Migration and ethno-architecture

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Chapter 13: Migration and ethno-architecture

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Whereas academic studies within the humanities have addressed migration through frameworks of culture, belonging and mobility, in national, political and media discourse, migration is represented as problematic to the nation-state. Increased security of the geopolitical borders and the foreclosure of internal borders preserving the homogeneity of dominant cultures reinforce popular terms, such as ‘alien’ and ‘foreigner’, conveying the sense that migration is temporary and entails an invasion. Experts in migration studies note a discursive and theoretical gap between the developments in cultural studies and the blatant protests related to territory and rights in political discourse (Castles and Miller 2009). But neither focuses on the role of the architecture. The enduring and physical nature of architecture and building that has evolved from migrant individuals and communities, however, provides compelling evidence that these structures are neither temporary nor transient, nor that their migrant inhabitants, adaptors and makers lack belonging. The ethno-architecture of migrants defines and articulates a history of agency, making and expression that reframe the question of the politics of migration.

When people speak of ‘ethnic’ public buildings, ‘ethnic’ neighbourhoods or ‘ethnic’ housing they are using the adjective ‘ethnic’ to define migration in the context of architecture and the built environment. The word is deployed to characterise the environments produced by underprivileged migrant individuals and communities as they assimilate, adapt, remake, construct and express the architectural processes of resettlement. Stereotyping the visual manifestations of ethnicity in the built environments of migrant peoples entrenches a caricature that obscures their particular modes of production and affect. In addition to architecture and buildings, shop signage, temporary displays, atmospheres and activities all form environments that governments and tourism policies invoke to symbolise the plurality of their nation as multicultural society. At the same time migrants are targeted for the visual presentation of difference as an inappropriate ‘ethnic’ presence. Consequently, the architectural spaces, aesthetic styles and motif expressions of migrant cultures are extant in immigrant-receiving cities across the
world, but are marginalised from aesthetic traditions persistently promoted as the norm, and from mainstream histories, disavowing decades of migrant settlement.

Migration has transformed urban cultures across the globe (Hannerz 1996). But what of the spatial and visual transformations activated through architecture? Alternative terms have opened the debate to the global de-localized and transnational textures of ethnicity. In geography, ‘ethnoburbs’ describe ‘suburban ethnic clusters of residential areas and business districts in large American metropolitan areas. They are multi-ethnic communities in which one ethnic minority group has a significant concentration but does not necessarily comprise a majority’ (Li 1998: 479). In sociology the term ‘ethnopolis’ refers to urban enclaves such as Chinatown or Little Italy, contemporary migrant environments integral to many world cities (Laguerre 2000: 11). These popular contemporary urban sites were originally ‘ethnic enclaves or ghettos’ which evolved as protective concentrations of immigrants in a hostile context (Castles et al. 1988). In anthropology ‘ethno-scape’ has captured new modes of global flows, communications and economies that emerged over the late twentieth century and produced larger and more connected diasporic networks (Appadurai 1996).

In this set of terms, ethnicity is extracted from its historical rootedness in place, custom and language, and transported to the global arena through its rendition in the prefix ‘ethno’. Like the other cognates of ‘ethnic’, ethno-architecture presents a way of thinking about globalisation and ethnicity, provoking critical questions about why and how ethnicity remains within the global, and how to rethink the global through situated, rather than abstract, mobility. This tension can be traced in the historic trajectories of ‘ethnicity’ braided throughout modernities in their contingent transnational crossings (Hall 1997b). The hybrid architecture and ad hoc urbanity of the border towns of U.S.–Mexico are obvious examples of this (King 2006: 69), but the effects are palpable in less publicly visible places as well. When diasporic subjects make return journeys to their homelands they disperse new imagery, technologies and architectural styles into the hinterlands of various national landscapes. Remittance constructions are transforming numerous traditional environments in the unknown villages and towns, and produce a very different interface of ‘ethnicity’ in relation to global flows.

The aim of this chapter is to build the meaning of ethno-architecture and to reflect on how it has been examined. It starts with problematising territoriality of dominant cultures, and develops a position on the nature of the migrating subject and her/his routes of migration that disrupts the cohesiveness of the dominant territoriality. Bringing the discourse to the discipline of architecture, the chapter outlines the failure of ‘vernacular’ to encompass the complexity of migrant physical (architectural) presence within dominant societies. This prepares the ground for the necessity of the term ‘ethno-architecture’ that has its own set of questions that the chapters in the book have engaged with.

