POSTCOLONIAL POSSIBILITIES OF ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY:
Questions and Concerns in reading the Urbanisms of the Global South

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Abstract: As the twenty-first century unfolds before us, the megacities of Global South experience unprecedented urbanization characterized by informalizations of urban spaces. While several new theoretical perspectives from fields such as geography, sociology, and urban planning are contributing heavily in understanding and explaining these mega-urbanisms of the Global South and their complicated and contested narratives, Architectural History, as a discipline, still struggles to articulate these transformations meaningfully. In the context of this epistemological dichotomy, this paper delves into an academic multilogue between architectural history as a methodological apparatus to read and understand space, recent theoretical insights from related built-environment disciplines that reflect on the Global South, and critical theories that help us understand socio-spatial processes, productions, and practices. In doing so, this paper first critiques the role of architectural history in its inability to include much of the spatial narratives of the Global South and questions the canonical understandings of architecture that most of its present academic pedagogy perpetuates. Second, it discusses the potentials of how and what architectural history and theory can learn from contemporary discourses in neighboring subjects. Third, it calls for a postcolonial intervention into architectural history and theory to enunciate the spatial narratives of the understudied Global South. Further, by configuring a critical conversation between theoretical perspectives such as Bhabha's 'hybridity', Lefebvre's triad of spatial productions, Certeau's 'strategies and tactics,' Bayat's 'quiet encroachment,' and Harvey's 'insurgent architect' this paper proposes an analytical framework that might help us read the complex, entangled, and contested urbanisms of the Global South and the history of their architectural productions.

Keywords: Architectural history, postcolonial studies, Global South

INTRODUCTION

There has been a long-standing epistemological dichotomy in architectural studies, which is of serious concern to various scholars of the Global South today. While on the one hand, architectural history fails to accommodate the spatial narratives of unprecedented massive urbanization processes in twenty-first century megacities, on the other hand, postcolonial studies hardly capture the architectural movements of these societies. This investigation picks up on this juncture and critically analyzes this gap. Building on this, it further speculates on the possible intersection between postcolonial theory and architectural history, and sheds light upon how such an intersection might give us new directions for understanding the questions and concerns that are necessary to read the urbanisms of Global South societies today.

This paper has three parts. First, by tracing various developments in architectural history and by referring to some key texts from the last century, I discuss why and how architectural history falls short in its scope to discuss spatial productions and practices in the context of the Global South, and highlight why such a limitation is of concern. Second, I refer to emergent research in

associated built environment disciplines that reveal similarities with architectural inquiries to trace how they have studied the "megacity" in Global South, in order to shed light on possible crossroads. Finally, in the third part, I use several examples of critical scholarship from postcolonial and poststructural theories and propose an analytical framework that may lead to a possible postcolonial intervention in architectural history.

1. LIMITATIONS OF ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY

Architectural history, hitherto primarily produced in Europe and America, has not been able to talk much about societies of the Global South. Western historians who have written about the non-West have, by the very weight of the category, studied it through, what Said has discussed as an orientalist lens (Bozdogan 1999; Akcan 2016). In particular, for the period from the mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth century, not only do we not have architectural accounts of the different histories that shaped the postcolonial Global South, but we also do not have scholarship that reflects upon the sense of 'architecture' that emerges from and represents the built environment and spatial practices of these geographies.

Furthermore, since the mid-nineteenth century, architectural history as a discourse has been politically dominated by the "architect's history," which necessitates the existence of an institutionalized architect, culturally recognized by the West (Bozdogan 1999; Coldstream 2003). These politics have manifestations that not only marginalize all other modes of thinking about what architectural history is, but also have far-reaching impacts that shrouded any other discourse of who is considered an architect, especially in the complicated and contested geopolitical contexts of the developing world.

Nevertheless, in the latter half of the twentieth century, two new directions have emerged from the West to look at the underexplored developing world and its' lesser-known architects. First, the development of vernacular architecture as a new epistemology looks back at "pre-modern" forms of traditional dwellings and non-pedigreed architects (Rudofsky 1965; Rapoport 1975) chiefly through climatic and cultural lenses, and argued in favor of their indigeneity and sustainability. Second, the development of critical regionalism focused on the indirect derivation of particularities of a region as a mediating strategy to resist the homogenizing forces of universalization (Frampton 1983; Lefaivre and Tzonis 2003), such as the architectural works of Charles Correa, Geoffrey Bawa, B.V. Doshi, Raj Rewal in the South Asian geopolitical context. While these two radical changes in perspectives do encourage us to see forms, spaces, and narratives beyond the lens offered by traditional Western architectural scholars, I argue that, because of a lack of Postcolonial intervention, they fall short of capturing the contestations and negotiations of the massive urbanizations of the Global South. Under three broad themes, I discuss why architectural history at its present moment is underprepared to take up this task.

