

A REGIONALIST APPROACH

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# A REGIONALIST APPROACH TO MODERN ARCHITECTURE

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HOW CAN A 'LOCAL IDENTITY' BE ENVISIONED WHEN THE CONTEMPORARY 'LOCAL'  
IS CHARACTERIZED BY THE COMPLEXITY OF MULTIPLE LAYERS OF IDENTITY?

Contemporary architectural thought deals with the ever-more complex notion that architecture must relate to the needs of society and respond to people in context such as interacting between societies. Traditionally architecture proved to be place-, time- and culture-specific, with available technology as the ultimate limitation. Nowadays, having the technology to build almost anything, almost anywhere, perhaps the major challenge facing architecture is one of identity.

While Paul Brislin highlights the controversiality that identity brings about when it comes to the creation of spaces, the architect and philosopher Juhani Pallasmaa stresses the urge for an architecture that is resistant to universal homogenization based on the argument that cultural identity, as a sense of rootedness and belonging, is an irreplaceable ground of our very humanity.

The concept of regional architecture claims that, "‘Being Modern’ often requires the attenuation of tradition and continuity to attain the fruits of progress and innovation (...) regional modernism and critical regionalism build the new upon a measured respect for traditional and regional culture."<sup>1</sup> However convincing this position is in theory, contemporary architecture often seems to be influenced by external factors which result in ongoing processes of homogenization. One might even question: What if homogenization is an intentional process, and what are the advantages of blankness in ever-more socially diverse contexts?

By investigating what identity is and how it is promoted through different world views, I want to look at the China Art Academy in Hangzhou by Amateur Architecture Studio and the ongoing constructions of the University of Brighton by Architects Hassell as my case studies. Analysing different contemporary approaches, with special regard to the idea that to design one is building identities and strengthening world views, might show how the cultural context becomes the physical built context.

Overall, in terms of the idea of cementing an identity, the argument might not be for one approach over another, but for a call for a critical knowledge of the context one is building in, and a clear understanding of which identity one holds as a priority.

Abstract.....V

Introduction.....13

Argument.....17-61

    What is Identity?.....21

    The Vernacular continuum of Culture & Tradition.....27

    Critical Regionalism.....35

    Change.....43

    Globalization.....51

    The New Identity?.....59

Case Studies.....63-78

    ‘The Big Build’ - University of Brighton.....67

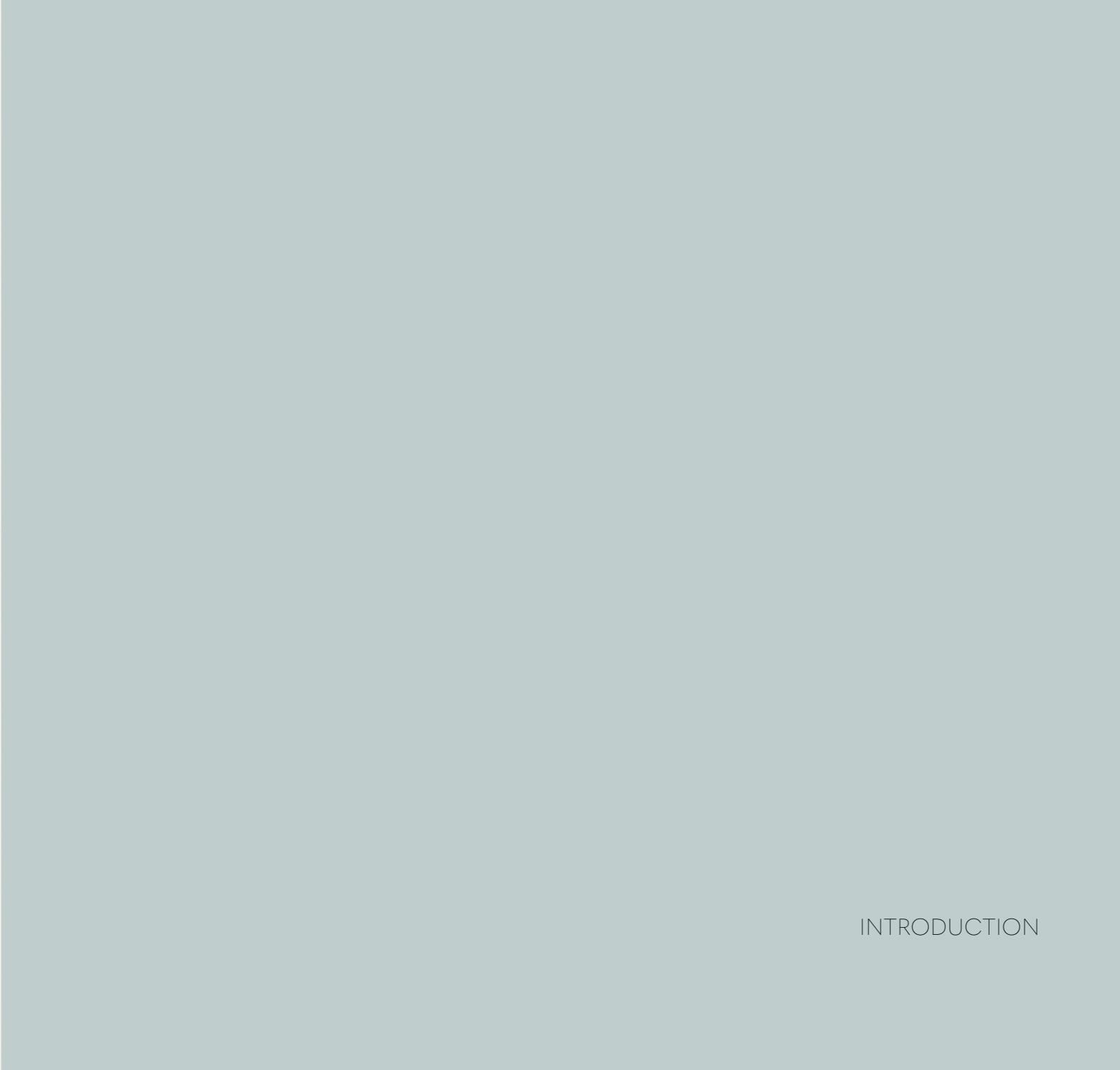
    ‘Xiangshan Campus’ - China Academy of Art.....75

Conclusion.....79

List of Illustrations.....87

Bibliography.....91

Appendix.....97



INTRODUCTION



Figure 1: The contemporary built environment is in a state of constant flux.

“(…) what should be the basic question for architecture, which architects never formulate: Is it normal to build or construct? In fact it is not, and we should preserve the absolutely problematic character of the undertaking.”<sup>1</sup>

Since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, rapid transformations in society have caused shifts in values and introduced new forms of economic driven structures. The “space of harmony”<sup>2</sup>, associated with historic build environments, appeared to be ever-more disrupted by the developing “space of chaos”<sup>3</sup>. Although many have argued how Modernism has inflicted irreversible damage with its revolutionary purposes and agree that there is a need for new solutions, the question on how to proceed remains. The idea of returning to the sort of predominant tradition amongst cultures that existed in pre-industrial era seems utopian, however idyllic it might appear. This calls for a more realistic approach and search for a critical awareness of the interaction with history, one that would invigorate and not debilitate.

The poet and critic TS Eliot, in his essay ‘Tradition and the individual Talent’, written before the forward driven position of the modern avant-gardes had developed into an everlasting destructive force, argued for a more autonomous concept of tradition which would allow opportunities for individual creativity whilst continuously reaffirming our links with the past. This position could be attained through what he called a “historical sense”<sup>4</sup>, an awareness of not merely the pastness of the past, but of its contemporary existence.

Our contemporary build environment is characterized by ever-growing diversity as an effect of globalization. Although this situation allows trends and influences to spread at fast pace, the contemporary reality of relentless communication and constant change has increased the desire for connection. If architecture must relate to the needs of society and societies have their characteristics reflected in what they build, then architecture must respond to people in context and as they interact within and between societies.