**SPACE AS TERRITORY**

Theories that expose the links between the nation, space and culture elucidate why migrant architecture is not welcomed in the built environment. The first of these
theories relates to the notion of 'whiteness' as a national cultural space, often termed 'white space'. 'Whiteness' is not necessarily about having white skin, as in the example of an eastern European immigrant with an accent; but about a stake in the claim to nationalistic belonging through the accumulation of cultural capital (Hage 1998). In the Australian context this can include various cultural alignments, from enjoying Australian football to identifying with Gallipoli. If whiteness is an identity that invests in remaining non-raced in a world of 'other' races, ethnicities and cultures (Dyer 1997), then the resort accommodation globally dispersed in contexts of the severe poverty of 'others' is an example of global white space, as is the erection of an Australian monument at the site of Gallipoli in Turkey.

Migration is undeniably political. The pressing question is how architectural and spatial production engages with the complex force field between whiteness and ethnicity. The idiom 'monster houses' captures an infamous confrontation between architecture and the politics of migration. The popular media coined it to describe the houses built by wealthy Hong Kong immigrants in the 1980s in Shaughnessy Heights, an upper middle-class suburb of Vancouver (Ley 1995; Mitchell 1998). A public debate initially erupted over the issue of architectural style: the Anglo-Celtic Canadian residents preferring English Cottage historicist-style dwellings in garden settings, and the Chinese immigrants preferring large contemporary forms that required the cutting down of old trees. Behind the emotional furore was another narrative related to the carefully defined borders that preserved the 'white' coding of this suburb and distinguished it from its ethnically mixed, east-side neighbourhoods. However, the debate between a vocal and wealthy resident community

Figure 13.1
Migrant house in Melbourne illustrating selection of trees/landscape and aesthetic palette that is not a reference to English garden typologies (Lozanovska 2012).
networked with planning authorities over zoning regulations and the preservation of the homogeneity of a neighbourhood developed into a bitter debate over competing narratives of citizenship and the nation. Explicitly waged as a fierce battle in the media, the fear of an 'Asian Invasion' was directly linked to the 'strangeness' of the new houses. Migrant houses became both the cause of, and the arena for, a heated public dispute over national territory and space.

In this framework, governments and the dominant majority identify ethnic 'others' as the passive objects of policies designed to benefit the majority. Individuals and communities assume the role of managing national and cultural space, and any person in the street can become a 'space manager' by pointing to the pervasive slogan 'go home' and managing the number of migrants entering (Hage 1998: 48). This role is especially activated as a protest against the buildings of migrants and migrant communities, including houses, worship temples of diverse denominations, ethnic clubs, retail strips, restaurants, and reception centres. Tensions have arisen in response to the identifiably 'non-European' built forms in suburban landscapes such as mosques or Hindu temples (Gleeson and Low 2001: 60), in addition to 'wog houses' or 'Mediterranean palaces' in Australia (Allon 2008) or the flamboyant apartments in Vienna (Savas 2010). A persistent construction of 'host' and 'guest' in migration theory perpetuates a perception that migrants are not residents and yet are destroying local environments.

How are diverse cultures negotiated on the ground? The multicultural narrative can take two forms: first, government policies implemented to manage cultural diversity; and second, a cultural terrain resulting from the desires of various individuals and ethnic communities who feel excluded from the discourse and practices of nationalism (Gunew 1993: 2). Ethno-architecture defines the spaces for the practice of diverse traditions, languages and rituals, but the distribution of 'plurality' is not even as illustrated in how migrant houses have caused tension in

