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Diasporic Habitations

Locating “Asian Architecture”

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Through an analysis of the marginality of Asian architecture in the historical canon and the interdisciplinary spaces it occupies, this paper argues that scholars and students of Asia in the architectural and urban disciplines follow a nomadic existence at the periphery of broader interdisciplinary debates in the humanities and in a narrow and liminal zone on the fringes of architectural history. It asks why this condition persists despite the numbers of Asian students entering professional programmes and traces this condition to exogenous curricula, a weak research culture in Asia and a colonial configuration of knowledge both within and outside the region. In excavating the historiography that locates “Asian Architecture” within the discipline and the profession, it asks questions about its preferred methodologies, selective representations and compelling questions. This paper argues that a new generation of scholars of Asia, influenced by interdisciplinary approaches, have begun to deviate from traditional methods of architectural inquiry. What is their future and how will they dislocate received notions of an “Asian Architecture”? How will they venture beyond dependency on Western theories to formulate new and different approaches to the discipline and the profession? This paper discusses these questions in terms of agency, opportunity and environment.

Although the impact of postcolonial theory has receded in the new millennium with new focus on globalisation and its discontents, the need for an inclusive history unaligned with entrenched political-economic hierarchies remains pertinent. The environment in which we operate since the unification of Europe is increasingly postnational and yet burdened with former imperial legacies.¹ This geo-political shift has also seen the emergence of “Asian architecture” as a distinct area of research (since the 1990s). The resultant challenges for practice and pedagogy are the focus of this paper.

1. See Yasemin Soysal, *Limits of Citizenship: Migrants and Postnational Membership in Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), for an early conceptualization of the term.



Such an intellectual shift based on broad regional definitions must, firstly, denationalize architectural scholarship and secondly, circumvent rigorous border controls. Pedagogical structures (professional registration, research funding and publications) frequently service national frameworks while neo-liberal policies and opportunities are still governed by developmental hierarchies. Although the withdrawal of the Welfare State and embrace of marketisation is lauded as transnational phenomena they have significant social costs. Both the most privileged and abject subjects of globalisation travel its routes. Therefore the condition of border crossing offers a critical analytical space for deconstructing social hierarchies. Subjective positions unrestrained by national ideologies and capable of imagining broader intellectual relationships must invigilate architectural pedagogy and practice.

Architectural scholarship on Asia can be measured by its sensitivity to social inequities and exclusions, and its exposition of the political, cultural or class-interests of the profession. While this is true of all architectures, everywhere, such revelations are most urgent where social security is not guaranteed. Ignorance of these sensibilities often occurs due to the extension of colonial and imperial legacies or their translation into national agendas or class narratives. Architectural discourses in which formal, aesthetic or technological concerns are prioritised have limited social capacity. In addressing such issues, the politics of postcolonialism as it translates across globalisation discourse becomes a tool of critical inquiry. This is the socio-political context in which 'diasporic habitations' maybe framed as spatio-temporal intellectual practices.

The diaspora referenced here is broader than the constituency theorized by postcolonial scholarship, and is a product not of exoduses but of two-way mobility. In the case of Australia, proximity to and economic inter-dependence on Asia has created fluid boundaries for trans-nationalism. The world of architecture is populated by global mobilities of educators, students, professionals, expatriates, clients, investors and construction workers. Yet their routes are governed by colonial legacies which forged assimilationist national policies. Knowledge that is central or marginal to architectural studies is sorted via this prior history. Regional relationships with Asian neighbours can be cautious, exploitative, defensive or patronizing. The critical capacity of immigrant subjectivities in post-imperial metropolitan centres, theorised by Bhabha, remains valid.² If postcolonial theory is the intellectual outcome of such habitations, what kind of new theoretical space do we occupy? How can a generation of scholars who are critical

2. Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994).

of nationalist pedagogy proceed in an era of global triumphalism? How might they escape the constraints of their own aspirations and self-fashioning?

