing global credit crisis which has caused many of these firms to lay off personnel.

the building of Frank Gehry's 'iconic' museum in that city – has created a demand, in some cases, for exactly the same design to be used in other cities. Designs become stereotyped, 'trophies' to be collected by particular cities. According to McNeill, what is not recognised is that many other factors, coincidental to the building of Gehry's museum, were also responsible for the improvement of Bilbao's economic fortunes (McNeill, 2009: 81). In many cases, the new concentration of wealth caused by the maldistribution of income worldwide, with the gains in economic growth going predominantly to rich countries, has been behind the commissioning of work from 'starchitects'.

In adopting the 'celebrity architect' in an attempt to transform the fortunes of declining cities, what is also overlooked is the specific cultural context, central to the functioning of American capitalism in which this concept developed, namely the privileging of the individual at the expense of the social. This is not a set of values currently widespread outside the USA, but the practice may indeed encourage such values to develop in the public sphere. 'Visual homogenisation' may also be encouraged by the rapidly increasing number of global architectural competitions and prizes involving committees travelling around the world, using a given set of aesthetic criteria to evaluate buildings which often have little or no connection to the local. The outcome can often be a case of 'the monotony of the exceptional.'

11. Globalisation or Delocalisation?

The decision of firms to 'go global' requires a delocalisation of both representational architecture and the symbolic nature of its design and also of the company name. Over a century ago, photography mogul George Eastman sought a company name that was short, easily written and remembered, and pronounceable in most world languages. The name he came up with was 'Kodak'. Employing a similar logic, today's corporations and architectural firms consciously disconnect themselves from their local or national architectural and geographical origins or from the names of their founders, and replace names with 'placeless' acronyms which are perceived as 'globally mobile' (McNeill 2009: 28) – AEDAS, KPF, SOM, HOK, IKEA; and most recently, AVIVA (previously Norwich Union, 'the world's fifth largest insurance company'). To cite the words of one of the company's representatives: 'as a global company we need a name that will be recognised anywhere' (Hughes, 2009).

'Placeless' names, like 'placeless' architectural styles, may delocalise in one place, yet in contemporary China, as I discuss below, they attempt to confer a spurious 'global' identity on some architectural project elsewhere. The essence and assumed logic of this is in the simultaneous creation of both difference and similarity: temporal difference, in relation to distinguishing itself from what was there before; geocultural difference, in

relation to what continues to exist within the relevant cultural and spatial region of the nation-state. Similarity, on the other hand, is constructed in relation to the architecture of other cities, irrespective of location, but which are part of the reference group to which the particular building patron, or occupant institution, wishes to belong. As detailed earlier in the paper, this simultaneous establishment of both similarity and difference attempts to claim the necessary attribute of equivalence. In other words, the process of 'being' or 'becoming global' is no different from the familiar old story of 'being' or 'becoming modern'. The act, and the outcome that results, is entirely relational, that is, we are 'global' or 'modern' but only in comparison to someone or somewhere else.

12. Where is homogenisation in cities?

If homogenisation of representations means bringing similarity to, and perhaps between (especially) 'third world' cities worldwide then in one sense this might be acceptable. Policies contributing to neo-liberal globalisation grossly exacerbate uneven urban development, not only between rich countries and poor countries but also between rich and poor populations in cities worldwide. Outsourcing employment from rich to poor countries depends on these gross disparities. The one accepted conclusion about 'global cities' that two decades of research and publications has shown us concerns the massive economic, social and spatial polarisation between the rich and poor, both locationally in terms of their place in the city and materially, in their differential access to space, shelter and services (water, electricity, schools, markets, etc.). Homogenisation in this case is in the similarities of contrasts in the city, with iconic spectacles, luxury condos, new shopping malls for the wealthy on one hand, and gross overcrowding, homelessness and squatter settlements for the poor on the other.

13. What are the impacts of homogenisation on the public sphere? A view from Beijing

As I suggested at the start of this paper, one argument supporting the 'architectural homogenisation' thesis concerns not just what is added to the city but also what is taken away, including the disappearance or neglect of culturally different lifestyles and the spaces and built environments that support them. In the long term, it is suggested that this has led to the loss of cultural identity and with this, a social and psychic shift to more 'modern' subjectivities and identities.

The misconceptions of such generalisations are best brought out by specific case studies which provide some insight into contemporary processes of identity construction. According to Xuefei Ren's empirical studies of transnational architectural production in China (2007), the new 'transnational architecture' introduced by prominent international architects (Rem Koolhaas, Norman Foster, Herzog/de Meuron, Paul Andreu and

others) in recent years into Beijing has been subject to different interpretations in the public sphere. Dependent on the commissioning agent concerned, the results are invested with different meanings. For the local developers, avant-garde designs become a branding tool in order that they can market their products more successfully. For city officials and administrators, avant garde design policies have been used to advance their political careers. For the Communist authoritarian state itself, the ultra modern, very deliberate 'non Chinese' modernist design functions to symbolise the arrival of 'modern China' on the world stage. In a neat contradictory inversion, therefore, 'being global' (whatever this means) is used to promote and enhance a nationalistic agenda. As 'space is consumed globally by a worldwide audience of spectators watching images circulating in global television networks' (as with the Olympic Games) 'means that it is constantly subject to multiple, and often contradictory interpretations, whether by local and translocal actors'. (Ren, 2007: xi–xii). To be seen as 'modern', foreign and futuristic, Chinese architects have adopted a style of the 'severest minimalism', i.e. without any decoration or 'featuring' whatsoever. For a younger generation of Chinese professionals, keen to display their rising status and anti-traditional stance, expressly non-Chinese cultural symbols are the key (Ren, 2007: 121–40).

Similar interpretations have been offered in earlier times. Over the last fifty years, in different historical and geographical circumstances (Brasilia, Jakarta, Chandigarh, Tripoli) reformist (as well as colonial) governments and political leaders have used so-called Modernist or International Style architecture in various ways (Holston, 1989; Kusno, 2000; Prakash, 2002; Fuller, 2006; Ray, 2010). In all cases, however, what needs to be recognised is that architectural style, in itself, has no intrinsic meaning except in relation to the discourses that accompany it.

Breidenbach and Zukrigl (1999) have suggested that societies are becoming different in more uniform ways. This could well be an accurate observation if made in relation to the increasing adoption worldwide of 'heritage' policies. What are seen by local officials as historic and culturally significant vernacular buildings, or even entire urban enclaves embodying collective social memories, are refurbished or even rebuilt with the specific objective of marking them off from other places. Yet as all histories are different, are the differences manifest in similar ways?

Conclusion

If it is accepted that there is an increasing degree of 'homogenisation of representations' in the architecture and urban spaces of cities worldwide (and I have argued that this cannot be taken for granted) and if action has to be taken to modify this, it must lie in the field of politics: for governments, institutions, and publics to resist the persistent pressure from (especially) non-local corporate power; for architectural schools to rethink curricula and

put the needs of society and values of economic and social equity at the centre of the curriculum, accepting that architecture is not just an art or technical object, but also a social object. Continuing present trends, encouraging high-energy, unsustainable buildings and glass-walled skyscrapers on air-cooled beaches, is a road to disaster.

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The Anxiety Concerning Cultural Homogenisation

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When I went back to Buenos Aires in 2000, for the first time after living there for a year in 1993–4, my wife Viviana and I were horrified to see MacDonald's and Burger King on Avenida Santa Fé. One of the most lovely things about Buenos Aires is the cafés, the *café con leche* and *medialunas de grasa*; to see them ceding space to these ugly imports produced a visceral reaction. I later noticed that these international – that is to say U.S. – fast food outlets served espresso coffee in small plastic cups. One could also get it 'cortado' with a little bit of milk which is a common way to drink it there. If the homogenisation into an international bland style produces horror, is a cortado in a plastic cup enough cultural difference to assuage the reaction? How much difference is enough? What sort of difference? Is cultural homogenisation really taking place if it makes some adaptation to local conditions? Or is it the blandness and ugliness that is the problem? Would we be horrified if homogenisation reproduced the style of the lovely old streets of Prague?

The charge of cultural homogenisation has been used to criticise and resist the phenomenon which it names, the phenomenon of the imposition of cultural norms and practices by stronger social actors on the weaker – a phenomenon which, at least in the eyes of its critics, pertains to many areas of politics, economics, art and material culture. Thus, in the background paper to the current workshop Modjtaba Sadria points out that in previous discussions 'a key issue... was related to the processes of homogenisation of representations. During the discussions it became clear that if such processes do exist, and to the extent that they exist, they become a limitation – even a denial – of pluralism in general and the plurality of modernities in particular'. The charge of cultural homogenisation – I will explain why I prefer this term to speaking of 'representations' below – is thus brought forth in the name of a fear or an anxiety for the loss of cultural diversity or, as is often said, *genuine* cultural diversity, which means a cultural diversity that matters to the speaker. In addressing the question of whether such processes of homogenisation do indeed exist, others have pointed out, in either a hopeful or resigned mood depending on their own standpoint, that the supposed homogenisation never actually takes place: there is always adaptation to local conditions, social movements that resist, and the *in principle* fact that a reproduction never reproduces an original exactly (and what is an original anyway? is it not itself formed through interaction with prior

influences?). Thus, every actual phenomenon of cultural transmission seems to involve an interplay of homogeneity and heterogeneity, an interplay that can be described by various social scientific methods and is visible to the naked eye. The remaining difficulty, however, is that the critical function of the concept of homogenisation is thereby exhausted and that evaluation of social processes and trends succumbs to straightforward description.

I would like to suggest that cultural homogenisation is not a descriptive concept either in the way that it is used by critics of the process or in the way that it relates to the social phenomena to which it is pertinent. It is a second-order concept, in the sense that it refers not to the description of social reality but to the categories through which we describe social reality. If it is used simply as a descriptive concept it functions in an entirely different way than as it is used in the critical discourse from which it emerged. Cultural homogenisation is a *critical* concept in the sense that it gets its meaning from defining and describing a deep-rooted *tendency* which, though threatening, is not total. Not only is it not total, but the deployment of the critical concept is a social action that aims at making it even less total. As a critical concept, it is designed to indicate and illuminate *something lacking* in the current social framework. That lack is the lack of a sufficiently strong tendency toward cultural diversity due precisely to the correlative tendency toward homogenisation. As a critical concept, its purpose is not description of a state of affairs but an intervention into the way in which we think about that state of affairs in order to open up possibilities for future action that would not otherwise be apparent. More exactly, a critical concept allows one to draw the limits of applicability of homogenisation and therefore to open up other possibilities. Thus, I would agree with the suggestion behind the workshop that homogenisation is a problem and that a more adequate social framework would in some way incorporate heterogeneity. But, note that cultural homogenisation is one critical concept; there is no reason to believe that it is the only one; it would require combination with other critical concepts to formulate a critical theory fully adequate to contemporary society; it is here that other concepts such as the culture industry, colonialism, Euro-centrism, class exploitation, and dispossession that have been deployed in critical social theory would fit in. My present contribution to this debate will not be to justify the concept of cultural homogenisation as a critical concept as such, nor to address what sort of cultural diversity is sufficiently plural or genuine, but to explain why the anxiety concerning cultural homogenisation, an anxiety that gives rise to the critical concept, is an unavoidable problem in modern societies and thereby, I hope, to explain the legitimacy of some such critical concept and its relevance to issues of social inequality and power. To do so, I need to touch lightly upon a number of issues that are eminently debatable on their own terms. I will attempt this with ten-league boots, as it were, striding over the many specific debates in an attempt to establish a larger perspective on the anxiety itself.

The Spirit of Modernity and Material Culture

The term and concept of modernity refers to many phenomena depending on the disciplines and contexts in which it is used. European modernity arose out of a complex of historical changes in which we can perhaps single out three which are significant for contemporary thinking about the anxiety concerning cultural homogenisation: the development of modern science, with its intrinsic relation to technology, that occurred in the scientific revolution of the 17th century; the rise of the modern state, with its standardisation of language and administration, which took place unevenly over a long period; and the differentiation of the spheres of art, science, economics and politics into separate compartments which is inseparable from the process of secularisation. All of these are related in complex ways to the rise of capitalism, though I will address this aspect of the problem separately below.¹ Insofar as in pre-modern, traditional societies a socially dominant religion tied activities in these spheres to an over-reaching concept of the good and the sacred, secularisation allows the separated spheres to follow intrinsic logics.

It may well be doubted whether there is a single concept of modernity that would subsume these phenomena, let alone those other elements of art, politics and philosophy that might be added. Nevertheless, later European thinkers have noted similar components in them that are the basis for a specific concept of modernity essentially tied to rationality. Max Weber is a crucial figure in this regard not only since both his sociology of modern Europe and his comparative sociology of world religions depend upon identifying such a concept of reason but because it is exemplary of more widespread ideas about modernity in European culture and thought – ideas which have also had significant impact around the world. Weber identified a conception of reason tied to both technological science and bureaucratic social organisation whose formalism negated any conception of substantive reason inherent in a religiously legitimated over-reaching concept of the good and the sacred. He stated that ‘in principle a system of rationally debatable “reasons” stands behind every act of bureaucratic administration, that is, either subsumption under norms or a weighing of ends and means’.² If we can connect modernity to a form of reason as ‘subsumption’, as Max Weber suggested, a form that encompasses both its scientific-technological origin and bureaucratic social organisation, and if we suspect that there exists a pressure toward adopting this form in societies other than where it first developed, then

¹ Thus, a key underlying issue of this paper is the relation between modernity and capitalism, an issue that has been debated in classical social theory between Marxists and Weberians. It should be noted, however, that both sides in the debate acknowledge a relation between the two terms, so that it is not a simple either/or that is at issue but questions of causation and predominance. I will not take a position on this debate in this paper but rather treat modernity and capitalism as two distinct but inter-related phenomena. This would ground a position beyond this classic debate if its implications were to be sufficiently worked out.

² Max Weber (1976) *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, trans. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills. New York: Oxford University Press, p. 220.

we must address the question of whether this pressure is a universal one or whether it is in essence the pressure of one cultural form upon others. Max Weber articulated what was once a common view, in Europe at least, when he stated that ‘a product of modern European civilisation, studying any problem of universal history, is bound to ask himself to what combination of circumstances the fact should be attributed that in Western civilisation, and in Western civilisation only, cultural phenomena have appeared which (as we like to think) lie in a line of development having universal significance and value’.³ A lot depends now on whether there are really any grounds for thinking such a thing. One of the keys to unlocking this issue is the anxiety concerning cultural homogenisation.

From its beginning, modernity has generated an anxiety about the homogenisation of culture. Since modernity is instituted through a claim to knowledge based on scientific rationality that is essentially tied to technological innovation, it is haunted by the possibility of homogenisation. Modernity is a re-naissance, a new birth or beginning, which articulates itself against a notion of the past that is to be overcome. The past is the ground of culture, usually articulated in a religion that is necessarily diverse since it has been developed through traditional practices that diverge and interact in various places on the earth. Culture always implies cultures in the plural, whereas scientific rationality points toward a single truth. Thus, the anxiety about cultural homogenisation is deep-rooted. Modernity began in Europe and the anxiety concerning cultural homogenisation first haunted the diverse European cultures and nations, but modernity has since become global and the anxiety has, likewise, become global.

A living culture comprises both ongoing practices and representations of those practices. Indeed, a living culture consists in the interplay between practices and representations. Representations are always produced and maintained by practices and practices require understanding and articulation to be continuously followed and allow innovation. When culture becomes purely representation, it has entered the museum – that is to say, the practices that sustain the representation are other than those that are represented: the living culture has receded into the past and its representations remain to be sustained and consulted by others. Thus, a purely representational, or semiotic, approach to understanding culture is insufficient. We need to understand culture as constituted by certain practical activities and as punctuated by instituting events. Husserl’s concept of *Urstiftung*, which we may translate as ‘primal founding, primal establishment, or primal instituting’, but for which I will simply use the term ‘institution’, since this English term has the useful double meaning of something that is both brought into being, or instituted, and something which persists in being and continues to provide the setting within which other

³ Max Weber (1958) *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, p. 13.

events and practices are situated.⁴ Pertinently, Husserl used this term for the ancient institution of geometry that was taken over by Descartes and also in relation to Descartes himself as the primal founder, or institutor (*Urstifter*), of 'the modern idea of objectivistic rationalism'.⁵ When a new practice, such as scientific-technological modernity, is instituted, time is divided into a before and an after. After the institution of modernity all other human events and processes are related to, formed and reformed by, this institution. To understand the significance of such institutions, a new form of questioning is required, a questioning that inquires backward from what has been established to the instituting formation itself. While this is a historical inquiry, it is not so in the usual sense. It is an inquiring backward into what must have happened in order for the institution that we now experience to have come into being, what Husserl called 'the *a priori* structure contained in this historicity'.⁶

The institution of modernity reconfigures traditional cultures by turning them into representations cut off from a sustaining cultural practice. It provides the setting from in which they are given meaning. Museum culture can be adequately preserved within scientific-technological modernity insofar as that modernity preserves the representations of the traditions and cultures against which its new institution posits itself. But can a living culture, an interplay of representation and practice, survive the institution of modernity? Modernity itself produces such an interplay and thus itself institutes a living culture of modernity. But we are again entitled to ask whether this is a single, and in that sense homogeneous, living culture, whether all other cultures are not relegated to their representation within modernity as remnants of the various traditions that once were dispersed across the world. Do they become merely represented, where modernity monopolises the power of representation? The anxiety concerning cultural homogenisation would not be assuaged either by museum remnants or by a culture of modernity that itself contains the danger of homogenisation. It points us toward the problem of time insofar as a new epoch came into being with the institution of modernity.

Rational Uniformity and the Metaphor of the City

At the beginning of scientific-technological modernity, René Descartes articulated *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*, whose first rule stated that 'the purpose of our studies

⁴ 'Starting from what we know, from our geometry rather than the older handed-down forms (such as Euclidean geometry), there is an inquiry back (*Rückfrage*) into the submerged original beginnings of geometry as they necessarily must have been in their "primally establishing" (*urstiftende*) function.' Edmund Husserl (1970) 'The Origin of Geometry', Appendix VI to *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. David Carr, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, p. 354; Edmund Husserl (1976), *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaft und Transzendente Phänomenologie, Husserliana VI*. Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, Beilage III, p. 366.

⁵ *Ibid*, section I 6 title (in both editions).

⁶ 'The Origin of Geometry,' p. 369.

should be the direction of the mind toward the production of firm and true judgments concerning all things which come to its attention'.⁷ Science in this form was not merely knowledge of many things but systematic knowledge resting on a firm foundation that was to be guaranteed by a correct method and a cumulative procedure that required a cutting-off from previous attempts at knowing. Francis Bacon agreed, arguing that 'it is idle to expect any great advancement in science from the superinducing and engrafting of new things upon old. We must begin anew from the very foundations, unless we would revolve forever in a circle with mean and contemptible progress'.⁸ In the *Discourse on Method*, Descartes reflected on this new methodical rationality in terms that illustrate its wide applicability. He noted that works by one person are 'more beautiful and better planned than those remodelled by several persons using ancient walls that had originally been built for quite other purposes', that 'peoples who were once half savage, and who became civilised by a gradual process and invented their laws one by one as the harmfulness of crimes and quarrels forced them to outlaw them, would be less well governed than those who have followed the constitutions of some prudent legislator', and attributed the flourishing of Sparta to the fact that its laws were 'designed by a single legislator, and so all tended to the same end'.⁹ Similarly, he judged that those great cities that have grown from ancient towns and hamlets 'are badly arranged compared to one of the symmetrical metropolitan districts which a city planner has laid out on an open plain according to his own designs'.¹⁰ The core metaphor by which Descartes, and many others also, understood the institution of modern rationality was that of children growing into adults.¹¹ In a reversal of previous usage, in which the 'ancients' referred to those who lived a long time ago and were assumed to be wiser because of their antiquity, Bacon thought that 'the old age of the world is to be accounted the true antiquity; and this is the attribute of our own times, not of that earlier age of the world in which the ancients lived; and which, though in respect of us it was the elder, yet in respect of the world it was the younger'.¹² Thus, the distinctiveness of the modern conception of reason was hidden, since it was masked as the dawn of reason as such, comparable to understanding the passage from child to adult as the onset of reason. The new science was seen by its proponents not as a new model of science and reason, but as the awakening of reason from irrational tradition. Tradition could, therefore, have very little to recommend it. The new scientific paradigm did not remain a partial enterprise but became the model of

⁷ René Descartes (1961) *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*, trans. Laurence J. Lafleur. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, p. 3.

⁸ Francis Bacon (1939) *Novum Organum*, included in Edwin A. Burt, (ed.), *The English Philosophers from Bacon to Mill*. New York: Random House, paragraph xxxi, p. 33.

⁹ René Descartes (1956) *Discourse on Method*, trans. Laurence J. Lafleur. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, p. 8.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

¹² Francis Bacon (1939) *Novum Organum*, op. cit., paragraph lxxxiv, p. 58.

reason throughout modernity. It became the leading component within a new form of life extending to social organisation, city planning, legislation and beyond. A form of life which, after the initial phase of enthusiastic modernisation abated, could be seen to contain an anxiety concerning cultural homogenisation due to cutting off the roots of tradition and living cultural diversity. Is the only alternative that between the living culture of modernity and a nostalgia for pre-modern remnants?

It is for this reason that in our own time we are pressed to understand the possibilities for cultural diversity. We cannot shake this anxiety from ourselves. It is rooted in the assumptions with which we moderns reason and live. But we can strive to turn the anxiety into thinking. Such thinking will not only need to embrace cultural diversity, but will also need to reform the concept of reason itself. This thinking has been underway for some time. It may be indicated by the turn from science to language as the central issue of philosophy, since language is contemporaneous with the human race and inherently resists being put on a new rational foundation. Ludwig Wittgenstein put this attraction of language to contemporary philosophy into the metaphor of a city. 'Our language can be seen as an ancient city: a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses, and of houses with additions from various periods; and this surrounded by a multitude of new boroughs with straight regular streets and uniform houses'.¹³ We have come to suspect that the straight streets, regular houses, and suburban sprawl that stand for modern rationality is a dead-end street, a street that needs to be revived by living culture in its diversity. It is with this background in mind that I want to pose in contemporary terms the anxiety concerning cultural homogenisation.

The Anxiety Concerning Cultural Homogenisation

Modernity can be understood as a conception of reason and as the predominance of that conception of reason throughout human life. It is by following this thread of reason linked to science and technology but universalised beyond it, that we can find our way through the many meanings of modernity and critiques of it. It is this conception of reason that has produced the anxiety concerning cultural homogenisation.

The anxiety about homogenisation never assumed that absolutely all differences would or could be abolished. There remain significant cultural differences around the relationship between individual and community in Protestant versus Catholic versions of European modernity, for example. Actual cultural identity between all human beings and groups is no doubt impossible. The anxiety originates from the perception of cultural forces tending toward homogenisation such that aspects of one's cultural identity to which some importance is attached are feared to have no place in the future. It is the tendency

¹³ Ludwig Wittgenstein (1968) *Philosophical Investigations, Third Edition*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe. New York: MacMillan Publishing, number 18, p. 8e.

toward homogenisation, not actual homogenisation itself, which produces the anxiety, since one can always point to some existing cultural difference. Moreover, the tendency toward homogenisation would not be of great concern if it were thought to be a marginal, remediable or temporary phenomenon. It is thus significant that the homogenising tendency in modernity is based on its conception of reason, not, say, on the arbitrary dictates of a given king. A third aspect of the anxiety can be added to its temporal dimension and its deep-rooted character: that which arouses the anxiety is central to the human being as it is conceived within a culture. Reason is an aspect of humanity for most humans everywhere, but for Europeans that pervasive significance of the definition of humans as 'rational animals' made famous by Aristotle is central to the notion of Europe itself. For cultures centrally committed to rationality as the human essence, a homogenising tendency based in reason is a source of deep anxiety since it involves two aspects of what one understands oneself to be: a rational animal like all other humans in this rationality and a human being of a particular sort due to participation in a given culture that may be disappearing. Reason, central to the human essence, is feared to be the agent of a homogenisation that would deprive humans of their particular way of being humans.

In emphasis at least, this anxiety manifested itself in Europe as a temporal relation, a relation to the traditional beliefs and practices of one's past that situated it as different from another culture. However, it should be recalled that the construction of Europe as an identity is not independent of the homogenising tendency of modernity.¹⁴ The centres of metropolitan life most committed to modern rationality exerted a pressure on the more traditional rural areas so that the pressure to modernise was not only temporal in relation to one's past but also spatial in invoking a relation between powerful centres and marginal areas. These temporal and spatial relations were often compacted insofar as the rural areas undergoing modernisation were seen as 'catching up' with the centres. Now that the phenomenon of modernity has spread from its European origin to influence every culture in the world, the pressure towards modernisation is often seen as a pressure towards Europeanisation – more often called Americanisation – that comes from 'outside'. To the extent that the pressure to modernisation is seen as coming from outside, the protection of cultural identity often involves a retreat from outside to inside, a phenomenon that occludes, or even expels, the pressures toward homogenisation and modernisation 'inside'. Both temporal and spatial relations are constitutive of any culture subject to modernisation, though one or another may dominate depending on the degree of commonality experienced by the newly modernising 'traditional' culture with the already modernised centres.

¹⁴ Notice that I am not saying that the identity of Europe was constructed by modernity. The prior elements of the Greek rational animal and the self-definition of Christendom as a relation to God provided an earlier basis of unity. But with the rise of modernity these were transformed into a unity based on scientific-technological reason, so that European identity in the modern period is imbricated with, or 'not independent of', the homogenising tendency of modernity.

One cannot write at the present time without an intense awareness of one dominant contemporary form in which the retreat to 'inside' tradition against modernity manifests itself. The anxiety about cultural homogenisation has become for some a panic about modernity which has led to the rise of Fundamentalism in all major religious traditions. Fundamentalism consists of the attempt to escape the anxiety of the loss of identity by turning back the clock prior to the arrival of modernity and believing in the letter and detail of revealed truth. The deep problem here is that an attempt to turn the clock back to tradition is not the same as tradition itself, which evolved and mutated in its own time. The panic for escape from modernity freezes, or attempts to freeze, an invented tradition. It does not discover tradition itself. It wants to reject modernity root and branch, especially the rise of individual conscience and secularism, at the same time that it uses the results of modernity – mass media, the internet, weaponry, state and international finance – to bolster its invented base-line in the past. Such Fundamentalism is locked in a death-dance with unrepentant modernity, a modernity that attempts to expel its own anxiety in a mirror-form to that of Fundamentalism. They both seek without hope of arrival an end to anxiety and, for this very reason, do not face up to the question of our time, but intensify it in the moment that they seek to escape it.

It is not enough to point to the particular European origins of this conception of rationality to establish that it is culture-bound and non-universal. Every phenomenon in human existence comes into being at some historical situation under particular, and probably unique, circumstances. Unless we were to deny any universality at all to any historical human experience – a position that I will not address now, but one that is internally incoherent – we have to accept that such universality does not emerge all at once, simultaneously everywhere. In fact, the emergence of universally human possibilities from determinate particular circumstances provides a ground for an internal critique of the claim to universality. To be truly universal it must shed the merely contingent features of its historical emergence. Thus, a process of self-criticism is initiated that drives modernity – understood as a claim to universality rooted in reason – forward. This dynamism can be deeply unsettling and produces an internal tendency to anxiety which is not identical to that experienced by those who experience modernity as an external imposition, but which has some of the same roots.

The Industry of Material Culture

I hope to have said enough to establish that there is an anxiety concerning cultural homogenisation due to the conception of reason as (quickly stated) 'subsumption under a rule' that characterises modernity. But it is not clear why this conception of reason has grown beyond its original boundaries, first unifying Europe under the sway of its most modern, urban, industrial areas and then transforming the rest of the world in its image. The planetary civilisation currently emerging has developed from this conception

of reason. Nevertheless, the characteristics of modernity already elaborated do not, in my view, account for the *spread* of modernity. It is one thing to trace a phenomenon back to its emergence in order to clarify its features and surrounding concepts (as I have done thus far); it is another to address the question of why a phenomenon has come to predominate, not only where it arose, but in other societies which did not give rise to it. It is here that the question of capitalism, which I postponed at the outset, can be seen to be the decisive factor. Capitalism has been the vehicle whereby the features of modernity have been exported and imported such that the anxiety concerning cultural homogenisation has become global.

Capitalism is an economic system that, at its origin and in its development, is a de-traditionalising force since it progressively reorganises ever-widening domains of human life through relations of exchange. Capitalism begins as a social system, rather than a circumscribed tendency, when labour becomes an exchange value. 'For the conversion of his money into capital, therefore, the owner of money must meet in the market with the free labourer'.¹⁵ Labour is thereby torn from all relations of personal dependency and community ownership in which it was embedded and organised through the labour market by payment in wages. The surplus value (profit) that is accumulated through industrial capitalism leads to huge concentrations of wealth and power that, in our own day, characterise global corporations more powerful than many nation-states. The expansionary and anti-traditional nature of these two basic characteristics of capitalism as an economic system – constantly changing the form of production to increase the concentration of wealth – provide the motive power through which the characteristics of modernity have become planetary. Without asserting any priority or causality between capitalism and modernity, certain symbiotic features of them should be noted: 1] a reliance on 'rationality,' that is to say a certain concept of rationality, oriented to efficiency and causal explanation that is intrinsically individualistic, or atomistic, and destructive of community property; 2] correlative concepts of tradition and nature as 'irrational,' as mere existence without internally articulated reason or value (without 'final cause,' or goal, in Aristotelian terms); and, 3] an institution of new time against the past; the past denigrated in favour of constant innovation; the future as the locus of orientation and expected satisfaction. These internally related characteristics shared by modernity and capitalism have allowed their synthesis a distinctive power in undermining other social orders around the globe in a similar manner to which this was previously achieved in Europe.¹⁶

¹⁵ Karl Marx (1970) *Capital, Vol 1*, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling. London: Lawrence and Wishart, p. 169.

¹⁶ I am actually skipping over an important factor here, that Marx called 'primitive accumulation,' in order to focus on the expansion and export of capitalism. But both prior to and coincident with such export, it was necessary to conquer lands who were outside the sphere of nascent capitalism and appropriate pre-existing wealth (i.e. plunder) to remove the possibility of such areas remaining independent. Marx gives the example of the 'clearing of estates' in Scotland. 'The spoliation of the church's property, the fraudulent alienation of the State domains, the robbery of the common lands, the usurpation of feudal

As an economic system, capitalism was in the first place oriented toward the reorganisation and development of directly economic goods, but it has expanded over approximately the last hundred years to the realm of culture, which it has reorganised and rationalised on the same principles. We may distinguish three stages of culture under capitalism.¹⁷ The culture of early industrial capitalism was oriented around the class relations of the workplace which yielded a *class culture* of the working class on the one hand and the capitalist class on the other (as well as surviving remnants of aristocratic and peasant culture). They performed different activities in different places while consuming different goods for different purposes. At the beginning of the 20th century capitalist enterprises began to control not only production processes but also the market in which they were sold. Increasing production of consumer goods required a sufficient number of buyers. To achieve this, workers had to be turned away from their traditional class-based activities and entertainments toward those that depended upon manufactured consumer goods. Advertising was a key element of this process. Mass produced culture, the *culture industry*, operates through differential access to the same sphere of goods. It thus levels class culture and constructs an enclosed sphere of social identities through homogeneous cultural expressions produced as commodities. Since the 1960s there has been a further change due to the influence of mass media, the explosion of new technologies, the global reach of cultural industries, etc. which has often been called *postmodern culture* or the information age. Leaving behind the homogenisation produced by the culture industry in polemical rejection of class culture, the process of postmodern culture is the production of *staged difference*: social identities, which are marked by their difference from other identities, are simulated through the circulation of images produced as commodities by global cultural industries.

Obviously, this description of the expansion of capitalism could be expanded considerably, but the upshot in this context is that it is the expansive dynamic built into capitalism through which modernity, as I described it above, became a global phenomenon. Global capitalism, as an economy embracing both material production and culture, uproots all remaining traditional elements and subjects them to the industry of material culture. However, the global culture industry guarantees that the process of cultural homogenisation is now overlaid by the staging of cultural differences.

and clan property, and its transformation into modern private property under circumstances of reckless terrorism, were just so many idyllic methods of primitive accumulation. They conquered the field for capitalistic agriculture, made the soil part and parcel of capital, and created for the town industries the necessary supply of a "free" and outlawed proletariat'. *Karl Marx, Capital, Vol 1*, pp. 732–3. While those dispossessed in this process dream of their land becoming London or New York, in reality it becomes like that of Highland Scotland.

¹⁷ This description is derived from Ian H. Angus and Sut Jhally (1989) 'Introduction' to Ian H. Angus and Sut Jhally, (eds.), *Cultural Politics in Contemporary America*. New York: Routledge, pp. 1–16.

An Allusion to Issues of Multiculturalism and Secularisation

The anxiety concerning homogenisation is a pervasive feature of our world. It has now been complicated by being overlaid by an anxiety that cultural difference is being staged and does not correspond to the 'authentic' aspirations of a living culture – however difficult it might be to define such authentic features. Many features of recent political and cultural life can be seen as responses to this complex anxiety. I would like to briefly mention two phenomena: multiculturalism, both in Canada and elsewhere, and secularisation. In this context I can only allude to these phenomena, each of which has been subject to extensive discussion. But my purpose is not to intervene in these debates here but rather to clarify a conceptual issue about the contemporary significance of cultural diversity.

Due to the large number of distinct cultural and national groups that have recently immigrated to Canada, and various other features of Canadian political culture, a rich discourse concerning multiculturalism has emerged which, among other things, produced the Federal Multiculturalism Act (1988).¹⁸ Without addressing the many specific issues that this discourse incorporates, it is possible to suggest that there are currently two dominant positions: one that claims that multiculturalism, though perhaps insufficient and in need of criticism and improvement, is an advance over the idea of a nation-state that assumes or enforces cultural and/or religious homogeneity among its population. Another claims that such cultural diversity is in reality a sham, that it functions by arraying 'ethnic' identities to order and domesticate them with reference to a supposedly non-ethnic, naturalised, identity that is Canadian without qualification. As I reported elsewhere, I recall someone saying to general assent at a conference organised by the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies in 1984 that 'The government's idea of multiculturalism is like Disneyland'.¹⁹ Canadian multiculturalism would be the heir of the ethnic-racial hierarchy deployed by the British Empire in this case. This second position has the advantage of pointing out that elimination of cultural difference is not the only mode through which a homogenising culture can work. Cultural homogenisation is also at work, more insidiously but also more pervasively, if certain cultural differences are seen as deviations from an assumed norm. In this case, diversity is domesticated by being confined to a surface phenomenon incapable of addressing the deeper tendency towards homogenisation. This position has become quite influential on the international scene also through Slavoj Žižek's claim that 'the "real" universality of today's globalisation through the global market involves its own hegemonic fiction (or even ideal) of multiculturalist tolerance, respect and protection of

¹⁸ My discussion is over-simplifying in one crucial respect. I do not distinguish here between multiculturalism understood as state policy, social reality or normative ideal. If one makes these distinctions then the two positions remain but may be complicated considerably. One may claim, for example, that multicultural policy does participate in this colonial heritage, whereas the social reality is not enclosed within it, and normative ideal may be taken beyond it.

¹⁹ Ian Angus (2002) 'Cultural Plurality and Democracy', *International Journal of Canadian Studies*, No. 25, Spring, p. 78.

human rights, democracy, and so forth; it involves its own pseudo-Hegelian “concrete universality” of a world order whose universal features of the world market, human rights and democracy, allow each specific “life-style” to flourish in its particularity’.²⁰ There is no doubt that this subsumption of culture, and the diversity of culture, beneath a unifying logic of state or economy is one meaning of recent multiculturalism. It remains, however, to ask whether the staging of culture is the whole of multiculturalism. The anxiety concerning cultural homogenisation and the staging of difference would have us ask: what would it mean to be multicultural *all the way down*?

I want to make a related remark on secularisation. Secularisation is widely thought to be an inevitable consequence of the form of rationality inherent in European modernity. Secularisation involves the death of God and thus empties, or leaves undetermined, the transcendent position in relation to which all immanent positions can be ordered and in which they culminate. Loss of transcendence leaves the field of identity and difference within which a culture defines itself in relation to another culture to be determined within the field of culture itself. The diversity of human cultures is no longer seen as a set of variations possible in relation to a human universality defined by its relation to the sacred source. After secularisation, cultures are understood to gain their identity in relation to cultures from which they are different and obtain this difference through the assertion of their identity. The tendency toward cultural homogenisation leads such differences in the direction of greater superficiality or separation from the human essence as such. The search for identity within a field of difference that is cut off from universality necessarily threatens to lead toward the phenomenon of Fundamentalism mentioned earlier. Although Fundamentalism is usually thought of as a religious phenomenon, it can now be seen to be a much deeper tendency rooted in modernity itself. If Fundamentalism loses the sense that the offending other humans are genuinely human also, it partakes in a cultural field that is essentially secular. Similarly, to the extent that apparently secular thinkers criticise the absolutisation of cultural differences, they appeal beyond the cultural field itself to a human universality. Such human universality may not be thought in religious terms, but it nevertheless occupies the same space as religious transcendence in relegating cultural particularities to species of the genus. A secular cultural field thus necessarily leads to a phenomenon that Sigmund Freud identified as ‘narcissism in respect of minor differences’ in which ‘it is always possible to unite considerable numbers of men in love toward one another, so long as there are still some remaining as objects for aggressive manifestations’.²¹ Insofar as we now occupy a secular cultural field, we are driven to ask

²⁰ Slavoj Žižek (1997) ‘Multiculturalism, Or the Cultural Logic of Multinational Capitalism’, *New Left Review*, N. 225, September-October. Downloaded on 2 February 2009 from <http://www.newleftreview.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/?page=article&view=1919>.

²¹ Sigmund Freud (1994) *Civilisation and Its Discontents*, trans. Joan Riviere. New York: Dover, p. 42. It is remarkable that Freud saw this phenomenon as ‘a convenient and relatively harmless form of satisfaction for aggressive tendencies’. However, when he comes to remark on the service that Jews have rendered

for the ground for distinctions of identity and difference. My schematic presentations of the anxiety concerning cultural homogenisation, and the anxiety that cultural difference is staged by a still homogenising though often invisible source, have been intended to clarify the contemporary issues involved in such a classical question.

Concluding Remarks about Critical Reflexion on Difference

The initial configuration of modernity and capitalism renders traditional sources of meaning irrelevant for the modern world. This produces an anxiety concerning cultural homogenisation, and a related anxiety for the staging of cultural difference, which is the experiential source for the development of a critical conceptual vocabulary. Haunting such a vocabulary, especially in the current intellectual climate, is the difficulty of fixing a meaning for the notion of an 'authentic' cultural meaning. First, a word on the notion of being authentic: a cultural meaning is not authentic in and of itself but could be authentic, or become authentic, by being incorporated into local culture. Authenticity is then another way of saying that the cultural practice occurs in tandem with social critique and decolonisation. So a definition of authenticity as such is not needed. What is needed is an account of a critical vocabulary that can ground such a cultural practice. I will conclude by contrasting the dominant Hegelian vocabulary with a phenomenological one, not to suggest that a critical theory adequate to contemporary practice is already available, but to suggest in what direction it might be found.

Modernisation and the tendency toward cultural homogenisation, including the staging of difference, brings about a new appreciation of tradition. This observation in its turn motivates the thought that modernisation came from somewhere and was, in the final analysis, a product of tradition. Thus, it is often suggested, the opposition between modernity and tradition is really a dialectical opposition whose tensions are worked out in time. Through history, modernity and tradition are reconciled. We might call this the Hegelian concept of reflexion after its master practitioner. It contains several problems, however, which render it unsatisfactory from the viewpoint of our contemporary issues. It does not speak to the position of those pulled into modernisation as an external force, whether within Europe or beyond – those for whom the spatial dynamic predominates. To them, it suggests that while modernisation may be mitigated by elements of tradition, the path forward is nevertheless one of modernisation. Hegelian reflexion cannot but identify itself with the forward march of history and take it for granted that whatever is valuable in tradition will be preserved on the ground of modernity. The same observation may be made about those who do not occupy the commanding positions of modernisation. They are drawn into it by the power of others and are not likely to be as well reconciled to the verdict of history as those for whom modernisation is an internal imperative. In addition,

civilisation in this respect his irony becomes palpable. If such irony was possible in 1930, when this was written, it would not have been so even a few short years later.

the Hegelian synthesis does not raise sufficient questions about the form of reason in modernity itself. It overcomes this form through its own dialectical form of historical reason, to be sure, but it does not criticise this form of reason itself. It overlays a second reflexion on the first, but the first reflexion must be, and remain, as it is.

Phenomenological reflexion operates in another fashion. It does not move progressively forward over the insufficiencies of modernity but brushes backward against the grain to uncover its instituting motifs. It traces modern reason back to Galilean science in order to uncover the substitution of mathematical forms for the world of experience with which it began. In Husserl's words, 'there has never been a scientific inquiry into the way in which the life-world constantly functions as subsoil, into how its manifold prelogical validities act as grounds for the logical ones, for theoretical truths'.²² Modernity thus must be understood as involving the distinction between science and lifeworld and also their reciprocal relation, an understanding that complicates, but considerably improves, understanding of the modern concept of reason. Second, phenomenological reflexion undoes the progressive assumption in the dialectical reconciliation of modernity and tradition. Progress can be attributed to scientific knowledge but the effect of science and technology on the experienced lifeworld has cultural dimensions that produce the tendency to homogenisation and therefore cannot in itself be seen as progressive. In the flattening language of social science, culture cannot be seen as simply a dependent variable driven by scientific reason. It is thus through phenomenological reflexion that I would expect that the anxiety concerning cultural homogenisation and staged difference can be adequately addressed. I will conclude with two short remarks on how I would propose to do so.

It was expected of modern reason that it would lead to the truly human, because rational, condition through knowledge of both nature and society. However, once one has thought through the formalising abstraction at the root of modern mathematics, it can be seen that modern reason has become a formal patterning that is divorced from any goals tied to the realisation of the human essence. One is forced to re-evaluate the possibilities of ground-up reasoning about human goals apart from formal reason and enter the material reasoning characteristic of cultural formations.²³ In this sense, phenomenology parts with the project of modernity, not as formal reason, or to deny the utility of scientific-technological reason, but to embrace the material reason inherent in culture that justifies particular human arrangements and goals. Second, the phenomenological account of the

²² Edmund Husserl (1970) *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. David Carr. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, p. 124.

²³ This sentence adumbrates an argument concerning the nature of modern mathematics clarified by Jacob Klein whose consequences were not clear enough to Husserl and therefore requires a radical revision of Husserl's expectation that phenomenology could cure the crisis of the European sciences. I have explored this aspect of a contemporary phenomenology in Ian Angus (2005) 'Jacob Klein's Revision of Husserl's Crisis: A Contribution to the Transcendental History of Reification', *Philosophy Today*, Vol. 49, No. 5.

mathematisation of the lifeworld by Galilean science allows a distinction between what we have heretofore called 'tradition' and the experienced lifeworld. The practical context of the lifeworld was hidden under tradition prior to modernity because the material principle under which knowledge and action were unified produced a unified, theologically-based, purportedly universal, understanding of the world – what Max Scheler called a 'relative natural conception of the world'.²⁴ Thus, the phenomenological critique of modern reason needs to be reconciled not with tradition as such but with the practical context of the lifeworld.²⁵

Even mentioned as quickly as this, one may ask how are such shifts expected to address the anxiety concerning cultural homogenisation and staged difference. First of all, it undercuts entirely the still pervasive and corrosive assumption that modernity is the locus of reason and that all other lifeworlds are reason-poor by comparison – an assumption that is muted though not rejected by the Hegelian vocabulary. The critique of formal reason reinstates the material reason in lifeworlds. It does not do so in an exclusivist fashion, however, which is characteristic of tradition – which relies on an over-arching conception of the world. The lifeworld, on the other hand, is open to competing definitions of how it should be understood and thus promotes social debate on the good life insofar as it can be pursued in a given context. It is this debate – which is no longer traditional but neither is it modern in the sense of unalloyed devotion to formal reason – that undercuts the anxiety concerning homogenisation and staged difference. If we can be liberated of the anxiety, we can live our condition in its tragedy and possibility, as humans have always lived it, and devote ourselves to pursuing human universality from within the opening, not confinement, of our particular way of life.

²⁴ Max Scheler (1960) *Die Wissenformen und die Gesellschaft, Gesammelte Werke, Band 8*. Bern und Munchen: Francke Verlag, pp. 60–3. See also Alfred Schutz (1964) 'Equality and the Meaning-Structure of the Social World' in Arvid Brodersen (ed.), *Collected Papers*, Vol. II. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, p. 242 and Alfred Schutz and Thomas Luckmann (1974) *The Structures of the Life-World*, trans. Richard M. Zaner and H. Tristram Engelhardt, Jr. London: Heinemann, p. 8.

²⁵ This is a key argument of my 1984 book, *Technique and Enlightenment: Limits of Instrumental Reason*. Washington: Centre for Advanced Research in Phenomenology & University Press of America, especially chapter 6.

The Homogenisation of Urban Space

MODJTABA SADRIA

Political and urban social movements have used the city as an agent of social and political innovation in the search to construct an alternative social order and a different sense to construct the right to the city.

David Harvey, 'Right to the City' (2006)

This paper attempts to bring together three sets of arguments related to homogenisation and urban space. The first explores the relationship between modernisation, homogenisation and the public realm, while the second considers the modernisation of urban space in contemporary cities. The third argument looks at the dimensions of life politics that can bring about the possibility of heterogeneity.

The traps of contemporary social sciences and humanities are many when we attempt to both refine conceptual frames and confront social realities. In order to avoid at least some of these traps, I should state that although I have used in some of my work the framework of postmodernism/postcolonialism, I intend here to remain within the discussion of modernities.¹ If I am to use this approach to discuss homogenisation and resistance against it, I also need to define the very specific concept of modernity² as I intend to use it here. With all due respect to colleagues who are most opinionated on theories of modernity and modernisation, I want to clearly distinguish between the two by stating that I will be using modernity in line with the approach of late (and very early) modernist thinkers as the social recognition of human autonomy with all its potential implications for reflexivity and self-reflexivity. This departing point allows us to explore the possibilities of *modernities*, which includes an opening for re-thinking and understanding the creation of a

¹ Modjtaba Sadria (2008) 'Hegemony, Ethics and Reconciliation' in [begin italics] Pathways to Reconciliation: Between Theory and Practice [end italics]. Edited by Phillipa Rothfield, Cleo Fleming & Paul A. Komesaroff, Aldershot: Ashgate.

² My dissidence to the Weberian approach to Modernity remains intact; see Sadria (2004).

new sense of the public realm, whether conceived of as the public sphere, or as a space for living together both institutionally and psychologically. It also includes an opening for the formation and transformation of subjectivity, through which the individual and collective appropriation of real and symbolic spaces becomes possible.

In opposition to this specific definition of modernity, I use a similarly narrow definition of modernisation, which refers here to the processes through which macro-actors, such as the state or major corporations, attribute to themselves the authority to define the agenda, priorities or aims of society. They do this by expropriating its peoples, capacities of imagination and initiative, and reducing them to a human force whose sole purpose is to execute this agenda. Thus, any consideration of homogenisation and heterogenisation must include an analysis of power relations. Who is benefiting from these processes? What are the possibilities for effective dissidence towards this use of power? Homogenisation and heterogenisation are not considered here as ontological concepts, but as reflections of social realities and the power relations within them. Specifically, in relation to the built environment and lived environment, are we witnessing through homogenisation, power relations that support the levelling off diversity and resistance and reduce cities to structures that function solely for the increasingly compact organisation of capital and knowledge? And, do these processes of homogenisation also lead to a psychological and semiotic rush towards forms as finalities? Or, are we in the process of empowering people, through the same institutions of homogenisation, to get involved in enriching urban life? In other words, if we consider institutions such as education, is it possible for us to live with levels of homogeneity that support diversity, heterogeneity and the development of human potential?

Modernisation, Homogenisation and the Public Realm

Modernisation, experienced in the form of imposed 'openness' to global flows of signs and capital, has now become a global phenomenon. As Wittrock argues, 'modernity is a global condition that now affects all our actions, interpretations and habits, across nations, interacting with civilisational roots we may have or lay claim to'.³ Modernisation, in other words, comes to be imposed as a single and unitary phenomenon travelling through global circuits of knowledge, finance, production, tourism, migrations, culture and communications across the world. Modernisation and globalisation are understood as a confluence of forces putting into motion transformative energies that replace universality with universalisation.

There are negative and positive aspects to this process. What has been termed 'globalisation from above' may be experienced in terms of cultural imperialism, whereby

³ Bjorn Wittrock (2000) 'Modernity: One, None or Many?: European Origins and Modernity as a Global Condition', *Daedalus*, vol. 129, no. 1.

the homogenising drive of global cultural industries flattens out cultural differences. It may also be experienced in terms of a logic of privatisation, through the penetration of hyper-capitalism that threatens the public sphere that supports the expression of difference, encounter, free association and autonomy, and allows a space to negotiate how people live together. The uncontrollable speed and dynamism with which this confluence of globalisation and modernisation plays itself out in non-Western urban contexts seems to pose a serious challenge to the idea of public interest and democratic culture. Under these circumstances, and as a consequence of the logic of 'globalisation from above', it may be said that the inadequate provision of modernity – with its subjects, institutions and structures protecting public benefit and access – puts severe pressure on the city as a democratic public realm.

At the same time however, more positive and potentially innovative developments are also occurring, associated with the dynamics of what may be termed 'globalisation from below'. These developments include the increasing level and quality of information and critical up to date knowledge, a greater consciousness of the need for different ways of looking at human relations, as well as the relations between humans and nature. The economic dynamics of globalisation have also given rise to increasing transnational networks of people searching for new forms of solidarity, and engaging in different kinds of transnational flows of goods, media, information and so on. These new and various global mobilities have brought with them new kinds of diversity and complexity, involving new patterns of cultural articulations, encounter, exchange and mixing. Experiences of the globalised world – whether as an overwhelming exercise in accumulating material wealth, or as an opportunity for improving our way of being in the world – can now also be retold as the 'vernacularisation of modernisation'. There is a silent revolution in what may be termed 'the provinces of the world', where the top-down approach to modernisation and the concomitant homogenisation of culture and identity that this project endorsed, is now paralleled by a process of vernacularisation. And, crucially, these new forms of diversity and complexity are at the same time located in space that is transnational and translocal in nature, and functions across national frontiers and different urban spaces. The problematic cannot be reduced to a 'globalised versus parochial' dichotomy, but must take into account different motivations, logics and content of translocal interactions.

Some of these movements could be defined as facilitators of the multitude of modernities. As S. N. Eisenstadt puts it, 'the undeniable trend ... is the growing diversification of the understanding of modernity, of the basic cultural agendas of different modern societies – far beyond the homogeneous and hegemonic visions of modernity prevalent in the 1950s'.⁴ Or, as Arjun Appadurai observes, 'the monopoly of autonomous nation-states over the project of "modernisation" has broken down and "modernity" now seems more

⁴ S. N. Eisenstadt (2000) 'Multiple Modernities', *Daedalus*, vol. 129, no. 1.

practical and less pedagogic, more experiential and less disciplinary than in the fifties and sixties, when it was mostly experienced (especially for those outside the national elite) through the propaganda apparatuses of the newly independent nation-states and their great leaders.⁵ We may say then that the monopoly of the state and elites in dictating the norms, aesthetics and codes of contemporary life are increasingly being challenged and relativised by ordinary people in their appropriation and reworking of modern logics. Within these new forms of modernities, therefore, there are certainly present resistant trends that have become conscious of what can be achieved through dialogical interactions between form and content. These movements look for originality, locality and insertion in specific social and physical fabrics, and thus work to heterogenise representations.

