

ARCASIA FORUM 12 International Seminar

Globalization and Asian Architecture

10-12 December, 2003, Dhaka, Bangladesh

ABSTRACTS

(papers will be published in the seminar proceedings)

GLOBALISATION AND CRITICAL REGIONALISM: what kind of *identity* are we talking about *now*?

Sub-theme: Culture and Identity

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Abstract: The attitude and designs of the first and second generation of post-independence architects in India (roughly from 1950s to 1980s) sought to create a pan-Indian architecture. The documentation of such works, apart from creating a historical anomaly, has also seriously impeded the discussion of pertinent contemporary issues. India's economic liberalisation in the early 1990s introduced the phenomenon of globalisation to Indian society. This development, apart from creating discernible changes in socio-cultural patterns, also affects the production of architecture. The contemporary issues of migration, transculturism, media and mediated imaginations, as discussed vehemently by Arjun Appadurai in his *Modernity at Large*, challenge the very validity of creating and maintaining a post-colonial *Indian* identity.

Critical Regionalism, as proposed originally in 1981 by Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre, and interpreted by the postmodernist writer Fredric Jameson, is adopted in this paper as one way of interpreting the new socio-cultural conditions brought on by globalisation in architecture. The primary aim of this paper is to examine how, through the use of Tzonis and Lefaivre's Critical Regionalism, it is possible to negotiate through the cultural excesses of the present. Ultimately, the paper concludes, through the application of appropriate anthropological observations and Postmodern theories, that Tzonis and Lefaivre's Critical Regionalism is a radically progressive Postmodern theory which is mutational in character, and may be used as a device to answer the old and new problem of *identity* in contemporary Indian architecture.

Key Words: globalisation, critical regionalism, Tzonis, Lefaivre, contemporary Indian architecture.

PREFACE TO A POST STRUCTURALIST TEXT: A RE-READING OF CRITICAL REGIONALISM

Sub-theme: Culture and Identity

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Abstract: Since the polemical pronouncement, of the German scholar Jurgen Habermas, "Modernity –an incomplete Project", the abandonment of modernism in the late 60's, has been considered to be a rupture in the trajectory of the development of the human knowledge. The locus of the displacement of the center is being retraced within the Post Modern discourse through de-constructionism, post-structuralism, constructionism, finally modernism. Modernism is enjoying a revival; arguments in favor of project modernity, in the discourses of art, culture, and social science are proliferating. A social movement against traditionality is gradually gaining ground in the west.

Architecture in the western world is watching the resurgence of modernist architecture, based on cultural aesthetic, only without any socio -political underpinning; the incomplete project of modernism has been revived again. After years of experimentation with different styles architecture, since the rejection of postmodernism, has finally engaged itself within the principles of modern architecture.

Regional architecture, which came alongside with postmodernism, as a socio-culturally inspired resistance against the faceless onslaught of the Internationalist Style, promised so much, that whole generations of architects took to the evolving principles of this new discourse. Developing through the various stages, which included experimentation with historical, vernacular, populist in nature, regional architecture continues to reflect occasional schizophrenic interpolation of images of modern architecture. The craving to be part of the universal civilization, without compromising cultural values and aspirations, remains undiminished.

The development of information technology, seamless connectivity at global level, and global reach of the media has contributed to the rise of a new order of economy where the capital formation takes place in the a Post industrial west. In the face of the pragmatic opportunity of Globalization, the still prevailing, pre modern traditional state of the societies of our region, present an opportunity for double articulation/reading of any architectural text.

This paper intends to retrace the journey, of modernity, which has, not lost its legitimacy, in the discourse of development,. In the face of the pragmatic opportunity as presented by Globalization, the still prevailing, pre modern traditional state of the societies of our region, present an opportunity for double reading/articulation of any text of architecture. An Architecture, modern in form and vocabulary, situated in our soil, celebrating the relation of our culture with the nature, reflecting the aspirations of the architects and the people.

