

Final Discussion

(Andrea URUSHIMA) Now it is difficult because we had so many different types of presentations during these two days but the idea of this symposium was to delineate a panorama of what is possible to do when we cross disciplinary borders. But not only! Of course there was also the challenging effort to put together different regions to dialogue. And this kind of dialogue becomes possible exactly because nowadays we have new types of technical support and tools. As Pedro Brancante was saying, this was the first time that Oscar Niemeyer was ever exhibited in Asia. This has an important meaning because it shows that indeed the exchange between Brazil and Asia is still extremely limited.

In Brazil there is a tendency towards looking a lot on transatlantic exchanges but very few people will do the effort to look at the transpacific exchanges, and this is a new route of knowledge production that I believe is really important to develop and think about in the future. Because we know that most of the Japanese researchers in history and theory of architecture or urban planning, have mostly focused on Asia. Which is understandable. I mean, we have most of the Brazilians researching about Latin-America, we have Italians or other Europeans researching about Europe and then we have Japanese researching in Asia. But the point here is to debate are there means that could facilitate in exchanging further? In amplifying? This is a bit of the challenge we have tried to propose here.

(Ana TOSTOES) Allow me to interrupt you because here, you know I am staying in Tokyo University and I have lectured about Brazil, Portugal, Africa and Japan.

(Andrea URUSHIMA) This is a new trend that Japanese universities are now trying to reinforce. There is now in Japanese universities this interest “to internationalize”. But still it is rare to find Japanese researchers who do research about regions outside Asia, Europe and North America. But I know that there is the linguistic problem always. I know from my experience that is hard to bring some Brazilian scholars who have an excellent research inside Brazil, but they are reluctant to use

English. I know that doing things in another language requires more time and energy. Hugo Segawa is great, he can speak many languages, even a little bit of Japanese, but it is not so common. And it happens the same with Japanese scholars, not all of them are willing to spend this amount of time and energy to do research about other regions. So the idea of developing digital tools is connected also to the idea of facilitating research at the larger scale in order to allow the world to become more accessible. So by keeping this in mind I would like to open the discussion now.

(Kristof CROLLA) Thank you. I am a bit out of my comfort zone in terms of research but I enjoyed the presentations this morning and I have a question related a bit with Gaia’s presentation and picking on the VR presentation that we saw last night. If we look at the contemporary media and how these are becoming transnational very quickly, as things can go viral across the borders, even and often if it is only image based, without any text since it is only image based, which is not specific to any language, they can migrate from platform to platform. Through that image basis the impacts of an image can be much quicker and much bigger than the impact of texts. How do you think the historical research and the type of work that is happening nowadays, how do you think is it going to fundamentally change with that? Because as part of it we will have a flattening of the reasoning behind it, of the theories that are written down and the fact that words become second tier because of their viral nature. Which is very different from the work you were doing back in time. The few things that were printed before photograph they became the basis for a lot of the dialogues that is happening even nowadays. How do you think this will change in the next moment?

(Gaia CARAMELLINO) That is one of the reasons why we decided to frame this chronology, because of course the research practice needs to work with this. We are collaborating, and maybe it will become interesting, with other two small other projects in the Politecnico di Milano one has only

a focus on journals immediately before and after 1989 to observe the transition in the Post-Socialist Eastern European Journals, and it has a totally different way to approach the theme. If we look at the contemporary production it is quite interesting to see that in many of these platforms sometimes the text basically disappears. You have an entire platform that strongly focuses on the autonomy of the theory which heavily contrasts to the practice in architecture where the image is the starting point for the construction of narratives. So to work on critical statements in this case can be quite difficult. What I saw as few examples of projects that try to observe different platforms in this moment are really catalogues of a series of data which I think is very difficult to work with. It is totally different from the idea of carrying on a transnational or international dimension to the knowledge production. So I never worked on these, but I think that a research project would be totally different it would need another kind of perspective. I am thinking of researches that map contemporary platforms, such as blogs and websites of architecture, but I don't know if there are researches about these. It would be interesting to have a research on it.

(Ana TOSTOES) I must ask my students to do it. I already started on.

(Kristof CROLLA) For example, *ArchDaily* has its international websites, and I think that they have created a specific China page and a Brazilian page. And I think it could be very interesting to see how they are different, how they are specifically oriented to, how the contents are communicated and which projects make to the borders.

(Gaia CARAMELLINO) What could also be very interesting I think in this research about the press is not necessarily just to look at the specialized press, but also the role of architecture in the non specialized press. We invited for a series of lectures, Cathleen McGuigan, who is the editor of the *Architectural Record* right now and it was very interesting to see that she was before, for more than 20 years, in the *Newsweek* curating the section in architecture and then she became director of *Architectural Record*. So the space of architecture was so limited in the *Newsweek*, that it was interesting to know about the strategies of selection in North America for foreign experiences to legitimate the undergoing discourses. So I think that an observation larger

than just architecture in specialized press would be very of contemporary interest.

