The Martyr and the Juggernaut: Disrupting Global Assumptions in Architectural Pedagogy

While "globalization" was a hotly debated buzzword in 1990s, it has subsided from theoretical prominence and become more generally understood as an incontrovertible socioeconomic and geopolitical fact from the vantage point of several scholarly disciplines. Globalization, global culture, and global architecture have come to be seen as markers of this bold new spatial reality. While these debates have yielded some epistemological insights about a broader spectrum of the built environment, the persistence of a few rhetorical patterns in the discourse is problematic. The question of whether globalization is a constraining or liberating force on architecture is premised on a false dichotomy and flawed presumptions. More importantly, these embedded assumptions prevent the discipline from providing students the critical skills for navigating the complexities of a globalized world. The focus of this investigation will be to draw attention to the strengths and shortcomings of the debate on architecture and globalization.

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Architecturally, globalization debates have conventionally and unimaginatively been framed dualistically as the global versus the local. A subset of secondary binaries inform this spatialized, Manichean global/local struggle —modern/traditional, foreign/indigenous, homogeneous/ heterogeneous, universal/particular, core/periphery, etc. The title of this conference, *Globalizing Architecture/ Flows and Disruptions*, while opening its terms for critical interrogation, in fact, reiterates this dualistic conceptualization. As discourse has accrued, these poles have ossified. The objective of this paper is to reflect on the considerable scholarly work devoted to globalizing architecture, to critically examine its logic, and by way of constructive examples begin to suggest generative pedagogical strategies that disrupt persistent global assumptions in architectural pedagogy. While not putting forth a grand theory or new agenda in architectural education, this paper does draw attention to the productive value offered by a selection of recent works investigating global architecture. The aggregate of their insights, it is argued, potentially form the basis of future pedagogical models questioning the Western origins of modernity, emphasizing the values of design thinking,

interdisciplinarity, contingency, historical perspective, and a more dialectical and processural understanding of globalization and space.

THE MARTYR AND THE JUGGERNAUT

In looking at the globalizing architecture discourse, two diametrically opposed figures repeatedly present themselves— the martyr, usually part of a buzzing multitudinous swarm, and the oppressively huge, seemingly ubiquitous juggernaut. It should be stressed that what is critiqued in this argument are not the views, positions, or people involved in these debates themselves but the unproductive ways in which their views are framed. Martyrs, occupying the lower section of these binaric relationships, righteously contest the frictionless and homogenizing flows exuded by the inexorable juggernaut of globalized modernity. Martyrs emphasize the importance of identity, local culture, sustainable materials, politics, and history. These are undoubtedly important concerns, though martyrs ultimately die for their cause. They throw themselves into the gears global capital in hopes of making lasting social change. Like the Hindu Ratha-Yatra, though, the chariot of globalization continues to roll, pulled by its frenzied devotees (Figure 1). "Disruptions" certainly exist in these conventional frameworks, but the virtues of "flow" have common-sensically been accepted as the dominant organizing logic of global economies and space.

Examples of martyr-like positions are several. The Occupy Movement's takeover of Zuccotti Park, the urban protests in Tahrir Square and Taksim Gezi Park, struggles for indigenous land rights groups and environmentalists, and slum dwellers movements are just some of the recent examples inhabiting the martyr-pole of global architecture debates. Despite political gains, tremendous worldwide exposure, and the innovative use of social networking technologies, these movements are often cordoned off as regional "disruptions." Space is either treated purely as an insurgent zone of political activism or contained and de-limited to distant, symbolic nodal points. Written off and peripheralized as broken, dysfunctional spaces operating at the fringes of the established (Western, global) order, their heralded as aberrant ruptures in history. The homogenizing forces of global consumerism have highlighted this moment of crisis in the built environment. From architecture and urban studies discourse, texts like Mike Davis's *Planet of Slums,* Anthony King's *Spaces of Global Culture*, and to some extent essays in Graham Owen's edited volume *Architecture, Ethics, and Globalization* make this kind of argument. Perhaps the most frustrating aspect of the martyr position from the perspective of the architecture student or practitioner is that they leave very little wiggle room in terms of actual praxis. Martyrs are paralyzed by their own criticality. This is doubly frustrating for designers since the socio-political issues confronted by this position have such tremendous potential.

