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Interrogating Difference: Postcolonial Perspectives in Architecture and Urbanism

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INTRODUCTION

Postcolonial perspectives in architecture and urbanism offer ways of thinking about built form and space as cultural landscapes that are at once globally interconnected and precisely situated in space and time. With intellectual roots in the struggles against Western European colonization of Asia and Africa in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, much of the scholarship has focused on the global South that has been disdained or marginalized in received literature. Postcolonial thought questions the dominance of universalizing paradigms and simplistic categorizations in conventional scholarship in architecture and urbanism focused on Western Europe and North America. Dichotomies such as those between West and non-West, traditional and modern, have persisted as rigid oppositions that deny both the interdependence and the inequalities in the relationship. Postcolonial perspectives challenge the notion of a universal modernism that privileges those in positions of power and authority, legitimating their right to define fundamental values, policies, operations, and identities. They acknowledge instead the multiple dimensions of subordinate experiences. In so doing, postcolonial perspectives particularize universal narratives and globalize narrowly parochial ones.

Postcolonial scholarship began in the 1950s as a fiercely political opposition to colonial rule: giving voice to the oppressed, while exposing the violence and brutality of those in power. Scathing indictments against oppression critiqued the complex and insidious ways in which colonialism operated and the corrosive impacts it had on people and their landscapes – producing a condition that the French anthropologist, Georges Balandier spoke of as 'the Colonial Situation' (1966 [1955]). Although a crude and violent assertion of control over passive subjects has been all too prevalent in colonial circumstances, postcolonial scholars have recognized power as a complex and all-encompassing web of relationships that operates in space to control people's behavior, relationships, and identities. As Ashis Nandy (1988 [1983]) has explained so well, the historical inequalities

and cultural domination have been such that the indigenous identity must contend with its subjectification as its 'intimate enemy.'

The intellectual discourse of postcolonial critique and affirmation extended from the social sciences to philosophy, film, and other art forms. Using the language, tools, and tropes of the colonizers to highlight experiences and perspectives other than the dominant ones, the subordinate and the marginalized spoke back to power, and in the process, decentred their discourse. Thus postcolonial thought as an intellectual perspective is not so much the result of a chronological sequence of events after colonialism as it is a way of thinking about the relationship between a dominant power and its subjects under colonialism.

Postcolonial perspectives in architecture and urbanism do not form a well-defined body of knowledge or a fixed set of stylistic tropes even today. While historical, geographical, and cultural distinctions are paramount, the influences come from a variety of disciplines as well. It is, as yet, a dynamic approach that does not have a clear or agreed upon beginning, boundary, or path. Some scholars define postcolonial studies as precisely focused on European colonization of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Others have a wider view that now includes the experiences of nations that have never been colonized, such as Turkey; the repercussions of earlier colonization in Latin America; recent imperialism such as those by the US, Japan, or the USSR; as well as the multiple effects of colonial experiences on Europe and the US. In its broadest definition, postcolonial perspectives give voice to all types and sites of struggles against hegemonic power. Its challenge is in legitimizing, enabling, and empowering alternative narratives and forms. Many critical readings about domination based on gender, race, caste, ethnic, or religious groups, could thus be subsumed under postcolonial thought.

In this chapter, I adopt a middle ground. I argue for an intellectual decolonization, an active rejection of spaces and discourses based in hegemonic dualities: a realm that is neither so broad as to include every type of critical perspective under its umbrella nor so narrow as to exclude any interpretations that do not pertain specifically to Western European colonialism. Through writing and theorizing, but equally through design and planning interventions, postcolonial theory has relocated discussions of modernity to marginalized locales and emphasized the interplay of culture and power in imagining, producing, and experiencing the built environment. This chapter considers writing within the broad realm of postcolonial perspectives as well as critical practices with similar objectives. I also include the work of scholars from a variety of fields other than architecture who have influenced thinking about built form and space. A wealth of scholarship has emerged in recent years that highlights the distinctive experiences and histories of specific regions. Given my personal experience, research, and practice, this chapter emphasizes scholarship and examples from South Asia more than other regions. It begins with a discussion of the key intellectual issues and concerns of postcolonial theory. I will then focus on four topics of critical importance: historiography and representation, nationalism and nationhood; globalization; and preservation and cultural identity. This leads to a discussion of postcolonial themes in recent design practice, seen across a broad geographical and cultural terrain. At a time when sustainability is an urgent global concern, postcolonial theory becomes especially important in giving salience to the global–local interconnections to address equity, access, and environmental resources.

KEY IDEAS AND INTELLECTUAL INFLUENCE

The first and still most admired writer in this field was the philosopher and revolutionary,

Frantz Fanon best known for his book, *The Wretched of the Earth* (2004 [1961]). Fanon, born in Martinique and educated in Paris, was a vocal critic of France's colonization of Algeria while it was still a colony. He denounced the psychopathology of colonialism and warned of possible violence in the aftermath of national independence struggles. Fanon's powerful work on race and colonialism inspired and influenced anti-colonial liberation movements for decades.

Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) was a seminal work that further shaped the landscape of postcolonial thought. His brilliant literary exegesis of learned Orientalist scholars shows how they created the very idea of the mysterious 'Orient'. They disdained all indigenous scholars as inevitably biased and parochial; bestowing interpretive authority of major historical texts to outside experts. Said contended that this axis of knowledge and power still affects every realm of modern life across the world. Along with other scholars, Said's work showed how identities were culturally constructed rather than inherent characteristics. Said thus led the way for later critical theorists to read architecture and urban spaces, both historical and contemporary, as cultural documents that could reveal hidden biases.

