Third World Modernism

The first volume to map multiple positions on architectural modernism across the developing world, this book offers an international perspective on the practices and consequences of modernist architecture in the mid-twentieth century. Presenting fresh case studies from Asia, South America, Africa, and the Middle East, experts in this volume challenge canonical architectural historiography which identifies the West as the sole yardstick to measure the beginning and end, success and failure, of modernism. They show that modernism in Third World nations took trajectories radically different from those in developed societies during the same historical period. The intersections between modernist architecture, globalism, developmentalism, nationalism, and postcolonialism are explored. Chapters illustrate modernism’s part in the transnational development of building technologies, the construction of national and cultural identity, and the geo-historical entanglements of nations.

Creating new openings for cross-cultural analysis of modernism, this provocative book has a key place in the historiography of modern architecture in non-Western societies.

Duanfang Lu is Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Architecture, Design and Planning at the University of Sydney and author of Remaking Chinese Urban Form: Modernity, Scarcity and Space, 1949–2005.
For the New Third World
Third World Modernism

Architecture, development and identity

Edited by Duanfang Lu
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Acknowledgements

Some of the essays in this volume were first presented at the Society of Architectural Historians 61st Annual Meeting, held in Cincinnati, Ohio, 23–27 April 2008. The editor and contributors wish to express our sincere appreciation to conference participants who offered valuable comments and posed insightful questions. In particular, we would like to thank Professor Nezar AlSayyad, for being discussant of the session ‘Third World Modernism’ and for his unflagging support of our volume. Deep gratitude is extended to Professors Swati Chattopadhyay, Hilde Heynen, Anthony D. King, Jon Lang, Peter Scriver, and Richard Williams for their thoughtful comments. We are also indebted to Georgina Johnson-Cook, Pamela McLaughlin, Rob Brown, and Marie Lister for their sensitive work throughout the book preparation and publication process. The editor wishes to express appreciation for the support provided by a Discovery Project research grant from the Australian Research Council, the J. Paul Getty Fellowship, and a small grant from the Faculty of Architecture, Design and Planning, University of Sydney, which have all helped the production of this volume. Aspects of the issues discussed in the Introduction were presented in the Department of Architecture at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the Department of Geography at Guangzhou University, the Institute of Postcolonial Studies at the University of Melbourne, the Graduate School of Design at Harvard University, and at the Second ‘China Architectural Thought Forum’ in Shenzhen. The editor wants to thank her hosts and her audiences for their rigorous engagement and insightful feedback. Many thanks go to Farhan Sirajul Karim and Cassi Plate for their valuable research assistance. Last but not least, Duanfang Lu would like to thank her family for their love, support, and patience.
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Chapter 1

Introduction: architecture, modernity and identity in the Third World

Duanfang Lu

This book examines modernity’s multiplicity by documenting cutting edge research on architectural modernism in the developing world during the middle decades of the twentieth century. Originating in interwar Europe, modernist architecture – as a way of building, a knowledge product, a style-of-life consumer item, and above all, a symbol of modernity – has traversed national boundaries throughout the world. Despite the extensive adoption of modernist architecture in developing countries, standard history books focus on its development in the West. Up until the last three decades, academic inquiry into the built environment in developing societies concentrated on traditional forms. With the exception of the work of a very small number of acclaimed non-Western architects such as Hasan Fathy and Charles Correa, little attention was devoted to modern architecture in the Third World, which was considered merely lesser forms of Western modernism. This orientation has been changed as canonical narratives which privilege Western modes of thinking and aesthetics are challenged, and orientalist perspectives on other cultures are debunked. Informed by turbulent theoretical debates throughout the humanities and social sciences, scholarship on the far-reaching variability of modernism has begun to grow, advancing our understanding of how modernist architecture was adopted, modified, interpreted, and contested in different parts of the world.¹ This discourse has focused on national building projects and their confrontation with and assimilation of modernism. Is it possible to transcend binary oppositions such as modern/traditional and core/periphery while still recognizing the ongoing making of global modernity? Can the history of modernist architecture be more responsive to the realities of other histories? How did architectural modernism develop with reference not only to Western epistemology, but also to the experiences and knowledge of other Third World countries? And how did the implications of modernist architecture continuously shift in the context of conflicting relations involving nationalistic concerns, global aspirations, and the problems of underdevelopment?
Third World Modernism aims to address these issues by connecting debates on modernism that have unfolded in different geographic regions in the mid-twentieth century, a historical period characterized by processes including independence, decolonization, nation building, architectural modernization, and the development of the Cold War. The book problematizes the global spread of modernist architecture against this broad socio-political context and highlights what is at stake in the study of the intertwined relationship between architecture, modernity, and identity in the developing world.

To think the modern is to think the present, which is necessarily caught in the ever-shifting social, political, and cultural cross-currents. For many decades, modernization was depicted in social sciences as a broad series of processes of industrialization, rationalization, urbanization, and social changes through which modern societies arose. This approach has been heavily criticized for its Eurocentric assumptions in recent years. It assumes, for example, that only Western society is truly modern and that all societies are heading towards the same destination. With the epistemological break triangulated by postmodern, poststructuralist, and postcolonial theories, the dominance of progressive historicism and its associated binaries (modern/traditional, self/other, center/periphery, etc.) is being challenged. Questions about modernity, understood as modes of experiencing and questioning the present, are being rethought.