A position more amenable those hoping to productively practice comes from the work on Critical Regionalism. With its emphasis on creating an "architecture of resistance," this presents another example of the martyr-like position in relation to globalization. Several variants on Frampton's argument privilege locality as a trait characteristic to be amplified in the face of the threat of global similitude. Riddled with contradictions as it is, Critical Regionalism puts forth a concerted effort to counter both the homogeneity and placelessness of modern architecture and the superficial historicism of postmodernism. Critical Regionalism strives for a middle position between the particularities of place and the universal logic of modernism, though, like most work addressing globalization of the built environment, tends to buttress the latter. Eggener, for example points

out how, with its emphasis on expressing the particularities of regions within a universalizing framework, critical regionalism ultimately reinforces the general at the expense of diversity. Critical regionalism conceptualizes space by a static region by region basis, rather than as a result of dynamic, contrapuntal processes. Inherent local identity in the built environment is geographically tied to a particular place. The region is a bounded entity rather than dynamic site of exchange. In reviewing discussions about how architecture might best operate in a globalized world, it is revealing how many of them, whether explicitly or implicitly, assent that some form of "critical regionalism" or "glocalization" as the most responsible course of action.

This form of resistance is very different from an earlier generation of architects and historians resigned to Tafuri's Marxian-influenced form of criticality and autonomy epitomized in his call for "pure architecture" and "sublime uselessness." The objective of this paper is not to critique these well-intentioned, and indeed necessary discussions about identity and place, nor is it to valorize the sublime and unflinching power of the juggernaut. The either/or logic of both is what stymies conceptualizing more generative, multi-logical, understandings of global space. The purpose of this argument is to unhinge these persistently divergent ways of conceptualizing space.

One of the positive aspects of these martyr-like histories and theories of globalizing architecture is that they open up the discourse and expose the contingency of space. These counter-histories and resistant modes of operation document the multiple ways the master narrative of efficiency, progress, and connectivity can be frustrated. Though architects would like to think so, things do not always going according to plan. As Jeremy Till argues, architects tend to instead embrace the juggernaut rather than grappling with the contingency of the world. He writes, "To face up to contingency is to stare into the mirror of one's fragility, to see one's shared impotence at the wheel of the juggernaut." While his book examines ways to deal with the messy complexity of the world, it should be emphasized that Till isn't advocating for an acceptance of the martyr's critical positionality. Rather than viewing architecture's dependence on outside forces and uncertainty as a threat to be resisted, Till sees this relationship as an opportunity.

Examples of the juggernaut position are easy to find. Thomas Friedman declares that "the world is flat" and that a new playing field has opened up in the wake of technological innovations such as personal computers and sophisticated communication networks. Friedman critiques martyr-like positions as static and resistant to change. It is the juggernaut which subconsciously guides the contemporary studio. The oft cited example of an architect rejecting the discipline's sense of resistance and propensity to seek autonomy in favor of an adrenaline-charged surf of the waves of neoliberal global capitalism is Rem Koolhaas's "Globalization" essay. Valorizing the potential of the market, he writes that it "contains the promise of a new architectural system; it establishes episodes of global enterprise: an infrastructural project to change the world, it aims a montage of maximum possibility collected from any point, lifted from any context, pilfered from any ideology." Koolhaas's engagement is a non-apologetically global one. His embrace of the "self-organizing" logic of the market, not just in the West, but in the developing world has been critiqued elsewhere. World city approaches, like those of Saskia Sassen, similarly treat the globe as a parsed-up entity with spatial nodes acting as sites of connection versus those hopelessly disconnected from circuits of global capital. Castells' theorization of "spaces of

flow" likewise analyzes sites of bypass within the network society. Within these narratives, context is eschewed in favor of the logic of connection and flows of transnational capital, but it is important to underscore from which direction that flow occurs—from the center to the periphery. Ananya Roy suggests that 21st century theorizations must disrupt and de-center these categories. She argues for "dislocating the Euro-American centre of theoretical production; for it is not enough simply to study the cities of the global South as interesting, anomalous, different, and esoteric empirical cases." Historically, spaces in the global North are interpenetrated by those from the global South. Relying on these outmoded theoretical models is inadequate for understanding the interdependent dynamics of global flows and disruptions. Interestingly, a standard textbook like Jarzombek, Ching, and Prakash's *A Global History of Architecture*, which chronologically itemizes great monuments in architecture at the scale of the planet, shares the heroicism displayed by the juggernaut. The uncompromising inclusivity of this survey is a necessary upgrade to previous Euro-centric collections as is the implied sense that globalization is not something in the past few decades. In its focus on discrete architectural masterworks, though, the text's ability to talk about larger cross-cultural connections is hindered. The buildings are distinct spatial entities cut off from their socio-cultural contexts and fall into the dual traps of global tokenism and triumphalism. In another text, Jarzombek and Hwangbo acknowledge the challenges posed by global approaches to architectural education, specifically addressing the inherent paradoxes in the NAAB "Historical Traditions and Global Culture" requirement. They conclude, "The more global—or seemingly global—we have become in the last decade the more we realize how un-global the dominant narratives are about what global means. What is to be done about this difficult bind that architectural pedagogy finds itself in? Are there texts we can look to as educators to productively engage the seemingly ever-present dualism in globalized architecture literature?