In Said's work, as well as in that of many other postcolonial thinkers, Michel Foucault emerged as an important theoretical influence. Foucault challenged established notions about the relationship between culture, power, and knowledge (see also Chapters 1 and 2). His 'networks of power' identified cultural practices that served to dominate in ways that went far beyond direct acts of physical aggression including architectural spaces that worked as 'machines for the control of the self'. His analysis of the all-encompassing panoptic controls of prisons and asylums as well as his notion of heterotopias as 'other' spaces that allowed people to step briefly outside the expected norms of behaviour were concepts especially important to architecture (Foucault 1977; 2008).

The 1980s saw revisionist thinking in the humanities and social sciences that included a growing coterie of non-Western intellectuals, many of whom had been trained in universities in the West. The Subaltern Studies Collective, started in the mid-1980s, marked a dramatic move into the global intellectual terrain. Speaking from and on particular landscapes of South Asia, they challenged conventional histories of colonized or subject populations with 'histories from below' that presented various non-elite populations as active agents of social and economic change.[1] Ranajit Guha, Gyan Pandey, Partha Chatterjee, Gyan Prakash, and Gayatri Spivak have been among the most prominent members of the Collective (Guha and Spivak 1988; Guha 1997). Strongly influenced by Marx and Gramsci, the work of this group has sought out the experiences of marginalized people. The significance of their work to architecture and urbanism has been twofold. First in legitimizing 'other' histories that are non-Eurocentric and making visible people and landscapes that received accounts had been blind to; and second in recognizing the subtle ways in which even the most marginalized populations actively shape and negotiate the spaces they inhabit.

Race was a central aspect of Western Europe's colonization of Asia and Africa, making racial difference an important aspect of postcolonial analysis. Focusing on questions of power and identity, scholars have probed the positive and negative self-conceptions of diverse groups within a larger and/or hostile society (Appiah and Gates 1995; Hall and du Gay 1996). Literary critics like Henry Louis Gates (2006) have pointed out the cultural prejudices inherent in literary theory, arguing that black American literature should be evaluated on the criteria of its origin rather than measured against Eurocentric literary canon. Contrary to such a view of a black cultural aesthetic has been Kwame Anthony Appiah's (2003) critique of Afrocentrism as a mirror image of Eurocentrism and equally preoccupied with ancient histories. These varied commentaries on the constructions of black culture and African-ness have had a profound impact on identity politics. For architecture and urbanism, such debates have raised questions about subjective experience and cultural relativity of aesthetics in architecture and urbanism as opposed to supposedly objective and universal measures for their evaluation.

Colonial anxieties about purity of oppositional categories such as black and white, colonizer and colonized, modern and traditional were countered by ever increasing forms of hybridity as new ideas, people, images, and capital moved around the world with greater frequency. Transnationalism and interconnectedness meant increasingly 'impure' mixtures of diverse, supposedly contradictory, even forbidden elements, or experimentation driven by the desire to find new kinds of strength and beauty. Homi Bhabha (1994) has recognized the unpredictability of hybridization, the impossibility of total control as itself a source of power. Bhabha's intricate view of hybridity and infiltration of cultural symbols, values, and practices and his emphasis on identities as heterogeneous provide an understanding of multiple, contradictory, and fluid modern identities.

The grand history of Europe had for decades been equated with the universal history of humankind and many have continued to accept accounts of a linear and universal modern originating from Western Europe and disseminating to other places. Postcolonial intellectuals have been instrumental in offering complex readings of modernity and modernism from the margins. Arjun Appadurai (1996) has been immensely influential with his work on modernity and globalization (discussed in greater detail later in this chapter). In his recent book, *Provincializing Europe* (2007), Dipesh Chakrabarty has addressed the idea of Europe not as a specific geographical region but as the mythical site of the original modern. His effort to provincialize Europe is not to reject the legacy of Enlightenment thought that he considers indispensable to a social critique of justice and equity but to de-centre the mythical Europe by looking at the many Europes from the margins.

Addressing global interconnections, local experience, and visual difference, postcolonial approaches in architecture and urbanism look far beyond form, function, and style. In depicting particular places as international and cosmopolitan as well as local and provincial, postcolonial critics do not dismiss the commonalities of modernism but have highlighted the uneasy negotiation between sameness and difference in particular locales. Postcolonial theory has informed thinking about buildings and urban space as symbolic cultural landscapes that are historically constituted, culturally constructed, political artifacts whose forms are dynamic and meanings constantly negotiated.

HISTORIOGRAPHY AND REPRESENTATION

From Vitruvius to Venturi, architectural theory has relied on a particular set of historical premises and examples that were considered universal even though they were rooted in the experiences and intellectual traditions of Western Europe and North America. This Eurocentric canon looked down on all other cultures, dismissing their architecture as static, backward, or 'decadent'.

Postcolonial thought questions the received canon of European architectural history as the *only* history of architecture and is also critical of a linear history that traces the 'progress' of architecture from primitive to modern. One genre of writing has critiqued the ways that design and policy reinforced established identities and relationships of power and also looked at interventions in the colonies. In *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism* (1991), Gwendolyn Wright has analysed design strategies in France and in three French colonies (Morocco, Indochina, and Madagascar) from the 1880s through to the 1930s. Seemingly antagonistic design strategies – historic preservation, contextual design, and a highly rationalized modernism – all served imperial goals.

