
Re-iterating Theory in Architecture: from an Imperial to a Provincialized Transnational Pedagogy

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Abstract

The study of architectural theory in the Philippines remains in need of a transnational framework that extends beyond the Vitruvian Triad, which most architectural academics tend to teach. Many Southeast Asian architectural institutions, including those in the Philippines, have already incorporated modern and contemporary discourses into their curricula and teaching sessions in design studios, expanding the issues and problems of the built environment. The Philippine experience struggles with the synergy of architecture as a problem-solving practice and architecture as a theoretical discourse. One of the more obvious reasons for such struggle is the dearth of a transnational framework or literature, and its dissemination to Philippine architectural academia. There is an urgent need to expand the theoretical and creative knowledge of architecture students now that institutions are preparing for an overhaul of architecture education in the Philippines and the region of Southeast Asia at large. This region, despite its multiple identities and heterogeneous differences, shares qualities in its geolocational, linguistic, and even colonial experience that can inform or even transform pedagogical direction. Necessary to this preparation are new transdisciplinary frameworks that can reassess both form and content in architectural design theory. This paper sees this overhaul challenge as an opportunity to attempt to propose a provincialized and transnational framework of architectural history for reiterating theory in the study of architecture.

Keywords: empire, architectural theory, provincialize, “trans-” (as prefix conceptual device, i.e., transnational, transdisciplinary, translocal)

I. Empire and Architecture

Much of the basis of ‘Western’ architectural theory is about empire.

I start with this, as my provocative statement, to initially argue that the recovery of the Classical Roman architecture treatise of Vitruvius² (largely based on ancient Greek architecture and prescribed as precedence to an expanding Roman imperial identity) in fourteenth century Europe onwards was a paradigmatic shift towards the writing of new treatises³ from the Renaissance onwards. Still relatively, the code of global architectural education now, European architectural classicism became *the* traditional⁴ and hegemonic basis of architectural knowledge, from the fifteenth century onwards. These traditional models were embedded in neoclassicist academies in Europe, and the proliferation of neoclassical building activities propagated cultural thinking and building throughout the colonized world. It is not far-fetched nor even that provocative to presume that the European neoclassical (thus colonial) building styles in Southeast Asia are part of this stylistic ‘empire’ traced back to Vitruvius, who incidentally, also prescribed a comprehensive way to complete the ‘education of the architect’ in the same treatise.

This ‘empire’ argument I am provoking gives way for me to map the genealogy of thinking, especially when considering Roman imperial expansion⁵ at the time of Vitruvius’ writing. We can read into this context at the ‘dedication’ page of Vitruvius’ text, “The Ten Books on Architecture,” where the whole textual opus was pledged to the Emperor Augustus Caesar as such:

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² Marcus Vitruvius Polio, an architect and military engineer, wrote *De architectura* (named in English as The Ten Books on Architecture) around 26 B.C. and had a long history of being hand copied throughout the period after the fall of Rome. It was believed that a surviving scrolled manuscript was discovered by Italian Renaissance scholar Poggio Bracciolini in the 1400s and was the basis of numerous translations that architecture scholars in Europe produced. These scholars began a project of writing new treatises, often based on, or derived from Vitruvius’ text still being read by most architectural historians and theoreticians today.

³ In the fourteenth century, Leon Battista Alberti was the first to publish a treatise he called *De re aedificatoria*, while other known treatises include those by Cesare Cesariano, Sebastiano Serlio, Giacomo Barozzi da Vignola, Giorgio Vasari, Andrea Palladio, John Ruskin, and a host of others. Some historians and theorists would include Spanish Jesuit Juan Bautista Villalpando in the list, but because of his blatant critique of Vitruvius and religious bias, others doubt a lineage.

⁴ The word ‘traditional’ is used here specifically in the context of architectural modern discourse—there are two senses of the word I wish to clarify, first, ‘the sense in modernist (early twentieth century) assertions that architectural tradition was based on architectural education of the neoclassicist (e.g., École de Beaux Arts) mode which many rejected, and second, tradition as that of a set of beliefs and practices often associated with the wider cultural and social traditions. In keeping with the tone of this paper, it is the first sense of the word that I use in this paper.

