

LET US WELCOME GLOBALIZATION

Sub theme: Practice and Pedagogy

ARCASIA FORUM 12 International Seminar on *Globalization and Asian Architecture*
10-12 December, 2003, Dhaka, Bangladesh

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Abstract: I would like to present a different, more positive aspect of globalization that probably has not been fully explored. I have made a case for welcoming globalization in the spirit as the Chinese manufactures responded to the challenge with highly fruitful results. The argument is based on the fact that the comparative advantage, low production cost, efficiency can work to our advantage, if we gear our practice in line with the global trends, while focusing on our unique environmental context.

The method of analysis that has been adopted includes definition of globalization and its nature, review of arguments against and in favor of globalization, to put things in a proper perspective. A quick review of issues of architecture identity in the overall global context and major response to counter it. This is followed by a description of the state of the profession in our country. Based on these analyses a case is made for efforts to bring our profession in line with the global trend, and to take advantage of the fruits of globalization.

Key Words: Comparative advantage, Identity, Partnerships

INTRODUCTION

"Globalization, telematics, loss of sovereignty where role of national state is shrinking and developing countries since they are outside the realm of centrality they would hardly get any share in the fruits of Globalization, where winner takes it all.."

Globalization is like a double edge sword, it has positive as well as negative impact for every aspect of our life. Unfortunately the tendency is to take the benefits for granted and condemn the disadvantages. In this context it is heartening that Arcasia 12 has taken up this theme for this year conference. This is as good a time as any to look into this phenomenon objectively to explore areas of threats as well as opportunities, so that we prepare ourselves to meet the challenge, and also identify the areas where we can help each other as a regional block.

What I have done in my paper is to attempt to put things in perspective, and explore the two aspect of this phenomenon in our context, with particular reference to our architecture profession. This has done by analyzing the following:

1. Meaning of Globalization and what it stands for
2. Arguments against globalization especially for the developing countries.
3. Arguments in favor of globalization
4. Question of globalization and the issue of architecture identity.
5. State of local architecture professional and the challenges of globalization

In conclusion I have stressed the need to gear our practice in accordance with the global trends.

MEANING OF GLOBALIZATION

Globalization in Capitalist terms means making each component and performing each activity at the place on the globe where it can most cheaply be done and selling the resulting products or services wherever prices and profits are highest. Minimizing costs and maximizing revenues is what profit maximization, the heart of capitalism is all about. Sentimental attachment to some geographic part of the world is not part of the system (Thurow, Lester.C, '96, p.115).

Rise of capitalist globalization was the outcome of the threat that was felt with the rise of communism after the Second World War. Something global had to be put in place to contain global communism.

With the communism dead, the threats that were instrumental in producing a global capitalist economy are over. But historic paths make a difference. Whether a global economy would have been built without the presence of a Communist threat can be debated, but that debate does not change today's reality that a global economy exists. Stopping its development might not have been hard at the beginning, but dismantling it now would be very difficult. – Most likely impossible. A global economy now shapes everyone's view of the world and alters how each of us thinks/ everyone faces a new reality. Everyone is mutually interdependent and linked in very different patterns of supply and demand than might otherwise have existed. Powerful institutions (world bank, multinational firms, international institutions) are in place with a vested interest in maintaining themselves and their environment (Thurow, p.116).

Thurow (1996) argues that getting rid of the existing world economy would require some painful structural readjustments. Export industries would have to be shrunk. Import-competing industries would have to be expanded. Huge economic losses would be forced on those who earn their living as exporters or importers in the existing global economy. Not being able to take advantage of the comparative advantage inherent in foreign trade, the prices of some products (for example, oil) would rise dramatically and those who buy such products would find themselves with much reduced real incomes. In a very real sense the global economy has become physically embodied in our ports, airports, and telecommunication systems. But most important it is embodied in our mind-set.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST GLOBALIZATION

Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad has articulated the core sentiments of the developing world in what is likely to go down as the defining phrase in the long drawn debate between the rich north and poor south over what is fair in trading freely. He has called for fair rather than free trade as according to him fair trade can be free but free trade can be unfair. He has also very rightly pointed out that the poorer countries could not agree to the agenda at the fail WTO talks in Cancun because it was not their agenda.

