Championing architectural research as a field of real relations spreading locally and trans-locally, across a vast geography, in a space of the other and a space of the outside.

The cartographic and the geopolitical: advocating a new agenda in architectural thinking and research

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A problem I face when I write on the 'architecture of modern China' is that it is geographically not clear where is and where isn't China. Should I include Taiwan and Hong Kong? Why should I focus on the coastal cities of the mainland as the face of China? What about the inland provinces? What about Xinjiang and Tibet? Do I need to take a political stand before deciding on these? And what about the Japanese legacies in the early modernisation of Taiwan and Manchuria during Japan's colonisation of the places, now regarded as part of 'China', by both the Republic (ROC) and the People's Republic (PRC)? Other issues also occur: how to account for US-China and Europe-China relations and China-Asia and China-Africa relations, when architects and projects 'travelled' between them – when Ieoh Ming Pei (I. M. Pei) 'returned' from New York to Beijing and Suzhou in the 1980s and the 2000s, when Dai Nianci

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designed for Colombo in Sri Lanka in the 1970s, not to say the more active exchange between Europe and China in recent years? Within East Asia, if Japan had an impact on various regions, how can China, Japan, Korea, and other places be related so that Manchuria, Taiwan, and Korea, and therefore the DPRK and ROK (North Korea and South Korea), may be brought into some kind of integrated investigation? All these problems, I argue, can be resolved or managed if we abolish the idea of the nation of 'China' and any nation-states as a fixed category and adopt, instead, the idea of a network of relations of places and constructed nations – a geopolitical assemblage of relations of various scales.

Today, there is an increasing use of terms around various projects such as 'transnational architecture', 'architecture beyond Europe', 'architecture of China, Japan and Korea', 'China in Africa', and 'Socialist architecture in Africa'. It signals a change in the basic outlook in thinking and research around architecture towards a problematic concerning geography and geopolitical relations. Michel Foucault, as early as 1967, had already said that 'history' was being replaced by 'geography', and a historical outlook on an endless timeline was being replaced by a new awareness of a finite world, of a world geography, of things happening 'here and there', of space and place, and of a 'network' we were all located within (in a speech published later as 'Of Other Spaces: Principles of Heterotopia').[1] My contention is that, due to many factors, today more than any other time, a world-historical paradigm in architectural research is being replaced, or at least radically reformed, by a new one that methodologically privileges local and material happenings as horizontally connected to *other* sites and happenings, in a networked geographic spread: it involves a cartographic perspective that challenges endogenous, national, and formalist categories. To explain this, some observations are required:

1.
Two significant developments outside the discipline of architecture are asserting long-term and important impacts on the direction of thinking and research in our discipline: an intellectual one; and a politico-economic one. Regarding the first, there has been a convergence of the cultural and spatial with the political occurring first in social and critical studies, then in cultural, urban, and architectural studies. If it was pioneered by earlier figures such as Walter Benjamin and Max Weber, then it became a current from the 1960s and 1970s onwards, with the rise of Marxist critical school, structuralist analysis, and other lines of investigation, as evidenced in the work of Claude Levi-Strauss, Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes,

Louis Althusser, Jürgen Habermas, Henri Lefebvre, Pierre Bourdieu and, recently, Jacque Rancière among others. The integration of abstract political analysis with the concrete in social, cultural, and spatial practice (including the design and the use of buildings) made an important inroad into our discipline. It occurred in various areas: a Marxist critique (in the work of, for example, M. Tafuri, J. Ockman, D. Agrest, P. V. Aureli, and H. Heynen), a Foucauldian discourse (power-knowledge) analysis especially for a postcolonial critique of orientalism (Anthony D. King, Nezar AlSayyad, and others), a Foucauldian institutional-spatial analysis (T. Markus, B. Hillier, J. Hanson, R. Evans, K. Dovey, and J. Zhu), and other streams, such as those around the everyday, domesticity, gender, the body, and recently terror and violence. The impact is also manifested in a self-conscious reform of methods in architectural history, where art-historical approaches are being absorbed into a social-historical paradigm (D. Porphyrios, E. Blau, I. Borden & J. Rendell, N. Stieber).

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The impact of this integration of the cultural and spatial with the political on our discipline is multiple. It creates an increasing alertness about the socio-political implications in and of the spaces we design or study. It cultivates a criticality around, or at least raises questions about, top-down systems, power relations, and forms of ideas and representations (as ideologies). It also opens our eyes to the micro, the everyday, the marginal, the other (not least in terms of gender, race, and place), and the importance of the non-Western world.