⁵ Recall that Augustus’s reign as the first emperor was also the beginning of the imperial expansion of Rome. Vitruvius perhaps took this opportunity to advance his position and to codify a style for such expansion.

“While all foreign nations were in subjection awaiting your beck and call, and the Roman people and senate... were beginning to be guided by your most noble conceptions and policies... I hardly dared, in view of your serious employments, to publish my writings and long considered ideas on architecture...”⁶ (Marcus Vitruvius Pollio, 26 B.C., Preface to *De architectura*; translated by Morris Hicky Morgan, 1914)

This dedication acknowledged the rise of Rome as an empire-building global enterprise that later reached northwards to England, southwards to northern Africa and eastwards to India. Even if Vitruvius’s text was not the influential treatise of Roman imperial expansionist building, as contemporary architectural analysts suggest, the revival of his *De architectura* was key to the propagation of its principles, or their transformation.

Following this expansion, the rediscovery of the Vitruvian text over half a millennium ago shaped a set of neoclassical design traditions, and this text has been translated, re-interpreted, modified, or referenced by many architects and theorists from Alberti to contemporary scholars. While the eventual fall of the Roman Empire lost a developmental stylistic progression, these new treatises provided both theoretical and prescriptive ‘preservation’ efforts. This neoclassicism spread widely, especially as academies appeared all over Europe, enhancing a specialized project of thinking and writing architecture. As impetus for ‘new world’ urbanization and European presence in their colonial territories, building in the neoclassicist ‘style’ (with the propagation of the imperial Laws of the Indies, especially in the Hispanic colonies) marked colonial legacy through architecture. In Southeast Asia and the global south, European colonialism left such architectural marks through its neoclassical buildings and cities, akin to the classic Roman project of empire. These legacies configure part of the common threads for colonized Southeast Asia, despite the administrative (colonial) and stylistic differences.

II. Transnational Disciplinary Theory

To frame this in the context of transnational architectural theory, we must understand architecture within its disciplinary boundaries.⁷ Often, only architects understand each other, with talk of form, space, order, first principles, and representational processes. Even today, these are basic components of design theory that all architecture students should use in the design process. basic list, below (see inset box), is a major part of architectural theory—an offshoot of Vitruvian and neoclassical texts— and we shall consider this *as* architectural language (or jargon). Furthermore, this *is* also its practice, and is understood, even currently, in the larger transnational (global) architectural pedagogy.

⁶ Marcus Vitruvius Pollio, 26 B.C., Preface to *De architectura*; translated by Morris Hicky Morgan, 1914.

Some systems and components that articulate the language of architecture, summarized:

- **Architectural Form** as enveloping and massing, historically formal reference and precedence, the representational (drawing) process, and even architectonic systems.
- **Space** through the planning of functioning areas of the building, organizing and articulation of geometries and their volumes in a location or at a site; architectural space needs to be organized on Euclidean and Cartesian planes.
- **Formal Order**, through meaningful organization, or an identity, an idea, a *parti*, an organization of form and space.
- **First Principles** of design, including but not limited to axis, datum, symmetry, hierarchy, rhythmic repetition and its transformations, proportion, unit-to-whole harmony.
- **Design of Atmospheres** that account for lived experiences and other cultural, ephemeral, or phenomenological and geo-climatic considerations.

In neoclassical architecture, theory *is* practice, despite relying heavily on guild craftsmen, representing (or drawing) architecture **and** the principles and theories that came with it. Architecture was studied in European art and architecture academies—ruins of Classical Greece and Rome were documented and “copied,” and this process was a sign of an educated architect. As an example, a design competition winner of a French neoclassical academy will visit ancient sites in Rome, Greece, and other sites of antiquity around the Mediterranean as a main prize. These architectural “documentarians” who analyzed classical architecture and its proportions, scale, and details, and from which, published treatises based on their reading of Vitruvian text itself, werethe traditionalist theoreticians.