Figure 13.2
Migrant house in Melbourne illustrating flat roof and clean modernist lines in brick different to the weatherboard bungalow style house typology of the street context (Lozanovska 2012).
particular neighbourhoods and not others. If ‘white’ culture is the common ground between mainstream national citizens whether or not they agree with the policy of multiculturalism (Hage 1998: 17), the protest towards migrant construction can be explained as a fear of cultural change conceptualised as white cultural loss (Hage 1998: 179). While this is induced by globalisation, in much migration discourse the guest is constructed as an individual who is inserted into a context with pre-existing laws and rules. Architecture’s non-temporary aspect points to the problem of the host–guest binary structure, even as it persists in discourse. The increasing social diversity whether in Melbourne, Australia or Queens, New York, causes an emotional reaction that fears multiculturalism will erode a foundational heritage – British or Irish/Italian/European cultures – respectively. Architecture and buildings that serve immigrant individuals and communities more concretely and evidently articulate and manifest difference, diversity and otherness, and thereby affront the white space of the national imaginary. The public debate over the migrant house, or over the mosques in Dandenong, Australia (Beynon, Chapter 2) and New York (Gillem and Pruitt, Chapter 4), illustrate that a society’s laws determine not only criminal behaviour, but also cultural norms, aesthetic traditions and spatial appropriation. Lurking beneath anxieties over the appearance of architectural styles are anxieties about the proliferation of migrant buildings and their appropriation of the cultural space of a place, city or nation.

In highlighting the political and cultural dimensions of migration, this particular lens gives rise to an inherent territorial dimension of architecture. Often evaded in revisions of the canon, architecture’s political and cultural territoriality is evident as the meta-narrative of colonial history (Scrivo and Prakash, 2007; Crysler et al. 2012). Territoriality also operates through contemporary globalised flows of migration and its local and micro adaptation of buildings (Lozanovska 2004). Migratory trajectories call upon architecture as spatial and territorial practice in order to organise multiple and transnational environments and thereby to accommodate and mediate pre- and post-migratory social and cultural lives. And yet framing forms of settlement through invisibility (Gillem and Pruitt, Chapter 4) different to perceived visibility of ethnic communities (Frazier, Chapter 3) underscores the link to whiteness studies that have critically examined the racial underpinnings of institutional power (Dyer 1997).

Exclusionary landscapes and representations of national culture continue to be crucial in displacing those who cannot, or will not, identify with the national culture. Discourse on migration is separated from the postcolonial discourse of indigeneity; even so, many nations have histories of governance informed by racialised knowledge, and an inherited narrative of colonisation ‘haunt[s] contemporary debates around the nation, citizenship and multiculturalism’ (Gunew 2004: 10). This perspective shifts the scholarly tendency to address either indigenous or multicultural concerns. The interests of the First Nation peoples in the Vancouver ‘monster house’ debate were not merely ignored, but a priori elided in the colonising structuring of space and territory. Most immigrant-receiving nations’ practices of modernity and globalism are implicated in colonisation and, as such, they reproduce a foundational myth of the nation as a homogenous culture defined by opposition to both indigenous and multicultural others.
The names monster house, wog house or Mediterranean Palace belong to specific cultural and historical contexts, but such naming draws its authority from a transhistorical discourse of power. In these instances the act of naming redraws the divisive line between the host and the guest as individual member or communal group. The practice of identifying concentrated urban ethnic enclaves by a diminutive relationship to another place, as for example with Little Italy, Little Saigon or Little India, often authorised by municipalities, is historically actively resisted by the migrant inhabitants (Cairns 2004). The diminutive effectively belittles the migrant in relation to mainstream societal processes, systems and structures, producing precarious positions for the migrant subject (Sayad 2004; Berger and Mohr 1975). The operation of naming the boundary between belonging and not belonging through the term foreigner and its synonyms – alien, barbarian, monster, demon, non-western and ‘other’ – activates a territorial narrative. This narrative is integral to the history of civilisation, but the historical moment of colonial encounters is particularly important for the discipline of architecture and this book. Desire for the exotic and disgust of its difference in Banister Fletcher’s foundational History of Architecture (Baydar 1998) pervades other canonical efforts to come to terms with the signs of architectural difference. In a counter move, authors have sought to shift the lines of division by employing irony as in ‘Third World Looking Buildings’ (Beynon 2005), ‘Lion-taming territory’ (Lozanovska 1997) and ‘Too many houses for a home’ (Jacobs 2004). These reiterate that migrant encounters are two-way, messy and complex processes that challenge assumptions and acknowledge the infiltration of ‘otherness’ within the mainstream (Abu-Lughod 1997). Chapters in this book have devised research methodologies that can capture migrants’ views of the city and thereby promote new migrant agencies.