This book is an attempt to contribute unique perspectives to the critical rethinking of the modern by unraveling the complex meanings of “Third World modernism.” The term “Third World” has been an important addition to the political vocabulary of the past century. First coined by the French demographer Alfred Sauvy in 1952, the phrase gradually gained popularity as a classification describing the emerging arena of global politics associated with neither Western capitalism nor Soviet socialism in the early 1960s. This arena included the developing nations of Africa, Asia, and Latin America which shared broad historical, economic, social, cultural, and ideological commonalities: a history of colonization, relatively low per capita incomes, culturally non-Western, and agriculturally-based economies. The meeting of Afro-Asian nations held in Bandung, Indonesia in 1955 marked a significant step in the institutionalization of the nonaligned/Third World identity, which was consolidated through subsequent assemblies (in Belgrade in 1961, Cairo in 1964, Lusaka in 1970, Algiers in 1973, Colombo in 1976, Havana in 1979, New Delhi in 1983, and Harare in 1986). Third World nations were therefore also referred to as “nonaligned nations,” although this was not entirely accurate. For example, despite being part of the Third World, Turkey and Pakistan were not part of the nonaligned membership due to their close ties to Western capitalism via the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) respectively.

Compared with other alternative phrases such as “developing countries,” “less developed countries,” “non-industrialized countries,” and “the South,” the Third World is more than merely a socio-economic designation. It has come to represent a forceful ideology, a meaningful rallying point, a widely shared
mentality, and a unique source of identity. The phrase has proven rhetorically, politically, and theoretically effective. Despite the end of the Cold War, the term “Third World” remains viable in contemporary geopolitical vocabulary, as seen in leading scholarly journals such as Third World Quarterly and Journal of Third World Studies.

This book is concerned with issues related to the development of modernist architecture in developing societies from the end of the Second World War in 1945 to the late 1970s, a period which witnessed the steady growth of Third World solidarity. On the one hand, chapters in this volume demonstrate that there are multiple ways of being modern, which are not the less perfect, incomplete versions of an idealized full-blown modernity, but constituencies with their own trajectories, discourses, social institutions, and categories of reference. On the other hand, these studies show that as a result of social production under similar historical conditions, and representation of similar values and beliefs, modernist architecture in these societies shared some common characteristics and trajectories that were sharply different from those shared by developed societies during the same historical period. This book uses the concept of “Third World modernism” to describe, analyze, and theorize these distinctive meanings, practices, trajectories, transformations, and consequences of modernist architecture in developing countries in the mid-twentieth century. By doing so it aims to overcome the earlier hegemonic assumption which identified the West as the sole yardstick to measure the beginning and end, success and failure of modernism. It shows how canonical architectural historiography has universalized experiences with modernity that were actually peculiar to the Euro-American context.

Until now, most existing volumes have been monographs on the development of modernist architecture within a single nation or anthologies that focus on a single region. Third World Modernism is the first edited volume that addresses the development of architectural modernism in countries across the Third World. It represents an opportunity to map multiple positions in related debates. The book highlights sites of encounter, connection, and negotiation. Many nation-based histories of modern architecture picture architectural histories as disconnected variations, each confined to an a priori state-defined space and following an internal logic. To quote Eric Wolf, this is a “model of the world as a global pool hall in which entities spin off each other like so many hard and rounded billiard balls.” In contrast, by mapping the concrete routes to and through modernity, the original scholarship of this volume points to the importance of multiple patterns of interlocking not only between non-Western and Western locales, but also among non-Western ones. Together the essays reveal the intrinsically paradoxical differences at the very heart of the modern, on the one hand, and the geo-historical entanglements of modernities from a global perspective, on the other.

In the following, I will discuss “Third World modernism” from four interconnected perspectives, namely, modernism as globalism, modernism as
developmentalism, modernism as nationalism, and modernism as postcolonialism, which both sets up theoretical and historical frameworks for the book and introduces the chapters that follow. I will close the chapter with a discussion of the epistemological implications of this study. A significant implication has been that in order to reach a true dialogism, we need to recognize not only the histories of different modernities, but also the legitimacies of different bodies of architectural knowledge. It is my hope that the notion of “Third World modernism” will eventually come to represent the aspirations for a more sustainable built environment of humanity.

Modernism as globalism

The term “modern” originated from the fifth-century Latin term *modemus* which was then employed to distinguish the Christian present from the pagan past. From the fifteenth to the eighteenth century, three vital transitions – the discovery of the Americas, the Renaissance, and the Reformation – formed “the epochal threshold” to modern times in Europe. While the processes of modernization began around the fifteenth century, the kinds of art, literature, architecture, and music we term “modernism” did not appear until the late nineteenth century. Marshall Berman characterizes modernity as a historical experience that seeks to ceaselessly transform the very conditions that produce it. In the same vein, modernism has been a reaction to societal modernization, which is modern in its celebration of newness and the break from tradition, and anti-modern in its critique of modernization’s betrayal of its own human promise.

In architectural discourse, the very idea of modernism is culturally and historically constructed into a heroic interwar modernism and a revisionist post-Second World War modernism, which are characterized by different manifestations of the modern in architecture. The modern movement in architecture originated from the avant-garde spirit shared by modernist painting, music, and literature. Compared with their literary and artistic counterparts, whose countermodern gestures called the authority of Western rationality into question, early modern architects were more allied with societal and industrial modernization. Their manifestos and practices often affirmed the very beliefs and values of modernization being attacked by other streams of modernism: progress, technology, and rationality. Walter Gropius in his description of the Bauhaus program, for example, proclaimed that “A breach has been made with the past, which allows us to envisage a new aspect of architecture corresponding to the technical civilization of the age we live in; the morphology of dead style has been destroyed; and we are returning to honesty of thought and feeling.”

