ARCHITECTURE GREATER THAN ARCHITECTURE: SOCIAL ETHICS IN DESIGN

TOPIC CHAIR:

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This session will examine the notion of social ethics in design by exploring the session theme through local and global contexts. The session explores broad ideas of architecture and culture through the lenses of practice, identity and globalization. Each of the individual papers constitutes a smaller element that together looks at the various issues of social ethics in a wide net, emphasizing the interdisciplinary impact of architecture at various scales (office, community, country).

SESSION 1: SOCIAL ETHICS IN ARCHITECTURE – LOCAL AND GLOBAL CONTEXTS

SESSION MODERATORS:
ELEANOR WIENEL
University of Oklahoma

ZEULER R.M.A. LIMA
Washington University in St. Louis

SESSION PAPERS:

The Aesthetic of Inclusiveness
STANLEY RUSSELL
Miami University

Architectural Culture in the European Union
LINDSAY FALLERT
Miami University

Graves and Ghosts: Recovering the Body and Soul of an American City
MIRIAM GUSEVICH
The Catholic University of America

The Aesthetic of Inclusiveness

STANLEY RUSSELL
Miami University

The Work and Methodology of Team Zoo

At a time when globalization threatens to overwhelm local cultures and the world grows more and more homogeneous there is a sense of urgency among Architects, who value diversity, to protect, maintain and reinterpret local culture, and regional features that reinforce the genius loci. Alexander Tsonis refers to "The ubiquitous conflict in all fields, including architecture, between globalization and international intervention on the one hand and local identity and the desire for ethnic insularity, on the other."[1]

Improvements in global communications systems and increased intensity and efficiency of international trade have contributed to the globalization of architectural practices which have more often than not contributed to a loss of regional flavor in built environments worldwide. The loss of the sense of place and the distinction between places is disorienting and disheartening. Christian Norberg Shultz in his book *Genius Loci* contends that,

"Most modern buildings exist in a nowhere; they are not related to a landscape and not to a coherent urban whole but live their entire life in a kind of mathematical technological space which hardly distinguishes between up and down."[2]

Rushing in the popular direction, packaged and sold by the western media, of what is "modern" and what is "advanced" and even what is "sustainable", regions around the world have turned their backs on their own cultural heritage and ignored their physical context. Lewis Mumford wrote in the *Culture of Cities*,

"Unity by suppression is achieved by de-building organic relations and by the reduction of the complicated facts of life to a simpler system: such method is ingrained in all the generalizing processes."[3]

There is a long standing debate about the degree of regionalism that is appropriate and the method of applying it in architecture. Most agree that the answer is not a pastiche artificially applied to create the illusion of a living tradition that is in fact no longer technologically justifiable, economically viable or socially relevant. Mumford asserts in the *South in Architecture* that,

"Regionalism is not a matter of using the most available local material, or of copying some simple form of construction that our ancestors used, for want of anything better, a century or two ago. Regional forms are those which most closely meet the actual conditions of life and which most fully succeed in making a people feel at home in their environment: they do not merely utilize the soil but they reflect the current conditions of culture in the region."[4]

The inability or unwillingness of many architects and planners to understand a region well enough to do meaningful design seems to be at least partially at the root of the crisis created by globalization. The varying degree to which architects respond to the local and regional conditions of the site may also point to something lacking in architectural education. At a time when the problems of sustainable design and rapid globalization have come to the forefront of the architectural debate we cannot afford to relegate the site to a position of secondary or tertiary importance in education or practice.