<sup>1</sup> Jean Baudrillard and Francesco Proto, *Mass, Identity, Architecture: Architectural Writings of Jean Baudrillard* (Chichester, Wiley Academy, 2003), XIII

<sup>2</sup> Farrokh Derakhshani, ‘Appropriating, Reclaiming and Inventing Identity through Architecture’ *Architectural Design* 82, no. 6 (2012), Page 31

<sup>3</sup> Derakhshani, ‘Appropriating, Reclaiming and Inventing Identity through Architecture’ *Architectural Design* 82, no. 6 (2012), Page 31

<sup>4</sup> Ben Farmer and Hentie J. Louw, *Companion to Contemporary Architectural Thought* (London: Routledge, 1993), 181

Considering the inseparable and complex impact the creation of spaces might have upon the broadening of people's identity, architects carry the responsibility to find a compromise between what they control and what they provoke. Yet, all over the world, homogeneous, time- and cost-efficient architectural solutions are created. "Architecture consists in working against a background of spatial deconstruction."<sup>5</sup> When the change inflicted by constructions dismisses the sense of unique identity of place and prioritises the mentioned efficiencies, it also fails to respond to the essence of human identity that is rooted in its context.

However, change is a foreseeable consequence of the persistent interaction of the social-, economic- and institutional forces and nowadays it occurs with ever-more speed. One could say that in our age of globalization we are faced with two things, the idea of nostalgia and belonging, and the notion of an identity that is being lost within the homogenization of economic driven urban environments. Therefore, the question over what or whose identity is being prioritised within this state of flux becomes crucial. There is a need for reinforcing not just what the place looks like, but what it stands for, the values

embedded within it and the creating of identities that begin to promote a world view.

This dissertation will start to formulate an argument around the question: What is Identity? This will open to several approaches and responses regarding its complexity, depending on distinct perspectives. Then, looking at the two chosen case studies, the aim is to compare at what level contemporary architectural thought might differ and show its effects. An interview with Julian Gitsham, principal architect of 'The Big Build' in Brighton, will help to understand what Architects Hassell envision for this project. Since it is designed by an international architectural practice, which tend to focus on delivery, this might be an example of the homogeneity that results under such pressure. Yet, their ambition lays in achieving an upgrade to the local area, adding a new layer of identity that responds to a vibrant community. Contrary, Amateur Architecture Studio is known for the slow and careful manner of construction. Co-founder and Pritzker Prize winner Wang Shu claims that: "Construction is actually ignorant destruction of the built environment, when architects have no profound understanding of

tradition."<sup>6</sup> The adaptation of elements from rich architectural traditions, such as skilful use of juxtaposed modern and traditional building materials, speak for their clear intention of creating spaces that are rooted in their context and yet respond to universal scales of production.

As university campuses, both projects function as institutional buildings, therefore the architecture might influence the formation of new local identities. With regard to the argument around the key question of identity, and the study of seemingly opposing approaches, the aim is to investigate if the right approach to achieve an identity that people can relate to is by enhancing the traditional local character, or whether the architecture of globalization emerges as a new layer of 'identity' within a wider world view. Hence, trying to answer the question of how a local identity might be envisioned when the contemporary 'local' is characterized by the complexity of multiple layers of identity?



Figure 2: 'The Big Build' Moulsecoomb Campus, University of Brighton under construction. Designed by Architects Hassell



Figure 3: 'Xiangshan Campus', China Academy of Art in Hangzhou, China. Designed by Amateur Architecture Studio

<sup>5</sup> Baudrillard and Proto, *Mass, Identity, Architecture* (Chichester: Wiley Academy, 2003), 27

<sup>6</sup> Wang Shu, Iwan Baan, Michael Juul Holm, Kjeld Kjeldsen, Mette Marie Kallehauge, and Louisiana (Museum : Humlebæk, Denmark), *Wang Shu Amateur Architecture Studio* (Baden: Lars Müller Publishers, 2017), 8

WHAT IS IDENTITY?



Figure 4: The making of space has an inseparable relation towards the concept of identity.

In terms of the making of space, with its aspects that make places unique, or qualitatively different from others, the concept of identity has developed into a major focus of discussion as a matter that gives rise to architectural debates across the world. "Draw it too tightly and it is a noose: a boundary marker that defines the separation between individuals or between one group and another (...) And yet draw it too loosely and we no longer feel the connection between people and place. (...) Ironically that which sustains us might also destroy us."<sup>7</sup> With reference to the way Foucault, Lefebvre, Soja and others have defined how "spatiality"<sup>8</sup> affects us, Paul Brislin points out how the making of space has a complex and controversial, however inseparable, relation towards the making and sustaining of human identity.

Understanding the physical impact that architecture evokes upon social environments, increases the intense desire for cultural character that civilisations experience when it comes to rapid urbanisation and change. The sensitivity around this matter is

ever-more important, considering the mobility of people nowadays, where communities are in state of constant flux, and anyone who is creating spaces may affect the aspirations and identity of a widespread community.

One might agree that if identity is essential towards human existence, then spatialization might have an essential impact upon the furthering of identities. The apparent complexity of the notion of identity opens hereby to a wider range of questions concerning the potentials of an architecture that can cherish individuals and offer a balance between the rootedness, given by the unique character of a place; and the sense of alienation, generated by the flux of developing societies. So, one could argue that building identity revolves around whose identity is prioritised within a context, and the world view that priority comes from. Thus, the questioning of context becomes relevant, as in, what does it mean to be contextual and how can that be translated into an architectural language that speaks for the complexity of multi-layered societies?

<sup>7</sup> Paul Brislin, 'Identity, Place and Human Experience', *Architectural Design* 82, no. 6 (2012), 8

<sup>8</sup> Michel Foucault, Henri Lefebvre, Edward Soja and others have defined how spatiality – manmade geographies, urban planning and place – is complicit in the localisation of a network of power relationships that operate on societies and individuals and on the human body, conditioning their and our behaviour. Foucault and Colin Gordon, *Power/knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977* (London; New York; Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1980). Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), Edward W. Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice* (Vol. 16, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2010)

THE VERNACULAR CONTINUUM OF CULTURE & TRADITION



Figure 5: Nature, culture and tradition merge into a layer of identity with a strong sense of regional character.

Sustaining the sense of rootedness and belonging as an irreplaceable ground of human identity, spaces and places are not simply phases for people's lives. As people settle in a place, the place settles in them. Accordingly, to enable a ground of identification for many, Maurice Merleau-Ponty suggestively points out: "We come to see not the work of art, but the world according to the work."<sup>9</sup> In other words, when it comes to creating spaces, the more objective a work is, the more likely it is to offer a ground for identification for a diverse society.

Taking the position that perceives architecture as a way of structuring an understanding of the past, one might achieve such objectivity by building layers of identity that restructure the reading of the continuum of time, drawing on the entire history of building of certain place. With regard to Forty's critical assessment of 'nature' as a category, "for most of the last five hundred years 'nature' has been the main, if not the principal category for organizing thought about what architecture is or might be."<sup>10</sup> Hence, one might understand that being comprehensively observant and sensitive towards the existing environment becomes key

in the making of vernacular architecture. When nature, culture and tradition merge into the layers of identity, the built environment speaks for a strong sense of regional character.



Figure 6: The consistency of vernacular architecture found in the historic centre of Siena causes its strong regional identity, yet make it seem as if it was detained in some moment of history. This has made it become a major tourist attraction.

However nowadays, interest in the dominance of tradition is often associated with ideas of nostalgia and conservatism. During the past few decades,

<sup>9</sup> As quoted in Iain McGilchrist, *The Master and His Emissary* (Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, and London, 2010), 409

<sup>10</sup> Adrian Forty, *Words and Buildings: A Vocabulary of Modern Architecture* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2000), 220

the “coherence and harmony of landscapes and cityscapes”<sup>11</sup> has strongly been affected since the priority given to the historical layering in the making of architecture faded. Although tradition, as the continuum of an identity, is no longer as relevant, one might achieve a sense of place by taking the time to sensibly regard its specific natural characteristics; getting to know the human culture of a specific place; such as observing its established building culture. Providing experiences of place-connectedness and authenticity might not happen without these characteristics. Yet, when the focus has shifted towards progress, as in the present and the future, giving rise to uniqueness and newness as a principal criterion, there is need for criticism and a consciousness of balance.