Similar expressions can be found in the writings of the modern movement’s other polemicists such as Le Corbusier and Sigfried Giedion, the manifestos of the Congrès Internationaux d’Architecture Moderne (CIAM), and subsequent canonical architectural histories. In fact, most technical advancements required by modernist architecture took place before the advent of the
Introduction

The significance of the modern movement lies in developing a set of new design and aesthetic principles to correspond to technical conditions that were already in place, as well as forming a cohesive position on modernist architecture among avant gardes. Through a successful cultural politics of self-construction, modernism was associated with a set of positive attributes and gradually attained its ascendancy. By purifying traditional restrictions and decoration, reconceptualizing space-time, following the logic of function, and modulizing its components, modernist architecture was considered to embody modern modes of living, thinking and production based on rationality, efficiency, calculation, the obsession with novelty and abstraction, as well as the moral pretension of advancing social and political goals through design practices. Notably, modernism was acclaimed “International” and conceptualized as exemplifying the positive aspect of globalism: the interests of the entire world were placed above those of individual nations. In the polemical picture of the modern movement, the new forms, spatial principles, and technologies of modernism were a matter of universal knowledge unrestrained by national boundaries and an expression of zeitgeist which held an epochal force that no society could escape.

Modernism conceived as such, however, did not match the actual driving forces behind the development of modernist design at a dynamic formative moment of industrial capitalism. The practices of the Weimar Bauhaus, for example, reflected the initial idea of establishing the Werkbund: to improve the global competitiveness of national industry by integrating mass-production techniques and traditional crafts. There were also multiple contesting positions against the transnational claims of early modernists, as shown in the perceptions of the Weissenhofsiedlung at that time. First exhibited in the city of Stuttgart in the summer of 1927, the Weissenhofsiedlung was part of a series of exhibitions with the overall title of “Die Wohnung” (The Dwelling) directed by Mies van der Rohe, and is often considered the moment when modernist architecture first became institutionalized. The Weissenhof architecture featured flat roofs, white walls, cantilevered balconies, roof gardens, sun terraces, and large verandas. As these characteristics were initially inspired by Mediterranean, middle-eastern, and north African vernacular buildings, the Weissenhof architecture was assaulted in racist terms by both traditionalists and proto-Nazi critics. A satirical postcard with figures of Arabs and camels montaged onto the view of the Weissenhof estate was circulated throughout the 1930s. Conflicts among Western countries preceding the Second World War added additional layers of entanglements. French critics considered the promotion of architectural internationalism an attempt by Germany to impose the style upon western and central European nations. Within Germany, however, cosmopolitanism associated with the international qualities of architectural modernism was frequently used by Nazi propagandists to demean “anti-national” and “rootless” Jewish intellectuals.
Despite the conflicting views at the early stage of its development, modernism nonetheless achieved its global reach in the subsequent decades. Standard history books fail to problematize this process, as if the worldwide spread of modernist architecture were natural and spontaneous. When the issue is discussed, it usually evokes notions of dissemination, progress, and enlightenment. This leaves many questions unanswered: Who initiated the dissemination and for what purpose? How did the meanings of modernism shift during the process? Why was modernism widely adopted regardless of existing regional building cultures? And what were its global cultural, social, environmental, and epistemological consequences?

A close examination of these questions reveals that the globalism embodied in modernism has much more complicated meanings beyond those constructed by the early modernists. Indeed, modernist architecture developed at a time when benevolent late colonialism was at its peak. Although the common view considers classic form an arm of colonialism and modernism its antithesis, recent studies on colonial modernities show that modernist design and planning were not necessarily a denial of colonialism. Instead, the colonies were often employed as laboratories of the newest design ideas, through which the metropolis imposed political and cultural influence upon the rest of the world. While previous models presupposed modernity (and with it modernism) to be the result of economic and technical advancements in Europe, these studies reveal Western expansion through colonization as an indivisible feature of modernity, and colonial modernities as an integral part of global modernity.

A number of chapters in this volume extend this argument by looking into the development of modernist architecture under both neocolonialism and Cold War cultural politics, exemplifying the other side of globalism embodied in modernist design practices: that is, viewing the world as an appropriate arena for one nation to project its influence. In Chapter 9 Jiat-Hwee Chang illustrates the production of tropical architecture as technoscientific knowledge in the context of complex socio-political relations between the British Empire and the postcolonial nations. According to Chang, there were attempts to replace the earlier modes of economic exploitation and political dominance with new discourses and institutions of welfare and development since the depression of the 1930s. Many new regional research stations in the colonies were established and modeled after the metropolitan model for this purpose. For instance, following the establishment of the Building Research Station in Watford in 1921, which carried out research on building materials and construction methods in order to provide efficient solutions to post-First World War housing shortages, it was proposed that the Colonial Housing Bureau be attached to it and model itself after it. Regional research establishments like this greatly facilitated not only the acceptance of modernist architecture for tropical building but also the continuation of British influence after the Second World War.

Meanwhile, with the establishment of two co-existing superpowers in the Cold War context, the connotations of modernist architecture went through
radical changes. The socialist ideals of its European pioneers were replaced by a commitment to democracy, which was employed strategically to expose the defects of the liberal West’s enemies. Under the new political aura, modernist architecture was Americanized and exported to different parts of the world.\textsuperscript{22} Chapters 4, 7 and 8 provide fresh evidence of how modernist architecture was promoted via vehicles such as the postwar CIAM, the Ford Foundation, and the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in Peru, Turkey and India as part of the attempts to implement American globalism. In Latin America, Roosevelt’s administration sponsored CIAM members to evangelize new democracies in Latin American countries with the idea of using modernist architecture and planning as a means of modernization during the mid-1940s. In Turkey, knowledge about the “International Style” and American domestic design was widely publicized in the wake of a series of mutual aid agreements between the USA and Turkey in spheres including economy, military, technical assistance, and culture in 1945, which reached its peak with the Marshall Plan. In India, the US policy to promote India as a democratic counterweight to China resulted in a number of influential exhibitions on modernist design organized by MoMA, in addition to financial aid totaling US$10 billion in 1954–64.