ETHNICITY, MOBILITY AND PRECARIOUS SUBJECTS

At one end of the spectrum migration is circumscribed by underprivileged migration conditions signified by the adjective ‘ethnic’, and at the other end by the more privileged international migratory trajectories of academic and diplomatic personnel and employees of transnational corporations. The ‘international’ urban enclave comprised of gated or privileged housing, and the accompanying infrastructure of services – work, education, house cleaning and leisure – promote an international and cosmopolitan urban taste culture that is distinct from the ethnically differentiated articulations of underprivileged migrant communities. Their different mode of mobility – departure, arrival, access, immigration and settlement – inscribes the limit to the ‘free and speculative’ exchange of commodities, economies and communication of globalisation (Castles and Miller 2009). Architectural discourse that passionately celebrates the privileged contracts of globalising economies – such as the iconic work for the Olympic Games, for example – while remaining silent about the substandard housing of migrants that constructed them spotlights that limit.

This distinction is the point of departure for this book. Historically, underprivileged migrants have been considered economic commodities, exploited by transnational or global economies and located within the consuming operations of nation-states. Short-term market interests and nation building, rather than a desire
to create multi-ethnic or multicultural societies, have routinely generated large-scale labour migrations (Castles et al. 1988). However, the word migrant describes any person who is ‘othered’ by the process of migration, and this includes post-migration generations who experience the negative and disempowering effects of their differentiation from the norms of the community into which they resettle.

In this context, Butler’s theory of sexuality (2004) as the practices through which normative human subjects are produced can be applied to culture, race and ethnicity (Butler 2009). Butler’s notion of performativity refers to the reiterative everyday practices that enable or disenable normative subjectivity. While all subjects participate in normative identity, some have more precarious, marginalised, lawless positions from which to act and perform agency. Some subjects are eligible for recognition, while others are less so or not at all. Despite decades of critical investigations, ethnicity remains essentialised theoretically and conceptually in contemporary discursive arenas, including architecture. The notion of architectural value assumes an objective evaluation of ‘authenticity’, ‘form’ and ‘style’, veiling the fact that these qualities are derived from the particular histories that dominate the narrative of architecture. Exclusionary frameworks distinguish migrant from non-migrant housing and building practices. For example ‘American’ or ‘Australian’ houses are differentiated from migrant houses, even if both typologies are within non-architect-designed categories.

To construct the ‘ethnic’ subject as a ‘collective’ or ‘group’ disavows the individually differentiated pathways within migration, and assumes an authorial representation of the group. Ethnicity functions as a generalised term and limit to the non-ethnic, but this can be reconsidered by firstly thinking English — not as universal as is often assumed, but as an ethnicity – and secondly, dismantling what

Figure 13.3
Fragments of otherness: house fragments of migrant adaptation to existing worker’s cottage in Melbourne illustrating the effort to transform house to a different aesthetic and tradition (Lozanovska 2001).
constitutes ‘Englishness’ and illustrating how ‘others’ and migration are integral to it (Hall 1997b). Work on migration and architecture tends to blur plural cultures of immigrant-receiving cities and disavow their particularity, or it produces case studies that examine isolated migrant communities producing ‘ethno-architecture’. By contrast, the analysis of the local–global character of Walworth Road in South London combines globalism and particularity (Hall and Datta 2010). By tracing the origins and journeys of the migrants on a world map, and documenting the languages, style and investment in the shop signs, they effectively represent Walworth Road as an ethnopolis. Such geo-migratory world maps are the surface plane of a potential visual counter-representation of ethnicity and architecture.

In contrast to the autonomous travel of twenty-first-century tourism, migrant mobility is characterised by multiple connectivities that are associated with networks of family and belonging (Glick Schiller and Çağlar, 2011). The mobility of underprivileged migration is related to resettlement. Displacement and place-memory are often linked to migrant identity, and yet this field’s focus on place attachment and single place-identity is inadequate to describe migrant temporality. Migration discourse shifts the relationship between place and identity for two reasons: first, more places are involved; and second, places are not merely memorialised within a nostalgic past, but re-activated through travel (Massey and Jess 1995; Sandercock 2003). The migrant desire to construct houses in the original homeland, sometimes instead of building in the city of immigration, illustrates its situatedness in multiple sites and presents a more radical challenge to architecture discourse. In addition to houses, migrants have initiated the development of public or commercial buildings in ‘homeland places’. This constitutes a dominating migrant agency and a more conscious role in the transformation of place (Lopez, Chapter 5).