Highlighting the overarching and particular histories of different colonies, she has also emphasized the significance of this imagery at home to promote tourism and public support for the colonialist project. In *An Imperial Vision* (1989), Thomas Metcalf has looked at architecture as a symbolic representation of British power in India and as an instrument for articulating cultural difference.

Another genre of postcolonial inquiry has focused on the conflicts, negotiations, and experiences of different groups of subordinate populations in response to dominant interventions to control and define identities. Historiography in this mode of inquiry has used eclectic sources to piece together narratives from the other side. For instance, my study of nineteenth century Delhi (Hosagrahar 2005) showed that Indians appropriated neoclassical elements into traditional building fronts, negotiated the limits of Haussman-ic clearances of dense urban neighborhoods, and subverted colonial building regulations to transform the city into one that was both traditional and modern. Accounts of defiance and negotiation by those in the margins destabilize the singular authority of those in power. Through form, use, and meaning, architecture and built form have contributed to imagining and constructing identities. Some scholars have critically examined the ways that those in authority have used space to define oppositional identities to reinforce their position of power. Others have explored the ways these enforced and essentialized identities have been contested and negotiated by subordinate groups.

Timothy Mitchell's *Colonising Egypt* (1988), a seminal work, critically examines Europe's encounter with the Orient, the preconceptions and perceptions on both sides. In his insightful analysis of the representation of Cairo at the World's Fair in Paris in 1889, Mitchell has argued that colonial displays affected Western perceptions of urban life, especially in the colonies, creating an artificial vantage ('the-world-as-exhibition') that combined sensual pleasures with the assurance of safety. Zeynep Çelik (1992) later accentuated the gendered aspect of these displays of the non-West that further reinforced power relations between the colonizers and the colonized.

The colonial construction of difference was premised on the purity of the opposing groups: colonizer and colonized, Orient and Occident, modern and traditional. The reality, however, was always much muddier. Some postcolonial histories have reversed this ideal of purity to look at hybrids. Anthony King (1976) initiated this approach early in his career, analyzing British cantonments in India as a hybrid 'third culture': neither entirely British nor entirely indigenous. A subsequent book, *The Bungalow* (1984) followed the development of a house form from its humble origins as rural hut in Bengal through its many colonial avatars in South and Southeast Asia to its incarnation as a 'cozy' middle-class house in the United States. This book showed architecture as a global project in which the buildings and forms that developed in one place influenced those in another, weaving as it did themes of prejudice and exoticism, visibility and invisibility into a complex narrative. Other recent studies have also regarded the seemingly dichotomous categories such as 'colonizer' and 'colonized', or 'modern' and 'traditional' as fluid and shifting, seeking out areas of hybridity, ambivalence, and crossing over of cultures. In emphasizing interconnections and infiltrations, they have highlighted the active engagement of the subordinate groups in the making of their landscapes and identities. Swati Chattopadhyay's (2005) interpretation of colonial Calcutta, for example, has offered valuable insights into the way the Bengali middle-class appropriated the forms and tropes of the colonizer to increase their own authority and status.

Against the notion of a singular Western modernity imposed on the world, scholars increasingly advocate the concept of multiple, overlapping, and incomplete modernities. This in turn precludes simplistic characterization of forms and meanings (see for instance Morton 2000). Postcolonial thought is not about a rejection of European modernism. Rather, it necessarily engages with modernist universals and the discourses of European intellectual traditions. Acknowledging these as a global heritage, postcolonial perspectives make sense of this heritage from and for the margins. Postcolonial theories have created modulated terms to describe the multiplicities of modern life and, to a lesser extent, its hierarchies. Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar (1999) speaks of 'alternative modernities,' and Gyan Prakash (1999) of 'divided modernities.' Lu in this volume (Chapter 13) underscores complex, impure interconnections with 'entangled modernities.' Such phrases challenge the received canon that puts Europe at the centre, rejecting adaptations and secondary gestures toward multiculturalism or 'global openness'.

In fact, all modernities are indigenized interpretations of an imagined ideal. This is why I titled my book *Indigenous Modernities* (Hosagrahar 2005). Rejecting the notion of an alternative to the dominant and single notion of modern, I hold that all modernities are indigenized interpretations of an imagined ideal. The concept of 'indigenous modernities' recognizes and legitimizes a multiplicity of 'other' experiences of modern life, its spatial forms and cultural expressions, as being on a par with conventional ones. And Western Europe moderns too, are localized indigenous realizations of a mythical ideal.

Postcolonial perspectives not only globalize local histories and provincialize histories masquerading as global but have also informed global comparisons. For those convinced that particular European architectural histories are *the* only histories of architecture, the canonized built forms are, by definition, complete, autonomous, and universal. In this view, the built forms of other places, especially in the colonies and ex-colonies, are dependent and place specific and hence not worthy subjects of historical inquiry. Nineteenth-century European historians presumed they were presenting a global perspective. Even today, few European or American historians pause to ask how colonial histories might have affected Western aesthetic ideals and hierarchies.