Table 1. Theory as Representational Practice in Architecture

Neoclassical (Renaissance to the Nineteenth Century)	Modernist to the Twentieth Century
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mimesis (of Classical Greek and Roman forms and principles) • Analyses of Vitruvian writings in (new) treatise forms • Establishment of architectural (and art) academies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dogmatic Manifesto • Rejection of Classicist “traditional” forms • Rediscoveries of 18C “revolutionary” architectural writing and thinking • Utopian visions

⁷ This paragraph and inset were provided to introduce architectural language to an audience of non-architects.

In early (twentieth century) modern architectural education, these 'traditional' (classicist) representational copies of the ancients became a subject of scrutiny and rejection, yet despite these rejections of Classical mimesis, recent scholarship revealed a gamut of architectural principles, still following a set of neoclassicist theories prevailing—in proportions, in perspectival scale, or in representational or drawing nomenclature. Some analyses identify many modernists relying on the floor plan proportions of and spatial distribution within the Greek Temple as spatial references of their designs.⁸

There is a hegemonic quality to how this architectural language is propagated, and it is always through academia that it becomes "canon." Examples from Classicist canons were drafted in the seventeenth to the nineteenth century European academies mimetic of Greek and Roman principles as their ruins were studied and documented. Despite modernists' insistence on anti-traditional influence, I argue that modern architectural design principles still relied on 'canons' (see inset again on first principles). Even as modernists will initially insist theirs aren't canonical, their designs still seem to trace almost the same tactical theoretical framework that guides architectural design now. Modernism, though, followed through with new social motivations: international homogenization and rationalization, ideological manifestos, social control through space, and utopian goals. Furthermore, even though many of their intentions attempted social relevance and ideologically liberal intentions, their failures marked 'post' responses against their hard-lined philosophies, disdain toward history, and lack of local sensitivities in their prescribed architectural forms. Yet despite these post-responses, both modernist and neoclassicist principles have become pedagogically hegemonic and are ubiquitous in every design process.

As late as 1994, though, views of a 'theory' of architecture were still as varied as it was enigmatic in the context of design pedagogy. Hanno-Walter Kruft provided a framework that placed it within a historical context, definitively outlining an aesthetics-based understanding of architecture theory. Taken into account historical contexts, he approached (Western) architectural theory as "the sum of what has been consciously formulated as [(the history of) architectural theory], i.e., (the history of) thought [as well as ideas and motivations] on architecture as recorded in written form, that is based on aesthetic categories. The sources of our knowledge about architectural theory are... polyvalent."⁹ As such, these European treatises, or the sum of polyvalent and consciously formulated thought that Kruft writes, have become the baseline content of the theoretical pedagogy of architectural thinking and design. Again, this architectural pedagogy, with empire-building origins, exported through European colonization of the

continents, implying a hegemonic understanding of what architecture should be and how it should be thought and taught, is what we are still working with now, even in post-colonial and post-modernity education. And these pedagogies have been translated into the building of our (Southeast Asian) shared colonial heritage buildings.

Many examples of Southeast Asian colonial buildings are implied by this. And this "hegemonic building form" is not just architectural, but also epistemological, ontological, and cultural. Knowledge on the nature of local architecture had been stifled, to say the least, and racial biases implied in some literature on architecture were due in part to the idea that indigenous architectural production was banal, vernacular, and as such, not Architecture (with a capital "A"). This is apparent in the fact that vernacular architecture, whether in Southeast Asia or elsewhere, was never part of the canon of architectural studies, much less architectural theory. This is so apparent in the Philippines that even as late as the 1970s, some scholars were still searching for an archaeologically 'glorious past' of building traditions to be inscribed into this capital A in Philippine architecture. The implications even move to how (urban) development is viewed as dichotomized and binary: developed / undeveloped, East/West, progressive/indigenous, urban/rural, modern / backward, and the list goes on.

Back in the 1980s, many attempted to offer an analysis of the indigeneity of urban theory (O'Connor, 1983, for instance) in Southeast Asia. Expressing this uneven divide, one must start with how the West views the idea of urban progress and suggest, alternatively, the more phenomenological idea of 'meaning.' O'Connor's proposal to rethink urbanization signified the differentiated approach to indigeneity of experience in the early urbanization boom of Southeast Asia, and that the 'western' model of "fixed and knowable reality" of the first world is not as tenable as it seems in the understanding of the Southeast Asian indigenous experience.

