

INVENTIVENESS AND PERTINENCE LESSONS FROM THE SOUTHERN PART OF THE WORLD

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DEBATE

Southward

Alberto Ferlenga

The numerous changes to the scenario of contemporary architecture in recent years include a progressive “southward” movement of key centres of interest. More than a literal geographic movement, it would be more correct to speak of a transfer to the less developed, or only recently developing parts of the world.

On the one hand we find the historical “nations” of modern architecture: Europe, the United States and Japan, characterised, it would seem, by an increasingly more refined reconstruction of what defined them for decades, though for some time now without managing to truly affect, or to even understand current processes. On the other hand, from South America to Africa, from India to China, a new and interesting architecture is taking shape in those areas that manifest the most evident effects of the environmental and social phenomena characteristic of the dawn of this new millennium.

This text explores this new geography of contemporary architecture and its specific characteristics, but above all its general usefulness at a time of passage, when architects are asked to take on new responsibilities and a new awareness, capable of having an effect on the changes taking place.

Changing Architectural Perspectives – Learning from or with the Global South?

Sigi Atteneder

The paper addresses the role of architecture (education) within development and adequate pathways towards its future. It draws from almost two decades of experience in sustainable architecture and spatial development from BASEhabitat. The very concept of development, as well as the broader issue of colonialism still pose considerable question marks to this work. The paper discusses this discrepancy and offers some arguments, why and how I think working on “development” still makes sense and could even be a tool towards environments that provide the basis for a decent life for as many people as possible. I argue that a “new development” must include sustainability as one central pillar and it further must address development as a concept that concerns the whole world. We need to learn from each other, because only together we may have a chance to tackle the tremendous challenges like climate change and social erosion. In terms of architecture, joint projects between actors of the Global North and the Global South should further help us, returning architecture to its main functions. Despite taking up a critical view towards conventional development work, I argue that, if done respectfully and on equal terms, the positive aspects outweigh the negative ones.

John F.C. Turner. Translator and Innovator of Urban Readings in the Global South

Kathrin Golda-Pongratz

The name of John F.C. Turner is, since the publication of “Housing by people” and Turner’s presence at the Habitat I conference in Vancouver in 1976, intrinsically related to the self-built as a solution to the housing problem, especially in the global South. Turner’s many publications have had a significant influence on housing policies, discourses and action taking with regards to urban slums and have contributed to a paradigm change from slum eviction towards slum upgrading and urban repair worldwide. At some point, his ideas have been polemically received.

The paper traces the formation of John F.C. Turner’s theoretical and philosophical approach towards a holistic reading of place-making, regional planning and a relational concept of housing. The early encounter with the ideas of Patrick Geddes, the close collaboration with anthropologists in his Peruvian years and the exchange with Charles Abrams at the MIT played a crucial role in the construction of his ideas. Turner, now in his nineties, has concentrated his efforts on explaining and interpreting tools for building community and the universal principles for successful adaptation.

Studying Architecture in Talca

Juan Román

In 2004, the Escuela de Arquitectura della Universidad de Talca in Chile made the decision that, to obtain a degree in architecture, a student’s graduate thesis would no longer be a project drawing, but a built work. This meant that students were to conceive, design, manage, raise funds and build a public project. In this manner, student work would develop both inside and outside the university, in both an academic and professional environment. The intention was to create small works of architecture, like *parador*, *belvederes*, squares or community centres, all inserted within a traditionally rural context, with the result that these projects would be inserted within a territory of farmers and their families. Small works of architecture built using local materials. To ensure that students are able to successfully complete their graduate projects, education begins with the first year course in the *Taller de la Materia* and continues years after year in the *Taller de Agosto*. A drawn graduate project costs students roughly 1,000 euros; in Chile, in particular in the Valle Central, this is enough to build 10 m² of something, somewhere.

A Different Idea Out of Africa

Maria Argenti

Architectural culture suffers from a deficit in its comprehension of, and relationship with, the Africa. On the one hand it fails to speak of, and on the other to listen to it; on the one hand it trivialises Africa in an idealised and reticent read-

ing, on the other its risks underestimating its cultural vivacity and social potentialities; on the one hand it neglects its vulnerabilities, on the other it fails to comprehend Africa's strength.