<sup>11</sup> Juhani Pallasmaa, ‘Newness, Tradition and Identity: Existential Content and Meaning in Architecture’, *Architectural Design* 82, no. 6 (2012), 14-21. – Making reference to his lecture given in 1988 entitled ‘Tradition and Modernity: The Feasibility of Regional Architecture on Postmodern Society’ at a conference in Copenhagen entitled ‘Nordic Tradition’. The lecture was subsequently published in the *Architectural Review* 5, May (1988)



Figure 7: Ruins of ancient cities represent the dominant regional character which defines the identity, but might also underpin negative aspects of some establishments.





Figure 8: Reinventing regionalism means mediating the impact of universal civilization to elements derived directly from the place.



Figure 9: Primitive builders, from Filarete's Treatise (1460-64). The Vitruvian myth of the origin of the first buildings linked architecture to mankind's first, 'natural' state.

The concept of regionalism dates back to Vitruvius. "Regionalism is never a singular theory or practice but is most often a means by which tensions – such as those between globalization and localism, modernity and tradition – are resolved."<sup>12</sup> To solve these tensions, architecture is regarded as a means to give people an "existential foothold"<sup>13</sup>, nurtured by the characteristics of a place. The regional character is an essential element within authentic architecture. For buildings to form part of a specific 'here' they should embody certain qualities of a given place, and thus avoid being alike everywhere.

Throughout history, this quality has been recognized as the 'genius loci', or as Norberg-Schulz explains: "there are no different kinds of architecture, but only different situations which require different solutions in order to satisfy man's physical and psychic needs."<sup>14</sup> One might also understand the idea of a developing and ever-changing identity, provided the satisfaction of people's needs is ever-changing.

In the 18th century, William Temple was one of the earliest theoreticians to emphasise on an architecture drawn from the natural typography of a specific location known as 'Your Genius, the Genius of the Place'. Historically buildings usually, although they often responded to a general style, suggested an explicit local flavour. Architecture thus helped man to identify with the "spirit of the place"<sup>15</sup> and offered him a sense of belonging and security.

However, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, regionalist architecture was a means of imposing the identity and authority of a region, which led in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to a nationalist movement. One clear example of such

<sup>12</sup> Vincent B. Canizaro, *Architectural Regionalism: Collected Writings on Place, Identity, Modernity, and Tradition* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2007), 16

<sup>13</sup> Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* (London: Academy Editions, 1980), 5

<sup>14</sup> Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci* (London, 1980), 5

<sup>15</sup> Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Principles of Modern Architecture* (London: Papadakis, 2000), 11

extreme is Germany's 'Heimatsarchitektur', yet comparable trends developed during the 1900's in several parts of world ruled under totalitarian regimes.

Moreover, the commercial activity and capitalist world grew parallel to that. In this scenario, "many regionalist architects seek to provide authentic experiences through design. As such they deal in the notion of authenticity as connectedness, participation, and the possibility of real local experiences."<sup>16</sup> This led to commercial regionalist settings, a simulacrum of places aimed at tourists, in the form of illusion, make-believe environments, such as kitsch and mass media products, which fed the emotions of being in a certain place. Concerned with the effects caused by extreme positions of either nationalism or commercial globalization, the writer-, cultural historian- and critic Lewis Mumford intends to reinvent and rephrase regionalism. He stressed the importance of giving new significance to community and finding a reason for an area to be considered independent, without the mentioned negative aspects.

Later, Kenneth Frampton's theory of critical

regionalism highlights that the contemporary condition of globalization, while demonstrating progression, also indicates a certain form of destruction within the spectrum of culture and tradition.

"It seems as if mankind, by approaching 'en masse' a basic consumer culture, were also stopped 'en masse' at a subcultural level. (...) Everything will depend in the last analysis on the capacity of regional culture to recreate a rooted tradition while appropriating foreign influences at the level of both culture and civilization. (...) If any central principle of critical regionalism can be isolated, then it is surely a commitment to place."<sup>17</sup>

His theory addresses the conflict of change that globalization brings about concerning the issues of cultural heritage getting lost and calls for balancing universal impacts with fundamental aspects of a specific local context. Nevertheless, considering the extent of this 'change' taking over in the world; if the vernacular of an area emerged from the environment at that time, from the beliefs of the

<sup>16</sup> Canizaro, *Architectural Regionalism* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2007), 27

<sup>17</sup> Kenneth Frampton, 'Prospects for a Critical Regionalism' (Perspecta 20, 1983: 147-162), 17

inhabitants and their needs, then perhaps this is not different. One might consider questioning if this 'consumer culture' might be a transition away from the vernacular, where new identities emerge independent from place. What if architecture of globalization uncovers new layers of 'identity' within a wider world view?

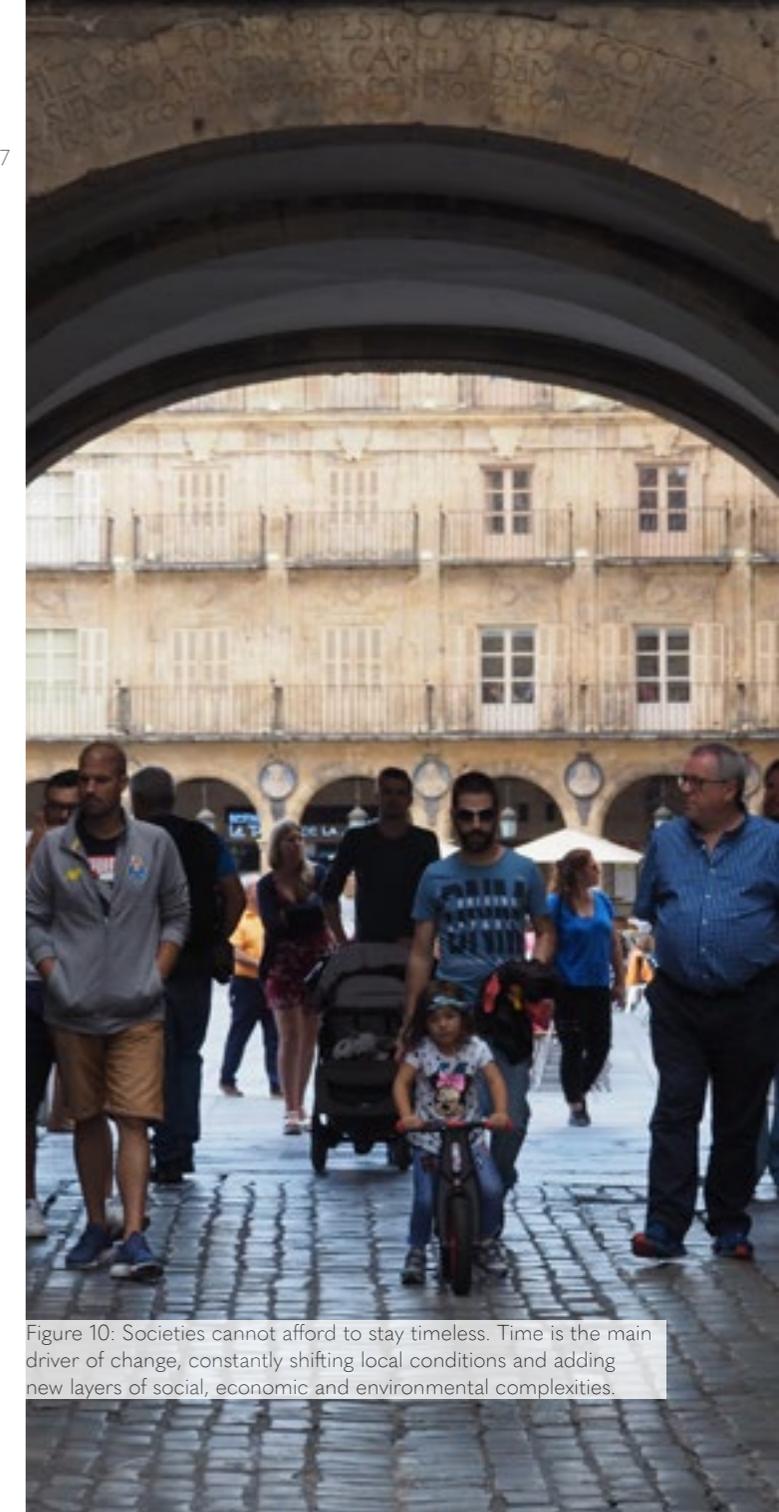


Figure 10: Societies cannot afford to stay timeless. Time is the main driver of change, constantly shifting local conditions and adding new layers of social, economic and environmental complexities.