Place, perceived through the matrix of underprivileged migration, is associated with routes and returns and embedded within fictionalised imaginary memories and possible future productions. Place is at once rooted within spatial boundaries and yet characterised by the dispersed network of accumulated itineraries, travels and absences of the migrant. This points to the many links and differences between place theory and migration discourse. The desire and nostalgia of ageing migrants in Israel or in the Netherlands (Levin, Chapter 7 and Vellinga, Chapter 8) contest the premise of ‘deep belonging’ to place (Relph 1976) as it is framed in various interpretations of place-attachment theory (Low and Altman 1992). Does this yearning for architecture of belonging after migration present the discipline with the challenge of a different form of utopia, emerging parallel to the much-discussed global iconic architecture and global non-place? Dominant theoretical frameworks present the migrant’s allegiances as split between two homelands. Yet migration can also connect two or more homelands, challenging both the exclusionary basis of the nation-state and the abstract notion of global mobility. Importantly, places assumed to be unrelated become connected, such that major world immigrant-receiving cities become routinely tied to unknown villages and towns of emigrant departures and exile.

Hotel lobbies, conference resorts, sparkling fast-train stations, cruise ships and air-conditioned luxury cars are not artefacts associated with the non-place of
underprivileged migration. The non-places of migrant travel might include detention centres, cargo containers, migrant construction-worker accommodation, impromptu bus-car terminals, nation-state checkpoints, networks of illegal crossings, the Indian Ocean and airports. This is material for another book, however. Here it is important to briefly distinguish between the transnational citizen who

Figure 13.4
Village-cities network: graphic representation of emigrants' routes from the village Zavoj, Republic of Macedonia to various destinations in the world (Lozanovska, drawn by Leila Mahmoudi Farhani).
travels light and yet gains access and whose privilege is visualised in Diller and Scofidio’s ‘tourist’ (Diller and Scofidio 1994), and the underprivileged migrant who carries necessities and cultural baggage from one place to another in order to build a new life. The dominant discourse of non-place associated with abstraction, estrangement and individual autonomy cannot effectively describe mobility characterised by connectivity. Migrant mobility is configured as a thick layering of routes; each one induced by promise, nostalgia or escape and, sometimes, risk.

In contrast to the popular uptake of Deleuze and Guattari’s utopian figure of the nomad in architecture, the mobility of the migrant, also discussed in A Thousand Plateaus (Deleuze and Guattari 1987) and differentiated from both the sedentary human figure and the nomad, produces materialities of attachment. Mobility is differentiated and is not always a generic global mobility: ‘It matters who moves and how you move. Nomadism is also the mantra of the neoliberal: financial capital is constantly circulating; the factory may be “fly-by-night”. (And what of the rights of migration?)’ (Massey 2003: 117). Numerous stories of the to-and-fro journeys of migration exemplify the opportunities afforded by the blinks in the temporal and spatial surveillance of cities, like the temporary appropriation of city space by food trucks in New York or Portland (Franck and Speranza, Chapter 11). The migrant is not a passive recipient, but must remain active and organised in order to ‘turn’ away from surveillance and embark on, plan and execute departures and returns (de Certeau, 1984).

Narratives of globalisation often overlook the actual physicality of place that manifests, indeed articulates, global cities, especially those spaces and structures inhabited and transformed by labour migrants (Sassen 2007). Focussing on the information economy, telecommunications, global transmission and transnational global corporate culture, such narratives mask a hidden form of globalisation that is empirical, physical and located. This includes built infrastructure, service and manufacturing labour, the (immigrant) workers, and the multiplicity of cultural environments. To consider globalisation from the lens of underprivileged migration involves taking a parallax view of globalisation and the global economies which produce architecture. Further from the dominant matrix is the architectural productivity of ‘rural’ sites. Radical mixings of urban, rural, ethnically cultural and contemporary produce what might better be defined as a global diasporic architecture erupting beyond the boundaries of nation-states, cities and villages, and undermining the very static framework that the global aesthetic is ‘urban’. The distinction between the urban and rural as twenty-first-century sites of exchange is blurred, as is the distinction between ‘generic (international universal, modern) and cultural (ethnic, exotic, differentiating)’ (Cairns 2004: 19).