III. "Trans-" as a Conceptual Device

It is at this point that I suggest conceptualizing architecture, in its training and in practice for Southeast Asia, as both transnational and transgressive to allow us to see the nuances of teaching architectural theory critically. While these two "trans-"references offer divergent ideas, the heuristic capacity of the prefix is conceptually useful. Understanding the 'transnationality' of architecture in the region acknowledges the shared experiences of colonial and Orientalized histories in this part of the global south;

⁸ Jacqueline Gargus's lectures and writing on the history of architecture refer to how the Greek Temple was an important spatial ordering precedence for Mies van der Rohe and a host of other modernists in the twentieth century.

⁹ Kruft, 1994, summary and additions, mine

its common phenomenological realities (i.e., in the lived experience of its mainland and island inhabitants—tropicality, references to water, including its management, resilience of perhaps archaic worldviews within their adopted religions, acceptance of transnational exchange, etc.); and, even while mostly inferred by Austronesian linguistic culture, the configurations of the house-on-stilts architectural elements. Transdisciplinary thinking, on the other hand, acknowledges the permeability of (academic) disciplines, which must now be recognized as (positive) transgressions. This recognition softens the insularities of disciplines and allows us to think about architecture both being informed by and engaged in other disciplines about architecture and vice versa. This also capacitates architecture as a discipline to open its interdisciplinary culture of simply being informed or to inform, to being actively collaborative in transgressing both disciplinary limitations.

As conceptual devices, tabulated below, I suggest how these, from my point of view now as an architect, can help assuage and get past the binary divides (of western-eastern theory and discourse) and rethink the idea of de-centering a region like Europe (as colonial originator of architectural ideas until the twentieth century) or Southeast Asia (as receiver of shard-like information through colonial education) towards an acceptance that knowledge had already been created, but must be re-allocated. These conceptual devices (see comparative, below), both in the negative and affirmative, are synergized in the hopes of critically surveying the impact and flow of knowledge “shards” that describe the nature of academic and theoretical production in the Philippines and Southeast Asia.

Architecture Research for a Transnational Practice:

“Trans-” as a Conceptual Device:	Transnational Productions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trans-disciplinarity • Open architectural disciplinary limits • Inscribe other disciplines • Resolve disciplinary vocabularies • Transitional (contemporary) theories • Transgressive methods that: • allow disciplines to peek through and participate in disciplinary debates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transgressive practice of architecture: “Western principles” to interrogate Austronesian / SE Asian transgressions • Austronesian vernaculars • Transnational critique of the: • Colonial • Insular • Modernist • Hegemonic • Neoliberal • Re-inscriptions of the subjugated local

- allow architecture to seep its intra-disciplinary formality into the debate
- ‘provincialize’ knowledge ‘centers’

This idea of the transdisciplinary approach has been around in many disciplinary debates¹⁰ but in architectural education and practice, the same conceptualizing process became more pronounced as Mark Linder argues that “(T)ransdisciplinary work navigates a contested field of discourses that have been claimed, structured, and adapted to specific disciplines. (Thus), transdisciplinarity scrutinizes architecture’s *appearance* and seeks its *significance* in the forms of other disciplines, or the spaces between disciplines, but in no way abandons the specific modes of the architectural discipline” (Linder, 2017). An entanglement muddles the discipline, and rightly so, as we acknowledge a decentering of architectural ideas to enhance the localized knowledge of rebuilding site/culture-specific environments.

Yet here in the Philippines, the idea of trans-disciplinarity seems to have already become embedded in architectural interrogatory negotiations, perhaps already a second nature to a people whose cultural practice was capitalized by multiple shards of knowledge. These entangled shards were amalgamations of disciplinary learning reduced into the anthropological and historical significance of the building, in understanding the psychological nature of users, or even in the impact on the environment.