CHANGE

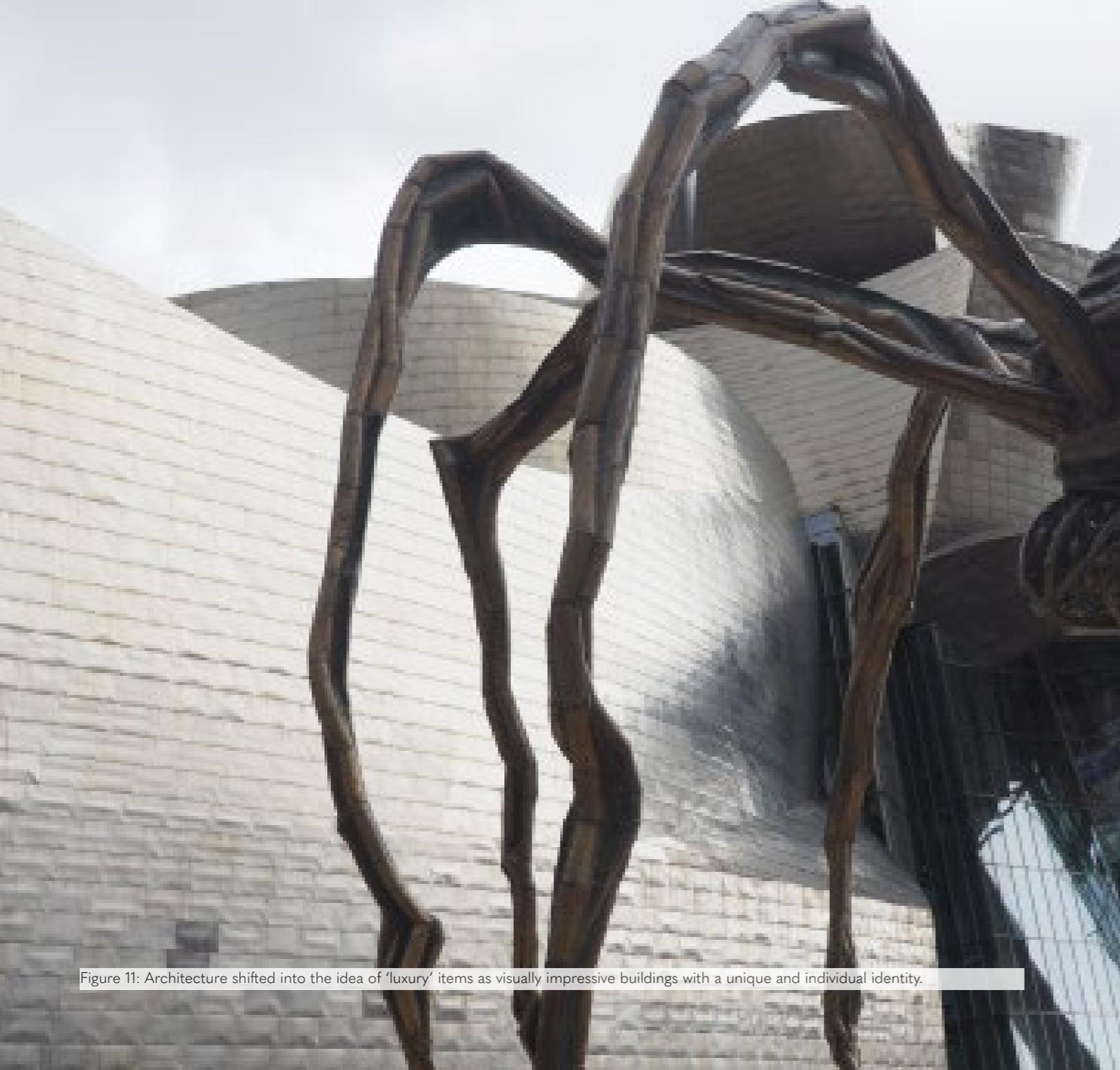


Figure 11: Architecture shifted into the idea of 'luxury' items as visually impressive buildings with a unique and individual identity.

With regard to the loss of the sense of history and evolutionary identity, it is suggested that for at least 30 years the economy has strongly affected significant potentials of architecture. In fact, in several developing countries the augmented reality of contemporary investment strategies, such as universal time- and cost-efficient methods of construction, have in many aspects restricted what architecture is capable of promoting. Koolhaas analysed the situation pointing out that, "(...) the ¥€\$ Regime, the regime of the market economy, which has infiltrated every single pocket of autonomy, has turned architecture into a different art. (...) I think architecture is gone. (...)"<sup>18</sup> The change of architecture is here seen as parting from seemingly producing buildings that were simply necessary and turning to the idea of architecture as assets or 'luxury items'.

The concern of architecture becoming less responsive to people's needs and more linked to economic growth emerged around the early 1970s. At the time, Robert Smithson anticipated Koolhaas's analysis and warned both his contemporary

architects and economists of ignoring the irreversible impact these two professions may inflict.

"Architects build in an isolated, self-contained, ahistorical way. They never seem to allow for any kind of relationships outside of their grand plan. And this seems to be true in economics too. (...) There is very little consideration of natural resources in terms of what the landscape looks like after the mining operations or farming operations are completed. So that a kind of blindness ensues. I guess it's what we call blind profit-making."<sup>19</sup>

Smithson drew awareness to an emerging position that lead architects and economists to the change into evermore individuality through the production of subjective models. These respond to innovative global views, yet individual taste, and disregard constitutive externalities. Forty's critical analysis of nature shows the break and change of perception as "in the early to mid-twentieth century when, in the era of high modernism, 'nature' was largely

<sup>18</sup> Rem Koolhaas and Jorge Otero-Pailos, "Paul S. Byard Memorial Lecture", *Preservation is Overtaking Us* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 21  
<sup>19</sup> Robert Smithson, 'Entropy Made Visible: Interview with Alison Sky (1973)', *The Writings of Robert Smithson*, ed Nancy Holt (New York: New York University Press, 1979), 309

put into abeyance; however, in the 1960's with the coming of the environmental movement, a re-invented 'nature' has returned to the vocabulary of architecture."<sup>20</sup> The irreversible shift architecture and economics imposed, often described as irreversible destruction, can be seen in the way 'green architecture' responds to the idea of re-invented nature. Driven by economic growth, blindness towards the consumption of natural resources and erosion of evolutionary identity became reality. Buildings are often torn down and replaced by the mentioned 'green architecture'. While this means that nowadays there is an encouragement of the consumption of green solutions, the suggestion that both practices are rooted in the logic of capital remains.

Consequences depend on level of economic development and geographic regions, though global tendencies have emerged: "At the macro scale, cities are becoming more spatially fragmented, more socially divisive and more environmentally destructive. As a result, they will have more negative consequences at a local and global level."<sup>21</sup>

However, one might argue that this change is partially driven with the aim to improve urban living conditions. Since cities are facing overcrowding due to the continuously growing urban populations, there is a need for quick solutions. Therefore, it is worth questioning if this situation results in a new layer of identity, a future without its intrinsic past as a result of globalization?

<sup>20</sup> Adrian Forty, *Words and Buildings: A Vocabulary of Modern Architecture* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2000), 220

<sup>21</sup> "Through the Urban Age network we have built up a comprehensive overview of how a number of global cities perform by asking questions about the speed of change, the demographic profile, and the sustainability of various urban forms." Ricky Burdett, *Mapping Scales of Urban Identity* (London, 2012)



Figure 12: The issue is extremely sensitive in rapidly changing societies. Those that create the built environment might become responsible for the aspirations of the wider community.

GLOBALIZATION



Figure 13: Every city has a unique urban identity, yet the ever-more 'efficient' buildings transform that identity into characterless landscapes.

