

ARCHITECTURE OF A 'THIRD-WORLD': DESIGN, TECHNOLOGY AND ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION

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The changing social, economic and environmental challenges in the developing world call for an amplification of the role of the architect. Rather than continue standing by the old principle of non-compatibility between the production of cultivated advice (e.g. design) and the production of goods (e.g. construction), architects must find a way to bring the ambitions of design and the realities of construction together - devising, if possible, coalitions and solutions to make socio-technical novelty manageable in terms of labour skills as well as building results. In Sri Lanka, such an outlook requires change in both professional attitude and cultural appreciation.

In such context, professional architectural education cannot be steeped in a cultural framework that is merely context-selective and impinges on a specific narrative celebrating the picturesque alongside nostalgic representation of traditional building products and processes. If poetic transcendence cannot be contaminated by modicums of enlightened technocracy, necessary managerialism and social activism, it will be very hard for other design domains to enter the picture.

By exploring the notions of 'design', 'technology', and 'design teaching' as relevant to the building production in the developing world, this paper argues that architectural education must move away from a mono-disciplinary academic culture that can infuse a sharp divide with engineering, construction and social and economic sciences. Instead, alternative models for teaching must be explored to promote cultural dialogue and reflections, and facilitate professional development in critical directions.

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