Although largely neglected by previous observers, some newly independent countries also exercised globalism through modernist design during the postwar era. In Chapter 5, Inbal Ben-Asher Gitler shows that the planning and design of the Obafemi Awolowo University Campus in Ile-Ife, Nigeria was an organized governmental initiative of Israel. In the context of its political and economic isolation brought about by Arab boycotts, Israel aimed to gain strength through its relations with Third World countries. Decolonization processes in Africa, in particular, were considered a historic opportunity for establishing diplomatic and economic ties. To achieve this objective, Israel initiated comprehensive technical assistance programs in various countries, of which architecture and construction were an integral part.

My own research on the development of building projects in Third World countries as part of China’s foreign aid programs shows China as another important player in this.\textsuperscript{23} Since the founding of the Third World coalition at Bandung in 1955, China has consistently identified itself with the Third World and has considered strengthening cooperation with other Third World nations its basic foreign policy. Extensive Chinese architectural exports began in 1956 as part of overseas aid programs within the Cold War context. In the decades that followed, Chinese architects built construction projects ranging from major national buildings to factories in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. Many of these buildings adopted modernist style, among which the Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall (BMICH) in Colombo, Sri Lanka, represents one of the most significant examples.\textsuperscript{24} Designed by Dai Nianci, a prominent figure in the history of modern Chinese architecture, BMICH echoes both postwar tropical architecture and the iconography of Maoist utopianism (Figure 1; see also the
book cover photo). Due to its striking aesthetic appeal, BMICH has become a symbol of national identity and a premier tourist attraction in Sri Lanka.

Notably, BMICH successfully hosted the Fifth Non-aligned Summit Conference in August 1976, which in turn helped Sri Lanka project its own global influence among Third World nations. Many delegates who attended the conference were impressed with the architecture and facilities of BMICH. It was reported, for example, that Iraq, who had been provisionally selected to host the Seventh Non-aligned Summit Conference in 1982, wanted to construct a similar complex. The Iraq government sought Sri Lanka’s assistance in this respect and planned to send a team of architects and engineers to study the plans. Several other countries such as Pakistan were also interested in constructing something similar, which marked BMICH as an interesting case in modernism’s global dissemination.

A quick overview reveals the complexity and contradictions involved in the worldwide diffusion of modernism. It suggests that the rise of modernist architecture as a global phenomenon should not be taken for granted. Instead, the global reach of modernism in the postwar era registered the rise of a new world order which marked new forms of control, new ways of collaboration, and new partnerships in international affairs. Global modernist design practices were performed by a wide range of players and tangled with multiple political purposes in the process. On the one hand, it must be more than coincidental that modernism achieved its worldwide hegemony when financial capitalism was on the rise. Affirmed by the 1944 Bretton Woods Agreements, the new financial system achieved circulation, control, and exploitation that did not require that much physical support of locales compared with that required by colonialism. Hence, the new system was abstract and independent of the specificities of place, of which the sterile and faceless modernist architecture served as the proper symbol.
On the other hand, modernism traveled in the name of knowledge transfer, overseas aid, and new forms of cooperation among newly independent countries. Successful modernist design proved effective in helping the nations that offered it to create expanded spaces in the global political arena, as well as bringing international recognition and faster-paced modernization to the host societies. Seen in this light, the postwar spread of modernism not only signaled new relations between Western and non-Western modernities, but also among Third World ones. Today, many studies on non-Western modernities continue to be preoccupied with the centre–periphery dichotomy, while neglecting other relations that used to be so prominent in the actual “postcolonial” vision during the 1950s and 1960s. The emphasis on both types of relations in the formation of Third World modernism, therefore, is methodologically significant, as it allows a theoretical break from the normative historiographical emphasis on the West/non-West confrontation in much of current postcolonial scholarship.

Furthermore, previous accounts highlighted the “immigrant boat” (émigré and refugee architects) as the main vehicle for modernism’s dissemination. Instead, the studies of this volume show that the mediums through which modernist architecture spread were much more diverse and often highly institutionalized. Apart from moving about as a means of exercising globalism, modernist architecture also travelled to the Third World on the wings of developmentalism, to which we now turn.

**Modernism as developmentalism**

Dipesh Chakrabarty considers colonial historicism to be the colonizers’ way of saying “not yet” to non-European peoples, who were forced to wait until they became “civilized enough to rule themselves.” After independence, despite the end of direct colonial rule, the modernist vision of a rationally progressing universal history persisted, which considered that all nations were heading for the same destination; some arrived earlier than others. With the acute self-awareness of the temporal lag turned into a nationalistic aspiration for development, an all-encompassing project of modernization was at the top of the national agenda of many Third World countries. New infrastructure, housing, administrative and educational buildings were constructed to accommodate new functions, new organizations, and new citizens.