The 'vernacularisation' of modernity is most apparent and acute in urban contexts. Here we can see and experience most intensely the contemporary challenge of living together in our cities and societies. In many ways this is the challenge of vernacular modernity to the elitist, statist and disciplinary modernisation of the 20th century. The (top-down) push towards the homogenisation of representations and the (bottom-up) countermovement towards empowerment through representations, as well as their consequences for the public sphere, are most visibly contested in the condensed sphere of the city.

The Modernisation of Urban Space in the Contemporary City

The city constitutes a public space where all kinds of intimate or distanced interactions and encounters of everyday life take place. As Gole has noted, it is the space of the 'circulation of a universal code of modernity as well as [its] particular significations and practices'.⁶ Everything has been *concentrated* and *accumulated* into cities in the context of modern capitalism: people, capital, commodities, desires, information, signs, images, power and strategies.⁷ Cities have been constructed as the *centralities* of politics, economy and culture.

Here I choose to build my argument around some of the core constructions of Henri Lefebvre, though I am aware of the controversies surrounding his work. However, Lefebvre has the advantage of having grasped both the dynamics of homogenisation and its logic, and identified the areas of life politics where it has become possible to resist homogenisation and even to give birth to new heterogeneities. Lefebvre predicted that the process of urbanisation would be completed in the future, and indeed, our society seems

⁵ Arjun Appadurai (2008) *Modernity At Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

⁶ Nulifer Gole (2002) 'Islam in Public: New Visibilities and New Imaginaries', *Public Culture*, vol. 14, no. 1.

⁷ Henri Lefebvre (2003) [1970] *The Urban Revolution*. Translated by Robert Bononno. Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press; and Henri Lefebvre (1996) [1967]. 'Right to the City'. In *Writing on Cities*. Translated and edited by Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas, pp. 63–181. Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell.

to be increasingly characterised by complex, urbanised lives.⁸ Contemporary urbanisation has historically been promoted since the beginning of industrialisation in the late 19th century and continues unabated in our society.⁹ The speed of this transformation has been greatly accelerated during the last 100 years. In recent decades this has been facilitated by the advent of information technology, which evokes the transition of the economic system from Fordism to post-Fordism and the transnationalisation of enterprises and people. This had led to the increasing concentration of global flows of capital, information and people into cities¹⁰ at a speed that human beings have never experienced before in history. It could be said that we live in a hyper-urbanising society in the context of the reconstruction and formation of new compact capital.

The explosion of the urban population on a global scale has been accompanied by the production of homogeneous urban spaces in these cities. This has occurred at different rates since the late 19th century. Such urban spaces include suburban houses, apartment complexes, shopping malls, skyscrapers and motorways. These increasingly connected, homogeneous urban spaces have absorbed the population and resources, and have functioned as sites of cybernetic control through the homogeneous representations of urban life promoted in advertisements, in the discourses of educational programmes, and through mass media and journalism.¹¹ The state has, according to Lefebvre, organised the production of those urban spaces for capital accumulation, accelerating urbanisation and controlling its flows.¹² The urban ideologies of aesthetics without ethics propagated by those in power tend to promote both consumerism and entrepreneurship based on 'individualism', attempting to convert people into immoderate consumers and active

⁸ Henri Lefebvre (1996) [1967] 'Right to the City' in Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas (eds.) *Writing on Cities*. Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, p. 122; Henri Lefebvre (2003) [1970]. *The Urban Revolution*. Translated by Robert Bononno. Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, p. 1.

⁹ Lefebvre, 'Right to the City'; Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*; see also, Neil Brenner (1999). 'Globalization as Reterritorialisation: The Re-scaling of Urban Governance in the European Union'. *Urban Studies*, vol. 36, no. 3, pp. 431–451; Doreen Massey (1997). 'Space/Power, Identity/Difference: Tensions in the City' in Andy Merrifield & Erik Swyngedouw (eds.) *The Urbanization of Injustice*, pp. 100–116. New York: New York University Press. Pacione, Michael. (2005). 'The Global Context of Urbanisation and Urban Change'. In *Urban Geography: A Global Perspective*, pp. 71–95. Oxon, New York: Routledge. Saskia Sassen (2000) 'The Global City: Strategic Site / New Frontier' in Engin F. Isin (ed.) *Democracy, Citizenship and the Global City*, pp. 48–61. London: Routledge; United Nations. (2004). *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2003 Revision*. New York: United Nations. <http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/wup2003Report.pdf> (accessed 21 June 2007).

¹⁰ Nancy Fraser (2003) 'From Discipline to Flexibilization?: Rereading Foucault in the Shadow of Globalization'. *Constellations*, Vol. 10, No. 2, pp. 160–171; Harvey, David (2001). 'Capitalism: the Factory of Fragmentation' in *Spaces of Capital – Towards a Critical Geography*, pp. 121–127, New York: Routledge; Saskia Sassen (2000) 'The Global City: Strategic Site / New Frontier'.

¹¹ Lefebvre, 'Right to the City'; Henri Lefebvre (1991) [1974] *The Production of Space*. Translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith. Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell.

¹² Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*; Lefebvre, 'Right to the City'; Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*.

workers in the name of 'individual freedom', for the purpose of maximising their own profits.

Assigned the program of producing such urban spaces by state or local governments, urban planners, developers, and architects consciously or unconsciously produce homogeneous urban spaces as the active sites for capital accumulation, and I would add, symbolic and political control.¹³ Their efforts contribute to increasing the profits for capitalist enterprise by producing urban spaces that support capitalist growth, and by purporting to be facilitators of a 'better life', or posing as 'doctors' of peoples' spaces and lives.¹⁴ Therefore, urban spaces not only accommodate the population, but also act as strategic sites for exercising the hegemonic power of state and capital. In other words, we can see urban space as the site of exploitation and alienation of people by a network of financial, political, bureaucratic, and technocratic powers, national governments, local governments, developers, urban planners and journalists, through strategies that aim to produce a higher density of capital and power. Paradoxically, this entails forms of social engineering that in urban spaces tend to encourage *fragmented* human bonds, homogenised lifestyles, and the *hierarchical organisation* of individuals.

However, if urban spaces are the strategic sites of hegemonic and homogenising power, can they not also be seen as the sites of counter-strategies, creativity and heterogeneity? At the everyday level, can the practices of inhabiting urban space culminate in wider movements towards 'globalisation from below' and a vernacularisation of modernity? How can inhabitants become agents of social change, and *reappropriate* those urban spaces that have historically been expropriated and homogenised through modernising strategies? How can urban spaces become emanations of different expressions of human dignity and solidarity?

Urban Life and the Ingredients for Multiple Modernities

According to Lefebvre, there remains the possibility of urban space becoming the site for challenging, contesting, and even subverting hegemonic power. This possibility can be enhanced by what he termed the *intensification of the urban*,¹⁵ a concept that we will explore in greater detail below. However, first of all, we need to clarify what is meant by 'the urban'. It can be defined in four ways: 1) as a place of desire, 2) as a place of differences, 3) as a place of encounters and gathering, and 4) as a place of contradictions and conflicts. As I will argue in the following discussion, though all four aspects are important in Lefebvre's thinking, it is the final definition of urban space that takes centre stage in his conceptualisation of revolutionary urban space. In his view, urban spaces can

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*; Lefebvre, 'Right to the City'.

¹⁵ Ibid.

be transformed into spaces of resistance through the promotion of creative differentiation and contradiction. These spaces entail the possibility of new kinds of social, cultural and political practices.

The Urban as a Place of Desire

Firstly, the urban is defined as a place of desire.¹⁶ Desires have been concentrated in the city, along with acquisition and production of knowledge, and the accumulation of capital, people, information and commodities. In the city, desires are distorted into 'needs' through urban ideologies that contain both homogeneous representations of the 'good life', through concrete entities such as money, exchange value, commodities and skyscrapers, and through the headlong rush to commoditise everything. However, desires cannot be completely absorbed into consumption needs, which tend to be calculable in terms of exchange value. Desire cannot be so, because it seeks a quality and use value which is not necessarily, nor is it entirely measurable. Through desires people imagine the city as a utopia, which Lefebvre conceives of as both non-place, but also a possible place. This half-fictional and half-real utopia becomes a primary element of the urban, motivating people to seek to restore the balance of the urban in favour of quality of life, and pushes them towards the reappropriation of urban space. Therefore, it is in the urban sphere that people strive to transform the existing city into a new or alternative city.

The Urban as a Place of Differences

The second definition of the urban is as a place composed of an ensemble of differences. Differences are accumulated and socially produced and reproduced within and through the urban. In other words, differences converge in the urban and are multiplied by it. Though hegemonic power tries to neutralise produced differences and integrate them into its own system (POS), they tend to *resist* homogenisation and integration.¹⁷ They actively transgress the norms of the system. By gathering together differences, abolishing the distances among them, and connecting them together in a unity, the urban promotes and engenders new differences within itself. In this sense, in urban space people possess 'the freedom to produce differences' as their fundamental right.¹⁸ This freedom creates the possibility of the urban being a place of creativity and *poiesis*, which led Lefebvre to conceptualise the urban as a kind of 'second nature'.¹⁹ The urban as a unity of differences tends to transform existing social relationships and activities through constant differentiation. Therefore, when Lefebvre refers to the intensification of the urban, he means in part

¹⁶ Lefebvre, 'Right to the City', p. 131; Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*, p. 176.

¹⁷ Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*, p. 173.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 174.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 174–175; Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 368.

the consolidation of the unity of differences and the acceleration of differentiation. He considers this movement to be at the foundation of any quest to an alternative city.

The Urban as a Place of Encounters

Thirdly, the urban can be regarded as a place of encounters and a place people come together.²⁰ In doing so, they share their ideas, thoughts, and experiences in shared and invented spaces such as the café, street, square and park. This sharing process is completely different from the process involved in commodity exchange, where there is no affect-laden communication, but rather strategic communication for the purpose of consuming goods or making a profit. On the other hand, in the sharing process of urban encounters there is an enjoyment of communication, detached from exchange value. In this sense, the urban comes to contain the quality produced by affect-laden communication; it is composed of a qualitative continuum of encounters and active communications. Hegemonic power seeks to fragment this continuum, and flatten its quality in order to make people quiet in the city. Homogenisation here is a clear strategy of power. However, this repression tends to proliferate the networks of encounters and communications, and unite them.²¹ Therefore, according to Lefebvre, the intensification of the urban means promoting gatherings and shared encounters which enhance the possibility of creating and articulating heterogeneity in the content of an alternative city.

The Urban as a Place of Contradiction and Conflict

The fourth definition of the urban is as a space of contradiction and conflict. The urban contains various kinds of contradictions: between use value and exchange value; desires and needs, squandering energies and consumption, differentiation and homogenisation, encounter and isolation, networking and segregation, equalisation and hierarchisation, appropriation and domination and so on.²² Those contradictions are closely interrelated. Hegemonic power attempts to forbid or reduce encounters in the urban and to segregate people in terms of private property and exchange value,²³ while also homogenising difference, and manipulating desire through urban ideologies. However, the more the hegemonic power attempts to invade urban sphere, the more intensively contradictions emerge. People have the desire to create something new, and to experience encounters and connection with others. They cannot be solely satisfied with the reality, illusion, and expectation of increasing their wealth, consuming commodities and enhancing their status. But it is through creating original *oeuvres*, expending their energies in festivals, and passionately communicating with one another in certain appropriated spaces that they

²⁰ Lefebvre, 'Right to the City', p. 117 and 131; Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*, p. 118.

²¹ Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*, p. 121.

²² Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*; Lefebvre, 'Right to the City'; Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*.

²³ *Ibid.*

achieve a sense of well-being. Thus, desires clash with the intervention of hegemonic power within the urban, which seeks a univocal space.

People are in no way passive and quiet in the urban. They insist on their right to differentiation, the right to gather together, the right to appropriate and use urban spaces for their own enjoyment. That is, they forcefully demand *the right to the city*.²⁴ In a multitude of ways they criticise the domination of urban spaces by state and capital and reject social fragmentation, the homogenisation of urban space and lifestyle, and hierarchical organisation of society. They strive to construct an alternative order, in which the urban environment and their place within it are transformed according to their desires and based on democratic procedures.²⁵ That is, they attempt to construct a new city through urban democracy.

In this sense, the urban is the place of conflict. The intensification of contradictions leads to the intensification of conflict. Plural networks formed through encounters converge rapidly.²⁶ The actions of these solidarity networks lead to resistance, and promote the praxis of reappropriating parts of urban space. Thus, the intensification of the urban implies the promotion of contradictions and conflict between the network of citizens and the hegemonic network of capital and state. It also implies a proliferation of solidarity networks characterised by radical pluralism. According to Lefebvre, it is through this struggle that the alternative 'ephemeral' city would emerge.

While attempting to clarify the concept of the urban, this discussion has also outlined what is meant by the *intensification of the urban*: the intensification of desire towards an alternative city; the acceleration of differentiation through unifying multiple differences; the promotion of encounters and gathering together; the intensification of contradictions and conflicts. These four processes are interrelated in complex ways. At first, when desires are concentrated and intensified within the urban, a superfluity of energies accumulates around the desires. After the energies are sufficiently concentrated, they explosively erupt, which results in the production of differences in the urban. Next, encounters in the urban are brought about by the desire for connection, and further energies are accumulated through interactions with others. Encounters contribute to the communication of desires and accumulation of energies, and promote the production of differences and heterogeneities. All the processes mentioned above can be seen as the *differential movement* of the urban. This differential movement promotes the contradiction between use value and exchange value; that is, it serves to valorise use value and devalorise exchange value, while homogenising forces tend to move in the opposite way.

²⁴ Lefebvre, 'Right to the City'; Henri Lefebvre (1996) [1967] 'Space and Politics' in Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas (eds.) *Writing on Cities*. Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, pp. 185–202.

²⁵ Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*.

²⁶ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*.

Therefore, increased differentiation in the urban produces heightened contradiction and conflicts. In so doing, the urban is intensified in diverse ways.

The Appropriation of Space by the Living Body

In the process of differential movement, people are appropriating urban spaces through concrete spatial praxis. In other words, urban space is produced through encounter, communication and social action, mediated through the body. People walk, run, move their hands, speak, express their desires and feel the rhythms of the movement of other bodies in space. When people resist the production of homogeneous urban spaces this counter-action is embodied in a concrete way in physical space; counter-space is produced.²⁷ Lefebvre calls this body the *living body*. By virtue of the spatial praxis of living bodies, both spaces of enjoyment and spaces of resistance come to be concretely generated within the urban. Here I shall focus on the dynamics of the living body as *the generator of space as well as the appropriator of space*.

How does the body differentiate and appropriate space? Lefebvre argued that this is achieved by *generating living unity*. Living unity is a dynamic process that produces differential space. The creative capacity of the living body and how it produces living unity and differential space can be understood through five classifications: 1) spatio-temporal body, 2) differential body, 3) polysensorial body, 4) polyrhythmic body, and finally, 5) metaphilosophical body. The body that unifies these five forms can generate living unity.

(1) Living Body as Spatio-temporal Body

Lefebvre rejected the dominant epistemology of space in modern society based on geometry and the thinking of Descartes, and instead depicts the living body through the anomalous epistemology of space as espoused by Spinoza, Leibniz and Nietzsche. For him, the living body is itself a part of space. It occupies the space and has the capacity to produce the space for itself through its energies. On this point he argues, 'Can the body, with its capacity for action, and its various energies, be said to create space? Assuredly... there is an immediate relationship between the body and its space, between the body's deployment in space and its occupation of space... each living body *is* space and *has* its space: it produces that space'.²⁸ Thus, the living body not only exists in space, but it is also actively engaged in space. It appropriates and uses the space for its own pleasure and joy. The appropriation of space can be defined as the spatial praxis of the body which '*is lived directly* before it is conceptualized'.²⁹ This property of the body is the *spatial body*.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 170; original emphasis.

²⁹ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 30; emphasis added.

It should be noted that the appropriation of space by the living body is both a spatial and temporal process. As Lefebvre describes, 'time is distinguishable but not separable from space. The concentric rings of a tree trunk reveal the tree's age, just as a shell's spirals, with their 'marvellous' spatial concreteness, reveal the age of that shell's former occupant... Space and time thus appear and manifest themselves as different yet unseverable'. Similarly, an artist creates works of art, which are materialised through the use of the artists' hands and certain tools, and in doing so produces space qualified by their imagination and inspiration. In other words, time is inscribed in the space.³⁰ The living body, which has both characteristics of spatiality and temporality, is the *spatio-temporal body*.

By virtue of the fact that the living body actively engages in the appropriation of space and the production of space within time, the body creates a living unity between itself, space and time. Such living unity can be regarded as *the organic unity between spatiality and temporality*. Moreover, an important point here is that living bodies immediately encounter one another in that organic unity, connect with the movements of other bodies, and create a new unity. Here, 'external is...internal inasmuch as the other is another body, a vulnerable flesh, an accessible symmetry'.³¹ And through this unity, living bodies continuously appropriate urban space and differentiate it. In this process, they continue to intensify living unity.

(2) *Living Body as Differential Body*

Secondly, the living body is also the *differential body*. This signifies that it is actively producing differences that are something new. In this sense, the living body has the capacity to innovate. According to Lefebvre, the superfluity of energy plays a decisive role here. At first, the living body needs to capture, accumulate and concentrate energies in a specific place in order to carry out the production of difference. In short, it gathers massive energies for creative action, a process that is, according to Lefebvre, laborious and repetitive. Little by little the living body accumulates energy in the context of repetitive, everyday life. The body is then able to initiate the process of differentiation at the precise moment when the available energies become so abundant that they can be discharged, producing 'unpredictable' differences. At the same time, through these differences the living body transforms itself into a new body and generates a new space.³² Finally, after the available energies are completely expended, the transformed body once again enters into the laborious activity of a new type of repetition in order to accumulate the energies

³⁰ Henri Lefebvre (1971) [1968] *Everyday Life in the Modern World*. Translated by Sacha Rabinovitch. London: The Penguin Press, p. 202; Lefebvre, 'Right to the City'; Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*, p. 182; Kofman & Lebas 1996, p. 16.

³¹ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 174.

³² *Ibid*, p. 177.

needed for the next differentiation.³³ In this way it can differentiate and diversify itself and its own space.

Lefebvre argues that the engine that powers the process of capturing and discharging energies is *desire*. Without desire, there would be no creative cycle of repetition and differentiation. Though desire is originally undifferentiated,³⁴ it urges the body to initiate the process of accumulating energies and producing differences. This is the desire to squander energies, to create something new, to appropriate space, and to enjoy the process of differentiation in *festivity*. According to Lefebvre, this desire corresponds to Eros and the Grand Desire referred to by Nietzsche, and it is entirely different from the desire that is mentioned by theologians and such psychoanalysts as Freud. The desire is dialectically connected to an individual's needs for survival, but always attempts to transcend those needs. It urges the body to put a priority on itself, life and use value, and to master needs, survival and exchange value. Motivated by desire, the body organises and connects everything in its environment by means of accumulation and accumulated energies. The energies create diverse linkages between the past self, the present self and the future self; between the self and its body; between the body and its surrounding space; and between the body and other's bodies. These multiple linkages form a living unity. Desire not only produces differences and differential spaces, but also harmoniously connects all differences and differential spaces. It produces the living unity as a *unity of differences*.

(3) *Living Body as Polysensorial Body*

Thirdly, the living body can physically perceive space through multiple senses, such as smell, taste, touch, sight and hearing. Lefebvre explains this capacity to perceive space by invoking the following image: 'When "Ego" arrives in an unknown country or city, he first experiences it through every part of his body – through his senses of smell and taste, as... through his legs and feet. His hearing picks up the noises and the quality of the voices; his eyes are assailed by new impressions. For it is by means of the body that space is perceived, lived – and produced'.³⁵ It is easy to imagine this kind of experience that Lefebvre describes: in the park, one hears the voices and laughter of children, the song of a street musician, feels the flow of wind and warmth of the sunshine and smells the freshly cut grass. In this way, one's body physically perceives and experiences the quality of space in multiple ways through the senses. Thus, one's living body can be considered a *polysensorial body* which perceives space in the here and now.

³³ Ibid, pp. 203 and 377.

³⁴ Ibid, p. 394.

³⁵ Ibid, p. 162.

In the process of perceiving space, the body creates a living unity between itself and space, which is composed of the sensory qualities of that space. It also contains the dynamic continuum of the lived experiences of the body that perceives these qualities. This living unity may be deemed a *unity of qualities* or a *unity of lived experiences*. In generating qualitative unity, bodies are interacting with each other and appropriating space. This unity occupies and flows dynamically in space, and through it the living body differentiates space.

(4) *Living Body as Polyrhythmic Body*

The body can be also seen as *polyrhythmic body*. The living body 'senses' the multiple rhythms of space in the process of perceiving the space.³⁶ The quality of space includes the dynamic flow of diverse rhythms of the body and that space. The rhythms are always differentiating, diversifying and overlaying themselves upon the rhythms of other's bodies, of nature, the seasons and the surrounding world. Lefebvre explains that 'rhythms in all their multiplicity interpenetrate one another. In the body and around it, as on the surface of a body of water, or within the mass of a liquid, rhythms are forever crossing and recrossing, superimposing themselves upon each other, always bound to space'.³⁷ Each body has multiple rhythms – *polyrhythm* – and combines its internal rhythms (such as breathing, the heartbeat and facial expressions) with the external rhythms (such as the rhythms of day and night, music, ocean waves or city life) which are flowing around the body. The combination of internal and external rhythms is always in the process of perpetual diversification and differentiation. The boundaries between the internal and external are at any time ambiguous and indistinguishable; they are moving within and around the body. The rhythms of each body are unique and singular, and every rhythm is polyrhythmic. Thus, the living body can be said to be fundamentally polyrhythmic. It differentiates space through the differential movement of multiple rhythms that it creates. It appropriates space through perceiving and capturing the dynamics of the differential movement of multiple rhythms that exist outside of it. According to Lefebvre, this process can be accelerated by music and festivals, which promote people's interaction through the intensified dynamics of polyrhythm.

As noted above, the bundle of diverse rhythms connotes a living unity itself. The unified and ceaselessly transforming polyrhythm within and around the body is an organic unity that consists of the body, other bodies, space and nature in their temporality: 'unity in diversity'.³⁸ Multiple rhythms are *simultaneously* interconnected with one another, preserving the diversity and differences in the unity. Lefebvre also argues further that 'each one of us is this unity of diverse relations whose aspects are... oriented towards the outside,

³⁶ Henri Lefebvre (2004) [1992] *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life*. Translated by Stuart Elden & Gerald Moore. London, New York: Continuum, p. 77.

³⁷ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 205.

³⁸ Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis*, p. 77.

towards the Other and to the World'.³⁹ He goes on to say 'it is in the psychological, social, organic unity of the "perceiver" who is oriented towards the perceived, which is to say, towards objects, towards surroundings and towards other people, that the rhythms that compose this unity are given'.⁴⁰ Hence, this unity can be regarded as a *unity of polyrhythm*, which endlessly differentiates and diversifies space.

(5) *Living Body as Metaphilosophical Body*

The final characteristic of the living body is that it has its own *intelligence*. The source of the intelligence is at first, according to Lefebvre, knowledge constructed through self-reflection on the lived experiences of the body,⁴¹ made up of the cycle of repetition and differentiation, capturing and discharging energies, and perceiving the quality of space through multiple senses. The living body becomes able to better judge what are the sources of its own pleasure and joy, or danger and sadness, in its immediate milieu.

In this sense, the knowledge of the brain is deeply connected to the 'practico-sensorial realm' of body, which is space itself. The knowledge produced by self-reflection is not a pure and rational knowledge of the Cartesian *cogito*, which is detached from the action of the body and space. The knowledge is always combined with the praxis of the body through dialectics between the body and mind, which Lefebvre calls *metaphilosophy*. Metaphilosophy involves self-reflection but at the same time, goes 'beyond philosophy' and directly links with lived experiences and the spatial praxis of the body.⁴² Lefebvre calls this kind of knowledge *connaissance*. Thus, the intellectual activity of the living body produces *connaissance*. *Connaissance* is fundamentally connected to desire, and motivates the body to imagine future realms of possibility, radically criticising the 'existing' self and the 'existing' space.⁴³ Therefore, the living body can be understood as a *metaphilosophical body*, which imagines a lived space that is both utopian but at the same time exists as the very heart of reality.⁴⁴ This was for Lefebvre the most fundamental aspect of differential space.

Appropriating Space through Voice and Speech

All these elements contribute to activate the living body. But how then does the living body achieve the appropriation of space? The living body appropriates space not only through capturing and discharging energy but also through the act of speaking what it desires,

³⁹ Ibid., original emphasis.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*.

⁴² Ibid, p. 368.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*.

imagines, and contemplates in the process of metaphilosophy. According to Lefebvre, the produced space can be called *the space of speech* which is animated with the impassioned thought, dialogue and multiple voices of diverse living bodies.⁴⁵ This dialogue includes both self-critical knowledge and critical knowledge about others, social relations and the existing order. The space of speech involves discussions on how to produce a new space, based on desire and an imagined possible future, and oriented around the enjoyment and



Figure 1: Photo credit: Reza Masoudi

quality of life. In this way, it is *a space of the affirmation of life*.⁴⁶ Living bodies therefore appropriate and differentiate space through voice and speech.⁴⁷

In differentiated space, multiple living bodies are connected with one another, enmeshed in a network mediated by speech. A living unity emerges, in which living bodies express and share their ideas, and also, create new ideas. In doing so, they appropriate and transform existing space into a new space which is, by its very nature, the space of ethical concerns in which everyone can participate and be empowered while generating new solidarities.

Conclusion: The Production of Counter-space

Homogenisation works mainly through a certain reified view of life and possibilities of living together. However, such reductionism requires pressure, manipulation and oppression of the population in order to achieve an interiorised and homogenised view of life, society, space, forms, and their interactions. What role then, does appropriated and differentiated space play in the context of the contemporary city? As we have seen, the intensification of urban life results in living bodies being able to feel the quality and rhythms of space more intensively, to produce differences and new spaces more energetically, and to

⁴⁵ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 403.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 201.

⁴⁷ Technological breakthroughs will also have impacts on the effective choices in both the built and lived environment in relation to these differentiations.

speak with one another more passionately. Additionally, the intensity of contradictions and conflicts within the urban becomes more acute. The more intensively differences and contradictions are generated, the more actively hegemonic power attempts to extinguish those differences and contradictions, because they are, or might be perceived as an obstacle to building structures for univocal social, cultural, economy, and political processes. The key strategies for doing so include the normalisation of urban ideologies and the production of homogeneous urban spaces. However, the attempts to control living bodies ultimately produce fresh and more acute contradictions. It is important to note here that a non-essentialist view of homogenisation and heterogenisation in built and lived environments needs to take into account the contextually specific modes of vertical integration as well as any resistance to it.

These strategies are resisted through critical knowledge, the promotion of encounters and dialogue, interactions and the experience of multiple rhythms in festivity. Through *the production of counter-spaces* they demand the right to appropriate space, and to use it for their enjoyment and fulfilment. In other words, they demand the right to the city. In doing so, people struggle against the authoritative power within the city, and reject the segregation and hierarchical organisation of their networks, as well as the homogenisation of their lifestyles. From this perspective, the city and the urban sphere can be seen as 'the setting of struggle' against brutal spatial planning and homogenised urban spaces. What is important in this struggle is the awareness that each person, architects included, potentially has the energy and desire to transform the city and ensure genuine quality of urban life.

Based on my understanding of Lefebvre's profound insights, how can we interpret the various conflicts taking place in the contemporary global city? Conflicts in the city seem to contain an enormous possibility to reverse the hegemony of mega-actors and states. This stems from the fact that many urban inhabitants are aware of the brutality of the hegemony that ignores their quality of life; people are producing differential spaces and counter-spaces through spatial praxis. These solidarity networks are virtually and actually expanding, intensifying, and multiplying the sense of urbanity. They promote the imagining of an alternative city, an alternative way of living in the city, in which everyday life and urban spaces are ceaselessly transforming through different urban realities, and vice versa. On the one hand, the power relations implicit in the mechanisms discussed by Lefebvre demonstrate the top-down, vertical, exclusionary processes that operate in urban life. On the other hand, these power relations highlight the human will and capacity throughout moments of social history to redefine, and reappropriate the way they wish to be and live in the city. These represent the two major forces that shape and reshape the multitude of urbanities, and strengthen either homogenisation or heterogeneity in built and lived environments.

Is it wise, considering the arguments made above, to think that the conflicting agendas in the city, borne from a multitude of urban subjectivities, will provide the necessary energy to sustain both processes of modernisation as well as policies inspired by a recognition of multiple modernities? Moreover, how will postmodern and post-colonial ethics be integrated into urbanism and the architectural mental landscape? Can we, as public intellectuals, advocate for an understanding of urban subjectivities that remain vivid, fluid and critical at the same time? This might be the challenge if one aspires to let the flow of life, desire, and creativity be incorporated into, but also move beyond, current intellectual and scholarly horizons.

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Conscious and Unconscious Aspects of Homogenisation Processes in Architectural Representation

GEORGE BAIRD

Some weeks following the Knowledge Construction Workshop that was convened by the Aga Khan Award for Architecture in Vancouver in February 2009, those of us who had participated in it were asked by Modjtaba Sadria to expand on the presentations we made there, and in doing so, to focus on two specific questions. These were:

What are the contemporary social, economic, political, cultural, historical mechanisms that lead towards homogenisation and heterogenisation of the built environment, and what are the implications for the lived environment?

and

What are the contemporary social, economic, political, cultural, historical mechanisms that lead towards homogenisation and heterogenisation of the lived environment, and what are the implications for the built environment?

In my contribution to the February workshop in Vancouver, I had attempted to elucidate the relationship of *design intention* to the *architectural unconscious*, in the processes of homogenisation of representations in architecture. That is to say, I argued, if it is true that homogenisation is caused by such factors as the ‘mobility of influential people teaching in faculties of architecture and urbanism’, by ‘scholarly networks and journals with strong editorial policies’ and by ‘the growing presence of symbolic buildings being conceived and built by largely the same networks’, I claimed that this process of causation is one that is at least as much ‘unconscious’ as ‘intentional’.¹ I confessed at the outset my realisation that this inclination of mine was, in substantial measure a consequence of the fact that I began my career in architectural theory with an exploration of the possible uses in architecture of the precepts of semiology – especially as they had been set out by the Swiss linguist Fernand de Saussure in the early 20th century.² In particular, Saussure argued that any

¹ These ‘factors’ had been cited by Dr. Sadria in a statement of the themes he wished participants in the workshop to pursue, several months prior to it taking place.

² George Baird (1969), ‘La dimension amoureuse in architecture’, in Jencks and Baird, (eds.), *Meaning in Architecture*. Barrie & Rockcliff: the Cresset Press, London.

efficacious communication system in human affairs necessarily operated simultaneously in both unconscious and conscious ways, and he characterised these two constituent components of any such communication system respectively as *langue* and *parole*. The *langue* was collective, and comprised the body of mutual knowledge and assumptions implicitly shared among a group of users of any given communication system – most typically, of course, a spoken and/or written language. The *parole*, on the other hand comprised the individual, and more personal features brought to such a language by any given user, and included such features as tone and style – and in spoken language, even intonation. I proposed then – and in fact still believe today – that a theoretical apparatus such as this one borrowed from Saussure, could assist a analyst in comparing relatively similar and relatively dissimilar architectural forms in an illuminating fashion.

For example, consider a well-known body of works in southern California from the 1940s and 50s: the Case Study Houses sponsored by *Arts and Architecture* magazine. This body of works as a whole exhibits a formal language powerfully influenced by the work of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe – in particular by his Farnsworth house near Chicago from 1949 (see Figure 1). That having been said, it is not difficult in examining that body of works, to distinguish the work of designers such as Charles and Ray Eames, from that of their local contemporary, Pierre Koenig. The influence of the Miesian language on the *langue* of the Case Study Houses is easy to discern. The steel frame, the regular structural module, the articulated relationship of frame to skin; all these are in common, and they are all Miesian (see Figure 2). Yet notwithstanding this mutuality at the level of the tectonic *langue*, we can say that the *parole* of the Eames house of 1945–49 is clearly episodic, relaxed and ingratiatingly quotidian in its deployment of steel frame technology (see Figure 3). The *parole* of Koenig's West Hollywood house from 1958, on the other hand, is minimal – we might even say reductive – formal and aloof. By some such semiological method as this, I would argue, it would be possible to compare in depth works manifesting such complex sets of formal interrelationships – both similarities and differences – as these buildings do.

More recently, I have found myself employing such a method to bring to light what seems to me to be a problematic feature in the *oeuvre* of the major American firm, Kohn Pedersen Fox. Late to an appreciation of their importance in contemporary American architecture, I found myself on a trip to Manhattan examining a project from their 'postmodern' period at the corner of Lexington Avenue and 57th Street (see Figure 4). In particular, I was looking for what had been described to me as the characteristic KPF window, one that was detailed with the glazed panels adjacent to the window jambs set back from the other panels, so as to create an apparently deep reveal within a relatively thin, modern wall assembly. And sure enough, the building in question included the notable window detail in question, thereby buttressing the design's traditional and classicising formal intentions. What is more, it combined the window with a series of elaborate window framing profiles and mullion patterns that underscored the classicism even more.

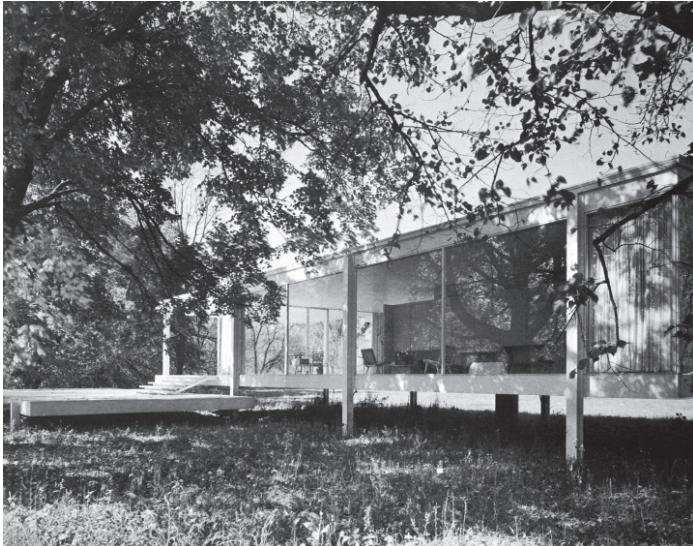


Figure 1: View of the Farnsworth house (1949) near Chicago by Mies van der Rohe.



Figure 2: The Eames house (1945–1949), Pacific Palisades, Los Angeles.



Figure 3: The West Hollywood house (1958) by Pierre Koenig.

Then, by chance, a few months later, I found myself in Montreal, and there I took it upon myself to pay a visit to a major new office building there, a headquarters building for IBM also designed by KPF. But this building, I had been given to understand, represented KPF in a different design mode. In the interval between the design of the Manhattan project and the Montreal one, the firm was understood to have undergone an important ideological design shift, and to have abandoned postmodern classicism for a more recent, neo-modernist design mode (see Figure 5). And sure enough, as I approached the site on René Levesque Boulevard, I could see in the middle distance the tall, slender tower of the complex with its curved and cantilevered prow, projecting dramatically into the Montreal sky. Continuing to walk towards the building, I arrived a few minutes later at its base, and was able to observe the ensemble in its entirety, right down to ground level (see Figure 6). To my surprise, I discovered window framing profiles as well as mullion patterns similar to those used at the building in Manhattan had also been employed here. Details that had made some visual sense in a 'postmodern' design with classicising formal ambitions in 1986 had been carried over into a 1992 design that was, as I understood it, supposed to represent a return to the sleek, anti-classical motifs of a recovered constructivism. The overall result in Montreal is an oddly ponderous one.



Figure 4: View of the KPF office building at Lexington and 57th Street in New York City.

As far as I can tell, the explanation of this puzzling carry-over of a formal motif from the 1986 design to the 1992 one has to do with the managerial organisation of a corporate architectural firm, in which the employees who are responsible for the development of design concepts are a different group from those who are responsible for the development of construction details for the firm's projects. One suspects that a corporate decision on the part of KPF's management to shift from 1980s classicism to 1990s neo-constructivism was effectively conveyed to the group of employees responsible for overall conceptual design for projects, but not to those responsible for façade details. Or to put it in Saussurean terms, the *langue* of KPF (as embodied in the firm's repertoire of stock construction



Figure 5: View of KPF's IBM building on the Montreal skyline.



Figure 6: KPF's IBM building, Montreal, detail view at ground level.

details) was *unconsciously* carried over from the 1986 classicist project to the 1992 neo-constructivist one, despite the conscious formal intentions of the employees responsible for the overall design concept of the later project. Or again, to employ an intellectual

construction from Erwin Panofsky, we may say that we are observing here a detail of architectural meaning that has been *betrayed* rather than one that is explicitly *proposed*. In my view, we confront here a problematic instance of the contemporary *homogenisation of representations*³ and one can even say that this homogenisation results in a discernable devaluation of the architectural language of the project.

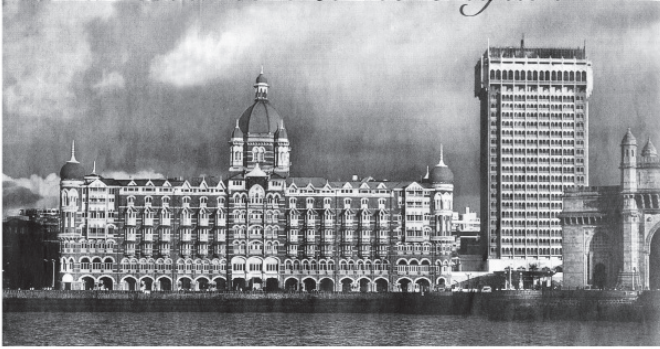


Figure 7: Double page spread from Venturi, Scott-Brown and Izenour's *Learning from Las Vegas*.

An especially controversial example of this sort of homogenisation is one presented by Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Stephen Izenour in their famous 1972 publication, *Learning from Las Vegas*. In it appeared a disheartening trajectory of slowly dissipating formal intensity that stretches from le Corbusier's *la Tourette* monastery through to a Neiman-Marcus department store in Houston, Texas by Helmut, Obata and Kassabaum (see Figure 7). Here you can see the sequence in its entirety, on a double-page spread from the first edition of *Learning from Las Vegas*. And here are the constituent steps in the sequence, beginning with *la Tourette* of 1959–60, and then moving through Paul Rudolph's Art and Architecture Building for Yale University of 1962–63 (already, in this case, the range of complementary employments of concrete textures is reduced from that of *la Tourette*), Ulrich Franzen's Cornell University Agronomy Building from 1936–68 (here, both massing and surface texture can both be seen to be reduced from the original), Kallman McKinnell and Knowles Boston City Hall of 1963 (here we can, I think, recognise some recuperation of motifs of the original building of le Corbusier, but only at the cost of a certain stiffening of its compelling sculptural plasticity), to, finally, the Neiman Marcus department store cited above (in which all that is left of the referent is the heavy cornice). In the case of this sad sequence, we can say that the gradual decline in the formal intensity of the projects illustrated betrays the increasingly limited capacity of their design firms

³ In his introduction to the theme of the workshop, Modjtaba Sadria cites 'a certain vertical integration' of architectural offices as one of the possible contributors to the overall homogenisation of representations in our field. And I do not doubt that such integration is a typical contributor to it. Ironically enough, it would seem that the sheer scale of the KPF operation is such as to have allowed the instance of homogenisation I have described above to occur.

Welcome Home Again.



The Taj Mahal Tower has reopened. Mumbai will rediscover its nesting place and play host to the world again.

Figure 8: Advertisement for the Taj Hotel in Mumbai from the New York Times (January 14, 2009).



Figure 9: View of Caesar's Palace Hotel in Las Vegas (right).

to emulate the Corbusian *parole*. And not only that, the perceptible decline in question is severe enough to constitute an overall diminution of the very *langue* of late modern architecture itself.

Now I understood at the workshop in Vancouver that this was not exactly the mode of homogenisation contemplated by Dr. Sadria in his introductory text. Instead, I took him to be alluding to a condition more like the one captured in an image from an advertisement that happened to appear in the *New York Times*, just as I was beginning to formulate the argument of this paper (see Figure 8). In regard to the image, let me say that I have never been to Mumbai, and thus have no first hand familiarity with the Taj Hotel. But I have, of course, been exposed to many images of the main Taj building, on account of the numerous news reports of the 2008 attack on it. I had seen textual references to the Taj tower in those news reports, but unlike the original building, the tower was not represented in the news photos that accompanied reports in the attack and its aftermath. It was this advertisement that made me aware for the first time of the existence of the tower, and that enabled me to begin to ponder its problematic formal and semantic relationship to the original hotel building beside it.

In this tower, as far as I can tell, we confront a more-or-less typical instance of a pragmatic contemporary hotel tower, which has been provided with a representational cladding its authors deemed appropriate to its geographic and cultural situation. Let me quickly say that while I find its relationship of skin to volume too perfunctory, this example is far from being the most problematic condition one I can imagine. Here, for comparative purposes we can use an image of the tower of the Caesar's Palace hotel in Las Vegas, seen past the façade of the Bellagio hotel across the street (see Figure 9). If one compares the Caesar's Palace example to the Taj, then one can readily see the effort and expense that has been taken by the designers of the Taj tower to contextualise the skin of the pragmatic tower mass, in a fashion appropriate to an institution as important – and as iconic – as the Mumbai Taj. Nevertheless, for me, the Taj tower hovers in a problematic representational limbo. I am able to read its cladding as sufficiently articulate to cause me to grasp its intended relationship to its precursor building, but not sufficiently so as to enable me to read the cladding as conceptually integral with the tower's own volumetric mass.

One need only scrutinize the façade of the original Taj building adjacent, to be able to discern a more successful conceptual integration of cladding and massing. I confess that sustained examination of the façade of the original building has not enabled me to decode the precise iconographic terms of that integration. Indeed, I probably lack the historical knowledge to be able to do so. Still, that having been conceded, I am intrigued by this building that has only entered my consciousness recently, and by chance. And even though I cannot fully decode the relationship of its massing to the detail of its plastic expression – for example, what is one to make of those insistent dormer windows that

so strikingly animate its eave line? – I tend nevertheless to read such a relationship as a visually successful one. My tentative interpretive speculation notwithstanding, to my eye, the original building demonstrates a happier, and more supply reciprocal relationship of skin articulation to massing than its more modern tower partner is able to do. In the case of the only partial success of the tower in this matter, it seems to me that we might speak – on the plane of theory – of a failure of the *parole* to engage with the *langue* deeply enough. If I have understood Dr. Sadria’s charge correctly, I would say that this is surely an instance of precisely the sort of cultural homogenisation that is to be lamented.



Figure 10: View of John Nash’s Royal Pavilion at Brighton.

Perhaps I should confess at this juncture that I was not really surprised to discover that such a reciprocal relationship as that of the skin articulation of the original Taj building to its massing can exist in architecture, even in forms of architecture that evidently straddle distinct cultural contexts. In short, I would hold, as opposed to certain essentialist cultural arguments, that not all representations that combine references from different cultures are necessarily homogenising ones. Perhaps an even more flamboyant example of imperial British appropriation than the original Taj would be the British John Nash’s Royal Pavilion at Brighton – from nearly a century earlier than the Mumbai hotel (see Figure 10). At Brighton, it seems to me that the formal facility of the designer has been expansive enough that his promiscuous appropriation of representational motifs from diverse settings does not prevent him from achieving a surprisingly integral tectonic conception. It even occurred to me in developing this particular part of my argument that one might characterise Nash as a designer possessing an unusually and highly synthetic and inclusive visual sensibility. Designers of such temperament as this cannot resist a certain playfulness, and perhaps even dare-devil formal experimentation. And even when their experiments fail, one can say nonetheless that such experiments still open the door for further possible experimentation by others.

I can go further still, and say that some of my favourite moments in the canon of world architecture entail precocious designers deliberately seeking to emulate formal genres

that have been developed by, and are critically associated with others. I show here, as a case in point, Pierre Chareau's and Bernard Bijvoet's sublime Parisian project of 1930, the *Maison de verre* (see Figure 11). Among the many contemporary admirers of the project was le Corbusier himself, and notwithstanding his admiration for it, the pre-eminent European architect of the time was evidently discomfited by it, even a little upstaged by the formal and technical virtuosity Chareau and Bijvoet had exhibited in it. But whether he was discomfited or not, it is a fact that in one of his own projects of the very next year, the *Maison Clarté* in Geneva, Le Corbusier paid his peers the definitive homage of borrowing innumerable details from their superb Parisian precedent (see Figure 12). In this case, I



Figure 11: Interior view of Pierre Chareau's and Bernard Bijvoet's *Maison de Verre* in Paris.

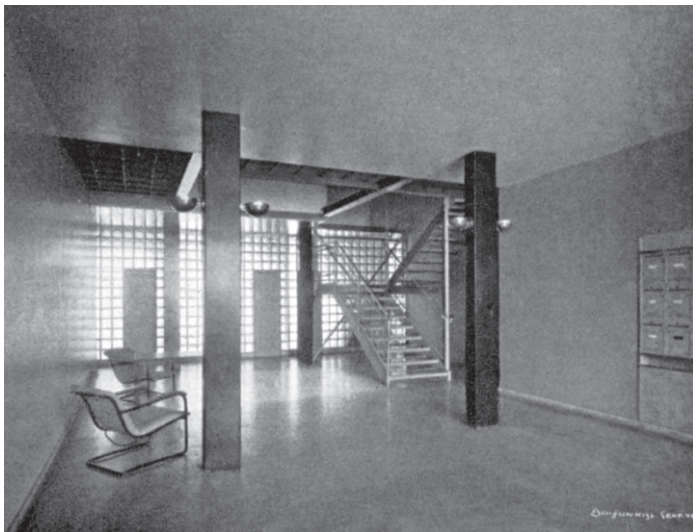


Figure 12: Interior view of le Corbusier's *Maison Clarté* in Geneva.

would argue that Le Corbusier's design dexterity has enabled him successfully to emulate the *parole* of his precocious colleagues.

Let me now discuss a pair of examples of consciously designed urban fabrics that I find relevant to this discussion. I refer to the so-called '*villes indigènes*' designed and constructed during the 1920s and 30s by the French colonial authorities in Casablanca, Morocco (see Figure 13). The Habous quarter from the '20s and the extension of the new medina from the '30s are examples of urban expansion of existing cities that are perhaps among the most successful ones I have even seen. One cannot, of course, deny the cultural and political complexities of the conscious creation by French architects of housing precincts to be inhabited by indigenous Moroccans populations. Nonetheless, as urban fabrics that now belong to the *long durée*, the Habous quarter and the new medina are much more successfully integrated into the city in which they were built, than innumerable examples from other cities and later periods. The morphological compatibility of these Moroccan neighbourhoods with the urban fabrics to which they abut, seems to have granted them an exceptional capacity to integrate over time, urbanistically, sociologically, and formally, in ways that their later, orthodox modernist projects have been unable to do. In this case, a conscious – and it must be said largely successful – effort was made by the designers of the quarters to design for 'the other'. It would seem that their capacity to bridge a socio-cultural gap that the concept of *parole* is too individual to capture, was a formidable one.⁴ Once again then, even in clearly problematic cultural and political circumstances, a thoroughgoing homogenisation seems to have been eluded.

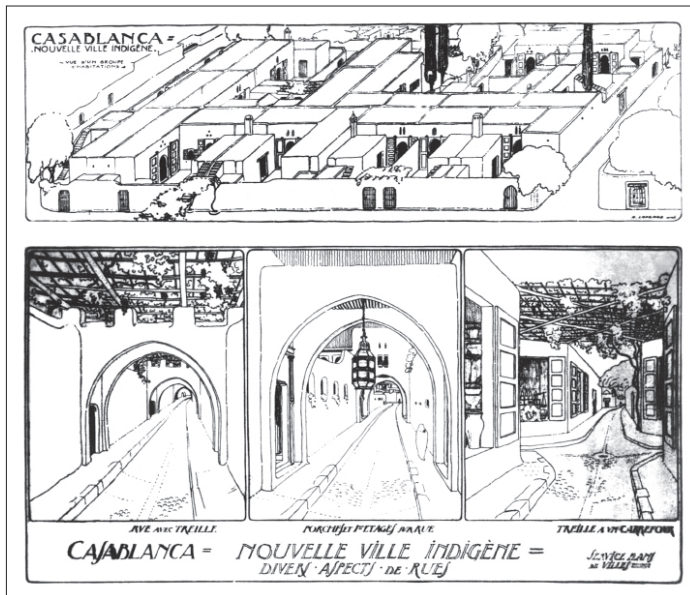


Figure 13: Laprade drawings of the design for a new indigenous town from Cohen and Eleb's *Casablanca: Colonial Myths and Architectural Ventures*.

⁴ See Jean Louis Cohen and Monique Eleb (2002) *Casablanca: Colonial Myths and Architectural Ventures*. New York: Monacelli Press.

Now one might ask, even if one is persuaded by my arguments about the specific examples I have cited, if it would be possible to explain just how it is that some of them have evidently been successful, and others not. And this is, of course, a very large cultural question that brings sharply into relief the two questions posed by Dr. Sadria to us, following the workshop in Vancouver. I will not be able to offer a definitive explanation of these relative successes and failures in this short paper, but let me offer a few suggestive possibilities for consideration. If it is true that the conceptualisation of many formal aspects of building designs is, as I have claimed, an unconscious one, then it is equally true that the reception of those forms by their public is equally so. In Walter Benjamin's famous statement:

Architecture has always represented the prototype of a work of art the reception of which is consummated by a collectivity in a state of distraction.⁵

In the first instance, we may say that even before it is apprehended visually, architecture is appropriately in a bodily fashion. The sensory-motor movement of our body through the spaces of the city or the buildings that comprise it utterly precedes our conscious perception of them. Moreover, perception of architectural forms in its turn takes place before well before we begin to read them iconographically. It is in light of these aspects of the appropriation of architectural forms by their publics that I will offer a few speculations on the success or failure of the built examples I have cited above, to elude homogenisation.

In the case of the Los Angeles houses of the Eames and of Pierre Koenig, one can discern two distinct design approaches to the referent for both that is Mies' Farnsworth house. The Eames house quotes motifs from Farnsworth, and then goes on to exfoliate them in extended chains of signification, semiologically speaking. Indeed, in their *oeuvre* as a whole, one can see this exfoliation extending the palette of modernist design discourse to encompass a whole range of vernacular artifacts that were not previously part of it. The Koenig house, on the other hand, sticks much closer to Farnsworth's basic compositional strategies of reduction, always eliminating as many 'extraneous' motifs from the field of perception as possible. And I would argue that an observer does not have to be a culturally trained one in order to read these opposed compositional techniques of 'association' on the one hand, and 'reduction' on the other, even if he or she may not be able to identify explicitly the iconographical or ideological intentions of the buildings' designers.

In the case of the office buildings of KPF in New York and Montreal, I detect a methodological confusion between the techniques of association and if not reduction, then at least radical unification of the mass of the building as a whole. In other words, the consciously classicising Manhattan tower employs the well-established formal motifs of module, measure, and pattern associated with classicism, and as a result the pictorial effect

⁵ Walter Benjamin (1968) 'The Work of Art in the Era of Mechanical Reproduction' in Hannah Arendt (ed.), *Illuminations*. Harcourt Brace & World, p. 241.