2.
The second major development, political and economic in nature, is the empowerment of the non-West on a global scale in the second half of the twentieth century. The 'non-West', including Asia, Africa, and Latin America, occupying 70–80% of world's population, has gone through a process of empowerment politically and economically since the 1950s and 1960s, through decolonisation, urbanisation, and industrialisation. The economic renaissance of East Asia, with Japan and China as prominent players, from the 1970s to the present, is arguably the strongest sign of the rise of the non-West. According to Marxist and economic historian Giovanni Arrighi, 'the revolt against the West created the political conditions for the social and economic empowerment of the peoples of the non-Western world; the economic renaissance of East Asia is the first and clearest sign that such an empowerment has begun'.[2] Arrighi argues further that, should this trend continue, it will bring the two centuries of global domination by Europe

and its giant North American offshoot to an end, pushing towards an equalisation of power between the West and the non-West.[3]

This situation creates a huge gap between real and cutting-edge occurrences in Asia/non-West and the old bodies of knowledge published in the West and in Western languages. It generates an urgent call for new studies into the development of the non-West, with its unprecedented scales and problems in relation to entirely different languages, histories, cultures, and worldviews. Apart from Asian and other non-Western scholars now making effort in this regard, publishing in English and other languages, the most prominent figure in our discipline today remains Rem Koolhaas, as evidenced in his *S, M, L, XL* (1994) (including 'Singapore Songlines' and 'Generic City') alongside *Project on the City: Great Leap Forward* (2002),[4] and his other studies on Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. Writings by one architect, however, is far from enough. Much more is needed in this direction. Above all, new methodological framing is needed beyond empirical studies of just another place or culture.

3.
These two developments, one intellectual and one politico-economic, I argue, are making important and lasting impacts on the way we think and research in architecture. If the first makes us aware of socio-political implications of the space we design or study, the second makes us increasingly conscious of a geographic co-presence of other places, peoples, and cultures, of a finite global space of relations and networks, and of the developments happening elsewhere in the non-West that are changing the world. And the single most important effect of the two impacts coming together, I argue, for the discipline of architecture, is a trend towards geographic and cartographic thinking, towards an outlook on the world as a co-presence of peoples located 'here and there', towards a new paradigm in which material and geopolitical forces, connecting and spreading, indicate a primary field where unities and categories (ideas, forms, states, institutions, ideologies) are constructed.

Postcolonial studies have loomed large on the horizon. Yet the new paradigm or framework cannot be reduced to the experience of colonisation and decolonisation, nor to orientalist knowledges and discourses. These processes are dependent on the colonising West and therefore study into them is epistemologically narrow or confined. The non-Western world has a much longer history and is immensely larger in cultural composition. The new paradigm, since it faces the world, has to be free from, or independent of, a certain historical

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experience, even though this experience is important. Searching for concepts and perspectives for a new framework of architectural research concerning geopolitical distribution, two lines of scholarship are useful: World-System analysis from economic history; and cartographic thinking in philosophy.

4.
World-System theory is developed from economic history with a long perspective, focusing on material life and its economic basis. Fernand Braudel, in *The Perspective of the World* (1979) has focused on 'world-economies' of large regions (the Mediterranean, Hellenic world, Islam, Russia, China, and India).[5] Immanuel Wallerstein (*The Modern World-System*, 1974), instead, worked on the formation of one single world-economy, the modern capitalist world-system that – formed over a few centuries – is still at work, although in a deep crisis, today.[6] Unlike the old world-economies ruled by a state or a city, the modern world-system is ruled by a core of states. The system has core, semi-periphery and periphery, with the latter two – and especially the last – providing raw material, labour, and the market for the first. Established in 1492 at the time of the 'discovery' of the Americas, when Europe and the new colonies began to act as core and periphery respectively, the system reached a global scale in the nineteenth century, when most of the non-Western world was colonised. According to Wallerstein, the capitalist world-system is a 'class society', with an unequal division of labour and an uneven distribution of power. This theory proposes that there is a cycle of certain states acting as core powers (fifty to sixty years of growth and contraction, and one hundred to one hundred-and-fifty years of hegemony as a superpower), and a slow shift of the location of the core powers from western Europe to North America. For Wallerstein, the system may not continue and is heading to its various limits now. According to Wallerstein, there have been anti-systemic movements against the world system, and that social, political and now environmental forums should be taken into account.

Giovani Arrighi's book, *Adam Smith in Beijing* (2007), summarised many scholars' studies on Asia and on East–West comparisons in the tradition of world-system theory.[7] Arrighi compared long-term economic trends in East Asia with those of Europe and North America, and identified a renaissance of the first occurring now after a century of eclipse. Arrighi also observed and studied the non-capitalist 'market economy' that China and East Asia were practicing and are perhaps recovering: a model based on high population density, human resource, and relative wealth for a large population and economy as a tool of government, as opposed to Western 'capitalism' based on low density, technology and automation, high income for a small part of the world population, and the state as a tool for economic growth. For Arrighi, this Asian model is exactly what Adam Smith was looking for long ago.