Early histories of modern architecture, notably Sigfried Giedion's *Space, Time and Architecture* (1967 [1941]) glorified a teleology that showed modernism emerging triumphant from western architectural history. Giedion gave considerable attention to the US as well as Europe, but virtually ignored non-Western cultures. Later editions, and a plethora of similar histories of modernism that soon followed, occasionally added non-Western sites designed by European and North American 'masters'. Mark Jarzombek and Vikramaditya Prakash offer a valuable counterpoint to the architectural histories of Bannister Fletcher and Giedeon in *A Global History of Architecture* (Ching et al. 2006). In order to emphasize the connections, contrasts, and influences in architectural movements throughout history, this book organizes 5000 years of architectural history on a global timeline from pre-history to the present.

Postcolonial perspectives, however, have not yet managed to dominate the teaching of architectural history, as became clear from a special series of issues of the *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* (2002–2003). The series highlighted how the primacy of European monuments and narrative of stylistic development still remains the central architectural canon almost everywhere. It was also apparent that local architectural histories and building traditions received short shrift in comparison. Sibel Bozdogan (2001), Gülsüm Baydar (1998), and I (Hosagrahar 2002) have each pointed out the Orientalist bias in the canonical histories of architecture. In recent years, 'non-Western' intellectuals teaching in architecture schools in North America and Australia (many of whose writings are discussed in this chapter) have brought postcolonial critique and transformations to bear on the teaching of grand European histories of architecture – so it is well possible that the coming years will see a serious shift in dominant teaching topics and methods.

NATIONALISM AND NATIONS

The emergence of nations in the twentieth century has been a matter of much debate among scholars (see also Chapters 11 and 12). The works of Benedict Anderson (1999 [1985]) and Partha Chatterjee (1993) have led the way. Anderson described how nations were 'imagined' into existence rather than teleologically determined by language or religion. Chatterjee has pointed out how nations were cobbled together from colonies and imagined into existence by colonizers in their efforts at empire building and later by nationalists. Military conquest and European geopolitical competition shaped national boundaries regardless of the diversity of indigenous groups they encompassed, creating among citizens fragmented loyalties between modern nations and other forms of traditional communities.

Architectural styles had historically played an instrumental role in visualizing national identities in Western Europe. For the Western European colonizers building in the colonies, the choice of style was deliberate. In addition to displaying the authority of the empire, they carefully sought to construct narratives of difference between what they saw as the enlightened colonizers and the primitive, decadent, and despotic colonized. The newly independent nations also used architecture in their search for a national identity in their own terms. They rebelled against a colonial characterization of their societies as primitive and backward, and at the same time did not want to cast themselves in the mould of the colonizers whose forms they identified with oppression. The literature suggests that the anxiety to visually express the identity of the new nation as both modern and unique in its heritage resulted in four types of responses.

First, the rise of anti-imperialist movements during the twentieth century often fuelled the idea of reclaiming (or constructing) a pristine and idealized precolonial past rejecting architectural forms associated with Western Europe and Greek and Roman classicism. For instance, in her study of modern nation building in Turkey and its complicated relationship with an Ottoman past, Sibel Bozdogan (2001) has showed how the architects such as Sedad Eldem served as key figures in the new republic responsible for creating a 'Turkish' identity that made references to a vernacular Anatolian heritage. A second response has been for the nation to portray itself as a global modern by inviting acknowledged 'masters' of modern architecture in Western Europe and North America to construct iconic symbols in the International Style such as in Chandigarh and Dacca. Vikramaditya Prakash's (2002) critical study of Le Corbusier's design of Chandigarh has explicated a newly independent India's struggle to define itself as a leader in science and technology. He has shown the ways the conflicting views and imaginations of key figures, political ideologies, and urban processes were negotiated to construct the modernist narrative of the nation and shape the seemingly global form of the city. A third response has been more fragmented. Changing nationalist agendas and narratives can lead to a diversity of architectural and urban preferences, that each mediate in a different way the construction of national identity (see for instance Kusno 2000 about Indonesia). Finally, in recent years, design interventions by high profile designers from Western Europe and North America in places that had hitherto been relegated as traditional have helped to establish their national identity as significant players in a globalized world. Architects recognized as global stars have moved 'the margins' to transform them into museums of architectural wonder or laboratories for architectural experimentation. Iconic buildings such as those by Herzog and de Meuron and Rem Koolhaas in Beijing, Norman Foster's design for the sustainable city of Masdar in Abu Dhabi, and Arup's technological and planning wonder in the eco-city of Dongtan in China are examples of such projects that have been instrumental in building new identities for these nations.

Citizenship is a concept related integrally to nationhood – loyalty and allegiance to an imagined community in return for the rights of legitimate membership. Going far beyond received notions of modern nation-states as the principal domain of citizenship, scholars have examined the complexity of citizenship and multiple allegiances in the context of transnational migration, recent trends in globalization as well as the growing importance of cities. Essays in a collection edited by James Holston, *Cities and Citizenship* (1999), have pointed to the crucial significance of the right to reside in the renegotiating of cities, democracy, and new alignments of local and global identity. The absence of citizenship or the systematic denial of it to some people significantly marginalizes them. From refugee camps and shelters of those fleeing war and ethnic persecution to the vast landscapes of slums, scholars have highlighted the urban spaces of illegitimacy, appropriation, and informality where the hegemony of their marginal identities are reproduced and contested (Roy and Al Sayyad 2004).

PRESERVATION AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

As visualizations of inherited values and histories, preservation of cultural heritage takes centre stage in discussion of identity (see also Chapter 17). Western European notions of preservation, when transported to the colonies, rationalized the assertion of power and a single linear historical account that reinforced colonial hierarchies.