Figure 14: View of house built by Luis Barragan in the 1920s.

of its façades is articulate and animated, at least on its own terms. The formal imperatives of constructivism, on the other hand, require an assertive welding of the mass of the building as a whole into a much smoother and more unified volume. The associative façade detail that has been carried over from the New York building to the Montreal one, badly erodes this necessary unification of the volume of the building, and as a result, its façades – especially those near the ground – appear excessively articulated and overwrought. In this case then, it seems to me that the form of homogenisation that has occurred has led to a somewhat incoherent blandness.

In the case of the Habous quarter and the new medina in Casablanca, the frame of reference of my commentary necessarily shifts from the scale of the individual building to that of the urban quarter. And here we can readily read certain features that distinguish both of these French colonial projects from the orthodox modernist examples of urban renewal and extension that so problematically succeeded them after the end of the Second World War. First of all, the Casablanca projects carry over from their local vernacular the courtyard housing type, together with its shared party walls and low-rise urban form. Unlike their post-war successors, the Casablanca projects are not conceived as discrete formal objects in space, and they are not multi-storey. Indeed, they shape the public spaces of the neighbourhood they comprise in a very positive way. Then too, these projects also eschew the desire to separate themselves off from the existing urban

fabric to which they abut, and thus forsake the opportunity to try to symbolise a new urban future, as their post-war successors so consistently – and so tragically – have done. Instead, they are conceived as integral components of an urban fabric which already exists, and in relation to which they stand simply as improved, but still relatively familiar urban and social typologies; formally more precocious and considered than their vernacular precedents, but still recognisable to their inhabitants, both individually and collectively.

I would like to conclude my sequence of architectural cases with what is for me an especially poignant crossing of genres, this time in the long, productive career of the great Mexican architect Luis Barragan. Barragan began his career in the 1920s, and executed a large number of residential projects in and around Mexico City which were skillful ones within the classical vernacular genre of Hispanic residential architecture of that period (see Figure 14). In the early '30s, Barragan found himself swayed by the increasingly



Figure 15: Barragan building from the 1930s.



Figure 16: Interior view of the studio of Barragan's house for himself.

influential tenets of international modernism, and the result of this was a whole series of projects from that decade in which he demonstrated a new dimension of his design virtuosity. I show here a typical example from that period (see Figure 15). Then, later still, Barragan's deployment of the formal language of modernism gradually evolved again, into the minimalist, somewhat mystical vocabulary for which he is now most renowned. In one remarkable instance of work from this later period – one we can surely call his 'mature' one – he built a home and studio for himself, a project that is another in the canon of my own world favourites (see Figure 16). Here, we can see that Barragan has successfully distilled the spare essence of the vocabulary of modernism, and yet has managed at the same time, to evoke the powerful artisanal traditions of the country in which he practiced his whole life. It seems to me that in his home, we contemplate a hybrid masterpiece that is able to hold in brilliant equilibrium, a whole series of complex references to architectures and to cultural histories that show Barragan's conceptual, representational capacities triumphant. Sculptural forms that are at one and the same time Arabic and cubist, construction details that are both industrialised and artisanal, and an utterly playful interpretation of the age-old architectural theme of the relationship of a building's interior to its exterior.⁶

⁶ In a brilliant text published in the first issue of the recently launched architecture journal *Positions*, Jorge Liernur has argued that the conservative German critics of the architecture of *die neue sachlichkeit* in

To conclude my text as a whole, I return briefly to the two questions that Dr. Sadria posed to us after the workshop, in respect to the mechanisms that lead towards homogenisation or heterogenisation in the built environment and the lived one. Needless to say, in my intense focus on built form, I have leant more to the former than the latter. But I would claim that through my employment of a semiological framework to shape my analysis, I have posited a workable enough, early mode of reception theory to be able to argue that my argument encompasses in significant measure, aspects of the lived environment as well.

What is more, I hope that I have demonstrated that the conceptual, formal, technical and social skills of designers can successfully elude homogenisation, despite the power of the contemporary social, economic, political, cultural and historical forces that so powerfully promote it. I would argue that my varied examples from Los Angeles, Paris, Geneva and Mexico City all demonstrate this, and that my more problematic instances from Montreal and Mumbai demonstrate what happens when the skills of the designers in question are insufficient to meet the challenges of those forces. Let us reflect for a moment on the example of contemporary Dubai, cited by Dr. Sadria as an example in which it is clear that the consequences of those insufficiencies can be culturally catastrophic. It troubles me deeply how current commentaries on the new architecture of Dubai – even those that are critical ones – tend to focus almost entirely on its iconography, and leave unconsidered its urban morphologies and building typologies. As a result, in most of these commentaries, its utter lack of urbanity escapes unscathed. As anyone who has spent time there knows all too well, the quotidian experience of the public space of the new Dubai is degraded in the extreme. Its streetscapes lack intimacy or amenity; its high-rise towers lack any urbane relationship one to the next, and its putative public realm is utterly void of any but the most acutely stressed modes of social heterogeneity. All that is usually commented on is the ensemble of its innumerable towers, viewable as pictorially engaging only as a skyline from afar. Yet those towers, by and large, are utterly repellent in bodily or social terms, up close.

The new Dubai is surely a world cultural tragedy. Yet the irony is that even in this part of the world, all one has to do to rediscover true urbanity is to retreat to old Dubai – the area known as Deira – on the east side of the creek, where a modest, but nonetheless vibrant social, economic, political, cultural and historical urban fabric continues to exist. There one finds streets bustling with multifarious life, a dense, relatively low-rise pattern of built form appropriate to the local climate, and an intense series of souqs, some of

the 1920s and '30s, were not wrong to label the forms of that architecture 'Arabic' as their modernist opponents have claimed, but only wrong to suppose that to label them as such an epithet was sufficient to demonstrate their lack of cultural value. See Jorge Liernur (2008) 'It's the Viewpoint, Stupid! Nine Points on Positions', *Positions*, Netherlands Architecture Institute and University of Minnesota Press, No: 0, Fall: 62.

which have even been provided with simple, yet sophisticated forms of climate modification. And all this only a few kilometers from Jumeirah and the tragic 'new' Dubai. Can we hope that the next generation of designers of the new Dubai will possess the formal and the political sophistication to learn from the old one?⁷

⁷ Some evidence that this hope is a reasonable one appears in two recent projects, one by the Office of Metropolitan Architecture for Dubai, and the other – the Masdar initiative – by Foster & Partners for Abu Dhabi. In the first case, yet another artificial island is created, but on it is proposed a multilaterally connected urban grid with street-related buildings on blocks – and even a climate modifying system of covered pedestrian ways. In the second, even more ambitious case, a contemporary urban mat is proposed, which takes its overall design cues from the traditional forms of Arab urban housing, with dense, low-rise accommodation, courtyards, covered streets, etc.

Neither Homogeneity Nor Heterogeneity: Modernism's struggles in the Muslim world

NEZAR ALSAYYAD

Looking at architecture and urbanism in the Muslim world today, one cannot ignore the revolutionary developments that have occurred in the world in the last decades of the 20th century. Trends such as the transnationalisation of capital, the internationalisation of labor, the steady increase in global trading and communication, and the ensuing competition between cities have led individuals, businesses, industries, and governments to attempt to position themselves globally.¹ It follows that in a globally compressed world, constituted of national societies that are becoming increasingly aware of their ethnic and racial roots, the conditions for the identification of individual and collective selves become very complex.² It is important to take into account that any theory of globalisation must recognise the distinctive cultural and unequal conditions under which the notion of the 'global' was constructed.³ It also becomes difficult to comprehend globalisation without recognising the historical specificity of traditional cultures, their colonisation, and their later emergence as nation-states.

At the heart of all of these issues is the question of identity. We see this very clearly in no place more than in the vast Muslim World, where the very problematic traditional/modern dialectic is often invoked. Of course, all societies are constructed in relation to one another and produced, represented, and perceived through the ideologies and narratives of situated discourse.⁴ For example, the definition of the 'Muslim World' as a category is very much dependent on the existence of a 'Christian West'. Both terms are mainly defined in difference, constructed in opposition to the other, produced in a variety of postcolonial and anti-colonial discourses, although neither of them constitutes a

¹ See Anthony D. King (ed.) (1991) *Culture, Globalization, and the World-System*. Basingstoke, U.K.: Macmillan, in association with the Department of Art and Art History, SUNY at Binghamton.

² Roland Robertson (1991) 'Social Theory, Cultural Relativity, and the Problems of Globality', in King, *Culture, Globalization, and the World-System*.

³ Many conceptions of globalisation have been developed in the social sciences or are rooted in economic theories. This essay mainly draws from the field of cultural studies.

⁴ Janet Wolff (1991) 'The Global and the Specific: Reconsidering Conflicting Theories of Culture', in King, *Culture, Globalization, and the World-System*.

monolithic preexisting real subject itself.⁵ Even the Aga Khan Trust, in setting up the Aga Khan Award for Architecture, had to come up with its own definition of what constitutes the Muslim World for the purposes of the Award.

Periodising Modernity in the Muslim World

In studying the relationship between the West and the Muslim World and its effect on the corresponding identity of people and architecture, three historic phases may be discerned: the colonial period, the era of independence and nation-state building, and, the most recent phase, globalisation. These phases appear to have been associated with three respective urban forms: the hybrid, the modern or pseudo-modern, and the postmodern. In this essay, I hope to demonstrate how constructed the notion of the Muslim World has been and to show the fluidity of identity under both colonial and global conditions, often invoking examples from the Muslim World. But I also want to make explicit that this historical periodisation and the attempt to theorise modernity in the entire Muslim World will always be an abstract exercise. Generalisation about the diverse countries of the Muslim World, a fragile geopolitical entity whose existence as a single cultural unit can, and should be always called into question, and may only be justified in the pursuit of general cultural knowledge of the region.

Before the era of colonialism in most of the Muslim World, architecture and urbanism largely took the form of traditional communities under pre-industrial and often insular conditions. Although some forms of economic exchange occurred between this world and that of the developed world, curiosity about the 'other' was limited. These vernacular forms were shaped primarily by socio-cultural attributes and surrounding natural limitations. They also reflected, possibly at the subconscious level, the identity of their inhabitants.

Around the middle of the 19th century, the world witnessed the rise of modern industrial capitalism and the emergence of organised political dominance, represented by colonialism. The paradigm shift from the traditional to the colonial created a relationship of unequal cultural and socioeconomic exchange. And, if one analyses the issues of identity in the Muslim World, one must take this fact into account and understand the processes by which identity was violated, ignored, distorted, or stereotyped throughout history. For once the 'backwardness' of this traditional Muslim World population was established (at least in the minds of the great mass of citizens in the colonial motherland), reform was legitimatised. This series of events did not necessarily have an effect on the physical fabric of cities; everywhere the colonists went, they introduced their own brand of settlements.

⁵ See Stuart Hall (1991) 'Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities', in King, *Culture, Globalization, and the World-System*.

The colonisation process affected the overall planning model that determined the patterns of urban development. This was the era when modernist ideas flowed from the countries of the West to the Muslim World. Ironically, in the 1950s and 1960s, when many Muslim World countries launched their wars of liberation and independence, the colonists resorted to an age-old urban strategy. Hundreds of traditional villages were destroyed in order to regroup the population in checkerboard resettlement towns under the banner of modernisation. This uprooting operation, as in the case of the Algerian war, was meant to break the subversive influence of the rebels, rather than to improve conditions for the local population. The colonial era thus resulted in a hybrid urban condition and, subsequently, a certain architectural and urban language began to emerge, at least at the visual level, that unified the countries of the Muslim World ruled by certain colonial empires – British, French, and Italian.

When the people of the Muslim World started to rebel against this colonial world order, they had little conceptual language to employ in their drive to establish sovereignty. Often they were forced to use the terms of the existing order, with all its baggage of physical realities and ideological constructs, like the nation-state. Groups of people living in one region under a colonial power (but of different religions, languages, ethnicities, and traditions, as in the case of Iraq and Sudan), sharing little more than a colonial history, had to band together to achieve this new, 'more advanced' stage of independence. The new political and governing bodies highlighted what few commonalities existed, and suppressed differences, in pursuit of the larger goal of freedom and independence. A national identity based on shorter-term political interest and the ideology of struggle emerged as the driving force behind many nationalist movements in the Muslim World. Once independence was achieved, the glue that bound together the various groups no longer held. Indeed, the long ethnic civil wars in Sudan and the recent American occupation of Iraq have exposed these weaknesses in those states. The continuing conflicts between the different ethnic groups that formed these countries are testament to the true associations of their native populations, where ethnic origin or religious affiliation have been, or have re-emerged as the prime definer of their collective identity.⁶

Again, the second phase of independence struggles and nationalism did not necessarily improve the quality of the built environment in the Muslim World, nor did it resolve the conflicts that plagued the traditional settlements of those countries. During the era of colonialism, important and irreversible decisions were made that affected the production of the built environment. In the Arab Muslim World, for example, new building codes requiring setbacks (based on Western norms) forced the traditional courtyard house out of existence in much of the Arab World. New construction often took the form of banal single-family dwellings that were unsuited for the climate of those countries. Also, in

⁶ Nezar AlSayyad (1992) 'Urbanism and the Dominance Equation', in Nezar AlSayyad, (ed.), *Forms of Dominance*. London: Avebury.

such societies, where privacy was cherished, major adaptations of these new forms were required. In some countries, entire efficient systems of construction were abandoned because they did not suit the modern era. The urban system fell grossly out of balance, and the urban environment of many Muslim Countries became pseudo-modernised.⁷

An obsession with modernity accompanied the early years of nationalism and independence and preoccupied most governments in the Muslim World, including the most conservative ones. As a result the Western, particularly European, pattern of urban development continued to serve as the main frame of reference, especially for the urban middle classes who stepped in after independence to run the various bureaucracies of these new nation-states. During this period, after World War II, the construction of public housing was pursued in many parts of the world both as an instrument of rebuilding and as a mechanism to achieve social justice. Despite the failures of many public housing projects in the West, the international influence of modernism was strong enough to assure that this public housing model would be often copied in the Muslim World without questioning its stability. Here, as with other developing nations, Muslim World governments in rich and poor states alike often used public-housing projects as an instrument of nation-building in an attempt to gain the allegiance of the new citizenry. In Egypt, for example, under the nationalist-socialist regime of Gamal Abdel Nasser, thousands of public housing blocks were built across the country. Suffering under the usual problems of such development – lack of maintenance, empty and unused spaces, the need to accommodate expanding families – many residents took matters into their own hands and took over these projects by reappropriating them in novel ways. Some built additions into public spaces, others took over ground floors to use as private vegetable gardens, and, in some cases, the project's community collaborated in erecting small neighborhood mosques to camouflage their interventions, which revealed a new tendency to resort to the power of religion to achieve their goals. Both ethnicity (e.g., Kurdish, Berber, Nubian) and religion (in this case, Islam) were becoming the preeminent forms of community identification in much of the Muslim World.

We may consider globalisation as the third phase in the relationship between the Muslim World and the West, particularly at a time when the search for and the reconstruction of identity has become paramount. Once independence was achieved and the dust from the struggle had settled, the problems of national and community harmony began to surface. Where these issues were resolved, religious and political fundamentalisms began to flourish. To understand the impact of these forces on urbanism, closer attention must be paid to the difficulties associated with defining national identity. The primary elements of nation identity – race, language, religion, history, territory and tradition – have always been essential but unequal components in its formation. The political units that formed

⁷ Nezar AlSayyad (1995) 'From Vernacularism to Globalism: The Temporal Reality of Traditional Settlements', *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review* 7, no. 1, pp. 13–24.

most nations in the Muslim World after the two World Wars were expected to be homogenous entities with a common culture. But the reality was otherwise, as these nation-states were mainly put together by international deals that displayed little interest in the will of the people who inhabited these lands. Iraq, Lebanon and Afghanistan are among the clear examples.

National identity as perceived by a government is inherently tied to the image it wishes to project in the international arena. Many governments of Muslim Countries resorted to using local and foreign architects to help them create such a new national style. While many of these post-independence projects continued the modernist schema, some others totally retreated to older traditional forms, and sometimes to newly invented ones that claimed to be based on specific historical periods. The work of Ramzy Omar and Ali Nassar in Egypt was an extension of the modernist schema, but with a lot of attention to issues of climate and abstract symbolism. These two architects helped build a large number of structures for the newly constituted public sector in Egypt, which included hotels, schools, clubs, and even structures for Egypt's single party at the time, the Arab Socialist Union, representing the attempt to devise a modern architecture for Egypt that was based on universal principles but adapted for the Egyptian context. Anyone who lived in Egypt in the 1960s easily recognises these buildings today, which are often referred to as the Socialist Architecture of Egypt. I am not only talking about these public buildings, but also about the vast numbers of five-storey public housing walk-ups discussed earlier.

There were a few who had earlier rejected the Western styles altogether, and here architect Hassan Fathy stands out as the lone ranger. His village of New Gourná, near Luxor, Egypt, provides an interesting story of grudging critical acclaim. New Gourná was planned in the 1950s as the new home for residents of an old settlement that existed among the archaeological sites of the ancient Theban necropolis, whom the Egyptian government wanted to evict from their houses. Fathy designed the village using elaborate mud-brick structures that he imagined represented indigenous traditions. However, in his search for the ideal vernacular form, he turned to the geometries and proportions of Islamic styles, particularly Mamluk, which had flourished in medieval Cairo several centuries earlier. Among other things, this resulted in the use of unfamiliar forms (domes and vaults) for the project, which the local people associated with the tombs and shrines of the dead. New Gourná was an elegant depiction of an idea, but when the villagers who were meant to live there refused to move in, the attempt to create a new community with no real economic or social justification was revealed as a costly mistake. And in the end it became all too clear that Fathy's true concern was with his standing among his Western architectural peers, not his struggling Egyptian colleagues. Nevertheless, on account of the publicity of his effort to adapt indigenous architectural forms to create a national style, and after

winning the distinguished Aga Khan Award for Architecture, Fathy became something of a guru among Muslim World architects.⁸

Today, examples of Fathy-like architecture are widespread in the Egyptian landscape, often giving the mistaken impression that this is what vernacular architecture in Egypt has always looked like. What Fathy had inadvertently done was to resuscitate an old tradition, or to simply invent a new one based on an imagined continuous history and an assumed homogenous community, when neither existed. His project is, in fact, an excellent example of how architecture can provide some of the best illustrations to Benedict Anderson's brilliant and important thesis about imagined communities.⁹ Only time will tell whether the imagery that Fathy created in Gournah will become a lasting national Egyptian style, unlike the short-lived modern style that emerged in Egypt's socialist period.

Of course, identity cannot be based on some myth from precolonial times. Many 'Muslim Worldern' nations have resorted to a past in which identity may coalesce as a solace against the perceived dominator, often forgetting that respect for the past must also include accepting and coming to terms with the architectural and urban legacy of colonisation itself. In the 1920s and 1930s, when it was a monarchy, Egypt often resorted to its Pharaonic past to establish the symbols of its new nationhood. But its architects and planners, like Fathy, often borrowed more from its Islamic heritage as well. Other architects simply invoked both traditions without resolving any possible contradictions, and that resulted in interesting hybrid forms that some may consider uniquely Egyptian but still modernist. The work of Ali Labib Gabr is a good example of this creative but small group of practitioners from the 1940s.

Globalisation, Identity, and the 'Other' in the Muslim World

The problem of national identity is of course complicated by the extensive economic exchanges that characterise the world today. Not only do Muslim nations have to mediate between pre-colonial and colonial legacies, between the traditional and the modern, but they must also deal with the effects of globalisation and the New World Order.

'Globalisation' here refers to the process by which the world is becoming a single economic entity, characterised by information exchange, interconnected modes of production, and flows of labor and capital within a predominately capitalist world system. Indeed, the considerable migration from the former colonies in the Muslim World and North Africa to the lands of their former colonisers in Europe and the infiltration of these ethnic subcultures into mainstream European societies cannot be dismissed. In fact, this

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Benedict Anderson (1983) *Imagined Communities*, London: Verso.

demographic change has often been the cause of social conflict as these local subcultures, often Muslim, have resorted to ethnic, racial, or religious allegiances to keep from being swallowed up by the majority culture.¹⁰

The current attempts at multiculturalism in Europe, and the struggles, often failed, of many European governments to cope with their minority Muslim populations, usually from Muslim countries, may be a good example of a strategy to embrace difference as a fundamental constituent of national identity. It is ironic that as the national identity of the former European colonisers is being discussed and reassessed, often in an attempt to become more inclusive, the national identity of the formerly colonised nations of the Muslim World is moving in the opposite direction, and is often becoming more exclusive and more directly linked to national origin or religious association. Indeed, the 20th century has witnessed the return of states where belonging to a particular religious or ethnic group is a prerequisite for the enjoyment of full citizenship rights or status.¹¹ Here, Israel and Iran may be good examples of this point.

We must remember, however, that national identity is always undergoing a process of transformation and flux. While the contradictory forces of globalisation may be playing havoc with traditional loyalties and values and challenging older ideologies and practices, a single 'world culture' inclusive of Muslim Worldern traditions remains a distant prospect. Thus, as Benjamin Barber points out in his appropriately titled book, *Jihad vs. McWorld*, Muslim Worldern and Islamic nations want the veil, but they also want the World Wide Web and Coca Cola.¹²

Timothy Mitchell, on the other hand, argued that Jihad is not antithetical to the development of McWorld, and that McWorld is really McJihad, a necessary combination of a variety of social logics and economic forces, often driven by and benefiting from the advances in communication technology that led to the emergence, particularly in the Muslim World, of the current Jihadist movements, like Al-Qaida.¹³ Here, some Muslim countries evolve their own local appropriations of many Western practices without ever embracing their logic. Similarly, for its part, the West continues to be interested in consuming the cultures and environments of Muslim countries because of the exotic differences they offer, but without accepting their underlying premise. A good example here may be the fascination or the fixation that some Western countries have with monuments in the Islamic World and their emergence as financial patrons for monument preservation as part of what they

¹⁰ Nezar AlSayyad and Manuel Castells (eds.) (2002) *Muslim Europe or Euro-Islam*. Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books.

¹¹ Nezar AlSayyad (1992) 'Urbanism and the Dominance Equation', in Nezar AlSayyad, (ed.) *Forms of Dominance*. London: Avebury.

¹² See Benjamin Barber (1995) *Jihad vs. McWorld*. New York: Ballantine Books.

¹³ Timothy Mitchell (2002) 'McJihad: Islam in the U.S. Global Order', *Social Text Vol. 20*, no. 4, Winter: 1–18.

define as 'universal' heritage, even when the natives of those Muslim countries do not recognise or accept the historic value of such structures. The dynamiting of the Buddha Statues in Bamian, Afghanistan, under the Taliban regime is a case in point.

I have argued elsewhere that most people usually exhibit two conflicting sentiments toward tradition, culture, and the past. The first is to resort to culture and tradition out of fear of change – change that in and of itself may be inevitable. But protectionism against the unknown or the unfamiliar can, and often does, turn into fundamentalism. Some may simplistically argue that this position offers an explanation for the attitudes of some Muslim nations and their people toward the West, but I believe that the matter is more complex than that and requires a more global perspective.

The second sentiment, characterised by interest in the culture of the mysterious 'other,' an idea that generated the initial interest of European orientalists in the Muslim World, emerges from a totally different feeling, that is, the desire to have the choice to merge with the 'other' and share in a wider or a different collective consciousness. Indeed, we see this sentiment clearly represented among groups of Muslims living in the West who have become thoroughly westernised and are no longer interested in or comfortable with their Muslim heritage, as well as among groups of Europeans.

The tremendous movement of citizens across borders and the rise of protected ethnic minorities demonstrate that the two sentiments, both legitimate, are not necessarily contradictory. In fact, they may indeed occur simultaneously, or, alternatively, based on time and place.¹⁴ I would argue that the interplay between these two sentiments shapes much of the attitudes of many Muslims in Western countries and may be a better way to shape the debate than the homogeneity – heterogeneity dichotomy. For those interested in the critical study of architecture and urbanism in the Muslim World in the era of globalisation, there are some lessons to be learned.¹⁵ First, one may argue that even as the many different nations converge into a 'world culture,' it is a culture marked by the management of diversity, rather than by the replication of uniformity. Indeed homogeneity of images conceals a heterogeneity of experience and reality. This so-called 'world culture,' an idea made possible during the heyday of modernisation, remains essentially a culture of dominant groups, in which the persistent diversity of the constituent local culture – as is the case with many Muslim countries – is often a product of globalisation itself.

¹⁴ Nezar AlSayyad (1996) 'Culture, Identity, and Urbanism in a Changing World', in Michael A. Cohen et al. (eds.), *Preparing for the Urban Future*. Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and the Johns Hopkins University Press.

¹⁵ Many of these lessons are collected in a series of essays by Anthony King, Stuart Hall, Roland Robertson, Immanuel Wallerstein, Ulf Hannerz, and Janet Wolff, among others. The essays are from a symposium held at the State University of New York, Binghamton, in 1989 (see King, *Culture, Globalization, and the World-System*).

The second lesson involves the connection between this world culture and the nature and form of space and place as this culture is increasingly placeless. Indeed, it is a culture created through the rapid interconnectedness of local, national, and foreign communities, through flows of information whose logic is largely uncontrolled by any specific local society but whose impacts shape the lives of all these local societies.¹⁶ Nowhere can this be better observed than in the Muslim World. Here, the impact on architecture and urbanism is that cultural experience, even in the supposedly traditional Muslim World which is sometimes notorious for its resistance to change, will likely become less place-rooted and more information-based.

The case of the Muslim World may in fact convince us that the so-called 'universal modernism,' if one can talk about such a thing, is only or mainly a European phenomenon. The permanently hybrid nature of architecture and urbanism in the Muslim World makes it impossible to accept this 'universal' notion. Hence, the rising tide of placelessness will not likely generate a uniform global response, since the underlying cultural diversity will find new and yet to be known means to manifest itself. Placelessness will not eventually undermine cultural diversity, but it will require different practices for the construction of the multiple and increasingly complex identities of the people of the Muslim World.

Finally, and despite the world's preoccupation with globalisation, the history of the world demonstrates a movement toward cultural differentiation and not homogenisation, in which each individual belongs to many cultures and people have multiple cultural identities. In this sense, identity is always under construction and in constant evolution. For if hybridity is accepted as an inherent constituent of national identity, then the ensuing urbanism must be accepted as only a reflection of a specific transitional stage in the life of any society.¹⁷

Indeed, globalisation has made the issues of identity and representation in urbanism very cumbersome and has cast doubt on urbanism's ability to fully represent the peoples, nations, and cultures within which it exists. But since culture has become increasingly placeless, urbanism will likely become one of the few remaining arenas where one may observe how local cultures mediate global domination. Again, here the countries of the Muslim World will be prime sites for such observations. But as the nations of this globalising Muslim World become more conscious of their religious convictions and ethnic roots, they are likely to seek forms and norms that represent these sub-identities, even if these send confused messages to a global audience that will ultimately deal with them through the spaces of flows.

¹⁶ Manuel Castells (1992) 'The World Has Changed: Can Planning Change?' *Landscape and Urban Planning*, Vol. 22, no. 1, pp. 73– 78.

¹⁷ Nezar AlSayyad (ed.) (2001) *Hybrid Urbanism*. New York: Prager.

In the end, while some may argue that there is a world of difference between the 'true' modernity of a First World city like London or Paris and the 'apparent' modernity of Cairo or Beirut, much new research has demonstrated that citizens of Muslim World countries are articulating a project of active citizenship outside of the traditional institutional arenas. It is a unique modernity cognizant of the surrounding global and transnational current.¹⁸

Whether the different nations that constitute the Muslim World will be able to develop a new political culture and a spatial articulation beyond the slogans of traditionalism, religious revival, and anti-modernity is yet to be seen. The new claims to citizenship that have emerged recently may simply be a response to the perceived threat of the rising American Empire. This raises for me the most important issue in studying modernity and modernism in the Muslim World.

In his book *All That Is Solid Melts into Air*, Marshall Berman brilliantly illustrated how the modernity of Paris and St. Petersburg in the mid-19th century was a modernity based on urban encounters in the newly-opened boulevards, which, in Paris, were often cut from the traditional fabric of the medieval city.¹⁹ These new public spaces allowed the rich and the poor to come together in physical contact in new and unprecedented ways. This apparently similar modernity in both of these cities captured very different meanings. In Paris, it was a modernity of class encounter grounded in a particular liberal tradition, whereas in St. Petersburg, Berman argues, it was a 'modernity of underdevelopment', bearing the apparent forms of the modern but lacking its processes, and marked more by a mix of mimicry and envy.

The globalising changes that the Muslim World has undergone, particularly in its confrontation with the West following the repercussions of 9/11, have opened up new experiences of modernity à la Berman. Are today's exclusive malls of Cairo, Beirut, Dubai, and Doha, where the totally veiled mix comfortably with the skimpily dressed, the new boulevards of a unique Muslim modernity?²⁰ Will the attempt to reconcile 'McWorld' and Jihad lead to a new and different modernity? Or will we see a retreat to traditionalism without an abandonment of the fundamental premises of modernity, a sort of 'Medieval Modernity' that deals with the new parameters of survival in an ever-changing and globalising world?²¹

¹⁸ Paul Amar and Diane Singerman (eds.) (2006) *Cairo Cosmopolitan*. Cairo: American University in Cairo Press.

¹⁹ Marshall Berman (1988) *All That Is Solid Melts into Air*. New York: Penguin.

²⁰ Nezar AlSayyad (2006) 'Whose Cairo?' in Paul Amar and Diane Singerman (eds.), *Cairo Cosmopolitan*. Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, p. 539.

²¹ Ananya Roy and Nezar AlSayyad (2005) 'Medieval Modernity: Citizenship in Contemporary Urbanism,' *Applied Anthropologist*, Vol. 25, no. 2, pp. 147–65.

Generative Copies: Modernist Architecture and Urbanism in Brazil

JAMES HOLSTON

CIAM modernism is one of the most enduring, reproduced and recognised standards of architecture and planning the world has known. For all the criticism it has endured, from every angle and imagination (mine included, see Holston 1989), it remains arguably the most coherent paradigm of the architected environment globally. To be sure, there are successful competitors. But most derive directly from it in both form and strategy. Moreover, its practitioners and sponsors – architects, planners, developers, governments, international agencies, local organisations, corporations and so forth – range across the entire political spectrum. The global pre-eminence of CIAM’s modernist lexicon may be attributed to a number of factors: its formal brilliance in subverting the architectural conventions of its opponents, its dominance in architectural education and professional organisation, and, perhaps above all, its elective affinity with modernity itself, that is, its ability to communicate both the aspirations and the tragedies of being modern – the bravado of being able to rewrite history and leap into a radiant future by means of ‘total design’ as well as the aloneness of mass life registered in building forms whose outlines appear self-contained and detached.

The very success of CIAM suggests a means to address an important question raised in this volume of essays: Do CIAM’s globalised standards homogenise the built environment, producing look-alike urban landscapes that flatten urban life itself into sameness? A sameness without vitality? One might ask the same question of other successful architectures, especially those that accompany empire. One might ask it, for example, of the ubiquity of the Doric column and entablature, though the destiny of classical architecture as pure appliqué gave it an adaptable superficiality inherently unavailable to CIAM’s sculptural modelling. Certainly, one of the frequent charges levelled against CIAM modernism is homogenisation. By that, I mean the reduction of social, cultural, material and functional differences to templates of architectural solution produced through the universalisation of a particular conceptualisation of architecture and its conventions of form, space and design. My focus in this paper is in part on these conventions. However, my larger concern is with a problem of copying, the problem of reiterating and transplanting recognisable conventions that is necessarily a component of the propagation of any model, style and paradigm, including architecture.

High and Low Copies

I take as my case one example of such propagation, namely, Brazil's national investment in CIAM modernist architecture. This modernism is on display in all Brazilian cities. Among its various renditions, one is internationally renowned for transforming the lexicon of CIAM into brilliant Brazilian performances. I refer to the gems of this avant-garde that Brazil's world-famous architects continue to produce – the buildings of the Ministry of Education and Culture, Copan, and Brasília to note a few. Although their types and functions vary, they are designed by architects – such as Paulo Mendes da Rocha and Oscar Niemeyer – who maintain a highly competitive dialogue through them not only with each other but also with the ambitions of design professionals globally.

Another performance of this modernism is not well-known outside Brazil. Yet examples are found by the thousands in modest residential neighbourhoods throughout the country: single-family homes that are owner designed and built, an 'autoconstruction' (*autoconstrução*) as Brazilians call it, produced by both the middle and the working classes without professional architects. Sometimes labelled 'popular modernism', its designer/builders are no less concerned with using modernist architecture to narrate, to say something about being modern Brazilians. However, their modernist means are routinely dismissed by both native and foreign architects, critics and historians as kitsch, degenerative, vulgar and worthless imitations precisely because they are vernacular.

One way to bring these two performances into critical relation is to show that while they sometimes homogenise, at other times these architectural modernisms create active, participatory and diverse publics. The question is, what conditions produce each outcome? Surely one condition for evaluation concerns the means and modes of their dissemination. Neither 'high' nor 'low' versions are imposed undesired in Brazil. Rather, both are widely demanded and consumed. Studies of Brazilian architecture demonstrate the popularity of modernist architecture among all classes of Brazilians. Though most focus exclusively on the production of star architects, a few consider autoconstruction among the lower and middle classes.¹

* All illustrations are by the author unless otherwise noted.

¹ For example, James Holston (1991) and Fernando Luiz Lara (2008). There are many historically-oriented studies of modernist architecture in Brazil. They may be grouped in terms of the final period of architectural production they consider: Goodwin (1943) up to the early 1940s, Mindlin (1956) the mid 1950s (before Brasília), Bruand (1981), Ficher and Acayaba (1982) and Lemos (1979) the 1970s, and Arantes et al. (2004) and Cavalcanti and Corrêa do Lago (2005) the mid-2000s. On Brazilian modernism in other fields, see Wilson Martins (1969). Specifically on Brasília, see Holston (1989) and Holston (2001), Belo Horizonte, Lara (2008); and Rio de Janeiro, Czajkowski (2000). Interestingly, I could find no book solely on modern architecture in São Paulo. Furthermore, there is very little, if any discussion in the general architectural studies I cite above on the density of modern residential and commercial construction in downtown São Paulo that I consider in this essay. Perhaps that is because the design of most of this construction is not considered 'star quality' but only 'ordinary modern', and architecture books tend to focus on stars. Thus

These studies highlight two crucial sources of dissemination: modernism's propagation by the state – that is, its sponsorship in projects built by various local and national administrations of government – and its appearance in the media, in 'coffee table' magazines, television (especially in telenovelas and advertisements), and in trade magazines. These sources expose massive numbers of Brazilians to modernist architecture, turning this architecture into a widely legible, compelling and innovative paradigm of communication about the modern and its prospects for producing new personal, social and national identities.

Especially between the 1930s and 1970s, but continuing today, Brazilians of all classes embraced the 'new architecture' because they saw in it a means to express their aspirations to invent new futures that were simultaneously national and personal, the destiny of one identified with that of the other. To both the state and its citizens, the modernist vocabulary articulated a way of leaping over a backward, rustic, and colonial past into a radiant industrial urban future constructed symbolically and concretely with the columns, canopies and *brises-soleils* of modernist architecture. It expressed a direct equation: building modern indicates being modern and being modern means innovation. Thus President Juscelino Kubitschek justified his support for Lúcio Costa's modernist Master Plan for Brasília in the following terms: 'Owing to the need to constitute a base of radiation of a pioneering system [of development in all areas] that would bring to civilization an unrevealed universe, [Brasília] had to be, perforce, a metropolis with different characteristics that would ignore the contemporary reality and would be turned, with all of its constitutive elements, toward the future' (1975: 62). This 'spirit of Brasília' as it was often called – this invocation to break with the past, to dare to imagine a different future, to embrace the modern as a field for experiment and risk – was most legibly captured in Brazil's architectural production. However, it was also articulated in other important aspects of Brazil's emerging urbanity, from television and cinema to participatory citizenship.

Another way to bring Brazil's cosmopolitan and popular performances of architectural modernisms into critical relation is to suggest that the intense debates about the worth of each have the same root issue. It is the judgement that the copy is inferior and that copying is inauthentic, if not degenerative. There is a double iteration of this problem in Brazilian architectural modernism. On the one hand, the importation of European avant-garde modernism to the 'periphery' of Brazil is deemed artificial and false because

there are books on São Paulo's individual star architects and, in the general studies, some treatment of their (star) buildings in the city. However, these are overwhelmingly single structures (often houses) presented without discussion or illustration of their urban context. Even the well-known Copan receives scant attention and, when it does, it is only as a decontextualised single structure. Is the obsession in architectural criticism and education with 'stardom' (with individual star architects and buildings) the best approach to an architecture for and of cities, most of which will inevitably be 'ordinary modern'?

exogenous; on the other, the Brazilian masters of the high modern 'made in Brazil' dismiss its translation into an 'unarchitected' vernacular as mimetic kitsch.

The problem of the foreign copy that produces alienation at the core of Brazilian identity is, however, hardly new. At least since the founding of the Republic at the end of 19th century, the thesis that Brazilian society results from the dichotomous development of 'two Brazils' – each foreign to the other – is commonly expressed in literature, art, social science, and religion, as well as everyday interaction. The one Brazil is coastal, urban, capitalist, cosmopolitan, rational, national and modern. The other is backland, feudal, mystical, dark and primitive. Most Brazilian authors are located in the former, even those who write about the other Brazil. What is curious is not that some despise the backland Brazil as degenerate, even though they may describe it as little-known and remote. It is more that this Brazil emerges in their reflections as the genuine one, the real and popular Brazil, in contrast to the urbane Brazil which is artificial as an European or American transplant. The former, unfamiliar and primitive, is nevertheless authentic. The latter, modern and urban, is, to use a phrase Roberto Schwarz (1977) made famous, a copy 'out of place' of European and American ideals of progress, civility, law and aesthetics.

Brazilian architectural modernism doubly suffers this castigation of being out of place. Much of the high modern rejoinder to this charge argues that it is, after all, an authentic Brazilian production because it uniquely combines European modernism with elements of Brazilian baroque. In digesting both, it produces an 'anthropofagic' original.² It seems to me, however, that the important point is not to debate whether this or that element implies a continuation or reinterpretation of a specific style from the past but to analyse the selective uses of the past for present purposes. What the argument about authenticity misses is that with or without supposedly baroque curves and decorative ceramic tile, the Brazilian renditions of CIAM's global modernism constitute a copying that is itself generative and original. In a fundamental sense, the very purpose of its exemplars (think of Brasília) is to capture the spirit of the modern by means of its likeness. Its supposedly baroque elements are irrelevant to this project. Rather, it is the homeopathic relation to the model – brilliantly executed to be sure in many Brazilian cases – that gives the copy its transformative power. In other words, its power resides precisely in the display of likeness, in a replication of the model in new places. Paradoxically, it is this replication of

² It is widely heard in Brazil that Niemeyer's architecture has a baroque aspect. Such comments point to the curving and 'lyrical' lines of his massing and to the iconic quality of some of his forms. The Cathedral in Brasília is a good example of the latter, readily recognisable as a 'crown of thorns' or 'two hands in prayer', as many people describe it. I argue that modernist urban planning is antithetical to baroque planning in theory and eliminates it in practice. I also show that it produces buildings that are always figural and that the dynamism of baroque cities depends on rhetorical principles other than iconicity. That some of Niemeyer's are especially iconic says more about their ability to communicate quickly and effectively as 'one-liners' than about any deeper baroque sensibility.

the same model in different locations that gives it the possibility of signifying a diversity of local narratives about being modern.³

By the same token, the reproductions of autoconstructed popular modernism in Brazil are also original copies, creative and productive in their own right. It is far less important that popular modernist houses, like their cosmopolitan counterparts, combine modernist and non-modernist elements in sometimes contradictory ways – a flat stuccoed entablature behind which is hidden a pitched tile roof or a modernist façade built on a rusticated stone base and enclosing a colonial plan. What is significant is that the appropriations and recombinations of this popular modernism succeeded in creating a massively legible narrative about being modern in Brazil, and therefore a diverse public to digest it through the invention of contemporary life written, commented on, and read in architecture. To dismiss these houses as low quality, reject them as sources of aesthetic innovation, and ridicule them as kitsch, as Brazil's own high modernist architects have done, is to miss something fundamental about architecture itself as a record of human aspiration and achievement.

Replication establishes the possibility of diverse publics who can speak the same language. But its realisation – that is, the transformation of the copy into a generative transplant with a life of its own – depends on local conditions of production. In what follows, I contrast two decisive conditions of producing CIAM modernist architecture in Brazil, that of master planning and total design and what I describe as urban layering and contingency.

Modernist Master Planning and Total Design

My argument is that when modernist architecture is produced as a totally designed urban environment using modernist conventions of design and planning, the result tends to flatten both building and space into repetitious sameness, draining their vitality and interest. In contrast, when modernist architecture is produced in conditions of urban density sufficient to generate a layering of different kinds, lexicons, and uses of forms and spaces, the result animates both building and space, independent of the aesthetic coordination of the whole or the aesthetic merit of individual elements. To illustrate, I contrast several examples by Oscar Niemeyer. First, I discuss the spatial logic of modernist totalisation in planning and design, using the examples of a whole cityscape (Figure 1: Brasília) and a single building that assumes such a whole (Figure 2: the Memorial of Latin America in São Paulo). I then discuss the dense urban layering of a single building, Copan, in downtown São Paulo (Figures 3–10).

³ For a study of the politics and aesthetics of autoconstruction, see Holston (1991).



Figure 1: Brasília, view (back to front): Lake, Esplanade of the Ministries, Cultural Sectors (with Cathedral), Public Service and State Enterprise Sectors, Residential Sectors, and Banking Sectors, 1981.

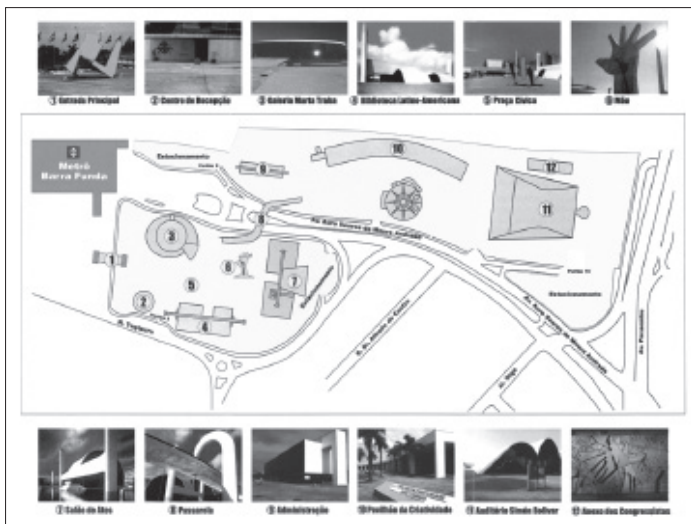


Figure 2: Memorial of Latin America, site plan, 2009.

As I have elsewhere developed an extensive critical analysis of modernist total design and master planning (see Holston 1989), assessing both its formal and social assumptions, methods and consequences, I only summarise some essential points here. CIAM's principal paradigm of urban planning is to impose upon the existing city (or to lay out from scratch) a totality of new conditions that organises the entire cityscape in terms of the coherence of its spatial and functional logic. Thus its strategy for city making is totalisation. I have in mind not only entire cityscapes like Brasília, Dubai, Houston (or central Dallas, Detroit, Saint Louis and so forth), Eastern European 'new cities' and U.S. suburban developments. I also refer to fragments of the total vision that assume the modernist whole in relation to their site and surroundings regardless of function, from a business sector like Berrini to a single building like the Memorial of Latin America, both in São Paulo.

In its standard expression, the functional logic of modernist total planning insists on a separation of the urban 'functions' into zones of residence, commerce, work, traffic, recreation and administration, with entire sectors of the city devoted uniformly to one

zone. Nevertheless, in state-sponsored examples such as Brasília, an additional kind of homogenisation often occurs. On the one hand, the modern master plan displaces institutions traditionally centred in a private sphere of social life to a new state-sponsored public sphere of residence and work. On the other, its architecture renders illegible what used to be (in non- or pre-modernist contexts) taken-for-granted representational distinctions between these institutions. Its strategy of total design is thus a double defamiliarisation. As a result, for example, the functions of work and residence in Brasília lose their traditional separation when the latter is assigned on the basis of work affiliation, as it was generally until 1965 and still is in some sectors. Hence, Bank of Brazil employees reside in one superquadra, those of the Air Force Ministry in another, those of Congress in yet another, and so forth. In addition, these functions become architecturally indistinguishable as the buildings of work and residence receive similar massing and fenestration and thereby lose their traditional symbolic differentiation. The newer residential superblocks in Brasília address the estrangement this erosion of differences caused among inhabitants by significantly increasing the amount of solid exterior wall in relation to window and by emphasising balconies for each apartment to distinguish buildings of residence from those of work.⁴



Figure 3: Copan, view of urban context from the terrace of Edifício Itália, 2009.

⁴ The original intended defamiliarisations were brutally effective. Most people who move to Brasília experience them with trauma. In fact, the first generation of inhabitants coined a special expression for this shock of total design, *brasilitis* or 'Brasília-itis'. As one resident told me, 'Everything in Brasília was different. It was a shock, an illusion, because you didn't understand where people lived, or shopped, or worked or socialized.' Another said, 'even the tombstones are standardised.' Another common instance of disorientation is the sense of exposure residents experience inside the transparent glass façades of their modernist apartment buildings. With considerable irony, residents nicknamed their transparent glass boxes 'the *candango's* television set' – meaning that a poor man (the *candango*, Brasília's pioneering construction worker) could find nightly entertainment by standing in front of an apartment block to watch the interior drama of middle-class life revealed on the big screen of the illuminated façade. In response to this perceived assault on their privacy, which some link to the moralising gaze of a new state-sponsored public sphere, residents resist by putting up every kind of visual barrier – curtains, blinds, potted plants, even birdcages. It is as a response to this problem of exposure that the newer non-transparent façades of increased wall solids and recessed balconies became prominent.

It is in the application of its spatial logic, however, that modernism achieves an unrelenting totalisation of urban life that, once installed, can only be changed by breaching the model itself. The development of this logic derives from CIAM modernism's elimination of the corridor street (the street edged with continuous building façades) as its prerequisite for modern urban organisation – a plan of attack Le Corbusier announced as 'the death of the street' in 1929. In its critique of the cities and society of European capitalism, CIAM vilified the street as a place of disease and criminality and as a structure of private property that impedes modern development. Above all, modernist architecture attacked the street because it constitutes an architectural organisation of the public and private domains of social life that modernist architecture sought to overturn.



Figure 4: Copan, view of entrance 'hub' on Av. Ipiranga, 2009



Figure 5: Copan, site plan, 2009.

This organisation is constituted in terms of a contrast between the street system of public spaces (voids) and the residential system of private buildings (solids). In the kind of pre-industrial urbanism that modernism attacks, streets and squares are framed by façades built edge-to-edge and perceived as having the shape these frames make. Thus, streets and squares are spaces that have form, usually perceived as figures of rectangular

volume. This figural perception creates the impression that the continuous building façades are the interior walls of outdoor rooms, the public rooms of the city. The street-walls are, accordingly, ornamented, and the street-rooms furnished with benches, sculpture, fountains and other amenities to nurture the social interactions that take place in them. The corridor street-system of spaces is thus the architectural context of the outdoor public life of pre-industrial cities.

The spatial principle of this urbanism is not only that streets and squares are figural voids in contrast to the ground of the solids around them. Just as fundamentally, it is also that these voids and solids are reversibly both figure and ground. Although space is consistently figural and building ground, these relations are easily reversed to signify public monuments and civic institutions. Think of churches and city halls gesturing to their publics as buildings broken away from the anonymous ribbon of street façades, given sculptural massing and set into urban squares that become ground to their figural volumes. This reversal of figure and ground is the key rhetorical principle of the architectural organisation of the preindustrial city, articulating its social values through processions of ambivalent solids and voids.



Figure 6: Copan, view of western elevation and urban layering, 2009..

By eliminating the corridor street, modernism ruptures this system of architectural signification. Whereas pre-industrial baroque cities (such as Ouro Preto in Brazil) provide an order of public and private by juxtaposing architectural conventions of repetition (ground) and exception (figure), the modernist city (such as Brasília) is conceived as the antithesis both of this mode of representation and of its represented sociopolitical order. In the modernist city, vast areas of continuous space without exception form the perceptual ground against which the solids of buildings emerge as sculptural figures. There is no relief from this absolute division of architectural labour: space is always treated as continuous and never as figural; buildings always as sculptural and never as background. The consequences of this total inversion are profound. By asserting the primacy of open

space, volumetric clarity, pure form and geometric abstraction, modernism not only initiates a new vocabulary of form. More radically, it inverts the entire mode of perceiving architecture, turning it inside out – as if the figural solids of the modernist city have been produced in the mould of the figural voids of pre-industrial urbanism. Furthermore, the modernist city negates the reversals of the traditional code by insisting on the immutability of the terms: by establishing the absolute supremacy of continuous nonfigural void, it transforms the ambivalence of pre-industrial planning into a monolithic spatial order. Reversals are now impossible. Modernism has imposed a total and totalising new urban order.

While this order is obvious at the scale of an entire city built *de novo*, like Brasília, the destructive nature of its antagonism to the old urbanism is most palpable when the two collide in single building projects. This is because one of the distinctive features of modernist planning is that it refuses any dialogue (other than rejection) with existing



Figure 7: Copan, view along Av. Ipiranga, 2009.

urban conditions. Its unrelenting decontextualisation is evident, for example, in the march of Le Corbusier's Cartesian Towers across the old Paris in his Plan Voisin (1925) or in Hilberseimer's proposed levelling of central Berlin (1927) to clear the ground for an overlay of gigantic superblocs. Niemeyer's Memorial of Latin America inaugurated in central São Paulo in 1989 is a contemporary example, though not quite as dramatic, of the insertion of a modernist project into the fabric of an existing city. It is an ensemble of freestanding objects – including nine pavilions – set on two enormous expanses of grey concrete (more than 84,000 square meters in total). A wide pre-existing street separates the two parts, which are connected by a pedestrian bridge overhead. The site is a difficult one, bounded on one side by a major thoroughfare and on another by train tracks. Yet, rather than engage the dense residential and commercial streets of the neighbourhood of Barra Funda that converge on the other sides, its site planning is resolutely detached and self-referential. It makes no accommodation to these streets, no recognition of the neighbourhood, no effort to bring the city to it. Its planning logic of figural objects set in open space is not, however, that of 'pavilions-in-the-park' or sculpture garden, as its intention is not to be a neighbourhood or city park at all. In fact, there are no areas with trees and grass anywhere that invite people to relax.

Rather, its project is to be a 'memorial' – a remembrance and celebration – of Latin American peoples, cultures, arts, and politics. It is intended as a place where the local (Brazilian) encounters the continental (Latin American) in a Civic Square, as the open space of the entrance slab is called. Distributed around this space and its other part are various buildings, including the Latin American Library, the Tiradentes Events Room (with panels depicting Latin American's colonial history), the Simón Bolívar Auditorium, the Pavilion of Creativity (permanent collection of popular arts), and the Annex of Congressionalists (for diplomatic and academic activities). As a place to discover, disseminate and integrate 'the vision' of a greater Latin America, 'its vocation is', according to official information, 'the encounter of crowds, with a capacity for at least 30,000 people.' As a modernist set piece, it thus reproduces the social and spatial assumptions of the entire model of CIAM urbanism, rejecting the local urban present in favour of the inspiration of a primordial past and the promise of a different future.