Since 1971 a group of Japanese architects known as Team Zoo have been working to maintain the local identity of regions throughout Japan and stave off the negative effects of globalization. The central theme of their design method is a rigorous period of fieldwork at the beginning of each project which they call the "Hakken Teki Hoho" or method of discovery. The term was first used in 1966 when several future Team Zoo members went to the Island of Oshima with their mentor, Takamasa Yoshizaka, to do a master plan for the island, which had been destroyed by a fire. Yoshizaka and his team did exhaustive field work to uncover the essence of the island and its people. They made a point of involving the community in each step of the master plan which gave the local residents a sense of ownership in the process. This method of gathering information about the place and involving people in the design process which started at Oshima became a fundamental aspect of the work of Yoshizaka and later Team Zoo. In a 1975 article which appeared in Toshi Jutaku magazine Team Zoo member Akio Chii introduced the Hakken Teki Hoho to the architectural community in this way,

"The most common way of thinking is from the top down with little consideration for the importance of the small village and its often poor inhabitants. Our way of thinking is the opposite. We start at the level of the small village and the average man and go to the immediate surroundings, the city, the country and the world. We search for the world that was hidden until now and the world that is not yet here always focusing on the relationship to and impact on the people. We do not attempt to change the world but to understand the world that we are a part of... It would be arbitrary to measure an unknown world with our own measuring device. We must first walk the area, look very closely, listen carefully and clear our hearts so that we can see things as they are."[5]

In 1971 the students of professor Yoshizaka who had assisted with the Oshima project started their own firmwhich they named "Team Zo" and the Hakken Teki Hoho was a central part of their design process. Team Zoo founding member Tsutomu Shigemura in a 1980 symposium held in Delft explained the firm's methodology in this way,

"When we design, be it a house or a city, the site is of course not a white paper, so every designer attaches at least some importance to it. But we consider it to be more than a condition or a limitation; we see 'hidden resources' in the site or situation in the sense that most of the answer for the problem or at least the seed of the solution is hidden there."[6]

At a time when the homogenizing effects of modern architecture and globalization in Japan were being fueled by a booming industrial economy the work of Team Zoo was a charming and often humorous idiosyncratic breath of fresh air. Each building was an expression of the region in which it was built with as much warmth personality and exuberance as the people they were built for. The flat roof plains, smooth white walls, bare concrete, and glass walls of the international style were nowhere to be found. Instead, Team Zoo buildings and landscapes featured an architectural vocabulary derived from the "hidden resources" of the site. In the words of Patrice Goulet "Zoo does not find banality in this world, but on the contrary a richness that has to be helped to reveal itself and blossom."[7] The key to finding the "hidden resources" is intensive fieldwork. In Shigemura's words,

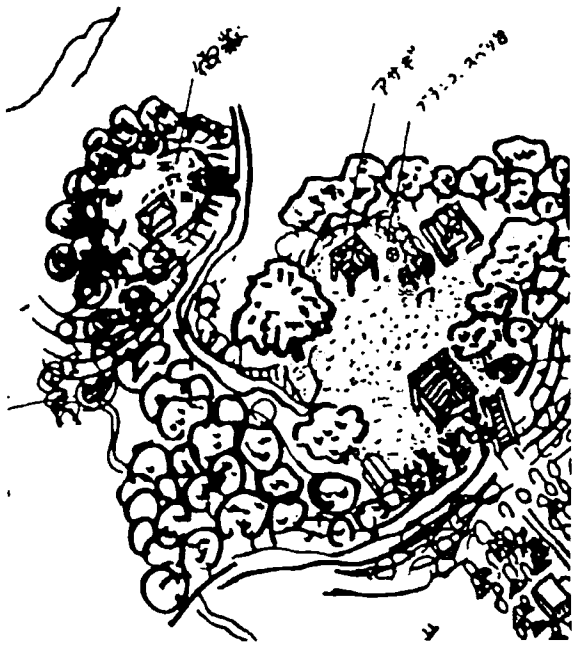

Figure 1. Sketch of indigeonous Okinawan village structure.