1.1. OTHER

Much like history, architectural history, burgeoned within the colonial and imperial enterprises of Europe and America, and, has been shackled by a perspective that Said in 1978 described as Orientalism (Said, Bayoumi, and Rubin 2019). Said uses Foucault's reflections on authoritarian power and knowledge, along with Gramsci's discussion on hegemony, to explain how the purpose of knowing the 'orient' through the colonizer's gaze, necessitated a willful misrepresentation of it to gain and maintain control over it. Although much less acknowledged, architectural history has not only been dominated by this orientalist perspective but also aided in constructing this very perspective, which operates for and from a positionality that is West-centered. It is important to emphasize here that this gaze, not only influenced the production of architectural histories of

the colonial peripheries, but that such tendencies could also be traced back to texts produced within the center.

For example, let us critically consider the famous lectures on architecture by Viollet-Le-Duc, which had substantial influence in shaping the understanding of what defines architecture for generations to come (Viollet-Le-Duc 1877). His introductory struggle to separate the high arts from the "barbarous" is quite telling of the inherent tensions that were latent, as the cultures around him are gradually exposed to external influences. Following the traditions of the *Ecole-de-Polytechnique* school of thought in France, Le-Duc confines his texts within four categories of arts (Music, Architecture, Sculpture, and Painting) and repeatedly emphasizes the necessity of a "civilized man" to understand and appreciate arts as an instinctual response to the craving of the mind. Why is Viollet-le-Duc so concerned with the "civilized man"? What, according to him, is the "barbarous"? Moreover, how does art help make a distinction between the two? In his very normative tone present in many contemporaneous texts, Viollet-le-Duc assumes his position of superiority and dictates in a rather direct and legible way, "Building a hut with branches of trees is not Art; it is merely the supplying of a material want" (Viollet-le-Duc 1877, 12).

While it is important to note here that Viollet-le-Duc indeed fails to see art in the building of a hut with tree branches, what is even more interesting and significant is that in his struggle to define what art is, he cannot define it in its own terms, and gets conditioned by its other, i.e., what art is not (e.g., art is not "barbarous"). This underlying effort to appraise art and proclaim the superiority of the artist distinctly marks his text, while it also delineates a boundary beyond which lies every other "other" of art. Furthermore, while it can be argued whether such effort to define and confine the realm of art and its mastery is at all relevant or agreeable, it is striking, if not shocking, to note how such preferential treatment of art, provides Viollet-le-Duc a standpoint from which to politicize its different reception, in order to delegitimize the orient. For example, in discussing the interrelation of God, imagination, sculpture, and the "savage," he writes, "If the savage be a Hindoo or an Egyptian, he will soon aspire to make his god in material form such as his imagination depicts him" (Viollet-Le-Duc 1877, 23).

While such statements are highly problematic, and perhaps unacceptable to most today, it is crucial to understand the underlying project of how such thought processes that create a boundary around artistic productions continue to perpetuate in our thinking today.

A detailed critique of Viollet-le-Duc's lectures is indeed not the primary objective of this paper. However, I have tried to show how, in creating such a space of

the other in order to establish an absolute superiority, the perspective inherently limits itself in knowing about these othered conditions. While such tendencies are perhaps most prominent in this particular text, they are not exclusive to it and can be observed throughout what becomes identified as the Western canon, such as in the texts of Ruskin, Semper, Wolfliin, Scott, and Panofsky.

Nevertheless, how does this conditioning of the other aid or harm the production of knowledge about the non-West? Is it by fundamentally knowing the orient as other, that the canon loses its ability to introspect meaningfully into the non-West? How does acknowledging the colonial gaze restrict what the Western canon can explore? These questions get further complicated by yet another aspect of the methodological apparatus that is prevalent throughout architectural history, the distanced gaze.