The problem is that there is no encounter of crowds. Except for major staged events and occasional tourists, the Civic Square of the Memorial is almost always empty, an enormous expensive expanse of (now stained and dirty) concrete devoid of life, an island of modernism bereft of the crowds and encounters of urban life in a city teeming with them. Just as in the open spaces of Brasília – in its Plaza of the Three Powers or Esplanade of the Ministries or the green areas of the Superquadras – the modernist spatial paradigm produces no active, informal, *daily* urban public. To the contrary, its reiterations in Brazilian cities doubly deaden their vibrant outdoor public life.

On the one hand, when rendered as sculpture, always figure, architecture loses its ability to provoke a diversity of appreciations and surprises. It becomes, in effect, an ensemble of repetitious 'one-liners', fixed in people's minds – when they think about it at all. Individual buildings remain self-contained outlines signifying a single form (a rectangle, cylinder, curve) or image (spaceship, crown, sails, waves, bird) that once established hardly changes. At the same time, this totalising modernist design transforms space into mere background to figural objects. It eliminates the possibility of ambivalent encounters between the two, establishing a uniform condition in which space loses the plasticity to become architectural form (i.e., figural void) and the vitality to be a container of social life, an outdoor room that nurtures social interaction. To the contrary, modernist monolithic space alienates social life, driving it into privatised and secured interiors. Under these conditions of production, whether applied to an entire city or a single set piece, the propagation of the modernist paradigm soon loses its affinity with innovation and experiment. Instead of being original and generative, its copies become dead letter.



Figure 8: Copan, side 'civic square', 2009.

Layered Modernism

I turn now to a counter-example by the same architect in the same city to show that under different urban conditions, modernist architecture can animate building, space and public. Two conditions are crucial to this animation: compelling modernist constructions to maintain and accommodate a street-system of public spaces in plan and elevation (in the case at hand, pre-existing), and producing them in contexts of sufficient density to generate a multivalent layering of forms and spaces. In most cases, the first condition tends to foster the second.

Not far from the Memorial are the old central neighbourhoods of São Paulo that were built up in the 1940s, '50s, and '60s with modern residential and office towers: República,

Consolação, Vila Buarque, Anhangabau, Sé, among others. One block from the Republic Square and two from the famous intersection of the avenues São João and Ipiranga, set on a deep lot in the middle of its block that fronts onto Ipiranga, and surrounded on all sides by buildings of different shapes, sizes and surfaces that grew up over the same decades, is Copan, an enormous curvilinear housing block designed by Niemeyer and completed in 1953 (see Figures 3–10). It has 38 floors above ground and two below and a total constructed area of 116,000m². Its 32 residential floors are raised by pilotis and walls above a four-storey commercial space. They contain 1,160 apartments of various sizes, currently housing approximately 5,000 residents. Articulated as layers of *brises soleils*, Copan's principal western façade undulates along the curve of a small side street (Unai) that defines an inner edge of the lot. This curve wraps around its main entrance on Ipiranga (Figure 4) and flows away along the other side street (Araujo). At this hub, the curve draws the sidewalks of these streets and their pedestrian crowds into the building, to walk along open-air, double-height passageways that are lined with 72 shops, restaurants, and offices, 20 elevators to the upper floors, and one cinema (today an Evangelical church).



Figure 9: Copan, play of solids and voids seen from side 'civic square', 2009.



Figure 10: View of Copan and neighboring buildings seen from a nearby street, 2009.

Copan supports the dense streetscapes of downtown in three fundamental ways. It does so, moreover, not on staged occasions but in everyday urban life. First, it receives the pedestrian traffic of neighbourhood streets into its commercial space directly from the sidewalks along their entire length (Figure 5). As people walk, they can enter the building at almost any point along Araujo, Ipiranga, and Unai. Being porous to these sidewalks along its ground floor, it thus maintains and extends the street-system of public space, offering pedestrians both continuation and destination. In doing so, it articulates in its own body the principal ‘functions’ of city living – work, residence, shopping, entertainment and traffic – by means of the public space of streets.

Second, although open to the sidewalks, the building maintains the edges of the streets that border it. The body of the building is not set back but built out to the lot lines at the sidewalks. Moreover, the façade in elevation does not step away from these sidewalk lines but follows them on both sides. Although the curving side street Unai pulls the building away from Ipiranga, it becomes parallel to the main street after the curve. Thus Copan’s great vertical face follows the line of Ipiranga along this street. As it slips behind the considerably lower tower of its neighbour, its massive elevation therefore reinforces Ipiranga, forming part of its container wall and maintaining its quality as a figural space (see Figures 6, 7, and 4).

Finally, the street level of Copan is a place of intense sociality. Every time I have been there – now many times over several decades – the open commercial area has always been full of people. Not only do people use the stores and offices, but I also see them having conversations in small clusters in the open but still protective spaces of the passageways that flow off the street. They stand together in front of a coffee bar having an espresso; even more, they chat at one spot or another in meetings of twos and threes, perhaps impromptu or perhaps arranged, but obviously with a sense that they can be both public and private at the same time. Thus it is not only or even mostly the instrumentality of shopping that brings these people into conversation. People meet there because the architected spaces foster a public and in that sense civic sensibility about urban conversation. These are reliably good spaces for a quick, informal talk.

Especially compelling about this urban architecture is the way it creates these civic spaces. They are not produced by Copan alone. They result from the density of many streets and buildings, a co-production. Thus even the exterior space at the side of Copan between it and its neighbourhood – in fact an intersection of streets – functions like a small civic square (Figure 8). Such a space would no doubt be merely no-man’s land if these building had been given typical modernist planning and pulled into their lots away from the streets. Instead, where Unai intersects with another small side street (a dead-end one called Vila Normanda in Figure 5 but today renamed), the buildings in proximity create a small, relatively intimate and quiet outdoor room, supported by a café with chairs on

the sidewalk on one side, frequented by pedestrians but rarely a car, and populated by clusters of people in conversation.

What creates this outdoor public room, this figural void, is the dense layering of modernist buildings that engage each other in their own conversations. They are able to do so precisely because they remain on and open to the streets, rather than following the typical modernist site planning of being detached from the streets. The street logic of this site planning ensures a density of construction sufficient to generate an urban montage in which solids and voids discourse with each other as figures and ground. To create this dialogue, the buildings do not have to be contiguous, as in the older urbanism. In central São Paulo, in fact, they are mostly freestanding. However, they are proximate enough to ensure that the spaces between them become figural voids in the dynamic tension generated between their surfaces, as seen by pedestrians from different perspectives (Figures 7 and 9).

Furthermore, as Figures 7 and 9 illustrate, this density generates a play between figural solids and figural voids, as figure and ground shift back and forth between building and space. For the pedestrian, this perceptual play is full of surprises. Standing in the 'civic square' at the side of Copan, I look up to see intriguing shapes and volumes, reversible figures and ground (Figure 9). Looking across the city or walking up a neighbourhood street (Figures 6 and 10), I perceive Copan sometimes as ground revealing other shapes – the round tower of the old Hilton Hotel, for example – and sometimes as an undulating figure. This perceptual play produces an interesting and engaging cityscape *for people*, especially pedestrians.

As Figures 3 and 6 show, central São Paulo is a chaos of tall buildings, a city 'standing up'. There is no aesthetic coordination of this extraordinary density, other than the distribution of buildings along the street system of traffic (itself intense and chaotic). Rather, the eye perceives in any direction a montage of superimpositions, clashing juxtapositions, collages of contradictory materials and styles. Many of the individual elements in this montage could justifiably be described as aesthetically impoverished, if not 'ugly'. Yet these judgements are simply irrelevant to the excitement of the city's dense layering: One happenstance view along the sidewalk (Figure 10) reveals four modern styles of building clashing against each other, a juxtaposition that makes one think (even without especially wanting to, even if half unconsciously) about the nature of architecture, about what it means to construct and inhabit a city.

In the montage of São Paulo's cityscape, Copan is one piece, a remarkable one to be sure, but one piece of an ensemble in which the ordinary and the ugly also become interesting for their participation. Such transformation exemplifies the creativity and exhilaration of modern urbanism. However, it is a modernism very different from that of Brasília and the Memorial. Its copies and transplants – hundreds of buildings with similar fenestration

and massing, specific tokens derived from general types (like Copan itself in relation to Le Corbusier's *Unité d'Habitation*) – belong to a street-based and multi-layered cityscape that creates a participatory public of people and buildings engaging each other. By their collective effort, the sum becomes great urban architecture.

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Why is Contemporary Islamic Architecture Risking Banality?

NASSER RABBAT

Architecture in the Islamic World underwent a series of major shifts in the last two centuries, which is, significantly, the period of Western colonial dominance and its aftermath. In fact, the definition of an Islamic architecture itself is a European idea that owes its genesis to the post-Enlightenment project that aimed to collect, classify, and codify all available knowledge about all cultures. That early conception of Islamic architecture was rather romantic and essentialist, aside from not having bothered to differentiate between the various historical strands of architecture within the Islamic world. It managed, nonetheless, to inform most of the architectural production of the 19th and early 20th century in the recently colonised Islamic countries as well as the fantastic Oriental follies in Europe. But the historically eclectic and heavily ornamental architecture it created lost a lot of its appeal by the middle of the 20th century with the waning of direct colonial rule. National independence movements brought with them the more vocal and more aggressive categories of modernity, nationalism, and, later, socialism to represent the architecture of the recently established states. The new framework engendered some grand architectural and urban projects, such as commemorative monuments, large governmental complexes, and whole new administrative and industrial cities. It also generated extensive debates about regionalism and vernacular architecture as authentic illustration of the nation's spirit, which produced idealistic villages, residential suburbs and community centers, in addition to villas for the artistically minded nationalist elites. This progressive stage, however, was succeeded and somewhat supplanted by the no less passionate discourse on religion as framer of identity that sprang forth in the 1980s primarily as a response to the failure of the nationalist regimes to fulfill the aspirations of their people. An indirect consequence to this ideological twist was that most new architecture built in the Islamic world after 1980, though still following some international standards of form and function, began to pay homage to some notion of 'Islamic architecture,' even if sometimes only in the form of pastiche.

This last stage, which we are still going through, runs the risk of completing a conceptual cycle of sorts and returning us to where we started, i.e., a narrowly defined, historically predetermined, and formally homogenised 'Islamic architecture'. This possible, though probably never intended nor anticipated, outcome finds its causes in various trajectories.

Some are political and socio-cultural and can be summed up by the question: What do Muslims today, or at least the patrons among them who are dictating the current demand for an 'authentic' architecture, want their buildings to express and why? Others have to do with the profession of architecture and its current politics and demographics, as well as its changing conceptual, financial, technical and ethical parameters. Still others are economic: they relate to the effects of the unstoppable global late-Capitalism and its regional clones, which promote a glitzy yet monotonous architecture in order to satisfy a business ambition to homogenise all markets. But one little-explored factor affecting this state of affairs is in fact a cultural theory, which, though powerfully present in the current architectural discourse, has its distinct and clear origins outside the domain of Islamic architecture. This article is a concise and somewhat selective review of the history of that particular theory from its intellectual roots in 19th-century Europe to its application in architectural practice today. It aims to understand how a relatively simple and strongly prejudiced cultural theory was able to affect and define the orientation of architecture in the Islamic world and how it was, conversely and unpredictably, bolstered by the reaction of those who are ostensibly opposed to both its premises and conclusions.

It all began at the turn of the 19th century when the term 'Islamic architecture' (or any of its period equivalents such as Oriental, Arabic, Saracenic, Mohammedan, Moorish, etc.) first appeared in pioneering Orientalist tracts on architecture. The initial attempts at formalising a name and definition of that architecture were rather open-ended. This was probably a function of the novelty and peculiarity of the architectural specimens encountered by the first European architects, artists, archaeologists, and draftsmen who came to the 'Orient' right before the first European military interventions. They had little preconceived notion of 'Islamic architecture', other than its outlandishly extravagant allure, which they had imbibed as children from the fantasies of the *Arabian Nights* and other such romantic tales. And although they did not readily find the fanciful architecture of their childhood dreams in the dusty and rundown cities of the Orient, what they came across was strange enough to provoke certain wonderment among them, which they set out to remedy in the best manner available to them. They empirically represented it. They measured and recorded buildings and ruins and illustrated them using all sorts of techniques from freehand sketches to photography and exact *camera lucida* projections. They collected, analysed, and translated all the historical references they could find in the primary sources available to them. They then published impressive architectural catalogs, which began to reveal the rich architectural heritage of the historical 'Orient' (the present was too degraded for their tastes) that was hitherto almost totally unknown in Europe.

The next wave of Western architects coming to the Islamic world around the turn of the 20th century carried out their work under colonial tutelage and within the confines of a colonial ethos. Most of them in fact came in search of employment in the colonial administrations or local governments and occupied positions ranging from documentation, research and

conservation, to design and construction, to even intelligence gathering. They had learned about Islamic architecture from the usual travelogues but also from the substantial corpus of elaborate catalogs produced by their predecessors in the late 19th century. But that rather empirical knowledge base did not erase from their minds the tales of yore and their images of Oriental fantasies. Nor did it taper the effect of their conventional architectural education which espoused a canonical view of architecture as culturally circumscribed and linearly chronological, with the architecture of the West ensconced at the core and impervious to any influence by a lesser culture. Thus, despite their serious architectural learning, the Western designers still conceptually, historiographically, and analytically separated the styles that developed north of the Mediterranean, i.e. Western styles, from those that emerged south of it, i.e. Islamic styles. They also, following the Orientalist approach to the study of Islamic history, sharply distinguished between the Islamic past, considered glorious and inspiring, and the decadent present seen as the antithesis of the modern, ordered and advanced world. This translated into two traits that often appeared in the architecture built by these Western designers in the first half of the 20th century. First was the burgeoning of numerous historicist and revivalist styles that borrowed freely from the varied repertoires of the past and blended them with some modern structural, stylistic and compositional modes. Second was an excessive focus on the architectural object as detached from its urban environment with its messy social, economic and political conditions, rendered paradoxically complex by colonial domination.

This culturally and historically skewed conception was formalised when Islamic architecture became a subject of academic specialisation in a few top art history departments in major Western universities in the 1940s and 1950s. With this development, the study of the history of architecture of the Islamic world joined a constellation of culture-specific, non-Western traditions, which made their way into Western academe around the same time. There, these disciplinary newcomers acquired the patina of scholarly authority and professional respectability. But lacking any theoretical or historiographical constructs derived from their own context or developed in their own tradition, they found themselves subsumed by the conceptual framework of Western architectural history. This was methodologically expedient for Western architectural history offered a ready-made classification system that could be adapted to the various non-Western cultures in a clear and comprehensive way. It was also academically advantageous as Western architectural history had a dignified scholarly tradition behind it dating back to the 18th century and had substantially matured through its encounters with various anthropological and historiographical new schools of thought in the 20th century.

But Western architectural history also engendered a hegemonic structure in the sense described by Michel Foucault; that is, it discursively controlled the intricate network that produced and used architectural knowledge. Furthermore, because of its venerable legacy and institutional power, the chronology of Western architecture, from its presumed

Classical origins to its victorious culmination in modern times, constituted the historical core of World Architecture, which has to be internalised by all architects, and relegated other architectural traditions to peripheral places in its ordered hierarchy. This is best exemplified by the famous Tree of Architecture of Banister Fletcher, which appeared as frontispiece in all the editions of his influential book, *A History of Architecture on the Comparative Method for the Student, Craftsman, and Amateur*, between 1896 and 1961 (see Figure 1). This unabashedly racist diagram reserved the trunk and the upper, healthy branches of the tree to an uninterrupted succession of Western styles from Greece to modern America, and relegated the architecture of all other cultures, both in the Old and New Worlds, to dead-end branches.



Figure 1: The Tree of Architecture of Banister Fletcher.

This rigid framing of the history of architecture, which owed much to the colonial atmosphere of the late 19th century, reduced all architectures outside the West to endogenous and seemingly self-contained architectural traditions that somehow did not manage to complete the leap toward modernity and remained embalmed in their splendid past. The consolidation of that conceptual separation between past and present and East and West as well as its concomitant conjecture that Islamic architecture was essentially a dead tradition affected the production of new architecture in the Islamic world, as well as elsewhere outside the West, and it still does today. It afflicted any design that aimed to relate to its architectural context with a schizophrenic condition, which lies at the roots of the homogenising impulse that this essay set out to analyse. Architects active in the Islamic world at the height of the colonial age and their patrons were actually futilely challenged to bring together two epistemologically distinct and historically irreconcilable traditions: the modern architecture they learned about and imported from the colonial metropolises, which was a living tradition with a long history, and the historical architecture they encountered in the colonies, which had a long history but was no longer alive. They had one of two choices. They could reject the dead tradition and copy directly from Western models to assert their modernity and up-to-dateness, hence the preponderance of Neo-Classical, Art-Nouveau, Art-Deco, and Modernist architecture in their work. Or they could reference Islamic historical architecture in their design as a way to give it a local flavor. They had, however, to filter their references through established Western revivalist methods, since they were trained to regard Islamic architecture as a heritage of the past that was interrupted and thus in need of revitalization. This is how we can understand the various neo-Islamic styles that flourished at the time all over the Islamic world: they were mostly European styles dressed in sometimes fanciful yet geometrically calibrated Islamic ornaments that represented a nod to the architectural history of the place.

Analogous constraints governed the work of several architects of this generation from the Islamic world who studied in European schools of architecture and applied the lessons they learned to the buildings they designed in their countries. Their work, though formally indebted to the same Art-Nouveau, eclectic-revivalist, and other stylistic innovations of the period that informed the work of their Western counterparts, is usually interpreted as a conscious effort towards the creation of a historically recognisable and legitimising national image. To that end, they tried to identify within the vast Islamic formal repertoire the most representative subset pertinent to their geographically circumspect nation, but still had to maneuver around the incompatibility of the two mega-historic traditions they were trying to blend: the Western and Islamic.

Although many ideological constructs crumbled after the end of colonial rule in the mid-20th century, the bluntly Eurocentric stratification of world architecture survived to exert a considerable influence on the national architecture of the sometimes hastily formed states of the decolonised Islamic world. In their zeal to purge their emerging national

identity from any compromised influence, be it colonial or pre-national, the nationalist architects and architectural historians bought into the cultural autonomy paradigm, so as to reconstruct a 'pure' and 'authentic' architectural heritage. As noted long ago by Franz Fanon,¹ the nationalists' heartfelt resistance to the hegemonic Western model did not translate into their rejection of its conceptual and methodological premises. On the contrary, they embraced them in their own work and ended up structuring and categorising 'their' architecture and 'their' culture in general, from an exclusive and ultimately narrowly defined perspective.

The first architectural signs of this nationalistic impulse appeared in countries that experienced radical rupture with their past such as Turkey after the breakdown of the Ottoman Empire or the Islamic Khanates of Central Asia after their annexation by Tsarist Russia. Digging up ancient civilisations and abstracting their architecture in modern renderings was a favorite path. Next were those modern states, such as Iran and to a lesser extent Egypt (but also Spain, Portugal, and Greece, though they had already been admitted to the Western club), which sought to revive a pre-Islamic past as a means to construct a presumed historical continuity of a quintessential national identity. The rediscovery of vernacular architecture is the most revealing case in point of that process. Idealistic architects saw vernacular architecture as the true, honest architectural expression of traditional culture that successfully addressed both contextual specificity and formal diversity. This, however, was not culture in an anthropological or historical sense, but rather culture in a militant and passionately ontological one: culture as a marker of identity and a framer of national unity. It is therefore no accident that the rediscovery of vernacular architecture as the embodiment of cultural identity coincided with the age of decolonisation and independence. Its revival was a direct outcome of a rising nationalism that located its identity in the original, authentic culture of the homeland to which it laid claim. To the nationalist and culturally sensitive architect, vernacular architecture was in fact a sign of the vitality and depth of native culture that existed before and would, hopefully, be restored to its former glow after the overthrow of the tarnishing colonial experience. It was both an affirmation of an active, pre-colonial traditional architecture and the foundation for a postcolonial national architecture.

No architect has accomplished this more passionately, more gracefully, and more steadfastly than the pioneering Egyptian architect Hassan Fathy (1900–1989).² He challenged the mainstream modernist architecture of his training by advocating a return to the vernacular as a source of architectural and even social rejuvenation. The design principles he proposed are seen as expressions of indigenously developed architecture with clear cultural and environmental contours and place rootedness. But the ideological references of Fathy's

¹ Fanon, F. (1967) *A Dying Colonialism*. New York: Grove Press.

² Fathy, H. (1973) *Architecture for the Poor: An Experiment in Rural Egypt*. The University of Chicago Press.

vernacular architecture did not remain fixed over time. They expanded, and even shifted with the changing national identity of Egypt as it went through the long and torturous road from colonial domination to independence to development and its aftermath entangled with grand dreams of regional supremacy.



Figure 2: New Gurna village, Egypt, Hassan Fathy (1948–1961).

Fathy's discovery of the vernacular had its historical roots in the struggle against the British colonial rule in the 1920s and 1930s and the rise of an Egyptian national identity. He presented his first experiments in New Gurna as the embodiment of an authentic Egyptian architecture, albeit of an unlikely mix of Mamluk and Nubian styles that he admired (see Figure 2). But what started as a visual marker of an Egyptian national identity was transformed at least twice during Fathy's lifetime. After his return to Egypt in 1962, Fathy himself modified the interpretation of his architecture from a manifestation of a primeval Egyptian model to an essentially Arabic and later an Islamic one with ambiguous universal applicability. He first identified a 'ubiquitous' Arab house with a spatially ingenious response to the harsh desert environment as the model for his own architecture. A few years later, the model became the Arabo-Islamic house, and ultimately an all-encompassing Islamic concept of domestic space with references to notions of the serene and protected family life and the conception of unique God and the images of His promised Paradise as the normative paradigms of his architectural model. His last grand project in Abiquiu, New Mexico (1981–86), when his trademark design crossed the Atlantic to be implemented in the southwestern American wilderness, was predicated on an idealistic universalism that was nonetheless recognisably Islamic in forms, meaning, and aspirations (see Figure 3). This process paralleled the changing dominant ideology in Egypt, and elsewhere in the Islamic world, from the pre-and post-independence liberal nationalism, to the various experiments in supra-nationalism and/or socialism of the 1960s, to the populist Islamism of the 1980s, which was underwritten by various groups primarily for political ends.

This badly understood and still-unfolding process evolved intermittently during the late 1970s and 1980s in the vast majority of the Islamic countries. Spurred by the triumph of Khomeini's Islamic Revolution in Iran of 1979, and vaguely conceived as a response

to the perceived failures of the national edifices built after Western cultural constructs, the Islamicist movement sought a return to more authentic cultural, political and social foundations. This search ultimately gave rise to an ideology that saw Islam as identity and, tangentially, Islamic architecture as an expression of that identity. Several culturally and politically dissimilar, though ultimately mutually reinforcing social elite groups promoted that development. Their wealth and their fervent quest for political and cultural identity combined to create a demand for a contemporary, financially beneficial, yet visually recognisable Islamic architecture. Sincerely at times, but opportunistically at many others, scores of architects responded by incorporating in their otherwise postmodern designs various historical elements dubbed 'Islamic', which they often used as basic diagrams for their plans or splashed on the surfaces as ornament.

Thus, the 1980s and 1990s became the decades of readily identifiable Islamicised post-modern architecture everywhere in the Islamic world. There were the post-traditionalists

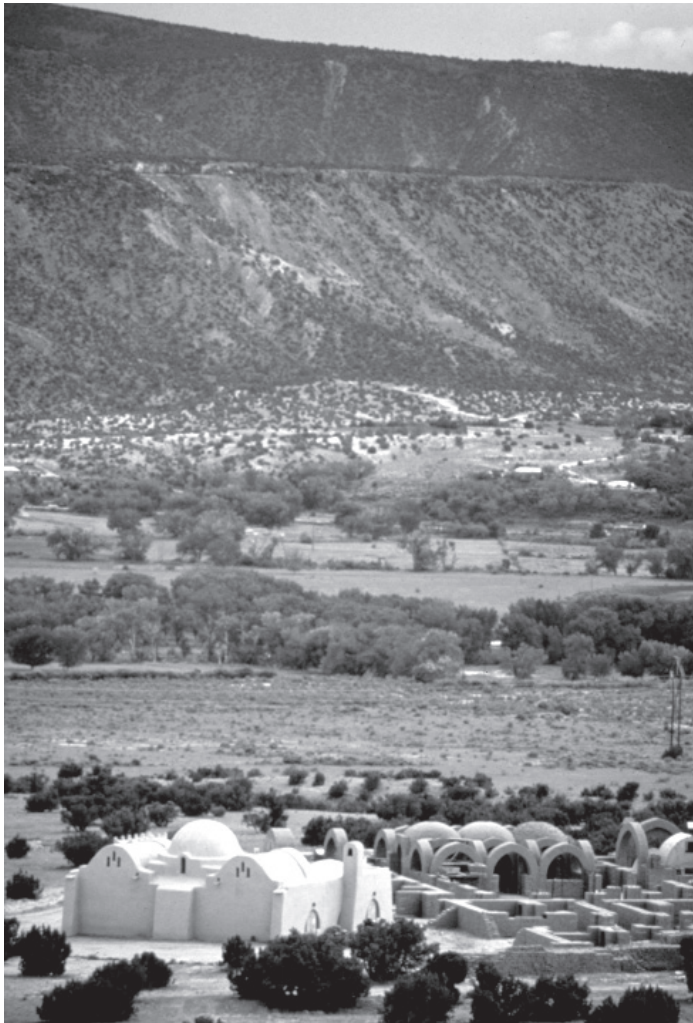


Figure 3: Dar al-Islam, Abiquiu, New Mexico, Hassan Fathy (1981–86).

who, like Hassan Fathy before them, looked for inspiration in vernacular architecture. But unlike Fathy, they did not build on the social, environmental, and economic underpinnings of the revived traditional forms and restored material and construction techniques. Instead they brandished their architecture as a kind of native response to both the blandness of international modernism and the Eurocentrism of post-modernism and, in some cases, exported it as an expressive Islamic style. There were also the free, and often arbitrary, mélanges of diverse historical forms and patterns from the full range of Islamic styles, and even un-architectural symbols sometimes. This trend culminated with grand structures by large international firms, which re-interpreted visual symbols and historical motifs and used them in otherwise ultra sleek designs. Parallel to this historicist process, and following a similar socio-economic track, was the adoption of regional references that originally appeared in nostalgic small projects all over the Islamic world, to be appropriated by large real-estate and tourism developers and translated into mega-projects, especially in the Arabian Gulf cities (see Figure 4). In these later projects however, thoughtful regionalism was given up in favor of compositions that loudly, and perhaps even too loudly, bespoke the desire to endow a global pursuit of luxury in architecture aimed at the wealthy, with sanitised but recognisable local referents.



Figure 4: The Burj al-Arab Hotel (designed by Atkins, 1999) seen behind the wind catchers of Madinat Jumeirah (designed by Creative Kingdom Inc., 2004), Dubai.

Despite their different social, political and economic backgrounds and their diverse architectural output, the proponents of all three phases of historicist architecture in the modern Islamic world – the Orientalist/colonial, nationalist, and neo-Islamicist – share the same cultural theory on ‘Islamic architecture’. They all accept the paradigm of cultural autonomy developed in the triumphant colonial Europe of the 19th century that casts Islamic architecture as a tradition that ran parallel to the Western architectural tradition but almost never intersected with it throughout the Middle Ages until it dissolved into it with the onset of modernity, loosing all creativity in the process. The only difference between the nationalists and the neo-Islamicists is that they emphasise different historical trajectories. The nationalists stress the point in time when their putative nation – i.e. Turkish, Iranian, Arab – rose to prominence under Islam or broke away from its hegemonic grip. They sometimes search for some anchoring roots in the distant, pre-Islamic past and postulate some latent continuity between that past and the awakening of their nation to its true identity in the modern age. The neo-Islamicists, on the other hand, subscribe to the notion of an Islamic Golden Age, stretching from the high Caliphate in the 8th century to the Gunpowder Empires’ high tide in the 16th century. They hold that age as the fountainhead from which their architecture derives, jumping right to the present where they try to rebuild that romantically remembered architectural utopia using purely postmodern compositional and formal techniques and leaving out all that they consider ‘foreign’, i.e. the age of intense interaction with the West after the 16th century. The end result is that both nationalists and neo-Islamicists conceive ‘their’ architecture from an exclusionary, reductive, and eventually ahistorical perspective, which they unwittingly inherited or conveniently appropriated from their Orientalist predecessors and sometime teachers.

The historical exclusivity and referential reductiveness delimited by the theory of cultural autonomy are among the most critical root causes of the potential for homogenisation in architectural production in the Islamic world today. For as long as architects responding to the demand for a contemporary Islamic architecture turn uncritically to either the nationalist (and by and large modernist) or the neo-Islamicist (and resolutely postmodern) interpretation of the Orientalist paradigm, the pool of conceptual and compositional possibilities available to them will remain limited. Nor will further documentation and assimilation of little-studied specimens of historical architecture in the Islamic world, or even the inclusion of the hybrid styles of the colonial age in their referential repertoire help much in increasing the diversity within the realm of Islamic architecture. What is needed is a true re-conceptualisation of what Islamic architecture is; a reappraisal that goes all the way to challenging the dominant paradigm of the entire discipline of architectural history. Organisations such as the Aga Khan Award for Architecture (AKAA), the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture (AKPIA), and individuals concerned about architecture in the Islamic world will have to once and for all transcend the polarising dichotomous conditions, such as East vs. West and modern vs. traditional, that have restricted their

discipline's scope and self-image for so long. They will have to cast the illusory notion of cultural autonomy aside and espouse the full range of world architecture with all its wonderful cultural multiplicity and interconnectedness as their rightful domain of learning, inspiration, and, in the final account, belonging.

A Research Agenda for the AndAnd

MARI FUJITA

When I show people images of Thames Town China, the inevitable response is laughter. Not rolling, side-clutching laughter but the tentative, dry, nervous sort. I have shown Thames Town to a wide range of colleagues, friends and family and it's always the same: nervous laughter. I am interested in this laughter and its deeper implications. Since the gradual privatisation of the market starting in the mid-1990s, developers in China have been experimenting with new forms of urban development. Through my own research of the various forms of private real estate development that have and are taking place in China, I have become particularly interested in what are known as 'themed housing developments': Beijing's Orange County, Upper East Side and Vancouver Forest, Thames Town in Songjiang, Venice Aquatic City in Hangzhou, Anting, a 'German town' designed by Albert Speer Jr.; the list goes on. These developments are typically received with horror in the press, horror in academia, and delight by new buyers eager to invest. Faux. Ersatz. Copy. Farcical fantasyland. Simulate a simulacrum. Self-Colonisation. These are some of the words that have been used to describe the new developments in the press and beyond.



Figure 1: Aerial view of Thames Town, Songjiang City, China.

Underlying these critical descriptions is the belief that there are 'appropriate' and 'authentic' building forms that have a 'correct' position in time and place. In such a belief-system, the inverse must also hold true: that there are building forms that are inappropriate and unauthentic and have an 'incorrect' position in time and space.

Rereading the 1983 paper by Kenneth Frampton, 'Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance' I came across this same either-or construction.

Written as a quest to find an architecture of resistance to the seemingly monolithic wave of postmodern architecture, the text seeks to define what makes a building regional. Frampton's tact is to attempt a theory of critical regionalism through negation and a very hard-lined binary definition. Throughout the text there is a sense that architecture is either universal or indigeneous: 'Here again, one touches in concrete terms the fundamental difference between universal civilisation and autochthonous culture'.¹ Within Frampton's text, these oppositional categories are expanded to architecture that is either scenographic or tectonic, either rhetorical or offers an embodied tactile experience, either populist and kitschy or occupies the special space of 'real culture'.

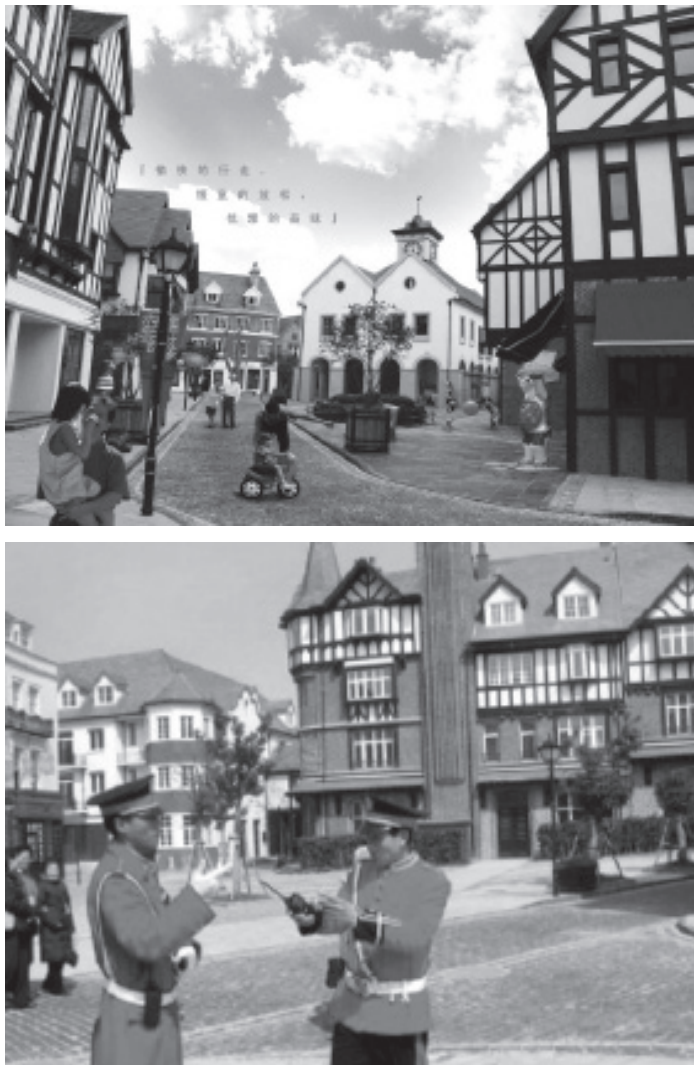


Figure 2: Views of Thames Town, Songjiang City, China.

¹ Kenneth Frampton (1983) 'Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance' in Hal Foster, (ed.), *The Anti-Aesthetic Essays on Postmodern Culture*. Seattle: Bay Press, p. 26.

Within Frampton's framework, where does Thames Town China fit? On the surface, Thames Town bears the distinctive markings of a universalising form of architecture. It is the product of a collaboration between a private developer and an offshore global architecture firm; the images it produces are scenographic, kitschy and appeal to a populist audience; it eradicated the agricultural and light industrial land that came before it and is therefore an example of *tabula rasa* development.

We can, however, switch sides and argue that Thames Town China is an example of autochthonous culture. In a paper titled 'Building Urban Narrative' co-authored with Jason Anderson,² I argued that the programming, the scale, and form of Thames Town China continue these aspects of the *danwei* (or work unit), the administrative-social-spatial unit that formed the basis of urban development in socialist China. Originally conceived of as a unit of production, the work unit gradually developed into the basic unit of collective consumption that integrated workplace, residence and social services. The profound influence the *danwei* had on planning correlated with its widespread acceptance; by 1978, 95% of Chinese belonged to a work unit.³ Following privatisation in China, the ubiquity of the *danwei* declined, and yet this form of living and working and socialising continues just in different costumes, perhaps.

The fact that Thames Town resists or defies categorisation in Frampton's framework shows that both the framework and the either-or construct are insufficient. I also believe it is this uncategorical position that Thames Town occupies that is at the root of the uncomfortable laughter.

The simplicity of Frampton's argument coupled with his failure to develop a 'true theory' of critical regionalism opened him up to criticism and an eventual discrediting of the text within academic circles.⁴ So while I am using him as a straw man to open my own paper, I believe his either-or framework is latent in many popular and critical approaches to reading our contemporary landscape. Has architectural representation become homogeneous or heterogeneous? Is the phenomenon of Thames Town an achievement of the local or the universal? Not only does the either-or produce an unproductive stalemate, it has been proven to be an insufficient framework for analysis. Underlying the framework of the either-or is a socio-historic bias towards the bounded demarcation of 'this' and 'that' in which urban form is considered to be in a static state.

² Mari Fujita and Jason Anderson (forthcoming) 'Building Urban Narrative' in Vinayak Bharne, (ed.), *The Emerging Asian City*.

³ Duangfang Lu (2006) *Remaking Chinese Urban Form: Modernity, Scarcity and Space, 1949–2005*. New York: Routledge, p. 47.

⁴ Robert Adams (2008) 'Globalisation and Architecture: The Challenges of Globalisation Are Relentlessly Shaping Architecture's Relationship with Society and Culture', *The Architectural Review*, Vol. 223, Issue 1332, February, p. 74.

Within architectural discourse in particular, there is a parallel bias towards a symmetrical construction of built form to ideas. A haunting quote from Walter Gropius sums this up: ‘one day there will be a world-view and then there will be its sign: crystal architecture’.⁵ Writing thirteen years before the declaration of the International Style of Architecture through the Museum of Modern Art exhibition,⁶ Gropius puts forth the position that Modern Architecture is the manifestation of the Modern project in general, that built form is the expression of all the hopes and dreams of a people. Does the inverse of Gropius’ position hold true? Can we read the hopes and dreams of a people through their built form?

My paper will challenge both the either-or framework and the symmetrical construction of built form to ideas through a series of observations on the phenomenon of Thames Town, Songjiang City, China. While these are parallel processes, I believe that they work in tandem to produce, at best, nervous laughter and at worst, impoverished readings of the development and others of its kind. At the root of my paper is the belief that our socio-historic bias for categorisation, for bounding, for demarcation and for assuming a static place-ness (urban form as noun) produces a limiting reading and representation of space, experience, and urban subjectivity. As both the either-or framework and the symmetrical construction of built form to ideas are embedded within this bias, I will suggest an alternative: the AndAnd as a research agenda for reading and representing our contemporary built form. This formidable challenge of doing so has already been recognised by Frederic Jameson, ‘The problem [*of contemporary mapping*] is still one of representation, and also of representability: we know that we are caught within these more complex global networks... yet we have no way of thinking about them, of modeling them, however abstractly in our mind’s eye’.⁷ The key to the AndAnd research agenda is the synthesis of the noun and verb: the relationship of the bounded, static and scenographic, to the fluid, enmeshed and multi-scalar. From such a framework, a reading and representation of plurality can emerge.

Inspired by the writer Zadie Smith’s recent lecture ‘Speaking in Tongues’, this research agenda seeks to represent the Dream City in every city.

[Dream City] is a place of many voices, where the unified singular self is an illusion. Naturally, Obama was born there. So was I. When your personal multiplicity is printed on your face, in an almost too obviously thematic manner, in your DNA, in your hair and in the neither this nor that beige of your skin – well, anyone can

⁵ Walter Gropius, Bruno Taut, Adolf Behne, ‘New Ideas on Architecture’, leaflet at Arbeitsrat für Kunst, April 1919.

⁶ The International Style exhibition, Museum of Modern Art, NY curated by Philip Johnson and Henry Russell Hitchcock, 1932.

⁷ Frederic Jameson (2003) *Postmodernism or the Logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, p. 127.



Figure 3: Views of Thames Town, Songjiang City, China.

see you come from Dream City. In Dream City everything is doubled, everything is various. You have no choice but to cross borders and speak in tongues.⁸

The proposal for the AndAnd will unfold in two parts: critical and propositional. The first will examine the implications of the either-or framework and symmetrical construction of built form to ideas on notions of *identity* and *community*. The main thesis of the paper will thus be scaled to issues particular to the test site. The second part will propose a procedural shift towards the reading of urban form via notions of *landscape* and *territory over time*. Because of the nature of my research, I will not be writing about architecture as strictly buildings per se, but rather as components within larger constructions of urban form.

⁸ Zadie Smith (2009) 'Speaking in Tongues', *The New York Review of Books*, Volume 56, Number 3, 26, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/22334> (accessed February 14, 2009). The text is from a lecture given at the New York Public Library in December 2008.

Part One

In a 2003 press release from Shanghai Henghe Real Estate Co. Ltd, the developer of Songjiang City and Thames Town declared, 'Foreign visitors will not be able to tell where Europe ends and China begins'.⁹ I find this claim for trans-continental continuity to be quite fascinating. Can design transcend the inscription of national boundary? Were the developers inspired by the foreign concessions in Shanghai and attempting to celebrate the reversal of power in their history through the creation of their own special coded space for the Chinese consumer? Through the narrative created by the developer, we know that they, together with the lead architects UK-based Atkins Group, went to great lengths for veracity. The architects conducted a thorough study of the architecture of southern England prior to design, and the developer went to great expense importing building materials and fixtures straight from England. The developer has also approached British retailers such as Tesco and Sainsbury to open stores in Thames Town to complete the day-to-day experience of living in an English village.¹⁰ Veracity, then, is not only created through scenographic and formal means, but also extends to the design of experience and lifestyle.

The important questions the claims for veracity bring up for me are: how does design translate to experience? Does it matter that a foreign architect masterminded the design? What is the cultural significance of creating a pocket of England in China? And how does the creation of a pocket of England relate to the construction of community and identity for the occupants of Thames Town? Will Thames Town produce a monocultural ghetto?

Social theories of globalisation have called for a new approach to our understanding of identity and community. According to cultural theorist Stuart Hall, the increased flow of information, people and capital brings about 'a new articulation between "the global" and "the local"... where it seems unlikely that globalisation will simply destroy national identities'.¹¹ In his paper 'The Question of Cultural Identity', Hall describes globalisation as an uneven process through which 'cultural identities everywhere are being relativised by the impact of time-space compression'.¹² Globalisation can 'lead to a strengthening of local identities, or to the production of new identities'.¹³ In the case of China, the dismantling of the centrally planned socialist economic system through the opening up of the market has had a profound impact on the daily lives of Chinese across the nation. In the last two decades, the shift from a majority rural to a majority urban population coupled with the

⁹ Herbert Wright (2008) *Instant Cities*. London: Blackdog Publishing, p. 77.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

¹¹ Stuart Hall (1992) 'The Question of Cultural Identity', in David Held and Tony McGrew, (eds.), *Modernity and Its Futures*. Cambridge: Polity Press, pp. 273–316.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 306.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 308.

privatisation of home ownership has changed the landscape of China. Of course not all Chinese have the means to participate in the market, and the distance between rich and poor in China has increased significantly in the last decade. But the ones that do have the means are exposed to the global market system in ways their parents never were. In an article about the rise of the private homeowner in China, Brooke Larmer states, 'No longer do Chinese families live in the same place for years as wards of the state. Now, as in the West, they are stakeholders, buying into the market and moving up as fast as they can'.¹⁴

Reframing Identity

The choices for home ownership available on the private market have brought about much debate within individuals in China about where and how to live. The choices on offer are giving shape to discussions regarding the emerging contemporary Chinese identity. There are Chinese who are critical of the Western-themed housing developments. One retired government administrator interviewed in a *Washington Post* article said she would not allow her family to live in a Western-style development because 'We are not foreigners'.¹⁵ Others in support of the developments include the general manager of Venice Aquatic City in Hangzhou, 'Even many Americans in America also prefer to buy non-American things... It doesn't mean people are denying traditions their ancestors have passed down'.¹⁶ A recent buyer described what she liked about her new four-bedroom townhouse, 'It's like I'm living abroad, but it's still China and everyone still speaks Chinese'.¹⁷

The debate over identity and architecture is not exclusive to China today. In her paper 'Learning from Chinatown', Anne-Marie Broudehoux gives a captivating account of the century-long search for a Chinese national style of architecture, through the various political and ideological shifts starting after the 1842 Treaty of Nanjing. In both the contemporary debate over Western-themed housing developments and in the longer trajectory of history that Broudehoux captures in her paper, the relationship of architecture to the construction of identity is an important entry point. Broudehoux makes two useful points in her paper: the first is that development of a Chinese national style of architecture was not strictly a national project, but is the outcome of extended exchanges between China and foreign architects.

¹⁴ Brooke Larmer (2008), 'Building Wonderland', *The New York Times*, 6 April. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/06/realestate/keymagazine/406china-t.html?scp=1&sq=Building%20Wonderland%20By%20BROOK%20LARMER&st=cse> (accessed 15 July, 2009).

¹⁵ Ariana Eunjung Cha (2007), 'West Rises in China's Back Yard', *The Washington Post*, 17 April. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/04/10/AR2007041001656.html> (accessed 15 July, 2009).

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

‘Today the Chinese style of architecture has become fully incorporated into the pan-Chinese collective consciousness, to the point of amnesia about its origins. Indeed, contemporary scholarship on China’s modern architectural history either downplays or entirely ignores the role of foreign architects in developing the Chinese national style. ... The constitution of collective identity is far from being a self-contained event, but can be truly global in nature. Different attempts at representing Chinese identity have been shaped by ideas, agents and events coming from across the temporal and spatial spectrum, constantly reformulated over the years to serve new needs and purposes.’¹⁸

In the long view Broudehoux offers, the relationship of architecture to identity in China is demonstrated to be non-linear and global. The second point Broudehoux makes is that the very idea that architecture can express or embody a national identity is problematic because it ‘has rested on an essentialist notion of the nature of collective identity as monolithic, definable, and capable of being translated into built form. It has also rested on a blind faith in the representational power of architecture and its capacity to communicate simple, unequivocal meanings’.¹⁹ Edward Said’s use of the term essentialism, in which the Orientalist eye presupposes an ‘essence’ of the Oriental identity as stable, stagnant and uniform²⁰ has been explored further by thinkers such as Stuart Hall, Homi Bhabha and Amartya Sen. In general, these thinkers agree that essentialist notions of identity are constructed and do not allow for identity to be multiple and fluid:

The subject assumes different identities at different times, identities which are not unified around a coherent ‘self’. Within us are contradictory identities, pulling in different directions so that our identifications are continuously being shifted about.... The fully unified, completed, secure and coherent identity is a fantasy.... [W]e are confronted by a bewildering, fleeting multiplicity of possible identities, any one of which we could identify with – at least temporarily.’²¹

Both of Broudehoux’s points offer important insight into how criticism of Thames Town is caught up in practices that assume a construction of Chinese identity that is static, categorical, bounded and demarcated; a practice that the AndAnd is arguing against.

Reframing Community

The recent decline of the danwei (or work unit) has effectively eroded the system and structure upon which the socialist Chinese city was formed. In Beijing, many danwei were

¹⁸ Anne-Marie Broudehoux (2001) ‘Learning From Chinatown’ in Nezar AlSayyad (ed.) *Hybrid Urbanism: On the Identity Discourse and the Built Environment*. Westport, CT: Praeger, p. 175.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

²⁰ Edward Said (1978) *Orientalism*. New York: Random House.

²¹ Stuart Hall (1992), pp. 277.

dissolved to make room for more lucrative development in the urban core. Chinese families are no longer limited to living in communities that compound work, leisure, social life and politics. In an analysis of Line 13, a recent light rail development in Beijing that loops 41 km north from the North-West corner of the city core back to the North-East corner, I asked my graduate students to gather information on the fourteen new stations created by the transit development. Their findings show a radical rearrangement of the city according to distance from center. While the notion that the value of property decreases as the distance from the city center increases is quite familiar in North American and most European cities, it is relatively new to a Chinese city such as Beijing. Up until privatisation, the center of Beijing was filled with working class families. Many of these families have been relocated to subsidised developments at the stations furthest from the urban center. Furthermore, the privatisation of the housing market in China has brought with it a cornucopia of choice for the upwardly mobile new consumer. Gated communities such as Beijing Orange County and amenity-filled developments such as Beijing's Linked Hybrid are introducing a new class of housing to a new class of private homeowners. These new developments may be located close to the city center (Linked Hybrid) or in exclusive sites further away from the city and only accessible by car (Orange County). The changing status of community is a timely and important question in contemporary Chinese cities.

As I have shown, the efforts on the part of the developers and architects of Thames Town to create a community that (attempts to) replicate British daily life has been the cause of much criticism and debate. If this community is a 'copy', is it 'fake'? Again, I will argue that the idea of drawing a line around the jurisdictional boundary of Thames Town and examining its viability as a community in and of itself is a misguided enterprise. To consider the noun state of Thames Town as a community in which knowing one's neighbour, kinship and a sense of participating in a bounded entity is a hangover of 19th century thinking that pervaded 20th century thinking. The recent disembedding of community and locality (the noun state) has been brought about by studies analysing 'in different ways the construction of imagined, diasporic communities, "new ethnicities" and a third, hybrid space between "insiders" and "outsiders" in the context of global processes'.²² Thinkers such as Arjun Appadurai, Homi Bhabha and Stuart Hall would agree that 'the construction of 'community' in a specific location therefore, cannot be analysed on the assumption that the local is prior, primordial or more real'.²³ For Thames Town and for the multitude of new residential developments around Chinese urban centers, analysis of emergent formations of community must take into consideration unbounded, fluid and multi-scalar notions of place.

²² Martin Albrow, John Eade, Jörg Dürschmidt and Neil Washbourne (1997) 'The Impact of Globalization on Sociological Concepts' in John Eade (ed.) *Living the Global City: Globalization as a Local Process*. London: Routledge, p. 23.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

Part Two

What then, are the actual procedural shifts we must take to be liberated from the either-or framework and the symmetrical construction of built form to ideas? In this last section I will propose the key components of the AndAnd research agenda. As I wrote earlier, the key to the AndAnd research agenda is the synthesis of the noun and verb: the relationship of the bounded, static and scenographic, to the fluid, enmeshed and multi-scalar, that will allow for a reading of plurality.

Reading and Representing Landscape

The first component of the AndAnd is the representation of all places through their participation in landscape. According to W. J. T. Mitchell, landscape can be understood not only as a noun but also as a verb because it has the potential to be both physical and discursive.²⁴ For cultural geographers, landscape refers simultaneously to material space and to ways of both seeing and representing space through various media. The non-material aspect of landscape is the one I would like to focus on here. The heteroglossial intersection of history, politics, governmental strategies, and distinct or everyday events actively figure and are figured by material space. The traditional noun-reading of a space: static, bounded and scenographic, does not have the capacity to uncover the verb-reading: the rich intersection of forces that can be summarised as the cultural politics of a place. Material space and the spatial dimensions of cultural politics are equally important to a representation of place for they work in tandem to provoke new ways of seeing and being.