With a touch of sarcasm Dr. Mahathir said that poorer countries were ready to be exploited but they would want to be fairly exploited. . Implying that these countries are ready to open up their markets to rich countries and their multinationals and also have an open mind on the structural reforms being suggested by the World Bank and IMF but all that they want in return is a guarantee that in the process of globalization, they are not left holding an empty sack.

To activists like Michael Albert Globalization refers to changes in the terms of trade and exchanges that tilt the playing field even more dramatically to the advantage of the already powerful and the already rich at the expense of the still weak and poor

To achieve this they believe that a start can be made by canceling the Third World debt and replacing the IMF, World Bank and the WTO with new institutions devoted to protecting environments and expanding the well being and influence of currently weak and poor population. Their mission vision is about alternatives to the underlying structures of capitalism, for example about alternatives to the underlying structures of political authoritarianism, and of racism and cultural oppression of diverse kinds, and of sexism.

Anti-globalization movements have been successful in generating sizable gatherings, and successfully interrupting meeting and blocking odious trade agreements, They have also been successful in increasing the awareness among tens and hundreds of millions of people of the fact that international exchange is

not some kind of inevitable fact of life, but is impacted by social decisions and institutions which serve vile interests, and which can be opposed and replaced with more just arrangements.

The noble nature of their intentions and their contribution notwithstanding it is an Herculean task that these people have taken upon themselves. By very nature their efforts shall continue regardless of their success or failure. Meanwhile professionals like us would need a more pragmatic strategy to survive in a world, which is in flux.

ARGUMENTS FOR GLOBALIZATION

In contrast to the views expressed by Michael Albert, authors like George Monbiot present a totally different scenario as a result of globalization. This school of thought believes that as a correction mechanism workers in the third world countries would greatly benefit because of the job market which would open up in the west where computer and communication technologies would allow them to provide service from their native countries at first world wages (albeit in the lowest bracket).

He warns his fellow countrymen that "if you live in a rich nation in the English speaking world and most of your work involves a computer or a telephone do not expect to have a job in five years time. Almost every company, which relies upon remote transactions is starting to dump its workers and hire a cheaper labor force overseas. All those concerned about economic justice and distribution of wealth at home should despair. All those concerned about global justice and the distribution of wealth around the world should rejoice."

He goes on to say "For the first time in history, the professional classes of Britain and America find themselves in direct competition with the professional classes of another nation. Over the next few years, we can expect to encounter a lot less enthusiasm for free trade and globalization in the parties and newspapers, which represent them. Free trade is fine, as long as it affects someone else's job."

In another such study investment banker Goldman Sachs predicts that around 2040 China will overtake the United States to become the world's largest economy. Sachs' predictions are in a way encouraging for the developing countries of our region. Five centuries ago, on the eve of Europe's rise to World Empire, average incomes in China and India were about the same as average incomes in Western Europe and average incomes in the Muslim Middle East were probably higher. Then the Europeans burst out of their continent and overran the planet. They and their overseas descendant ended up far richer than everybody else, partly because of their empires and because they took the scientific and industrial lead. The new status quo has been around for so long that it has come to seem natural, but is ending now.

His paper is a sophisticated exercise in prediction that takes into account factors like population growth and changing age structure, capital accumulation and likely productivity growth, rather than just doing straight-line projection of current trends. It focuses on what it calls the Bric: four lower middle-income countries- Brazil, Russia, India and China- that have big populations and already have significant industrial and technological skills and resources. And it tells us where it thinks we will all be in 2050.

The world's biggest economy will be China's of course, with the United States in second place. India is not too far behind in size and then a long way after the Big three, come Japan, Brazil and Russia. Bringing up the rear, so far as the major players are concerned, are Britain, Germany, France and Italy.

With the exception of the US and Brazil, New World countries that were not home to modern mass civilizations five hundred years ago it is a return to the same list in almost exactly the same order that you would have drawn up in the year 1500.

Now there is a need to explore the validity of such analysis. The key areas of develop human resource, management practices, political stability, and focused government policy can play crucial role in making or breaking this prediction come true.