The “othering” of Asia by architectural institutions, discourses and pedagogy and its cultural objectification and essentialisation has carved an uneasy space for scholarship on Asia. The “spatial turn” advanced by key Western theorists like, David Harvey, Edward Soja, Henri Lefebvre, and Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari assume the universality of Europe and America in their geographical exclusions. Asia, despite its economic and demographic impact, is peripheral to the main global intellectual currents. Similarly, theories of architecture originating in the West translate unevenly or awkwardly into Asian contexts where empirical research dominates. Dependency on Western theories, journals, accolades, audiences and publishing houses limits intellectual scope. Asia is often objectified as an exotic commodity or as mired in underdevelopment—recreating the paradise or purgatory of colonial discourse. The geographically determined category of Asia essentialises a heterogeneous region. Normalising Asia in the historical record as a valid, equivalent space for theories and methods is an arduous and under-supported task. The visibility of Asian architecture is dependent on building a critical mass of scholarship.

Asia as Theory and Method

The proposition of repositioning Asia as a source not for empirical research but for theory and method is evident in scholarship that is arraigned quite differently across postcolonial and globalization theory. University of Sydney sociologist Raewyn Connell’s *Southern Theory* (2007) asserts the validity of diverse perspectives on sociology from the global south. Exposing how the modern discipline has been framed in relation to Euro-American modernity she reassesses the transformative value of non-Western and Indigenous theoretical perspectives.³ While dislocating this content from persistent colonial hierarchies her critique is aligned with Marxist anxieties regarding the withdrawal of the Welfare State. The proposition of a south-south discourse where Third World dependencies—the legatees of colonialism, the Commonwealth and Cold War imperialisms—might inform core disciplinary orientations recognises the political and economic rise of the Asia as having real global impact.

3. Raewyn Connell, *Southern Theory: The Global Dynamics of Knowledge in Social Science* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2007).



Former imperialists in Europe are excluded by such geographical realignments that have increasing relevance for emerging markets, although postcolonial nations like USA and Australia—global powers in the Pacific—remain on-stage. These New World colonies become the trading partners, cultural models, educators and police of the new Asia, refashioning their own imperial ambitions. Although the decline of Atlantic Empires is presaged in the aftershocks of the Global Financial Crisis, liberal democracy remains the anticipated goal.

Taiwanese Cultural theorist Kuan-Hsing Chen offers a different proposition of *Asia as Method* (2010), an effort to reintegrate Asia and give it greater political visibility through regional identification.⁴ His objective is to use this (broadly essentialist) category to deconstruct previous power-knowledge frameworks. He argues that “decolonizing,” “de-Cold War” and “de-imperializing” are part of the same historical process that must proceed together to achieve reintegration and reflexivity. He writes, “the task is for the colonizing or imperializing population to examine the conduct, motives, desires and consequences of the imperialist history that has formed their own subjectivity.”⁵ Chen uses the modern period in East Asia as an intellectual starting point, and moves beyond national to regional histories. He uses postcolonial theories to challenge previous and continuing legacies of globalization.

4. Kuan-Hsing Cheng, *Asia as Method: Towards Deimperialization* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

5. Cheng, *Asia as Method*, 4.

Deconstructing Architectural Pedagogy

What bearing do these transformative intellectual forces in the humanities fields have on our study of architecture? Architecture’s traditional Euro-American focus has long-shaped core curricula in countries, including Asia, relegating local place-based knowledge to electives or sections. This artificial division of East and West, or the West and Non-West (as it was categorized during the 1950s and the 1980s, respectively), produces a privileged and frequently exclusive discourse based on authorship, elite production and corporate globalisation. These priorities reflect professional agendas. The challenge for designers in Asia is to adapt an exogenous education devised for a post-industrial urban economy to hybrid and uneven socio-economic conditions. Ignorance of these perpetuates colonial class-based myopias and minimises architecture’s impact.

Asia is purging its postcolonial legacies to embrace unprecedented levels of globalization. This calls for a different kind of architectural discourse. A generation of scholars writing since the 1990s, alert us to the challenges of self-determination. Within the rubric of de-colonising or de-imperialising historical knowledge they scrutinise the introduction of modernity—enlightenment rationalism, urban planning and democratic political systems via an essentially hierarchical and racist European colonial regime.⁶

6. See Anoma Pieris, "South and Southeast Asia: The Postcolonial Legacy," *Fabrications*, 19, no. 2, "About Asia" (2010): 6-33.