With regard to the increasingly diverse expansion of population, one could argue that the perception of local identity as sharing common elements of the past is becoming insignificant. "The stronger the identity, the more it imprisons, the more it resists expansion, interpretation, renewal, contradiction."<sup>22</sup> This argument is fundamental when it comes to dealing with those ever-changing globalized contexts.

However, the issue lays in the bulk of what is being built. The spatial and temporal nature in which the build environment grows, limits the opportunity of gradual integration of diverse populations within the development of a place. Therefore, those places lack the atmosphere that results from evolving spatial accretions. They result in new, efficient, yet characterless landscapes, promoting what is known as corporate identity. Ironically, by comparing the homogeneity of such "concentrations of 'placeless' constructions"<sup>23</sup>, with the unique identity of places that have settled over an extended period, the apparent co-dependency between the formal economy and informal development is brought into sharp focus. Therefore, one might question

whether the very intention of global capital and investment, to provide evermore expansion and diversity, is to isolate from the sense of temporal and cultural accumulation of place and creating lifeless architecture as a result.

"Is the contemporary city like the contemporary airport – 'all the same'? (...) Convergence is possible only at the price of shedding identity. That is usually seen as a loss. What are the disadvantages of identity, and conversely what are the advantages of blankness? What if seemingly accidental – and usually regretted – homogenization were an intentional process, a conscious movement away from difference toward similarity? What if we are witnessing a global liberation movement: 'down with character!' What is left after identity is stripped? The Generic?"<sup>24</sup>

In his text, 'Generic City', Koolhaas reacts to the idea of corporate identity in a provocative manner. While the suggestion of intentionally removing everything that belongs to the

<sup>22</sup> Tom Avermaete, 'Rem Koolhaas Generic City' *Architectural Positions: Architecture, Modernity and the Public Sphere* (Amsterdam: SUN, 2009), 63

<sup>23</sup> Saskia Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo* (2nd ed. Princeton, N.J.; Oxford: Princeton University Press), 2001

<sup>24</sup> Avermaete, 'Rem Koolhaas Generic City' *Architectural Positions* (Amsterdam: SUN, 2009), 63

past in order to generate space to create new, independent and isolating structures, is critical; the alarming point is that these ideas might already be embedded within the contemporary process of designing. In a later analysis regarding preservation he states: "we built so much mediocrity that it is literally threatening our lives. Therefore, we will have to decide in advance what we are going to build for prosperity sooner or later."<sup>25</sup> There is a definite concern that hangs upon this situation, where the evermore efficient building typology is a process of homogenizing our cities.

However the question is, what can be done for a better architectural approach? Teddy Cruz suggests, "Architectural practice need to engage in the re-organization of systems of urban development, challenging political and economic frameworks that are only benefiting homogeneous large-scale

interventions managed by private mega-block development."<sup>26</sup> In order to challenge the established context, and avoid the eliminating of identity, what architecture needs is a flexible understanding of globalization.

Stuart Hall proposes an understanding which he calls "globalization from below"<sup>27</sup>. This vision of the topic is at a fundamental level denoting the continuous mass movement of individuals across the world, as an opportunity to make a difference. An opportunity that encourages the emerging of cultural practices, as in architecture, to instead of introducing generic models which sustain the homogenizing influences of globalization, building and concentrating on the new urban 'spatial and social DNA'<sup>28</sup>, creating a new consciousness of identity.

<sup>25</sup> Rem Koolhaas and Jorge Otero-Pailos, *Preservation is Overtaking Us* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 15

<sup>26</sup> Teddy Cruz, 'Mapping non-Conformity: Post-Bubble Urban Strategies' (2009), *Hemispherica Website*: (<http://hemisphericinstitute.org/hemi/en/e-misferica-71/cruz>), Accessed 10 April 2012. 'Estudio Teddy Cruz', *Spatial Agency Website*: (<https://www.spatialagency.net/database/estudio.teddy.cruz>), Accessed 12 November 2019

<sup>27</sup> Stuart Hall, 'Globalization from Below', in Richard Ings (ed), *Connecting Flights: New Cultures of the Diaspora* (Arts Council/British Council, London, 2003), 6-14

<sup>28</sup> Murray Fraser, 'The Future is Unwritten Global Culture, Identity and Economy', *Architectural Design* 82, no. 6 (2012), 63



Figure 14: Cultural diversity is ever-more present in global cities. The multiple layers of identity that the movement of people create can result in new concepts of identity. (Ridley Road Market)

THE NEW IDENTITY?



Figure 15: The perception of urban spaces being in state of constant flux due to global influences challenges the concept of local identity.

Although the term globalization is often considered as an opponent to the harmonious local architecture, it has become an essential part of its present reality. Migration and the communication amongst distinct cultures generates new ideals and ambitions. Therefore, societies are becoming ever more diverse through constant interaction and movement, building various layers of knowledge and consciousness. As an effect, the build environment is constantly changing, aiming to respond.

While this situation is a challenge of redefining the concept of 'local', architects with a sensibly attuned awareness to place and context are faced with the opportunity to develop innovative ideas around the concept of local identity. "Newly changing societies – whether or not they have architectural traditions – need strong, place-specific buildings that can represent them globally. Occasionally these buildings can invent an identity and a sense of belonging."<sup>29</sup> One can argue that inventing a new local identity, although it needs to sustain a fundamental research on local heritage, might promote global world views.

When it comes to newness, the philosopher Lars FR H Svendsen argues: "something new is always sought to avoid boredom with the old. But as new is sought only because of its newness, everything turns identical, because it lacks all other properties but newness."<sup>30</sup> Since local conditions naturally alter with changing perceptions of social, economic and environmental complexities of our globalized world, the 'newness' has to deal with the fact that time is the main driver of change. The concepts of nostalgia and historicism often give unrealistic impressions of local architecture which requires to somehow detain time and persist in some moment of evolution. Yet such timeless places solely exist as tourist destinations nowadays. It is important to separate the idea of newness as Pallasmaa states: "Boredom with the old becomes replaced with boredom of the new"<sup>31</sup>, from the sensible newness that responds to needs of globalization.

Furthermore, when architects have a dynamic intention in re-inventing an identity, there are cases where societies reinterpret projects in their own manner. Such projects often become fundamental elements of a new cultural identity, carrying a

<sup>29</sup> Farrokh Derakhshani, 'Appropriating, Reclaiming and Inventing Identity through Architecture', *Architectural Design* 82, no. 6 (2012), 32

<sup>30</sup> Lars Fr H Svendsen, 'Ikävystymisen Filosofia', *The Philosophy of Boredom* (Kustannusosakeyhtiö Tammi, Helsinki, 2005), 75

<sup>31</sup> Juhani Pallasmaa, 'Newness, Tradition and Identity: Existential Content and Meaning in Architecture', *Architectural Design* 82, no. 6 (2012), 11

'proudly local' character. The appropriation often results in a new identity, reflecting common aspirations. This means, that the creation of context specific public spaces is an essential need for new urban spaces. Here, what differentiates places' character is the way in which the public identifies with the spatial qualities of that urban space.

Creating a new identity in a global context implies a "patient process of assimilation based on an intuitive, human understanding of spatial structure, and the ability of individuals to intervene in a modest but transformative way in their own environment, that create places which acquire a unique sense of identity."<sup>32</sup> However promising this perspective is, regardless of the importance of identity in architecture, the notion remains vague. Globalization provides the same, materials, technology and architectural education, around the world, promoting efficiency that results in soulless environments.

The essential challenge is to take an approach which accepts reality and seeks for representing the plurality of our society and working with multiple layers of identity. This implies, exploring how multiple layers of identity can be placed within

architecture and whether the architecture of a society can become a symbol of its complexity from a local and universal point of view.

<sup>32</sup> Ricky Burdett, 'Mapping Scales of Urban Identity,' *Architectural Design* 82, no. 6 (2012), 97



Figure 16: The importance lays in having a critically understanding of the context's reality, and find what common aspirations of a diverse society might be reflected as a local identity.

'THE BIG BUILD' UNIVERSITY OF BRIGHTON



Figure 17: The new towers in Moulsecoomb, ranging in height from 8 to 18 floors, will provide a multi-storey car park, new students' union- and fitness facilities, a pedestrian bridge, five new halls of residence and a new academic building for the Business School.