REDEFINING ARCHITECTURE FOR THE ERA OF POST WEST-CENTERED GLOBALIZATION

Sub-theme: Culture and Identity

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Abstract: This paper discusses the possibility of creating a redefinition of architecture, which diverges from traditionally conceived Western architecture, and which takes its understanding of architecture from traditional East Asian countries. This attempt is meaningful because it is not desirable for Asian architecture to remain within the same scope of Western architectural definitions in the 21st century that contained it in the 20th century. The current model of globalization can only accelerate the process of cultural homogenizing based on Western value systems. Hence, architects of Asia should be concerned more with the possibility of diversifying their approach beyond the prevailing framework of modernistic design, which basically duplicates Western patterns. To be able to redefine architecture, it is necessary to start from the worldview of a traditional society, which is free from the influence of the West. This paper deals with five points of comparative perspectives between East and West, from which this discussion of redefining architecture is derived. They are the problems regarding: 1. Realization of Self – Environmental Fitness, 2. Rational Construction – Indeterministic Becoming, 3. Mechanical Function – Autonomy of Life, 4. Spatial Composition – Change, Process, and Performance, and 5. Physical Existence – Invisible Relationship. The key issue in different definitions is the way a certain culture deals with these sets of opposing values. The West tries to affirm one and negate the other, while the East tries to achieve balance between the two. 21st century architecture needs to recover the spirit of balance.

Key Words: Asian architecture, globalization, definition of architecture, East and West, 21st century, balance

THE PHENOMENON OF RETAIL DEVELOPMENTS DEVOURING THEHERITAGE VALUEOF THE HISTORIC SITES OF WORSHIP: A Case Study of Chennai, India

Sub-theme: Culture and Identity

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Abstract: The phenomenon of developing Centralbusiness District (CDB) at the City Centers, which enclaves within the traditional precincts of the cities, is common to most of the regions of the globe. In India, the commercial aspect overwhelms a positivistic tension of its relationship with the historic core, it results in conflicts of socio-cultural qualities of the heritage. The city of Chennai also exemplifies this phenomenon caused by the development of heavy commercialization around its historical temples. This paper describes the issue of commercialization of the outdoor environments or the traditional settlements around one of the historic sites of worship at Chennai. By referring to a number of Western and Middle Eastern cities, the intention is to show how the situation is faced by most of the regions of the world and thereby bringing out the importance of the issue. It is essential that now recommendations to be made for a balanced urban design which does not tend to exceed a positivistic tension between these two activities. This paper concludes with the proposed research intention.

Key Words: Culture, Commercialization, Heritage, Urban design, Globalisation.

SUSTAINABILITY AND GLOBALIZATION NEXUS

Conflicts and Contradictions in the Kahn's Creation in Dhaka

Sub-Theme: City and its Context.

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Abstract: Good works generate debate and the mediocre one doesn't, with this premise in view; Kahn's work— architecture and urban design in Sherebanglanagar has been evaluated here. Buildings and settlements have some innate needs and attributes that make them useful and contextual. The axiom "think globally and act locally" is very much applicable in the practice of architecture and urban design. With this backdrop, the design and its process in the making of Sherebanglanagar and National Assembly complex were scrutinized and the study was continued further to see its relevance against sustainability and globalisation matrix. The study also examines the conflicts and contradictions between Kahn's vision and realizations in the project. Though the work of National Assembly complex is adjudged a masterpiece the euphoria is misplaced rendering us unable to see that the site and the context (including monitory and time budget) in the project have not been adequately addressed. Local geo-climate, natural growth needs and traditions took a back seat in his design considerations. At times he violated his own rules to go ahead with his modernist mindset in favour of form that he inherited from Beaux-Art. Never the less Kahn's works were widely accepted. The study is based on enumeration of author's own work experience and contacts with the persons engaged with the making of Sherebanglanagar.

Key Words: Sherebanglanagar, architecture, sustainability, globalisation, conflicts and contradictions.

CITIES IN THE FACE OF ECONOMIC LIBERALISATION & GLOBALISATION- AGENDA FOR ACTION

Sub-Theme: City and its Context.

