



Southern Voices

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A review of Harriet Harris, Ashraf M. Salama, and Ane Gonzalez Lara, eds., *The Routledge Companion to Architectural Pedagogies of the Global South*, London: Routledge, 2022, 508 pages, 175 b&w illus. ISBN 978-1-003-01884-1. A comprehensive and necessary compendium that gives voice to a wide range of pedagogical experiences produced by the global South, demonstrating the relevance of this body of knowledge.

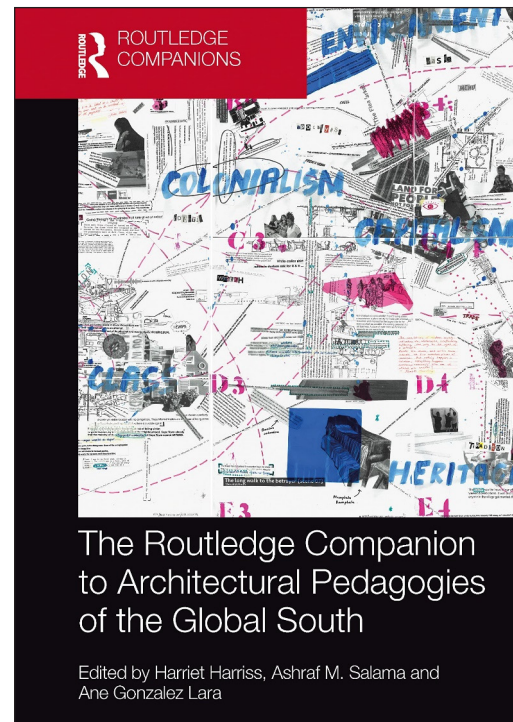
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A volume on pedagogical practices in the field of architecture is not precisely novel, though it is always a relevant topic, especially when presented as a broad compendium of experiences as in the book under review, *The Routledge Companion to Architectural Pedagogies of the Global South*. What distinguishes this volume from other books on the subject, however, is that these practices originate what is known as the global South. As several of the contributions point out, the global South is not a geographical place, has no defined latitude, and does not represent only one specific group of people; it encompasses all places, all people, and all experiences that do not conform to and that question the societal models disseminated by hegemonic policies represented by the global North. Thus, even though the global South represents many, these many are seldom represented, and giving voice to these experiences is the purpose of this work.

The volume was written during the pandemic and so is characterized by introspections and reflections on the human condition and our impact on the planet. These reflections point to the failure of the hegemonic models perpetrated so far—exclusive and sectarian—that affect various aspects of our societies, including the education of future architects. Questions the book proposes to discuss include what role various participants in architectural education play, what political and social dimensions it has, and what frames of reference are relevant to it today. Bringing together authors from various regions, countries, genders, races, and religions, the great merit of the work is that it gives voice to different thoughts. It does not seek to restrict or find definitive answers but to broaden and expand the field of thought around architectural pedagogies.

The authors describe pedagogical experiences from many different places, including spaces traditionally called the global North, such as major American and European universities, and approach their pedagogical practices through a self-reflective lens, many adopting the first person, which lends a sense of intimacy. These experiences converge in a search for dialogue between South and North, whether



through actions aimed at challenging the educational models imported from the North to the South or expanding the horizons of the North. The narratives also reveal diasporas, violence, and prejudices arising from this polarization.

Nonetheless, it must also be noted that although the book presents experiences outside the canonical axis, it was produced in the North. The asymmetrical relations are expressed in the very language of the texts. Although presented in a traditional academic format and translated into English, the contributions still reveal different accents that demonstrate the variety of their origins. The significant presence of authors within the North denotes, however, a transgressive movement within the academic system itself, through an organic diffusion of ideas that contributes to dismantling the hegemonic structures.

In an introduction that provides an overview of the book's 34 chapters, the editors identify transversal themes such as experiences beyond academic walls, the development of participatory practices in studios, and the representativeness of various segments of society in pedagogy. They also address the problems the relationships between education and power give rise to and the impositions of the university academic regime, which is uniform in its practices and market-oriented, fostering insurgent and resistant actions, as many of the case studies exposed in the book illustrate.

The first section contains nine reports on tools and pedagogical proposals that allow access to knowledge produced by the South, highlighting South-South connections, acknowledging the maxim of Joaquín Torres García, 'Our North is the South', and also considering how to establish North-South connections. These pedagogies are presented as having broad application, and they incorporate various cultural manifestations of the South, its indigenous roots, migrations, exiles, ethnographic practices, the practice of active listening, and its confrontation of racism. The accounts in this section bring to light other histories behind the making of architecture, histories that are silenced and rarely present in formal education.

The second section discusses the inadequacy of curricula built from Beaux-Art and Bauhaus models that were imported into various parts of the global South. The seven chapters in this section describe experiences of breaking away from these canons and creating curricula through collaboration practices that include community-based knowledge. The accounts also address both cultural transposition and migration charting the trajectories of architects trained in the North who return to the South, as well as Southern spaces within the North. The violence arising from these importation processes, especially racial discrimination that is still expressed in the imported curricula, is another topic this section tackles.

The nine chapters of the third section cover the political aspects of pedagogical practice. Discussing themes such as the legal barriers imposed on curricula, the homogenization of education, and importations, the chapters describe various pedagogical proposals that incorporate anti-hegemonic practices, such as interventions in public spaces, learning in practice, participatory games, and didactic tools that recognize the diverse urban subjects and the non-neutrality of pedagogy. A prominent presence throughout the book, Paulo Freire is one of the authors who takes up this political dimension of education.

The fourth section documents hybrid pedagogical practices that bring students into contact with experiences from the South. Practices that emerged in the wake of post-colonialism but that are deemed economically unprofitable by universities subject to the commercialization of education. They also discuss the globalization of education, which leads a large number of foreigners to Northern universities whose cultural diversity is not reflected in the curricula, the impact of colonial practices on Black and Indigenous peoples, and practices that empower women in urban settings. The chapters address themes such as actively listening to communities, self-construction experiences, and urban agriculture, all through a perspective that challenges traditional educational models.

At the end of the 480 pages, readers are left with a profound sense of breadth. Even for those in the South, the book confirms that the existence of many other relevant perspectives from the South that have limited reach, demonstrating the difficulty of accessing knowledge from the South. The volume also makes it clear that the South has produced pedagogical approaches distinct from canonical ones, approaches that although diverse are linked by a desire to foster participatory curricula, a recognition of prior and ancestral knowledge, an interest in practical construction experimentation, and a recognition of the role of the architect as a mediator of knowledge. These commonalities indicate that these approaches are more than merely 'local views'. In this sense, by leaving old practices behind, South becomes an adjective as well, characterizing these diverse practices as alternatives for architectural pedagogy in today's world.

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