1.2. VIEWING

In his text *The Shape of Time* (Kubler 1962), Kubler provides a perspective that was radically fresh in its time. For Kubler, the historian is tasked with the portrayal of a time, in a configuration resembling an astronomer observing the stars (Kubler 1962, 19). The historian ends up knowing and portraying time, as much as the astronomer ends up knowing about the stars. The stoicism inherent in this methodology is crucial here, as the historian places *himself*[1] distanced from time, *his* ability to portray time is as limited as that of astronomers' ability to portray stars. While Kubler emphasizes the need for this distance throughout his text to prioritize the reading of signals from historical objects, he never really explains its necessity, and rather assumes this positionality for the historian. Such a positionality of the historian distanced from the time, apparently justifies problematic correlations such as "Craft education is the activity of groups of learners performing identical actions, but artistic invention requires the solitary efforts of individual persons" (Kubler 1962, 15).

How then does the historian reach such conclusions if indeed *he* is distanced from the time to be portrayed? Such distance, I argue, privileges individuality over collective endeavors and thus exposes the problematics of the author's normative position about craft and art. Kubler fails to see the essence of invention in group work, flattens craft education as "identical actions," and fails to explain why the activity of groups producing craft is different from a solitary individual producing art. Again, we find texts that represent the canon, using their strategic historicism to create distance from the subject.

Such a distanced gaze faces substantive criticisms in the post structural reflections on everyday life that emerged a few decades later in Certeau's work (Certeau, 1984), which discusses the limitations of its scope even further. Certeau clearly states that the widespread circulation of images and narratives that are perpetuated in our societies hardly let us know anything about how the consumer uses a product. He encourages us to look for alternative approaches grounded on the street level, rather than the all-encompassing Icarian viewpoint. He says:

> To be lifted to the summit of the World Trade Center is to be lifted out of the city's grasp…An Icarus flying above these waters, he can ignore the devices of Daedalus in mobile and endless labyrinths far below. His elevation transfigures him into a voyeur. It puts him at a distance. It transforms the bewitching world by which one was "possessed" into a text that lies before one's eyes. It allows one to read it, to be a solar Eye, looking down like a god. The exaltation of a scopic and gnostic drive: the fiction of knowledge is related to this lust to be a viewpoint and nothing more. (Certeau 1984, 92)

The architect's obsession with the bird's eye view, in imagining *his* grand design, in being the voyeur of a future resembles the air-view that is employed by the architectural historian to create the fiction of the city's history (Summerson 1969). City, then in this voyeuristic gaze, becomes a fictional knowledge for many architectural historians (such as Summerson, Kostoff, and Mumford) who begin by putting themselves, much like Kubler recommends, at a distanced, elevated position of power and, in possession of specific expertise in the text, producing the criteria of determination. While I by no means question the credibility of the knowledge produced by these authors, I do wish to point out the inherent limitations for history-writing that is associated with assuming a positionality from where it is convincingly determined.

1.3. INSTITUTIONALIZATION

Who is considered an architect? Who determines this? Moreover, what role does architectural history play in the making of the architect? Such inquiries that question the normativity of discourse were perhaps not prominent before the postmodern turn in the middle of the last century, when authors and activists from various backgrounds were fighting the hubris of the modern heteronormative white male architect. Some sharply questioned the self-fancied position of power that allowed architects to foster a nostalgia of the future (Moholy-Nagy 1961), some emphasized the need to engage in complexities and contradictions in architectural thinking (Venturi 1977), some reflected deeply on the politics of bricolage (Rowe and Koetter 1975), and some launched a full-fledged attack on the institutionalized, state-sponsored practice of city planning (Jacobs 1961).

However, it was perhaps not until the groundbreaking exhibition entitled "Architecture without Architects" at the Museum of Modern Art in New York that a possible alternative to the licensed architectural practices was found (Rudofsky 1965). While the title of this exhibition and book was quite radical in its context, and it captured architectural forms and spaces from *vernacular* cultures, it is also interesting to note that it created a theoretical category of "non-architects." Thus, while many argue that the epistemological category of "vernacular architecture" does enable us to study and analyze built environments supposedly outside the canon, it again reinforces the institutional pedagogy to define and control them as separate. Similarly, in Rapoport's work (Rapoport 1975), categories such as "vernacular architecture," "shelter," "folk architecture," while studied extensively, are somehow put in a pre-modern and non-urban space, and the agency of their producers becomes other to that of the work of licensed, institutionalized architects.