'The Big Build' (2018-2021) is designed by Architects HASSELL, a leading international design practice.

Theorist Paul Virilio has argued that "speed"<sup>33</sup> is the principal driver in contemporary culture and that international practices focus mainly on delivery. Regarding the difficulty of sustaining overlaying complexities of urban life within the instant change of neighbourhoods, Richard Sennett argues that these "instant cities"<sup>34</sup>, become ubiquitous urban landscapes, lacking the resilience to adapt to social and temporal change. Thus one might question, how is the context perceived in this case and what is prioritised by the designers in terms of building an identity?

Brighton has a character of small scale, the iconic 'Lanes of Brighton' in the historic quarter form an essential item of the city's identity. Trying to capture its essence, they have classified Brighton as a city with the biggest percentage of individual businesses in the whole UK. Therefore, the new academic

building at the heart for the project is built around the concept of 'Open for Business'. This is an important focal point for the whole campus, trying to acknowledge the open character of Brighton, and the use of this specific building as a business school. These aspects define the project's character and strongly relate to the notion of global identity.

Hereby, one must recall the critical field around the "consumer culture"<sup>35</sup> and its effects upon the environment. The bank surrounding the site is a SSSI<sup>36</sup> due to its rich ecology. The intention was that the biosphere would run down and through the masterplan, like 'green fingers'. Yet the architect admits, "I am not really sure the idea of the biosphere running through is completely successful to be honest."<sup>37</sup> Moreover, the car park was meant to be a green car park, with a living, breathing wall. Yet, as a result greenery was planted on the top of the building, although that was not their initial intention. Ironically, Frank Lloyd Wright said, "the physician can bury his mistakes, but the

<sup>33</sup> Paul Virilio, 'Speed and Politics: An Essay on Dromology', *Semiotext*, 1977 (New York, NY, USA : Columbia University, 1986)

<sup>34</sup> Richard Sennett, 'The Open City', *Qandt Foundation Website* ([www.richardsennett.com/site/SENN/Templates/General2.aspx?pageid=16](http://www.richardsennett.com/site/SENN/Templates/General2.aspx?pageid=16)), Accessed 12 November 2019

<sup>35</sup> Kenneth Frampton, 'Prospects for a Critical Regionalism.' *Perspecta 20*, 1983: 147-162, Page 17

<sup>36</sup> SSSI (Site of Scientific Special Interest) is a conservation designation denoting a protected area in the United Kingdom

<sup>37</sup> Interview with Julian Gitsham, by the author, 3. December 2019, Brighton. Transcript available from the author

architect can only advise his client to plant vines."<sup>38</sup> For a clear position and avoiding the potential of reinforcing ideas one might oppose, critical thought should be the basis for design. Which in this case might be the idea that most areas are being pedestrianised and new cycle lanes are being introduced, promoting the use of green transport.

One might argue that this project is driven with the aim to improve living conditions, responding to the existing need for student accommodation. It is understood why towers is an efficient building typology to accommodate large numbers of students in a densely populated environment; however, they are also very widely criticised in terms of discouraging social cohesion. Regarding options of massing, clusters of 8-10 students sharing a community space could provide a strong sense of community. Therefore, the best option was to go tall, allowing the building heights to vary depending on where they sit in relation to the context. They looked at how the towers would impact views from the surrounding areas through 'verified views', generated via satellite. These were used in several

public exhibitions, allowing the consultation with the community and "actually, we had very few objections"<sup>39</sup>, since people felt it was regenerating and improving the area. This means, as an effect of globalization and the movement of people, there is an acceptance for ideas of corporate identity which presumably they are aiming to reinforce.

Regarding the use of BIM, Murray Fraser argues: "we know that official attempts to impose such totally planned models are inherently flawed (...) often anathema to good-quality design, placing short-term financial gain over aspirations for long-term design quality and liveable public spaces."<sup>40</sup> Yet, they decide to take advantage of the provided efficiency and regard the use of BIM and concrete as a versatile construction material, essential in terms of delivering such large project. This means they are faced with the challenge of creating a soulless environment.

However, they show an understanding of the historic materiality of the city, especially the use of mathematical tiles, and intend to reinterpret it in a contemporary way. The towers are meant to

<sup>38</sup> Frank Lloyd Wright, Two Lectures on Architecture by Frank Lloyd Wright, *To the Young Man in Architecture* (The Art institute of Chicago, The Lakeside Press, R.R. Donnelley & Sons Company, Chicago, 1931), 62

<sup>39</sup> Interview with Julian Gitsham, by the author, on 3. December 2019, Brighton Transcript available from the author.

<sup>40</sup> Murray Fraser, 'The Future is Unwritten Global Culture, Identity and Economy'. *Architectural Design* 82, no. 6 (2012), Page 61

be simple with white brick and highly reflective terracotta ceramic tiles. While the use of natural ceramic aims to respond to the environmental context, the academic building is covered with a 'veil' inspired by the local phenomenon of 'murmuration'. Technically, this means a state of flux, movement, or change. So, the idea is that the façade expresses that experience which students are going through. Meanwhile, at the lower levels, the transparency suggests the openness and access for everyone to be part of that experience.

To promote the idea of a vibrant community, all outdoor spaces and buildings are to be well connected, activating the street scape and therefore, enriching the campus experience. "In the end really, the curation is going to make it a success or not"<sup>41</sup> Whether consciously or not, certain ideas of corporate identity are being actively reinforced while aiming to achieve an upgrading of the local area. Considering the embedded conditions, one might question if the appropriation of students from around the world can transform the place into the aimed new layer of local identity.



Figure 18: The local phenomenon of 'murmuration', Brighton Beach



Figure 19: The new academic building at the heart of the project

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Julian Gitsham, by the author, on 3. December 2019, Brighton Transcript available from the author.



Figure 20: Current view of the fast paced construction of 'The Big Build', showing the scale and impact it will have in changing the area.

'XIANGSHAN CAMPUS' CHINA ACADEMY OF ART



Figure 21: South elevation of the Wa Shan Guesthouse ('Xiangshan Campus') showing walls of rammed earth lined with bamboo strips and recycled materials. In the complex roof structure, wooden rafters conceal a steel structure that supports a canopy over a semi-open space.

"I tried to build a diverse world as a resistance to the uniform world. But I also wanted to avoid the kind of singularity that comes from a design by a single architect, or even the inevitable singularity when buildings are designed by several architects together. Anonymous diversity might be designed by time; no human being could do that. I tried anyhow." - Wang Shu

The 'Xiangshan Campus', China Academy of Art (2004 - 2010) is one of the largest project Amateur Architecture Studio has designed so far. The studio, based in Hangzhou, was found by Wang Shu (Pritzker Price winner in 2012) and his wife Lu Wenyu. Their work stands apart from most contemporary practices in the way their approach towards architecture is "consciously method-less".<sup>42</sup>

While China's urbanization was destroying traditional rural areas, Amateur Architecture Studio showed a clear opposition to the system by recollecting and reusing the materials that were left behind from the demolished buildings. This means, their projects demonstrate a political statement against the process of homogenization encouraged by the government.

As a city, Hangzhou characterizes through its respected artistic traditions and its harmonious connection with nature. It is located at the foot of Xiangshan Hill, and at its very heart sits the virtually sacred West Lake. Wang Shu explains: "In

my design process the most important thing is the critical study of local culture and researching social realities. Design is a process of analysis and research with an emphasis on truth and authenticity."<sup>43</sup> Considering the scale of this project, with regard to contemporary construction, one can observe a fascinating field between allusions to the local traditional culture and large-scale modern architecture. The critical understanding of context is key for creating an identity that is place specific, and yet universal. The "theme of diversity"<sup>44</sup> is ever-present in this project that aims for a diverse world as a resistance to the uniform world.