COUNTER-NARRATIVES OF TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY VERNACULAR

What can be learnt from the architecture, building and environments associated with migration and migrant communities if the material productions are simultaneously read as the results of global flows, routes and mobilities, and inherently
‘ethnologised’ interpretations and representations of either particular ethnic groups or ethnicity per se? If migration brings into confrontation the assumed global and a perceived ethnic limit, can more inventive theoretical approaches to place, the vernacular, critical regionalism and architecture evolve?

Due to their focus on culture, ordinary people and non-architect-designed architecture, both ethno- and ethnic architecture are linked to theories of vernacular architecture. In the twenty-first century, vernacular architecture is a problematic field and its redefinition provides a way of accounting for globalised exchanges as well as the varied traditions of popular, kitsch and ‘everyday’ architecture (after the profound influence of the theories of Michel de Certeau 1984 and Henri Lefebvre 1991). Considering the established critique of the western gaze towards sites of otherness, a study of these structures requires ‘an entirely reimagined terrain’ of vernacular architecture studies (King 2006: 70). Are the processes of migration accommodated within the new scope and terrain of vernacular architecture? In architectural history, the vernacular is constituted as the non-architectural component of a mainstream narrative of architecture, frequently presented ahistorically, and at best through a problematic historiography that charts the structural biases of a dominant western history (Baydar 2004). Old-fashioned definitions of vernacular architecture as authentic, fixed and static are challenged by a new scope of the vernacular that encompasses many spatial, architectural and constructional building typologies, that is, everything except architect-designed architecture (Brown and Maudlin 2012). Yet such comprehensive theoretical appraisals of vernacular architecture do not always discuss migration as a significant force altering the theoretical terrain of vernacular architecture. While The Sage Handbook of Theory (which includes Brown and Maudlin’s chapter) has tried to shift the canonical position towards a more cultural and postcolonial perspective, it omits migration and its various renditions – migrancy, migrant – in its contents and index (Crysler et al. 2012). This is surprising because key authors, including Paul Oliver (2003) and Amos Rapoport (1969), and theorisation of vernacular architecture in Vernacular Architecture in the Twenty-first Century (Asquith and Vellinga, 2006) bring exchange and migration into the framing of vernacular architecture.

One problem with this omission is highlighted by the constructions and interventions built by emigrants in the hometowns to which they regularly return. Both remittance and vernacular architecture are linked to cultural theoretical frameworks related to ordinary people. But local debates illustrate that remittance architecture is opposed to the vernacular or traditional architecture (Lopez, Chapter 5 and Klaufus, Chapter 6 in this volume; Van der Horst 2010). The vernacular haunts the nostalgic architecture revisions of elderly immigrants, as with the Indisch in the Netherlands (Vellinga, Chapter 8) or Moroccan Jews in Israel (Levin, Chapter 7). If not originating from the local context, how do architectural ideas, aspirations and the imagery of returning migrant architecture evolve? What is the origin, and does it resemble vernacular architecture traditions? How can the production of ethno-architecture be characterised? What do descriptions as kitsch or pop mean in relation to transnational contemporaneity, and are they adequate to define a
distinction from the local and vernacular? Migrant stories of return trips illustrate that vernacular culture has never been rooted and static but has evolved through imprints and transformations realised through travel, in addition to dwelling in place (Clifford 1997: 251). But twenty-first-century migrant architecture involves a flux of visual imagery gathered through various media, providing the articulation of an imaginary landscape of itineraries, multiple places and aspirations. The temporal dimension and internet are folded in the spatial processes of culture and dwelling.