These limitations, identified in three categories, expose the inherent vulnerabilities of architectural studies in understanding and reading built environments, forms, and spaces within the established and relatively stable Western canon. For the Global South then, where the megacity provides conditions that are even more complicated, contradicted, and contested, how can we rely on architectural history and its methodological apparatus? What can we learn from the built-environment disciplines, such as urban planning, sociology, or geography?

2. URBAN INFORMALITY

Rooted in the economic concept of the informal sector (Hart 1973) urban informality has become a subject of scholarly interest across disciplines such as urban planning, sociology, and geography. Within the context of the Postcolonial Global South, urban informality has nuanced understandings of employment, citizenship, poverty, and urban space. It has been used to explain a range of socio-spatial, socio-economic, and socio-political aspects of megacities such as slums, pavement-dwelling, street-hawking, urban poverty, subaltern social movements, non-movements, everyday resistance, and "illegal" encroachments to name a few. Urban informality and related concepts, such as quiet encroachment (Bayat 2000), occupancy urbanism (Benjamin 2008), insurgent planning (Miraftab 2016), messy urbanism (Hou and Chalana 2017), broadly capture the research area that discusses what is fundamentally different between the canonical epistemes of "cities" and the cities of the Global South and how such differences manifest in their corresponding built environments and spatial practices.

Important to emphasize here, is how far away from their disciplinary canons these researches go, in order to be able to capture in bits the contested landscapes of the contemporary Global South megacities. Some scholarship has not only gone beyond the prevalent theoretical paradigm, but has also challenged the very disciplinary dogmas they emerge from. This is partly because of the inherent limitations of the canonical apparatus of the disciplines themselves, and partly due to the new effort in articulating the underexplored Global South, which the canon fails to do theoretically. Roy has captured this epistemological crisis in a rather straightforward way as "the dominant theorizations of global city-regions are rooted in the EuroAmerican experience and are thus unable to analyze multiple forms of metropolitan modernities" (Roy 2009, 819).

However, we cannot operate under the assumption that the larger body of Postcolonial criticisms have been fruitful in dismantling architectural history's eurocentrism, as much as it has done so in other disciplines. As recent intellectual endeavors of rethinking the canon have revealed:

> Art and architectural history have responded to Said's challenge, albeit on a more subdued scale than some other academic fields. Not surprisingly, much of this recent scholarship follows the model established by Orientalism and engages in a series of analyses focusing on works of art and architecture that contribute to the construction of an "Orient." (Camille et al. 1996, 202)

Most architectural historians who have worked in the context of the 21st century megacity in the Global South have either relied on other fields, looked at the Global South through a mixed lens approach, or have used their architectural expertise to investigate the urban fabric, while avoiding the question of "architecture" altogether. A strong questioning of the field of architectural history and how it shapes the meaning of 'architecture' is yet to come forth. While a crisis was felt for a long time in the discourse, it was perhaps not until Esra Ackan's text entitled "Postcolonial Theories in Architecture" that these possible interventions made themselves heard. Ackan, referring to Bozdogan's work, says, "Apart from suggesting an emphasis on intertwined histories, Bozdogan argues . . . that only when a non-Western architect "reaches the level" of Western "skill and sophistication," can s/he be appreciated and press the boundaries of the canon" (Akcan 2016, 136).

How can we further Akcan's discussions on postcolonial theories *in* architecture, of what can be a postcolonial theory *of* architecture? How can it have a critical conversation with postcolonial urban theory (Roy 2016)? And then, how does architectural history reflect on the postcolonial space? These are the theoretical investigations that guide the locus of my work and

situates it in the intersection of architectural history and urban informality.

3. PROPOSED FRAMEWORK

For my doctoral work, I am attempting to write an architectural history of urban informality that can help explain the entangled spatial productions of Global South megacities from an architectural perspective. For this, I have found the proposition of insurgent architects (Harvey 2000) as a useful category. Insurgent architects, as Harvey explains, are embodied beings, who do not have institutionalized training or licenses, but by their practice, they subvert the dominant spatial order. I argue that investigating the various design tactics employed by insurgent architects in producing such forms and spaces will give us deeper insight into the making of urban informality, not only as a "new" way of life (AlSayyad 2004) but also as a mode of spatial production (Lefebvre 1991).