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Abstract: Globalisation and liberalisation of national economies are making urban centres emerge as areas of concentration of wealth, services, employment, and above all human beings. Concentration of activities and population has implications in terms of large demand for built environment leading to growth and expansion of cities. Despite efforts made, city growth has outpaced the institutional capacity to provide basic necessities to individuals. City growth is marked by dualities and contradictions. Cities have ceased to be cities and number of cities have emerged within each city perpetuating contradictions in city planning and designing. Globalisation has adversely impacted the local initiatives in creating better built environment and promoting design solutions which are alien to the context, location and community. Environment has become the first causality of globalisation. Design solutions promoted have large energy implications resulting in depletion of natural resources and creating imbalances in the urban eco-system. Energy efficient locally available building material and technologies are being replaced by energy intensive materials and technologies. The buildings so created have emerged as eye-sores within cityscape without any concern for sustainability. Quality of space created has ceased to be critical and design solutions are competing with nature. Money power has overwhelmed the design approach. In this context, it becomes essential that Architects should objectively consider their role and function of the profession. Globalisation should not be allowed to hijack the traditional strength, values and ethos in architecture. Architect's role should not be confined merely to designing of buildings but should extended beyond, to city planning and development, creating well-knit communities and minimising conflicts and crimes. Resources generated from globalisation should be effectively used to evolve design solutions to take care of the needs of the poor and to create an enabling environment where they become integral part of the city and contribute to its rational growth and development. Paper looks at the emerging urban scenario in the face of globalisation and liberalisation and focuses on efficacies of Master Plans, genesis of slums, valuable heritage and architecture of town and cities as a mechanism for promoting sustainability, productivity, livability and ecology of urban centres.

Key Words: Urbanisation, Globalisation, Master Plan, Slums, Heritage, Built Environment, Community, Land Bank, Transfer of Development Rights.

IMPACT OF GLOBALIZATION ON THE PHYSICAL GROWTH OF DHAKA CITY: Case Study of Dhanmondi Residential Area

Sub-Theme: City and its Context.

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Abstract: Globalization has in some ways evolved out of a need for nations and continents to support each other economically and politically. It is accepted by many as a natural evolution of economic and industrial development cutting across geographical boundaries. But it also poses a threat to cultural identity, local initiatives and environmental sustainability. This threat in the case of a city affects its environs with regard to building patterns, landuse and the cityscape in general. In Bangladesh 26 % of the population is urbanised; 4 cities have population above 1 million and there are as many as 65 secondary cities and yet the effect of globalization is only seen in the capital city of Dhaka. This, however, has a positive side since it allows for planned development for other urban centres in future. The paper analyses the effect of globalization on Dhaka city through the rapid increase of high-rise buildings in all areas irrespective of its landuse zoning. It notes the lack of attention to traditional architecture and the indifference to principles of planning and building standards. The multistoried apartment buildings and shopping complexes etc. may stand out as modern buildings but they are placed without any regard to landuse zoning building and planning codes. The whole is indicative of social imbalance and lack of control on the cities growth. A case study of recent development of multistoried buildings in a residential area is made to give example of the mentioned changes. The paper concludes by offering some recommendation to architects and planners and urges them to make a conscious effort to guide development efforts by protecting the natural fabric of the city, allowing proper landuse and utilizing structural development in a manner that will be in keeping with the social and cultural history of the land and make. In short, it urges for the optimum use of available resources. The following are some of the topics that will be covered in the paper:

- The impact of globalization on landuse of the city and building design.
- Case study of building development in a residential area of the city and changes in landuse.
- Thoughts on how to achieve a balance in development of landuse and architecture of buildings, while confronting the issue of globalization.

Key Words: building pattern, landuse, zoning, balanced development.

CHANGING URBAN FACADES IN DHAKA: IMPACT OF GLOBALIZATION IN MATERIALS AND TECHNOLOGIES

Sub-Theme: Materials and Technology

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Abstract: New urban forms are emerging in Dhaka, which are changing cityscape rapidly. New materials and technologies, mostly imported, are being used in response to changing cultural and aesthetics values. In most cases, fenestration, imitated from global cities, are imposed, and accepted unquestionably. Focus of this paper is to discuss some recent built forms in Dhaka, the materials used in fenestration and try to analyze their success or failure in terms of economic, environmental, and cultural context. We will also analyze the historical development of fenestration in Dhaka and relate them to the present context.

Traditional built forms in pre Mughal and Mughal and colonial Dhaka responded to the tropical climate. Those were mostly based on indigenous materials and technologies, which resulted in built forms such as Choto Sona Mousque, Carzon Hall, Ahsan Manjil, etc. In Pakistan era, new urban areas emerged and as a result urban development accelerated. Use of RCC became more and more popular, although architects adapted the use to local context. The development increased very rapidly after the independence, and still accelerating in the present days. The impact of globalization started showing its presence from early 80's. Dhaka became overwhelmed by it in the 90's. Use of reflective glass, aluminum and stone claddings delineated most of our new buildings and also some old buildings in the renovation works. Some of these global materials may prove to be less effective in our climatic context unless used with caution.

