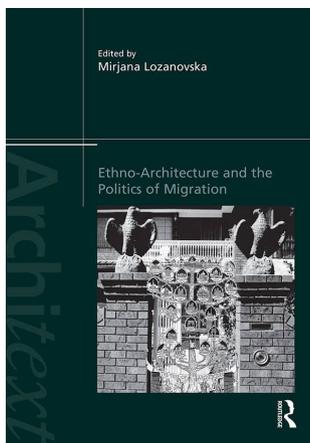


review / MICHAEL MILOJEVIĆ

Mirjana Lozanovska (Ed.)

Ethno-Architecture and the Politics of Migration

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Since we've had migration longer than architecture, the latter's history is a palimpsest inscribed by the histories of migrations. The canonical Western history of architecture in the Old World is a succession of migrations—the dynastic Egyptian migrations up into Nubia, Greek migrations west into ancient Sicily, Umayyad and Almohad migrations north into Iberia, and of course reversals and re-reversals. In *Ethno-Architecture and the Politics of Migration*, Mirjana Lozanovska reminds us that an important facet of cultural hegenomies is the reading and control of urban space and architecture. In this volume, she gathers the research of fourteen scholars, each of them carrying out micro studies into the ethno-architectures of transnational migrations across the past few decades.

While all her contributors engage with the city, not all can be said to have engaged explicitly with architecture, and none engages in a sustained reading of form, space or materiality. Lozanovska articulates this loose assemblage of materials over three sections—the first and third concerned with expansive ethno-landscapes in metropolitan centres, with four case studies focussed on smaller scale domestic topics across the middle section.

Though Lozanovska's publication does not include studies which focus on the architecture of prominent or longstanding transnational migrant communities, two chapters focus on 'Third World-looking' facets of Melbourne. Ian Woodcock's piece on the particularity of Sydney Road as an urban armature of ethno-architecture analyses its exceptional density and diversity, noting that the original two-story narrow frontage mainstreet building stock, the retention of which is now supported by heritage controls, endorses the need for adaptivity and reads as a palimpsest of simultaneous readings, quite literally.

In another chapter, David Beynon's case study on the rebuilding of Emir Sultan Mosque in the suburb of Dandenong highlights issues around the visibility of minorities. Unpicking the cultural disinclination to appreciate neo-Ottoman architectural forms, he highlights the council's biased planning application process. He points out that the new project was deemed "not in keeping with the character of the neighbourhood" even if the law said that there was no distinction to be made between Christian and Muslim places of worship. In his account of the 'Indianisation' across a part of Queens, New York, John Frazier highlights

the irrational racist response to the transformation and renewal of commercial and domestic properties by Indian immigrants.

The scenario involving waves of immigrants moving gradually through the city neighbours, before dispersing in subsequent generations, is common internationally where the closing of ethnic ‘institutions’, be they Jewish delis, Italian bars, or Austro-Hungarian patisseries, are replaced by ‘strange’ new businesses catering to an entirely different migrant clientele. Mark Gillem and Lyndsey Pruitt report on this phenomenon—the highly concentrated and visibly coherent migrant settlement areas such as San Francisco’s Chinatown, where shopping, political, cultural and spiritual pursuits had been concentrated within a few blocks—to the dispersed communities of the biggest Ethiopian-Americans zone in Atlanta, and the even more extensive migrant landscape found in America’s largest Lebanese-American community of Detroit.

Arjit Sen reports on the incremental expansion of the extended Patel family businesses in the medium density fine grain urban fabric of Devon Street, North Chicago, as an example of “spatial temporality”. Now, two generations on, the Patels are an extended family each fronting a facet of the national Patel brands, supplying to a much broader ethnic spectrum nationally, disengaged from their original clientele to the point where devotional songs and vegetarian stricture is long gone. In contrast with the Patels’ immersive experience retail formula, Karen Franck and Philp Speranza’s survey into the latest iteration of mobile food vending in New York and Portland notes how, in a bid to enter hospitality, the food trucks and carts of the cash-strapped migrant support the semblance of an informal city and its unpredictably pleasurable urban experiences. But where the truck or cart format cannot support an ethno-architectural atmosphere or sustained client contact, these businesses often branch into immobile restaurants. The co-authors recommend that more cities actively support these endeavours as they tend to serve a significant sector of the low wage earners, who claim otherwise be priced out of the market by high restaurant prices.

The four “materialities of home” chapters sit together more comfortably. Using Vista Hermosa in the Mexican state of Jalisco as a case study to better understand the aspirational aspects of migrants’ remittance projects, Sarah Lopez points out that the landscape of migration is double-ended in that some prosperous Mexican migrants, not only Mexicanize their American neighbourhood, but through sustained philanthropic involvement in seed-funding via a Mexican government urban development program, also engage in the Americanization of their hometowns by the construction of luxurious vacation homes, the renovation of a plaza, and the construction of a sports and entertainment facility.

Critical responses and ambivalent results suggest that economic infrastructure might be a wiser investment. Christien Klaufus’s contribution concerns remittance architecture in the peri-urban zones of three mid-size Latin American cities—Cuenca in Ecuador, Quetzaltenango in Guatemala and Huancayo in Peru. Applying “demonstration effect” analysis, it is noted that whilst the owners of these unconventionally large and non-traditional residential forms are re-investing in their hometowns, they are simultaneously jumping up the social ladder. Architectural form and ornament re-emerge in Iris Levin’s readings of two domestic interiors in Tel Aviv. Deriving socio-political meaning from the ornamentation of the “Moroccan rooms” synonymous with Sephardi

Moroccan-Israeli immigrants, she points out that these private havens of nostalgia do not challenge the long-dominant European Ashkenazy culture like the outwardly Moroccan cultural sites of Bab-Sali shrine at Netivot. Marcel Vellinga's study of two unrealised pseudo-Indisch style neighbourhood developments in the Dutch city of Almere set out the projects' intention to satisfy the late life nostalgic inclinations of first and second generation Indisch immigrants to live out their days with each other within a visibly distinct environment. While rejecting the objections of the Dutch press to *ersatz*-Indonesian design, the author evokes notions of domestic comfort, of being 'at home', without an analysis of the projects' urban or architectural design.

The contributions of the first and last chapters of Lozanovska's volume highlight the opportunities that the study of the representation, images and their interpretation provides the researcher in this field. Ayona Datta's piece on photo-narratives of London by Polish migrant construction workers, and Yannik Porsché's account of mounting a temporary exhibition on the history of immigration in Paris, and later Berlin, points out the gulf between a migrant's view of the everyday city and official narratives projected by institutions.

As one might expect, Lozanovska's own final chapter is both the most broadly framed and most closely argued piece in this volume. In it, many important questions of her topic and material are asked. In her repositioning of ethno-architecture alongside the prevailing understanding of vernacular architecture, I found myself wondering how she might see this in the broader context of the pseudo-ethnic and pseudo-historic architectures, and other reinterpreted and debased forms by long established and fully integrated communities, each punctuating the urban panorama of our cities.

As an ex-Toronto and Vancouver Serbian-Canadian architect, I carry personal experience of two examples Lozanovska calls upon, these being the tendency among Balkan migrants to increase the success of their relocation in Western industrial cities by leaving and arriving in clusters, and the ironic indignation of Shaughnessy residents in their reactions to wealthy immigrant Chinese "monster houses". Such phenomena from distinctly different socio-political urban contexts suggest that the coherence of ethno-architecture as a study is critically important, and that research of this kind be strongly contextualised in time and space.