The importance of this line of investigation (Braudel, Wallerstein, and Arrighi) in architectural thinking and research is methodological. Here, we are witnessing an investigation that is materialist, localised, and yet trans-local and trans-national, with a large geographic space of different scales as its primary basis, where the constructed nations, institutions, and ideologies are secondary as working concepts.

5.
Cartographic thinking in social theory and philosophy can be found in the work of Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze. In *Discipline and Punish* (1975), Foucault investigated empirically the rise of the modern prison and associated disciplinary power, as well the relations between knowledge, power, space, the body, visibility, and mechanisms of control and normalisation.[8] At a theoretical level, as subsequently interpreted by many, Foucault effectively formulated a new concept of power and its materialisation. Power is no longer conceived as a substance or an entity, but instead as a 'relation' between agents and between forces. In the case of a modern prison or any institution of a modern disciplinary society, power relations are managed and materialised through a spatial design or disposition, such as Panoptic prisons and other institutions: a 'diagram' in which power relations are mapped as a distribution and managed as a dynamic operation. This spatial or geographical diagram can be a building, a city, or a vast country in which some forms f power relations unfold and operate.[9]

'power relations are managed and materialised through a spatial design or disposition'

In Deleuze's reading (*Foucault*, 1986), this cartographic analysis assumed a field of power relations as primary, material, and spatial in relation to the bodies of knowledge that a certain field produces and that it is produced by.[10] Power relations are pre-formal and pre-stratified in a field of pure force and pure matter with which forms of knowledge and institution take shape which, in turn, direct and sustain a certain disposition of the field.[11] In a broader investigation into desire, geography, and flows and relations (*A Thousand Plateaus*, with Felix Guattari, 1980), Deleuze explored this relationship between stratified forms (of knowledge, institution, and statehood) and pre-stratified flows, energies, forces, and desires in space, in the body, and in nature. Within this realm, he advanced a philosophy of immanence and difference (against that of transcendence and the same), and created a suite of terms for research that are epistemologically spatial and geographical.[12] These include: a 'network' (of lines and relations); an 'assemblage' (as a pack or a collective linking entities together in a non-hierarchical way); and

a 'rhizome' (a network or assemblage that has no centre, no beginning, no end, but opens and extends in all directions), with 'lines of flight' and 'deterritorialisation', on a 'plane of consistency', in a 'space of others', and a space of 'the Outside', where the primary drive is a logic of adding, of others and others endlessly. This comprised a philosophy of AND.

6.

If we put these ideas together, from those of the world-system, to diagrams and cartographies of power relations, to a theory of assemblage of relations as pre-formed and pre-stratified which conditions a certain system of knowledge and institution, then what we have is an open, materialist, geographic, and geopolitical methodology for thinking and research in architecture. It is an approach that privileges local and material production in a network of relations with *other* places, peoples, and cultures. It is an approach that privileges a primary terrain of pure force, energy, and desire spreading in a network

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or assemblage, and a secondary level of stratified forms of ideas, language, ideology, institution, and nation-state. In other words, the new research, cartographic and geopolitical, is poised to challenge the idealism of a world history of architecture. That is, it challenges the idealist, top-down, universal, and historical logic in architectural research and criticism that we have been so familiar with for so long. The new approach, in other words, subverts the predominance of certain ideas, forms, formal languages, and ideologies, and the idea of the nation-state, as well as the system of stars and masters. It examines instead a field of real relations spreading, locally and trans-locally, on and across a vast geography, in a space of the other and a space of the outside.

Notes

1. Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces: Principles of Heterotopia', *Diacritics* 16 (spring, 1986), 22–7.
2. Giovanni Arrighi, *Adam Smith in Beijing: Lineages of the Twentieth-First Century* (London and New York: Verso, 2007).
3. Ibid., pp. 1–2.
4. Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau, *S, M, L, XL* (New York: Monacelli, 1994); Rem Koolhaas and Sze Tsung Leong, *Great Leap Forward: Harvard Design School Project on the City* (Cologne: Taschen, 2002).
5. Fernand Braudel, *The Perspective of the World, Vols 1–3* (London: Fontana, 1979).
6. Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System, Volume 1* (New York: Academic Press, 1974), pp. 2–11.
7. Arrighi, *Adam Smith*, pp. 1–10, 13–39.
8. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin Books, 1977 [orig. pub. in French, 1975]).
9. Ibid., pp. 195–228, 293–308. See also Michel Foucault, *Power/ Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–77*, ed. by Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), including 'Questions on Geography', pp. 63–77.
10. Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, trans. and ed. by Sean Hand (New York: Continuum, 1999 [orig. pub. in French, 1986]).
11. Ibid., pp. 59–77.
12. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism & Schizophrenia*, trans. and forwarded by Brian Massumi (London: The Athlone Press, 1988 [orig. pub. in French, 1980]), pp. 3–25.

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