¹⁰ The transdisciplinary debate may be understood in several waves of academic exercises especially in science and technology according Jay Bernstein’s 2015 review (as well as in Osborne 2015) although the idea of softening the disciplinary borders of hard science and soft science and their problematic specializations may perhaps go as far back as Immanuel Kant’s persuasions to viewing problems within the notion of

interconnectivity. The academic debates in Europe and the United States follow critiques of historically contingent thinking: structuralism, disciplinary specialization, and questions on dichotomies, among others. Nicolescu’s (2002) “manifesto of transdisciplinarity” became the most recent call for the critique of hardline disunity of science and the humanities and its consequences.

Notice these “social studies” disciplines are anthropology, history, psychology, or environmental studies, with vocabularies very much different from the act of building, much less the act of designing. With different disciplinary vocabularies, even the word “tradition” might not be easily *translated* to architecture, as ‘tradition’ in architectural

harmony, etc., were part of architectural ‘traditional’ canon, despite its contemporary use. I also invite them to explore how such canon is evident in Philippine architectural heritage, both colonial and “traditional.” This is not always an easy task. These interrogations, however, need to be coded through pedagogical frameworks for

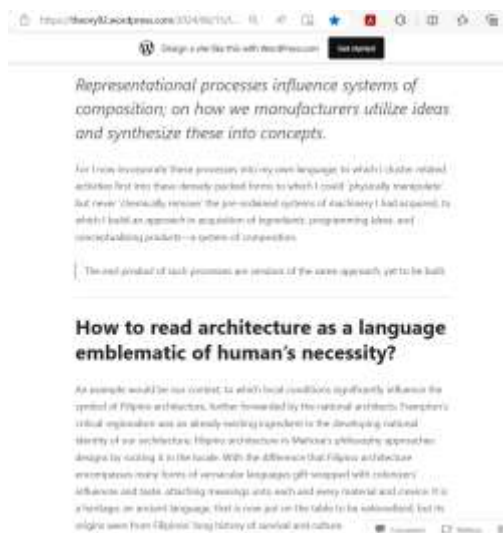


Figure 1a and 1b. Two good examples of my students’ work and blog on theory, after giving them a brief about going back to the language of architecture. *Left* (1a), Brian Axel Ycoy; *right* (1b), Ronald Joshua Coching.

praxis often hearkens to the “pre-modern” design vocabulary, i.e., the ‘canon’ of classical and neoclassical European architecture.¹¹ Such is the bias that confronts all other disciplines, challenging the operationalization of transdisciplinary thinking.

In my theory classes, I often invite students to always remind themselves that architecture’s representational language and vocabulary, such as proportion, scale,

educators to be more succinct in their transference. The challenge of trans-nationalizing architectural theory that educators and students face now, and how theory is engaged in the process of architectural design, is intimidating, as my students have struggled in their writing and in their design. Figure 1 shows two of the most creative theory assignment outputs as blogs by my students last semester (second semester, academic year 2023-2024).

IV. The Task of Provincializing Architectural Theory Now

The “trans” conceptual device is indeed risky. Rethinking theory within the fold of transnationalism and transdisciplinarity involves rethinking architecture’s history and its biases, as well as its vocabulary, following a framework that is more open and engaging. Furthermore, it will be a daunting task for architectural educators and practitioners in the Philippines and Southeast Asia.

Confronting historical biases includes deployment by pedagogy, but must be de-hegemonized and decolonized. It should include knowledge subjugated

by colonial and hegemonic education through decodifying canonical principles and re-inscribing these subjugated knowledges as equal, not marginal ideas. Theory must then translate back into design and transition the re-inscribed knowledge that confronts biases into local and regional histories. This includes the difficult decision to incorporate the study of the vernacular (and, the Austronesian legacy, for Southeast Asia) that had long been considered outside of and excluded architectural canon, despite its ubiquity (e.g., dwelling places) and accounting for more than half of all architectural (or building) production.