Yet Africa forces us to ask questions about the relationship between what we are and what we will be; on the role of the city; on overpopulation or the rebirth of agricultural areas; on the possibility to combine development with sustainability; on the relationship between place and community, between roots and education. Failing to answer these questions means falling short of a historical task.

From Africa, in relation with Africa, we can develop a different idea related to new technologies, which do not necessarily imply a cultural homologation or the expansion of the divide between "high tech" and "low tech." At best it would require a diverse culture, capable of integrating the universal and the specific, with respect to traditions and the digital environment.

This is why it is important to analyse the participatory processes that graft real architecture onto social dynamics, using the materials of local constructions.

This may be the time of a "Reverse Innovation," capable of changing the paradigms of progress; the time for imagining a new model, founded on a diverse awareness, on overcoming the philosophy of waste and accumulation, on the recovery of internal areas in relation with the urbanised world. Above all, it is the time to rediscover the ethical root of architecture, of the duty to relate to the environment, the earth and populations in all of their complexity. Through the experiences and lessons of Christian Benimana, David Adjaye, Kunlé Adeyemi, Lesley Lokko, Diébédo Francis Kéré, Driss Kettani, Mariam Kamara, Anna Heringer.

About the Turkana Houses

Shigeru Ban, Philippe Monteil

The Turkana Houses pilot project was born in 2017 from a collaboration between UN-Habitat and the Voluntary Architects' Network (VAN). In 2019, two years later, fourteen houses had been constructed for the new settlement of Kalobeyei (Turkana, Kenya). They were built for both refugees and the nomadic community of Turkana. This paper describes part of this experience in Kenya, examining some of the choices made and the "perpetual construction" carried out by residents: the continuous and slow process of modifying, expanding, and transforming the work of the architect.

This experience, broadly described in the book *Turkana Houses*, fragments of which are presented in this text, represents the encounter between the architect, refugees and the Turkana people, united by the act of building. The homes were thus the fruit of a study of the local culture of the Turkana and nearby South Sudan; they are the expression of the mediation between lessons learned and the possibilities offered by our contemporary era. Finally, the project is the result of the work of an *équipe*, for having involved the community in its construction.

Bangladesh Rising: An Architecture for the Delta

Kazi Khaleed Ashraf

Bangladesh played a critical role in the history of mid modern architecture. The ethos and methods of "tropical

architecture" evolved from the earlier development of the bungalow type from the rural bangla hut. Louis Kahn's modulation of the land-water terrain in his parliamentary complex at Dhaka was prescient of a new landscape imaginary. If both tendencies are ultimately environmental responses, a more urgent challenge awaits architects in Bangladesh who work in the most dynamic delta of the world. The rising architecture of Bangladesh exhibits thoughtful and sensitive innovations.

Homegrown Cities. Sensible Urban Transformation by Utilising Rural Systems

Rajeev Kathpalia

In this paper we have presented a wide range of possible strategies to re-use and adapt existing rural systems into fully functional urban system. These strategies have been informed by our understanding of the city as a system of overlapping and intersecting cycles of human and natural life. Our experience in urban planning has led us to believe that the current mode of urban development of Indian cities is overly focussed on short term technological solutions, while longer cycles involving climate, landscape and urban form are not adequately taken into consideration. Our approach to planning as exemplified by the projects in Ahmedabad aims to go beyond a mainstream understanding of urban planning to form the idea of Homegrown Cities. This approach can be summarised as an effort to enhance the potential of the natural landscape by integrating new urban facilities and infrastructure into existing rural systems.

RESEARCHES

Practicing Architecture to Complete the City

Elisa Silva

Enlace Arquitectura's practice in Caracas Venezuela has sought to provoke new understandings of the city through mapping, public space making and urban activities that encourage a wide audience to question the preconceptions and prejudices they have acquired through generations of disengagement and denial. The intention is to incite a process of discovery and readjustment that allows people to weave and grow a more complete and complex notion of their city.

Ultimately such processes may successfully re-signify the urban constituencies deemed lesser or *other*, so deeply engrained in the built environment and may provide ideas and courage for others to tackle the spatial inequalities that affect cities and their citizens everywhere.