In terms of achieving a resemblance to nature, the method of free-hand drawing is used. This allows to maintain a continuity with the hill and a design that is in tune with its surrounding landscape. The drawings reflect the panoramic tranquillity of traditional Chinese landscape painting. This translates into a unique sensibility where "...every building is laid out in a certain way in relation to the landscape and the trees, the direction it

<sup>42</sup> Wang Shu, Iwan Baan, Michael Juul Holm, Kjeld Kjeldsen, Mette Marie Kallehauge, and Louisiana (Museum: Humlebæk, Denmark), *Wang Shu Amateur Architecture Studio* (Baden: Lars Müller Publishers, 2017), 7

<sup>43</sup> Edward Denison and Guang Yu Ren, 'The Reluctant Architect: An Interview with Wang Shu of Amateur Architects Studio' *Architectural Design* 82, no. 6 (2012), 124

<sup>44</sup> Wang Shu, 'Building a Vibrant, Diverse World. Xiangshan Campus, China Academy of Art, Hangzhou, China (second phase), 2004-2007', *Imagining the House* (London;Baden: Lars Müller, 2012), npn

faces depending on the light and the features of the location, which make it suitable for human habitation.”<sup>45</sup> Although the sketches and drawings are later refined and transformed into computer drawings to suit the construction stage, the idea is to avoid the importing of generic models at an initial design stage.

Regarding the layout, the prototype of the buildings was a transformation of the ‘combined courtyard’ type. The idea was essentially a creating series of small space, where people could interact. The building can be accessed from the ground floor, the second floor, or the rooftop so that “People would be invited to experience a sequence of surprising feelings in various segments (...)”<sup>46</sup> This shows their intention of creating spaces that re-establish a relation among societies and their surrounding environment.

While the use of rammed earth as a construction method for simple walls is a universal approach, the general impression of the building speaks for the intended theme of diversity. This is achieved by reinterpreting the local technique known as wa

pian qiang (clay-tile wall), where a combination of Chinese black tiles are fixed to a wall. Instead of blindly following international methods, they come up with creative solutions for an irregular exterior facade that is in tune with the natural setting. Also, it is a way of recalling inherited crafts and passing them on to coming generations.

Although the project resembles the function and scale of many projects of global representation, one can argue that it evidences the creation of a new local identity that reconnects with the forgotten traces of timeless Chinese images and traditions. The local identity is not portrayed as a far-removed formal characteristic of the country’s rich architectural past, but through an atmosphere that resembles certain depth of time, grounded in history. Therefore, respecting the natural surroundings, preserving Chinese building customs and raising local awareness of materials in a context that is fast losing its building culture, is an intentional process of promoting the idea of a continuous, yet ever-changing local identity.

<sup>45</sup> Kenneth Frampton, ‘The Architect as Amateur: The Studio of Wang Shu and Lu Wenyu’, *Wang Shu Amateur Architecture Studio* (Baden: Lars Müller Publishers, 2017), 12

<sup>46</sup> Wang Shu, ‘The Guesthouse on Xiangshan Campus. Tiles Hill: new reception center for the Xiangshan Campus, Hangzhou, China (under construction), 2010-2013’, *Imagining the House* (London;Baden; Lars Müller, 2012), npn

The reason this project succeeds in creating a rooted identity is not merely because of what it looks like, but because of what it stands for. It is the critical engagement with place that developed into the design process and construction methods, which show consciousness of the created identity.

Figure 22: “When doing research on the subdivided types, I was thinking through the organization and control of the large scale. I often thought about these two topics simultaneously. After those seeming fragments of work, I stopped drawing for several days but drew in my mind, or even felt like I was drawing with my body. One afternoon, after I had drunk tea, written Chinese calligraphy, and calmed down, I suddenly had the impulse to draw. I took out a piece of paper and drew from left to right without stop for about four hours. The process couldn’t be halted.”<sup>47</sup>



<sup>47</sup> Wang Shu, ‘The Guesthouse on Xiangshan Campus. Tiles Hill: new reception center for the Xiangshan Campus, Hangzhou, China, 2010-2013’, *Imagining the House* (London;Baden; Lars Müller, 2012), npn



Figure 23: Xiangshan Campus, China Academy of Art, Hangzhou. Built within six years, on a site with an area of around 533,333 square meters, encompassing a hill, two streams, and over thirty buildings. The second project phase, for the south campus, contains thirteen large buildings and two small ones. The third phase were six village houses in 1990s style for visiting scholars with an area of 5,000 square meters.

CONCLUSION

In terms of the argument, it is safe to say that spatialization has an essential impact in the making of an identity and therefore, when it comes to designing and building, one is inevitably furthering identities. The importance in our age of globalization is to design with a profound consciousness of context, and therefore a clear position on what one intends to promote. Some might take the time to sensibly regard specific natural characteristics; understand the human culture of the place; such as observing its established building culture in order to provide experiences of place-connectedness and authenticity. Yet, others might take advantage of the efficiency that modern architecture offers and provide quick solutions towards changing urban living conditions that result from globalization. Regardless, the core is to understand that one is building in a context, therefore it is vital to be contextual through a critical engagement that allows to design knowingly of the identity that is being strengthened.

With regard to the two case studies, it becomes apparent how different identities are being built. While 'The Big Build' seems to be furthering a new identity within the concept of globalisation, the 'Xiangshan Campus' builds on tradition,

reinforcing a cultural identity. Since both cases are responding to the need of society, one can argue that their methods do not sit in opposition but show different approaches of creating an identity in our contemporary world. This means, the argument does not stand for globalisation and the potential formation of a new identity emerging from this as being destructive, and the vernacular critical regional being the right approach; the point is that one must design knowingly of the identity one is sustaining. Therefore, one must aim for a deeper level of critical thought and engagement with context.

To conclude, it is worth recalling the 'historical sense' sustained in TS Eliot's essay 'Tradition and Individual Talent' (1929).

"Tradition is a matter of much wider significance. It cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labour. It involves, in the first place, the historical sense, which we may call nearly indispensable to anyone who would continue to be a poet beyond his twenty-fifth year; and the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical

sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. And it is at the same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his own contemporaneity"<sup>48</sup>

multiple layers of identity present in contemporary societies. This implies being critical about the political and economic frameworks that encourage homogeneous interventions. So, other than blindly importing generic models that sustain that reality, one might concentrate on creating a new consciousness of identity given by the existing diversity. A critical understanding of context might uncover new layers of emerging local identities within a wider world view.

The argument around the 'historical sense' brings about the idea of cultural meaning and societal purposefulness, while also insisting on it being the opposite of something static that is passed on and needs to be preserved. This might be more relevant nowadays in our age of globalization than at the time of its writing. The concept of local identity can be ever-changing as long as one maintains a critical perspective of the local context. Ultimately, the essential challenge is to take an approach which accepts reality and seeks for representing the

<sup>48</sup> TS Eliot, 'Tradition and Individual Talent', *Selected Essays* (new edition, Harcourt, Brace & World, New York, 1966)