"We think that fieldwork is very important to discover something that could be one of the defining elements, comparable to distinguishing something like the sounds of different musicians. Through fieldwork we can discover many things to be included in the future structure of a space. This structure may sometimes be very clear, exist in reality and be plain to view, but sometimes it is to be found in the minds of the people who live near the site. This psychological structure might appear in some modest physical form somewhere or might appear in the behavior or the customs of the inhabitants... Local features are another important aspect to be looked for. Of course, in Japan as well as elsewhere, regional characteristics stemming from the feudal age are marked, not only in the country but also in the largest city in the world where we still find the distinctive coloration and features of each district. And though this may be as true for other metropolises in the world, in the sense that even the smallest street corner is holding its identity, most of the time we tend to ignore it." [8]

Team Zoo received their first commission in 1971 on the main island of Okinawa and from that time on became very involved in Okinawan planning and politics. Okinawa has a complex cultural heritage with distinct Chinese, Polynesian, Japanese and American influences. At that time it was being returned to Japan after a long American occupation and the Japanese Government had plans to develop the island as a resort. Recalling his early visits to Okinawa Kinya Maruyama of Team Zoo wrote,

"We began going to Okinawa to work in 1971 during the Vietnam War. Since that time Okinawa was returned to Japan and I have seen many changes happen while designing and sketching there. The wing of the B-52, the traditional Okinawa tombs and the fences that go on forever made a lasting impression on me. My image of Okinawa is a place always divided into parts."[9]

Through their work the members of Team Zoo developed an appreciation for the indigenous culture of Okinawa and it's traditional village structure and natural systems. When asked by the local government to do a master plan in anticipation of an upcoming world Exposition, Team Zoo rejected the suggestion that they plan a resort area. At the risk of jeopardizing

Figure 2. Kinya Maruyama's image sketch of Okinawa.

any future commissions on the Island, Team Zoo proposed that the resort approach be scrapped in favor of a scheme that was sensitive to the island's natural order and small village communities. According to Team Zoo member Koichi Otake,

"We felt that because we were outsiders we should state our honest opinion and if it is not accepted we can just return to Tokyo. As outsiders with the freedom to speak frankly we should be the voice of the people."[10]

Their proposal was refused and they returned in disappointment to Tokyo thinking that they had lost all hope of getting any further work on Okinawa. Shortly after however they received another call from the Nakijin area of Okinawa to do a similar type of regional plan. Nakijin was interested in an environmentally focused plan that would respect the culture and traditions of the residents. The Hakken Teki Hoho was an essential tool for discovering and documenting the assets of the area. In Kinya Maruyama's words,

"We would spend each day talking to local people and looking for and sketching new discoveries in the man made and natural environment. These could be the design of a window or door, roof shapes, fabric patterns, plant and animal types, food and any other distinctive aspect of the environment or people's lifestyle. We were looking for relationships between climate, lifestyle, pattern and building form. At the end of the day we would get together and share our sketches, stories and ideas."[11]

To get the local people's feedback Team Zoo formed a village-planning group of thirty members consisting of laborers, farmers, shop people, teachers etc. to discuss the master plan of Nakijin. At the end of the master planning stage the group decided that a

community center should be the first step towards revitalizing the community and they asked Team Zoo and their partner office Atelier mobile to do the design. The first challenge Team Zoo faced was in dealing with people's preconceptions about community center design. Koichi Otake said,

"We knew from the beginning that the ubiquitous community center design seen all over Japan was the wrong direction. These reinforced concrete buildings with flat roofs, that soak up the heat of the sun, aluminum sash and air conditioned interior spaces had no relationship to the Okinawa climate or culture. However Japanese people are accustomed to seeing this type of building and if we had chosen to do it no one would have questioned the decision or complained."[12]

They looked instead to the local village structure, the traditional architecture, and the climate for inspiration. Because Nakijin is near the ocean and the sea breezes are consistent and dependable they decided that the building should respond to the Okinawa climate without the use of mechanical ventilation or air conditioning. Through the Hakken-teki hoho Team Zoo arrived at three concepts for the design of the Nakijin community center. First ,they adopted the planning concept of the traditional Okinawan farmhouse which typically had a large overhanging roof to provide shade and protection from rain. The roof was tile and very heavy so many posts were necessary to support it. The living area was divided into distinctly separate sections with outdoor circulation space between and around the entire perimeter. Second, they determined to make the outside skin of the building like a filter to block direct sun and wind. As Koichi Otake said, "The wind shouldn't penetrate straight through the building but should mingle with the people on the way through." Third, in previous generations, community centers had been modeled after the folk house and were built with a technology familiar to the people so that they could participate in the construction of the building. Through conversations with local people and observation of their communities it became clear that through participation in the construction process people acquire a sense of ownership of the building and stronger sense of community.