Reading and Representing Territory and Time

In the introduction to her book *Organization Space*, Keller Easterling writes about the difficulty architects have thinking in verbs: 'Architects are typically more fluent in descriptions of activity and relationships that result in artifacts and forms within conventions that favor the designation of site as a single entity. We are most comfortable with nouns rather than verbs....'²⁵ She suggests an expansion of architectural terminology that will 'describe spatial organisations with active parts, temporal components, or differential change'.²⁶ Geology is a good example of this: a glacier can be measured, quantified, located, observed, experienced, as a thing [noun] in the world. At the same time, the glacier is a system in flow [verb] that changes over time and is acted on by a complex set of conditions. I would provoke architects and critics to look to other disciplines that have acknowledged the synthesis of disparate things; the 'this and that' of Zadie Smith's *Dream City*. For example, from the field of linguistics, bi-dialectalism, which is the possession of two or

²⁴ W. J. T. Mitchell (ed.) (1994), *Landscape and Power*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

²⁵ Keller Easterling (1999) *Organization Space*. Cambridge: MIT Press, p. 1.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

more mutually intelligible dialects, is acknowledged and protected.²⁷ From the fields of political theory or international studies we can observe changes in the relationship of nationalism to the statehood.²⁸

Conclusion

The attention I have paid to Thames Town does not necessarily indicate my support of 'themed housing developments'. I believe the architecture is unimaginative and represents a missed opportunity by Chinese developers to experiment with fresh ideas for urban housing. For this reason, I do not find Thames Town to be deserving of any great awards! As mentioned earlier in the paper, the privatisation of the market in China has brought about a dramatic remapping of urban centers according to class. The proliferation of exclusive and gated communities in Chinese cities is of deep concern for the diversity and vitality of urban cores. While it is not the subject of this paper in particular, a close examination of how this remapping is participating in plurality in general will be an excellent starting point for subsequent research.

My interest in Thames Town (and places like it) has to do with the uncategorical position it occupies in popular and academic discourse; a position that has resulted in unsatisfactory critique and discourse rooted in latent tendencies to categorise, bound, demarcate and assume a static place-ness of contemporary spaces. Cultural theorists, sociologists, and anthropologists have done excellent work reflecting on our contemporary condition brought about by, among other things, globalism, increased migration and new technologies. This work, some of which I have drawn inspiration from for this paper, has inspired a procedural shift in thinking about identity and community. I have attempted to transfer this inspiration to the discipline of architecture and urbanism so that more relevant and potent discussions can take place that allow for a deeper understanding of the places we design, build and occupy.

²⁷ For more on this see: Walt Wolfram, Carolyn Temple Adger and Donna Christian (1999) *Dialects in Schools and Communities*. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum.

²⁸ For more, see Benedict Anderson (1991) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Brooklyn: Verso.

Defiant Ambivalence: Globalisation, Architecture, and Urbanism

JYOTI HOSAGRAHAR

By all accounts, India today is racing ahead on a path to a globalised modern development. And the cities, as the engines of development, are at the forefront of modernity and globalisation. Has architecture and urbanism in India converged on a single homogenised global or is it a kaleidoscope of locals of which the seemingly global is only one? Such a question assumes a universal understanding of what a homogenised global looks like. I will look at the paradoxical urbanism of India to reflect on the central questions of this compendium on the homogeneity of representations.

Urbanism in India has contrasting forms. On the one hand are the glass and steel skyscrapers of the financial centers, the Special Economic Zones (SEZ) for multinational corporations, exuberant shopping malls, and vast gated communities, as signs of a global modernity. On the other hand are countless historic towns with their palaces, mosques, and temples, their lively bazaars, traditional neighborhoods, and living heritage. Many of these are quintessentially exotic and timeless in relation to the contemporary urbanism in Western Europe and North America. Seemingly isolated from the global flows of technology and information, they are celebrated as symbols of place, culture, and locality even as many complain of their being sullied by the homogenising influences of a universal 'modern'. Within and between these opposing forms are 'transitional' spaces that are as yet 'modernising'. An urbanism rife with problems and emblematic of poverty: haphazard growth, inadequate infrastructure, and squalid squatter settlements. Observers of cities in India might read recent transformations as evidence of the flattening out of a rich diversity of cultural heritage by the homogenising processes of global modernity. Should one be categorised as monotonously homogenous and the other as exuberantly heterogeneous?

If the assumption is that globalisation leads to homogeneity of representation and localities express vibrant heterogeneity, then a careful examination of the binaries such as global/local, and homogenous/heterogeneous are necessary, as well as particular understandings of modernity that such binaries are premised on. Equally important to an understanding of representation is to ask 'whose representation?' and to question the divide between the subject that is represented and the representation as an object in itself.

From a postcolonial perspective globalisation does not appear as a determining force that has flattened out other urban processes, but rather as a phenomenon producing flows of capital, goods, labor, and information that shape the forms of specific cities and neighborhoods and leaves others behind, reproducing in new ways the global inequalities and dependencies of colonialism.¹ Globalisation is a powerful cultural force. It is really not an erasure or rejection of history, locality, and tradition, but as in the colonial period, it is made up of various subaltern negotiations, adaptations, appropriations and contestations of the forms, practices and identities that have been defined. While the forces of globalisation may be homogenising, in their localised interpretations they are not.

In this essay, I will look at three seemingly disparate aspects of urbanism in India to reflect on some of the ways that history, place, and locality have engaged with modernity and globalisation. The first aspect is an exploration of a sports event and a type of radio station as cultural practices that are symbolic of a new urban landscape. Second, is an investigation of the global imaginaries of Gurgaon, a city in the metropolitan region of Delhi that is a hub for the IT industry and multinational corporations in India. Finally, the historic cities of Delhi and Srirangapatna and their heritage sites, the apparent antithesis of Gurgaon, provide a view of identities rooted in local context. In looking at the interpenetrations and sullied binarisms of local and global, modern and traditional, I examine what defines these identities in the built environment and who arbitrates them.

Assertion of Popular Identities

Not only was the game [of cricket] different, but the team was unlike those past. Its members played fast and furious. They danced victoriously on the cricket pitch. At news conferences, they spoke Hinglish, a mongrel of Hindi and English that has become the lingua franca of the young small-town Indian...²

The cricket match between India and Australia for the 20Twenty World Cup in July of 2007 was a tense one. Mahendra Singh Dhoni, then 24-year-old captain of the Indian cricket team, called on the players to 'shake off the burden of history' and play with abandon as he led them to victory in a game that was swift, lean, and decisive.³ Cricket, brought to India and its other colonies by the British, had been the quintessential 'gentlemen's' sport.⁴ Elegant, restrained, full of technique and slow, with games typically lasting 3–5 days, cricket had been the very antithesis of Monday night football in the US. That was until the

¹ Jyoti Hosagrahar (Forthcoming) 'Interrogating Difference: Postcolonial Perspectives in Architecture and Urbanism', in Hilde Heynen et al., (eds.), *Handbook of Architectural Theory*. New York: Sage.

² Somini Sengupta (2007) 'Hip, Fast, and Furious', *Deccan Herald*. Bangalore, September 27.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ramachandra Guha (1998) 'Cricket and Politics in Colonial India', *Past and Present*, No. 161, November, pp. 155–190.

development of the 20Twenty game format: each team got to make the maximum runs in 20 overs. The game lasts 2.5 hours: a perfect length for television viewing. The newly conceived game included cheerleading and other fanfare that made it a spectacle more comparable to football and baseball games popular in North America. Mahendra Singh Dhoni on the field, with rippling muscles, long hair, flashy dark glasses, full of glitz and glamour has the demeanour of a Bollywood star rather than yesteryear cricketers. Dhoni symbolises the new, homegrown avatar of cricket in India.

Dhoni, Bollywood stars and cricket are among the numerous topics that are discussed in quick, bilingual bites, between songs on the countless private FM radio stations that have mushroomed rapidly since national radio was made public in India 15 years ago. In a multilingual country like India, the measured formality and separation of programs by language has given way to a plethora of programs with effusive, gushing hosts moving fluidly between languages, chattering in quick bites, drawing in listeners by inviting commentary on all topics from the mundane to the profound, listeners who use cell-phone to computer technology to poll text messages.

The populist and hybrid bilingual radio is anathema for those who value purity of language, literary traditions, and grammatical correctness. Bilingual radio, Mahendra Singh Dhoni and the 20Twenty matches are symptomatic of a new kind of public sphere that speaks at once to globalised publics in local voices: voices that deliberately eschew erudition and classicism in favor of a street-smart eclecticism. More significantly, I believe that these hybrid forms of popular culture can be read as subaltern responses to elite imaginaries and hegemonic homogenisations.

India, an ancient land, and a population with a median age of about 24, is what many see as a nation of the young and the restless. In a subcontinent rooted in ancient wisdoms, rich with histories and heritage, its inheritance has become, for many, a burden to progress and an embarrassment. Seemingly, the meta-narrative of a singular vision of globalisation has served as a polarising force rejecting locality, tradition, heritage, and history, to embrace newness and universality. Yet the universals of globalisation open doors that provide opportunities for envisioning reconfigured local identities that neither fully reject tradition and history nor feel obliged to remain forever steeped in it. They play the game not by other people's rules but unapologetically make up their own. As opposed to a universalised global identity of cricket or a homogenous national one, the hybrid forms of bilingual radio and Bollywood influenced speed cricket legitimise and enable alternative narratives and identities, and are empowering to the subalterns as such.

Imagining Globality

Gurgaon is a city in the northern Indian state of Haryana located in the metropolitan region of Delhi. Starting in 1990, Gurgaon has seen a dramatic transformation from a sleepy village in a largely agricultural state, into a global space of multinational corporate parks, IT offices, mega-malls, and gated apartment complexes that are more like cities within cities. Home to Maruti Suzuki, India's first private automobile manufacturer, DLF City, one of Asia's largest private townships, companies like Motorola, Dell, and Microsoft, and a 600 acre project for an International Industrial Model Township, Gurgaon today is a world of glittering malls, air-conditioned glass and steel office towers, wide straight streets and vast, gated enclosures of luxury apartments epitomising for many modernity in India.

Everything in Gurgaon is intended to convey a placeless cosmopolitanism that, despite its apparent similarity to particular North American modernities, has come to represent a cosmopolitan global modernity. Companies like Hewlett Packard and Cisco, malls called Sigma and Central, and gated residential complexes with names like 'Bellaire', 'Summit', and 'President' signify connections to a world far beyond Gurgaon, Haryana, and India.⁵ At work, a majority of young and upwardly mobile Indians communicate in English with partners and clients globally, operating on clocks set to New York, London, Singapore, and Tokyo time. They travel in one of the new urban automobiles from their gated apartment complexes in Gurgaon or commute from Delhi in air-conditioned company vehicles, take pride in sporting the latest personal devices such as mobile phones, eat at Pizza Hut or McDonalds, socialise at a franchise coffee shop similar to Starbucks, work out at gyms equipped with the trendiest machines, shop in air-conditioned malls to buy Levi's jeans, Tommy Hilfiger t-shirts and L'Oreal beauty products. Dinner, for some, comes in microwaveable, ready-to-eat packages; others choose from among restaurants serving Chinese, Thai, Mughlai, or Italian cuisines. Traveling along the wide, treeless roads, or inside at one of the many brightly lit places with a profusion of English language billboards and signboards, one could forget for an instant the precise geography of location – it could just as easily be Dubai or Singapore or Kuala Lumpur if not Southern California.

Outside the gated complexes of sparkling towers, paved paths, tidy hedges and manicured lawns, amidst the wide treeless streets, nondescript intersections, and whirling clouds of dust under a relentless sun is the 'other' Gurgaon. Motley groups can be spotted taking refuge in shadowy fringes vending *chai*, cigarettes, cane juice, tire repair services, ice-lollies and fruits.⁶ Vegetable and fruit vendors negotiate vehicular traffic at the edges of the roads and intersections, their wares on carts or make-shift shelves, protected from the harsh sun or the monsoon rains by a piece of plastic or tarpaulin supported on a

⁵ See also, Seth Schindler (2007) 'A 21st-Century Urban Landscape: The Emergence of New Socio-Spatial Formations in Gurgaon', *Sarai Reader: Urban Frontiers*. New Delhi: Sarai, pp. 499–508.

⁶ Charles Dettleux (2007) 'En Marchant dans Gurgaon', in *Urbanisme*, No. 355, July.

bamboo pole. Obscured from view in shadowy spaces behind the colourful billboards and architect-designed towers are sprawling masses of slums. Migrants from Bihar and Bangladesh arrive in search of jobs as maids, drivers, gardeners, office errand boys, and the like. In the lost spaces beneath flyovers and on construction sites, migrant workers make homes in shacks amidst piles of construction material and debris. Filling the interstices between the precise and geometric compounds are the fluid, flexible, and spontaneous landscapes of the villagers who inhabit the surroundings of Gurgaon. Urban villages with entirely different land use and ownership patterns are hemmed in by new developments that have taken over their agricultural lands. Hand-drawn and bicycle rickshaws waiting at street intersections are reminders of these other, older settlements.

The global cosmopolitanism of Gurgaon is supported by local economies and politics. Every middle-class apartment and house within the gated complexes employs a cleaning maid, a cook, a driver, and often, an *ayah* for childcare. Silent and invisible armies of sweepers, gardeners, window cleaners, garbage collectors, ironing services, shoe-shines, repair technicians, mechanics, milkmen, delivery boys, and vendors penetrate the fortified worlds of the commercial and office complexes to make daily life possible.

Glass fitters, carpenters and woodworkers, cane and bamboo workers, goatherds, and welders all find a niche in the otherwise ordered and planned developments that had made no room for them. Pizza Hut, Hagen Daaz, and Cookie Man inside the mall vie with the street food vendors with their fragrant and spicy temptations who congregate outside the mirrored doors of the malls: a promenade for the well-heeled inside, and a tentative bazaar for socialising and shopping outside. Hand-pulled rickshaws compensate for the lack of public transportation.

The distinction between public and private space is clearly spelled out in Gurgaon. Public space is minimal and such as there is, has often been appropriated and privatised. A few designated parks are clear in excluding vending and informal activities. Apartment complexes, office parks, shopping malls, schools, hospitals, and golf courses are all bounded and secured, and distinct from their locality. Private security guards are everywhere, at the entrance to malls, offices, and gated apartment complexes, allowing entry only to those they consider worthy of inhabiting those spaces. Residents whose children attend school within the vast gated complexes that function as privately administered cities-within-the-city, see no need to venture out to the world beyond on an everyday basis and appreciate being able to let their children walk to school on their own within the secure and clean environment of their complex – something the middle classes can rarely be comfortable with in Delhi. The fragile and glittering glass and steel walls function as impenetrable fortresses separating those who have risen to gain entry to a global world and those who must remain excluded from it – making the space within ever more magical and desirable.

Gurgaon's built form and homogenised global culture, seemingly renders irrelevant history and locality. However an historical perspective on Gurgaon's development reveals a complex engagement with Gurgaon's particular institutional and social structures in the making of the global 'modern' landscape. Haryana was a largely agricultural state that shared its administrative capital, Chandigarh, with the state of Punjab. Through the efforts to transform agricultural technology during the 1950s, the states of Haryana and Punjab became the focus of the Green Revolution as the wheat bowl of the nation. Historically, the agricultural lands and villages in and around Gurgaon had belonged to royal subordinates of the Mughal King who often lived in Delhi and attended court there while they maintained their estates in the region of Gurgaon. The management of urban and rural areas in the vicinity of Delhi underwent dramatic changes through the British colonial rule and finally with the establishment of state boundaries in the new republic.

Real estate speculation was rife in Delhi with the vast development projects of the Delhi Improvement Trust through the early 1950s. Gurgaon's development is associated with the career trajectory of Kushal Pal Singh of Delhi Land and Finance, one of the two key property developers responsible for its dramatic transformation. K. P. Singh had joined the real estate firm of Delhi Land and Finance (DLF) in 1954 only to find that on the passing of the Delhi Development Act in 1957 the development of land in Delhi became a state monopoly inhibiting land speculation and private development. K. P. Singh was forced out of business in Delhi. The government had made some unsuccessful attempts at establishing satellite towns for Delhi at Panipat, Sohna, and Aligarh.

By the mid-1970s Maruti Udyog had been set up in Gurgaon as the first private car manufacturer in India. K. P. Singh and DLF began to buy land in Gurgaon in Haryana State at a time when it was still largely agricultural. Land ownership and titles were complicated by the traditional patriarchal patterns of family and inheritance so that farms of even a few acres had multiple owners who needed to reach consensus before sale. The average size of the farms was 4–5 acres owned by undivided families (under the Hindu Undivided Family Act) so he visited homes to establish personal relationships with the farmers and their families, earned their trust and convinced each adult to obtain their legal consent for the sale.⁷ With no access to large scale credit to undertake the property purchases, K. P. Singh borrowed from one farmer to pay the other so that the farmers themselves served as bankers for the DLF until he finally acquired about 3,500 acres with more than half the land on credit. They developed the property with the concept of 'walk to work', and 'walk to leisure', so that the developments were conceived as complete townships with offices, leisure facilities, schools, hospitals, and shopping complexes as a way to persuade people to move out of a congested metropolis.⁸ By 2005, DLF City was Asia's largest private

⁷ Sanjay Sharma (2005) 'How Mr. K. P. Singh of DLF Group Helped build Gurgaon into one of Asia's Largest Private Townships'. <http://www.gurgaonscoop.com/story/2005/3/21/19352/5/006>, posted March 21.

⁸ Op.cit.

township and DLF had developed 20 million square feet of residential space, 3 million square feet of commercial space, and 1 million square feet of retail space in Haryana.

The Indian government's economic liberalisation policies of the 1990s and the explosion in Business Processing Outsourcing and Information Technology services connected India to global markets and corporations worldwide. With the opportunities and incentives these businesses received to invest and locate in Gurgaon, they helped transform the region into the global space many consider it to be today. The village of Manesar in the region was declared a site for a 600 acre Industrial Model Township, a program of the Indian government to attract businesses and investments from international companies.⁹ Extended tax holidays for the businesses and promises of enormous expenditures on infrastructure provision are part of the plan.¹⁰ The plan is to attract high technology, non-polluting industries and plan for housing for those employed in the industries. Such programs are intended to generate a huge amount of revenues, jobs, as well as real estate developments.

History, heritage, and village life, that were at once denigrated and romanticised, helped create the global spaces as alluring visualisations and unique experiences. The older settlements of Gurgaon, Manesar and Farukh Nagar have been overwhelmed and squeezed into the narrow confines of their built properties by the new developments. In a region where nucleated settlements were surrounded by agricultural lands, the sale of their agricultural holdings at nominal sums has left them with only their homes in the villages. The marginal, the outcaste and the landless in the villages, otherwise not eligible for compensations or proceeds from sales, were, in some cases, relocated. Harijan Basti, for instance, houses rickshaw pullers, goatherds, welders, and other outcastes of a nearby village. However, neglected by municipal development authorities (HUDA) as well as the village *panchayat*, they are without infrastructure facilities like roads, sewer lines, and water supply.¹¹ Monuments of the 18th and 19th centuries that dot the area remain largely neglected, ignored, and threatened by rapid transformation. With a view to capitalising on their tourism potential, 18th-century structures like the Farukh Nagar Fort, Sheesh Mahal, a baoli, and the remains of city gates have been taken up for preservation only since 2009.

Romanticised fantasies of an idealised rural life and Indian urbanism abound. In a new social structure where royalty are regarded no distinct privileges and where class identities are defined by what people consume and where, an inversion of familiar forms, spaces and identities are evident in Gurgaon's relationship to history and preservation. Street foods

⁹ See Masterplan for Gurgaon-Manesar 2021.

¹⁰ Krishan Singh (2004) 'Industrial Development of Gurgaon District of Haryana in the National Capital Region, India' in *Anreg*, no. 13, March, pp. 135–150.

¹¹ Sanjay Sharma 'Unlimited Water Connections for Rs 150 Per Connection Available In Sector 23 A, HUDA, Gurgaon'. In <http://www.gurgaonscoop.com>, posted on November 23, 2004.

are sold in the antiseptic and disciplinary environment of new fast food cafés inside new malls; and shops and restaurants evoke ‘bazaar’ in their names. Luxury hotels vie with each other to promise distinctive and memorable experiences and conjure tantalising visions of the pleasure and decadence of a mythical orient. Heritage Village Manesar has been conceived and promoted, according to its marketing brochure and website, as ‘a Rajasthani haveli style palatial resort’ that invites guests to experience ‘a world of ethnic grandeur’. They claim with pride that what they offer is a ‘stupendous fusion of vibrant colours and landscapes of Indian ethnicity and International eloquence’.¹²

The global imaginaries of the Gurgaon region, with their allusions to a placeless cosmopolitanism, and connectivity to the global economy, belie their rootedness in local specificity of history and circumstance. The vast tracts of land, outlined by wide, straight roads, the futuristic towers, the apartment blocks set amidst manicured gardens, and the enormous commercial establishments seem to be paper-thin images that mask social and economic divides and systems of inclusion and exclusion entrenched locally. The connections to the global economy, the Business Processing Outsourcing, the McDonalds serving Aloo McTikki are equally real. The new forms of social differentiation based on patterns and spaces of consumption are overlaid on inherited structures of caste, gender, caste-based occupations, and religion.

Constructed and consumed at once globally and locally, Gurgaon is a complex medley of *indigenous modernities*. Although the global imaginaries appear to dismiss and replace local forms and meanings, and the marginal presence of villagers and squatters seem to negate the cosmopolitanism of Gurgaon, I hold that as simultaneous and essential aspects of the landscape, both the local and the global constitute and transform the other.

Preserving Heterogeneity

In contrast to the global space of Gurgaon, historic cities like Old Delhi and Srirangapatna represent the quintessentially provincial. Their identities are based on difference: the antithesis of universal modernism, they stand for everything Gurgaon is not. In the idealised opposition one is new, the other old; one instantly developed, the other incrementally built and rebuilt over centuries; one a temple to modern commerce and consumption, the other a place of ancient religion and ritual; one built by multinational corporate capital, and the other by the wealth and benevolence of kings and the modest investments of ordinary residents; one a casteless society where anyone could make it to the top, and the other a place where a complex web of caste, community and gender determined one’s position in society. If the mythical cosmopolitanism of Gurgaon was constructed on and interwoven with the particularities of the local, through studies of Old Delhi and Srirangapatna –

¹² <http://www.selecthotels.co.in/Manesar.asp>

despite their dominant visual identity as historic places – I will investigate if historic sites and heritage in India today can be similarly read, as hybrids interpenetrated and layered by globality. In so doing, I question the binarism between global spaces and historic places.

Delhi was established in 1658 as sovereign city of the vast Mughal empire by the Emperor Shahjahan. It was a walled city by the river Yamuna that had a palace, city walls and gates, mosques, temples, bazaars, squares and well-defined neighborhoods. Until the middle of the 19th century, Mughal elite lived in extensive mansions that were almost like self-contained neighborhoods. The streets were walled, narrow and winding, but inside the compounds the structures were airy pavilions arranged around green and paved courtyards. The vast retinue in service of the nobility or under their patronage lived in or around the mansions in smaller units that also had access to private open spaces.¹³

After the conquest of the city in 1857, British colonial rulers set about deliberately modernising the walled Mughal city – by reshaping spatial patterns but also by redefining the economic, innovative, cultural and social roles of the city in the region. The ubiquitous mansions and courtyard houses had, at one time, formed a primary unit of the urban fabric. By the early 20th century, many of these elegant and sprawling mansions had suffered dilapidation and been converted into over-crowded multi-family ‘tenement’ houses, warehouses and specialty markets.

Srirangapatna in southern India began as a small settlement around an important temple in the 10th century. Subsequently it developed into a temple town. The Ranganathaswamy temple was at the heart of the small temple town. It was added onto and elaborated over the centuries through the rule of the Gangas, the Hoysalas, the Vijayanagaras and the Mysore Wodeyar rulers. The main town of Srirangapatna was enclosed in three layers of fortification with ditches between them and the river. The Vijayanagaras first built the fort wall in the middle of the 15th century that was reinforced and expanded by Tipu Sultan in the 18th century. Today much of the fort walls have been brought down.

Historians have noted that the neighborhoods inside the settlement were dense and the streets irregular. Eighteenth century travelers described Srirangapatna fort as consisting of many ‘magnificent buildings’. Outside the fort was the *pettah* or the commercial town that travelers described as ‘prosperous’ until the middle of the 19th century. During the 18th century, as a sovereign city under the reign of Tipu Sultan, the town contained a population of about five hundred thousand. By the end of the 19th century this population had dwindled to just over twelve thousand. The remains of the older settlements are still in evidence today in the street patterns. Many of the houses are over 100 years old, although several have been altered recently. Houses with white walls and red-tiled roofs

¹³ For a detailed analysis of historic Delhi see Jyoti Hosagrahar (2005) *Indigenous Modernities: Negotiating Architecture and Urbanism*. London, New Delhi, New York: Routledge.

continue to face the street, located at the edge of the streets. Entryways are marked by steps and a characteristic porch leading up to the front door.¹⁴

Landmark mosques, temples and palaces mark both Delhi and Srirangapatna; both are by the banks of major rivers, and both have populations that are both Muslim and Hindu. With forms, spatial practices and festivals that are historical and inherited, both cities appear at first as quintessentially traditional cities. Srirangapatna is today a small town, two and a half hours by road from Bangalore, an exploding metropolis and a center for the Internet Technology industry. By comparison, historic Delhi lies at the core of a teeming and ever-expanding megalopolis. Neither city is isolated and cocooned in their traditional practices; rather, modernity is significantly present in both.

A dizzying simultaneity of modern and traditional plays out in both cities. Abida and her husband bought a Bosch washing machine and a Whirlpool refrigerator from the appliance store on the main commercial street in Srirangapatna while Venkamma and her sister-in-law continue to carry their dishes and clothes to the *ghats* on the river bank to wash. Khalida's son recently got a job as a security guard for an IT company in Mysore.¹⁵ With the remittances she is hoping he will soon be able to send her, she can rebuild the broken wall of her old house and buy a new TV. Getting piped water-supply, however, was not something the money could help arrange. With an educational loan from a rationalised and global banking system, Raghu left Srirangapatna to study engineering at Manipal University and then got a plum job as a software engineer at a BPO in Bangalore.¹⁶ With the compensation he sent home, his father was able to completely rebuild their ancestral home into a three-storied modern marvel that was the envy of his neighbors.

Also in Srirangapatna, Abdur Rahman and his brothers circumvented building restrictions to renovate their ancestral house close to a national monument.¹⁷ They chose concrete flat roofs for their house against the traditional tile because concrete for them reflected higher status: so did bright colours and carved embellishments. In Srirangapatna, building regulations are yet to be enforced meanwhile the anarchy that reigns in the building forms testifies to the power of the citizens over government.¹⁸

¹⁴ Analysis of Srirangapatna is based on research and fieldwork conducted for a project with Sustainable Urbanism International for the Government of Karnataka for the Conservation and Development of the Heritage City of Srirangapatna. See also Jyoti Hosagrahar (2007) 'Indigene Moderne: Uber Architektur und Ambivalen in Indien', *ArchPlus* 185, pp. 33–35.

¹⁵ Based on field work in Srirangapatna over several visits from 2006–2007. Interviews with Khalida, Venkamma, and other local residents.

¹⁶ Based on field work in Srirangapatna over several visits from 2006–2007. Interviews with Raghu's father Govindappa, and other local residents.

¹⁷ Based on field work in Srirangapatna over several visits from 2006–2007. Interviews with Abdur Rahman, and other local residents.

¹⁸ No statutory master-plan for Srirangapatna was yet in place until September 2010.

In Delhi, Zakir Ahmed and his brother were known for their intricate *zardosi* work – the traditional fine gold brocade embroidery for wedding trousseau. Ahmed’s daughter Rehana and her sisters sit in their courtyard at home sewing on sequins and hand embroidering flowers on shirts for Gap and other mass designer-wear. Their neighbor, Syyed Khan’s daughter was planning to attend law school in Bangalore.

Also in Delhi, appropriating sidewalks for hawking and vending, extending private homes over public walkways, citizens flouted building by-laws not through confrontation with officials or blatant disregard, but through subversion, non-conformation to new regulations and countless quiet rebellions in a way that undermined the power of a modern municipality.¹⁹ The residents of Delhi and Srirangapatna, at once members of a neighbourhood and a community, and citizens of a boundary-less global world, negotiate multiple identities and geographies. Neither trenchantly traditional nor rabid converts to someone else’s version of globalisation, modernity for them is the ‘million mutinies’ as V. S. Naipul put it. Modernity for them is in the here and now.

The presence of older forms visually signals changelessness in function and meaning, and so obscured the modern influences that have shaped the meaning of the spaces. Equally, kitsch new forms belie persistent continuities in relationships and meanings. If global imaginaries are marked by glass and steel towers, shopping malls and high-speed transportation routes, then places like the walled city of Delhi and Srirangapatna are iconic of local identities rooted in particular histories. Preservation of monuments in these places has reinforced the popular perception of these places as historically derived, rooted in local context, and generally timeless in their identity. Yet, intertwining of modernity and tradition has occurred constantly in every aspect of life – formal, social, economic and symbolic – in these historic cities. The heterogeneous local forms operate within homogenising global networks.

Conventional architectural histories have valorised modern architecture in North America and Western Europe through its contrast with a static pre-modern or traditional architecture. While vernacular architecture in the North America and Western Europe generally referred to non-monumental historic structures, ‘traditional’ architecture denoted the built forms of contemporary indigenous and ‘non-modern’ people everywhere. From such a modernist perspective, ‘traditional’ architecture, the everyday built forms particular to a place and a people, were either denigrated as primitive and backward or romanticised as harmonious and enlightened. Rather than view historic cities as static, timeless, or ‘traditional’, or preserving their monuments as cultural icons, their landscapes can be read to highlight local engagements with modernity.

¹⁹ See Jyoti Hosagrahar (2005) *Indigenous Modernities*.

Ambivalent Modernities

Architecture and urbanism in India unsettles the calmness of accepted categorisation of architecture (and societies) into ‘modern’ and ‘traditional’, ‘Western’ and ‘non-Western’. Lively bazaars and exuberant malls, traditional neighbourhoods and gated communities, squalid squatter settlements and sleek high-rise offices of glass and steel form fragmented metropolitan landscapes that are in a constant state of mutation. For many observers of city form and urban life, ‘incomplete’ modernisms that jostle with ‘inauthentic’ traditions, symbolise a provincial place that is as yet becoming globalised.²⁰ Are these marks of a failed modernity or of disintegrating tradition? How does one make sense of the fragmented and paradoxical built environment? How do we understand its ambivalent modernity? Incomplete and partial in all its aspects, are these vestiges of community and custom, place and tradition, history and spontaneity as yet transitional, on their way to becoming fully modern or are they the failures of modernity and bastardisations of traditions? I suggest instead that we read them as the informalisations of the formal: an indigenisation of the homogenising global, and a modernisation of traditions. In an altered context familiar forms acquire new uses and meanings and strange elements were incorporated into familiar arrangements. The emergent built forms, and their use and meanings, did not flatten out completely to resemble an idealised European or North American modern. Nor were they rigidly puritanical in their adherence to an equally idealised and homogenising ‘Indian’ identity. Instead the outcomes were defiantly ambivalent in their modernity and in their traditions – and abundant in their interpretations of each.

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, colonial anxieties for purity of oppositional categories such as black and white, coloniser and colonised, modern and traditional were countered by ever-increasing forms of hybridity as new ideas, people, images and capital moved around the world with greater frequency. Transnationalism and increasing interconnectedness meant increasingly ‘impure’ mixtures of diverse, supposedly contradictory, even forbidden elements, or experimentation driven by the desire to find new kinds of strength and beauty. Homi Bhabha has recognised the unpredictability of hybridisation, the impossibility of total control as itself a source of power.²¹ Bhabha’s intricate view of hybridity and infiltration of cultural symbols, values, and practices and his emphasis on identities as heterogeneous provide an understanding of multiple, contradictory and fluid modern identities.

Rather than accept dichotomies such as modern/traditional, or homogenous/heterogeneous as inherent characteristics of particular built forms, I see homogeneity of representation and heterogeneous identity construction as interconnected processes

²⁰ For a detailed discussion of the concept of indigenous modernities, see Jyoti Hosagrahar (2005), *Indigenous Modernities*.

²¹ Homi Bhabha (1994) *The Location of Culture*. London, New Delhi, New York: Routledge.

that together influence particular forms and spaces. More useful than singular and static definitions of global and local, 'modern', and 'traditional', 'West' and 'non-West', or homogenous and heterogeneous, I think, are fluid and ephemeral constructions of one category by the other: the insidious infiltrations and bold appropriations. More useful than an absolute separation of object and representation, or public realm from the private, are explorations of their interactions to create a multiplicity of forms, representations, and interpretations. In my first book I developed the concept of *indigenous modernities* to denote the paradoxical features of modernities rooted in their particular conditions and located outside the dominant discourse of a universal paradigm centered on an imagined ideal of the 'West'.²²

The vignettes of urbanism in India reveal that far from being an accidental, apologetic, tentative or marginal sully of categories, the indigenised globalities and rationalised traditions are defiant amalgamations that appropriate the authority to define their identities in their own terms. At a time when region and locality are in question, even seemingly frozen traditions are not objects isolated from a global milieu. The engagement with global economic and cultural forces is both deliberate and unselfconscious. Many observers view the penetration of formal elements reminiscent of a homogenous global modernity as a 'failure' to be completely local. Nor are landscapes in the foregoing vignettes passive 'victims' of globalisation. The forces of homogenisation are not externally imposed. The identities, neither entirely global and modern, nor completely local and traditional, simultaneously contain the oppositions within them in an ever-shifting landscape of *indigenous modernities*. A simple and linear narrative of an essentialised local culture being replaced by a singular global culture or a rich variety of traditional forms being replaced by homogenised modern ones are made more nuanced and complex by the presence of one within the other.

A closer view of some specific examples in India reminds us that hybridity is not only in the built form but pervades all manner of identity construction. Thinking about buildings and urban space as symbolic cultural landscapes that are historically constituted, culturally constructed, political artifacts whose forms are dynamic and meanings constantly negotiated are more useful to understanding the paradoxes and contradictions in forms simplistically labeled as global/modern and local/traditional.

Postcolonial thinkers have critiqued universalising narratives of modernism and questioned naive dichotomies such as those between West and non-West, traditional and modern that continue to pervade architectural analysis. Postcolonial perspectives show the ways seemingly unique and narrowly particular forms and histories are situated in

²² *Op. cit.*

global interconnections; forms and histories presumed to be universal, such as Western European modernisms, are in fact provincial and particular.

Acknowledging ‘other’ modernities is also to observe the ways that dominant concepts proclaimed to be universal and global translate into local spatial practices, and the ways that particular forms, places and communities engage with a changing cultural milieu to adapt and innovate. Recognising the plurality of modernities legitimises its many interpretations. We would then cease to aspire for and lament over an imagined universalism or romanticise about a built environment imagined and fixed as ‘traditional’. Unable to completely reject one or surrender fully to the other, they melded into internally divided indigenous modernities.²³

Uniformity can also be interpreted as tyranny – an assertion of a single identity, form or structure over all others. A postcolonial reading of the foregoing examples in India suggests that the various hybrid forms and identities challenge a singular modernism that privileges those in positions of power and authority. They acknowledge instead, the multiple dimensions of subordinate experiences appropriating the right to define fundamental values, policies, operations and identities. In so doing, the indigenous modernities particularise universal narratives and globalise narrowly parochial ones. Gurgaon’s traditional social structures and particular histories shaped its seemingly global modernism. Equally, global flows of capital, information and communication had transformed the cultural landscape in towns seemingly steeped in history and tradition.

Even as universalising forces of global flows threatens and decimates local identities, people from the margins rise up to de-center a globalisation discourse that privileges a dominant ‘West’ and make it their own. Globalisation on whose terms? As the 20Twenty cricket matches and the bilingual radio remind us, they ‘play fast and furious’ only to make the game their own. Mongrel forms and bastardisations of identities give voice to struggles against hegemonic power and recognise the subtle ways in which even the most marginalised populations actively shape and negotiate the spaces they inhabit. For those in subordinate positions who under various types of colonial rule have been denied the authority to speak for themselves, to assert their identities, or follow their aspirations, it is enabling and empowering. Ephemeral and dynamic, they are important as reminders of the uneasy negotiation between sameness and difference in particular locales.

Far beyond the Muslim world, the Aga Khan Awards have been vital in offering a postcolonial challenge to universalising interpretations of modernity. Critique, the Frankfurt school has reminded us, is a form of knowledge. The power of the Aga Khan Awards lies in continuing to recognise design for the ways it enables and empowers societies. The

²³ *Op. cit.*

notion of representation assumes a subject-object relationship where each is complete and separate. If we look at buildings and spaces as cultural landscapes then we might be able to see forms in relation to the processes of their making and practices of inhabitation.

Bruno Latour, when asked recently to comment on globalisation, responded, Which globe? Which politics?²⁴ Perhaps a critical practice of architecture is one that encourages interconnected appropriations in a manner that asks which moderns? Which identities? Whose representation?

²⁴ Bruno Latour, lecture at Columbia University, New York, February 2009.

Homogeneity of Representations: Salvation or Menace?

ABIDIN KUSNO

'Homogeneity of representations' indicates not only a particular reality of our time; it is also a knowledge construct which seeks to challenge our understanding of that reality. As a problem-posing phrase, the idea of homogeneity of representations invites a debate.¹ We could start by arguing whether there is such a thing as 'homogeneity of representations'. We could also move beyond the discussion of whether homogeneity is a reality by debating if such a thing is desirable, good or bad and whether it can be a salvation or a menace. Before then, we would also need to ask what kind of representation we are in fact looking at. Are we considering the supposedly 'universal' (if not homogenising) Enlightenment *ideas* of liberty, individuality, and equality that are presumably not merely desirable but also universally possible? Or are we looking at the transnational discourses of architecture and their formal expressions which have constituted a powerful force for homogenisation for over 100 years at least? What could we say about the *lingua franca* of particular architecture that has facilitated homogeneity across space, such as, among others, corporate towers, Greco-Romanic state architecture and modernist or postmodernist international style housing?

On the other end of homogenisation is everything that seems to stand against it, which is 'heterogenisation', a counter-process that is at once intellectual and political. This binarism could be said to be one of the most productive as well as the most problematic constructs in the arts and social sciences since its formation in the 19th century. However, by posing these binary oppositions, we also often overlook the profound, mutually constitutive relations between them, in which one takes the form of the other, and how one depends on the other for its existence and effect. For instance, the profound heterogeneity exists only within the context of the homogenising 'forms of dominance'.² Similarly, the heterogeneous appearances of national or local specificities carries with them profound

¹ As Modjtaba Sadria points out, 'in problem-solving, knowledge is not merely describing reality. It is performative and diversifying, because it challenges the dominant understanding of reality which has attempted, and maybe even succeeded, in being considered "true"'. See: Modjtaba Sadria (2009) 'Modernities: Re-posing the Issues', in Modjtaba Sadria (ed.) *Multiple Modernities in Muslim Societies*. Geneva: Aga Khan Award for Architecture, p. 9.

² Nezar AlSayyad (ed.) (1992) *Forms of Dominance: On the Architecture and Urbanism of the Colonial Enterprise*. Aldershot: Avebury.

homogeneity. In my opinion, our intellectual task is to release us from the burden of (essentially) opposing norms of homogenisation – no doubt a worthwhile project – in order to insist on the other end of the antinomy. Should a choice be made between them, it would be based on our context-bound intellectual, ethical and political decisions. Let me stake out my position. I make no claims to judge what might be the best or most useful form of representation for architecture and urban space today (should it be homogeneity or heterogeneity?). I wish however to show that the antinomies pose no question of dilemma, for if a choice were to be made, it would be subjected to the socio-historical contexts within which that choice is made.

In this essay, I look at the state discourses of homogeneity and heterogeneity in colonial and postcolonial formations and how they raise intellectual and political questions. I draw illustrative cases from colonial and postcolonial worlds as I believe these places articulate most profoundly the antinomies of homogeneity and heterogeneity in both spatial and temporal terms. At the end, I look at the responses to the state's discourses of homogeneity and heterogeneity via the narrative construct of Mas Marco Kartodikromo, an Indonesian novelist in the early 20th century, who through his writing reconfigured politically the binary contrasts that structured the colonial city in which he lived.

Heterogeneity

The notion of homogenisation of representations, if we are willing to stretch beyond the visual and spatial concerns of architecture, is a socio-temporal concept derived from Western historicism; which conceives the world as moving along a single trajectory with the West at the forefront followed by the 'not-yet', or 'yet-to-be' developed countries/colonies. In his critique of Western historicism, Dipesh Chakrabarty describes the 'not yet' understanding of history 'as an imaginary waiting room ... it was as though we are all going to go to the same place in the end. However some people would go there earlier because they were ready for it. Others will have to be readied'.³

We should however note that the historicist aspiration of 'going to the same place in the end' (and its concomitant discourse of homogenisation) is remarkably different from the conservative idea found, for instance, in certain policies of the colonial government, which believed that the only way to bring order and peace to the colony was to prevent the 'natives' from taking any part in the 'development' initiative. The conservative thereby believed that the 'natives' should remain a 'noble savage' frozen in time and space – a mode of thinking based on essential difference that would take us back to the discourse of

³ Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000) 'Asia and the Twentieth Century: What is "Asian Modernity"?' in Kwok Kian-Woo et al. (eds.) *'We Asians': Between Past and Future*. Singapore: Singapore Heritage Society, p. 23; See also: Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000) *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton University Press.

Orientalism. Within this context, the idea of developing the colony (through the stages of development ‘in order to go to the same place in the end’) can be seen as quite radical in its forward-looking vision even though we might say that such movements, under colonial conditions, carried no prospect for democratic governance. Overall, modernisation leaves an impression that the colony and its people are developing. At least if they are not-yet-developed they can be made ready for development in stages and the built environment serves as a means for representing such possibility. The developmentalist discourse of ‘not-yet’ thus keeps the colony always a step or two behind. This temporal lag preserves the gap between the coloniser and the colonised – a precondition for continuing the discourse of development in the first place.

However, colonies being colonies, modernisation remains partial and homogenisation has never actually taken place in the colony.⁴ For instance, in colonial Indonesia, the installation of water supply was limited to the European residential and commercial areas: ‘Design criteria explicitly stated a production capacity that could serve 90 percent of the European households with 140 liters/capita/day, 60 percent of Chinese and Foreign Easterner households with 100 liters and 30 percent of native households with 65’.⁵ There are many more examples of differential treatment of urban space, and it is sufficient to say that the unevenness of colonial urban development has kept the colonial city heterogeneous.⁶ The developmental discourse of ‘not-yet’ or ‘yet-to-be’ perpetuates the space of unevenness, social differentiation and unequal heterogeneity, which has become the characteristic of colonial and postcolonial cities.

⁴ In the case of colonial Indonesia, the contribution of the state activity for the welfare of the colonised in the early 20th century only stemmed from the embarrassment of the spectacular profit generated by the expansion of economic enterprise in the outer islands. See: Robert Cribb (1994) ‘Introduction: The Late Colonial State in Indonesia’, in *The Colonial State in Indonesia: Political and Economic Foundations of the Netherlands Indies, 1880–1942*. Leiden: KITLV Press.

⁵ Cited from Michelle Kooy (2008) *Relations of Power, Networks of Water: Governing Urban Waters, Spaces, and Populations in (Post)colonial Jakarta*. PhD Thesis, Department of Geography, University of British Columbia; See also Jacques van Doorn (1982) *The Engineers and the Colonial System: Technocratic Tendencies in the Dutch East Indies*. Rotterdam: Comparative Asian Studies Programme, 6.

⁶ The urban and rural upheavals in the late 19th and early 20th century against the colonial regime of differentiation triggered only subtler strategies of control, displacement, and surveillance. The vision of developing ‘the welfare of the population’ thus stemmed not only from the relatively liberal climate in which the city became the ‘laboratory of modernity’, but also the need to suppress the emerging urban social movements and popular radicalism. It is not coincidence, therefore, that a significant part of urban modernisation in colonial Indonesia was only put into practice after the crushing of the communist uprising and urban radicals in the 1926–27. See: Abidin Kusno (2005) ‘The Significance of Appearance in the *Zaman Normal, 1927–1942*’, in Freek Colombijn et al (eds.) *Kota Lama, Kota Baru*. Yogyakarta; Ombak Press, pp. 493–520; For discussion on colonial politics of architecture and urban design, see: Nezar AlSayyad (ed.), (1992) *Forms of Dominance*. Aldershot: Avebury. Paul Rabinow (1989) *French Modern*. Cambridge: MIT Press; Gwendolyn Wright (1991) *Politics of Urban Design in French Colonial Urbanism*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

In effect, colonial space is a space of exception where the homogenised notion of the 'city-as-a-whole' remains elusive and opaque. Heterogeneity, differentiation and division are modes of governance, and they often de-link aspects of everyday life from the possibilities of generating a common interest. The question of mass society so crucial to the formation of mass utopia of democracy and popular sovereignty was clearly outside the mission of the colonial state. To appropriate the words of Susan Buck Morss, in the colony, there is no attempt by the colonial state to 'construct mass utopia (as) the dream of the 20th century'.⁷ Instead, differentiation, exception and unequal treatment of the legal and the political were the socially prescribed norm.

Under such conditions, can we still claim homogenisation of the built environment? And perhaps more importantly, what might be the impacts of the heterogeneity of colonial space on the public sphere? The points described above could be said to be a story specific to (Indonesian) colonial urban development. However, it is also a story of how architecture, urban design and planning participate in power relations and in reconfiguring relationships between governing and the governed that call for heterogeneous architectural and spatial solutions. Now if colonies being colonies and differentiated treatment of urban space are the norms and the forms of governance, are we today living in a postcolonial time that is experiencing less heterogeneity in representations than in the past?

I use the colonial condition to reflect on the theme of heterogeneity in part because the history of colonialism continues to mark the social life and urban politics of our contemporary era. And, perhaps more importantly, it allows us to understand historically the profound heterogeneity of representations in contemporary postcolonial cities. Contrary to the homogenisation thesis, the built environment of the postcolonial 'global' cities (with very few exceptions) is characterised more and more by uneven heterogeneity than a homogenised environment. In this sense, it becomes rather problematic to celebrate heterogeneity, multiplicity and plurality without addressing how they are implicated in the formation of colonial power relations and neoliberal global capitalism.⁸

Today, the homogenisation of representation is often understood (although not exclusively) as a product of capitalism, but such abstraction does not match the temporal and spatial heterogeneity experienced by millions of people in the postcolonial 'Global South'. As suggested above, (post)colonial cities are not formed under the regime of homogeneity. Instead they are constituted under a colonial regime of differentiation

⁷ Susan Buck-Morss (2000) *Dreamworld and Catastrophe*. Cambridge: MIT Press, p. ix.

⁸ In the criticism of homogenisation, postcolonial studies often remark upon the resistance of the local to the dominant forces of homogenisation. They often celebrate heterogeneity and multiplicities; specificities and localities; plurality and diversity of the many. This perspective, while valuable, has also overlooked colonial formation of heterogeneity and the rule of multiplicity in delinking aspects of public life from generating a larger collective action.

in which the provision of housing, infrastructure and public services are marked by an uneven heterogeneity. This differentiation of urban services and spaces has made cities in the colonial and postcolonial societies heterogeneous from the beginning, long before the opening up of the city to the contemporary privatised market competition of neoliberal international regimes.

In their study of urban infrastructure, Stephen Graham and Simon Marvin have importantly shown how, under the current global regime of liberalisation, the major urban infrastructure networks in less developed countries have become available for the operation of international financial markets.⁹ The absence of planned convergence in many (post)colonial cities offers a ground for the subsequent 'parallel set of processes (that) are underway within which infrastructure networks are being unbundled in ways that help sustain the fragmentation of the social and material fabric of cities'.¹⁰ However, we can also add that the 'splintering' effect of urbanism today is neither a new happening nor evolving from the core countries and expanding to the rest of the world as suggested by Graham and Marvin. Instead the 'highly fragmented and differentiated styles of service provision with highly complex, and often hidden, geometries and geographies'¹¹ has long been taking place in the colonial cities of the Global South. The territorial unevenness, the different time regimes, and the different values embedded in the 'everyday' are neither new nor unproblematic conditions of many postcolonial cities. Under these circumstances, how is it possible to conceptualise urban politics (our public sphere) and to imagine political possibilities when heterogeneity sets a limit on the formation of a shared set of references?

The only convergence (and thus homogenisation) that we can see taking place is that between cities across nation-states that are relationally connected. Between Jakarta, Hong Kong and L.A. there are significant degrees of homogeneity, but between Jakarta and its own surrounding shanty town the relations are severe. The phenomenon of transnational, 'homogeneous' connections between major cities on the one hand and the physically-close but unconnected spaces in one city on the other hand is not quite new; they have been an essential feature of colonial cities.¹²

In the following section, I pose the problem of homogenisation by looking at the postcolonial refashioning of time through nation-building discourses of imagistic architecture and urban form. The driving force of this process of homogenisation, as I will argue, stems from a desire to revise the 'not-yet' version of history. From the experiences of heterogeneity in

⁹ Stephen Graham and Simon Marvin (2001) *Splintering Urbanism: Networked Infrastructures, Technological Mobilities and the Urban Condition*. NY: Routledge.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

¹² Anthony D. King (1990) *Urbanism, Colonialism and the World Economy: Cultural and Spatial Foundations of the World Urban System*. London: Routledge.

colonial cities stem, problematically, the desire for homogeneity that is at once intellectual and political.

Homogeneity

If heterogeneity had been part of the colonial mode of governance, the question of development, progress and ‘arriving at the same place’ is central to the politics of decolonisation. The postcolonial state in the decolonised worlds of Asia and Africa was in some crucial ways modelled on the colonial state it inherited. However, the lineage did not prevent the postcolonial state to revise the ‘not-yet’ version of history, and thus the desire to occupy the position of the ‘present’, of being equal to the West, with the effect of countering the ‘catching up’ narrative of modernisation which conceives the decolonised world as lagging behind, if not following the West. The anti-colonial nationalist movements in the early 20th century often understood the future in terms of a ‘just and prosperous society which was called a society (to appropriate a *Malay* term) of *sama rasa sama rata* (equality in feeling, equality in relation)’.¹³ They also appropriated the developmentalist discourse (in the words of Sukarno, the first President of Indonesia) by ‘bringing life to people’s awareness of their “glorious past”, their “dark ages”, and the “promise of a brightly beckoning future”’.¹⁴ With Sukarno, we can see the great leap forward from the (colonial) ‘dark ages’ to the future. Instead of following the ‘not-yet’ narrative of history, he wants the future now, not later. Such aspiration is most vividly represented in imagistic modernist architecture and the urban environment of Jakarta in the 1960s. The issue here is not merely the chance, at the moment of decolonisation, to express the desire for sovereignty which was suppressed under colonialism, but also the possibility of overcoming the image of ‘underdevelopment’ through spectacles of new buildings and urban spaces often portrayed as an ‘exemplary center’ of postcolonialism’s own brand of development. The imagistic urban projects could thus be seen as a cultural text that represents the psychic life of the postcolonial nationalist subject, one which contributes to the homogenisation processes of the lived and the built environment.

In the following section, I show two contrasting moments in the history of decolonisation to illustrate the diverse ways in which the ‘not-yet’ version of history is revised by the postcolonial state – the course of which have contributed to the processes of homogenisation. The first was the transnational spirit of decolonisation in Asia and Africa through city building as a way to construct a new time against the encroachment of the

¹³ This was proclaimed in 1957 by Sukarno who reiterated the slogan of ‘sama rasa, sama rata’ which was coined in 1927 when Indonesia was ruled by the Dutch. See: Sukarno (1970) ‘Marhaen, a Symbol of Power of the Indonesian People’, in Herbert Feith and Lance Castles (eds.), *Indonesian Political Thinking 1945–1965*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, p. 154.

¹⁴ Sukarno (1930), ‘The Promise of a Brightly Beckoning Future’, in Herbert Feith and Lance Castles (eds.), (1970) *Indonesian Political Thinking 1945–1965*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, p. 30.