Children's Village in Canuanã: a Dialogue Between Nature, Culture and Imagination

Fabio Cutroni

The works by Brazilian architects Gustavo Utrabo and Pedro Duschenes – mostly those projects related to the admirable philanthropic activity held by Bradesco

Foundation – stand out for their ability to listen, to dialogue, even to empathize with the nature and culture of places; an ability based on a deep respect for the environmental and anthropological local values.

This participative approach, learned from the collaboration with Marcelo Rosenbaum and Adriana Benguela, intends to promote conscious transformations, shared with the rural communities involved, also aimed at increasing their self-esteem, their autonomy – so their freedom – starting a process of emancipation focused on the recovery, development, re-appropriation of ancestral knowledges, traditions and skills, preserved and empirically handed down from the older generations. In particular, the new housings designed for the hundreds of children who attend Canuanã school-village are the result of a foray into the mixed culture of Javaé ethnic group, still the guardian of precious habits, rites and practices, expression of a perfect integration with the untouched and exuberant nature of Rio Javaés valley, but also with a centuries-old custom with the tropical climate, its torrential rains, its extreme temperatures. This project goes far beyond the specific conditions it wants to give a local and immediate response; it assumes the symbolic and universal value of a timeless architecture, capable of sublimating, through the “art of building,” the essential needs of man.

Toba Qom Culture House, Paraguay

Luis Godoy Bonini, María Liz Gulino

Native villages in Paraguay have been under attack for some decades now, as they are inhabited by the most neglected part of the population. The majority of these people live in extreme poverty and illiteracy, with almost no opportunities. Each day they are forced to abandon their identity, their culture and the wellbeing forged by their ancestors living in the forests, in search of subsistence.

This investigation, architectural proposal and construction of the Village Toba Qom in the city of Villa del Rosario, Paraguay, focuses on the opportunity to generate a whole and participative collaboration for the diagnosis, co-design and co-construction of an infrastructure that serves as shelter that protects the culture of Toba Qom, San Pedro.

With this example by Estudio OCA the intention is to offer a more tangible methodology, reflections and results of a process considered first and foremost human and which represents a searching for the most delicate approach to achieving a partnership that will allow us collaborate and transform part of their reality, moving toward the future the desired by the community. Through architecture, thoroughness and participation we assume the role of enhancers of ideas, agreements, and projects later converted into a material/special reality.

An Architecture of Vulnerability

Felix Holland

Whether working as an architect in a developing economy is a charitable act or simply a fascinating design challenge is very much depending on the mindset of the

individual. Whereas it can be argued that a contextual design philosophy works anywhere in the world – asking for a sensitive, listening posture that embeds architecture into place and culture –, the successful implementation of projects does indeed require an approach that is tailored to the specific character of each location and economy.

Over the years, Felix Holland has experimented with various forms of construction procurement, from formal general contractor arrangements, to the architect as master builder, to participatory self-build processes. This led to a heightened awareness that the process of designing and constructing – the How – can be as significant as its physical outcome – the What. A meaningful creative pathway, location-specific and participatory, has the power to root a project into its place, create a sense of ownership and dignity amongst the users and, as an added bonus, widens the role of the architect from building designer to social activist.

Self-built Utopias

Francesca Sarno

The encounter/clash between Europe and Africa has intimately altered the natural balance between people and places. As we know, the colonisation has inflicted deep wounds, affecting the way in which the Africans express themselves, even in the built language.

This essay is part of a larger research, focusing on the architectural challenges for urban-rural territories in sub-Saharan Africa. Here, we focus on the relationship between tradition and innovation, form and context, memory and contamination.

Starting from reflections on the current African architectural production, the paper aims to identify codes of interpretation to disentangle the complexity of the systems that make up the sub-Saharan reality. With the help of significant examples, both traditional (the constructions of northern Cameroon) and contemporary (some works by D. F. Kéré), the text identifies some tools to contribute to the desired African rebirth. The utopian approach of the general reflection is not hidden; however, the contemporary capacity to steer forms of architectural and social renewal is underlined. Therefore, to paraphrase Cicero, *in Africa spes*.

Architectures for the School in Sub-Saharan Africa

Anna Bruna Menghini

The issue of schools in sub-Saharan African countries is of social, rather than architectural, importance; but the commitment to “good architecture” has a significant civil value and can provide a strong impetus for the development of these territories.