But many ‘documentation’ and scholarly activities in the past 120 years or so imply a range of historically significant moments of both exclusion and inclusion in

¹¹ These ‘mistranslations’ are not just disciplinary dilemmas, or problem of disciplinary vocabulary, but also a problem of trans-continental didactic disjunction. For former colonies, ‘tradition’ is indeed a cultural necessity, and something to be sought after as

centuries of colonial occupation led to a ‘loss of identity.’ Indeed, if an architectural history educator mentions ‘tradition,’ a student may conjure local associations of heritage instead of (Classical) architectural precedence.

generation; architectural space. My proposal now is to “provincialize” (borrowing the concept by Dipesh Chakrabarty)¹⁴ these Euro-hegemonic ideas, to decenter their canonicity, to de-imperialize and de-colonize their original framework, and to redistribute architecture’s new heterogenous vocabulary and content.

Scope and Possible Design Applications:
THE SEARCH FOR FIRST PRINCIPLES (in progression)

Theory & Practice Scope of Learning	Year 1 Foundational	Year 2 Types, Typologies & Differentiation	Year 3 Security (The Public)	Year 4 Projects for Complexity	Year 5 Research & Theory
Experience	High Ground Policy, Perception of West & Nature	Perception of Form & Space Context & World	Knowledge Representation Context	Environmental Experience & Atmosphere	Integrated perspective experience
Site & Context	20 Elements 20 Principles of Architectural Environment	Type & Typology (The neighborhood 100)	Architecture for All the City	History & Environment	Analysis & Design of all context
Limits & Parameters	Architectural & Non-architectural space (High ground)	Boundaries, Lines, Order & Difference Space	Local & National (or Decentralized) Codes	International Codes	Integrated (Open) standards, integrated codes
Science	Architectural & Non-architectural knowledge (to what) science, methods	Technology as Public architecture	Network & Technology (Urban to 100)	Continuation of Public technologies	Continuation of Public on the science of design
Art	Formal and non-formal self-art architecture	Cultural value of architecture	Aesthetics & Ethics of Public architecture	Architecture as art, Continuation of responsibility (Sustainability etc.)	Advanced & complex issues for architecture
Issues	Problems, responsibility, cultural, design of architecture	Technology & Knowledge	History, Social, Cultural, production	Architecture as art, Continuation of responsibility (Sustainability etc.)	Advanced & complex issues for architecture
Practice precedent types	Individual observations (A, Local & Regional practice, historical & precedent)	Local & Regional practice, historical & precedent	Global practice, historical & precedent	Global practice, historical & precedent	Global practice, historical & precedent



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Issues	Problems, responsibility, cultural, design of architecture	Technology & Knowledge	History, Social, Cultural, production	Architecture as art, Continuation of responsibility (Sustainability etc.)	Advanced & complex issues for architecture
Practice precedent types	Individual observations (A, Local & Regional practice, historical & precedent)	Local & Regional practice, historical & precedent	Global practice, historical & precedent	Global practice, historical & precedent	Global practice, historical & precedent
LOCAL KNOWLEDGE	Site-specific knowledge	Differentiated types (heterogeneity)	Posthuman networking	Scalar Regional complexities	Advanced transnational aesthetics

Fig. 3. The task of localizing specific networks of knowledge regimes is immediately transdisciplinary.

The second set (Fig. 3) is of new issues that need to be localized as network assemblages, even as these newly inscribed first principles become theories that interrogate contemporary issues like experience, localized sites, local legal restrictions, local science and methods, or local practice. I propose the concept of ‘assemblage’ to retain the localization of knowledge yet networked transnationally. Knowledge indigenization needs to be de-coupled—from the vocabulary of modernism and its regulations; from capitalism and its

¹⁴ In Chakrabarty’s postcolonial concept, to provincialize implies challenging and decentering Europe (and by extension, the West—both geographically and intellectually) as being the only influential voice of universal knowledge or theory, and that it is but just one of a multitude of intellectual provinces. This task can be done by acknowledging both historical and experiential heterogeneity, that theoretical models and themes like development, capitalism, modernity and even history had

regulatory liberalization; and even from contemporary conditions that can slip into autonomous knowledge regimes like climate volatility, socio-cultural heritage, and the increasing human-to-non-human networks (or the post-human) created by the twenty-first century thinking. Areas of theory that need to be reassessed for provincializing, decolonizing, or de-modernizing show how the contemporary condition is heterogeneous, thus the need to see them as assemblages.