The result is a 1455m^2 building with only 716 m^2 of enclosed space and 739 m^2 of outdoor space covered by the roof. In the sub-tropical climate of Okinawa this is a very economical strategy as many of the daily activities can be held outside under the shade of the roof. The wind is filtered through a grid of concrete block pillars which allow the cool sea breezes in but protect the building against strong typhoon winds. The roof is covered with a layer of flowering vines growing through a trellis over a sloping concrete slab. The vegetation blocks the direct rays of the sun and keeps the interior cool.

Although people from the community could not participate in building the main structure made of masonry and concrete, they were able to help with detail work and many people made mosaics on the floors and walls out of shells. In addition, for the last fifteen years Kinya Maruyama has made a tradition of participation at Nakijin by holding workshops for people all over Okinawa to maintain the roof trellis and expand the shell mosaics.

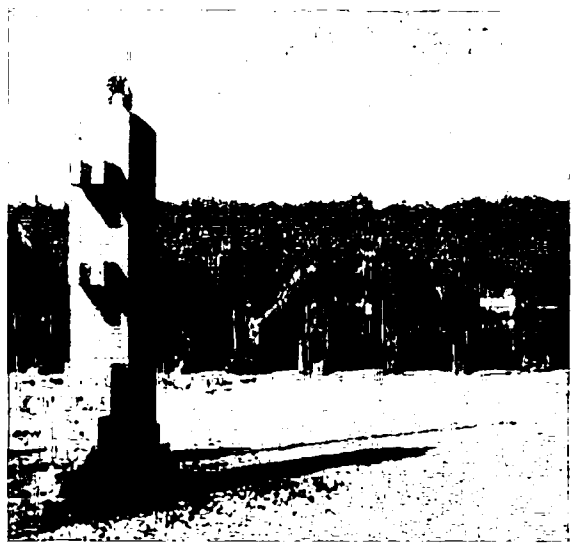

Figure 3. Nakijin Community Center

The Nakijin community center is covered with vegetation year round. The roof recedes visually into the surrounding foliage and only the red pillars are visible. The pillars are both a definer and protector of the community spaces they surround. Their bright red color dramatically declares the autonomy of the village of Nakijin on an island divided by history and politics. In 1975, the same year that the Nakijin Community center was

finished, The Hakkenteki Hoho was published for the first time in Toshi Jutaku magazine.

In 1979 the original members of Team Zoo split into three separate offices and became known as Team Zoo. By that time many of the members had become teachers and the word of the Hakkenteki Hoho was spreading through the schools. I was fortunate to be one of their students and was so impressed by the optimism and enthusiasm of Team Zoo that I went to Japan in 1986 to work for them and learn more about their design methodology.

In 1988, when I was working at Team Zoo, we were approached by the historic town of Izushi to enter a competition for the design of a new elementary school. Izushi is a town very proud of its heritage with an historic townscape and an abundance of talented craftspeople accustomed to working with wood. Our fieldwork took us to the old town and the existing wood frame school that had been used for the last sixty years. In order to observe how students used the existing school we were allowed to install cameras in and around the school and obtain valuable information about the usage of various spaces. We carefully placed tatami mats in the classrooms in several different configurations and watched how the students used the space. We also conducted interviews with graduates of the old elementary school to find out what they remembered most about the building. We found that many people had memories associated with certain kinds of activities like daily chores or special events held in classrooms. Many remembered soft textures, and certain objects. Another survey of students and residents revealed how the school grounds were used by students during school hours and by residents of the town in the evening and on holidays. We put all of our findings into tables and used them as tools in our meetings with the school administrators and faculty. The diversity of the program called for a building that was equally diverse and heterogeneous. In a lecture given in Seoul, Korea in 2003 Tsutomu Shigemura made a sharp distinction between the Team Zoo approach and an "esthetic of homogeneity" which industrialism and globalization have brought to the world.