7. Anthony D. King, *Colonial Urban Development: Culture, Social Power, and Environment* (London; Boston: Routledge & Paul, 1976).

8. See Peter Scriver, "Constructing Colonial and Contemporary South Asia: A View from Down Under," *Fabrications*, 19, no. 2 "About Asia," (April 2010): 34-57.

9. Abidin Kusno, *Behind the Postcolonial: Architecture, Urban Space, and Political Cultures in Indonesia* (London: Routledge, 2000); Jyoti Hosagrahar, *Indigenous Modernities: Negotiating Architecture and Urbanism* (London; New York: Routledge, 2005); Peter Scriver and Vikramaditya Prakash, *Colonial Modernities: Building, Dwelling and Architecture in British India and Ceylon* (London: Routledge, 2007).

10. Greig Crysler, Stephen Cairns, Hilde Heynen, eds. *SAGE Handbook of Architectural Theory* (London: SAGE 2012).

11. Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

12. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism, "Race," Writing, and Critical Inquiry, 12, no. 1 (Autumn, 1985), 243-261.

Influenced by the incisive social critiques of postcolonial studies, and following Anthony D. King's exposition of the power dynamics of colonial urbanism, this scholarship demonstrates that colonial architecture was never politically innocent.⁷ Producing the colonial environment involved the complicity of numerous European and indigenous actors who in turn shaped resistant forces and ideologies. Their delineation of these previous, power-knowledge dialectics pose a different kind of interdisciplinary inquiry disillusioning us of architecture's apolitical techno-aesthetic import. The profession's abstraction of formal and philosophical agendas that insulate its aesthetic from social compromise is brought into question. This scholarship remains pertinent across nationalist and Cold War architectures and new global urban environments where appropriate ethical practices are yet to be broached. We might identify two types of scholarship that are indicative of this shift, of scholars from Asia or with local language skills, and collaborations between Asian and non-Asian scholars.⁸ Authors in the prestigious Routledge, Architect series, edited by Anthony King and Thomas Markus, such as Jyoti Hosagrahar, Abidin Kusno and Peter Scriver and Vikramaditya Prakash serve as examples.⁹

The first real effort at integrating Asian material in an inclusive pedagogical canon is found in the *SAGE Handbook of Architectural Theory* (2012).¹⁰ Editors Crysler, Cairns and Heynen offer new and innovative frameworks around notions of "provincialising," "worlding" and "gathering." "Provincialising" which questions the universality of Euro-centric knowledge, is drawn from the work of historian Dipesh Chakrabarty.¹¹ "Worlding"—the application of imperial hierarchies to developmental categories was argued in the work of literary theorist Gayatri Spivak.¹² Both these postcolonial theorists offer critical interdisciplinary tools for deconstructing knowledge which have been adopted in the handbook. The range of authors and topics drawn from



Asia, such as Kusno “Rethinking the Nation,” Hosagrahar “Interrogating Difference,” Duanfang Lu “Entangled Modernities,” Chang Jiat-Hwee “Beyond Sustainability,” Mrinalini Rajagopalan “Preservation and Modernity,” and Vyjayanthi Rao “Slum as Theory” populate many critical gaps in previous history-theory texts.¹³ Chapter 1, “Power/Difference/Embodiment” repositions architectural production in political terms.

There are other recent publications that advance similar strategies. The *JAE* special issue on “Changing Asia,” co-edited by Kusno, Cenzatti and Findley and *Fabrications* volume 2, “About Asia” co-edited by Anoma Pieris and Paul Walker signpost intellectual currents.¹⁴ Duanfang Lu (*Third World Modernism*) and Jiat-Hwee Chang and William Lim (*Non-West Modernist Pasts*) challenge the pedagogical centrality of a Euro-American modernism.¹⁵ In contrast, the most popular sources on Asia among design students, the “post-critical” tomes produced by Rem Koolhaas and the Harvard Design Studio, celebrate conspicuous consumption and dirty realist heterogeneity.¹⁶