This further requires the reassessment of historically produced (European) language of architectural theory (including Pythagorean progressions, geometric manipulations, form properties, et al.), quite different from the intellectual province of (European) art but sharing common theoretical visual principles that architects and students of architecture already use in design. The possibility of merging these principles into new ‘provinces’ theory and practice for architecture is still not without difficulty, but perhaps we can start with understanding the synergy between architectural theory as already formalized, and the consideration of ideas from the relatively recent ‘province’ of vernacular architecture.



Fig. 4a. Renzo Piano’s Jean-Marie Tjibaou Cultural Center, New Caledonia [a. Aerial view, top]

been experienced differently in many colonized areas like Southeast Asia. His ‘provincialization’ idea recognizes the validity of other intellectual and theoretical ‘provinces,’ a powerful conceptual device, in my opinion. This sets a positive tone of operationalizing the problematics of several themes like Orientalist intellectual imaginations and production, subjugated knowledges and more, towards not just that of challenging dominant narratives but also that of producing inclusive theoretical heterogeneity.



Fig. 4b. Renzo Piano's Jean-Marie Tjibaou Cultural Center, New Caledonia [b. Kanak roof construction within the site, bottom.]

Two quite different examples of modernist cultural icons [Figures 4 and 5] [images of the examples to request copyright approval] use vernacular references for architectural form development—notice how approaches to design differ in these two architects: (Figure 4) the Jean-Marie Tjibaou Cultural Center in New Caledonia by French-Italian architect Renzo Piano, use Kanak roofing elements and not the overall form, to be the precedent parti (or design reference) of the architecture. In Figure 5, Filipino architect Leandro Locsin's work in Brunei Darussalam seems to have been a derivation of the Minangkabau roof form, despite its somewhat distant ethnic affinities to Brunei. Such "west-east" conceptualizations, as part of an architectural modernity of the vernacular, are still informed by a modernist project, as far as I'm concerned, but perhaps we can also reference and transgress into these, and other works from different disciplines, such as linguistics and philosophy to provincialize future architectural designs.



Fig. 5. Leandro Locsin's Istana Nurul Iman, the Sultan's Palace, Brunei Darussalam

Some proposals for such include the consideration of knowledge building from different fields and domains, like linguistics, conceptualized because of semantic proximities in architecturally related words, that can be framed within the provincialization of architectural theory that helps transition and translate into contemporary post-capitalist and post-postmodern conditions.

Aside from the many issues I raised and suggested earlier, I'd like to propose some reflections on the following conditions for the teaching of architectural theory:

A trans-Southeast Asian approach, or combined regional and local approaches to the contemporary, tropical, archipelagic/mainland strategies in architectural knowledge production, also implies architectural theory as philosophical rethinking specific to the region, entailing:

- 1- Asking transnational questions about the nature of architecture itself and identifying the sort of things that define architecture, including how to include the non-designed vernacular architectures of Southeast Asia, and the larger Austronesian linguistic regions (and beyond them) as part of the scope of architectural theory.
- 2- Asking epistemological questions to continue to know what needs to be known, and to reason effectively that such knowledge must be inclusive, and that applies to architecture's main purpose, which is to design and build the well-being of life itself.
- 3- (and) The continuing establishment of new thinking in the twenty-first century, building from the regional shared experiences that suppose a new condition of the present, and a possible volatile future.

I end with these additional commentaries on approaching the re-inscription of the local voice. Architectural theory is no longer confined to its Western genealogies of knowledge regimes. Local (and translocal) voices need to be encoded as open-ended theories and see knowledge as “shards” rather than regimes, that can be assembled as networks (assemblage). Transnationalism and cosmopolitanism are two socializing forms with diverging goals: one is regional exchange; one is a contemporary global aspiration of fair exchange—something to reflect on further. However, even as divergent as they seem, both require obligatory responsibilities in thinking about exchange, that of disrupting the imagined boundaries of state, citizenship, autonomy, or differentiated notions of equality, products of colonial and modernist thinking and policies of subjugation. If the Southeast Asian community is already a transnational heterogeneity, perhaps common research on their indigeneity as a theory can initiate and establish transnational exchange on architectural theory as well.

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