Colonial encounters in the eighteenth century engendered the work of documenting non-Western temples and palaces, and produced a body of work that challenged the canonical distinction between what is architecture and what is not architecture. While the vernacular ‘entailed, not the discovery of vernacular buildings, but the revernacularisation of classicism with which to substantiate a myth of origins’ (Colquhoun 1989: 30), unlike housing, temples and palaces could not easily be relegated to this role of nourishing dominant narratives. The eighteenth century marked a decisive historical moment when the discipline had to rethink its epistemological terrain because cultural particularity entered the scene of architecture and contested a single Eurocentric origin (Baydar 2004). From a postcolonial perspective it can be argued that the vernacular is deployed in the same way as the concepts of ‘oriental’ or ‘other’ have been in the servicing of the European subject, as its defining limit, the negative against which it defines itself as subject. Yet neither the canon nor the discipline of architecture is a fixed and autonomous entity with clear, stable and secure boundaries, and the current investment in what might be called ‘minor historiography’ further highlights permeability and exchange between architecture and the vernacular.

Theorisation of the impact of globalisation, mobility and the information era in relation to architecture in the twenty-first century includes the interest and critique of large-scale transnational projects, the phenomena of the star-chitect, and

Figure 13.5 House-states: developing research methodologies to capture complex conditions of architecture. Construction of the house in sites of origin is a process rather than a product that occurs in piecemeal ways depending on capacity for funding and travel. House in Zave village, Republic of Macedonia (Lozanovska field work 2007–2013).
the homogenising of the most remote sites through the same global architecture imagery. Does this mark a current moment when the discipline is rethinking its epistemological terrain, and what is the impact of migration in this field? Multiple situatedness – being grounded, in place and marked by ethnicity while simultaneously networked globally – illuminates how architecture mediates the dominant local–global framework. Thinking about the local is dominated by spatial boundary or scale in architecture and geography, but a reconceptualisation of the neighbourhood through temporality, relationality and contexts, and as a ‘property of social life’, gives emphasis to ‘the production of locality’ (Appadurai 1996: 182 his italics). Locality cannot be taken as a given because even in the most traditional of societies ‘locality is ephemeral unless hard and regular work is undertaken to produce and maintain its materiality’ (Appadurai 1996: 180). Temporality reconfigures architectural thinking as its elements stage particular social practices and reiterate cultural inscriptions through practice. The various temporal narratives of the Indian grocery store (Sen, Chapter 9) interact with the spatial scales of local site and trans-regional ethnic contexts (Indian/Asian and American), in addition to the micro-affects on the human body. How architecture relates to ‘social life’ provides access to temporal processes and diverse palettes of global imagery that influence the visual and spatial articulation of locality.

Architectural discourse privileges the object as stylistic artefact rather than considering the social role of architectural spaces and envelopes in the ways people organise their lives. The early work of anthropologist Mary Douglas (1970) and sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1973) reminds us that space is produced through ritual and ceremony. Attention is given to a hierarchy of time as seasons, as ceremonial calendar and as everyday activities evident in the material and spatial inscription: the plan of the settlement, the division of inside and outside, internal hierarchy and system of openings, as well as the pattern of ornamentation. Interaction and sensory affect with this ritually inscribed space produce an embodied and lived narrative of meaning and value, such that human subjects are expanded and limited by the cultural laws inherent in the architecture. The eventful temporality of food trucks and its impact on public space illustrates the role of food at this anthropological-architectural intersection (Franck and Speranza, Chapter 11). The architectural world is not only spatial, physical, scaled and ordered as a rational system, but a system within which magic, fiction and fantasy as well as fear, emotions and protection operate. If architecture is interactive, the altered environments produced through migration engender new heterogeneous or heterolocal cultures.

Migration and its modernities and mobilities challenge theories that depend on the secure boundaries of places, histories, artefacts and cultures. This challenge can occur from underneath canonical narratives and the precedents that architectural discourse privileges, as outlined in the chapters in this book. Architecture takes on different meanings according to location, how it operates in relation to social hierarchies, how it is theorised and by whom. The perceived difference between ‘ethno’ and ‘ethnicity’ is produced by discursive structures of the political and cultural context. Migration also takes on different meanings according
to location and perspective, as illustrated in the production of a major exhibition on migration in Paris and Berlin (Porsche, Chapter 12). ‘Ethnicity’ crossed with migration shifts the focus from ‘locatedness’ to the new global contexts of ‘ethno’. By combining ‘ethno’ and ‘architecture’, this collection aims to refunction architectural theory through the concepts of mobility and migration. The scope of architecture is related both to a politics of identity and to architecture as an incomplete term whose value and meaning must be negotiated through narration.