While offering new strategies for de-imperialising the canon, many of the Asian scholars mentioned above benefit from Western institutional privilege. They are diasporic with postgraduate education outside Asia and in many cases with jobs in Western universities. This contradictory condition whereby discourses on place, located histories and strategies for indigenisation are advanced through precarious diasporic ontologies has great relevance for discussions of architecture. Architecture is overly invested in sedentary material-spatial phenomena. Architects are wholly preoccupied in making, creating and stabilising space for aspirations of place-making. Conversely, the condition of diasporic habitation is deconstructive and antithetical to stasis. The instability experienced at the edge of nationalist meta-narratives, Euro-American discourse and professional curricula enables insights unavailable to mainstream scholarship. Their affiliation with or abidance by histories extraneous to mainstream aesthetic discourses locates these scholars tangentially to the discipline and the profession. They are ideally placed for the dual strategies of decolonising local histories of architecture while de-imperialising the overarching disciplinary frameworks.

De-imperialising and De-colonising Architecture

When compared with other spatial fields in the humanities and social sciences, many of which have an urban-spatial component

13. Compare with Kate Nesbitt, *Theorizing a New Agenda for Architecture: An Anthology of Architectural Theory 1965-1995* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996); Michael Hays, *Architecture Theory since 1968* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1998).

14. Abidin Kusno, Marco Cenzatti and Lisa Findley, eds, “Changing Asia,” special issue, *Journal of Architectural Education*, 63, no. 2, 2010; Anoma Pieris and Paul Walker, eds, “About Asia,” special issue, *Fabrications*, 19, no. 2 (2010).

15. Duanfang Lu, *Third World Modernism: Architecture, Development and Identity* (London: Routledge, 2010); William Lim and Jiat-Hwee Chen, eds, *Non-West Modernist Pasts: On Architecture and Modernities* (Singapore: World Scientific, 2011).

16. For example, Chuihua Judy Chung, Jeffrey Inaba, Rem Koolhaas, Sze Tsung Leong, eds, *Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping* (Köln: Taschen; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Design School, 2001).

(e.g. urban anthropology, urban geography, urban sociology etc.), architecture has been slow to de-imperialise its curricula. The reasons behind this retardation are complex. The framework for professional programmes in architecture is derived from colonial structures where accreditation by former imperialists validates content. Many former colonies (like Singapore or Sri Lanka) seek out RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) accreditation, as evident in a 2010-11 application by the City School of Architecture (CSA), Colombo. Colonial connections are robust and deferential. Conversely, India and China maintain their institutional autonomy, setting up their own internal hierarchies. Commonwealth and Cold War associations underscore these structural choices. Accreditation internalises colonial prestige.

Architectural decolonisation, which occurs internally, draws on postcolonial national frameworks. Although they accommodate local knowledge, the structures are broadly mimetic and dependent on Euro-American traditions. Intervening in the local context alone is not sufficient if new pedagogical frameworks do not evolve. Guaranteed social security and relative affluence, assumed in post-industrial environments, translate to exclusive architectural programmes negligent of social justice concerns.

Asian institutions too are at fault. The architect was and is largely regarded as an elaboration of the colonial engineer. The proliferation of local institutes and educational programmes, although dating from an era of de-colonisation (the 1960s), is the bi-product of post-imperialist interest in development goals. It is a product of the dependencies cited previously, where “Third World” nations looked to “First World” expertise in order to professionalise. In fact, the first generation of Asian architects trained in colonial Public Works Departments or in colonial firms. They translated late Victorian eclecticism into post-independent architectural styles. The commission for New Delhi exemplified a model that was being replicated across Britain’s Asian colonies. Encounters with European “Masters” commissioned for significant national monuments, such as Le Corbusier, Pierre Jeaneret, or Louis Kahn, during the 1950s-80s, produced a like generation of mimics. Tropical Architecture programmes were invented in the Architectural Association, London (1954) and University of Melbourne (1962) to be applied in former colonies. It would be hard to argue that these projects truly constituted decolonisation. They reinforced imperial connections and dependencies.

The era of decolonisation was instead instigated by the polemical regionalist alliances of the Cold War, during the 1970s. The vernacular and climatic agendas that followed (1980s-1990s)—of regional and vernacular architectures are regarded as forces for indigenisation synthesized with modernism. Yet, they frequently combined the colonial nativist gaze with modernist functionalism. Vanity publications featuring picturesque elite-homes and resort environments in Asia suggest a colonial revival for tourists and expatriates.