Colonial officials appropriated the right to classify heritage structures and define which monuments were worthy of preservation as artistic representations of a people and their identity. The British in India glorified ancient history as part of a narrative of early glory and medieval decline justifying British imperialism that promised to guide India once again to the glory that was (Hosagrahar 2002). For the French in North Africa, preservation of the *medina* of cities like Rabat, Fez, and Tunis, frozen and timeless, juxtaposed against modernist urban improvements in the new developments outside the walled city, articulated the identity of one as a place of decadence and the other as one of progress (Beguin et al. 1983; Abu-Lughod 1980; Wright 1991; Hamadeh 1992).

For modernists seeking the comforting binary of traditional and modern, an imagined 'authenticity' is of central concern. Any signs of modernity in heritage places they dismiss as signs of 'failure', 'incompleteness', and 'in-authenticity'. Such pictorializing of heritage and tradition to give it visual appeal has often been at the cost of locals compromising their needs and even excluding residents from inhabiting and using certain parts of the city. The process of constructing exotic and picturesque heritage has, at times, falsified a place. Not only does it disallow modernization and change but it also selectively preserves or reconstructs those elements that enhance an image of the place as belonging to another epoch.

Perhaps nowhere has the process of constructing a medieval city been a more insidious and deliberate a project than in Cairo. As the authors of *Making Cairo Medieval* (Al Sayyad et al. 2005) have observed, art historians, architects, urban planners, conservationists, literary writers, and travellers together constructed an identity of the old city of Cairo as 'medieval'. The process involved selective restoration and rehabilitation to shape the city forms to fit the imagined ideal: a dual operation that simultaneously modernized and medievalized Cairo. Remaking Cairo as medieval served both the Western European powers that partially colonized Egypt as well as nationalist goals.

Tourism has been an important driver for commodifying and marketing heritage. Selectively preserving, reconstructing, and controlling activities have served to make historic settings exotic and picturesque in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, raising the question, as the collection *Consuming Tradition* (Al Sayyad 2001) does, of who decides what kind of change is acceptable in historic landscapes. Falsification and

exaggeration in pictorializing heritage places are equally prevalent in North America where Michael Sorkin (1996) has pointed out that they are comparable to theme parks for entertainment.

A discussion of heritage sites raises important questions of what gets designated as heritage, by whom, and which identities are privileged. The designation of architecturally unremarkable places as important landmarks in specific histories and communities recognizes subordinate histories. Aapravasi Ghat in Mauritius was inscribed as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 2006. It was the landing place during much of the nineteenth and early twentieth century for almost half a million indentured labourers arriving from India to work in the sugar plantations of Mauritius, or other places in the British Empire. As such, it has strong associations in the memories of the indentured labourers and their families. Transnational populations in historic cities, like North Africans in Paris, or South Asians in Leicester, prompted in part by the intertwined histories of the two regions, have necessitated the rethinking of a single authentic identity of a place to become instead an ongoing historical account.

One aspect of preservation that remains a dilemma for many cities in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, is the absence of clear distinctions between traditional built forms and informal ones. While officials intervene to preserve vernacular settlements identified as traditional; informal settlements have often been the target of clearances. Although many have observed continuities of settlement patterns between neighborhoods in historic cities and squatter settlements, the latter have been considered as urban problems and planning failures.

GLOBALIZATION

From a postcolonial perspective, globalization does not appear as a determining force that has flattened out other urban processes, but rather as a phenomenon producing flows of capital, goods, labour, and information that forcefully shape the forms of specific cities and neighbourhoods and leaves others behind, reproducing in new ways the global inequalities and dependencies of colonialism. Anthony King (1990) was one of the earliest to make connections between modernization, the continuing interdependencies between the ex-colonial powers of Western Europe and the colonies in Asia and Africa, and the formation of global cities, cultures, and spaces. King began by tracing the connections between urbanism, colonialism, and the world economy further, developing Wallerstein's theories of the world-economic system. King emphasized cultural and spatial dimensions, showing how contemporary patterns of globalization have historical roots in the nineteenth- and twentieth-century colonialism of Asia and Africa. Thus, cities like London, New York, and Tokyo have become internationalized spatially and demographically as well as economically with ethnic enclaves, transnational communities, and spaces of global culture (King 2004).

Arjun Appadurai's work (1996; 2001) has been immensely influential in the understanding of the cultural experience of modernity and globalization. Two aspects of his work have been key. First is his engagement with image, media, and representation as social practices in the global cultural processes that highlight the role of fantasy in the making of the new global order. He has alerted us to the ways that the imaginaries collapse accepted separations between subject and object, resonating with the postmodernist view of the fragmented visual experience. Second, is Appadurai's contribution, along with Carol Breckenridge and the journal, *Public Culture* they co-founded, to understanding transnationalism and public culture. Together, they have been incredibly important in bringing to the fore cultural transformations in cities through investigations of a wide range of everyday appropriations and interpretations of power and identity in the city, from the terrorist attack in Mumbai to the football clubs of Buenos Aires. Another related initiative of Appadurai, a non-profit, Partners for Urban Knowledge, Action and Research (PUKAR), has been valuable in viewing Mumbai as a conceptual base and laboratory to investigate cultural forms of globalization.[2]

Other postcolonial approaches have emphasized the broader regional and transnational dynamics that have shaped particular places. In a collection edited by Gyan Prakash and Kevin Kruse (2008), the authors, focusing on expanding urban networks, have argued that cities like Johannesburg and Vienna were shaped by the particular histories of their global engagements. Sheila Crane's essay in their collection, for instance, has interpreted the colonial and postcolonial histories of Marseilles and Algiers not as self-contained entities but as interconnected forms shaped by similar forces. Nuanced readings of corporate landscapes emerging from the new globalization have emphasized the heterogeneity within the apparently homogenous monoculture of global cityscapes. Reinhold Martin and Kadambari Baxi for instance, have focused on imaginaries in the construction of corporate towers for multinational corporations in their book, *Multi-National City* (2007).