Cold War geopolitical arrangement. In the early 1960s, Sukarno for instance, conceived the city as the site for both the symbolic construction of the nation and the liberation of Asia and Africa from imperialism. Imagining, quite wrongly, that Indonesia could lead an international revolution, Sukarno proclaimed in 1962: 'Build up Djakarta as beautifully as possible, build it as spectacularly as possible, so that this city, which has become the center of struggle of the Indonesian people, will be an inspiration and beacon to the whole of struggling mankind and to all the emerging forces'.¹⁵

The keywords here are the 'people' and 'the whole mankind' and 'all the emerging forces'. Through modernist architecture and urban form, Sukarno imagined a moment of freedom from the past where the gravity of colonial culture (and traditional feudalism) was overcome and when the 'not-yet' version of history was momentarily reversed. Sukarno was not a right wing dictator, neither was he a conventional leftist,¹⁶ but he constructed a new time for his country in relation to other decolonised nations so that his and other fellow countries would not be seen as lagging behind in the new world order. He wanted Indonesia to be seen as modern 'now', not later. As far as political consciousness is concerned, this is a 'great leap forward', one that moves from seeing time as occurring in stages, to one that is simultaneous, comparative and of course also homogenising. The Bandung Conference of Asia-Africa in 1955 (which featured figures like Gamel Abdel Nasser, Jawaharlal Nehru, Kwame Nkrumah, Chou En Lai, Ho Chih Minh and Sukarno) represented a desire for a transnational collective identity against the Cold War arrangement which had started to encroach into the decolonised world. Several of these leaders (especially Sukarno) appropriated modernist architecture and urban form as a semiotic device to represent self-determination and sovereignty for 'independence', 'revolution' and 'anti imperialism'. We thus could see the semiotic push towards the homogenisation of representation was at once intellectual and political, in the sense that it was intended to go against 'Western imperialism'.

Their collective efforts however, were in contrast to the desire of Washington to create a base for 'development' in the region under the leadership of a capitalistically prosperous authoritarian regime – a move that leads us to the second and profoundly different style of homogenisation in the decolonised world. In Indonesia, where the Asia Africa Conference was held, the new regime of Suharto (1966–1998) constituted another form of architecture and urban homogenisation through the hegemony of market capitalism. This style of homogenisation arose as a reactionary response to Sukarno's type of nationalism against

¹⁵ Sukarno, 'Transformation of Djakarta Raya'. For other cases of a self-imposed strategy of modernism, see: James Holston (1989) *The Modernist City: An Anthropological Critique of Brasilia*. Chicago: Chicago University Press; Sibel Bozdogan (2001) *Modernism and Nation Building: Turkish Architectural Culture in the Early Republic*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press.

¹⁶ For a rich analysis of Sukarno and his world, see: Benedict Anderson (2002) 'Bung Karno and the Fossilization of Sukarno's Thought', *Indonesia*, 74, pp. 1–19.

imperial centers. It has everything to do with the Cold War in the region in which the U.S. made every effort to create dependent, capitalistically prosperous, authoritarian, anti-communist regimes. Under U.S. security arrangements and 'aid' (from Japan), President Suharto launched his own version of homogenisation. Naming the regime the New Order, Suharto points to a major difference between himself and his predecessor. One of the first things he did was to re-inscribe the developmentalist discourse under the tutelage of the IMF. With the mobilisation of oil, massive foreign aid and investment, the New Order Regime points to a new condition of postcolonial capitalist states in Asia.¹⁷ If we look across the region since the 1970s, capitalist urban development and its concomitant discourses of architecture and urban design were formed largely under dictator leaderships (Thailand's generals, the Marcos Regime, Suharto's New Order) and all of which was made possible by heavy American investment in Cold War Asia.¹⁸ The growth, the management and the vision of cities in Korea, Singapore, the Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand stemmed from heavy state intervention often under dictatorship, an arrangement made possible by the Cold War environment. The regions were made to compete with each other for aid and foreign investment in a seemingly autonomous way, but their freedom to compete was coordinated by the homogenising rules arranged by US-led supranational organisations, such as the IMF and the World Bank.

It would be a mistake, however, to assume that state leaders of Asia were merely passive agents of the world power. Perhaps the best way to characterise the Asian leaders of the time is not to see them as passive agents, but as 'late nationalists' who were both benefiting from and resentful of the world capitalist order. The state leaders accommodated as well as resisted their dependency on the world powers through various forms of official nationalism, ones that often served to justify their authoritarian rule. In any case they invested the globally financed urban project with a sense of 'national strength'. Since the 1980s capital cities in Asia thus have been predicated on the idea of 'national strength' even as they take on the image of global cities. The governments of the region and their business groups and technocrats have been cultivating different imagistic urban projects for the reshaping of their nations and citizens. Several new urban concepts have been proposed to register a sense of creativity, innovation and recovery by putting forward

¹⁷ Suharto dismantled the political organisation of the peasantry and cultivated an urban culture suitable for the depoliticised 'middle class' while retrieving strategies of colonial urban pacification (– such as the 'kampong improvement' project, 'the new town', and the transmigration of the urban poor and radicals to the outer islands). The 'development' came with an urban form that immediately overwhelmed the 'revolutionary' monuments of the previous era. I have discussed the politics of urban design in the Suharto era in Abidin Kusno (2000) *Behind the Postcolonial: Architecture, Urban Space, and Political Cultures*. London: Routledge: Chapters 4 and 5.

¹⁸ Jacques Hersh (1998) 'The Impact of US Strategy: Making Southeast Asia Safe for Capitalism', in Johannes Dragsbaek Schmidt, Jacques Hersh and Niels Fold (eds.) *Social Change in Southeast Asia*. Essex: Longman, pp. 23–39.

the region's own strategic resources, such as 'the tropical city', 'the intelligent city', 'the knowledge city' and the 'multimedia super corridor'.

For instance, when Mahathir Mohamad, ex-prime minister of Malaysia, launched his Multimedia Super Corridor in 1990s he was thinking about the hi-tech knowledge city project as a platform for Malaysia to become a nation ultimately free from the dictates of developed nations – namely the West (even though this is not a singular category).

Without being a duplicate of any of them (meaning other developed nations), we can still be developed. We would be a developed country in our own mould. Malaysia should not be developed only in the economic sense. It must be a nation that is fully developed along all dimensions: economically, politically, socially, spiritually, psychologically and culturally.¹⁹

Behind the homogenising image of the high-tech city, Mahathir was concerned with overcoming the 'West' and taking charge of Malaysia's own modernity. His emphasis on development was aimed at domesticating the West through an imagined national autonomy. Mahathir in the 1990s worked in a different context than that of Sukarno in the 1960s. The Malaysian leader harnessed the market economy for the promotion of a national sense of autonomy. He too called for the forging of state-led 'Asian values' or (to refer to the neighbouring Singapore) 'communitarian ideology', discourses which claim their own form of homogenisation.²⁰ This claim of an Asian union represented an aspiration of the region to benefit from the world order. It was by no means a call of anti-imperialism. Instead it was a claim for finding a unique fast-track road to economic growth and prosperity. While developed by some Asian nations to counter individualism and capitalist liberalism, it lacked the 'revolutionary' impulse of the previous era. It registered instead the idea that the region has its own agency in playing with the neoliberal game and in maintaining the power of the state to re-inscribe values and recharge its population with new energies of entrepreneurship. The call for 'Asian values' could be seen as an attempt by capitalist states to reposition their countries to take advantage of the dynamics of neoliberalism, the changing sense of the geopolitics of the region, and the desire of overcoming American-led globalisation.

What I have shown in this section is that the homogeneity constituted by the city building of the postcolonial nation has often been defined in opposition to the colonial history of differentiation, and the idea that the postcolony is still 'not-yet-modern'. As Chakrabarty points out, the nationalists in Asia were basically fighting against the colonial perception of

¹⁹ Mahathir Mohammad (1991) as cited in Richard Marshall (2003) *Emerging Urbanity: Global Urban Projects in the Asia Pacific Rim*. NY: Spon Press, p. 171.

²⁰ For a discussion of 'communitarian ideology' and political legitimacy of the state, see Chua Beng Huat (1995) *Communitarian Ideology and Democracy in Singapore*. London: Routledge.

the 'not-ready' or 'not-yet' version of colonial ideology.²¹ They wanted to be independent now, not later; and such desire has often been represented as an expression or projection of 'national spirit'. However, unlike the earlier attempts to distance the Global South from American hegemony, contemporary global urban projects incorporate, rather than break away from Western-led development.

But what will come out of the reconstitution of time and space? How does the city show itself as a model when the city has become the stage for the major restructuring of capitalism, the declining state power to provide basic services to its urban residents, and the struggle for social justice and the rights to the city? For those who live in and through the city spaces of the Global South, for instance, it is hard to ignore both the homogeneity and heterogeneity of the shanty town which, to quote Mike Davis, 'are the gritty antipodes to the generic fantasy-scapes and residential theme parks (...) in which the global middle classes increasingly prefer to cloister themselves'.²² In this space of contradiction, we are brought back to where we began, that is, that colonial and postcolonial societies are governed by an uneven space of heterogeneity driven by the neglect and lack of common trajectories. What effects would the experience of heterogeneity and homogeneity have on the subjectivities of urban dwellers? How the power of heterogeneity and homogeneity enter everyday life, and on what terms and for what purpose, are questions related to the public sphere.

The Public Sphere

The idea of the 'public sphere' as an arena of political deliberation and participation stems from the aspiration for a democratic governance. It relates to the question of how politics of space might be connected to the emergence of socio-political consciousness, and how differentiated urban space might encourage or discourage political participation. These are questions of reception and of how the intended meanings of urban and architectural projects are received and transformed through occupation and use. The connection between intention and reception would however remain speculative. The best we can do is to indicate some potent points of linkages between them.

In this following section, I illustrate the relationship between the physicality of public space and the politics of public sphere to show how the force of modernisation and its politics of differentiation was articulated and experienced with direct (or indirect) political implications for the emergence of anti-colonial nationalist imagining. For this case, the context for the political struggles in the public sphere stemmed not so much from the

²¹ See Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*. Op.cit.

²² Mike Davis (2004), 'Planet of Slums: Urban Involution and the Informal Proletariat', *New Left Review*, 26, March–April, pp. 13–14.

homogenised representation than from the unevenness and the differential treatment of colonial space.

In the 1920s, Mas Marco Kartodikromo, an Indonesian anti-colonial radical who was finally detained by the state and died in a penal colony, wrote about the popularity of new urban cultures that emerged in the colonial cities of Java. In the remarkable series of writing, Mas Marco used both poetic and political references to illustrate the homogeneity and heterogeneity of the urban visual environment. The city where Mas Marco lived was by then undergoing a series of 'modernisations' (or should we call it 'homogenisation'), such as the broadening of asphalt roads, the lighting of streets, the construction of European suburbs, the modernist zoning of the city, the proliferations of shops, restaurants, hotels and cinemas and not least, the experiment with modern architecture. One could analyse the modernisation of the city as an organisation of space that is at once social and political – a technique based on the belief that a relatively modernised city signals as well as calls for the well-being of its inhabitants. There is a theatrical as well as pedagogical aspect to all this, for the city is believed to be capable of playing the role of a 'model' for the viewers to learn collectively about themselves.²³ As a result, some kind of collective identity and social life is expected to be formed from the shaping of physical space for the proper functioning of governance. The discourse of modernisation (which in the colonial context entailed homogenisation) can thus be considered as a technology of governance and self-governing in order to pacify and optimise the productivity of its population. Mas Marco recorded what he saw in 1924:

Now if a person came back to Surabaya after being away for seven or eight years, he or she would certainly be amazed at the changes in this great city... The gas and electric lights lining the street lit the place up like daylight... Even at midnight the main streets are still busy – not all that different to the day time. Horse carriages, cars and all sorts of vehicles still sped along the roads, sounding their horns loudly. Cinemas like the Royal, the East-Java and dozens of other large cinemas in the main market had just finished showing films to audiences of thousands, who were now streaming out of the 'flicks', waiting for taxis or other vehicles. Why were the people still waiting even though the film was over...?²⁴

There are plenty of opportunities here to interpret the diversity of homogeneity and the singularity of heterogeneity in this remark. The urban modernity described by Mas Marco

²³ This form of colonial disciplinary apparatus, centered on the spectacle of example, was not unique to colonial Indonesia. We can consider cases in other major colonial cities of Asia, such as, among others, Hanoi under French colonialism, Seoul under Japanese imperial power and Shanghai under international occupation.

²⁴ Mas Marco Kartodikromo (1981) *Three Early Indonesian Short Stories*, trans. and intro. by Paul Ticker. Melbourne: Monash University, Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, p. 19.

could be seen as an example of the 'compression of time and space' in which the lively main streets brought together asphalt roads, motorcars, billboards, offices, hotels, the movie house, restaurants, fashionable shops, dancing halls and other wholesale ensembles of imported commodities. For Mas Marco, such panoramic experience provides not only an escape from traditional bonds, but also offers a space for the criticism of that order and the larger colonial cultures embedded in it.²⁵ For Mas Marco, the fascinating thing about the modern city is not just that it is new and accessible to the public (who can pay) but rather because it represents a sense of detachment from the order of 'home' and the earlier way of life. Mas Marco addresses this landscape of colonial modernity both in a mix of shock and an exhilarating sense of engagement. He juxtaposes the novelties of the modern built environment with indigenous power as if to make a point that his urban generation is on the move, leaving behind the feudalistic cultural tradition of Java sanctioned by the Dutch colonial government.²⁶ On the other hand, he also reads the streets marked by restaurants and shop fronts each displaying signboards of various kinds as a phenomenon of a larger force of colonial hierarchy working on the city. The main road brings the world of commodities and consumptions closer to him, allowing him to reflect on the question of who has the 'rights to the city'. It triggers a sense of collective consumption but it also heightens the feeling of unevenness in urban life.

In *Semarang Hitam* (The Dark Semarang), Marco wrote about the city by comparing spaces in the city. He depicted the unevenness of the city by moving in and out of representation: 'A young man turned the pages of the newspaper ... all of a sudden he came upon an article entitled: PROSPERITY: "a destitute vagrant became ill and died from exposure on the side of the road"'.²⁷ In dismay, the young man went off to stroll around the city. What he saw there revealed only more about the unevenness of the colonial city.

Yes... dear reader! Things are like that. In the big cities of our Indonesia, it is quite common for streets to be called the Heerenstraat (the Master street) – a name which has its roots in the capitalist spirit which divides social classes. If all things were fair, for every Heerenstraat, there should be a Kinderstraat (Children street), shouldn't there? ... Usually Heerenstraats are busy, wide and have shops and large tiles along them. It is of course apt that such streets are called Heerenstraat, for along this street in Surabaya are many grand restaurants, like the Simpang

²⁵ We can reflect on the urban theories of Georg Simmel and Louis Wirth. With their primary concern on the urban experiences of the West, Simmel and Wirth overlook the ways in which urban modernity (in the colony) was formed out of the struggle against the colonial/monarchical order. The spatial coordinates of Wirth (rural and urban split) and the temporal contradictions of Simmel (the old and new social relations based on money) does not take into account the disjuncture between the authority of the traditional royal center and urban modernity especially in the context of a colony.

²⁶ For a discussion on the co-construction of Javanese conservative culture by both the Dutch colonial state and the Javanese King, see: John Pemberton (1994) *On the Subject of 'Java'*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

²⁷ Mas Marco Kartodikromo (1981) 'Semarang Hitam', in *Three Early Indonesian Short Stories*, p. 7.

Restaurant – establishments whose expensive prices stop any ordinary worker having a drink there. You have to be one of the rich tuans (Europeans) to go in there ... If we compare the Heerenrestaurant on the Heerenstraat with the Tjap Krusek Warung (street vendors) on a narrow, smelly kampong alley, the capitalist 'caste system' becomes most obvious ... In one place people are happy, in another they are sleeping in the rubbish of those drinkers ... If you don't have the ability to study high-flown theories from foreign books, it is surely enough to understand the practical realities of everyday life. Comparisons show up injustices, don't they?²⁸

Though the unevenness of the colonial city was hardly a surprising item of news, and though Mas Marco's dramatic rendering of his discovery emphasises the significance of the everyday built environment, his experience alerts us to at least two things: first is the role of representation in forming the experience of the city and second, the importance of comparison in the formation of critical consciousness. Before the era of print, news about the ill, the poor and the dead were made available only in oral forms, but in the era of the urban generation of Mas Marco, the oral transmission of such news came only after the signs were printed in the newspaper. Second, the media representation works together with the material space of the city to develop a critical consciousness based on the sense of being discriminated against and left behind. Teasing out the uneven heterogeneity that lies behind the homogeneity of the colonial city, Mas Marco demands justice, equality and 'rights to the city'.

The arrival of new visual environments and the provision of new infrastructure and urban cultures in the colony while registering a sense of new (homogenous) times, also generates the experience of unevenness which inflected consciousness and the possibilities for politics in the public sphere. The lived experience of colonial subjects seems to indicate that critical responses to the rhythms of colonial architecture and urban form are constituted on the basis of comparison. We know well that in most cases colonial cities are divided cities (never homogenous), but this division also quite often brought elements together and established a *comparison* between them. This comparison may have not been planned, but it is capable of constituting political imaginations. For Mas Marco, the uneven heterogeneity of the colonial city constitutes an aspiration for a homogeneous treatment of colonial space – a desire, which has led him to a duel with the colonial state. He traces the tensions in the heterogeneity of the built environment and understands it as the politics of territoriality which marginalise the urban poor population. He compares different urban spaces, which are treated unevenly, and through comparison he articulates his critical consciousness.

²⁸ Mas Marco Kartodikromo (1981) 'The corrupted life of a big city' in *Three Early Indonesian Short Stories*, pp. 20–22.

To return to the theme of this volume, in what ways does the increasing homogeneity and/or heterogeneity of the built environment contribute to the emergence of political consciousness – a precondition for the formation of the public sphere? And with what knowledge and intellectual framework could we trace the consciousness of urban subjects to the homogeneity and/or heterogeneity of the built environment as they are represented in the city? The distinction between homogeneity and heterogeneity is possible, and there are various ways of dealing with their mutual criticism of each other based on our intellectual, ethical and political positions. But are they two different universes or one? Are homogeneity and heterogeneity not comparative terms that have meaning only in relation to one another? Through Mas Marco, I have shown that neither homogeneity nor heterogeneity could in itself contribute to the emergence of political consciousness. Instead it is by the relations between them that their impact on the public sphere can be traced to give rise to the intellectual, the ethical and the political questions of the lived environment.

The narrative constructs of Mas Marco also represents both the erosion of and challenge to the historicist narrative of homogenisation.²⁹ For him, the temporal march of history, moving in multiple paths from one stage of development to the next, is ideally supposed to bring everyone to the same place in the end. Yet, this seamless march of history, which guided developmentalist discourse of progress, has been challenged (internally) by the urban spaces it has helped to produce.³⁰ The most visible signs of this contradiction have been the increasing gaps and unevenness of development and the concomitant emergence of various claims of ‘rights to (survive in) the city’ (and in the village). The disjuncture between time and space can no longer hide a range of social differences even though different strategies of urban governance and governing, including a new framing of knowledge in spatial products, continue to be produced. This uneven development has generated possibilities of struggles for justice and equality in the space fragmented by heterogeneity.³¹ Through Mas Marco, I have shown just how the relationships between the temporal and spatial concepts of homogenisation and heterogenisation might impact on the formation of a critical public sphere. I have also shown how these antinomies could productively raise intellectual, ethical and political questions that are central to our engagement with the built and lived environment.

²⁹ Arturo Escobar (1995) *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

³⁰ Gyan Prakash (2002) ‘The Urban Turn’ in *Sarai Reader 02: The Cities of Everyday Life*. CSDC Delhi: Sarai: The New Media Initiative Reader, pp. 2–7.

³¹ ‘The territorial unevenness of production will result in an extraordinary geography differential value making that will sharply contrast countries, regions, and metropolitan areas... The planet is being segmented into clearly distinct spaces, defined by different time regimes.’ Manuel Castells (1997), *The Power of Identity*. Oxford, and Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, p. 21.

*Fragmented Representations:
A critique of cross-border homogeneity in the built environment*

MOHAMMAD AL-ASAD

Veering Away From an Academic Discourse

This essay generally is about crossing physical and cultural borders. More specifically, it deals with how architectural and urban models defining the built environment cross such borders and the extent to which they consequently have the capacity to homogenise built environments in different parts of the world.

The subject of homogeneity and its manifestations in the built environment addresses themes that directly or indirectly affect so many people throughout the world on a basic, personal, and continuous basis. This ever-present and highly-relevant subject is intimately connected to our lives, and consequently is far more wide-reaching than the subject matter for theoretical (and often esoteric) academic discourse. One consequently may write extensively and intelligently about homogenisation in the built environment without the need to link, ground or define one's writing in relation to the texts of others, as is predominantly the case in so many academic writings.

In this context, the subject of homogenisation in its wider sense is intimidating to write about considering the tremendous amount of both academic and popular writing that has appeared on it, particularly over the past two decades. There accordingly is the valid concern that any new writing on homogeneity will end up being not much more than a literature review, critique, or commentary on existing publications, or worse yet, simply 'spinning' what already has been written, without adding much that may be considered new or insightful. In contrast, writing on homogeneity in the built environment can be considerably informed through direct and personal experiences and observations, which very often can replace the need for a substantive reliance on other writings for referencing and documentation.

I am making these remarks since this monograph has evolved out of an academic workshop, with the participants belonging almost exclusively to the world of academia. In

Note: All websites referenced in this essay were accessed on 15 August 2009.

their writings, academics are usually reluctant to disengage or free themselves from the writings of other academics, and often feel the need to legitimise their writings through the work of other academics, generally eminent, established, and even trend-setting ones. This partly is the result of the importance that human beings generally place on belonging to larger groups. It also is partly based on the conception that unless academic writing provides extensive documentation and referencing that connects and even binds it to a wider body of established and accepted academic work, it may be disqualified as academic writing and relegated to what is viewed as the less-intellectually rigorous realms of journalism and popular writing.

The argument I would like to make, however, is that when writing on a theme such as cross-border homogeneity, academics should draw on their own direct rich personal experiences, which provide them with unique interaction with the forces that define, shape, and even oppose the phenomenon of homogenisation. So many academics, particularly those belonging to the wide range of disciplines connected to cultural studies, are regularly engaged on both the physical and intellectual levels in crossing cultural and national boundaries. For many, the place where they live often belongs to a different culture than the place they study. Many have colleagues and students from different parts of the world, and they attend conferences and meetings in various parts of the world. They therefore regularly come into direct interaction with people and cultures that are not their own. This puts them in a unique position to clearly explore the divergences and convergences that define relationships between cultures.

I will end this introductory section on a personal note, which is that in writing this essay I have drawn heavily on experiences from my own background of having lived in both North America and the Middle East (Jordan) since childhood, moving on a number of occasions between these two regions. This frequent crossing of physical and cultural borders has provided me with the opportunity to directly observe these two cultural entities and their built environments. What follows therefore is not so much an academic research paper on homogenisation, as a reflection on it based on direct and long-term personal experiences.

Defining and Explaining Homogeneity

Before proceeding further with this essay, there is a need to devote some attention to the issue of definitions. This is especially important for terms that have achieved high levels of circulation, as is the case with homogeneity (and by extension, homogenisation). Such terms inevitably assume a plurality of meanings, or at least shades of meaning, among different audiences, making it futile to attempt to identify a singular exclusive definition. It instead would be more constructive for anyone using any of these terms to clarify his or her own understanding and intended use of it. Accordingly, I will provide my understanding of

homogeneity. It is a basic and simple one. I consider homogeneity to refer to similarity and to a rejection of difference. To elaborate, a brutal and often violent and extreme example of homogenisation is found in the policies of totalitarian and authoritarian regimes, which force a series of behavioural similarities on their subjects and violently deal with any attempts to divert from them.

At the other end of the spectrum are more benign examples of homogenisation that are more relevant to the subject matter of this essay. Here, I am specifically referring to homogenisation as expressed through the practices of large corporations. More particularly, I am thinking of corporations that deal directly with consumers on the retail level, as with those running department stores, fast food and hotel chains, as well as entertainment and media businesses producing music, television programs, movies, printed materials and computer games. Of increasing importance are corporations involved in telecommunications, whether producers of hardware or providers of internet or mobile phone services. In the case of the built environment, one may cite large-scale architectural and engineering firms, as well as residential, commercial and office real-estate developers. These large corporations are generally international in scope, and among them, American ones have played a dominant role, whether directly through establishing a global presence, or indirectly through providing business and administrative models that have been widely followed elsewhere.¹ I will return to the significance of this strong American presence later on in this essay.

These corporations have highly-standardised procedures that are applied wherever they are located, and they go through extraordinary efforts to minimise, if not eliminate, any divergences from such standards. They aim at reaching as many consumers globally as they can, and are willing to enter any market where there is a critical mass of consumers who demand their products or services, or may be convinced to do so, and can afford them. These corporations accordingly depend on mass production and mass marketing, which makes it extremely difficult to tailor their products and services to meet the needs of specific markets, except in a superficial manner.

Another point that should be made in this context is that through intense advertising efforts, these corporations market 'experiences' to consumers rather than merely sell utilitarian products or services, and therefore can have profound and large-scale influences on behavioural patterns affecting whole societal groups, ranging from defining trends of social interaction to determining consumption habits.

¹ Of the world's largest 500 companies by revenue in 2008, 153 are from the United States. Of the world's largest ten companies, five are from the United States. In contrast, Japan, the country with the second largest number of companies among the world's largest 500, only has 64 companies. See http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/global500/2008/full_list/.

To elaborate further on the issue of definitions, it should be emphasised that the term 'homogeneity' conjures up a considerable number of related terms, and it is difficult to explore it independently of them. These include terms that may be viewed as opposing homogeneity, such as heterogeneity, diversity or plurality, as well as interconnected terms that may be applied to cultural relations, such as interaction and filtering, as well as others that fall beyond the scope of this essay such as acculturation, hybridisation and assimilation. And, of course, it is simply impossible to tackle the theme of homogeneity as it applies across national and cultural borders without connecting it to the ever-looming term 'globalisation'.

Finally, one should keep in mind that homogeneity depends on the extent to which people, goods, capital and information are able to freely cross borders, not only geographic, but also social, economic and cultural ones. In the case of the built environment, this cross-border movement applies to a wide range of activities including the teaching and training of architects and planners, as well as the processes of designing, developing and constructing buildings, districts and cities. In addition to the freedom of movement of information, it therefore also depends on the level to which the professionals, labourers and the materials involved in the making of the built environment are able to cross borders. A main goal of this essay is to examine the extent to which the crossing of national borders in connection to the built environment is taking place and to what extent it is resulting in 'one size fits all' architectural and urban solutions, to the detriment of any pre-existing pluralities consisting of locally-based and developed approaches.

A Brief Overview of Homogenisation in the Built Environment Before the Current Wave of Globalisation

Attempts at homogenising the built environment across geographic borders present nothing new. Any cursory overview of the history of the built environment shows that the world has had no shortage of cross-national political or cultural forces presenting architectural and urban models that claimed a certain level of universality, and that these models were consciously and, in some cases, aggressively exported well beyond the political and cultural borders from where they emerged. Roman architecture, particularly during the 1st and 2nd centuries AD, is an early and prime example of this. The Romans created highly-standardised architectural and urban models that their architects and engineers implemented around the Mediterranean, and beyond, reaching areas as far as the British Islands. These models included specific urban elements such as the *cardo* and *decumanus* as well as the forum; building types such as theatres, temples and baths; and architectural features such as the Classical orders.

Almost 1,500 years later, particularly during the 16th and 17th centuries, the Ottomans constructed mosques and religious complexes with their own specific syntax and

morphology, including central low-lying domes, supporting half-domes and pencil minarets, throughout their far-flung empire, which covered south-east Europe, west Asia, and North Africa. Such religious buildings were, after all, the most important public monuments of their time. The Ottomans, however, did allow for more local variety in the implementation of this model than the Romans before them.

The various vocabularies that are part of the Classical revival, including those of Renaissance, Baroque and Neo-Classical architecture, all spread across considerable geographic areas, often beyond the boundaries of the Western world where they originated in the middle of the 15th century. During the second half of the 19th and the early part of the 20th centuries, they spread to areas as diverse as the Middle East, East Asia and South Asia. They were often a public symbol of Western colonial supremacy and of the homogenising forces that accompanied it. They were also a manifestation of the wave of globalisation that took place at that time, which was brought about by technological developments such as the railroad and the telegraph as well as the spread of Western political and military influence – often taking the form of direct colonialism – to just about every corner of the world.

Closer to our own time, particularly during the first half of the early 20th century, the Modern movement, most eloquently articulated through the 'International Style', boldly claimed a sense of universality that was enthusiastically embraced – rather than imposed – in many parts of the world. As with the vocabularies of the Classical revival, the vocabularies of Modernism also emerged in the West, but they achieved higher levels of international dissemination and acceptance, and proved alluring to various non-Western audiences as they were presented through a vision based on the theoretically more abstract and universal, and also less culturally-constrained concept of technology.

This homogenisation of the built environment extends to include the training of the architects and planners involved in realising it (admittedly, many of these remarks apply not only to the built environment, but also to other professional fields and to those involved in them). Schools of architecture established outside the Western world over the past two centuries have been based on Western models, initially the French Beaux-Arts model, followed by the German/Central European Bauhaus model, which in turn was transplanted to the United States around the Second World War. An examination of architectural university curricula anywhere in the world over this rather long period shows that they are generally indistinguishable from each other in their overall formal structure and their inclusion of coursework covering areas such as architectural design, structural design, construction technologies and architectural history.

Homogeneity in the Built Environment and the Current Wave of Globalisation

The Forces of Americanisation

Although attempts at cross-border homogenisation in the built environment have a long history, what has taken place over the past two decades or so is far more widespread and intense than anything experienced before, sparking fears that local cultural entities, with the plurality and diversity they offer within the international context, are at risk of being completely taken over by overwhelmingly bland and banal consumer-based homogenising forces. As shall be seen shortly, this may be connected to corporate homogenisation and its link to Americanisation.

The forces of Americanisation as we know them today may be traced back to the end of the Second World War. Although the United States by then had been the world's largest economy for almost three quarters of a century, its crucial role in ending the war and in supporting international reconstruction efforts following the war brought about a new level of engagement in world affairs and its ascendancy as the world's undisputed economic power and – along with the Soviet Union – one of its two major political and military powers. Since then, the United States actively marketed on the international scene a socio-economic and political model for national organisation based on the primacy of the free market, which highly depends on a consumer-based society and, in principle though not always in practice, a level of participatory democracy. In marketing this American model, the United States was supported by its unparalleled affluence and the relative personal and institutional freedoms it offered.

Also of tremendous significance is that the United States boasted unmatched higher-education and research institutions that attracted students and scholars from all over the world. These institutions were particularly strengthened as a result of the Second World War, when they incorporated large numbers of European scholars seeking refuge from the war and the forces of intolerance that led, in part, to it. The foreign students who returned to their home countries after studying at institutions in the United States (a good number also ended up settling in the United States) generally took on the role of 'ambassadors' who, consciously or unconsciously, promoted that American model.

In terms of the built environment, the American vision of an affluent life primarily was expressed through expansive green suburban developments with spacious houses stocked by a dizzying variety of household consumer appliances, with the automobile (an ownership level of one automobile per adult household resident was common there since the 1950s) providing America's ever-increasing number of suburbanites the freedom to go wherever they needed or wished to go. These suburbs were linked to cities through

extensive highway networks. As for the city-centre, in many cases it became less the place where people resided and more the place where they worked. It also was presented as a glamorous world of corporate white-collar employees working in Modernist shiny glass and steel skyscrapers. Images of this vision of the built environment with its suburban dwelling place and urban workplace were spread effectively and extensively throughout the world, primarily through American commercial television programs and movies.

During the Cold War, this vision of the good life that the United States promoted to the world at large, although widespread, was not uncontested as it had to counter an opposing state-based vision presented by the Soviet Union. The latter promoted itself as a defender against American imperialism and (at least outside Europe and to the developing world) as a powerful force of anti-colonialism standing up for the world's weak and poor. In place of the affluence that the United States presented to the world, the Soviet Union marketed concepts of a classless society and socio-economic equality, which resonated well in the many parts of the world with considerable levels of poverty and inequality. In terms of the built environment, however, the Soviet Union was not able to promote equally seductive models as did the United States. Instead, its building legacy, rightly or wrongly, has been viewed in the popular consciousness as primarily consisting of large-scale, monolithic, characterless and dilapidated housing blocks and governmental buildings.

The Triumph of the American Model

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War in the late-1980s, whatever challenge the Soviet Union presented to the United States' world predominance came to an abrupt end. The United States by default emerged as the world's uncontested military, political, economic and cultural power. The collapse of the Soviet Union and of Eastern Bloc governments through the efforts of local movements with widespread popular support even allowed the United States to declare moral victory and assume a position of moral superiority.

The ensuing period initiated a wave of international economic and political liberalisation and openness (or what critics often refer to as 'Neoliberalism') primarily advocated by the United States. Expressions of this 'New World Order' included a freer movement of goods, capital, information, and to a far lesser degree, people across national borders. The cross-border movement of information particularly took place in a spectacular manner as this new and more open political climate coincided with revolutionary developments affecting information technologies, most of which originated in the United States. The speed through which satellite television and the internet spread everywhere may be viewed as the most powerful expression of this new era. Both have become increasingly affordable and accordingly ubiquitous, allowing people throughout the world, and from an incredibly wide range of cultural, political and economic backgrounds, almost unlimited

access to the same pool of global textual and visual information. The effects of these developments in relation to the built environment will be discussed in more detail below.

On the economic level, a major expression of this new age has been the increased access to a variety of consumer goods and services, primarily provided by international corporations (and also by their local and regional affiliates and imitators). Various factors, including the lowering of tariffs, the increased ability of corporations to relocate production and distribution centers from wealthier industrialised countries to ones with lower labour and production costs, and the creation of larger markets resulting from regional economic groupings, all allowed for the prices of many of these goods and services to come down significantly. The overall effects of these developments on poverty alleviation and socio-economic equity remain highly contested, but what is definite is that the trappings of middle-class consumer life, which were primarily limited to consumers in the United States and, by the 1970s, to other Western industrialised countries, now became available to emerging middle classes in various parts of the world, who have witnessed an increase in their incomes accompanied by a decrease in the prices of numerous consumer goods and services.

While welcomed by many, these various developments also raised deep concerns, if not alarm, throughout the world and among various groups – not only left-leaning and traditionalist intellectual, political and religious ones, but even among promoters of globalisation themselves – regarding the international spread of homogenising American modes of behaviour (or what may be referred to as a process of ‘Americanisation’) on the cultural, political and consumer levels, and the resulting decimation of local traditions. While such fears have existed since the end of the Second World War, they took on a tone of utter urgency and seriousness in the post-Cold War free-market age.

Such fears of course have included the ‘Americanisation’ of the built environment. On the residential level, this American model has been expressed through the rise of the suburb, mentioned above. The negative side of the rise of the suburb has been extensive sprawl characterised by low-density developments that eat up vast tracks of agricultural areas, replacing them with large, single-use residential communities with cookie-cutter, repetitive, housing units. Since these suburban developments are located at considerable distances from the more urbanised central business districts, where job opportunities are primarily located, commuting between the two depends heavily on the private automobile, using a network of highways connecting cities and suburbs. The highways become completely congested during the morning and evening commutes, and the overall result is a highly wasteful arrangement in terms of the energy consumed and the time spent commuting. The Levittown suburban developments built by Levitt and Sons beginning in the late 1940s were the earliest examples of this post-war suburban model and have come to symbolise it.

This Americanisation of the built environment is also expressed through the increased ubiquity of big-box stores and enclosed, climate-controlled shopping malls, both engulfed by vast, seemingly-endless parking areas, isolated and disengaged from any surrounding urban fabric. Instead of traditional commercial streets (which also were predominant in the United States before the Second World War and the widespread use of the automobile) with their dense urban fabric, lively pedestrian activity and adjacency to residential areas, the commercial streets of the suburban American model consist of seemingly endless automobile-dominated stretches of road where one drives from one location to the other, moving between uninspired, repetitive and bland fast-food restaurants, hotel/motel chains, supermarkets, gas stations and strip malls all located within or next to wastelands of parking.

Wherever one may be in the United States (and this to a great extent also applies to its northern neighbour Canada, making this model a North American one), these suburban developments are almost indistinguishable from each other, providing tremendous levels of homogenisation across vast geographic areas. The latest wave of globalisation has allowed this North American model to spread globally.

Although for many architects, urbanists and cultural observers, this is a realisation of a nightmare scenario of how the built environment in diverse areas of the world may evolve, such a view is not necessarily shared by the public at large. For most suburbanites in North America, the suburban model described above provides their only direct experience of the built environment, and they therefore tend to accept it uncritically. For many outside the United States, and particularly in the non-Western world, this suburban model is a major component of the 'American Dream' and the vast opportunities that the United States historically offered to its people. While students of urbanism may see it as environmentally and economically unsustainable, wasteful and destructive of local urban fabrics and built environments, many across the world, in contrast, view it as an expression of a life of plenty and a consumer paradise that they are willing to embrace enthusiastically.

Beyond Americanisation: Other Homogenising Influences

Americanisation is one component – definitely, a very strong one – defining this ongoing homogenisation process in the built environment. There of course are other homogenising factors. While those are strongly interlinked to the Americanisation process, and in some cases even find their origins in it, they nonetheless have taken on a life of their own to function as independent forces. These factors are influencing the evolution of the built environment on various levels ranging from how its professionals are being educated to how its physical composition is being developed. Three of these factors deserve particular attention.

The first factor relates to how the built environment is increasingly being defined by the activities of large-scale corporate real-estate developers. Considering the scale, the high levels of standardisation, and the cross-border reach of such corporations, they clearly function as major homogenising forces. As mentioned above, the clearest manifestations of the emergence of such developers initially took place in the United States, symbolised by the Levittown suburbs of the post-Second World War era. While this phenomenon is very much part of the Americanisation process, it now has taken on an independent path of evolution outside the United States, with new large-scale developers emerging across the globe, particularly in locations with robust economic growth such as China, India and the oil-rich parts of the Middle East.

Even though they follow rather similar financial, planning, design, as well as marketing models, and even though in the final result their economies of scales require that they produce repetitive, cookie-cutter components, many of these corporations engage in a degree of attention-grabbing one-upmanship. One manner through which a number of these large real-estate development companies attempt to differentiate themselves is through developing themed, planned communities with a Disney-like quality to them, each relating to a given architectural tradition, preferably ones with romantic or exotic connotations (traditional European building traditions in non-Western contexts qualify as 'exotic'). China, for one, has no shortage of such developments, as clearly expressed in the One City Nine Towns development under construction outside Shanghai, in which a series of suburbs have been developed as replicas of traditional European towns, including what are referred to as an Italian, English, French, Swedish, Dutch, Spanish, American and German, as well as a Chinese town.²

Another popular location for these themed developments is the oil-rich Gulf region in the Middle East. Consider in Dubai the Residential District of the International City being developed by the giant real-estate developer Nakheel, which features a series of 'internationally themed communities' representing China, England, France, Greece, Italy, Morocco, Persia and Russia. Also in Dubai is the Arabian Ranches projects developed by another Dubai-based real estate giant, Emaar. The project includes various housing developments. According to the company's promotional literature, the developments are inspired by what are referred to as Santa Fe, Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic and contemporary architectural prototypes.³

In addition to these themed developments, there are projects that concentrate on creating physical spectacles, as exemplified by a series of developments in the Gulf region consisting of massive urban-scaled artificial islands that take the shape of palm trees, a map

² For a more detailed discussion of this development, refer to the chapter in this volume by Mari Fujita.

³ Regarding the Residential District of the International City, see the following website: nakheel.com/en/news/nakheel-international-city. Regarding the Arabian Ranches project, see www.Emaar.com

of the globe, or a necklace, as seen in the Nakheel, The World, Durrat al-Bahrain and The Pearl-Qatar developments.⁴

Such large-scale real estate developments of course are not new. Earlier examples may be found during the globalising era that took place during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In the Middle East, a prominent example is the new suburb of Heliopolis outside Cairo, which was developed in 1906 by the Belgian developer Baron Edouard Empain.⁵ The developments we are seeing today, however, exist on a vastly larger scale, are more dependent on standardised models of planning and construction, and are spread along a global geographic expanse simply unknown before.

The second homogenising factor I would like to mention is how easily and readily available information on the built environment has become. One should keep in mind that until very recently, the cross-border transfer of information relating to the built environment primarily depended on the physical movement of people and publications. New ideas were introduced through architects and planners who worked or taught outside their home countries, or by those who studied outside their home countries and then returned there to practice or teach. New ideas regarding the built environment also greatly depended on the transfer of information through the print media, e.g. journals, magazines, and monographs, which were not always easy to access outside the countries where they were published. It is worth noting in this context that as recently as the mid-1990s, a monograph featuring the work of a celebrated architect was considered a valued possession among architects and architectural students. Such monographs not only were expensive, but also hard to obtain for those who lived outside cosmopolitan centres with specialised bookstores or those who did not have access to high-quality university libraries with collections on the built environment.

This is no longer the case. On the one hand, printed publications are more widely and easily available internationally through online book sellers and also through large-scale chain bookstores that are emerging globally. Both of these are a result of the current process of globalisation and the easing of the movement of information, capital and goods that have accompanied it. On the other hand, and more importantly, the Internet has made extensive visual and textual information about any well-known architect or just about any aspect of the built environment readily available. Both students and practitioners have come to depend heavily on the internet for such information, and the outcome has been that the same pool of data on the built environment is now available to all.

⁴ For the websites of these projects, see www.Nakheel.ae, www.Theworld.ae, www.Durratbahrain.com and www.Thepearlqatar.com.

⁵ For more information about Heliopolis, see Agnieszka Dobrowolska and Jaroslaw Dobrowolski (2006) *Heliopolis: Rebirth of the City of the Sun*. Cairo: American University in Cairo Press.

Moreover, architecture students in different parts of the world now seem to be looking at the same precedents. As an architecture instructor at the University of Jordan from 1993 to 2000, I recall how at the time I started teaching there, students primarily looked at the work of regional traditionalist architects such as Hassan Fathy, Abdel Wahed El-Wakeel and Rasem Badran as sources for guidance. By the time I left that university, when internet use had become widespread, a complete process of transformation had taken place, and these regional sources were almost thoroughly replaced by trend-setting international architects such as Frank Gehry, Peter Eisenmann, Zaha Hadid and Rem Koolhaas. The set of information on architectural design that architectural students around the world are looking at is increasingly becoming homogenous.

The third factor I would like to refer to is the internationalisation of architectural practice. This again is connected to the liberalisation of the movement of capital and information. Having architects and planners work outside their national or cultural borders is nothing new, and examples of it are found throughout history. Still, the work of architects and, to a lesser extent planners, until very recently tended to be heavily anchored to the countries where they lived, or at least the cultural regions to which they belonged. Although their work may have had universal aspirations, they remained intimately linked to specific physical geographies. Existing political, economic and technical/technological conditions dictated such a state of affairs as the logistics involved in being based in one country and designing a project in another were simply too complicated.

A number of large architectural practices, however, began to carry out a relatively significant amount of international work beginning in the second half of the 20th century. This is particularly evident in the work of American firms such as Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM), Hellmuth, Obata & Kassabaum (HOK) and Rogers, Taliaferro, Kostriksy and Lamb (RTKL), as well as others from Europe, Japan and Australia, and such work concentrated on large-scale commercial and institutional as well as urban planning and design projects. The Middle East construction boom of the 1970s that accompanied a spike in oil prices opened up considerable lucrative opportunities for such practices. With the latest wave of globalisation in the 1990s, this tendency has taken on new dimensions. The work of a number of international firms has become so global today that it is often difficult to exactly determine where their home office is located.

There are a number of manifestations of this globalisation of architectural practice. One of them is having the various components of the design process for a given project being simultaneously carried out in a number of countries belonging to different time zones. Work is transferred via the internet from one time zone to the other at the end of the work day, thus allowing it to proceed on a 24-hour basis. An example of this is the 460 million dollar Kingdom Tower in Riyadh in Saudi Arabia, designed by the American firm Ellerbe Becket in association with the Saudi Arabian firm Omrania and Associates, and

completed in 2003. The various components of the design of the project were carried out by teams working around the clock in twenty cities in five countries. With such a high level of international participation, a common denominator linking the design teams in different countries would need to be significant, thus reflecting relatively high levels of homogenisation.⁶

A most interesting development relating to the current wave of globalisation, however, consists of the globe-trotting international architectural star. The most prominent representatives of this group include the winners of the architectural Pritzker Prize. The work of these architects has become completely internationalised; it is no longer particularly connected to a specific location, and it is not unusual for many of these architects to have only a minority of projects located in their home city or country. They have become the ultimate jet-setters, constantly commuting from one project to the other, which usually are located in Europe, Russia, North America, China and the oil-rich parts of the Middle East – basically anywhere that has the financial resources to support them.

In the work of these architects, the idea of creating a sense of place is almost completely absent. They are providing their own personal artistic/creative stamp, which is viewed as being valid anywhere in the world that wants it and has the money to pay for it. Their work in fact provides a rebirth of the International Style aspiration of creating built environments that completely transcend cultural specificity, but is devoid of the higher unifying social, economic and cultural aspirations that often were linked (though not necessarily successfully or seriously) to the International Style. What they present instead are more or less pure visual statements that claim a sense of universality.

A hint of this phenomenon of designers working extensively across national borders may be found in the last great wave of globalisation that took place between the late-19th and early 20th centuries. For example, although the French engineer Gustave Eiffel (1832–1923) is best-known for designing the Eiffel Tower in Paris, he also designed projects in countries across the world, from Chile to Vietnam. However, today's technological developments in terms of travel and the transfer of information as well as the tremendous global economic growth that has taken place over the past two decades all have allowed this internationalisation (and by extension, homogenisation) of architectural practice to occur at a scale and at a level of intensity that simply was unfathomed before.

The Other Side of the Coin

The past two decades clearly have brought about global levels of homogenisation in the built environment (and this applies to many other aspects of our lives) not seen before.

⁶ See Ellerbe Becket (2004) 'Rise of an Icon in Riyadh: HRH Prince Alwaleed's Kingdom Centre', *Ellerbe Becket Quarterly*, 2:1. The article is available online at ellerbebecket.com/uploads/Rise_icon21.html#top.

The argument I would like to make in the last section of this essay, however, is that even at such exceptionally high levels of homogenisation, difference continues to trump similarity.

It is impossible to make quantitative assessments specifying how much of the built environment in different parts of the world today is being determined by the various global homogenising forces mentioned above in comparison to more localised factors. Nonetheless, a cursory observation of cities in various countries being exposed to the forces of homogenisation shows that these forces merely provide one set of factors within a multiplicity of forces defining the evolution of the built environment. In fact, such a multiplicity of forces creates conditions that are in opposition to homogeneity. These include the forces of what has been identified as 'glocalisation', which bring together global and local forces into new and interesting combinations, often adapting global influences to local needs.⁷ More often, however, this multiplicity of local and global forces acts as a source of fragmentation, and in some cases even chaos, as they pull the evolution of the built environment apart, often in opposing directions.

It also should be added that we are in the midst of numerous developments that in fact threaten to curtail the effects of the ongoing forces of homogenisation. It is of course very difficult to make any conclusive remarks regarding such an issue considering that we are dealing with ongoing developments that have been taking place for only about twenty years, which is a miniscule timeframe within the context of long-term historical evolution. Moreover, any development can easily take on sudden and unexpected reversals. One example is the almost fivefold increase and decrease in the price of oil that has taken place this decade, over the timeframe of only the last five years, which has had a destabilising impact on construction activity throughout the world. Nonetheless, it is useful for the purposes of this study to briefly go over relevant current political, cultural as well as socio-economic trends taking place today.

The end of American hegemony?

Let us begin with the forces of Americanisation discussed above. What may be described as an international infatuation with the United States' economic, political and technological accomplishments seems to have peaked at the end of the 1990s. In contrast, these sentiments took a nosedive with the new millennium. This primarily has been a result of the country's reaction to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on its soil, best summarised by former United States president George Bush's declaration to the world that 'either

⁷ The term 'glocalisation' was popularised by sociologist Roland Robertson. For more information on this term, see John Eade, 'Introduction', in John Eade (ed.) (1997), *Living the Global City: Globalisation as Local Process*. London: Routledge, pp. 1–19. I would like to thank Majd Musa for bringing this source to my attention and also for her general feedback regarding this essay.

you are with us, or you are with the terrorists'.⁸ Following the attacks, the United States government initiated its 'Global War on Terrorism' and took on a series of unilateral and overly-aggressive actions on the global level that managed to turn widespread international sympathy towards the United States into apathy, and, in many cases, outright resentment. Many felt that the United States government used this war to justify aggression, human rights abuses, and other violations of international law. Accordingly, while it may be said that the United States attempted, very often successfully, to positively engage the world as its sole superpower during the 1990s, the world experienced a different, darker and more ominous side of American power during the first decade of the new millennium.

In addition, the serious economic and financial setbacks affecting the American economy since 2008, and which to a great extent have been the result of unbridled greed and poor regulatory oversight, as well as a propensity to spend beyond individual and collective means, have further eroded the country's international standing. Add to this the spectacular economic growth of China to currently become the world's third largest economy, and the impressive economic growth taking place in India as well as in other countries such as Brazil. According to the International Monetary Fund, the size of China's economy in 2008 closely trailed that of Japan, the world's second largest, and was almost one third the size of the United States economy, the world's largest.⁹ If China is able to maintain its robust levels of economic growth, which is a realistic assumption considering its status as an emerging economy with considerable room for growth, it is very likely that it will become the world's largest economy over the course of the next generation. While the world's major economic powers – primarily Japan and the countries of the European Union – have been willing to take a back seat to the United States since the end of the Second World War when it comes to global political leadership, this is not the case with China, which is gradually but surely playing a more assertive role in the international arena, as with its foreign aid programs, which often take an opposing position to the policies of the United States and its allies. It also is very probable that India at one point will follow suit. In addition, Russia clearly has aspirations to rebuild as much of the influence and might it used to enjoy during the days of the Soviet Union, and will do so to the extent that its economic fortunes will allow.

These various developments lead one to wonder whether the United States will be able to maintain its position of global primacy over the coming generation. Will a multi-polar world emerge in which the United States is only one of a number of major military, political and economic players, or will the United States be able to reinvent itself, as it had

⁸ From President George W. Bush's Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People, September 20, 2001. Available online at georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html.

⁹ See the International Monetary Fund, World Economic and Financial Surveys, imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2009/01/weodata/index.aspx.

done before (and is attempting to do now, as symbolised by the election as president of Barack Obama, whose father is a Kenyan Muslim and whose wife is an African-American), confirming its position of world leadership? The answers to these questions will have a profound impact on upcoming global political, cultural and economic developments.

Local Filters

Another counterforce to the influences of homogenisation is that of local filters, which consist of various economic, cultural, social, political and technological forces that block out, modify or reconfigure outside influences.¹⁰ In some cases, these filtering mechanisms function in a positive manner, showing openness to global forces and adapting them to local considerations. As mentioned above, the term 'glocalisation' has been used to describe such a process. Examples of such glocalisation within the context of the built environment in the Middle East include the work of architects such as Bernard Khoury of Lebanon and Sahel Al Hiyari of Jordan.¹¹ Both their educational and professional backgrounds show intimate links and openness to global architectural developments. At the same time, however, their architectural work in their respective countries has emphasised developing vocabularies that while being in sync with global developments, provide innovative and profound explorations of locally-prevalent materials and construction practices.