GLOBALIZATION AND ARCHITECTURAL IDENTITY

The most dominant physical manifestation of globalization, of course remains in the architectural form. The mind set that what is west is best has damaged not only the ability of the local professional to innovate and produce solutions which are suitable to our cultural and environmental needs, but also made them agents of global corporations.

Pioneers such as Geoffrey Bawa, Hassan Fathy and El Wakil have been able to produce an architecture vocabulary, which opened up ways to the revival of architectural traditions, which were identifiable for the people of the region.

Chris Abel (2000) believes that the rediscovery of Islamic building traditions offers the greatest potential, where they are relevant for the development of a viable contemporary regionalism of consistent high quality capable of providing for many building types, both old and new. . The potential drives from the sheer richness of the heritage, which as an adaptable language of form, diversified over 1200 odd years of continuous development across several continents, rival that classical language of the west in its range of application(Abel page 171).

He talks of committed local architects who survived their orthodox Modern education, have made attempts to recreate the original dense structure of housing and souks, or markets, of the historic core, /the rebuilding of the El Hafsia quarter in the Medina, or old city of Tunis, by Wassim Ben Mahmoud, is one of the more successful projects of this kind. On larger scale, the Justice Palace District in Riyadh, by Beehah Group and Rasem Badran, provides modern commercial facilities and apartment building in like for, The last team also produced an similarly inspired dense linear core of public buildings and housing for the new Diplomatic Quarter situated in the suburbs of Riyadh (Abel p 175).

It is against this changing urban context that the work of two architectural projects in particular merits special attention. Of the two the Egyptian architect, Abdelwahed Wl-Wakil, takes the more strictly traditionalist approach, following on from the example set by his mentor, Hassan Fathy. The courtyard dwellings and mosques which dominate El-Wakil's practice have enable the architect to exploit a well established vocabulary of form, mostly drawn form the historic building of his native Cairo. However Wl-Wakil's carefully researched designs do more than bring back to life a neglected body of traditional knowledge and technique. They also present would-be creative regionalists with timely reminders of the of adage that ' in order to break a rule, first know the rule'

The Aga Khan University and Hospital complex in Karachi, By Payette Associates, affords lessons of a different kind, both in the complex nature of the modern functional programmed involved, and in the way the architects approached the problem of interpreting Islamic traditions. In this last respect it is noteworthy that, though Payette Associates is an American firm, the design of the hospital benefited from the participation of Moshan Khadem, an Iranian born consultant respected for his knowledge of Islamic architecture,. In addition, as part of their preparation, the architects undertook an extensive tour of Islamic monuments in Pakistan, the Middle East, North Africa and Spain(Abel page 175)..

The chief strength of El-Wakil's dwellings and mosques, and of Payette's building is that they offer clear promise of reproducible models, capable of adaptation to the specific contingencies of place and programme. El-Wakil's mosques already constitute a series in them, each new building developing further the model established by the last one. In case of the university and hospital in Karachi,, it is possible to see the emergence of a more general model of building based upon what might be called the concept of an urban oasis, which responds to the realities of new functional programme and urban frameworks,. In addition the urban oasis offers the security and privacy of enclosed spaces and other familiar elements of traditional Islamic architecture (Abel page 176).

The example like Aga Khan University Hospital illustrate ironically that the search for an architecture vocabulary which is regional rather than global have been produced by international architectural firms. However the contribution of Moshan Khadem should also be not underestimated. The point is that there is plenty of room for cooperation and there is a scope for a mutually beneficial partnership.

STATE OF LOCAL ARCHITECTURE PROFESSION

For the last several decades we have been struggling to establish architecture as a profession. People in authority rarely trust the skills or abilities of the local architects. All the major Architectural projects have been awarded to international firms. Our arguments in support of tradition and heritage get blown away by the beaurocrats and politician alike, even when the traditional vocabulary is picked up it is picked up for the wrong reasons.

Partly due to the reasons mentioned above the level of skill and competence of architectural firms have remained stagnant. Since there is no stability in the profession, employers are reluctant to increase the