ETHNO-ARCHITECTURE AND CRITICAL OTHERNESS

Much of the twenty-first-century built environment evolves through the mobility, settlement and itineraries of migrants. Numerous studies are carried out on particular migrant communities and particular sites, but very few as collective phenomenon, its impact on built environments and its challenge to architectural thinking. Framing migration and its resultant ethno-architecture as problematic to immigrant-receiving societies elides the discussion of heterogeneous locality inhabited by culturally diverse communities. Conversely, framing ethno-architecture through the celebratory tone of diverse and rich cultures avoids developing resilient positions relating architecture to critical otherness. Additionally, omitting critical studies of remittance architecture in the homeland sites continues a perspective focussed on western cities, raising the question ‘what places matter?’ when we speak of the global environment.

Theoretical positions that critique the interests of the nation-state and its spatial boundaries have challenged a persistent negative attitude to the strange and the stranger. The most radical and innovative of these is the theorisation of ‘diasporic cosmopolitanism’. In joining diaspora, signified through the vernacular, rooted and ghetto, and cosmopolitanism, signified through urbane, worldly and open, it offers a critique of the universalising theorisation of cosmopolitanism and its rootless, abstract and transhistorical modes of mobility (Glick Schiller and Çağlar, 2011; Sandercock 2003). Recognition of migrants’ investment and contribution to the social and urban cultures that have made many cities liveable requires rethinking about who engages with the other. Ethno-architecture extends this urban and cultural theory towards the on-site spatial and physical manifestations and the political and cultural negotiations made through architecture.

Theorising the cosmopolitan and global through the figure of the migrant requires negotiating frameworks of routes and roots, of diaspora as a necessary heterogeneity and diversity (Hall 1997a). However, one’s ‘entry point’ into the migration discourse determines the tension of identity and difference. A positivist and constructional agenda drives architectural practices. The construction and extent of ethno-architecture in many parts of the world represent the efforts of migrants to build and adapt their lives in a new local context. Many disciplines assume migrants are bound by homesickness and nostalgia (Hage 1997), but ethno-architecture, and its global distribution and volume, shifts the identity of the migrant from stranger and guest to local and resident, respectively.
The transformation of neighbourhoods, commercial and retail strips, public architecture and urban space provides the empirical landscape and evidence that ethno-architecture is as temporary or permanent as any other architecture defining the culture of place (Beynon, Chapter 2; Woodcock, Chapter 10). The buildings of migrants have had to negotiate laws, norms, authorities and public opinion in order to be erected, and then to be accommodated and tolerated within their local contexts.

However, ethno-architecture incites debate and raises more questions about the stranger and guest, and the local and resident. Home building is not a unified process occurring in one place. The migrant is often compelled to articulate and manifest connection to two or several sites through architecture. To look critically at various sites, including the homeland sites, means to account for a dominating migrant agency and capacity to build. The interface between migrant construction and vernacular architecture gives rise to more pressing questions relating to the local and the stranger. Effects on places of emigration, resulting in blurred rural–urban developments, contest generalised theories of ethno-scopes (Appadurai 1996) and diasporic cosmopolitanism (Glick Schiller and Çağlar, 2011) from perspectives of minor historiography. Thus migration is not one way, and must be reframed in order to identify how it contributes to the production of heterogeneous or indeed homogenising global locality. Migration promotes redistribution of globalising economies through remittance and the construction of fictive and embodied connectivity to multiple places. But do these migrant trajectories offer an alternative position towards place, through diversity and the stranger, rather than territorial frontiers? The emphasis of architecture mediated through migration is to dismantle the bounded concepts of ethnic community and urban neighbourhood that service the hierarchies of nationalist paradigms. Architecture’s appropriation of space and material definition of place make it critical to this discussion, and through visual presentation, architecture speaks to the larger public of the nation and global economy. It speaks not only about territory but also about a cultural existentiality that has symbolic intent.

NOTE
1 Is the Chinatown in New York the same as the Chinatown in Melbourne; is Little India in Singapore the same as or different from the one in Toronto? It would be interesting to examine the similarities and differences of the ‘ethnopolis’ from one city to another.

REFERENCES