(Hugo SEGAWA) I came to Japan 10 years ago for my first experience as lecturer at the Tokyo University of Science, it was my first experience as a latin-american in Japan, although I have this face features that look so Asiatic, and I went to an old book store where they had a display showing old books and one of these books was Papadakis on Oscar Niemeyer in Japanese. A book of 1952, before Kitagawa, so there is a kind of connection but we don't know why or what it was. We must do a self-criticism as academics, because we are always looking at ourselves. That is a difficult thing to do: to face this fact. I am around latin america, but in Brazil most of the people look at Brazil, and my colleagues at the faculty of architecture are mostly looking at Sao Paulo. So this is a big difficulty, we tend to always specialize more and more to the point that we are looking with a microscope. Not with big lens. The scaling in academia is a challenge, and yesterday prof. Okabe was discussing about scales. We tend to become very specialized people looking with microscopes to subjects. And to have this scope of transnational, transcultural and cross-cultural maybe is very difficult, and sometimes in turning to this transnational scale of research funding becomes very difficult. And budget is a central point here, all people who presented since yesterday they have mentioned the limitations imposed by budget. So there is a gap between this cross-cultural and transnational way to analyze the world and local resources or budgets. And now we are entering a very confusing moment: we have Brexit, we have Trump, we have a rise of nationalistic points of view, and the world is once again becoming provincial countries or places, without interest for what is happening outside one's neighbourhood. And maybe DOCOMOMO and other institutions can be places to open our eyes. I found it enlightening to see the presentations that try to bring this international scope, and perhaps we can apply, for example, Ana's methodology to research about the circulation of knowledge about Latin America in international reviews. I learnt a lot from your presentations, and I also enjoyed the presentation about Sri Lanka, where he demonstrates this effort to really understand and approximate to a different culture, which is absolutely different from mine. How do you look to this culture? And perhaps I could try to do the same when trying to look

at Latin America. I would love to have access to a database on Southeast Asia, and try to figure out how my research group could learn from that. We have been talking a lot about networks and how they can help the learning from each other.

(Akiko OKABE) I enjoyed a lot these two days of transpacific exchange in transpacific discussions! I heard Hugo, Ana and Gaia's presentation which are on the side of the providers of database. And I would like to comment from the side of users of database. You are providing information in databases in a systematic way. At the same way, as users of information technology we can access information without having a necessarily systematic approach. For example, we search the word museum in Google, and will come out several different museums from across the world. That is the users side approach. As we are talking about information technology here I think it is important to receive the feedback from the user side. Hugo was discussing about budgets, and as a provider the budget is quite important. But now with information technologies we have a lot of possibilities to provide databases without budgets. In these two days, we had discussions about informal settlements, about informalities. There is a book titled *Globalization from below*, maybe you have heard about that. And this informality is something without a frontier. There is no systematic order and it is globalized. I think we can learn a lot on how we can provide information from these informalities. And these informalities are directly connected to these information technologies at the same time. Maybe this is a comment I can give as a researcher of informality and as a user of database.

(Gaia CARAMELLINO) What I think about the limits of budget, and the fact that in our field, let us say architectural history, I can see that these limits to transnational studies are harder to break in our field. Because I see the emergence in many other fields of this global observation, or the tentative to trace experiences that are not looking at the national experiences or single figures, but the emergence and fortune of certain discourses observed at the wider scale. I think that histories of architecture still remain a collection of national experiences or related to single figures. Maybe I am dreaming, I don't know. But the idea would be to write a history, to understand a history that is born from this transnational perspective and which is not focused on the

analysis of these single contexts. Maybe the observation of this kind of database can be the source to look at the sources, emergences, the chronological gaps, on the apparition of certain discourses in a plurality of different contexts. In particular, in architectural history, there is a large gap, compared to urban studies and other perspectives.

(Ana TOSTOES) Very quickly just to say that in the last DOCOMOMO conference, that is why we made the effort to make one thousand pages of proceedings and we made it into an ebook. And we are really doing incredible efforts with not so much money. We are very lucky because we are in the midst of a digital revolution, we can speak to each other even if we cannot use proper English, but we can communicate, and this is fantastic.

(Hugo SEGAWA) Why do we organize a three national joint research group? Because we Brazilians would like to understand what is Latin America in a way that Brazilians understand it. And the Colombians also want to understand what is Latin America from their point of view. But not from a distant point of view, we would like to merge our different point of views and reach to a common definition. That is why it is important to create multinational research groups.

(Ana TOSTOES) Don't call this a multinational research it is better to call it multicultural then!

(Andrea URUSHIMA) Yes, culture has no frontiers, you are right Ana!