3.1. POSTCOLONIAL HYBRIDITY

In his essay "Signs taken for Wonders," Homi K. Bhabha introduces the concept of hybridity in the context of postcolonial cultural productions (Bhabha 1985) which also appears in his book *The Location of Culture*, along with some more related discussions on concepts such as mimicry, sly civility, and most importantly the realm of 'beyond' (Bhabha 1994). For postcolonial, societal contexts, one should refrain from reducing the hybrid to a condition of either mixed/combined/overlapped/juxtaposed/multilayered/palimpsest, as some streams of architectural and urban design thinking that prioritize geometric forms and cartographic morphologies might tend to do. Instead, hybridity allows us to find meaning in the realm of in-between, combats polarization and rigid categories, and provides a way of thinking.

Bhabha roots his argument by emphasizing the ambivalence at the source of the colonial discourse of power, meaning that we need to question the overarching narrative that colonization of different geographies intended to reproduce and resemble the colonial centers. Instead, Bhabha finds a paradox that is: within the project of colonization, colonizers designed a partial influence for maintaining colonial dependency which simultaneously, for Bhabha, became the subversive grounds of insurgent interventions. It is in this milieu of cultural production that Bhabha, explaining hybridity, writes:

> If the effect of colonial power is seen to be the *production* of hybridization rather than the noisy command of colonialist authority or the silent repression of native traditions, then an important change of perspective occurs. It reveals the ambivalence at the source of traditional discourses on authority and enables a form

> of subversion, founded on that uncertainty, that turns the discursive conditions of dominance into grounds of intervention. (Bhabha 1985, 154)

Taking up Bhabha's challenge in writing a history of architecture requires distancing ourselves from our dispositions with specificity and coming to terms with unknowing, and understanding that the unknowable, in fact, is part of the knowable.

3.2. HYBRID SPATIAL PRODUCTIONS

Lefebvre, in his highly regarded book, *The Production of Space*, proposed a triad for analyzing spatial productions, following a Marxist approach that society secretes its own space, or even more obviously, (social) space is a (social) product (Lefebvre 1991). The triad suggested that space is produced by a dynamic interrelation of the following analytic categories: spatial practice, representations of space, and representational space. Accordingly, spatial practice embodies "a close association, within perceived space, between daily reality (daily routine) and urban reality (the routes and networks which link up the places set aside for work, 'private' life and leisure)"; representations of space are "conceptualized space, the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers, as of a certain type of artist with a scientific bent—all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived"; and, representational space signifies "space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of 'inhabitants' and 'users'" (Lefebvre 1991, 38-39).

Now we can ask, is Lefebvre's triad robust enough to help us understand the ambivalent productions of hybrid spaces in twenty-first century postcolonial societies? Consider the case if we were to take Lefebvre's triad to the slums of Mumbai or the favelas of Rio de Janeiro and try to make sense of them. Indeed, the slums and favelas are built and lived environments. One can understand their spatial practices, albeit to a limited extent, through observing their gradual transformation over time via satellite imagery, by surveilling them through different state apparatuses, such as police or planning agencies, or by the ethnographic projects by academic researchers who engage with the community and document anecdotal accounts. Furthermore, if one chooses to represent these understandings, by doing an art project, writing a research paper, making a documentary, or producing full-fledged commercial films such as *Slumdog Millionaire* or *Gullyboy*, such spaces can then fit into what Lefebvre calls representational spaces.

The question that puts to the test the robustness of Lefebvre's triad, and thus also becomes the motivation of my project, concerns the representations of space

in the context of postcolonial hybridities? How can we make sense of the question—what is the conceptualized space of the slums or favelas, of barrios, of hawking, encroaching or poaching? Who are their conceptualizers?

3.3. STRATEGIES, TACTICS, QUIET ENCROACHMENTS, AND INSURGENT ARCHITECTS

Certeau's discussions regarding the consumption of culture and the role of the user in this process of consumption revolve around a deep discussion on the everyday life of the ordinary man (Certeau 1984). Certeau argues that to set up an understanding of cultural production, one must consider the everyday utilization of the products by the user. Certeau puts forth two concepts that are very crucial for this framework and this project, strategies and tactics, which originates in military lexicons to explain the utilization of time and space. In Certeau's words, ". . . strategies pin their hopes on the resistance that the *establishment of a place* offers to the erosion of time; tactics on a clever *utilization of time,* of the opportunities it presents and also of the play that it introduces into the foundations of power,' etc." (Certeau 1984, 38–39).