Nineteenth- and twentieth-century colonialism resulted in global movements of people in addition to goods and ideas. South Asians in Malaysia, Singapore, the Caribbean, and the UK; and North Africans and Vietnamese in France, among others, formed immigrant and diasporic communities. The struggles of these subordinate groups to cope with environments that were sometimes hostile and segregated defined the identities of the communities and their spaces. Equally significant are critical readings of the cosmopolitan transnationalism of cities like Los Angeles (Davis 2000) or Hong Kong (Abbas 1997).

Global flows of architects, design concepts, technologies, and materials from Western Europe and North America to the countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America have resulted in new conceptualizations of globalized architectural practices where ideas and innovation are considered the purview of architectural schools and practices in Western Europe and North America, while drawings and detailing are subcontracted to specialized agencies in India and China (see Chapter 22). Jeffrey Cody's *Exporting American Architecture* (2003) has provided rich insights into architectural importation in China, looking at the global-local interactions and the technologies of production even in discussions of ordinary buildings and neighborhoods. The Harvard Design School Project on the City directed by Rem Koolhaas has explored urbanism in rapidly urbanizing metropolises as a global phenomenon with particular forms in each place including the Pearl River Delta in China (Chung et al. 2001) and Lagos, Nigeria (Koolhaas 2008).

DESIGNING FROM THE MARGINS

No predefined criteria identify postcolonial approaches in design. I see practice not merely as an enactment of theory but also as advancing postcolonial thinking in the spatial realm. Most contemporary practitioners of architecture and planning do not make any explicit references to postcolonial theory. Rather, they critique accepted premises, categories, and forms arising from specific Western European and North American experiences, and propose alternative visions, processes, or narratives of modernism. Such designers see architecture as globally constituted engaging the interconnections between 'locality' and 'globality'. They seek not simply to take forms imagined elsewhere and locate them in distant places with minor adaptations but rather to renew and enrich understandings of dominant tendencies from the margins. They challenge the principles of universal design by embracing 'otherness', place, time, issues, and cultures rather than ignoring or subordinating them to the dominant paradigms of modernism.

From the perspective of received canons of architectural history, recognizing important innovations and designers in other locales is itself a huge step. Journals such as *Mimar* have played a critical role in privileging concerns such as low-cost housing, and priorities such as materials, technologies, climate, and cultural needs different from those common in Western Europe and North America. For instance, Hasan-Uddin Khan and Sherban Cantacuzino's *Charles Correa* (1987), and Brian Taylor's *Geoffrey Bawa* (1995) have contributed both to design knowledge and to critical discussions by identifying imperatives and narratives that construct modernism other than the dominant universalist ones. The writings have helped to document and globalize the work of architects who otherwise might have been considered totally embedded within their national contexts. Looking at postcolonial efforts to design from the margins in the last two and a half decades, I see four key themes as most significant: an emphasis on the particularities of region, site, and context; in-depth knowledge of a place and people; social responsibility in design; and sustainability.

One important postcolonial approach in design is a response to the characteristics of region, site, and context arguing for an identity that was modern but particular to a place. Deeply concerned about homogenization, many architects around the world have sought design solutions that are more specific and more appropriate to their context and have contributed to richer, more localized interpretations of modernism. Some, such as Glenn Murcutt in responding to Maori architecture, have modified and developed vernacular spaces and building practices. Others, such as Ken Yeang and T.R. Hamzah, or William Lim have paid special heed to climatic conditions and investigated what modernism means in the tropics. Still others, such as Balakrishna Doshi and Charles Correa have offered approaches to housing and street design that are dynamic and progressive, drawing on careful study of historic cities in India. Their work has been especially important in recognizing housing and city building as social and economic processes as much as form-making endeavors. With professional training in Europe and North America, these architects have critically examined their positions as 'outsiders' to the communities they have designed for and attempted to educate themselves to be cultural 'insiders.'

The Aga Khan Award for Architecture has been notable for celebrating the appropriateness of contextual design (see also Chapter 34). Currently on its eleventh cycle, the award has recognized and encouraged design innovation that has addressed prevailing concerns in the Islamic world. Despite numerous criticisms, the AKAAs have influenced new generations of designers to consider contextual and cultural relevance of design rather than mimic those arising out of the culture of the metropole or replicate traditions without inquiry or improvement.

How architects gain knowledge about the place they are designing in and how well they know it is a crucial question. In contrast to colonial architecture and planning interventions, and the increasing globalization of architectural practices in recent years, some designers have largely concentrated their work on a single region and devoted themselves to responding to the central issues arising there. Laurie Baker for instance, spent over thirty-five years of his life in India developing techniques of building with bricks that were low cost, used simple technology requiring minimal training, and were climatically comfortable in a hot humid climate. A French anthropologist, Peter Dujarric drew on his studies of Senegalese traditional motifs and crafts as well as village architecture in the design of a cultural centre, the Alliance Franco-Senegalaise in Kaolack, that aimed to celebrate and represent the essence of Senegalese culture.

