

ATR 26,2: Forgotten Histories of Transnational Architectural Practice

Deadline: Feb 1, 2022

Architectural Theory Review

Cosmopolitanism's Others: Forgotten Histories of Transnational Architectural Practice

A special issue of Architectural Theory Review edited by Jiat-Hwee Chang (National University of Singapore) and Eunice Seng (University of Hong Kong).

Of late, much has been written about transnational networks of architectural practice and expertise in the mid-twentieth century, and understandably so, given the seismic geopolitical changes at that historical juncture. These networks emerged when decolonization and the formation of new nations combined to create a new international order. Within this schema, cosmopolitanism as an embedded political consciousness and solidarity is intensified. Decolonization and nation-building were not only particular and anti-universal processes: they frequently entailed what scholars like Adom Getachew have called “worldmaking”—the creation of broader transnational alliances and solidarities that sought to reorder the international structures of unequal integration and racial hierarchy inherited from Euro-American imperialism. At the same time, architectural practice itself was also being restructured around new modes of organization beyond the traditional firm. These included multidisciplinary collaborative practices and large state-linked or corporate entities directly or indirectly connected to foreign aid programs, regional associations, national and international development schemes and circuits of transnational capital flow. The attendant restructuring of the geopolitics of architectural production and the organization of architectural labour means that questions of the architect’s belonging, subjectivity and agency in this period must be carefully reconsidered historiographically.

While many accounts of the circulation of knowledge and the movement of architects, planners, and designers across politically demarcated territories challenge and expand existing histories of modern architecture, most of these accounts continue to privilege the white male architect and the organizations he dominated in Europe and the geographical North as primary subjects. Work by non-white actors and non-white organizations remains largely invisible. Even when they are included, such accounts tend to relegate them to secondary roles as passive local collaborators and informants. They are consigned to being actors with limited cosmopolitanism and highly circumscribed agency within the transnational networks of architecture and planning. Even if many were educated in the metropole and practiced in a transboundary manner, their work was routinely described as a local response, not entirely understood within broader global discourses. A dialectic of such “local cosmopolitanism” and internationalism offers a means to historical recuperation as some might even have actively participated in architectural forms of worldmaking to reorder the structure behind the hegemony of Euro-American architects and architectural ideas.

Even those who practiced within their national territories might have contributed to the transnational networks by modulating and modifying them.

This call seeks papers that explore topics related to these figures and groups in what is today called the Global South, whom conventional narratives of architectural cosmopolitanism have otherwise marginalized. What is at stake here is not merely the inclusion of more actors and organizations, or to expand current narratives; rather, we are concerned with how the inclusion of these actors and organizations would lead us to understand the variegated forms of transnational architectural practice and differentiated politics of cosmopolitanism. Equally significant is how these actors and organizations expose the limits of current conceptions of architectural cosmopolitanism and transnational histories. Pressingly, we invite papers that interrogate cosmopolitanism's geographical, social, cultural, and political dimensions in light of the present critical mobilization of gender, race, labour, and migration.

Procedure

Scholarly texts of between 4000 and 8000 words (including notes) will be screened for double-blind peer review. Notwithstanding the global focus of this issue, all submissions must be written in (or translated into) English for consideration.

Full paper submissions via the Architectural Theory Review website are due 1 February 2022: <https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ratr20>

Reference:

CFP: ATR 26,2: Forgotten Histories of Transnational Architectural Practice. In: ArtHist.net, Sep 23, 2021 (accessed Jul 6, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/34884>>.