



Aesthetics of Architecture



Erasmus+

Lecture 3. Globalization and regionalization as processes influencing development of new aesthetic visions, values, and experiences

3.1. Introductory remarks

3.2. Globalization and regionalization

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3.1. Introductory remarks

To understand the aesthetic and cultural value of cultural heritage, it is very important to understand the dialectical relations of globalization and regionalization phenomena. It is very important to understand how the aspects of globalization and regionalization are related to the sphere of local cultural identity.

How when changing society, moving to the age of knowledge, where the media plays a very important role these processes can be managed. For this, it is important to know how these processes affect the formation of new aesthetic visions, attitudes, the value of architectural features and the personal experience of the perceiving persons.

3.2. Globalization and regionalization

Architects compete not only with one another but, more importantly, are confronted with competing clients on a global scale.

Subordination to the paradigm of a globalized economy where buildings becoming commodities is one fundamental principle of contemporary architectural production.

Present architects represent brands, but in contrast to luminaries of modern architecture such as Mies van der Rohe, Le Corbusier, and Frank Lloyd Wright, they don't have ultimate authority over the execution of their designs.

3.2. Globalization and regionalization

To a certain extent, international architectural design has become arbitrary and exchangeable. The decisive factor of architectural success today is media presence.

In recent years, the possibility of aesthetic experience is more common than ever, because the different contents are being more and more invested with aesthetic properties.

Architecture has become much more complex compared to twentieth century building, with an entire industry emerging over the past fifty years to manufacture architectural commodities. The digital revolution marked a substantial shift in this development, with new construction techniques, intelligence, digital infrastructure, surveillance, and sustainability, having cast a spell over the profession and its clients.

3.2. Globalization and regionalization

On the one hand, the architectural process has become fragmented into managed project groups, reducing the architect to designer. Today you have facilitators, complex project groups like Arup that are part of nearly every iconic building worldwide. On the other, the figure of the architect has mutated into that of a project developer with global range.

Jon Jerde, for instance, who has planned consumer-based neighborhoods with theme-park elements at the same time in the United States, Japan and China.

Likewise, the ability for huge global firms like Atkins and Gensler to offer all-inclusive projects has given them an incredibly prevalent, yet circumscribed role in the development of fledgling cities like in the Emirates, where these two firms have been responsible for nearly 70% of all structures built.

3.2. Globalization and regionalization

Hundreds of so-called “signature” buildings, located in new global, generic, or Special Economic Zones-cum-cities, compete with each other for notoriety on a global scale.

As sociologist Leslie Sklair points out, this is part of a wider economic strategy: “If there was no Burj Dubai [Khalifa], no Palm, no World, would anyone speak of Dubai today? You shouldn’t look at these projects as crazy stand-alones. It’s part of building a brand.”

In creating hitherto unknown mega-projects well beyond the scale of modernist tabula rasa cities like Brasilia or Chandigarh, iconic architecture today contributes to the creation of metropolises such as Dubai or Shanghai as a new prototype of the post-global city: “the ‘perfected’ synthesis of shopping, entertainment, and architectural spectacle on a pharaonic scale.”

3.2. *Globalization and regionalization*

Yet today, the sheer quantity of iconic buildings threatens to normalize architectural uniqueness, flatten it into convention, and marginalize the outstanding.

Seen in this light, one could argue that the grand narrative of the genius architect as a “curator of society” has become obsolete.

If we look at significant architectural works from the last century, it is obvious that this narrative went hand in hand with the modernist conception of architecture as “the art of construction” (*Baukunst*), and is where the aforementioned modern “masters” fall.

But it’s important to note that as this narrative developed, it was also frequently challenged by architects working in the realm of social architecture—in short, housing—such as Bruno Taut, Johann Jacobus Pieter Oud, Martin Wagner, Aldo van Eyck, Oriol Bohigas, among others.

3.2. Globalization and regionalization

Since at least the twentieth century, one of the core issues pertaining to architectural discourse has been its status as representation of civic society, of the *Res Publica*, as public matter.

Yet globalization has shifted our view of the world, and what those questions mean today must be radically thrown into question.

From an architectural historian's view today, it is indispensable to suspend linear historiographic modes and address multi-focal and multi-centered approaches that have been largely developed within the fields of sociology, anthropology and comparative studies.

Architectural history needs to open itself and its understanding of modernity to architecture's colonial heritage and postcolonial condition.

3.2. Globalization and regionalization

Furthermore, we need to talk not necessarily about knowledge transfer but about entanglement and exchange; about the overlapping and cross-fertilization of different cultures, particularly in transnational regions such as the Mediterranean, Gulf, or Caribbean.

Kenneth Frampton started the process of rewriting the canon of architectural history for the era of globalization twenty years ago, when he mapped twentieth-century architecture in his ten-volume *World Architecture*.

Yet even earlier in the 1980s, in the wake Liane Lefaivre and Alexander Tzonis's work, Frampton claimed regionalism as a critical force and paved the way towards writing counter-narratives of globalization and its violent narrative of homogenization.

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Frampton's original critique was launched at the height of the postmodern movement, a moment in which orthodox modernism was being largely abandoned and postmodernism was itself being criticized as a "superficial historicism."

Yet it was also the moment when city centers and the countryside were being "rediscovered" as "liveable" places, such as in Berlin with the IBA, Barcelona, and Amsterdam.

From today's viewpoint, one can question Frampton's conception of regionalism as a critical force. Yet the historical debate on regionalism can't be separated from debates about contemporary architecture.

3.2. Globalization and regionalization

“Globalization,” as Antony King claimed, “can only be understood contextually. There is no identity outside its social, cultural, historical and geographical context.”

The representation of identity, which is closely linked to the conception of architectural regionalism, is no longer a matter of a single region or a single country. Identity today is constantly defined, re-defined, constructed, and re-constructed.

Considering the notion of world architecture current approaches open a view for non-western contributions to the historical canon and the formation of alternative conceptions of history itself. Today, apart from mainstream globalized architecture, participatory architecture projects taking place in Bukina Faso, in Mali, in Japan, or in Venezuela have become part of architectural discourse.

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They can be characterized as a new form of the “glocal”: regional conceptions combined with the demands and opportunities of a global world.

Work such as this asks questions about architecture’s social dimensions and the integrity of architecture more generally, which it is our role as architectural historians to debate.

In recent years, the possibility of aesthetic experience is more common than ever, because the different contents are being more and more invested with aesthetic properties.

Although the term of “aesthetic experience” overpowered the traditionally dominant concept of “beauty”, the value ascribed to it is disputable, because the experience has repressed the object, but the growth of the aesthetic contents presence does not correspond with a occasion to meet the most significant aesthetic values.

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The excellence of art has been merged in the banality of everyday life, which obtained an attractive appearance, but not the beauty of spirit, lovable surface, but not the true depth.

As a strategy of turning of the unaesthetic to the aesthetic, aestheticization would be more promising if it would not be reduced to the mere technique of beautification, but represented the trigger for the legitimating of pervasive interference of all of the domains of rationality.

The process of globalization causes the weakening of the borders between different cultural domains, what makes their mutual interference easier, but it cannot itself ensure the meaning of such integrations and take-overs.

3.2. Globalization and regionalization

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