"The esthetic of homogeneity is one of industrialism. Here surfaces are shiny and cold and very different from living things and the materials in nature. As we were evaluating the implied value of industrialization, we seem to have accepted the aesthetics of homogeneity while factory chimneys and noisy car exhausts polluted our air. We will live in a more beautiful world when we have an aesthetic based on life rather than industry. Where everything is interrelated and interdependent, all things make a harmonious complexity and unity. This is the aesthetic of generosity, inclusiveness and coexistence." [13]

We designed Izushi Elementary School as a continuation of the historic townscape. The school is planned like a small village with buildings ranging in scale from the size of a house to the size of a temple. Making a complex of smaller buildings also meant that local carpenters could do the work at a scale that they were accustomed to. This was not only good for the local economy but also gave local people a greater sense of involvement and ownership of the project. Based on our research, we wanted the school to be special and memorable for the students so we created several distinct objects and a variety of textures and colors. Students were asked to participate in the process by painting tiles that were later embedded in the walls. We also wanted to accommodate the faculty's desire to use nature as a teaching tool so we wrapped the building around several different scale outdoor spaces and created many opportunities for outdoor learning and experience. After a visit to Izushi Elementary School Lucien Kroll wrote,

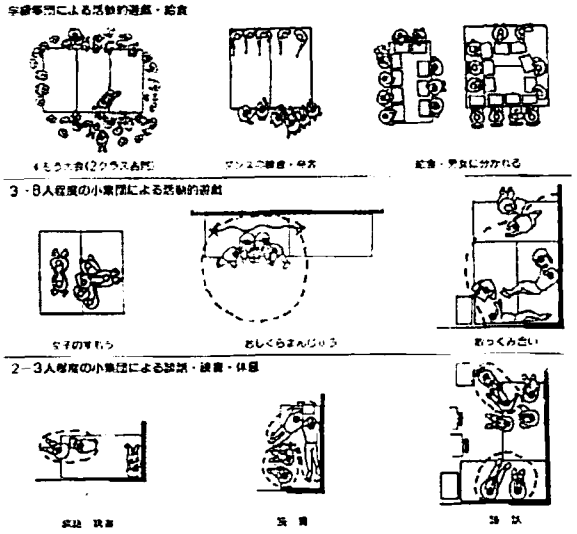

Figure 4. Tatami usage studies for Izushi Elementary School

"This approach takes the geography of the site and the people's lifestyle into account and provides for them in the design. The site has no distinct boundaries and the building has no conflict with its surroundings. Vegetation flows through the site and surrounds the building. A building with a complex program housing diverse activities wants to be complex and this building fits that need. The interior seems to have evolved organically according to the way the space is used which gives the building character."[14]

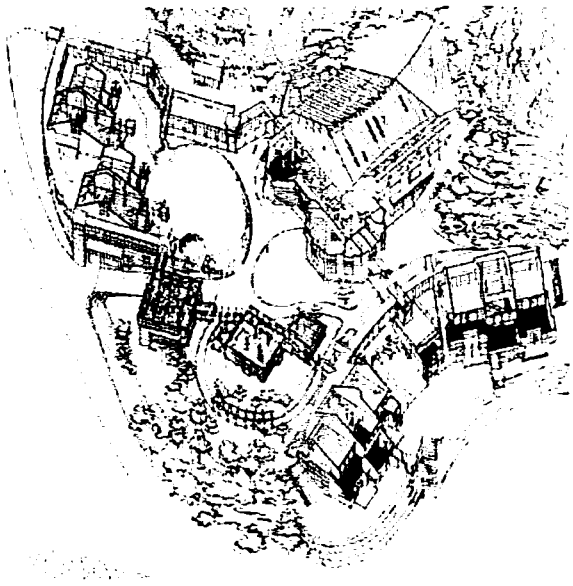

Figure 5. Izushi Elementary School Axonometric

Although the teachers liked their old traditional style school with separate classrooms, the building also placed limitations on them and made certain innovative teaching approaches difficult. They were ready to try a more open configuration as long as it respected the diverse needs of the different grade levels. As a result of meetings with the teachers and research into many different schools in Japan and abroad we arrived at an organization specially tailored to the faculty and student needs. Shigemura described the unique Classroom layout in this way,