THREE GENERATIVE EXEMPLARS

After studying these arguments and the diverse ways in which the relationship between globalization and architecture is imagined one realizes the juggernaut has a hegemonic grip on the discipline. Speed, fluidity, integration, simultaneity, time-space compression—characteristics once regarded as new and potentially dangerous have become indispensable facets of an interconnected existence with which we intimately live with now-- more of way of life than aspects of an emerging phenomenon to be debated. As though exhausted by the expenditure energy to carry its own ponderous weight, "globalization" has effectively been emptied of its once active discursive value, and transformed into a hackneyed talking point to vaguely describe contemporary culture. Presented with this problem-- at once an issue of definitional clarity and pedagogical responsibility-- certain questions arise. How can architectural educators meet the pedagogical demands of Millennials-- a generation so thoroughly infused with the logic of technological immediacy, cultural interconnectivity, and transnational interface— that globalization seems more like a largely complete project than a complex, historically- contingent and geographically-differential process? While McLuhan's words about the pace and awareness of the "global village" were in many ways keenly astute, instilling contemporary students of the built environment with a critical sense of responsibility in the face of this "implosion", remains a challenge. The ethical obligations which McLuhan assumes to naturally ensue from this condition are by no means automatic. The sheer power and seductiveness of this "sudden" implosion, in fact, have made it more difficult to engender

this sense of responsibility. How then do educators prepare architects to perform as global citizens—generative actors substantively creating meaningful places, engaging difference, responsive to uncertainty, sensitive to locality, attentive to diverse building traditions and histories, while harnessing the potentials of integration at the global scale? In the decades following McLuhan's pronouncements, the talk about globalizing architecture has indeed been profuse. But what does it mean to practice architecture in a globalizing world? What does this condition demand of architectural pedagogy?

To help frame the discussion and suggest future intellectual trajectories, I will highlight three texts which have brought attention to important vectors which need to be addressed in putting forth a resilient pedagogical model for architecture. While none of these is a perfect model for instituting a global epistemology, in aggregate they begin to sketch possible ways forward for teaching future generations of architects. The first of these is Keller Easterling's book *Enduring Innocence: Global Architecture and Its Political Masquerades* which playfully toys with the dichotomies outlined above. Using six case studies of "spatial products" from around the globe including high-tech agricultural formations in Spain, tourism in North Korea, and automated global ports, she demonstrates with wit and skill the relationship between globalization and architecture (Figure 1). Space is a product in Easterling's stories, part of a network rather than a contained entity. She writes that the stories in the book do not portray a resistance that can heroically match the purity of modernism" but instead display the evidence of rich contradictions and multiple logics" There is a dialectical understanding of globalization and space which escapes most global imaginings. This acute sense of doubleness is what the either/or, martyr/juggernaut thinking cannot adequately gain purchase on. The ability to occupy multiple positions at once and cope with contradictions is a skill necessary to equip global citizens with. Admittedly, at times, the book is difficult to access and its fragmented structure is difficult to follow. While the stories in this volume reveal the sublime power of the juggernaut, designers and practitioners might see the book as a martyr proclaiming the structural constraints of global systems. Agency is hard to detect in the stories meant to expose the complex production of space resulting from socioeconomic forces. For its extraordinary awareness of non-binaric thinking, interdisciplinarity, unbound and networked space, and global perspective of architecture, though, this book is indispensable.