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- Figure 1: Construction Site, Berlin, 2018. *Image © The Author*
- Figure 2: 'The Big Build' under construction, Brighton, 2019. *Image © The Author*
- Figure 3: Hangzhou Campus, China Academy of Art. 'Wang Shu et l'architecture contemporaine chinoise' (29 novembre 2014) *Image © Art Juice* (<http://artjuice.net/wang-shu-et-larchitecture-contemporaine-chinoise/>), Accessed 12 December 2019
- Figure 4: Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, Berlin, 2018. *Image © The Author*
- Figure 5: Building in Ravello, Italy, 2018. *Image © The Author*
- Figure 6: Historic Centre of Sienna, Italy, 2018. *Image © The Author*
- Figure 7: Ephesus, Turkey, 2019. *Image © The Author*
- Figure 8: Chapel of Reconciliation, Berlin, 2018. *Image © The Author*
- Figure 9: Antonio Filarete, Drawing of people building primitive structures in 'Trattato d'architettura', about 1465. Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, Florence. *Image © Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e del turismo/Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale Firenze. The National Gallery* (<https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/research/exhibition-catalogues/building-the-picture/architectural-time/the-stable-of-the-nativity>), Accessed 12 December 2019
- Figure 10: Plaza Mayor de Salamanca, Spain, 2019. *Image © The Author*
- Figure 11: Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, Spain, 2019. *Image © The Author*
- Figure 12: Basmane, Izmir, Turkey, 2019. *Image © The Author*
- Figure 13: The Icon Vienna, 'Neue Bawag-Zentrale: Zwei Standorte für Mitarbeiter' (7 July 2012), *Image © Börsianer* (<https://www.derboersianer.com/2017/07/neue-bawag-zentrale-doch-zwei-standorte-fuer-mitarbeiter/>), Accessed 12 December 2019
- Figure 14: Ridley Road Market, London, UK, 2019. *Image © The Author*
- Figure 15: London Borough of Hackney, UK, 2019. *Image © The Author*
- Figure 16: Exarchia, Athens, 2019. *Image © The Author*
- Figure 17: The New Towers of 'The Big Build'. *Image © Ken Young*, April 2, 2019 (<https://blogs.brighton.ac.uk/bigbuild/>), Accessed 12 December 2019
- Figure 18: 'Murmuration', Brighton Beach, UK, 2019. *Image © The Author*
- Figure 19: The New Academic Building. *Image © Ken Young*, April 2, 2019 (<https://blogs.brighton.ac.uk/bigbuild/>), Accessed 12 December 2019
- Figure 20: 'The Big Build' under construction, Brighton, 2020. *Image © The Author*
- Figure 21: Amateur Architecture Studio, Wa Shan Guesthouse, China Academy of Art Xiangshan Campus, Hangzhou, 2013. *Image © Iwan Baan* (<https://iwan.com/portfolio/wa-shan-guesthouse-hangzhou-china/>) Accessed 12 December 2019
- Figure 22: Drawing by Wang Shu. Image 2.7 in Wang Shu, 'The Guesthouse on Xiangshan Campus. Tiles Hill: new reception center for the Xiangshan Campus, Hangzhou, China, 2010-2013', *Imagining the House* (London; Baden; Lars Müller, 2012), npn
- Figure 23: Amateur Architecture Studio, Wa Shan Guesthouse, China Academy of Art Xiangshan Campus, Hangzhou, 2013. *Image © Iwan Baan* (<https://iwan.com/portfolio/wa-shan-guesthouse-hangzhou-china/>), Accessed 12 December 2019



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*Contextualizing the topic of conversation:*

Regarding the fact that every city has a unique urban identity, one can argue that what makes each urban environment distinct and instantly recognisable when compared with any other in the world is the authentic character that is developed along time. This character can be drawn on the natural surroundings, the passing on of traditional construction methods, such as cultural influences. Moreover, it invites people to grow a sense of rootedness and belonging by developing a connection to the identity of place. However, under the pressure of contemporary architectural production in our globalized world, this unique identity is often lost within an international style. The theorist Paul Virilio has argued that 'speed' is the most important product in contemporary culture and has led to international practices focusing mainly on delivery. One might observe the difficulty of sustaining overlaying complexities of urban life within the instant change of neighbourhoods. - Richard Sennett defines these 'instant cities', as ubiquitous urban landscape lacking the resilience to adapt to social and temporal change - since they rely on instant intervention rather than on accretion and organic assimilation. So one could ask, how can multiple layers of identity be located within architecture? And how can the architecture of each society become true representation of its complexity?

*Questions:*

- In terms of context, considering the Big Build's fast pace of construction under the mentioned pressure of contemporary architectural production focusing on delivery, would you describe the master plan as locally responsive? How were the surroundings: landscape of the greater area, cultural identity of the area, traditional building materials and techniques taken into consideration during the design process?
- In terms of people and the scale of the project, it is understood why towers is an efficient building typology to accommodate large numbers of students in a densely populated environment; however, they are also very widely criticised in terms of discouraging social cohesion within their surroundings. Traditionally, courtyards were often used as a catalyst in creating social, common spaces between communities. What would you say is the equivalent to a sort of a central courtyard or communal space within the Big Build that promotes interconnectivity between students? Moreover, considering the people living in the surrounding area who are being affected by the obstruction of views and natural light through the towers, how can they develop an assimilation to the project - a sense of belonging?
- In terms of construction methods and use of materials, concrete is characterized by its universality and efficiency since it is possible to make concrete with identical properties of quality and strength anywhere in the world. In that sense, one may understand the fact that 11 000 cubic metres of concrete were poured in situ. However, it is also associated with a common perception as a hard and unforgiving material. In comparison to traditional methods of construction and the use of natural resembling materials, the rough and heavy concrete may undermine the spirit of people's sensitivities, leading to a state of ever more open conflict with the natural environment. What would you say are the architectural qualities of the Big Build that improve people's sensibility, providing an equilibrium between rootedness and alienation?
- In terms of identity, the development will clearly create a strong effect on the urban identity and local character of both Moulsecoomb and Brighton, as it is the largest planning permission project that the area has ever gotten. How do you envision that identity taking shape, in regards to enhancing the pre-existing character of the neighbourhood, whilst making sure to remind the campus' visitors and residents of the locality and character of the neighbourhood? Is this goal of a unique urban identity achievable, when the architectural style and materials of the construction could be placed anywhere in the world at the moment?

*Notes taken from the conversation:*

- all outdoor spaces, in between buildings, were designed to have a canopy over it to allow installations and events to take place underneath. Aiming for a vibrant community-. Concept of canopy, as a connecting piece, space in between, public realm. Canopy idea got cut due to budget cut.
- "we did a review on what was on Instagram and what was the identity of the place already", short term interventions across campus and university, like pop ups.
- principles of short-term interventions: activating in between spaces and enriching the campus experience, activating street scapes.
- landownership distribution. Maintain existing buildings. Maintain Biosphere. Aim is to well connect the area: new square and bridge (with cycle paths).
- "There is what is called SSSI, the bank is a site of scientific special interest, and important piece of ecology, so we wanted that, not sure is we achieved this to be honest, but we wanted these 'green fingers' to run-down through an into the rest of the master-plan. So, we wanted this green of the triple SI to come through to these parts of the university." They will see if they have achieved it... after a while, the conversation went on and he repeatedly said: "I am not really sure the idea of the biosphere running through is completely successful to be honest" "The car park was meant to be a green wall, and as you can see they have stuck a few plants of the top. (...) But it was not meant to be that, it was meant to be a green car park. A living, breathing wall. This is the reality of what we do, you know." The idea is that all the cars go there, and all the rest is pedestrianised, cycle hubs and introducing new bus stops.
- New academic building, sitting at the heart for the project. The entrance is important as a new park. The concept for the building is 'open for business', because "everything we do is about business". Anybody can access it. They see it as an important focal point for the whole campus.
- identity of Brighton as a city, biggest percentage of individual businesses in the whole of the UK. Idea of innovation.
- Need for student bedrooms, provide more quality student bedrooms. Options of massing: clusters of 8-10 students, shared kitchen a community space: get strong sense of community within that cluster-interact. So best for was to go tall, allowing building heights to vary, depending on where they sit in relation to the context.. They looked at how it would impact views from south downs national park and other areas around. They did 'verified views' which are generated via satellite, incredibly accurate, and you can see the outlines on the buildings, sat on the street scape. So, they saw how it would change the character of the area, did consultation with the community. A lot of public exhibitions to show multiple elevations, and "actually we had very few objections". Maybe people felt it was regenerating and improving the area.
- 'Sticky campus' making people stay and facilitating them with all they need.
- Historic context of materials around us. Render, we use white brick (4 towers), Lasts longer and domestic material, reflect the regency. Tall tower highly reflective terracotta tower. All natural clay. Advanced engineering centre of the gold mesh.... Bridge gold inside, black outside. Glazed bricks - Created ceramic tile, goes from semi mat to mat, using grasshopper to see how daylight reflects on it to make it environmentally efficient.
- Historically in Brighton there is mathematical tile. Look at historic context and reinterpret it in a contemporary way. Cost wise it needed to be, simple. Lower lever, active, transparent and accessible.
- Veil, - "idea of 'murmuration', technically it means a state of flux, of movement, of change. Local phenomenon at the pier. So, we like the idea that the façade expressing that sense of change and of a state of change, which students are going through in their journey along. – sense of fun and activity of Brighton pier.
- "we were trying to say here, we understood the historic context, we understood the materiality of the city, but we are reinterpreting it in a contemporary way. And being ceramic its self-cleaning,