In many other cases, such filtering may not function smoothly, efficiently or optimally, but still can be very effective in transforming, limiting or even blocking out incoming influences, and is usually put in place by highly aggressive local pressure groups. In some cases, these filtering mechanisms work in a severe manner, as with the forces of religious or social extremism, which aim to block any external influences, and will aggressively and in some cases violently, go as far as attempting to rearrange existing cultural, social, economic and political systems to ensure extensive insulation from the outside world. The result under such circumstances may be referred to as an extreme case of local (in contrast to cross-border) homogenisation. In this context, I had mentioned earlier that homogenisation is directly related to the ease of movement of ideas, people, capital and goods. These prerequisites of course are easier to realise within national borders than across them, which is why homogenisation is much easier to achieve on the national than the international level. Under such circumstances, what under certain circumstances may be viewed as homogenising influences from abroad can function as agents of diversity in

¹⁰ I have explored elsewhere the issue of 'filtering' within the context of historical artistic exchange between the Islamic World and the West. See Mohammad al-Asad (2004) 'Encounters: A Preliminary Anatomy', *Gesta: International Center of Medieval Art*, 43:2, pp. 177–181.

¹¹ For more information about Bernard Khoury, see www.bernardkhoury.com. For more information about Sahel Al Hiyari and his work, see Sahel Al Hiyari and Mohammad al-Asad (with an introduction by Alvaro Siza) (2005), *Sahel Al Hiyari Projects*. Amman: Center for the Study of the Built Environment (CSBE).

the manner they influence social, cultural, economic and political development in a given society, including the evolution of its built environment.

Concluding Remarks

I will end this essay with a reference to the personal remarks I made at the beginning, concerning my own personal background moving regularly back and forth between Jordan and North America over a period of about four decades. It may be an issue of the glass being half-empty or the glass being half-full, but for me, ever since I first boarded a plane at the age of seven to travel from Amman to the United States, and throughout the dozens of trips I have made between these two worlds since then, it is the difference between them that continues to make the stronger impression on me. The fact that in both locations one can increasingly access the same internet sites, watch the same television programs, go to similar movie theatres, eat at the same fast-food restaurant chains and shop at similar malls, still remains far too little and far too superficial to make these two worlds, for better or worse, in any way similar.

There is much that is similar between human beings everywhere on the biological, emotional and overall cultural levels, but there is also much that is different. The forces of homogenisation have yet to eliminate such differences, let alone minimise them, and global similarities will have to reach incredibly high levels before one may begin to worry about the dangers of homogenisation. I would go as far as stating that homogeneity in certain doses is not in itself bad. People across the world need minimal levels of commonality to allow them to communicate more clearly, easily and effectively. Even the spread of the McDonald's fast-food chain, a primary symbol of consumer-based homogenisation, is not necessarily a negative development when viewed within the context of Thomas Friedman's 'Golden Arches Theory of Conflict Prevention', which states that no two countries with a McDonald's have gone into war with each other.¹² In fact, while we may think of cross-border homogeneity as being opposed to heterogeneity with its diversity and uniqueness, one may also think of what exists at the other end of the spectrum in terms of a rejection of 'the other' that is expressed through isolationism, jingoism, fanaticism and even racism rather than diversity. Under such circumstances, one may conclude that the world is not even close to having too much cross-border homogenisation.

¹² See Alex MacGillivray (2006) *A Brief History of Globalisation*. London: Constable & Robinson, p. 180. In this context, it should be mentioned that through his writings as book author and journalist, Thomas Friedman has played a very important role in framing the discourse on globalisation (and by extension, related themes such as homogenisation) for the general educated public, and any discussion of the subject accordingly should directly or indirectly address his views. A good overview of these views is provided in his book, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*. New York: Anchor Books, 2000.

Evaluating Lived Landscapes and Quotidian Architecture of Muslim Devon¹

ARIJIT SEN

Twenty-first-century ethnic and immigrant landscapes across the world look surprisingly alike. Take the example of the South Asian retail strip. A common sight in major urban centres, these landscapes consist of dress, jewellery, food, baggage and electronics stores catering to an immigrant customer base. Such streets in the United States (Artesia, Los Angeles; Berkeley; Fremont; Jackson Heights, New York and Devon Street, Chicago) look very similar to South Asian shopping strips in London, Singapore, Toronto and Barcelona. The sameness is not merely visual. The store types are the same. Store names are identical. Even the non-visual experiential qualities of these places – smell, layout, interior ambience – produce a very familiar and consistent haptic environment. One may argue that the homogeneity of representation of ethnic spaces across the world is a result of globalisation and the easy movement of people, goods, images, ideas and money across distances. Ethnicity is now a commodity, incessantly reproduced across diasporic locations via simple and easy to replicate systems of objects, signs and symbols. A bank of names, visual images, material culture, space-layout and merchandise circulate in global circuits sustaining what Ulf Hannerz calls a global ecumene.²

Yet, despite the banality of these spaces, stores, restaurants, makeshift places of worship and retail streets are indeed places where immigrants spend much time. These are places that appear everywhere and are locations where individuals sustain their social and cultural life. Human behaviour in these spaces frames identity and sense of belonging within a collective. Everyday experiences in such locations impact the way groups mark and maintain social boundaries. Yet, such commodified markers of cultural difference are deemed unworthy and somehow inauthentic in architectural discourses. They are not nominated for professional awards. Why not? Current practices and methods of architectural connoisseurship lack a language and epistemological framework necessary to evaluate quotidian spaces. The relevance of ordinary spaces comes out of its social value, not its aesthetic form. It is impossible to identify a single ‘creator’ or designer of these

¹ I will like to thank the following individuals: Professor Modjtaba Sadria, participants and organizers of the 2009 AKA knowledge workshop, Marcia Hermansen, Maribeth Brewer, Greg Brewer, Irving Loundy, Dorothe Shah, Amie Zander, Sadruddin Noorani and the students enrolled in the Imagine Devon Studio.

² Ulf Hannerz (1989) ‘Notes on the Global Ecumene’, *Public Culture 1*, Spring, pp. 66–75.

spaces, to whom we can credit the architecture. These spaces don't demonstrate the traditional criteria for artistic or architectural connoisseurship such as stylistic excellence, material and technological innovation, aesthetic form, experiential complexity, economic value, and other forms of artistic creativity. Negative value-judgment due to visual, representational and experiential homogeneity of these spaces often ignores the lived reality of these environments. An argument that these spaces are extraordinary gains traction if we consider the innovative and creative ways by which inhabitants organise the layout and manipulate their worlds in these spaces. The creative genius necessary to sustain these lived-worlds can be acknowledged once we realise that the meanings, layout, use and experience of these spaces are often highly contested and mediated.

Everyday lived landscapes play a salient role in sustaining communities and cultures and are therefore relevant to the Aga Khan Award for Architecture, whose work in identifying, documenting and rewarding outstanding architecture is aimed at setting 'new standards of excellence in architecture, urban or regional design, conservation and landscape architecture'.³ In addition, ordinary buildings, their makers, and their users perform extraordinary functions and fulfill the Award's clear criteria: 'to trigger debate and reflection on the built environment and plan a positive part in improving it for generations to come'. The award recognises 'work that addresses specific societal needs as well as wider contemporary concerns, and understands that successful projects are the outcome of a long and complex process of negotiation and collaboration between many different parties. ...'.⁴ By valuing common places we go beyond narrow material criteria of evaluation and acknowledge the importance of collaboration and conflict within the built environment. Spotlighting lived environments also allows us to examine the creative agency of users and inhabitants who lack social and political power and whose voices are not represented in official and architectural discourses.

If we agree that ordinary, architecturally insignificant buildings can be of social value then our central question is this: Without using the language of connoisseurship, how do we evaluate these sites? What criteria do we use to identify important buildings and locations that sustain our everyday public domain? Can we, or should we, distinguish individual buildings (as we do with architect-designed structures) from their larger cultural contexts and landscapes – separating, categorising and evaluating them as we do with our art and artefacts?

This paper suggests a methodological strategy that may help us identify, document and evaluate ordinary architecture. It focuses on the cultural landscape of South Asian Muslim communities on Devon Avenue in Chicago. It explores the seemingly homogeneous and

³ The Aga Khan Development Network, 2008. <http://www.akdn.org/akaa.asp> (accessed on July 21, 2010).

⁴ Farrokh Derakhshani (2007) 'Foreword', in *Intervention Architecture: Building for Change*. New York and London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., p. 5.

'hyper-commodified' Devon Avenue to examine if there are alternate ways to read this environment. This street has a large concentration of cultural, retail, residential, religious and social spaces catering to South Asian Muslims and is an important node within a large and globally dispersed transnational ethnic network (see Figure 1). Surely this street is an important node within the cultural landscape of South Asians serving as an important lived environment. In order to value this street and its architecture, this paper argues, we need to employ a new analytic lens that looks beyond the apparent homogeneity of this space. The first half of the paper identifies this lens by describing the anatomy of ethnic space in contemporary times. The second section proposes an evaluative criterion to study these spaces. These methods are not only distinct from the methods of architectural connoisseurship described above, they are also different from those used in traditional ethnic studies scholarship to evaluate ethnic enclaves in the United States. Instead, the methods suggested in this paper posit architecture as a part of a larger system of settings and activities and utilise values of social equity in order to evaluate these landscapes.



Figure 1: Views of Devon Avenue showing adjacent stores catering to various ethnic groups. Behind the highly visible signage one can decipher historic building façades. A map of cultural institutions in the area shows the ethnic diversity of the neighborhood. Photo Credit: Arijit Sen.

Anatomy of Muslim Devon

The number of South Asian Muslim immigrants entering and living in the United States multiplied since the 1960s.⁵ The actual numbers are difficult to ascertain because the US Census Bureau does not collect information about religious affiliation. Nevertheless, from religious census data released by other organisations and Department of State data, we can estimate that there are between 1.4 and 7 million Muslims living in the United States. A 2001 American Religious Identification Survey estimated 1.1 million adult Muslims in

⁵ Daniel Pipes and Khalid Durán (2002) 'Muslim Immigrants in the United States', In *Backgrounder*. Washington, DC Center for Immigration Studies; Aminah Mohammed-Arif (2002) *Salaam America: South Asians in New York*. London: Anthem Press; Karen Leonard (2003) *Muslims in the United States: The State of Research*. New York: Russell Sage.

America. In the same year, a study sponsored by the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) estimated the United States Muslim population at 6 or 7 million.⁶ Studies suggest that South Asians (Pakistani, Indian, Sri Lankan, Nepali, Bangladeshi and Afghani) represent an estimated 18% (Pew study) to 33% (Council on American-Islamic Relations study) of the total US Muslim population. Scholarship on the architecture of these immigrants focuses on mosques (there were 1209 mosques counted in the US in a 2000 study).⁷ We must note that most of these discussions revolve around buildings legally registered as mosques with local and city government. This figure does not include other prayer spaces, community halls and places of worship that are not registered as mosques. These discussions also leave out other major spaces used by this community – public spaces, residences, cultural centres and workplaces.⁸ Except for a limited number of religious buildings, the comprehensive lived landscape of the South Asian Muslim community is rendered invisible and left unaccounted for in official and architectural discourses in the United States.

Ethnic enclaves and mosque typology perpetuate an isomorphism between place and culture, between alterity and geographical seclusion, in the scholarship of urban ethnic spaces. These discussions primarily focus on architecture and immigrant settlement patterns as symbols of difference, as bounded locales where cultural difference is circumscribed and contained. Enclaves and specially-designed religious buildings are easy to identify and document. Architecture (the enclave, the building, stylistic features), culture (visible symbols, bodies, clothes and signage), and human behaviour (cultural practices) in these marked spaces are correlated, perpetuating the discourse of ethnic exclusiveness and ‘urban villages’. Scholarship on territorially-bounded enclaves includes Herbert Gan’s seminal work on an Italian enclave in Boston’s West End and scholarship on Chinatowns in major American cities.⁹ Khalidi’s work on mosques in North America identifies three types of mosques – the imported, adapted and innovative designs.¹⁰ His

⁶ A 2007 survey done by the Pew Research Center projects 1.4 million Muslims 18 years or older living in the United States. In contrast to that report, a 2001 *World Almanac* estimate states the number as 5.8 million. Sociologist Ilyas Ba-Yunu estimates 6.7 million Muslims. Pew Research Center (2007) *Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, pp. 9–14; (2001) *The World Almanac and Book of Facts 2001*. Marwah, NJ: World Almanac Books, p. 689; Ilyas Ba-Yunu (1997) *Muslims of Illinois, A Demographic Report*. Chicago: East-West University, p. 9.

⁷ Ihsan Bagby, Paul M. Perl, and Bryan T. Froehle (2001), *The Mosque in America: A National Portrait: A Report from the Mosque Study Project*. Washington, DC: Council on American-Islamic Relations, p. 3; Gulzar Haider, ‘Muslim Space and the Practice of Architecture’ in Barbara Daly Metcalf (ed.), (1996) *Making Muslim Space in North America and Europe*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 31–45.

⁸ Few studies exist that examine both secular and sacred spaces. Susan Slyomovic, ‘The Muslim World Day Parade and “Storefront” Mosques of New York City’, in Barbara Daly Metcalf (ed.) (1996) *Making Muslim Space in North America and Europe*, pp. 204–216.

⁹ Herbert J. Gans (1982) *The Urban Villagers: Group and Class in the Life of Italian-Americans*. New York: Free Press, 1982.

¹⁰ Omar Khalidi (2001), ‘Mosque Design in the United States’ *Saudi Aramco World*, November/December, pp. 24–33.

discussions are based on the architectural style and formal characters of mosque designs. These discussions of ethnic places fail to acknowledge changing transnational lived realities of our times.

Unlike ethnic ghettos of the past, the Muslim landscape in Chicago cannot be fully captured by reading it as a local ethnic enclave. The landscape is more complex than that, due to geographic dispersal and the extensive social networks that connect this neighborhood to a larger regional and global world. Although a concentration of residential, religious and cultural spaces within a 10-block radius around Devon exists, one can never understand how this neighbourhood works without relating it to the processes within the larger encompassing context. The stretch of Devon Avenue that runs roughly between McCormick and Western Avenues, along the northern borders of Chicago and adjacent to the village of Skokie in Cook County, has a complex and overlapping history and spatial morphology of ethnic space.¹¹ Germans, Irish, Jewish and Croatians were succeeded by South Asians, Asians and Russian Jews. Since 1991, adjacent portions of this street have been renamed in order to honour members of this diverse community: Gandhi Way (Indian community), Mohammed Ali Jinnah Way (Pakistani community), Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rahman Way (Bangladeshi community), Golda Meir (different Jewish groups) and Dr. J. Jayalalitha Way (Tamil populations). What makes the area more complex is that while the main shopping stretch is composed of immigrant stores, the adjoining residential neighborhoods are racially mixed. The retail street, too, is a tapestry of interlocking ethnicities, religions and cultures. Orthodox Jewish populations live in close proximity to low-income Muslim immigrants from South Asia. Stores, services, religious institutions, community halls and schools catering to Muslims are interspersed with those catering to Jews, Catholics and Hindus. Stores catering to Muslim immigrants include religious



Figure 2 (a–d): There are various kinds of places patronized by Muslim residents and shoppers. These photos show a bookstore, a restaurant, the mosque, and a grocery store selling halal food. In addition there are services, educational institutions, and community meeting halls serving the local community. Photo Credits: Arijit Sen, Jodi Masanz.

¹¹ Adam Langer (2004) *Crossing California*. New York: The Berkeley Publishing Group, Penguin Group; Jacque Day Archer and Jamie Wirsbinski Santoro (2007) *Images of America: Roger's Park*. Arcadia Publishing; Mike Stiehl (2007) *The West Ridge Community Survey*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Extension; Melvin G. Holli and Peter d'A Jones (1981) *Ethnic Chicago*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

bookstores such as IRQA Books; grocery stores selling halal food; restaurants serving culturally specific cuisine and halal cooking; stores with prayer nooks and spaces used by practicing Muslims during prayer times; community spaces; Islamic schools; meeting halls for local youth, the elderly, or women and children; basement prayer halls; mosques; and culturally sensitive services (doctors, consultants, travel agents, hajj-planners, real estate agents who speak vernacular languages and who understand the values and cultural needs of South Asian Muslims). These stores share the street-front with stores selling cultural artefacts, food and services catering to other South Asian, Jewish, Latino and Russian groups (see Figure 2, a–d).

Places like Devon Avenue highlight the central problem associated with such quotidian lived spaces – the problem of negotiated values. Different constituent groups value different aspects of this neighborhood and cultural values are often contested. Local grassroots organisations like the West Rogers Park Community Organization, West Ridge Chamber of Commerce, the Indo-American Center and the West Ridge Rogers Park Historical Society all have devised plans to redesign the street as a public space. But in the June 2008 community meeting organised by the South Asian American Policy Research Institute at the Indo-American Center, there was no consensus among stakeholders. Non-resident shoppers and storeowners displayed a different sense of place and place attachment compared to the different resident groups. Non-residents saw the street as made up of isolated nodes and wanted more parking to support travel while local residents complained about the lack of interaction between the street-users and the neighbourhood residents, as well as crowding and excessive parking.

Compared to out-of-towners, local resident Muslims experience this neighbourhood as a coherent territory.¹² The storeowners know them as customers, renters and chiefly as a source of cheap labour. Practicing women wearing the hijab, working-class men wearing work clothes or ethnic costumes, unaccompanied children and groups of teenagers collect along the sidewalks of this crowded and heavily trafficked street at odd hours.¹³ During late evenings, many of the restaurants and street corners turn into meeting places for young men from this community¹⁴ (see Figure 3). At prayer times, basements of stores and niches in restaurants get converted into prayer spaces.¹⁵ The local residents experience

¹² For example there are many community, dance, and marriage halls located on the upper floors of buildings. Organizations and services catering to local residents, elderly, women, children and families are tucked in between the retail stores along the street.

¹³ Ade Astuti and Susy Tekunan (2007), 'A Slice of South Asia Lives in Chicago', *Voice of America*, October 1, <http://www.voanews.com/english/archive/2007-10/2007-10-01-voa31.cfm>, (accessed May 6, 2009); Neil MacFarquhar, 'Pakistanis Find U.S. an Easier Fit than Britain', *New York Times*, August 21, 2006.

¹⁴ Community members of the South Asian community in interviews with the author, Chicago, February–March 2009.

¹⁵ Marcia Hermansen has done groundbreaking research on how Devon is used by the immigrants who live nearby. She has also studied the basement mosques and places of worship that have mushroomed in the

the street, individual buildings and open spaces as part of a continuous fabric that Rapoport calls a 'system of settings and activities'.¹⁶



Figure 3: Street corners, sidewalks and building edges serve as meeting locations and playgrounds for local residents of different age groups. The two photos show elderly men socializing on sidewalk seats and children playing on the sidewalks during weekdays.
Photo Credits: Arijit Sen.

At different times during the day and seasons, different parts of the stores are populated and used for different purposes. Stores such as Hyderabad House (2225 W. Devon Ave.) open early to serve breakfast to Muslim residents and cab drivers returning from morning prayers at surrounding mosques. Prayer spaces are located inside stores and restaurants such as Ghareeb Nawaz (2032 W. Devon Ave.) and Tahoorra (2345 W. Devon Ave.). These, often unmarked spaces, are attended by people living in the neighborhood as well as outsiders. For instance, restaurants like Ghareeb Nawaz and Hyderabad House are haunts of practicing cab drivers who traverse the city and need a place to pray during daily prayer hours (without having to drive all the way to their local mosque). This is not an example unique to Chicago. In an article on spaces frequented by cab drivers in New York, Courtney Bender and Elta Smith explore the network of prayer spaces available to Muslim cab drivers in that city.¹⁷

While we find that this multicultural mosaic appears within the ten-block radius of this street, we also find that suburban immigrants – Muslims among them – travel from

area. Personal communications with Dr. Hermansen, Chicago, April 2009.

¹⁶ Amos Rapoport (1993) 'Systems of Activities and Systems of Settings', in Susan Ken (ed.) *Domestic Architecture and the Use of Space: An Interdisciplinary Cross-Cultural Study*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 9–20.

¹⁷ Courtney Bender and Elta Smith (2004) 'Religious Innovations Among New York's Muslim Taxi Drivers'. in Tony Carnes and Fenggang Yang (eds.) *Asian American Religions: The Making and Remaking of Borders and Boundaries*. New York: New York University Press, pp. 76–97.

the urban periphery to shop, worship, and participate in cultural activities in this core-neighbourhood. Since the 1970s, the ethnic institutions along this thoroughfare have also served customers from a multi-state area (Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin and Northern Iowa). This core-periphery geography reminds us of an urban geography popularised by the old Chicago School of urban sociology. In that pattern, the inner urban core is inhabited by working-class recent immigrants while the suburban rings are occupied by the assimilated and rich.

Middle-class immigrants from the suburban hinterland include absentee landlords, storeowners and customers who form a 'community without propinquity'¹⁸ mostly in the Greater Chicago suburbs of Evanston, Skokie, Highland Park, Des Plaines, Arlington Heights and Schaumburg. Many local storeowners live and have set up branch stores in Greater Chicago suburbs (e.g., Patel Brothers, 2610 W. Devon Ave., Chicago; and 873 E. Schaumburg Rd., Schaumburg). According to local residents and the local Chamber of Commerce, some absentee landlords renting out apartments to low-income immigrants show a lack of interest or ability to maintain their properties or to carry out necessary repairs. Their rental strategy impacts the architectural and physical quality of the neighbourhood.¹⁹

The middle-class shoppers coming from far-flung areas (mostly on weekends) take advantage of convenient clusters of related shops. Such clusters have been forming over the last ten years, blocks with jewellery stores and dress stores conveniently appearing next to each other being a common example (see Figure 4). Community spaces, marriage halls and stores selling marriage clothes and jewellery are important nodes for out-of-towners. The services catering to the local community and residents are not easily visible to most out-of-town visitors because the latter are distracted by the overpowering signage and store advertisements carefully designed and placed on building façades to engage the

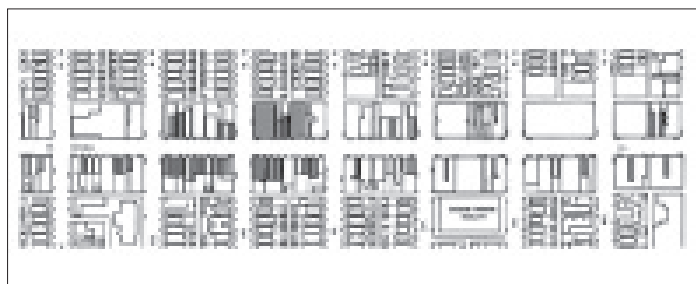


Figure 4: Over the years shops selling similar goods have opened in near proximity creating clusters. The shops marked orange in this map sell clothing and jewelry. Image Credits: This map was produced by students as part of a research studio, Spring 2009. Instructor: Arijit Sen, Drawings by Nick Gaddy.

¹⁸ Melvin Webber (1963) 'Order in Diversity: Community without Propinquity', in L. Wingo (ed.) *Cities and Space: The Future Use of Urban Land*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, pp. 23–54.

¹⁹ Interviews, The Devon Avenue Needs Assessment: A Smart Growth Strategy, workshop organized by West Rogers Park Community Organization and SAAPRI on Thursday, June 19, 2008, 7:00 pm–9:00 pm at the Indo American Community Center, 6328 N. California Avenue, Chicago. Amie Zander, West Ridge Chamber of Commerce, in interview with the author.

vantage point of those inside automobiles (see Figure 5). The resultant cognitive map of visitors is very different from the map locals have of this street. For the outsider arriving in a car, visibility from the automobile and then, the experience of walking to a destination after parking, are central spatial experiences. From the point of view of a traditional urban analysis the latter's experience of the street may be mistaken as 'fractured'. But in reality, this networked and nodal view is merely a different kind of spatial experience, as argued by scholars associated with the so-called Los Angeles school of urbanism.



Figure 5: Abundant storefront signage is aimed at people who will see it from various vantage points. Signs directed towards automobiles are large and above the door and awnings. Those read by pedestrians are stuck on doors and at eye level. Many of the latter are temporary signs, taken down and changed on a regular basis.

Photo Credits: Jodi Masanz.

Merely analysing Devon Avenue as a local strip mall may not give us the entire picture of the global and regional influences within which this space operates. Storeowners on Devon Avenue negotiate multiple juridical and governmental mechanisms – the economic regulations of global trade, national rules set by the FDA, the IRS, and other national governmental and regulatory bodies, local taxation and tax structures such as TIF (Tax Increment Financing) districts²⁰ and local building, parking and zoning codes²¹ – while also dealing with neighbourhood groups and their concerns, and advertising their stores to customers who come from far off locations and so on. All of a sudden, the very act of sustaining an economically successful store seems like a complex juggling of multiple laws, regulations, expectations and practices that go beyond the immediate context of the store.

Any study or development of this landscape has to deal with the multiple authorships of these spaces. As mentioned earlier, discussions of South Asian Muslims often generate discussions of mosques and prayer halls (religious congregation spaces) at the expense

²⁰ TIF stands for tax increment financing and is used by the City of Chicago for community improvement projects. TIF district redevelopment projects are carried out with the hope that such projects will bring in tax revenue and ultimately pay for the project. For further discussion on the importance of TIF funds for the Devon Avenue community, see Ann Lata Kalayil, Padma Rangaswamy, and K. Sujata (2008) *Developing Devon: Creating a Strategic Plan for Economic Growth through Community Consensus*. Chicago: South Asian American Policy and Research Institute, pp. 16–18.

²¹ Parking is a huge and highly contested issue here. A community meeting arranged by the South Asian American Policy Research Institute on June 19, 2008, and December 14, 2008, brought together local residents, storeowners and other stakeholders in 2008. Group discussions during the meeting identified parking as the most divisive issue for the community. Also cited in Kalayil et al., *Developing Devon*, pp. 22–23.

of other cultural and social spaces. This creates a certain singularity and homogenisation of representation and imagery by which the physical landscape of this group is portrayed and promoted. Contrary to common belief, the South Asian Muslim immigrants visiting this street are part of a very diverse community, fractured along class, language, national and sectarian lines. South Asian Muslims are seen as having dual national and religious identities. Researchers tend to downplay the distinctive interests of these groups.²² South Asian Muslim immigrants also belong to a transnational *ummah* (peoplehood) to which Muslims across the world belong. These diverse forms of belonging produce multiple and overlapping identities and cultural landscapes and an internal diversity that can be observed in the nature of Muslim religious spaces.

For instance, in proximity to Chicago's Devon Avenue, there are some 13 permanent centers of Islamic worship. These range from the pan-Islamic Jama Masjid (mosque) that holds thousands for regular Friday services, to a dozen basement gathering places that may each attract as many as several hundred male worshippers on Fridays, while functioning as schools and community centers throughout the rest of the week. Demographic and class diversity contributes to the fact that 'basement' mosques (situated in proximity to family life) are common in the Devon neighborhood. Marcia Hermansen's research shows that 'basement' mosques signal less visibility than storefront or street-level architecture. Many of these spaces are not readily identifiable as Muslim spaces from outside because of the way they are marked. Their distinctive character is created by complex and intersecting factors such as their spatial placement (in store basements, basements of apartment complexes and inside restaurants), predominant ethnic constituency (Gujerati, Hyderabad, Punjabi, Sri Lankan, Bihari and mixed), and interpretive and sectarian differences (Mahdavi, Tablighi, Deobandi, Bohra, Ismaili and Bareilvi).²³

The anatomy of Muslim Devon then suggests a networked multi-nodal and fractured geography. Three important issues emerge. First, (borrowing from Nancy Fraser) multiple publics coexist in this landscape.²⁴ As a result of this dispersal and diversity, one

²² Kathleen Bubinas (2005) 'Gandhi Marg: the Social Construction and Production of an Ethnic Economy in Chicago', *City & Society* 17, December, pp. 161–179; Padma Rangaswamy (2000) *Namaste America: Indian Immigrants in an American Metropolis*. Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University Press; Asad Husain and Harold Vogelaar, 'Activities of the Immigrant Muslim Communities in Chicago', in Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Jane Idleman Smith, (eds.), (1994) *Muslim Communities in North America*. Albany, NY: State University of New York, pp. 231–257; Ilyas Ba-Yunus (1997), 'Muslims of Illinois: A Demographic Report', updated 11/30/97 (copyright Asad Ba-Yunus), <http://www.geocities.com/CollegePark/6453/illinois.html?200927> (accessed July 27, 2009). Ashutosh briefly touches upon the diversity among Muslim residents and storeowners in his article, but doesn't discuss the local community in detail. Ishan Ashutosh (2008), '(Re)-Creating the Community: South Asian Transnationalism on Chicago's Devon Avenue', *Urban Geography* 29, no. 3, April 1–May 15, pp. 224–245.

²³ Personal communications with Dr. Marcia Hermansen. See, Marcia Hermansen (2007), 'Chicago' in Jocelyne Cesari, (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Islam in America*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, pp. 132–139.

²⁴ Nancy Fraser (1992) 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy', in Craig Calhoun, (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. Cambridge: MIT Press, pp. 109–142.

discovers a curious phenomenon. Instead of the waning of the importance of architecture and place, the opposite happens. Sidewalks and party-walls, entrances and edges play a role in the visual and haptic experience of the neighborhood. Signs and subtle boundary markers delineate ethnic businesses and public institutions from those that are not ethnic-owned or patronised (predominantly) by Muslims. Entrances and transition zones are carefully designed and decorated to communicate messages, reproduce ethnic identity and distinguish local-serving businesses from more general ones. A hubbub of exchange and interaction becomes the very basis for a new public sphere that is simultaneously local and global, ethnic and civic, political and parochial.

Second, time is central to the understanding of this lived landscape. Lefebvre's notion of multiple urban rhythms – an embodied temporal understanding of the city – gives us a useful framework of analysis. Seasonal merchandise produce temporal cycles, such as the way mangos in summer may take over the front of the grocery counter while seasonal vegetables are spread out next to the entrance. Stores like Sahil sell upscale marriage gear to a burgeoning second generation of South Asian Americans during 'marriage seasons'. During festival weekends the street is crowded as families from the hinterland drive in, often outnumbering the locals who use the street as a public meeting space. During weekend lunch times, the restaurant seating area is full and people flood out into the sidewalks.

Third, it is indeed the homogenising ethnic signage and other spatial orders along building edges on Devon Avenue that renders the diverse interior cultural spaces invisible to those who don't know. As Fredrick Barth wrote in 1969, boundary maintenance is central to the ways in which ethnic groups reproduce ethnic identity.²⁵ A study of boundary maintenance encounters posits the built environment as a theatrical stage – a setting that is more than a mere neutral context where culture and everyday life play out. A stage is successful because of its flexibility and malleability. It can be used for different purposes and for different plays. But at the same time a stage is successful because of the inventiveness with which the spatial parts are manipulated and transformed during performance. A stage is also successful because it lends itself to multiple forms of readings. Some of these interactional events are transforming and ephemeral, some invisible to the viewing audience, while others are permanent and highly visible. The notion of temporality, transactions and exchange in situations of cultural contact form a difficult yet useful armature to understand place-making in Muslim landscapes along Devon Avenue.

²⁵ Barth's emphasis on people and performance has influenced a variety of fields and scholarship in multiple forms – as transactionalism, interactionalism, and in scholarship on performance studies. Fredrik Barth (1969), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*. Boston: Little, Brown and Co.; Kathleen Conzen, David Gerber, Ewa Morawska, and George Pozzetta (1992), 'The Invention of Ethnicity: Perspectives from the U.S.A'. *Journal of American Ethnic History* 12, Fall, pp. 3–41; Werner Sollors (1989), *The Invention of Ethnicity*. New York: Oxford University Press; Mary C. Waters (1990), *Ethnic Options: Choosing Identities in Americ*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Such an understanding also complicates the notion of singular culture with a capital C and shows us that multiple forms of South Asian Muslim cultural practices occur along Devon Avenue at different times.

Approaches toward the Study of Lived Spaces

Historians and scholars of cultural landscapes argue that quotidian places cannot be studied in isolation from the larger landscapes to which they belong. Amos Rapoport suggests that understanding the system of settings and system of activities that sustain these networks is essential in understanding cultural landscapes.²⁶ Dell Upton argues for the importance of inserting the built artefact within a larger cultural landscape in order to look beyond architecture as the singular creation of the architect-designer.²⁷ He argues that using cultural landscapes (and not individual buildings and types) as a unit of analysis allows us to not only capture the physical and material aspects of the world around us, but also the imaginative and cognitive factors that give meaning and symbolic relevance to this world.

Studying a building within its larger context requires us to frame our investigation with transformation and change in mind. Renee Chow and Thomas Hubka propose two such concrete ways to evaluate ordinary spaces. Chow suggests that we need to look for 'capacity' in a design. Capacity is the architectural character of a built form that allows it to 'suggest a variety of uses. Capacity extends the functional requirements of a program by holding multiple configurations of inhabitation and receiving multiple associations'.²⁸ Capacity can be evaluated by an analysis of spatial form, its syntax, configurations, dimensions, layout and morphology. Forms with high capacity are flexible enough to accommodate functions and uses beyond those planned by the designer. Chow uses four categories to evaluate capacity: 1) flexible forms of circulation and access; 2) dimensional variety allowing for multiple uses and architectural forms; 3) graded privacies and control of spaces that allows for territorial complexity and structure; and 4) building materials that produce tectonic flexibility in the built form (allowing it to be changed and adapted). A building that allows multiple forms of movement and access (both physical access and visual access) accommodates a variety of functions and users. Chow shows that the nature of circulation within a building can accommodate change over time. Dimensional variety is a formal and 'proxemic' concept that suggests that buildings can support a wide variety of uses and adaptations because of their spatial layout and size. Proxemics is a word coined

²⁶ Amos Rapoport (1993) 'Systems of Activities and Systems of Settings', in Susan Kent (ed.), *Domestic Architecture and the Use of Space: An Interdisciplinary Cross-Cultural Study*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

²⁷ Dell Upton (1991) 'Architectural History or Landscape History?' *Journal of Architectural Education*, 44, August 1991, pp. 195–199.

²⁸ Renee Chow (2002), *Suburban Space: The Fabric of Dwelling* (Berkeley: University of California Press), p. 88.

by anthropologist E. T. Hall in 1966 to explain how distance between two individuals interacting with each other is determined by their relationship and by the nature of their interaction.

Chow's notion of capacity not only challenges us to 'value' flexibility in the form and program of the building but also entertains multiple forms of expressive uses and interpretations by users of buildings. In other words, Chow argues for an architecture that can be, in Michel de Certeau's phrase, 'poached' by its inhabitants.²⁹ A building thus designed ensures that the design supports patterns of use, behaviour, and practices without sacrificing formal and tectonic beauty and functionality. Like Rapoport, Upton, and Groth, Chow too argues that, rather than seeing buildings as independent objects, we should see the built form as part of a larger built fabric. A design that integrates the building-artefact into a larger urban (morphological) system can potentially promote a 'great deal of individual variation in which the collective structure is still highly discernable'.³⁰

Thomas Hubka, an architect and scholar of the built environment, compares the folk design process to that of a bricoleur whose 'design method is characterised by a primary (dependent) and a secondary (independent) design component in which the primary or gross architectural arrangement is rigorously structured while allowing the designer a range of individual design interpretations in the secondary system'.³¹ Hubka's allusions to language and grammar come from his structuralist references and suggest another framework that allows us to accommodate individual user's creative ideas within a more structured (cultural) grammar. This is where Hubka's work meets Chow's suggestions and leads into the following suggested criteria to evaluate lived spaces.

Evaluating Lived Spaces: Three Connected Criteria

It is clear that, given the demographic heterogeneity and historical transformations of this neighbourhood, culture-specific evaluation criteria will not give us a balanced picture. Not only do people and their culture change over time, the built environment along Devon Avenue displays cycles of death and renewal. New buildings come up in place of old dilapidated ones; preservation battles pit historians and residents against developers over certain historical buildings.³² Economic values and business practices change over time. New immigrants come in as immigration trends change and these groups have different

²⁹ Michel de Certeau (1988) translated by Steven Rendall, *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press, p. xii.

³⁰ Renee Chow (2002) *Suburban Space: The Fabric of Dwelling* (Berkeley: University of California Press), p. 149.

³¹ Thomas Hubka (1979) 'Just Folks Designing: Vernacular Designers and the Generation of Form', *Journal of Architectural Education* 32, February, p. 29.

³² Interviews with community members of the South Asian community, February–March 2009. The Devon Avenue Needs Assessment: A Smart Growth Strategy, a community workshop organized by West Rogers

cultural practices. Older values and expectations change as newer residents arrive. But the new practices are often seen as different and contrary to accepted norms of the place. Zoning codes, behavioural etiquettes, and community expectations built on mores of the past don't fit the needs, expectations and practices of the new residents. Differing values and histories produce conditions of inequality – both in terms of access to resources and levels of assimilation. This sets up conditions of social inequity and unequal access to resources in a multicultural and diverse neighbourhood such as Devon Avenue. Such scenarios necessitate a reconsideration of our values. Discussed below are three such values that can be used in order to assess lived environments.

The Value of Dependencies: Hierarchies of Decision-making

The first issue necessary for evaluating the lived environment along Devon Avenue involves the relative role of multiple stakeholders in the maintenance of this landscape. Because there are many users and stakeholders involved in the production and reproduction of the cultural landscape along this street, it is important to analyse the nature of interventions and the individual's role within a complex hierarchy of ownership and decision-making in this lived landscape. By outlining this hierarchy we can see how social power is reproduced within this neighbourhood.

For instance a city planner and city government's decision impacts policy and transformation at regional, urban and subsidiary scales. City regulations about vending, taxation, parking, zoning and business frame the way the storeowners, residents, and customers interact and behave. A lack of transparency and clarity about the hierarchies of political decision-making and jurisdiction in Chicago creates dissonant responses from various neighbourhood and local business groups. Such a situation fractures the local community and produces apathy among South Asian merchants. During our research, local merchants complained that they felt that city services are not commensurate with the huge revenue that this street generates – a complaint that confirms some residents' impression that they are ignored by the city government. Garbage removal policies, police citations and activities, and parking enforcement policies give rise to such conceptions.

For instance, SAAPRI (South Asian American Policy and Research Institute) reported that the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district created by the city in 1999 and scheduled to expire in 2022 often produces a lot of confusion. TIF funds come out of increasing property taxes that are funnelled back into the community as business investments, subsidies for private development and infrastructure improvement. The intention is to generate local revenue to improve a neighbourhood. However, TIF development can work to the detriment of the local community (leaving much of the power to the city agencies)

Park Community Organization and SAAPRI on Thursday, June 19, 2008 7:00 pm–9:00 pm at the Indo American Community Center, 6328 N. California Avenue, Chicago.

if they do not participate in this process. A recent parking lot being constructed at Devon and Talman is one such infrastructure project. This project gets the support of some merchants, developers, and the alderman's office while a majority of residents complain that their views were never taken into account during the planning and execution phases. SAAPRI reported that 'it became clear in the interview process that Devon Avenue business owners and residents had little or no idea about TIF. Some did not even know that they were part of a designated TIF district. Others felt that TIF information was withheld deliberately by interested parties, and there was no transparency.... There is tremendous scope for proper utilisation of TIF funds for genuine economic development of the community. This has remained unrealised due to the lack of awareness about the TIF, lack of cooperation from the alderman and developers, and a general failure to pursue the matter aggressively and access existing resources'.³³

The decisions of the architect and the building owners impact the building, interiors, and surroundings. Local residents complain about the unkempt conditions of the neighbourhood while absentee landlords overlook building repairs and maintenance. New owners convert and change their buildings, bringing howls of protest from preservationists and old neighbourhood residents about the owners' lack of sensitivity and appreciation for the neighbourhood's history. Political realignment between property owners, developers and the politicians can produce powerful political alliances that transform the shape of the neighbourhood.

The storeowners' manipulation of signage, storefront images, material culture and in-store policies point towards tactics by which those in the lower end of the decision-making hierarchy (storeowners and tenants) manipulate the lived environment in their favour. The use of the sidewalks and street corners by local residents, especially the elderly, young adults and women, show how socially subaltern groups can claim public resources. Guerrilla tactics utilised by illegal vendors include use of temporary awnings and street furniture. Other architectural tactics include manipulation of façade transparency, visibility and access.

The nature of intervention and control at each of these telescoping levels is different and produces distinct results. Hierarchies of decision-making also point towards differential access to spatial resources. On the one hand, these hierarchical levels and dependencies of decision-making produce a stable social pattern that Habraken calls an 'unambiguous communication structure'.³⁴ On the other hand, it also shows us that certain individuals and groups, by virtue of their social standing and roles, have less power over the built environment and limited access to resources. The ability of a physical environment to cater to the needs and uses of various social groups, respond to hierarchies of decision-

³³ SAAPRI, *Developing Devon*, p. 18.

³⁴ N John Habraken (1972) 'Involving People in the Housing Process', *RIBA Journal*, November, p. 3.

making and the politics of stakeholders is the primary criterion that can be used to evaluate lived spaces.

Value of Thematic Patterns: Parts and Whole

Levels of decision-making are related to patterns within the built environment. According to Habraken, thematic patterns are *shared* syntax of the physical landscape. Just like the grammatical construction of language, the social and spatial aspects of the built environment also display a certain structural syntax. An analysis of the formal and experiential orders of a lived environment should explore such thematic patterns. Thematic patterns not only explain the logic of the total lived environment but they also help us understand how smaller constituent parts are assembled within the larger whole. Thematic patterns sustain a physical armature on which future adaptations, generative and creative interventions and other changes can occur.

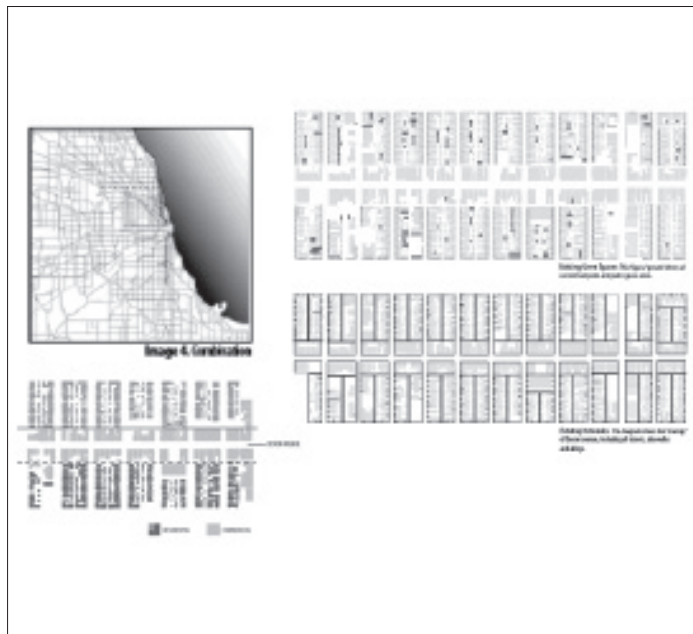


Figure 6: Whether at an urban scale or at the neighborhood scales we find multiple networks and patterns that give order to this neighborhood within its larger context. A few such syntactic structures are noted below. The transportation networks include freeways that connect this area to the tri-state area. At a neighborhood scale major and minor streets sustain different kinds of traffic; automobile, public transit, bicycle and pedestrian. The alleys and sidewalks create also serve as connectors. Open, not-built, green spaces when mapped show a distinct pattern.

Image Credit: This map was produced by students as part of a research studio, Spring 2009. Instructor: Arijit Sen, Drawings by Nick Gaddy, Kelly Adrian, Tom Joy.

Analysis of thematic patterns in the Devon case study can occur at different geographical scales – international, regional, urban, neighbourhood, street-level, architectural, and the near environment. For example, at the regional scale Devon Avenue belongs to a network of major and minor streets crisscrossing Greater Chicago. Devon Avenue is reached via major streets and minor neighbourhood streets. But the kind of people who use the different roads, the time when they use them, and the nature of transportation differ (see Figure 6).

Access to the freeway (I-94) from Devon Avenue makes Peterson Avenue in the south and Touhy Avenue in the north major traffic carrier streets in the area. A large volume of automobile traffic on weekends clogs up this network and makes it difficult for local residents to use these streets. Most of those accessing Devon from the major streets are out-of-towners driving into this area.

Low-income residents use public transit connections between Devon and the rest of the city. Route 155 (Morse Red Line) and Route 49B take bus riders from the locality. Route 155 connects to the Red Line and Loyola, but requires multiple transfers in order to reach other parts of the city. Route 49B travels along Western Avenue, a street perpendicular to Devon, and connects to more transit lines. But reaching Devon via a bus is a different experience. The riders are often elderly, children and poor residents of the region. The street's proximity to Loyola University has a potential of attracting younger crowds on weekday evenings, but interviews with non-South Asian residents showed that the predominant image of the neighbourhood, real or imagined, keeps white Americans away. Negative images included lack of safety, cleanliness, unsanitary conditions, and the presence of panhandlers.

Neighbourhood streets and alleyways are used by local residents and encroachment of outsiders (as they park their cars in these neighbourhood residential zones) creates a lot of conflict between storeowners, out-of-town shoppers, local residents, and the police and other law enforcement authorities.³⁵ The modes of transportation and network of streets influence the nature of connections between residents and non-residents and the experience of this neighbourhood for the socially powerful (and mobile) users and subaltern users.

Let's consider another scale. The neighbourhood fabric along Devon Avenue is very different from that seen in the surrounding neighbourhoods. A figure-ground map shows densely built spaces and relatively scarce 'unbuilt' or open spaces (see Figure 7). The predominant pattern emerges from the generative grid of property lines along the street. The property lines, setbacks, allowances, and built/unbuilt patterns produce a rectangular grain with the narrow end facing the street. Devon's street grain promotes small stores to thrive. Due to the depth of the property, the square footage of stores are adequate. However due to the narrow façades the density of the stores (number of stores per block) is high. Such a pattern makes economic sense and, over the years, building owners rented out the lower floors of their buildings to tenants, subdividing and further subdividing the prime real estate along the ground level into increasingly thin slices (see Figure 8).

³⁵ SAAPRI, *Developing Devon*, p. 2.

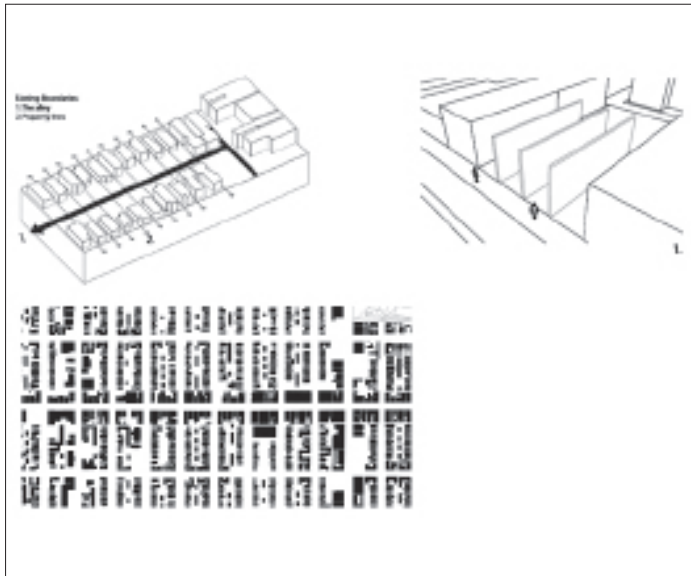


Figure 7: The relationship between property lines, the shape of individual lots and their relationship to the street create a complex urban fabric. The residential lots produce a pattern reflecting on the ordering of privacies and fronts and back regions. The processional way the property is accessed and entered from the street produces clear sequential territories enclosed within party walls. A figure-ground shows grain at the neighborhood scale.

Image Credits: This map was produced by students as part of a research studio, Spring 2009. Instructor: Arijit Sen, Drawings by Nick Gaddy, Brad Wilk, Jodi Masanz, Kelly Adrian.

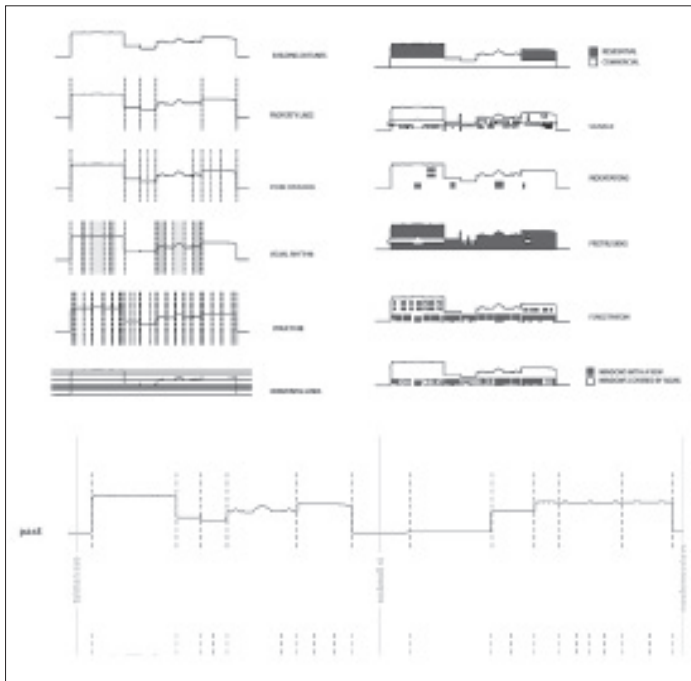


Figure 8: Economies of scale and physical fabric. Many ethnic stores start small. Frequent turnover and subdivided properties characterize the fabric and produce a very fine grain along the street, producing elaborate hems of buildings, protuberances and niches along edges and dense lived spaces along sidewalks.

Image Credits: This map was produced by students as part of a research studio, Spring 2009. Instructor: Arijit Sen, Drawings by Tom Joy.

If we correlate this finer-grained development with property values, capital available to start new immigrant businesses, economic affordability, and business turnover, a clear pattern emerges. It is a pattern that Roger Waldinger explains as the inverse of ‘economies of scale’: ‘Historically, new immigrants with limited capital have gravitated toward small business: in turn of the century New York, it was not only in the petty trades of peddling and huckstering that the foreign-born were over-represented, but also among “manufacturers and officials”, “merchants and dealers”, and other proprietary occupations. Small enterprise played an important role in the economic progress of a

variety of immigrant groups that implanted themselves in business then – Jews, Italians, Greeks, and others – and their proportionally higher involvement in entrepreneurial activities continues to differentiate these groups from much of the native population'.³⁶ For instance, as the new South Asian immigrants concentrate along Devon Avenue, the store sizes get narrower and there is quick turnover in businesses. In addition similar businesses gravitate and produce agglomerations of similar stores. Thus one sees a cluster of jewellery stores selling a variety of jewellery ranging from high-end expensive goods to cheap handmade trinkets. Waldinger argues that smaller shops create conditions for upward mobility. A new immigrant initially affords a smaller premise and over the years gathers enough capital to grow into larger stores, and then finally diversifies and adds stores and branches in suburbia. Such is the story of Patel Brothers, a grocery store that started small at 2034 W. Devon Avenue in 1974. It is now a national chain with 40 stores in 20 states. The existence of a finer grain accommodates businesses of different sizes, spurs growth, and allows access to resources to a wider group of immigrant entrepreneurs. The second evaluative criterion suggests that architecture that allows for thematic variety produces successful lived spaces.