"We developed an interrelationship of teaching spaces that is neither open cluster nor closed like traditional classrooms. The arrangement, termed "multi-cove-open-cluster", consists of interlinked semi-open areas. Pupils are encouraged to associate closely with particular parts and consider it "their own space." The coves are often small but have an educational purpose where the pupils can associate the tatami floored coves with home and hence their own private space." [15]

Conclusion

The current debate over the affects of globalization on cultural and regional diversity in the world raises many questions about the responsibilities of the architect and the education of architects. Adopting a critical attitude towards each project in relation to its context and users is fundamental to creating architecture that is reflective of its specific situation. Liane Lefaivre emphasized our current crisis in this way,

"As we move into the unknown territories of the twenty first century, the unresolved conflict between globalization and diversity and the unanswered question of choosing between international intervention and identity are increasingly leading to crises as vital as the threat of a nuclear catastrophe in the middle of the last century." [16]

Professionals must go beyond the standard practice of doing two dimensional site analysis and implement a "method of discovery" that delves more deeply into the historical, physical, and cultural attributes of the site and its context in an experiential way. Including a method of discovery in our architectural curriculum would educate architects to design in a meaningful way that is responsive to specific local conditions.

For Team Zoo, The Hakken Teki Hoho is more than just a method of doing fieldwork and site analysis, it is a way of thinking about the world that celebrates diversity and finds beauty, wonder, significance and potential in the seemingly mundane. The attitude of those involved is as important as the logistics. This method of discovery cannot be summarized in a list, as it must be specific to each site and community. A well planned and documented Method of Discovery as modeled by Team Zoo in their work over the past thirty five years is one step Architects can take towards developing a locally focused humanistic methodology which will allow them to design more responsibly in a rapidly Homogenizing world.

"The grasp of the region as a dynamic social reality is the first step toward a constructive policy of planning, housing, and urban renewal". [17]

-Lewis Mumford

Notes

Liane Lefaivre, Alexander Tzonis, Critical regionalism [New York: Prestel 2003],pp.10

Norberg Shultz, Genius Loci [New York: Rizzoli 1980] pp.190

Lewis Mumford, The Culture of Cities [New York: HBJ 1938] pp.311

Lewis Mumford, The South in Architecture [New York: 1941] pp.

Chii Akio, "Hakkenteki Hoho," Toshi Jutaku, [August 1975]

Tsutomu Shigemura, "Method Of Discovery or Discovery of the Methods- To Recover the Myths-," Ecology and Design' Symposium held in Delft in 1980

Patrice Goulet, Team Zoo, [New York, Rizzoli, 1991] pp.25

Tsutomu Shigemura, "Method Of Discovery or Discovery of the Methods- To Recover the Myths-," Ecology and Design' Symposium held in Delft in 1980

Kenya Maruyama, "Nakijinson Chuo Kominkan,"Shinkenchiku, [November 1977]

Koichi Otake "Chiiki Mezashita Design" lecture given in Tokyo Shibuya Shinro Fukushi Kaikan. [May, 9,1979]

Kinya Maruyama, "Nakijinson Chuo Kominkan,"

Koichi Otake "Chiiki Mezashita Design"

Tsutomu Shigemura, "Sustainability and Asian Architectural Design" lecture given in Seoul, Korea in 2003

Lucien Kroll, "Ecole Elementaire KODO," Kenchiku Bunka,[August 1991] pp. 49

Tsutomu Shigemura, "Sustainability and Asian Architectural Design"

Liane Lefaivre, Alexander Tzonis, Critical regionalism pp.20

Lewis Mumford, The Culture of Cities pp.305