There are those who might argue that the hybrid environments of postcolonial Asia are fated to imitate their own colonial pasts. The “spectre of comparisons,” of colony with metropole, theorised by Benedict Anderson, remains valid.¹⁷ Moreover, as long as architectural pedagogy serves professional programmes where aesthetics and pragmatics dominate, history-theory curricula will shrink. In Asia, this lacuna constitutes a crisis in architectural education where research is subservient to professional prerogatives. Very few schools have comprehensive research-only programmes. For example, whereas the universities of Singapore, Hong Kong and CEPT (Centre for Environmental Planning and Technology), Ahmedabad, produce international, English-language publications on architecture, much of the research is empirical or studio-related. Their exposure to theoretical approaches invariably occurs via exogenous influences. The environment in Asia for producing architectural theories and methodologies is as yet under-developed, largely collaborative, and dependent on Western input.

17. Benedict Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia, and the World* (New York; London: Verso, 1998).

Deconstructing Practice

The Asian profession advances along quite a different trajectory. Exogenous training has created narrow professional foci modelled on Euro-American traditions. The pragmatic colonial basis for professionalisation governs educational curricula. History is taught as incidental rather than integral to the design curriculum. The lack of trained historians and research higher degree programmes perpetuates a dearth of intellectual capital and a diminished desire for critical reflection within architecture. There is hostility within Asia to the kind of history-theory curricula found in Euro-American architectural schools, due to the irrelevance of that exclusive historiography to everyday realities.

The imperial politics of globalisation translates to class politics within Asia where “favoured circles” of architects, educated in prestigious international institutions, monopolise architectural commissions.¹⁸ The line between predatory capitalist and ethical practices is thinly drawn in these vibrant and emergent contexts. Corruption and nepotism is rife. Connections to the West remain key signifiers of cultural capital and social prestige.

18. In reference to Garry Stevens, *The Favored Circle: The Social Foundations of Architectural Distinction* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998).

The most celebrated architects in Asia are diasporic and inject their ideas and representations into Euro-American architectural forums. They look to the West for validation, accreditation and

19. Charles Correa and Kenneth Frampton, *Charles Correa* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1996); David Robson, *Bawa: The Complete Works* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2002); James Steele, *The Complete Architecture of Balkrishna Doshi: Rethinking Modernism for the Developing World* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998).

20. S.K. Panicker, "Indian architecture and the production of post-colonial discourse: A study of Architecture + Design (1984-1992)," PhD diss, University of Adelaide, 2008, 113.

21. Kenneth Frampton, "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance," in *The Anti-aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture* ed. Hal Foster (Port Townsend, Wash.: Bay Press, 1983), 16-30.

exposure. The profession lacks the confidence to assert its own territory. This is evident in the number of architectural monographs on Asian architects written by European or American scholars, such as David Robson on Geoffrey Bawa; Kenneth Frampton on Charles Correa or James Steele on Balakrishna Doshi.¹⁹ We might argue that (English) language plays a major role in such transactions and translations. However, the expatriation of knowledge and the relative scarcity of local authors suggest that successful Asian architects subscribe to a global dynamics of power, knowledge and capital.

A groundswell of architectural design monographs has produced a host of new heroes trained in Europe and North America, since the 1980s, measuring them against their Euro-American counterparts. They are lauded for their ability to simulate Western style modernism using the labour-intensive processes inherited from colonialism; or for advancing regional aesthetics along similar lines. The visceral materiality created by these hybrid processes proves attractive to postindustrial European sensibilities that seek a lost, craft-based past. As argued by Saji Panicker, non-Western architects were promoted as reactionaries against a "degenerative" post-modernism, in a Western discourse on modernity.²⁰ Architectural luminaries, like (historians) William Curtis and Kenneth Frampton, played their part. Frampton in particular with his seminal essay on critical regionalism was cultivated as author and juror for publications and awards.²¹

