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exploration, research and reflection on cities , public space, urban design , urban planning and landscape design

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urban developments - urban space vital to city development

GLOBAL PROJECTS

The literature review chapter tackles three main themes that formulate the conceptual framework fro intervening to retrofit Big Urbanism projects influenced and intensified by globalization – I call them Global Projects

THIS IS about defining **global urban projects**” as an emerging concept with its related challenges and investigates **the forces that have lead to the sterility of their urban spaces**. The public space definitions have been studied through different disciplines .Each discipline has studied its primordial characteristics and offered a partial perspective depending on the layer of analysis tackled. Few cases of research have attempted to present a comprehensive view or an overreaching concept (Low 2000).

Global Urban Projects

Global urban projects represent the local articulation of global processes with the physical space of the city. They represent the materialization of the globalization forces in the urban territory. They are referred to as the "new urban form" (Forbes 1999, Lin 1994) that links city regions, or spans across borders or even become an extended 'metropolitan regions" (Rohwer 1995, Marshall 2003)

Their spread encompasses the five continents although most of the literature focused on their emergence in the Asia –Pacific region (Olds 1995, Marshall 2003).Most of the public spaces in these projects suffer from such as Pudong Area China.

Absent urbanism is reflected in the absence of a deliberate articulation of the physical and non-physical characteristics of urban space which Results in the absence of the link bonding it to the encompassing public realm of the territory it occupies. Thus, the space is not enabling multiple meanings and facilitating multiple perceptions or readings by its users. It becomes flat, purified and abstract.

Global urban projects sprang out of the political, economic and cultural forces of globalization. The below section will try and analyze the entrenched aspects of these forces contributing to the absence of urbanism

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Global urban projects are seen as a marketing tool to put their host cities on the global map .In order to make foreign capital move efficiently, the projects disconnect themselves form their hosts and become isolated from the complexities of the territory surrounding them.

In the emerging urban economic base, cities compete mainly in terms of global competitiveness and connectivity which are the main criteria to determine their status (Short et.al 2003). **In order to claim a position in the urban hierarchy, these cities establish global projects (Friedman 1995)**. According to Short (ibid.), the world city status is seen as a guaranteed enhanced level of prosperity in the contemporary urban economy (Dieleman 1994 in Short ibid.).

The connection to the global flow of capital means confining connectivity to a global network of information and people that are essential to sustain the activities of these nodes. The dependence on the foreign direct investment and the relocation of transnational companies make it essential to remove risks associated with local conditions.

Castells (1989) argues that ‘the suppression of places by the network of the information flows is essentially to avoid the complicated different layers of the urban space’. Therefore, developers of such spaces are taking advantage of the liberalization policies and consumerism by developing the spaces and the infrastructure supporting these spaces as a closed network .By filtering the boundaries of these projects and enhancing global connectivity via transportation and information highways, they risk a disconnection from the local context (Graham and Marvin 2001).

This disconnection will impact the life and life cycle of the urban spaces created in the global urban projects since they will become only a transient space for Multi National Companies employees or Foreign Direct Investment guests. This transient character and the lack of connection with the existing fabric and community render their urbanism absent.

The dislocation and disconnection form the urban life of its host city, impacts negatively the input of these projects into the culture of the city.

Why their connection to the Cultural Dimension is lacking and is important to be restored?

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The research proved that in practice these projects, although implemented due to the cultures diversity of either the consultants working on the project or the investors developing them, **lack the multiplicity of spaces needed for representation and interaction**. Although policy makers emphasizes the role of economic forces and political forces in the success of global projects ,their sustainability can not be attributed only to economic factors such as accessibility to global networks or agglomeration of producer services firms.

Current research stresses on the importance of social and cultural factors in their economic long term life (Lee1995; Budd 1995; Amin and Thrift 1992, 1994).Global urban projects are essentially dependant on people. In his study of the Asian global urban projects, Olds argues that at the origin of the capital flows and mega urban developments between Hong Kong and Canada, lies essentially a cultural flow facilitated by the influential Chinese families and multinational consultants migrating Global projects are directly influenced by the cultural globalization that has been facilitated by the continuous flow of ideas, information, commitment and values across the world (Waters, 1995).