It is in this broad context that modernist architecture was intimately tied to state patronage and assumed a vital mission in Third World nation building. Despite its claims to universality in time and space, interwar modernism was developed at a time when “ascetic objects” were necessitated by economic depression and postwar rebuilding. Practically, design doctrines such as “form follows function” and “building = function × economics” articulated by early modernists served particularly well in the developing world where people and institutes constantly struggled with scarce resources and insufficient funds. For example, modernist architecture achieved a decisive victory in China as part of
the “anti-waste” movement in 1955. Modernism was first introduced to China as early as the 1920s, but under Soviet influence revivalist architecture became dominant in the early 1950s. 31 1955 saw a major reorientation when a resolution was made which denounced the tendency of impractical extravagances in construction. Nationalistic structures with big roofs and traditional ornamentation were condemned as wasteful under the new austerity policy. The modernist style, considered more economical and efficient, was established as the preferable style in development. The promise of modernist architecture in providing affordable and high-density housing also attracted many developmental states to integrate it into their policy interventions. In Singapore, for instance, instead of adopting the incremental approach to low income housing, the state espoused the large-scale development of modern high-rise apartment buildings, which proved effective in achieving comprehensive housing access in the land-scarce city-state.32

Symbolically, the precepts of modernism constructed by early modernists as innovative, liberating, universal, and rational were embraced by Third World societies. The formalistic features of modernist architecture, which appeared clean, open, dynamic, and neutral, presented enough distance from both native and imperialist buildings. As such, along with modern factories, bridges, dams, and power plants, the images of modernist architecture frequently appeared in official propaganda publications as representations of modernization. These visible symbols powerfully shaped the desire of the age, the standards against which things were judged, and the collective conscious of what a modern nation should look like.33 In practice, they were often taken as abbreviated signs of order, efficiency, and development, which James Scott has typified as the logic of high modernism, with the city of Brasilia being one of the most striking architectural examples.34

Elsewhere I have argued that an important dimension of Third World modernism has been the utopianization of modernity.35 If utopia is the “expression of the desire for a better way of being and living,” industrial modernity was turned into this better way of being in Third World countries.36 The numerous blueprints sparked by official utopianism in these countries often did not go beyond what had already happened or was happening in the developed world: abundance, industrialization, electricity, and automation.37 It was precisely because modernism had not happened, but was yet to come, that the potential existed to employ the vision to “teach desire to … desire better.”38

A number of recent studies have illustrated modernism’s postwar ascendancy as salvation for underdevelopment as a result of the “education of desire” provided by America-led Cold War cultural politics. Annabel Wharton’s study of Hilton International Hotels built in postwar Europe and the Middle East provides a proper example.39 The luxury hotels that Hilton International constructed abroad in the 1950s and 1960s introduced a remarkable visual contrast to the local architectural forms of host cities such as Istanbul, Cairo, and Jerusalem. Often the highest and most sumptuous building in the town, the Hilton created a
dramatic panorama for impoverished local populations and realized a powerful presence of the United States. Such effects were consciously made, as Conrad Hilton acknowledged, “to show the countries most exposed to Communism the other side of the coin – the fruits of the free world.”

Studies of modernist architecture as the imposition of a specific set of political and cultural values, forms, and knowledge upon developing nations to some extent echo recent post-development discourse in social sciences. Arturo Escobar, for example, argues that developmentalism constructs underdeveloped nations as subjects located in a preliminary stage of historical evolution and thus in need of improvement through development projects in order to be modern, industrialized, and capitalist nation-states. This is done “by creating abnormalities (‘the poor,’ ‘the malnourished,’ ‘the illiterate,’ ‘pregnant women,’ ‘the landless’) which it would then treat or reform.” As these subjects adopt policies influenced by international agencies, it is precisely the promise of development that provides the conditions for the center to realize its continued surveillance of peripheral nations and their citizens.

While existing research reveals power and hegemony involved in the diffusion of modernist forms, knowledge, and technology, it often implies a linear path and reduces the complexities surrounding local appropriations, (mis)interpretations, transformations, and resistances. The three chapters in Part I of this volume present a more complicated picture by examining the transplantation of modernist architecture as a two-way process in Brazil, Morocco, and Peru. Importantly, they demonstrate the localization of modernism as a process in which people worked actively to make themselves modern, instead of merely being made modern. They show that modernism entered the local scene much earlier than the launch of the Cold War, and played a powerful role in introducing societies into modernity. The domestication of modernist architecture involved dense local practices of translating, selecting, mixing, and reinventing. The chapters highlight two dilemmas in the course of pursuing modernism as developmentalism. First, modernist architecture in many developing nations arose at a time when societies lacked the typical prerequisites for modernism, such as industrialization and modern construction technologies. The second problem was to find the balance between the specificities of the local context and the homogenizing effects of modernist design.

In “The Other Way Around: The Modernist Movement in Brazil”, Daniela Sandler offers an account of Brazilian modernism not as an outcome of modernity, but as its harbinger. Canonical narratives consider industrialization as prerequisite for modern construction, modernity as the cultural context for modern forms, and urbanization as the setting for modern typologies. Sandler argues that these criteria would exclude much of the twentieth-century output of Latin American countries. Her analysis concentrates on the ambivalences and contradictories surrounding two important markers of Brazilian modernism: Gregori Warchavchik’s own house on Rua Santa Cruz in São Paulo (1927), known as Modernist House (Casa Modernista), and Lina Bo Bardi’s Museum of Art of
São Paulo, known for its acronym, MASP (1958–68). Sandler argues that the usual transplanted perspective of Warchavchik and Bo Bardi was neither inauthentic nor inappropriate. The adjustments the designers of the two projects made in the specific context of Brazil might at times seem to veer away from the canon or to result in “failures.” Yet they were nonetheless quintessentially modernist, because the adaptations they made were precisely part of the dynamic and constantly dislocated quality of modernism itself.