The advancement of Asian architects via Western scholarship perpetuates "universal" and Euro-centric aesthetic traditions. Perhaps this is an outcome of a universalised publication culture determined by the West. Representations of architecture as aesthetic artifacts in idyllic surroundings perpetually reconstruct orientalist associations. South and Southeast Asia appear trapped within a colonial subservience that translates into foreign-aid packages and tourist income, each with its architectures of rescue or escape. China's selective adoption of neo-liberalism, its resistance to denationalization and state-led marketisation, is viewed with skepticism by the West. Only Japan, differentiated by its own imperial history, has been elevated as internationally competitive with a coterie of exceptional Japanese architects, most recently, SANAA, Kenzo Kuma and Shigeru Ban, awarded significant commissions in Europe.

The manifestos of Asian architects span a range of approaches. Malaysian, Ken Yeang (bioclimatic skyscraper); and Singaporeans, William Lim (ethical urbanism) and Tay Kheng Soon (rubani-



sation), the latter members of SPUR (Singapore Planning and Urban Research Group) amplify environmental determinism and counter state-led developmental strategies,²² Thai architect, Sumet Jumsai, a dedicated postmodernist, is committed to historicising water-based traditions (Naga).²³ The Japanese post-war manifestos of the Metabolists are utopian projects based on biological schema (plug-in megastructures).²⁴ Nothingness is theorized by many Japanese architects including, Shin Takamatsu (*Architecture and Nothingness*).²⁵ Culture, identity and community are the foci of the multi-regional MIMAR publications (of the Geneva based Aga Khan Trust) which launched Charles Correa (India), Geoffrey Bawa (Sri Lanka), Sedad Eldam (Turkey), Hasan Fathy (Egypt) and Miguel Angel Roca (Argentina) on the international stage.²⁶ Within its aegis of a broadly liberal Islam, Charles Correa's ruminations on social housing in Asian cities (The New Landscape) and Hasan Fathy's dedication to local craftsmen (Architecture for the Poor) are lauded as "Third World" responses.²⁷ David Robson, a British scholar, has launched a retroactive manifesto for Monsoon Asia on behalf of the Sri Lankan architect Geoffrey Bawa, borrowing and reaffirming tenuous debates on regionalism.²⁸ A detailed study of these manifestoes, their instigation and their politics do reveal avenues for professional engagement. But if poverty, illiteracy and displacement are Asia's greatest challenges, the profession is well-insulated from these realities.

Regional Integration

The task of decolonizing and de-imperialising and of dismantling Cold War dialectics is equally urgent for Australia, as it repositions itself within the Asian region. Immigrant, regional and Indigenous spatialities remain marginal. Although the critiques of class-interests are sharp and incisive, issues of racial and cultural difference are under theorized. "Australian Architecture" competes against a canon dominated by Euro-American histories. Such preferences have serious implications for the education of Australian architects, particularly those who will intervene in, contribute to or benefit from the growth of Asia. While Australia is undoubtedly engaged in its own project of decolonization it maintains its imperial connections. As highlighted by Garry Stevens, although the Royal Australian Institute of Architects was rebranded as the Australian Institute of Architects in 2008, the Institute still retains its royal court of arms.²⁹

22. Ken Yeang, *Bioclimatic Skyscrapers* (London: Ellipsis, 2000); William Lim, *Asian Ethical Urbanism: A Radical Postmodern Perspective* (Singapore: World Scientific Pub., 2005); Kheng Soon Tay, *Mega-cities in the Tropics: Towards an Architectural Agenda for the Future* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1989).

23. Sumet Jumsai, *Naga: Cultural Origins in Siam and the West Pacific* (Singapore; New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

24. Zonghjie Lin, *Kenzo Tange and the Metabolist Movement: Urban Utopias of Modern Japan* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

25. Maurizio Vitta, *Shin Takematsu: The Architecture and Nothingness* (Minneapolis, MN: Quayside, 1996).

26. MIMAR, *Architecture in Development* (1981-1992).

27. Charles Correa, *The New Landscape: Urbanisation in the Third World* (Sevenoaks, Kent: Butterworth Architecture, 1989); Hassan Fathy, *Architecture for the Poor: an Experiment in Rural Egypt* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973).