Value of Infrastructure: Strategies and Tactics of the In-between

There is a third aspect of place-making that helps us account for tactics used by less powerful residents to gain access to environmental resources. This is important for Muslim Devon where South Asian Muslim residents have relatively less social power to make major transformations to their built environment. De Certeau refers to 'poaching', an everyday, on-the-ground tactic used by residents and users where spaces are used, adapted and given new meanings and uses without completely transforming them. De Certeau explains, 'everyday life invents itself by poaching in countless ways on the property of others'.³⁷ By that he refers to a process by which subaltern groups subvert the built environment 'not by rejecting or altering them, but by using them with respect to the ends and references foreign to the system they had no choice but to accept'.³⁸ Based on the work of de Certeau, we can claim that in order to understand and investigate everyday life and ordinary landscapes 'we must first analyse its manipulation by users who are not its makers'.³⁹ Poaching as a tactic is often surreptitious and ephemeral. Poaching behaviour is difficult and so subtle that it is often impossible to capture. Yet poaching is central to the evaluation and appreciation of lived spaces.

³⁶ Roger Waldinger (1986) 'Immigrant enterprise: A critique and reformulation', *Theory and Society*, 15, January, pp. 249–285.

³⁷ Michel de Certeau (1984) *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press, p. xvii.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. xiii.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. xiii.

Places that lend themselves to poaching without losing their central character are valuable places. The value of infrastructure suggests a conceptual framework to explore such spaces and territories amenable to poaching. Infrastructure here refers to 'in-between' spaces occurring between multiple domains. It refers to connective tissues simultaneously relating and delineating disparate elements in the built environment. Being part of two separate spaces yet apart from them both, transitional zones are ambiguous boundaries where norms of either domain are suspended. It is a space of difference as well as of negotiation. It is the 'thirdspace' that is often ignored when we get blinded by simplistic binary oppositions such as inside/outside, home/world, private/public, street/store, male/female. These spaces are also spaces of flows and exchange – of crisscrossing people, goods, energy, resources, communication and media images.⁴⁰ Because it connects more than one thing, the space of infrastructure can be part of more than one domain; its in-betweenness can spawn new knowledge and hybrid uses.

Iain Borden provides certain examples of such boundaries.⁴¹ He calls them 'thick edges', a boundary that 'that emerges as not a plane but a zone, not physical but socio-spatial, not a division of things but a negotiation of flows'. According to Borden thick edges are important because they become settings where social and political mediations take place. As boundaries between two distinct domains, thick edges are liminal zones. Rules and themes of either domain are recombined and circumscribed to produce new knowledge and mores. Use and behaviour along thick edges challenge normative cultural practices. In Borden's example, thick edges are like stage sets where human behaviour, bodily activities and daily experiences are activated in order to recreate a novel sense of place.

Thick edges appear in sectional drawings of Devon Avenue as building edges, alleyways, basements, intermediate floors, and the spaces between buildings and along sidewalks. They are inhabitable thresholds that include hems of buildings comprising an array of usable spaces such as façades, entrances, stairs, awnings, display cases and hallways. Thick edges often are transition zones between different levels of decision-making, described in the previous section. Local residents, store owners, street vendors and shoppers occupy these in-between spaces and produce lived and performative territories. Ephemeral behaviour in these spaces produces embodied forms of knowledge that are related to how human bodies move in space. A good example of manipulation of thick edges can be studied by

⁴⁰ In recent urban geography scholarship the emergence of the 'in-between' can be traced to the work of scholars such as Edward Soja and Saskia Sassen. But anthropologists working on social behaviour and communities have described the importance of liminal space in the past. Edward W. Soja (1996), *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*. New York: Wiley-Blackwell; Homi Bhabha (2004) *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge; Saskia Sassen (2008) *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

⁴¹ Iain Borden (2000) 'Thick Edge: Architectural Boundaries in the Postmodern Metropolis', in Iain Borden and Jane Rendell (eds.), *InterSections: Architectural Histories and Critical Theories*. New York: Routledge, pp. 221–246.

examining strategies of street signage – persistent naming strategies, repeated imagery, and reworked stereotypes along storefronts. Signage produces polyvalent readings among the customers, city agencies, local residents, and visitors.⁴² A good example can be seen in restaurants with the word ‘darbar’ in their names (such as Data Darbar and Delhi Darbar). These locations revert to young male gathering spaces (‘darbar hall’ in a South Asian context meaning ‘meeting hall’) during late evenings.⁴³ Similarly, the cognitive landscape of prayer spaces, basement mosques underneath restaurants, and cab driver prayer niches (discussed above) is invisible and incoherent to those who are not part of this community, yet they coexist with secular and civic spaces and perform a central role in the life of Islamic immigrants.

Since different individuals move differently through any given space, knowledge that is produced as a result of operating within the immigrant cultural landscape can be varied. Focusing on translation of such ‘transforming edges’ by various social stakeholders allows us to explore the interplay between individual and community values in the social production and politics of meaning in the built environment. It shows how multiple social and spatial boundaries are reproduced, accessed and permeated by individuals and groups. It allows us to place more value on architecture’s potential of accommodating multiple bodily experiences and performances as primary criteria for evaluating ordinary buildings not solely on their formal and stylistic characters. It allows us to see the complex workings of power/resistance in this neighbourhood, and in the lives and experiences of a variety of people.

Lived Landscapes and Social Equity

Interpreting Devon Avenue using the three criteria mentioned above provides an alternative way to read lived environments. It serves as a counterpoint to a view that bemoans the loss of authentic places and sees ‘homogenisation’ as a loss of resistance, death of ‘locality’, and an erasure of a ‘sense of place’. Despite the seeming spatial, visual and experiential similitude, streets like Devon Avenue display a tremendous amount of flexibility and diversity in the way these spaces are experienced, inhabited and used by individuals. The three evaluation criteria take our focus away from the production of places (by designers, architects, builders) to the way places are consumed, translated and occupied. The values suggested above provide an appropriate lens to evaluate lived environments. By studying the relationship between dependencies, themes and infrastructure we are able to better capture transformations and contestations within the lived landscape. The above values do not negate or ignore traditional principles of architectural connoisseurship. It includes

⁴² Arijit Sen (2009) ‘Creative Dissonance: Performance of Ethnicity in Banal Spaces’, *Uncommon Ground: Everyday Aesthetics and the Intensionality of the Public Realm*, *InTensions 2*, Spring, <http://www.yorku.ca/intent/issue2/> (accessed July 27, 2009).

⁴³ Personal communications with Dr. Marcia Hermansen.

participation, social action and individual performance in space as values in addition to structure, form, technologies and types. While traditional evaluation of architecture focuses on production of the built environment, the proposed strategy adds consumption and translation as ontological perspectives to frame our appreciation of architecture.

By studying lived landscapes we are able to focus on the political and negotiated nature of meanings and values in the built environment. We are also able to frame the built environment as a spatial resource available to its users. Research has shown that the built environment is the setting, origin and cause of a large amount of unequal resource allocations. Uneven spread of and access to resources in the built environment causes social inequity. The physical/material impact of social inequity on the neighbourhood fabric is evident if we drive through any dilapidated inner-city neighbourhood, many of them inhabited by minorities and poorer immigrants. Devon is no exception. Behind the more visibly cluttered and unkempt spaces, boarded-up stores and frequently turned-over businesses, lies an even more pernicious story of social, ecological and economic inequity. As de Certeau shows us, space and its manipulation can allow the dispossessed, subaltern, and socially marginalised groups' access to resources otherwise not available to them. The above argument reiterates the principles of holistic sustainability: environment, economy and equity. Evaluative criteria used in building practices like LEED lack a thorough consideration of social equity issues. Showcasing the importance of the lived environment will provide design professionals an opportunity for environmental activism in the area of social equity.

Commentary:
Homogeneity and Heterogeneity?

EDWARD SOJA

Accompanying the accelerated globalisation of capital and labour over the past forty years has been the diffusion of a particular belief system or, as some define it, a 'global culture'. What exactly this globalisation of culture carries with it is still being debated. For many, it is seen as 'Americanisation', spreading the values, beliefs, and ideological principles of specifically American culture. This has led some scholars and journalists to invent such descriptive terms as McDonalds-isation and Coca-colonisation to capture its essential features. Seen in this way, Americanisation has also triggered vigorous resistance in various parts of the world to its continued diffusion.

Associated with this view is the idea that what has been diffusing is somewhat more broadly definable as neoliberalism or neoliberal capitalism, rooted primarily in the US but expressive of a more general 'new economy' variously defined as global, information-intensive, flexible, and post-Fordist if not post-industrial. However it is specifically named, this neoliberal globalisation process is seen as having powerful effects on state policies, economic development, and nearly every aspect of the urbanisation process.

Neoliberal globalisation, like Americanisation, has fostered widely divergent political perspectives. Taken in one direction, neoliberal globalisation is interpreted as a 'new imperialism' imposing all the exploitative structures of urban industrial capitalism across geographical scales from the global to the local. Taken in another direction, globalisation becomes the contemporary form of modernisation (or for some, postmodernisation), an opportunity for all nations and cultures to achieve democracy and development. It would not be saying much to argue that a more appropriate approach lies in between these two extremes.

No matter what interpretive emphasis is adopted, however, it can be said that the globalisation of capital, labour, and culture has had a certain homogenising effect. Speaking specifically about the built environment of cities, it is easy to identify a repetitive sameness in architectural features and in interior and exterior appearances in nearly all the world's major cities. And there is little doubt that this homogenisation of the urban is more pronounced today than at any other time in at least the past 300 years. It is perhaps not

so surprising that many observers, scholars, and practitioners stop here and dwell entirely on this homogenisation process. I will argue that such focusing is misleadingly superficial, however, and misses many important features and forces associated with globalisation and the formation of the so-called new economy. At the very least – and I will argue that this is not enough – homogenisation and its opposite, differentiation or heterogenisation, need to be seen as happening together simultaneously.

Thinking about how to explain the need for this two-sided view, I am reminded of the debates in the 1970s and 1980s that focused exclusively on the deindustrialisation process affecting the economies of what was then called the First World. This led to the idea of an emerging post-industrial society in which manufacturing industry would lose its significance and a consumerist services economy would predominate. A vast amount of statistical data seemed to support such a notion at the time and its ideas persist today in many corners of the academic and public world. But in so many ways, the post-industrial approach to deindustrialisation only revealed part of the picture.

In retrospect, the new economy that was emerging was built around two interacting and seemingly opposite processes of deindustrialisation and reindustrialisation, the painful but selective breakdown of the old Fordist economy and the creation of a different economic model that was still rooted in industrial production and related financial services. As the Chinese would so knowingly understand, economic development remained primarily linked to the relation between urbanisation and industrialisation, as it has from the beginning of urban industrial capitalism. A new era was emerging, building heavily on a revolution in information and communications technology, but it was not post-industrial.

The simultaneous processes of deindustrialisation and reindustrialisation combined with other pairs of seemingly paradoxical processes, such as decentralisation-recentralisation and deterritorialisation-territorialisation, to bring about radical changes in cities, societies, and built environments all over the world. To understand what was happening required looking at both processes together. What was emerging from this reconfiguration of the urban was a new kind of city; a more polycentric and networked city region or regional city in which the old metropolitan division between the urban and suburban was disintegrating.

While most inner cities were to some degree ‘hollowed out’ and reduced in density primarily through the outmigration of their domestic populations, suburbia was being at least partially urbanised. Decentralisation was taking place to be sure but it was not simply the same old sprawling suburbanisation, for there was simultaneously a recentralisation, in some cases such as Los Angeles and New York through massive immigration flows refilling the inner urban core but more typically through the growth of booming cities in suburbia, where jobs began to outnumber bedrooms. These urban transformations

have generated a host of new terms: outer cities, edge cities, peripheral urbanisation, technoburbs, exopolis, silicon landscapes, metroburbia. The modern metropolis, with its pronounced division between urban and suburban worlds, was no longer what it used to be.

I mention these urban restructuring processes for several reasons. They lend strength to the argument that what is happening around the world today needs to be seen as a combination of increasing homogeneity and heterogeneity. In many ways, the 500 city regions of the world with more than one million inhabitants, relatively soon to be the home of the majority of the world's population, are becoming more alike. At the same time, local particularities are creating many differences among them. Indeed, global homogenisation has in itself stimulated major efforts in many city regions to be different, to create alternative cityscapes both as an expression of resistance and defiance as well as in accommodation to global competition for tourist and investment dollars. Monotony and repetition can be found at airports, shopping centers, central business districts, and other urban locations, but in many cases these homogeneities are embedded within the most culturally and economically heterogeneous cities the world has ever seen.

As a geographer and critical spatial thinker, I want to add another aspect to the debate on the 'Homogeneity of Representations', one that cautions against too great an emphasis on homogenisation. No social process, globalisation or urbanisation or whatever, ever occurs evenly over space and time. Some places will always have more than others. Even if we are concentrating on homogenising processes, their effects will always be geographically unevenly developed, more intense in some places than in others. This is another reason why homogeneity and heterogeneity need to be seen together.

Focusing too narrowly on the homogeneity of representations, I believe, leads too easily to a failure to see the dramatic changes that have been taking place in cities and urbanism as a way of life over the past thirty or so years. In perhaps in no other comparable period have the changes been so great. Taking such a narrow view also tends to be associated with another over-simplified interpretation of the contemporary world, one that sees the internet and other manifestations of the new technologies as signaling the 'end of geography', the 'death of distance', and the disintegration of urban agglomeration, making downtown clusters outdated. Smart cities in this view will not be cities at all but scattered homesteads with everyone producing and consuming electronically. As was the case with the post-industrial thesis, a superficial aspect of reality is taken to its extreme limits and begins to define the whole.

As I have been suggesting from the start, however, simply combining homogenising and differentiating forces together in a binary pairing or dualism is not enough. Dualisms imply closure, but there is more to understanding the built environment and its impact on the

way people live in different cities and societies than is captured by the simple combination of two opposing forces. The two opposing forces relate to one another not just in an additive way but can intertwine to create something new and different, a creative fusion or hybridity that is more than simply the sum of its two parts. Binary oppositions or dualisms invite what I have called a 'critical thirding', an opening up of new possibilities and challenges that were not visible in the original pairing. This leads to a conclusion that in a world of homogenised representations there is not only the possibility but the necessity for plurality and diversity.

Looking more specifically at the public sphere, I find myself moving from the theme of Session Two (*Homogeneity and heterogeneity?*) to the next two sessions (*Deconstructing the Public Sphere* and *Synthesis*), towards a process of deconstruction and a reconstitution or synthesis. The public sphere in many of the world's largest cities has been captured and captivated by often intensely competitive efforts at city-marketing or plans to develop 'creative cities' based in the so-called culture industries. This has provided new opportunities and wealth for the world's 'starchitects', but has in nearly all cases diverted the urban and regional planning process away from welfare-oriented and anti-poverty policies and programs at precisely the time when income inequalities, social polarisation, and slum populations have grown to record levels.

These efforts are sustained, whether intentionally or not, by tightly-knit professional and academic networks that powerfully shape the production and circulation of theoretical and practical knowledge. To the extent that prevailing, largely neoliberal influences are accepted, the public sphere is straitjacketed into repetition and the equivalent of what the film and television industry calls 'sequels' and the planning literature calls 'best practices'. The hierarchy of global city regions has become defined by a parallel hierarchy of ostentatious image-making, with Olympic Games and World Expos at the top, ranging through various architectural extravaganzas to smaller-scale cultural and media clusters and gambling casinos dominating the purview of local planners.

One can only hope that workshops such as this can help to open up debate on reconstituting the public realm and the city-building professions around a respect for difference and diversity as well as a new urban sensibility that is rooted in the search for greater social and spatial justice. There are some indications that a new movement of this kind has begun, especially around the concept of the 'right to the city' originally developed by Henri Lefebvre in the 1960s. There is now a World Charter of the Rights to the City, an outgrowth of the World Social Forum, and a burgeoning Right to the City Alliance, originating in Los Angeles but now active in Miami, New York, Chicago, New Orleans, and other cities. Significantly for the present debate, Lefebvre from the start defined the right to the city as a right to difference, the right and necessity of all residents of the city to fight against the homogenisation of everyday life.

Heterogeneities and Enriching Encounters

A Summary of Discussions from the Second Aga Khan Award for Architecture Knowledge Construction Workshop, Vancouver 2009

REBECCA WILLIAMSON / AKU-ISMC

The second Aga Khan Award for Architecture Knowledge Construction Workshop aimed to address the question of whether processes of homogenisation and/or heterogenisation of representations in relation to the built and lived environment can be identified, and if so, what this may mean for architecture, the built environment and social worlds.

Session I: Homogeneity or Heterogeneity?

The first session of the workshop was framed around the theme of ‘Homogeneity or heterogeneity?’, which urged presenters to question whether there is evidence of a movement towards homogenisation or standardisation of representations in the built and lived environment, or whether the opposite could be argued, that is, there is instead a movement towards a heterogenisation and greater differentiation of representations. All four presentations problematised the ‘either/or’ logic of this framework. Anthony King, Abidin Kusno and Ian Angus explored the wider historical, political and social contexts in which the concept of homogenisation has emerged, while Brigitte Shim presented an applied approach to problematising the concept of the homogenisation of representations, in relation to the work of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture.

In his presentation ‘Globalization and Homogenisation: The State of Play’, Anthony King highlighted the multiple definitions and interpretations of homogenising processes prevalent in current academic literature on globalisation and modernity, noting that these processes have variously been conceived of as forms of copying, imitation, mimesis or mimicry. How the quality of homogenisation is identified and who makes that judgement were raised as important questions. Moreover, the need to examine when and why people began to focus on similarity in the world was highlighted, thus bringing into the discussion wider historical processes of globalisation, post-colonisation and neo-liberalism. The role academia plays in framing the world in homogenous terms was also noted, as exemplified in the concepts of ‘global architecture’ and ‘global cities’ which fail to adequately recognise local social, cultural and political contexts. King argued that while strong signs of homogenisation can be identified in contemporary built environments, it is important to keep in mind that the

replication of built form across contexts does not necessarily produce the same social, economic and cultural effects.

In the second paper of the session, 'Continuing to Construct/Building Knowledge', Brigitte Shim presented an analysis of three architectural projects from the Tenth Cycle of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture, exploring the complex relationship between architecture and processes of global homogenisation. She argued that these buildings represented a hybrid condition embodying both vernacular and contextual elements as well as elements of a globalized architecture and modernity, thus problematising the logic of 'heterogeneity or homogeneity'. The dialogical nature of the Award selection process was highlighted, as well as the importance it places on recognising the reciprocal processes of knowledge transfer that shape the way buildings are produced and inhabited.

Ian Angus' paper, 'The Anxiety Concerning Cultural Homogenisation: Preliminary Notes', put forward the argument that there is an inbuilt tendency towards cultural homogenisation implicit in the modernisation and enlightenment projects, and thus in all societies affected by modernity. He posited that homogenisation should be understood as a relationship within the wider socio-historical context, rather than a state or characteristic. It was argued that in this sense, homogeneity in the form of repetition, standardisation and anonymity, exists in tension with heterogeneity as expressed through notions of difference, locality, belonging and identity. The term 'representations' was problematised, and the complex relationship between an object that is being represented and the representation itself was highlighted.

The final paper of the session by Abidin Kusno, entitled 'Homogeneity in the (Post) colonial Space?' approached the issue of homogenisation by framing it as a temporal concept inherent in the discourses of development and post-colonialism. Questioning the assumption that heterogeneity is necessarily positive, it was proposed that the colonial condition resulted in both positive and negative forms of heterogeneity. Moreover, homogeneity tended to be a goal to aspire to, rather than an imposed condition. It was argued that the world is experiencing a profound heterogeneity of representations in the form of fragmentation and decentralisation – especially in the context of neoliberalism. Kusno stressed the need to re-examine the concept of heterogeneity and the power relations within which it emerges.

General Discussion

Defining Homogenisation

In the ensuing commentaries and discussion, the issue of the definition of homogenisation was re-visited, and participants noted the plurality of meanings that this term has achieved.

Several commentators emphasised the need to examine homogenisation as a dynamic process that is essentially intertwined with processes of globalisation as well as the production and inhabitation of the built environment. Thus, it is not solely an outcome of these processes as embodied in concrete visual, formal and superficial elements of the built environment. Based on this line of reasoning, Jyoti Hosagrahar proposed that the interaction between the built and lived environment could be approached from three angles: the image (or representation), the processes of production, and the practices of inhabitation. Additionally, she noted that the elements identified as homogeneous and globalised in the built environment can be very selective; other forms, such as squatter settlements, are often overlooked.

Responding to Ian Angus's point regarding the sense of anxiety surrounding the concept of homogenisation, Hosagrahar noted that framing homogenisation as an monolithic 'outward force' threatening to smother local identities and culture can lead to reactive, defensive positions that tend to solidify identities, rather than allowing an active engagement and more effective forms of resistance to homogenising trends. Therefore, it was argued, the emphasis on process also enables an examination of the constitutive relationships, dynamics, and 'politics of place', which in turn highlights the crucial question: Who is controlling these processes? Building on Abidin Kusno's argument, she also questioned the unproblematic framing of homogenisation as inherently negative and heterogenisation as positive. It was noted that heterogeneity can potentially be an 'uncomfortable' condition; homogeneity – in the form of unification – can in fact be empowering.

James Holston further emphasised that the practices of inhabitation and an embedded understanding of the construction process should be central to examining and evaluating homogeneity in the built environment. Using the example of Brasília, he argued that practices of inhabitation are closely related to ideas of belonging and citizenship, and by extension, social inclusion and exclusion. He proposed framing the dialectic of homogenisation and heterogenisation as an ongoing interaction or discourse (discursare); a 'running back and forth between things'.

The temporal and spatial dimensions of modernity and homogenisation

The wider frameworks within which the concept of homogenisation has been constructed were also questioned. Responding to the themes raised in the papers, Edward Soja criticised the over-emphasis on the concept of time in relation to post-colonial strategies of control, and argued that the production of particular geographies also need examination. He discussed the issues of privileging time and history over space, proposing that a 'great ontological distortion' occurred within the social sciences, which saw time constructed as more significant, dynamic and powerful than space. It was argued that this process is an integral part of the new modernity that has emerged in the last half of the 19th century, and

was subsequently translated into urban industrial capitalism. It was argued that focusing on the temporal over the spatial, on continuity with the past over discontinuity, blinds researchers to what is 'new and different' about processes of cultural homogenisation occurring today. Commenting on this point, Nasser Rabbat suggested that the ontological shift took place when modernity became politicised, that is, with the advent of colonialism.

Nasser Rabbat and Edward Soja both critiqued the notion of a singular, monolithic modernity. It was argued that there was a need to recognise not only multiple modernities existing at a particular point in time or space, but a sequence of multiple modernities that are constantly evolving.

Homogeneity and the evaluation of the built environment

The way in which homogeneity applies to the built environment and architectural models in particular, was raised. The question was asked whether architectural models that attempt to address issues of best practice and 'good architecture' could be conceived as a form of homogenisation. Discussants agreed that duplication, emulation, copying and repetition were judged differently depending on their context; what constitutes 'good' and 'bad' architecture depends on who is making the judgement. James Holston critiqued the way that copying and originality are framed in architectural education where the overriding emphasis is on originality which tends to mask forms of copying. He argued that a more useful approach would focus on understanding architectural production as a process or continuous discourse between the model and its development, used for example, in the concept of auto-constructed architecture.¹

Several participants cautioned against examining processes of homogenisation solely within architectural discourse. It was argued that the homogenisation of architectural production needed to be understood within the larger discussion of the social, political and cultural processes of globalisation and homogenisation. The inability of the discourses of architecture and urban planning to address these social and political dimensions of the built environment was also raised by several of the participants.

The concept of copying and its relationship to homogeneity was problematised throughout the discussions. Jyoti Hosagrahar commented that repetition is only one element within processes of production and inhabitation, and does not necessarily always need to be seen as an indicator of homogeneity (for example, the use of similar building materials). Ian Angus noted that 'copies' always involve slight differences, and take on new meanings in different social, geographical and historical contexts. What differentiates homogeneity

¹ 'Auto-construction' was a central theme of James Holston's original workshop paper and refers to a form of vernacular architecture of the middle and working classes in Brazil, homes that are owner designed and built without professional architects.

from repetition, it was argued, was the *political* connotation implied by homogeneity. Expanding on this point, Abidin Kusno argued that the significance of homogeneity and heterogeneity lies in their meaning and impact in everyday life; how these forces relate to social change, to concepts of exclusion, urban citizenship and belonging. There was general agreement that viewing the processes and impacts of homogenisation solely in terms of whether they are 'good' or 'bad', can lead to missed opportunities to see the hybridities, complexities and relationships of power that are an integral part of these processes.

Session 2: Homogeneity and Heterogeneity?

While an either/or dichotomy was addressed in the previous session, the second session aimed to explore the question of whether dual processes of homogeneity and heterogeneity occur simultaneously. According to this approach, there is evidence of both industries, institutions, practices and policies that are producing homogenised representations in the lived and built environment of the city, but there also exists instances and patterns of heterogenisation and differentiation of urban forms and social life. The theme of the session aimed to address several key questions: What is the nature of interaction between these two trends? How do these interactions impact on the public sphere, and on the practice and valuation of diversity and plurality?

In introducing the session, Chair Nasser Rabbat outlined the methodological parameters discussed thus far. It was noted that there was a general consensus between participants about the need to move beyond the binary 'either/or' position. The importance of including multiple poles of analysis – examining architectural, social, political, symbolic, historical and spatial perspectives – was also highlighted.

In the first paper of the session, 'Neither Homogeneity nor Heterogeneity: Modernism Struggles in the Muslim World', Nezar AlSayyad reiterated the need to move beyond binaries. Focusing on the Muslim world in particular, he posited that discussions of homogenisation and heterogenisation should be reframed in relation to the processes of modernity, globalisation, colonisation and national identity struggles, particularly in the context of the relationship between the Muslim world and the Christian West. It was argued that the Muslim world – and its architecture and urbanism – is still marked to a greater extent by a movement towards cultural differentiation, a multiplicity of identities and hybridity, rather than replication and uniformity.

Mari Fujita, in her paper 'Hybridity in Urban Form: Representing the AndAnd', discussed the tendency in architecture to be guided by socially constructed notions of what is appropriate and inappropriate architecture in a certain time and place. The possibility of an alternative means of understanding and evaluating built form was proposed through the notion of the 'AndAnd'. This approach provides a way of recognising hybridity,

multiscalarity and simultaneity in the built environment, and frames urban form as both noun and verb. These points were illustrated through an examination of 'theme park urbanism' in Shanghai, using the specific example of 'Thames Town', an urban development modelled on an English village.

The third presentation in the session also problematised homogenisation in relation to architectural discourse and practice. George Baird's paper, entitled 'Conscious and Unconscious Aspects of Homogenisation Processes in Architectural Representations' used a semiological approach to examine homogenising processes in the built environment. Using Saussure's concepts of *langue* and *parole* to analyse architectural form, the paper examined the relationship between design intention and the 'architectural unconscious'. It was argued that the extent to which processes of homogenisation are taking place, for example in architectural discourse and teaching, in construction and in built form, is as much unconscious as it is conscious. Baird illustrates these issues through a semiological analysis of images of a range of major architectural works.

The final paper of the session by Edward Soja, 'Commentary: Homogeneity and Heterogeneity', reemphasized the simultaneity and interrelationship of the processes of homogenisation and heterogenisation. It was proposed that breaking down the binary opens up the possibility of alternative perspectives – the 'both and also and even more' – making it possible to see new hybridities which can be missed if analysis focuses solely on homogenisation. It was argued that there also needs to be a deconstruction of traditional frameworks and ways of thinking about urban space and cities, which tend to miss what is 'new and different' emerging in urban environments.

Discussion

Representations and the Construction of Identity

Overall, discussants agreed that homogenisation and heterogenisation can be conceived of as simultaneous processes that are contingent on the specific social and political milieu in which they occur. Thus, an image or representation may be viewed as both homogeneous and heterogeneous depending on the kind of power relations in operation and different subjectivities in play.

The problematic relationship between subjectivity, identity and representation emerged as a central argument in the session. Jyoti Hosagrahar and Abidin Kusno noted the importance of exploring the politics of representation in the built environment. Using the example of the theme town discussed by Mari Fujita, it was argued that there is a need to question whose representation it is, and how inhabitants themselves create their identities and are changed through these representations. In this way the agency of those designing and

living in the buildings is taken into account, and the processes of building and inhabiting can be understood as sites of contested identities. Abidin Kusno commented that identity, the governance of space and people, and issues of class can be also be examined as elements influencing the creation and inhabitation of urban environments. Moreover, exploring the way inhabitants subvert representations through daily life and practices of inhabiting space should be taken into account. Building on this point, Jyoti Hosagrahar noted that in the disjunction between the image and practices of inhabitation there exists a space for resisting homogenisation. Anthony King noted that several theorists have attempted to frame the interaction between the designed environment and the lived environment, for example, Lonsway's notion of an 'experience economy' which refers to an economy where value is derived through the provision and also consumption of various forms of experience.²

Referring to the discussion around Mari Fujita's example of 'Thames Town', Nasser Rabbat pointed out that while historic representations of England in a Chinese theme town is something that is immediately questioned and viewed as negative, there exists at the same time a lack of criticism of similar patterns in our own culture. He gave the example of the integration of Greek architecture into Upper State New York which was historically linked to attempts to integrate values of democracy into American society. He argued that there is a normalisation of representations occurring in this situation.

The power dynamics inherent in processes of representation was also raised by Modjtaba Sadria. Using the example of the way that China represents itself to the West by appropriating and re-presenting symbols of Western power, the question was asked: What happens when the reifier becomes reified? Examining the complex relationship between the object that is represented and representations thus requires a thorough analysis, as well as understanding the power relations in operation.

George Baird noted that it was possible to examine representations by considering the degrees of verisimilitude of an image. The issue of verisimilitude – the degree to which the copy reflects the original – is important to consider if the image is to retain any form of cultural durability in the face of endless representation or simulation. Others noted that the issue of whether the original is more 'authentic' than the simulacra or copy needs to be problematised.

Issues of scale and positionality

Anthony King noted that the number of terms that we can use to refer to the processes or forms of homogenisation have greatly expanded across the course of discussions, and

² As referred to in Brian Lonsway's book *Making Leisure Work: Architecture and the Experience Economy* (Routledge, 2009).

includes imitation, mimicry, similarity, emulation, resemblance, simulacrum, replication, reproduction, verisimilitude and simultaneity. The multiple disciplinary approaches that speakers have used to analyse homogenisation – through visual, social, geographical, spatial and temporal lenses – was also highlighted. Building on this point, Arijit Sen commented on the importance of acknowledging positionality in the debates, in particular, the way disciplines frame homogeneity as either an image of an object or as a process. Acknowledging different notions of geographical scale was also suggested in order to further contextualise discussions of homogenisation. In other words, processes of homogenisation and heterogenisation depend upon the individual observer's position in relation to the social, political, economic, regional scales. Noting that architecture tends to focus on singular built forms, Sen advocated bringing into the discussion the notion of 'cultural landscapes' as a frame of reference that allows the identification of wider social and cultural patterns in built form, for example, at the scale of a street or neighbourhood.

Brigitte Shim noted that this problematic of scale was a key topic arising in the Aga Khan Award for Architecture evaluation process. She noted that in the process of evaluating architecture works, there had arisen a need for a consensus definition of the issue of scale, one that recognised both social and architectural dimensions. The issue of scale, she argued, also relates to a sense of locality and belonging, and in this way is essentially an 'ethical issue'. A sense of 'timescale' was also important to consider in relation to architecture and its production. Architecture, it was noted, tends to lag behind because of its physicality and the time taken to construct buildings; an inescapable characteristic of the discipline as well as an important factor mediating the way in which architecture engages with larger societal issues. While acknowledging the 'time lag' in architecture, George Baird commented that the typological focus in architecture can provide a useful bridge between the social, formal and historical dimensions of the built environment. Arijit Sen noted that the typological approach can also operate in a functional as well as a formal way, making it applicable to social issues.

Session 3: Deconstructing the Public Sphere

The third session was oriented around the problematic of homogenisation of representations as it relates to the interaction between the built environment and the public sphere. Do processes of homogenisation have an important impact on diversity and plurality? All three papers approached the question by using ethnographic examples to explore the way in which people creatively respond to forces of homogenisation.

Chair Mohammad al-Asad introduced the session by examining homogeneity in relation to public space in Amman. He argued that this space has the superficial characteristics of a 'westernised' and homogenised public space. In this sense, public space in Amman demonstrates a cross-border globalisation of public space. He argued that under this

surface appearance however, there are multiple attempts to co-opt this space for a variety of public or commercial interests. These attempts at differentiation and heterogenisation are, he proposed, a much more powerful force than homogenisation.

In the first paper in the session, entitled 'Original Copies', James Holston discussed the homogenising vocabularies of international architectural modernism (CIAM modernism) in the context of Brazil, exploring how these discourses are consumed and re-presented in innovative ways in popular 'auto-constructed' buildings of the middle and working class on the peripheries of the city. This type of informal architecture – often dismissed by architects and critics – provides a means of actively constructing and communicating new social and national identities in a way that subverts the processes of homogenisation.

Jyoti Hosagrahar's paper, 'Defiant Ambivalence: Globalization, Architecture, and Urbanism', called into question constructions of homogeneity and heterogeneity in the urban environment in India. Employing three vignettes of urbanism in India, she argued that notions of the 'modern' and 'traditional' exist in a simultaneous and ambivalent relationship, and are part of an ongoing negotiation of multiple identities that bridge the global, modern and local in everyday life. It was argued that instead of basing studies of the urban on singular narratives of globalisation, homogenisation or tradition, there is a need to focus on the multiplicity of interpretations and forms in the urban environment, as well as processes of making and inhabiting the built environment.

The final paper of the session, entitled 'The Transforming Boundary: Evaluating Ordinary Spaces of Contemporary Public Sphere', Arijit Sen explored the creation of public spheres in ordinary, everyday places. Using the example of ethnic urban space in Chicago, it was argued that the banal visual façade of homogenised, commercial buildings that characterise many modern cities and strip malls often hide remarkably complex, multilayered and multifarious social worlds. It was noted that these spaces cannot be judged on aesthetic merit but are nonetheless socially significant spaces. The way residents inhabit these spaces involves processes of translation and resistance which constitute new forms of public discourse.

Discussion

Several key themes emerged or were revisited in response to the papers presented. New ways of framing homogenisation and modernity were proposed, and issues of agency and processes of appropriation and subversion were discussed as they relate to homogenisation of representations in the built environment. Finally, drawing on the question of how to evaluate informal or 'social architecture' – as contrasted to formal architecture – was raised.

Reframing the definition of homogenisation

Commenting on the multiple uses of the term homogenisation throughout the presentations, and the similar approaches in the papers in session three, Ian Angus suggested that the concept could be defined in two distinct ways. Firstly, homogenisation could be conceived of as a descriptive social concept, which would enable an examination of the interplay between homogeneity and heterogeneity. Secondly, homogenisation could be used as a critical concept, which would open the way for a critical analysis of social and political circumstances, and bring into the discussion discourses such as social inequality and colonialism. The meaning of 'social heterogenisation' could then be theoretically formulated using this framework. Bringing these definitions to the issue of copying in design and the built environment, Angus proposed that the concept of 'authenticity' could be similarly analysed. Design that aids social heterogeneity could be classed as 'authentic', while design that presents a homogeneous front but is resisted at a popular level could be classed as 'inauthentic'. The question was posed as to whether it is possible to move beyond the descriptive notion of homogenisation as a monolithic, global force with a plurality of responses, and instead create design processes that actively open spaces for heterogenisation.

Deconstructing modernity and modernisation

Anthony King noted that many of presentations had in some ways managed to reify modernity, and cautioned against the use of a Euro-centric, singular 'modern'. The importance of recognising multiple, popular and local modernisms was emphasised. Building on this point, Edward Soja argued that academia continues to use out-dated versions of modernity and modernisation that fail to take into account lessons from history which have demonstrated both positive and negative consequences of this process. This is, in part, related to the powerful networks and interests that maintain and ultimately benefit from one version of modernity. He proposed that the reification of modernity could in fact be the source of the anxiety that arises in response to homogenisation. In other words, a homogenisation of the representations of modernity and modernisation has taken place.

Nasser Rabbat noted the usefulness of Ian Angus's concept of homogenisation moving from a descriptive term to a critical term. Adding to the comments brought up by Edward Soja, he proposed that the anxiety around homogenisation can be linked to a latent fear of the homogenisation of the *process* of modernity, and a homogenisation of agency. In addition, it was argued that concepts of homogenisation tend to be structured around an artificial opposition between tradition and modernity, as Jyoti Hosagrahar had outlined in her paper. This binary sets up the idea that homogenisation is a linear process starting with tradition and ending with modernity. Rabbat proposed reintroducing the dimension of history in order to deconstruct this linear conceptualisation, and instead bring into

the argument the idea that what is framed as 'traditional' and 'modern' are both 'spatially inside modernity'.

Other discussants agreed that the idea of what is modern is a constantly evolving, context specific concept. James Holston commented that the notion of 'modernity' needs to be understood in relation to specific cultural circumstances, for example, in Brazil the notion of modernity and progress cannot be understood apart from the unique processes of Brazilian nation building. Defending his reference to CIAM modernism in Brazil, James Holston argued that rather than arguing for a singular modern in Brazil, it served to highlight a certain lexicon of modernity and architecture in Brazil, a form of top-down total design that is reinterpreted through auto-constructed buildings. In other words, it highlights the political conditions of architectural production. Similarly, Nezar AlSayyad noted that even if we accept the idea of multiple modernities, these are very specific forms of modernities that have been articulated and appropriated in different contexts and through different processes, thus, not all modernities are equal.

Processes of appropriation and subversion

A central theme emerging from the papers in Session Three was the interaction between agency, appropriation and subversion over time. George Baird began the discussion by highlighting the way in which agency and self-esteem are produced through the transformation and appropriation of the built environment, citing the example of the way in which informal settlements develop and claim space over time. These processes, it was argued, are essentially linked to notions of empowerment, and should be factored into the way architectural projects are evaluated.

The different processes of design involved in informal and professional design processes were highlighted by James Holston, with the former characterised by elements of the *longue durée*, a porousness to daily life, and a participatory approach. Informal constructions involve people who make aesthetic judgements in relation to political, social and economic conditions, thus critically engaging in the production of these conditions. It was argued that this gives rise to a new form of citizenship that challenges social inequality and demands the 'right to the city'. Similarly, Jyoti Hosagrahar noted that the continuous appropriation of buildings and urban space through the processes of construction and inhabitation transforms the meanings of these spaces. In the movement towards reinterpreting and reclaiming these spaces, there is a mingling of what is deemed 'global' or 'local' or 'modern' or 'traditional', all of which are involved in processes of mutual subversion and resistance.

Responding to the discussions around practices of appropriation in the built environment, Modjtaba Sadria noted that the concept of the *longue durée* is an important one. Using the examples of contested urban spaces in Tehran and Istanbul, he argued that while

moments of appropriation and subversion may occur, over time they become integrated into power structures which can lead to normalisation and further expropriation of urban space and citizen's rights, insofar as acts of subversion are reduced and homogenised. It was proposed that these dynamics should be taken into account when trying to grasp processes of homogenisation. Responding to this point, Jyoti Hosagrahar noted that the process of subversion becomes homogenising when people no longer feel that their identities are being expressed, and are instead being repressed and categorised in a fixed way. Thus, there is an element of ambivalence constantly present, and constantly challenging given categories. Edward Soja suggested that this selective ambivalence and the continuous push-pull dynamics constitute what is new and different emerging in urbanism in the 21st century.

The connection between creativity and subversion also emerged as an important aspect of the discussions in Session Three. Several participants reiterated the need to recognise not only aesthetic creativity, but also creative energies involved negotiating daily life in the urban environment at a political level: mobilising communities, negotiating with local authorities and residents demanding the right to the city. Abidin Kusno argued that individual and community creativity could act as a form of resistance but also as a mechanism for changing government policy, demanding the improved provision of services and transforming people's everyday experience of their environment. In other words, heterogeneity becomes a way of subverting modernity and homogenisation processes and is, in a sense, emancipatory.

Evaluating the built environment

The question of what evaluative criteria and parameters could be used to recognise the banal, everyday, informal built environment, or long-term projects of inhabitation was also discussed. While most participants agreed that high and low architecture can be subject to the same level of critical discourse, the questions were posed: Where do we draw the line? When does the banal become unique? Nezar AlSayyad questioned the degree to which architecture of the periphery or background can move to the forefront. Do we need a homogenous built environment at the margins or in the background in order to achieve the heterogeneity of the centre?

Nasser Rabbat raised the point that there exists a central contradiction or double standard in the debates around informal and formal architecture, that is, if one applies social and economic criteria of judgment to informal architectural projects, then one must also apply social and economic criteria to formal projects. A number of participants agreed with this approach, noting that it would signify an inversion of conventional processes of knowledge transfer: the defining dimensions of informal architecture are used to evaluate formal architecture.

Others contested this position. Mari Fujita noted that formal architecture cannot be equated with informal architecture due to the different processes and skills involved in the production of each. George Baird argued that rather than solely expertise, a key criteria that formal architecture seeks to fulfil is artistic and cultural expression, rather than more mundane, or purely functional criteria.

A second major thread in the discussion focused on the place of 'social architecture' or 'participatory architecture' within architectural discourse. Arijit Sen commented that acknowledging informal, socially significant architecture highlights a new framework for evaluation; not a framework oriented around architecture as an object, but a framework based on sustainability and the ability of built form to sustain social worlds. Furthering this point, Jyoti Hosagrahar noted that recognising the role of architecture in fostering a sense of belonging and locality was also relevant to this framework. To this end, she argued that architecture has a transformative potential to the extent that it empowers or enables certain narratives. Thus, the question guiding the evaluation of built form becomes: Which narratives are being empowered or enabled? Further discussion ensued about the degree to which it was possible to develop a criteria in which questions about social change and empowerment can be addressed, and how this could fit within a discussion of the aesthetic/design aspects.

This dialectic of total design versus participatory design was highlighted as a fundamental tension that shapes the Aga Khan Award for Architecture evaluation process. Brigitte Shim noted that the Award recognises participatory and social aspects of architecture as well as formal design excellence, both of which represent points at opposite ends of the spectrum. The richness of the Award, she argued, lies in the way multiple positions along this spectrum are negotiated and represented in the projects that are premiated. Moreover, this makes the Award more accessible to multiple publics. Shim posited that that there is a need to focus on knowledge transfer between each ends of this spectrum: how participatory design feeds into total design and vice versa. Modjtaba Sadria reiterated this point, arguing that the relevance and legitimacy of the Award within mainstream architecture depends on the recognition of both excellence in design and the improvement of social conditions. Without both dimensions, the Award would become peripheral to architectural debate. Nezar AlSayyad noted that it is crucial to keep in mind that the separation between architecture as a social act and architecture as an architectonic art is in fact, a false dichotomy.

Session 4: Synthesis

The final session consisted of two panel discussions intended to synthesise, summarise and further deepen the main themes of the workshop. The first panel, composed of Brigitte Shim, George Baird and Mohammad al-Asad, focused on the key problematic

of representation. The second panel, involving Edward Soja, Abidin Kusno and Ian Angus, returned to the theme of whether it was possible to argue for or against the homogenisation and/or heterogenisation of representations. The session began with some general comments about the outcomes of the workshop discussion, and possible ways of framing future questions.

Bringing together architecture and social theory

The marked difference in disciplinary perspectives throughout the debates in the workshop was commented on by Ian Angus, who noted the tensions at the intersection between architecture and philosophy/social theory, both of which used different languages and conceptual frameworks to talk about homogeneity of representations. In particular, the terms modernity, modernism and modernisation, and the different temporalities they invoke, needed to be clearly distinguished throughout the workshop, and for future debates.

Expanding on this point in his discussions, Abidin Kusno argued that architecture, perhaps more than social science approaches, has its own language and identity which tends to undermine its ability to engage and dialogue with other disciplines. He suggested that making architectural discourse responsive to social issues would necessitate an intervention at the level of architectural education; a reframing of the design process away from a primary emphasis on form, to an emphasis on urgent, contemporary social issues as the conceptual starting point. Similarly, James Holston noted that rather this could also be considered in relation to the way in which the Aga Khan Award for Architecture conducts the Award process. Instead of starting with the identification of a building or project and working back towards its social relevance, he suggested an approach that begins with a social issue and works towards a solution or form. In other words, an approach in which 'architecture thinks society'. Brigitte Shim commented that the Award should be positioned in a way that encompasses both total design and participatory design, but ensures that innovation, self-esteem and sustainability (in both social and built sense) remain central to the way the Award evaluates architectural projects.

Knowledge sharing and the Aga Khan Award for Architecture

Mohammad al-Asad commented on the way in which personal experience and ethnography were used throughout the discussions to investigate the homogenisation and heterogenisation of representations. He noted that all participants come from a relatively privileged position of being able to negotiate across different social and cultural worlds; personal experiences through the tool of storytelling present a particularly powerful way of illustrating and communicating these debates. Al-Asad also questioned how issues such as those explored in the current workshop, could be made relevant to a wider audience. Others highlighted the importance of communicating these types of debates back into the

Award process to aid self-reflexivity and open-endedness, and also to Award stakeholders and the public.

Brigitte Shim commented that this form of knowledge is crucial for pushing the Award to the forefront of architectural debates, and opening a space for new thinking. There is also, she argued, a need to position knowledge generated in relation to what is being practiced 'on the ground' in architecture and urban planning. Shim also noted that the ability of the Award to do this is impacted by the inherent tension between the fast-moving modern condition that involves constant processes of mingling, appropriating and creating, and the slowness of the production of built form.

Panel Discussion 1: The concept of representation

There was agreement amongst several participants that as a concept, representation and its social repercussions were difficult to articulate or theorise in isolation from a given locale or context. The centrality of 'representations' in architecture was highlighted by George Baird, who argued that built forms are essentially presentations of the individual and collective self. He cited the example of auto-constructed housing covered in earlier discussions, where representation referred to both the representation of people and their buildings. In her comments, Brigitte Shim discussed the concept of representation as it applied in the AKAA jury process. She explained that projects were not only represented to jurors visually through images, but also represented socially and spatially through reports on the production process (including the collaboration between social actors such as architects, local craftsmen, stakeholders and residents involved in the project's construction) and the way the built projects are subsequently used and inhabited. The importance of recognising multiple forms and layers of representation was thus emphasised.

Other participants questioned the utility of the concept of representation for the present discussion. Nezar AlSayyad argued that 'representation' was an unclear concept that potentially complicates, unnecessarily, debates about homogenisation. It was suggested that instead the emphasis should be on the notion of 'agency' which emerged in many of the papers in relation to representation: several of the contributions used representation as a way to address issues of agency, while others explored the role and meaning of agency in the production of the built environment.

Exploring further the question of representation in relation to the lived and built environment, Modjtaba Sadria commented that the majority of the discussions during the workshop had, due to the architectural focus of the workshop, looked primarily at how architectural homogenisation has had a social impact. He challenged participants to consider the inverse relationship: how value systems impact on architecture. Referring to the Deleuzian argument that states that the quality of representation is based on

its effect, he posed the question: If there is a homogenisation of representations, what effects are being produced? It was noted that these effects can be evaluated by looking at the homogenisation of representations in architecture, and then analysing the effect this then has on society. This thinking can also be turned on its head, by analysing the possible homogenisation of representations in value systems, and the kind of architecture this produces. From this perspective, the homogenisation of representations can be understood as the interiorisation of value systems. Sadria linked this problematic to the current financial crisis which, it was argued, carries with it a wider crisis of the way we frame our social worlds; a crisis of functionality of our interiorised value systems. Consequently, new challenges arise for both the lived and built environment, which are no longer based on the reproduction of old systems.

Several participants commented on the breadth of the topic raised by this problematic. Edward Soja noted that the values and aims embodied in the Aga Khan Award for Architecture addresses some of the issues raised by the argument of challenging existing belief systems, to the extent that it works to decenter the discourse of architectural design and practice, and emphasises socially and environmentally sustainable practices and design. There was a general consensus that the current historical moment represents a fundamental shift, if not, as Nezar AlSayyad noted, at the level of a post-Fordist, post-modernist, or post-technological transition.

Some commentators disagreed with the idea that there has been a homogenisation of representations in value systems and culture which is affecting architecture and built form. Nezar AlSayyad argued that the assumed connection between the homogenisation of value systems resulting from the homogenisation of representations was problematic and potentially deterministic. Others argued that if the current crisis presents an opportunity to create new representations and ways of being in the world, there were many examples of cutting edge thinking and innovative practices around sustainable living within the discipline of architecture that could play an important role in this movement. Offering a different perspective, George Baird acknowledged that while architecture does have social and political power, this power is constrained contextually and temporally. Architecture, he argued, moves too slowly to be able to respond to urgent challenges or to play a key role in producing utopian change.

Panel Discussion 2: Homogenisation and heterogenisation

Initiating the discussions of the second panel, Edward Soja argued that it is a false premise to approach the idea of homogeneity of representations as a process that has a certain impact or consequence, whether that consequence is positive or negative. It was re-emphasised that homogeneity and heterogeneity are happening simultaneously, and is therefore not an 'either/or' dilemma, but rather a situation better conceptualised in terms

of a 'both and also' logic. Soja reiterated the point that the historical and geographical dimensions in the discussion of homogenisation of representations are inseparable. Thus, homogenisation of the built and lived environment should be framed using a spatial-temporal, as well as a socio-spatial dialectic. In this way, he argued, it becomes possible to identify and investigate new creative and generative forces – made up of clusters of new spatialities, networks and activities – that are shaping cities in the 21st century.

Ian Angus proposed that there is a problem of homogenising tendencies in society, even though there also exist pluralising tendencies as well. He argued for the framing of homogenisation as a socially critical concept, and advocated for it to be used as a means to legitimise and support cultural heterogeneity that arises as a response to the pressure of cultural homogeneity and social exclusion. Angus also introduced property as a possible mediating concept related to social exclusion and the built and lived environment, that could be used as part of a socially critical commentary of homogenisation. The example was given of contemporary social movements that attempt to reinvent common property as a form of cultural and political resistance to the processes of homogenisation. He noted that it was important to bring into future debates these new ways of constructing communities and new forms of publics. Edward Soja, while agreeing with these points, spoke of the importance of acknowledging the identity politics involved in the construction of communities, and to foster new forms of community that are inclusive and 'radically open'.

In his commentary, Abidin Kusno posited that the binary opposition of homogenisation versus heterogenisation is a useful tool to begin with, as it enables both positions to be clearly outlined, in order to be able to question and acknowledge the limitations of both sides through dialogue and debate. It was argued that new thinking will emerge from maintaining this tension, as long as there continues to be an acknowledgment of the constructedness of both positions within the same system. Furthermore, Kusno argued that both forces of homogenisation and heterogenisation are constantly in operation, however their identification as such, and their impact, are essentially dependent upon the specific context in which they are given meaning. Building on this argument, Arijit Sen reiterated that the multitude of positionalities and spatialities of the social actors – including academics and their disciplinary approaches – brought to the discussion of homogeneity and heterogeneity needs to be continually acknowledged.

The workshop closed with a request for participants to use the preceding discussions to further deepen their papers (presented as chapters in this volume). The importance of approaching these topics from a problem-posing rather than problem-solving perspective was mentioned, thus maintaining an issues-centered approach to continued dialogue around the topics raised in the workshop.

List of Workshop Participants

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