In “Depoliticizing Group GAMMA,” Aziza Chaouni observes a disjunction in the existing studies of the modernist movement in Morocco between CIAM’s ideas and practices before independence and local reinterpretations of modernism’s precepts after independence. Her chapter concentrates instead on the continuity in the development of modernist architecture in Morocco by looking into the work of a group of young Moroccan and French architects from the 1950s to the early 1970s. Group Gamma, a Moroccan CIAM branch, was established in 1953, which promulgated a modernist architecture in line with Corbusian precepts, yet aspiring to be more in touch with the specificities of the local context, climate, and human habits. Group Gamma formed its architectural ideas under French rule, and put them into practice in its numerous public commissions for the Moroccan state after independence. Group Gamma’s contested modernism was not merely a product of national identity assertion or of a will to rupture with the colonial past, Chaouni argues, but rather a result of a local legacy of contest initiated by architectural experimentations.

In “Agrupación Espacio and the CIAM Peru Group,” Sharif Kahatt investigates transfer and transformation that occurred in modernist architecture from the European avant-garde, American modernism, to the creation of a hybrid architectural culture in Latin America. He shows that on the one hand, there were many European and American initiatives to spread modern design in Latin America. On the other hand, there was great interest from local architects who made a great effort to adopt, transform, and deploy imported forms and techniques. Led by Luis Miró Quesada, the Lima-based intellectual movement Agrupación Espacio played an important role in this. Kahatt examines the relationship between Agrupación Espacio and postwar CIAM by comparing the theories and practices the two adopted in their search for the modern city. Although canonical Latin American architectural historiography assumes that Espacio was CIAM’s “franchise” in Lima, Kahatt’s findings demonstrate that the relationship between these two groups was far more complex. The Peruvian Modern Project led by Espacio turned out to be a product of cultural hybridization rather than a direct borrowing of Western forms.

Modernism as nationalism

The concept of nationalism is a modern invention, associated with processes of modernization such as urbanization, the development of industrial capitalism, and the push for popular sovereignty that came with the French Revolution and the
American Revolution in the late eighteenth century. Europe was radically reconstructed according to the concept after the First World War and the breakup of the Habsburg and Ottoman empires. The European ideologies of self-determination anticipated the nationalist movements in Africa and Asia, where most countries gained political independence following the Second World War. As many have observed, the nationalism that drove the independence movement was not the same as the post-independence one.42 The national unity formed against an alien force before independence was replaced with the need to cultivate and consolidate national identity in face of multiple contending groups from within. Carefully manipulated built forms played a significant role in promoting a corresponding identity in terms of national culture.43

It is rather ironic that modernist architecture, disseminated in the name of “International,” was employed in many Third World countries – Turkey, Brazil, Morocco, Ghana, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Singapore, among others – to represent nationhood, which was generally conceptualized as being rooted in remote antiquity and grounded in cultural uniqueness. A careful dissection reveals that the mechanisms behind this are multi-layered. First, in the context of Third World developmentalism, modernity became the nation’s new identity: something that informed the nation’s new sense of self and directed a people’s imagination.44 What follows is that modernism, the symbol of modernity, became a preferred means to project national identity and bring international recognition. Grandiose modernist buildings served as visible representations of a developing nation’s capacity to equal the developed nation on its own terms. Second, stylistic differentiation served as an important strategy in the art of identity making. Despite multiple intersections between modernism and colonialism, the architectural culture of the time managed to establish sufficient distance between modernism and the system of architectural representation under colonialism. While architectural classicism was considered authoritative and culturally specific, modernism was welcomed in young nations as a new technology free of the ties of the past and suitable for widespread adoption. Third, it was essential for the postcolonial state to impose a national homogeneity upon a multitude of groups with divergent interests and cultural claims. Very often, the choice of symbols of a specific ethnic group to communicate a unifying national identity aggravated ethnic cleavages. In contrast, the use of modernism, which appeared neutral and universal, could help to reduce social, cultural, political, and religious tensions.

A reading of the making of Chandigarh in India illustrates multiple issues involved in modernism as nationalism in a specific Third World context. The building of Chandigarh, the new capital of Punjab, took place against the background in which the state was partitioned and lost its capital to Pakistan; many people lost their lives during this process due to religious violence. In Chapter 11 of this volume, Vikramaditya Prakash argues that apart from symbolizing both modernization and a new beginning, the adoption of modernism for the design of Chandigarh demonstrated the determination of the Nehruvian
regime to wrap the Indian constitution with an explicitly secular code. Being a modernist rather than a “Sikh” or “Hindu” city, Chandigarh served as a visible negation of former colonizers’ historicist reading of the colonial subjects as religious subjects who were not yet ready to be modern citizens. Here, the constructed non-identitarian quality of modernism was strategically motivated to create a national identity that was modern, secular, and unfettered by colonial historicism. The rejection of New Delhi as the prerequisite of the architectural style of Chandigarh can be understood as the newly independent nation-state’s rejection of Eurocentrism. Chandigarh’s modern architecture, Prakash suggests, should be viewed as the adoption of a non-Western, or non-Eurocentric, modernism.

Despite the alleged objectives, the making of Chandigarh, however, was not without its own problems. The grand scale of Chandigarh in many ways echoed that of New Delhi. Despite stylistic differences, both featured large-scale administrative buildings and oversized public spaces, which served the purposes of a search for legitimacy and a demonstration of state power. As Mark Crison observes, compared with the monumental symmetry of New Delhi, the plan of Chandigarh sought to tease off the central axis, “as if the spatial symbolism of democratic power in relation to executive power was being reconfigured rather than reconceived.” The plan of Chandigarh sought to tease off the central axis, “as if the spatial symbolism of democratic power in relation to executive power was being reconfigured rather than reconceived.” Like Brasilia, no design attention was paid to the place of unskilled manual workers in the city. As a result, squatters’ settlements grew after the completion of the project. The making of Chandigarh hence exemplified a pitfall of modernism as nationalism shared by many post-independent cities: the construction of a national identity through the modern façade concealed the pressing problems of underdevelopment.