1. **Epidural (1990, 1996) propose five dimensions of these global cultural flows:**
2. **-Ethnos capes: The movement of tourists, refugees and guest workers**
3. **-Medias capes: the international flows of printed media**
4. **-Techno capes: the spread and distribution of technologies**
5. **-Financscapes: the flows of international capital**
6. **-Icescapes: the flows of political ideas and values.**

Another factor that proves the importance of the social and cultural aspects of these developments is the importance of livability or what is referred to formally as "Quality of Life". **This is depicted in the quantitative models developed by international institutions such as World Bank and IMF; Quality of Life encompasses aspects such as availability of public spaces, open spaces as well as the array of cultural activities available .It is the absence of these spaces that impedes these projects from achieving sustainability and fostering social and cultural interaction (Knight 1995)..** The reason for this could arguably be a disconnection from the local dimension resulting in lack of spaces of representation and therefore the absence of urbanism in the spaces of these projects.

Contested territories

Sassen argues that the corporate culture as a representation of expertise neutralizes the urban space by ordering it through technology, economic efficiency and rationality. The main actors are the "business elites" who establish their identity by "aestheticizing urban space to overshadow the aspects that need to be controlled (Murray, 1995; Zukin 1991, 1992, 1995). **Sites become designed for one user group mainly business elites and employees providing spaces which can host them without taking into considerations the needs of other surrounding communities that are disregarded The issues of representation are key to understanding how various types of firms that are not associated with globalization or information economy are excluded. These are referred to "contested representations of globalism" (Hannerz 1991).**The representation of the city is merging with aims of boosting the city world status. These representations, either external or internal consumption, emphasize on the needs of the corporate new class: the city as a place of social justice, democratic participation or creativity is therefore silenced.

"This new managerial class colonizes exclusive spatial segments that connects with one another across city, country, world; they isolate themselves from the fragments of local societies" (Castells, 1989).

Sassen (1994) argues that there is a new space emerging that is calling for a new transnational identity. It is placed in the center because of its unique location and is considered transnational because it is connected to distant places .It is coinciding with Massey's (1993) call for a "progressive sense of place" that is global by linking itself to places beyond.

Although these flows have enabled the formation of a globalized culture, their articulation between each other and the local context lead to their reinterpretation and reinvention as subverted micro narratives (Appadurai 1990). In this sense, globalization is not a one way process, it adapts culturally to the local settings. However, differentiation does not occur in between societies. Instead, differences occur when clashes are produced between local cultures and imported ones (King, 1997).

Hence, Globalization as it advances will create hybrid spaces whereby the local and global fabric will fuse together and produce spaces that celebrate diversity while creating its unique narratives to the host city it belongs to.

What's in it for the developers to care so much about inclusive public spaces? Why it is it a big issue?

When the space is abstracted and purified through rationalization, **it ceases to acknowledge that attractive urban spaces throughout famous cities have always been sordid. Peter Hall (1989) deduced, after reviewing planning theory of the twentieth century, that' Great cities have never been earthly utopias: they are place of stress and conflict, messy places, sordid places but places nevertheless superbly worth living in" (ibid: 998).**

Moreover, such acute privatization of public space can lead to the loss of the same security that the global agenda strives to protect. Examining the psychological implications of the decline of the public realm, **Senett (1974) notifies that this turning inwards undervalues the importance of class and community relations with strangers, particularly those that occur in cities.**

quality of life,

indicator in global marketing strategies, by enhancing opportunities of a more vibrant social life. **Zukin (1995) elucidates the importance of public spaces because it reveals how the city receives strangers and integrates them into their social life.** Where the public arena gives way to mingling with strangers, urban spaces are transformed into scenes of the civic life. Boyer (1994) highlights the importance of everyday street life and ordinary places of collective assembly that initiate the emergence of a shared public culture which the new consuming places fail to infuse. Furthermore, she points out that this level of every day practices construct 'social vitality and cultures of socialization, talk, negotiation and understandings' (ibid: 260).

Fourth, face to face encounters is still an essential component in increasing creativity and reducing economic costs of insecurity. Stressing on 'the extraordinary social nature of modern economics', Thrift and Olds (1996) argue that 'in volatile and globalizing economies , trust ,reciprocity and face-to-face relational networks become centrally important to many economic practices'.

Fifth, Hybrid public spaces will cut on costs. By encouraging the sense of belonging for a variety of social groups, such space will also increase economic potential by increasing social relations between different groups and therefore enhance employment opportunities in minority enterprises, third sector services, local education and technical centers. **Hall (1995) views such diversity as producing better conditions for 'economic adaptability since cultural mixing would allow innovative business formulas and practices' (ibid cited in Amin A et al.1997:423).Diversity in the urban areas contribute culturally and economically to a vital style of life which will sustain social cohesion, mobility and opportunity (Castells 1989).**

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