At once local and global, rationalizing, improving, and modifying local technologies has resulted in greater opportunities for South–South flows of knowledge. Such lateral exchanges challenge the singular authority of Western Europe and North America as the centres of innovation (see also Chapter 13). For instance, Nader Khalili (1996) an Iranian-born architect, developed a type of shelter that could be built with sandbags and barbed wire and that could be used as emergency shelter in the event of a disaster. This design for disaster housing has been successfully used in Africa.

Another postcolonial approach to design has been to consider seriously social responsibility in design, with some viewing the social process of design as important as the form of the final outcome. Challenging a dependent view of architecture as largely an artistic endeavour whose aesthetics are driven by principles derived from movements originating in Western Europe and North America, some architects have addressed the spatial and cultural needs of underprivileged communities. With an activist agenda, some design efforts have focused on marginal localities with their particular problems, and limitations as legitimate subjects of design. From the provision of shelter for victims of natural disasters to refugee housing in conflict, from improving slum environments to providing improved infrastructure, design interventions, such as those of Architecture for Humanity (2006), have aimed at improving people's lives through community design (see also Chapter 38). Eschewing the conventional role of the autocratic expert, designers of this persuasion call attention to the creative force of collaborative knowledge building and design.[3]

A postcolonial agenda in the community development projects is advanced by the emphasis on enabling, empowering, and partnering with the community so that residents become active agents of transformation rather than passive objects of improvement that only increases their dependency. Clearly such efforts have conceived architecture as socially embedded processes more than completely visualized forms. For instance, the Grameen Bank, a microfinance organization in Bangladesh, has succeeded in creating low-cost housing by entrusting impoverished rural women with group loans for rebuilding their homes.[4] Their housing project won a World Habitat award and, moreover, by recognizing the creditworthiness of a group largely considered invisible and incapable, it had helped to empower them. With the idea of inculcating pride and self-sufficiency, Gawad Kalinga has assisted thousands of slum dwellers in the Phillipines to improve their living conditions with brightly painted homes, beautiful parks and playgrounds, colourful gardens, and clean surroundings.[5]

An increasingly important dimension of social responsibility in design is enhancing sustainability. Although 'sustainability' is a term that is variously interpreted, it has generally been synonymous with green building and energy efficient technologies. Only recently have equity and diversity as complex, interconnected ambitions been at the forefront of design and planning. Postcolonial perspectives on sustainability challenge the universality of technology-dominated innovations rooted in the experiences and practices in Europe and North America. Capital-intensive infrastructural services and building technologies demand huge investments of both finance and technical know-how, further reinforcing historical dependencies and marginalities. Equally, postcolonial thought, cognizant of the turbulent influence of modernity and uneven globalization everywhere, rejects simplistic assumptions about indigenous people following timeless practices and living in harmony with nature.

Minimalist interventions to rationalize, improve, and modify simple, local technologies and processes are to be preferred above importing new systems from abroad. From the perspective of enabling self-sufficiency, a simple and low-cost technology for a scavenging-free two-pit pour-flush toilet for safe and hygienic on-site disposal is a valuable contribution without high investment in expensive underground drainage. Sulabh International has been remarkably successful in constructing such public toilets in cities all over India.[6] Collective design involving

marginalized groups has served to organize and empower them, as well as develop solutions that are likely to be sustained by them. Mumbai-based SPARC has successfully supported movements to organize slum dwellers and pavement dwellers, especially the women, to find collective solutions for affordable housing and toilet facilities.[7]

Sustainable Urbanism International's (SUI) exploration of cultural sustainability has included expanding the notion of heritage far beyond monuments to look at the intersections of nature, culture, and built environment.[8] Their integrated view of sustainability has highlighted the ways that local knowledges, building practices, and hydrological systems have been integral to a cultural landscape. Identifying such heritage has been a collaborative effort with local residents that has helped them recognize forms, practices, and skills they have lost or are fast losing, and can help generate livelihoods. Efforts to revive and conserve historic lakes and wells, a heritage-sensitive masterplan for cities to develop on a compact model based on the built forms and standards derived from historic neighborhoods, and reviving and adapting traditional technologies of earth construction for new structures all integrate heritage conservation with design, development planning, and natural resource management.[9] From the perspective that these too are valuable resources, and that each place needs to find its own version of innovative architecture, SUI's minimalist design and planning interventions have aimed to bring necessary improvements for local economic development.

CONCLUSION

Far from being isolated artistic endeavours, postcolonial thought has contributed to interpreting architecture and urban space as cultural artifacts that are symbolic landscapes constituted by layers of meanings and identities. As sites of assertion, contestation, and subversion of difference, built form and space have been instrumental in reinforcing and negotiating hierarchies and relationships. Postcolonial perspectives show the ways in which seemingly unique and narrowly particular forms and histories are situated in global interconnections; and forms and histories presumed to be universal, such as Western European modernisms, are in fact provincial and particular.

Above all, postcolonial theory is a way of thinking about knowledge and power. It has emphasized ways that knowledge about the world is generated in specific relationships between those with power and those without as a way to justify and perpetuate those conditions of domination. This chapter concludes not by summarizing the status of postcolonial theory but rather with the implications of adopting such a perspective in research and design. What future directions does postcolonial thought point to? Looking ahead, I see the repercussions in architectural thinking and design as fourfold.