There were other tensions surrounding modernism as nationalism; the uneasy relationship between tradition and modernity remains the most striking one. Under colonialism, tradition was mobilized by some nationalists to form a collective denial of colonial modernity, while for others the relation between tradition and modernity did not have to be oppositional – indeed the non-dialogic relation between the two might well be part of colonizers’ strategies of differentiation and separation. After independence, tradition assumed a new role in cultivating national cultures through a process of what Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger have described as “the invention of tradition”: modern nations generally appeared so natural as to require no justification, but in fact they were recent constructs resting on novel practices of manipulating historical consciousness. As such, there were attempts to develop a national architecture based on the mixing of modernism and historic precedents even in countries where modernism had become dominant, which were not always successful. As Lawrence Vale points out, the cultural richness negated by modernism was sometimes resurrected in cartoon form, reducing architecture to “a three-dimensional, government sanctioned billboard advertising selected aspects of indigenous culture.” Still others sought to restore tradition via a discourse of authenticity. National museums were exemplary institutions in such
exercises, whose displays meant to transcend the young nation’s divisions and its recent colonial past so as to present a common past and incite aspirations to nationhood. According to Ananya Roy, the two moments – the consolidation of modernism through the taming of tradition, and the revival of tradition on the ashes of the modern – are “both part of the same grand narrative of geopolitical order and discursive legitimacy.” They both assume a rigidly dualistic narrative that marks the traditional off from the modern, which was inherited from colonial historicism and remains a primary dilemma of Third World modernism even today.

The use of modernism in designing major national buildings such as museums and parliament buildings has been addressed by many studies. The three chapters in Part II of this volume explore the role of modernist architecture in search of national identity by looking at three other important building types (the university campus, the exhibition complex, and the residential building). Educational architecture represented a significant segment of post-independent nation building in Africa. Gitler’s chapter investigates the design and construction of Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU) campus in Ile-Ife, one of the most important national commissions that followed Nigeria’s independence. Designed by Israeli architect Arieh Sharon in collaboration with his son, and often cited as a masterpiece of the Modern style in African architecture, the complex displayed an interpretation of national style that contested both mandatory and colonial rule. The strategy was to express a specific ethnic identity, the Yoruba, one of Nigeria’s largest ethnic groups, through a formalistic approach. To be sure, the search for a cultural language combining modernism with African visual heritage was not unique to Sharon and Sharon during this period. Developed from the discourse of Africanism and negritude, this approach to Modernism has been an important part of cultural production in Africa since the 1950s. Sharon and Sharon’s architecture, however, integrated locality in an unambiguous manner, which was rarely seen in large-scale civic commissions at the time.

Post-independence exhibitions in Colombo can be viewed as micro-environments for the playing out of Asia’s cold war political alliances, and reflect a marked departure from the colonial tradition of international expositions. In her chapter “Modernity and Revolution: The Architecture of Ceylon’s Twentieth-Century Exhibitions,” Anoma Pieris looks at Ceylon/Sri Lanka as a significant microcosm of the broader processes that were shaping the Third World. In the early 1950s, adopting anti-colonial nationalism, Ceylon moved from postwar domination by a neo-colonial Commonwealth to socialist republicanism. In the years that followed, Ceylon attempted to maintain its independence through non-alignment despite competing foreign interventions upon her. Using the Colombo Plan exhibition of 1952, Ceylon 65, and the Gam Udawa (Village Re-awakening) exhibitions as important registers of national culture and its revolutionary socio-political transformation, the chapter maps the social production of twentieth-century exhibitions in Ceylon. Pieris situates modernism and its humanist ideals within the wider socio-political framework which highlighted the emergence of the Third World as a category. The exhibitions she described span several aesthetic
moments in the self-fashioning of the nation-state, providing insights into a specific
nationalistic vision that was later terminated by liberalization. The subsequent
depoliticization and commodification of aesthetic trends, she argues, signaled the
social relevance of that earlier modernity practiced and produced at the margins.

In “This is Not an American House: Good Sense Modernism in 1950s Turkey,” Ela Kaçel questions historical narratives of postwar modernism that take
for granted the “Americanization of modernism” in Third World countries without
contextualizing the International Style within local discourses of architecture.
Drawing upon Antonio Gramsci’s distinction between common sense and good
sense, Kaçel suggests that modernism is concomitant with real processes of
modernization through which ideologies are turned into common sense, that is, things that are uncritical, passive, and unconscious. In Turkey, the so-called
“International Style” was propagated under the postwar sponsorship of the
United States as modern culture in the 1950s. The term “Hiltonculuk” was soon
coined by the architect and critic Şevki Vanlı to describe a fad among prominent
Turkish architects who uncritically modeled their buildings after the Istanbul
Hilton Hotel (1952–5). Built at the peak of “Hiltonculuk,” the vacation house that
architect Maruf Önal designed for his family in Bayramoğlu, however, did not fit
under the categories either of a formulaic Americanism or of a “perfect medioc-

ity.” Through a detailed analysis of Önal’s house, Vanlı’s critique, and the context
in which they were situated, Kaçel illustrates how “ordinary” architects employed
the relational knowledge networks into which they were embedded to critique
popular clichés of postwar modernism and endowed their own architectural prac-
tice with a new sense of identity.

Modernism as postcolonialism

Independence did not mark the sudden disappearance of colonial influence. Instead, the steady progression of decolonialization gradually turned the formerly
polarized relation between the metropolis and colonies into a more complicated
and ambiguous relationship in various arenas. Despite the residual effects of
colonialism, there were more spaces for connectivity, reciprocity, and entangle-
ment in the name of development assistance, commercial exchange, knowledge
and technology transfer, overseas aid, partnership, and collaboration. How did
modernism intersect with this new postcolonial condition?

