

Spring 2012 – MIT 4.616, Thursdays 9-12 in 5-216
Instructor: Sibel Bozdogan

SELECTED TOPICS ON CULTURE AND ARCHITECTURE:
GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON MODERN ARCHITECTURE AND URBANISM

The inherited Eurocentric biases of the historiography of modern architecture have more recently been dismantled in favor of recognizing the plurality, heterogeneity and difference of modern architectures across the globe. Recent critical theories and revisionist histories have articulated the need to abandon the very idea of a central, singular and canonic modernism or “a European master narrative” claiming distinction from what was perceived to be its lesser, derivative extensions in peripheral geographies (“non-western”, “Third World” or “other” modernisms to cite some of the terms in circulation). What is proposed instead is a “cosmopolitan modernism” –one that is de-centered, worldwide and heterogeneous; a global history that explores the circulation, translation and domestication of architectural and urban ideas and forms not just between the industrialized west and the countries typically grouped under the term “Third World”, but among different “Third World” countries themselves.

This seminar seeks to review the growing body of recent scholarship paradigmatic of such trans-national perspectives in the history of modern architecture –not only studies of individual countries like Turkey, Japan, China, India, Iran, Brazil, Mexico and Indonesia (such as Bozdogan, 2001; Akcan, 2012; Oshima, 2009; Kuan, 2002; Lu, 2005; Prakash, 2002; Grigor, 2009; Williams, 2009; Carranza, 2010; and Kusno, 2000 and 2010) but also broader and comparative regional studies (such as Duanfang Lu ed., *Third World Modernism: Architecture, Development and Identity*, 2010; Mark Crinson, *Modern Architecture and the End of Empire*, 2003; J.F. Lejeune, Michelangelo Sabatino, eds. *Modern Architecture and the Mediterranean*, 2010; and Sandy Isenstadt and Kishwar Rizvi eds. *Modern Architecture and the Middle East*, 2008, as well as special issues of *Docomomo Journal* on Caribbean, Middle East and Africa). Through these selected works, the seminar will explore the role of architecture and urbanism in the making (and continuous re-negotiation) of modern national identities of countries outside Europe and North America, from their colonial/imperial beginnings in the 19th century to the building of post-colonial/ post-imperial nation states in the 20th century and the more recent effects of globalization and neo-liberal economic integration in the 21st. Through weekly discussion of selected texts and contexts, we will focus on how imported discourses of modern architecture and urbanism are contested, selectively appropriated and transformed in peripheral geographies, reflecting the complex internal dynamics and the specific national projects of these countries. The overall objective of the seminar is to critically map the field, identify theoretical and methodological issues common to such trans-national studies of modernism and discuss the ways in which they open up, contribute to or transform the history, theory and criticism of modern architecture and urbanism. Seminar participants will be required to make class presentations on selected topics (texts, projects, exhibitions, practices etc) and submit a major research paper at the end of the semester.