Strategies are organizations of spaces and units by broader frameworks of power or establishments, and tactics are manipulations of such organizations in the moment. Strategies and tactics within hybrid postcolonial spaces become a bit more complicated when the conditions are more contentious. How, for example, can we understand the street hawking in Calcutta? Despite the decade long strategic efforts of the State to remove hawkers, the street hawkers of Calcutta were successful in unionizing, resisting, and protecting their space in the city (Bandopadhyay 2016). Now, in a country like India, where most of the people belong to the informal sector, then it is it not the case that, in terms of scale, the postcolonial context can potentially reverse the understanding of strategies and tactics, as Certeau described it?

Based on his observations on the Middle East over the last 20 years, Bayat argues that the absence of traditionally recognized cooperative or collective organizations amongst the urban poor does not necessarily suggest a paucity of grassroots activism; instead, the urban poor have resorted to, what Bayat refers to as an alternate strategy of quiet encroachment (Bayat 1996):

> Quiet encroachment refers to noncollective but prolonged direct actions of dispersed individuals and families to acquire the basic necessities of their lives (land for shelter, urban collective consumption or urban services, informal work, business opportunities, and public space) in a quiet and unassuming illegal fashion. (Bayat 2009, 45)

This idea of quiet encroachment as a non-collective strategy of the urban poor to manipulate the imposing strategy (or lack thereof) of the State power and its spatial ordering is perhaps the most robust concept that explains the socio-economic and cultural dynamics of informal urban practices in Global South cities.

Quite related to this discussion is a similar perspective that gains mileage in David Harvey's relatively later work, in which he refers to the insurgent architect (Harvey 2000). In the chapter "The Insurgent Architect at Work" of the book *Spaces of Hope*, Harvey calls for the speculative future of praxis, where insurgent architects, who are embodied beings, are capable of altering the future locus of city-making, by intervening themselves into its means of productions. He says, "The insurgent architect, like everyone else, is an embodied person . . . The person is endowed with certain powers and skills that can be used to change the world" (Harvey 2000, 234).

Drawing from the multilogues under section three, I propose the following theoretical framework to analyze the architectural narratives of informalization processes in Global South megacities. First, to use Bhabha's postcolonial hybridity to look at the megacity. Second, to use Lefebvre's tripartite framework to understand its spatial productions. Third, advancing Certeau's idea of strategy and tactics to uncover the forms and spaces of informalities. Fourth, locating Harvey's idea of the insurgent architect, and Bayat's account of quiet encroachments respectively as producers and produced spaces of informalities.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Reading across literature from various disciplines, I have come to three interrelated concluding directions that can help mobilize the potentials of architectural history for engaging postcolonial urban space.

4.1. RETHINKING ARCHITECTURAL PEDAGOGY

Mainstream professional architecture courses continue to perpetuate an understanding of the history of modern architecture in terms of Le Corbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright, Bauhaus, and CIAM, and their postmodern criticisms are chiefly limited to the likes of Jane Jacobs, Robert Venturi, Collin Rowe, and Rem Koolhas. The sheer suppression of the 'other' narratives, such as that of women or people of color or immigrants or indigenous societies or transnational standpoints, throughout the discourse spanning two centuries, is so potent that even to conceive of alternate historiographies that can meaningfully counter this canonical regime, presents an incredible intellectual, if not a political, challenge for the scholars of the twenty-first century. However, to bring forth such a radical change in architectural pedagogy,

architectural historians may find meaningful directions from the intersections of its neighboring disciplines with postcolonial studies.

4.2. ADDING ARCHITECTURAL NUANCES

Built environment disciplines such as sociology, urban planning, and geography are contributing heavily to studying the informalization processes of the urban Global South. However, these miss the architectural narratives of these spaces and their practices. This epistemological gap should be of concern, not only to architectural historians, but to all those who are studying spatial productions and practices in their geopolitical context. A postcolonial intervention is thus necessary, not only for the field of architectural history, but also for all disciplines that architectural history can impact.

4.3. DEINSTITUIONALIZING THE 'ARCHITECT'

A meaningful postcolonial intervention in architectural history is different from critiquing architectural history through a postcolonial lens. While the idea of the 'architect' has been questioned several times in different contexts, none have actually been able to penetrate the protective shield of institutionalization within which architects shelter themselves, both in the traditional sense and in the context of postcolonial societies. The category of the insurgent architect, as a possible venture to deinstitutionalize the role of architect in our societies may make way for a more meaningful role in architectural history's endeavor to narrate postcolonial urban space.

ENDNOTES

1   I use *himself/his/he* for the historian to correspond with the usage of this pronoun in the referred text.

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