First, thinking about architecture in an expanded realm acknowledges interconnections across time, space, and scales – as well as inequities. As a symbolic landscape, the significance of a single building extends far beyond its site to the community, city, and nation. Postcolonial thinking encourages the questioning of established cultural categories, disciplinary boundaries, and hierarchies of control. With the new modernities of globalization, new forms of dominance and subordination, and inclusion and exclusion, have emerged. The structures and hierarchies of colonialism have morphed into the new landscapes of globalization.

A postcolonial engagement in design has prompted designers to challenge universal paradigms of modernism. It prompts them to sully accepted binaries like modern and traditional; art and technology; craft and globalization; heritage and development; conservation and development; improvization and design; local and global; nature and built form; and expert and community.

Second, postcolonial thinking challenges with multiplicity and hybridity the tyranny of singular narratives of modernity. Rather, it encourages alternative interpretations of modernism and legitimizes other modernisms originating outside its canonized loci. Rather than expect purity and authenticity, postcolonial thought accepts hybrids. By highlighting histories, experiences, built environments, and people invisible in the canonical histories, postcolonial efforts have engaged with dominant accounts. A postcolonial agenda for design thinking involves as Gwendolyn Wright (2002) has suggested, considering the politics of space: 'Comodernities', as a way of thinking about modernism that allows for respectful dissent and plurality of trajectories rather than a continued acceptance of Western hierarchies alone. The objective of postcolonial critique has not been to reject the central narrative or to replace it with another, equally singular and authoritative history, but rather to expand, enrich, and renew it from the margins.

Third, postcolonial perspectives alert us, implicitly or explicitly, to the sources of architectural knowledge. Particular treatises, histories, and forms of Western Europe (and, more recently, North America) have become canonized as architectural knowledge. Recognizing the relationship between knowledge and power, postcolonial thought legitimizes other architectural knowledges. Giving voice to subordinate struggles against the structures of hierarchy, the legitimization of their experiences, has been an express objective. Beyond considering Western Europe's colonization of Asia and Africa, the ordinary and everyday architecture of prostitution houses and flop houses or critical studies of race, class, and gender, postcolonial perspectives influence investigation of other types of power relations using the idea of negotiating power and identity rather than assuming them to be given categories.

Finally, postcolonial inquiry in design brings to centre stage a transformative agenda for architectural and planning interventions seeing their objective as empowering and enabling the ordinary and the marginalized to reconsider their subjectivities as agents of positive change and to renegotiate their positions of relative powerlessness. Considerations of sustainability of environmental and cultural resources are central to this view.

Postcolonial perspectives espouse a transformative agenda for architecture and urbanism that enables and empowers multiplicity in the processes of material production, practices of their inhabitation, and structures of representation. The attempt to break free of colonial hierarchies includes investigating the colonial dimensions of concepts like modernism, postmodernism, tradition, heritage, and sustainability – all of which are rooted in Western European experiences of modernity. Interrogating difference demands an investigation into the origins of the conceptual frameworks and spatial categories that define the discipline. Therein lies our future – and our hope – of a more just and equitable world that demands globalizing knowledge production in architecture and planning.

NOTES

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1 The term 'subaltern' was a term used by the British to refer to junior officers in the army and literally means subordinate. The work of Eric Stokes, Eric Hobsbawm, and James Scott was also influential here.
2 See www.pukar.org.in/
3 See for instance the special issue on alternative architecture by *Journal of Architectural Education*, May 2009.
4 See www.grameen-info.org/
5 See www.gk1world.org/
6 See www.sulabhinternational.org/
7 See www.sparcindia.org/

8 See www.sustainurban.org/; www.arch.columbia.edu/labs/sustainable-urbanism directed by Jyoti Hosagrahar

9 See report, Sustainable Urbanism International. 'Site Management Plan for Sustainable Conservation and Development of Hoysala Heritage Region'. 5-volume Monograph to the Government of Karnataka, 2011.

4

Tendencies and Trajectories: Feminist Approaches in Architecture

Jane Rendell

This chapter provides an overview of shifts in the debate around feminism and architecture over the past 40 years, from the 1970s, when (arguably) feminist debate in architecture first emerged, to the 1990s, when discussions concerning the relationship between gender and space gained strength in the academy, to the contemporary moment. We will see how the key concerns raised by gender and feminist theorists are evident in a wide range of architectural texts and practices, from the analytic to the productive, the interpretative to the speculative, and from those which are clearly aligned with the feminist movement, to those which do not necessarily identify themselves as 'political' or motivated by issues concerning discrimination against women. One of the most original and radical aspects of feminist and gendered critiques of architecture has been to draw attention to the body, to reveal how architectural knowledge is embodied and how the practice of architecture is material not only in terms of its engagement with the production of artifacts but also through animate bodies and corporeal processes.

In the first part, *Tendencies*, I outline how architecture's engagement with gender difference has changed in emphasis in the past 30 years, in response to the multifarious demands of 'feminisms' and the changing place of political work in the profession and the academy. In the second part, *Trajectories*, I turn my attention to the present moment, and sketch out the terms and concepts, processes and modes of analytic enquiry and interpretation, critical and creative production, which currently feature across the work of a wide range of architectural writers and practitioners interested in feminism and gender.

TENDENCIES

The early stages of the architectural debate emerged out of the more overtly politicized discourse of feminism(s), where feminists of different persuasions took varying positions: some liberal, arguing for equal representation in architecture, others radical, calling for