Following James Clifford’s seminal pairing of “roots and routes,”
which conceptualizes the borders between fixity and mobility as porous and
subject to crossings from both sides, I suggest that we need to look at criss-
cross paths, flows, and networks that connect multiple platforms as important
arenas for the diffusion and development of modernist architecture in the post-
colonial context. Despite a flourishing vocabulary of mobility and hybridity in the
past two decades, global links, flows, entanglements, and networks are still
treated as marginalized categories filling in the interstices between bounded
territorial units. National or local architectural histories are presented as co-existing
but disconnected variations, which has presented difficulties for studies of issues such as the transnational development of design discourses. Much of postcolonial scholarship is still preoccupied with a dichotomy that “defines the colonized as always engaged in conscious work against the core.” Part III of this volume attempts to go beyond both nation-based historiography and the clear-cut core–periphery model to view connection, dispersion, entanglement, and mobility as an important dimension of Third World modernism.

Certainly, the continuing presence of global unevenness means that the positions of different parties in these transactions were not necessarily equal. As a result, heterogeneous and peculiar moments and results were generated. The development of modern tropical architecture exemplifies some of such postcolonial moments in the history of Third World modernism.

In colonial discourse the term “Tropics” was often used to refer to “colonies,” as if the latter could be defined as a homogenous climatic zone. Developed by Otto Koenigsberger, Maxwell Fry, Jane Drew, Fello Atkinson and others in the postwar era, modern tropical architecture is regarded as an adaptation of modernist design principles for a distinctive (hot and humid) climatic condition by incorporating passive solar design and ventilation systems, and vernacular building elements such as verandas, louvered windows, and perforated walls. The Architectural Association School of Architecture (AA) in London initiated a diploma in tropical architecture in 1954, and the University of Melbourne established a similar program in 1962. The institutionalization of tropical architecture allowed former colonial powers to maintain their influence in former colonies, on the one hand, and helped train the early generation of Third World architects, on the other. In recent decades, with the booming of the tourist industry, neo-tropical architecture has been developed in various parts of the developing world to create exotic and picturesque resort hotels for Western tourists. This new landscape, with locals as labour and Westerners as consumers, tends to reproduce social and class relations under colonialism.

Despite its rich cultural meanings, tropical architecture is still considered a neutral and technical development in much of architectural discourse. Chapters 9 and 10 re-examine the early evolution of tropical architecture as a social phenomenon. Jiat-Hwee Chang’s chapter investigates the under-studied technoscientific dimensions of the circulation and transformation of modernism. There has been little critical scholarship on modernism in relation to the institutionalization of building science in the mid-twentieth century, and the attendant establishment of research stations, changes in architectural education, and the technicalization of architectural knowledge and practice. Chang’s chapter fills the gap by examining the work of the Tropical Building Section of the Building Research Station in Britain and a network of similar research stations working on tropical building problems in the British Empire/Commonwealth during the mid-twentieth century. Drawing on the interdisciplinary scholarship in postcolonial science studies and post-development studies, he reveals the production of
technoscientific knowledge on tropical architecture by these building research stations as a Foucauldian power-knowledge regime, which was inextricably bound up with the politics of decolonization. Chang argues that the technoscientific knowledge, as produced and articulated in the name of welfare and modernization, should be considered as a new form of expertise that served to ensure Britain’s ongoing politico-economic relevance in the tropics after formal decolonization.

Vandana Baweja’s chapter challenges the binary categories such as center/periphery embedded in the recent histories of tropical architecture. She starts with the career trajectory of Otto Koenigsberger (1908–99), who is best known for his contribution to climatic responsive design. Baweja then contrasts Koenigsberger’s practices with those of Peter and Alison Smithson, who focused on the temporality of the climate and its relationship with architecture at the level of the building form. The chapter ends with a discussion of the shifting discourse of tropical architecture as sustainable design. While canonical architectural histories treat tropical architecture as a commodity exported from the metropolis to the tropics, Baweja’s chapter tells a different story. In the process of imposing architectural knowledge to the tropical Third World, Baweja argues, architects unwittingly developed a body of knowledge that later constituted the intellectual foundation for the discourse of tropical architecture at the AA and was eventually subsumed into the contemporary discourse of sustainable architecture.

In the chapter “Modernity Transfers: The MoMA and Postcolonial India,” Farhan Sirajul Karim observes that India’s post-independence practice of domesticity experienced a multi-directional turn. Albeit celebrating a model of affluence, India was experiencing a resurgence that explicitly challenged the indulgence of domesticity and the exuberance of material fetish, a portion of the history of domesticity that had long been veiled by the dominant discursive practice of Western modernity. The ambivalence and tension that emerged from the exchanging of modernity between India and the West are studied through two exhibitions that were organized by MoMA during the 1950s: one about India mounted in New York and titled “Textile and Ornamental Arts of India” and the other about the West, mounted in India and titled “Design Today in Europe and America.” On the one hand, the promotion of modernity of affluence by America sought to demonstrate a fantastic view of future domesticity before an Indian audience. On the other hand, India sought to promote itself as a model of a non-industrial material world. Based on rich first-hand archival material, Karim shows that in a bid to forge a true hybrid of ascetic modernity, Pierre Jeanneret sought to reconcile these two streams by synthesizing the modernist trope of machine-made, luxurious consumer goods with the asceticism of a Gandhian material culture.

Finally, Vikramaditya Prakâsh’s Epilogue reflects upon the necessity of creating a new framework for understanding modernism as a global construct, in parallel with the discussion of “cosmopolitan modernism” prevalent in art history currently. He calls for the move towards a horizon where “the asymmetries in