There is an increasing number of architects, many of whom are of African origin, who are tackling the meaning and role of the “school” in the most marginal contexts and in emergency situations, setting themselves the goal of creating “architecture” for the growth of individuals and to represent communities, as well as structures to meet immediate needs, taking into account local specificities.

In particular, Francis Kéré is now known internationally for his pioneering approach – utopian and pragmatic

at the same time – to sustainable construction in territories with limited economic capabilities, making the most of local resources and the potential of communities. The Burkinabe architect approaches his projects in relation to essential needs (shelter, shade, ventilation) and economic and material constraints (budget, constructive feasibility, availability of labour and raw materials).

Design Beyond Building. The Meaning of Practicing Architecture for Foreign Architects in Rwanda

Alice Tasca

An architecture project that wants to reach a local community and empower it through its design has to act as an ecosystem balancing the relationship between the users and their surroundings. The design goes beyond the building. The process is as important as the architectural design if you want to increase its chances to be successful.

By definition an ecosystem is a system of interconnecting and interacting parts. Through the design process, these parts have to interact at different scales and all the stakeholders must harmonize and share the same vision.

ASA has been working on socially active architectural projects since 2012 and has collected a series of experiences in education, sanitation and health facilities design. An hands on approach and researching by design have been the main architectural tools in ASA's learning path: balancing each project's components to design its empowerment strategy. Through a selection of three projects, we will try to demonstrate how community empowerment can be achieved only when the design process doesn't end at building inauguration, but starts from a design insight and continues well beyond the moment the keys are handed over to the new owner.

Housing Innovation and the Global Foreign Aid Agenda in Addis Ababa (1964-1993)

Nelson Mota, Brook Teklehaimanot Haile-selassie

Since the Bretton Woods agreement of 1944, housing has often been part of the foreign aid agenda of international agencies and non-governmental organisations. Housing concepts included in the development aid "packages" were often used to introduce new political ideas and economic paradigms that would affect dramatically the livelihoods of the society at large, an of urban communities in particular. During the cold-war period, this phenomenon was particularly striking. Addis Ababa is a case in point. In this article, we review three cases of housing settlements built in Addis Ababa from the mid-1960s to the early 1990s, which were developed under the auspices of the foreign aid agenda. Spanning two com-

pletely different political systems, from the last decade of the rule of emperor Haileselassie I to the whole duration of the Derg regime, this article discusses the complex balance between individual homeownership and collective welfare as central aspects of housing programs and housing design that aimed at emancipating communities of urban poor in Addis Ababa.

Building with Earth: Sharanam Center for Rural Development

Alessandro Lanzetta

In marginal areas of the world, is an unavoidable necessity to build a public work through participatory processes, unskilled workforce, traditional technologies, and materials. The Sharanam Centre for Rural Development (2016), designed by Jateen Lad for the N.G.O. SARVAM in southeast India, is a complex built by residents using rudimentary tools and local materials, yet it also recalls some of the research of the architects of the 1960s. Is a work that stands as a model for identity architecture, useful for promoting socio-economic development and ecologically sustainable: in fact, it was largely built with the earth from its own plot, flattened into bricks of high quality, durability, and minimal maintenance.

The complex is made up of a large open multifunctional volume with a vaulted roof, surrounded by small service buildings intermingled with gardens and open spaces that integrate it with the rural context. In short, it is a project that has restored a degraded landscape, recreated a liveable habitat, offered social services, and created skilled workers who are proud of their work and confident about the future.

Beyond the Bare Necessities

Pooja Khairnar

Man has indulged in building comfortable environments around himself for thousands of years. Over time man has changed his surroundings without superseding but instead adapting to previous conditions. Here originality was a notion; a certain amount of content was new and the rest borrowed. Modern man has the choice to build either by defying or obeying context, acknowledging that this is to be the context for future development.

This article strives to provide a retrospective on the way we look at things around us, as well as ourselves. It triggers the ordinary way of drawing inferences through observing not only buildings, but also the factors that influence and inspire them. Though advancing theory is a critical objective achieved by many, it becomes further essential to strive to achieve the same in practice. This article also describes a project in which the parameters explained are narrated in progression.