A second book of tremendous value is Duanfang Lu's *Third World Modernism* (Figure 1). This is a book which, perhaps more than any other, answers Ananya Roy's call to dislocate the center of Euro-American theoretical production. Drawing on examples explicitly from a "Third World" context Lu makes tremendous strides toward imagining a multivalent history of architecture sensitive to the particularities of place and the rich diversity of actors that produce it. Lu sets out to recognize not only the existence of other modernities, but also the "legitimacies of different knowledges" in order to "enfranchise other spatial rationalities." The several examples of fine-grained historical research in this volume not only fill a void in the literature on the built environment, but systematically disassemble the certainties and centralities undergirding disciplinary readings of modernism. Though some might see this as a text of postcolonial "resistance", it is one which shows that terms like tradition and modernity are not diametrically opposed but mutually constituted. Like Easterling, Lu does not think in binaric terms. The hybrid forms invented in the case studies resist easy classifications as

foreign or indigenous technologies. The book sidesteps the tokenism displayed in global surveys, provides a thorough critique of critical regionalism, historicizes the processes of globalization, and destabilizes the myths of hegemonically associated Western modernist architecture. Approaches like this one are at once inclusivist in their telling of heretofore peripheral histories, but also eye-opening in that they shed new light on familiar narratives on modernist design.

The final text highlighted is Stephen Cairns' essay entitled "Flows" in *The SAGE Handbook of Architectural Theory* (Figure 1). This is an example of a short, accessible piece which is both theoretically rich and provides visually-rich supporting material. Texts like Cairns' speak to historians and theorists, but also designers. This ability to communicate across established boundaries within and outside the discipline is a necessary skill to equip future global architects with. For example, the essay deftly moves between theorizing flow in relation to Castells' notion, historicizing the conceptual legacy of the term "circulation" in architectural discourse, providing a vivid account of several international airports, as well as insights from other disciplines. This aptitude for feeling at home in a multitude of intellectual contexts is something lacking in most of the globalizing architecture discourse. Though architects are supposed to be masters of several fields, architectural education still proceeds with the conceptual silo-ing of expertise and information. Cairns' essay challenges this tendency by asking readers to dissolve boundaries, laying bare the fact that "while architecture has always necessarily engaged with flows, historically the focus of its theory and disciplinary self-image has been stationary." This fact is doubly frustrating when one considers our buildings are more porous than ever with the advent of digital interfaces, mobile devices, and social media. Millennials intuitively understand this relationship, but are still taught with conservatively bound notions of space. Cairns' essay answers to the guiding themes of the SAGE anthology: interdisciplinarity, cross-cultural frameworks, the economy of reflection and action, and provisional and open-ended investigations. All of these themes are productive starting points for constructing future pedagogical models. Taken in sum, Easterling, Lu, and Cairns provide three generative exemplars for constructing future pedagogical models for schools of architecture.


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Figure 1: *Enduring Innocence: Global Architecture and Its Political Masquerades, Third World Modernism, SAGE Handbook of Architectural Theory.*

POTENTIALS FOR FUTURE PEDAGOGICAL MODELS

After years of elliptical debate and minimal progress on deciphering the relationship between architecture and globalization, it is time to suggest potential pedagogical models for preparing architects for this transformed spatial condition. While constructing such a framework is impossible to accomplish in the space of such a short paper—indeed it may be the collective pedagogical task of this generation— generative examples of scholarly work seem to suggest the potentials contours of what that model might look like. Much of the existing discourse

repeats global assumptions, however exemplary texts such as Easterling, Lu, and Cairns challenge ingrained ideas and suggest possible elements of a critical global pedagogy. These arguments espouse neither pro-market nor anti-market positions. The profession demands more flexible approaches beyond dualistic martyr/juggernaut conceptualizations and mediocre and effete fallback positions like Critical Regionalism. It requires an approach to diversity and "global traditions" beyond dystopian imaginings of the "Third World" and token inclusivity. It requires an interdisciplinary and cross-cultural approach that doesn't create imaginary boundaries between fields of knowledge. Duanfang Lu argues this recognition is necessary "in order to imagine an open globality based not on asymmetry and dominance but on connectivity and dialogue." Ultimately, a more dialectical understanding of globalization must be taught in order to equip designers with the critical thinking skills to maneuver through the contingency presented by McLuhan's global village. Previous models proceeded with a rigid "local versus global" view of the world that precluded understanding the actual dynamics of sociopolitical space. Further, this was a de-historicized proposition. A phrase often used in debates refers to architecture during the "Age of Globalization". When exactly did this "Age" begin? Are we still in it? Without a historical frame, it is difficult to understand how tradition and modernity are not steps in a teleological progression, but mutually constituted terms. Flows and disruptions certainly exist within the framework of globalization, though they're not necessarily always running in opposite directions. Spatially and ethically, it's unwise to assume that flows emit from centers of power, and that disruptions exist at the periphery and against the center. If there is a disruption to propose, it would be to disturb the conventional language used to describe the complex entanglement of contested spaces we call the architecture of globalization. Only then can we properly speak of actually existing built environments and imagine future forms of Globalizing Architecture.

ENDNOTES

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