The positive side of this issue is that it helps to redefine our local context under the influence of globalization. These have generated some innovative details, which can be utilized to create more effective fenestration through out the city. In this paper, effort will be given to illustrate the new wave of design practice with the help of visual details of selected buildings. Moreover emphasis will be given to critically discuss some of the methods of designing buildings which will likely to pour new thoughts for the practicing architects and builders in order to create a rational way to look at the building process.

A DISCRETE RESPONSE TO GLOBALIZATION AND SEARCH FOR A NEW PARADIGM

Sub-theme: Practice and Pedagogy

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Abstract: Anguish over shortcoming in globalized urban systems obscure the inert reasons for the exuberant existence of Asian mega cities. These vibrant cities possess a hidden spatial order and that should be explored, to suggest a new paradigm for the future. To me, the apparently chaotic developing cities are nothing, but functioning as a Non-linear system. Non-linear system are capable of self-organization, they can spontaneously generate order.

The new science of complexity, illuminate a new world view, this allow us to analyze the natural phenomenon and non-linear systems with rule based bottom up theories like --- Fractal theory, Chaos theory, Cellular Automata, Genetic Algorithm, Shape Grammar etc. These emerging theories can help architects to overcome the challenge of globalization by creating new ideas in proposing appropriate design solution for rapid urbanizing Asian cities.

The local conditions seldom ignored due to the myth to achieve global conditions. In this paper, the search is for the design rules that help to generate architectural forms for a small plot in a dense urban context. And it is responsive to local conditions - physical, cultural, and social. Here, the rules of interaction and behavior of a house form in an urban system is derived in a simpler form as design rules. Cellular Automata allows us to process these rules in computer without preconceptions, in order to generate new shape & form. Here 3D CA (Cellular Automata) used as methodology. It is a discrete dynamical system, with very simple rules that implies on the state of a cell and its neighboring cells give rise to an interesting behavior. Thus the whole system at the end reproduces a new form. It is concluded that in architecture the design ideas can be transformed as generative rules so that their evolution can be expressed in computer. The design rules can be used in a 3D CA. With many generations cellular automata can produce 3D shapes that changes in to different forms. It can evolve by surviving all the barriers towards a place specific solution. Thus we can evolve new forms with each number of iteration in 3D CA. The new paradigm provides unlimited new choice of a house form sympathetic to complex urban system of any specific Asian mega-cities

SYNCHRONOUS ARCHITECTURE

Sub-theme: Practice and Pedagogy

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Abstract: Globalization is the buzzword of today. Whether in business, politics, science or technology, it is the common expression of every field in the contemporary world. We need to conceptualize the term "globalization". Globalization has changed our life-style. Naturally, it becomes an unavoidable phenomenon of our architecture. But, in the realm of architecture it is not a very new idea. In fact, modern movement has already dealt with the concept of globalization, which was mainly practiced in the western world, but it failed to survive. For Asia, it has brought new dimension in architecture.

On the other hand the local context is the vital component of Asian architecture. Without contextual response architecture becomes dead. We got another condition for architecture and that is contextual response. But, the problem is, how could we manage to oppose directional force within the same architecture? In that case, at first we have to understand the negative and positive impacts of globalization and contextualization on architecture and then we have to decide our way of working.

Architecture always seeks for new living condition. If this is not, then there is no need for architects and architecture. We cannot simply decorate the same old thing in the same old way. In that case architecture should not proceed forward, and this not accepted to be. Architecture should express its space (which means its place location) and also it should be the icon of its time by which the future people could justify our architectural discourse.

Then what would be our point for facing new world condition? What would be the mode of expression of our architecture?

The paradigm has been shifted from electronic era to the communication era. Electronic communication system has bound the different territories of the world into a singular one. Due to the faster communication system distance and time has lost their obstacles. The word context has got a new meaning today. The term context could be differentiated into three major part, first local context, second global context and last of all time context. In such complex condition a singular concept is not valid today. Pluralistic vision of the world has got dominancy.

A heterogeneous, pluralistic reality is our goal. To meet the pluralistic condition no style or idea should be given priority over others. Juxtaposition is one of the possible ways to work out, where separate elements could be arranged to find out their new relationship..... Juxtaposing different components at different layer and blurring them at different dimension should reduce the singular prominence. In toto a new kind of architecture should evolve.