28. David Robson, *Beyond Bawa* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2007), 258.

29. Garry Stevens, "Royal No More: the RAI A Rebrands Itself," archsoc.com, accessed 19 January 2013, <http://www.archsoc.com/kcas/raianewname.html>.

Australia and Asia are interdependent. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics over one in five (22%) tertiary students studying in Australia was an international student in 2009. There were 617,000 overseas student enrolments in various courses in the higher education sector across Australia in 2010 with 27% from China and 16% from India.³⁰ Their contribution to the Australian economy in 2010-2011 was \$16.3 billion. The RAI A reckons that in some architectural schools international student numbers are as high as 40%. The shift to a research-led culture following the Bologna Procedure (from 5 years to a 3+2 programme, including postgraduate education) has led to greater specialisation and diversification.³¹ The government white paper, *Australia in the Asian Century* advocates new opportunities in Asia's emerging markets for Australian design, engineering and construction services.³² The example it cites is the architectural firm, HASSELL, China's largest foreign multidisciplinary design practice, with studios in Beijing, Chongqing, Hong Kong, Shanghai and Shenzhen, Bangkok and Singapore.

30. Australian Bureau of Statistics, 4102.0 - Australian Social Trends, Dec 2011, accessed 22 January 2013, <http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/subscriber.nsf/>

31. Australian Institute of Architects, Higher Education Base Funding Review, 8 April, 2011, accessed 22 January 2012, http://www.innovation.gov.au/HigherEducation/Policy/BaseFundingReview/Documents/Submissions/AtoF/Australian_Institute_of_Architects.pdf.

32. *Australia in the Asian Century*, White Paper, Chapter 4, Outlook for Australia to 2025, 4.3 and Box 4.6 (Commonwealth of Australia, 2012), accessed 22 January 2013, <http://asiancentury.dpmc.gov.au/white-paper/chapter-4/opportunities-of-the-asian-century>.

How can Australia theorise its regional location if it references Europe and America as a source for ideas, forms and discourse and as a measure of visibility and success? How can it move beyond an insulated view of the Australian geography made impervious to Asia by the White Australia policy? These positions enabled a distinctively Australian and national architecture in the past. Embedded within these preferences is a self-conscious hierarchy of Australia as an established metropolitan centre and Asia as economically emergent, politically unstable and socially undeveloped. Critical responses to informal settlements, post disaster accommodation, environmental and ecological sustainability, religious and cultural diversity, urban congestion and infrastructure development occur in urban planning or sociology. The Australian profession's engagement with Asia is less vigilant of ethical engagement and confined to an expatriate liminality.

Conclusion

Diasporic habitations can be both reflexive and exploitative. The diasporic condition may suggest a lack of moral investment in the host geography, preoccupation with homeland nostalgia or more rarely, dual loyalties with equivalent investment in both. Although comparative studies are essential, they are haunted by imperial inequalities and developmental hierarchies.



A common regional purpose makes strange bedfellows of former colonial subjects, imperialists, Cold War adversaries and competitors in the field of globalisation. They are linked by their shared experience of diasporic subjecthood. In the case of many scholars this translates to exogenous education, in some to positions in Western academia, for others their dependence on Western frames of thinking. There are those who are diasporic within Asia, who benefit from the unevenness of local economies and occupy new forms of expatriation. There are those who are effectively “dual citizens” and wear their liminality as a badge.

The euphoria surrounding a south-centered global order in the shadow of the Global Financial Crisis suggests the decline of former Atlantic Empires. Yet, the most immediate challenge for Asia is of denationalising history and achieving internal equity, alongside marketisation. However, there is always a risk that without national resistance prior global hierarchies will dominate. That an Old World Order will resurface through mimicry as prestige.

Without the coupling of internal social change with external global pressures, Chen’s three tools for integrating history are pointless. Maintaining critical welfare policies while promoting neo-liberal ones require a political balancing act. The denial of place, inimical to architectures pedagogy, is an empowering dislocation from which to critique these multiple forces of change. Without that dislocated, reflexive, self-scrutiny Asia (like many of its former colonisers) will produce new imperialisms of coercion and capital. This is the intellectual opening to be seized and magnified.