Modern Architecture in Southeast Asia, an Introduction.
Asia, North-South-West-East

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In the summer of the year 2000, a group of like-minded architectural scholars and practitioners gathered in Guangzhou, The People's Republic of China, to discuss what constituted common concerns about the recent rapid economic growth and physical development of Asian cities and landscapes. New opportunities in the early 2000s seemed to be promising Asian countries a new start after the 1997 Asian financial crisis. By then, Southeast Asian economic powerhouses such as Thailand and Indonesia (along with South Korea), were badly shaken by the currency crisis (which eventually led to a political crisis), gasping for bailout from the International Monetary Fund. The crisis also affected Hong Kong, Laos, Brunei, China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, Mongolia as well as Japan.

The Asian economy began to rebound in the early 2000s. Cities were, once again, expanding along with the population and industrialization. Architectural projects, after having halted for a few years, were coming back providing new opportunities for Asian practices. Sharing optimism as well as anxieties, Asian architects and scholars were looking forward to the future as well as once again taking a glimpse back at their recent architectural past, roughly from the late 19th century and throughout the 20th century. With this opportunity, they decided to take a moment to reflect on how Asian cities, landscapes, and their architectural heritage were shaped, altered, grown in the process of Asian societies embracing modernity. The group, namely the modern Asian Architecture Network (MAAN), agreed to establish a common platform enabling scholars, practitioners and students to reflect and to build knowledge of homegrown Asian modern architectures. "MAAN", with lower case "m", reflected their intention to open the debates on modernism, modernity, and modernization processes especially in Asian contexts. The network was set up with the spirit of equality, friendship, freedom, and openness – modeled after a Chinese dining table or like an Asian food-court, where people with similar intentions and goodwill may come together – to exchange ideas and to push forward the discourse into new theorization through comprehensive inventories, seminars, workshops, critical exchanges, researches, education, outreach, and publications.

The founding MAAN conference was held in Macau, July 2001. Building on a nascent idea, the second conference in Singapore, September 2002, went ahead by declaring the members' strong will to discover ideas and stories behind the multifaceted architectural developments in Asian countries. The 3rd conference in 2003 was hosted in Surabaya, Indonesia, focusing on the importance and challenges of documenting the Asian built environment. After this conference, docomomo International was invited to participate, with Maristela Casciato (as chair back then) as one of the keynote speakers in the subsequent MAAN annual conferences.

An important milestone happened in 2003, when MAAN, docomomo International, and the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, supported by the Chandigarh Administration, joined hands together in Chandigarh (India) for the UNESCO World Heritage Centre 2nd Regional Meeting on "Modern Heritage in Asia". This historical meeting was followed up with the publication of docomomo Journal 29 on "Modernism in Asia Pacific", September 2003.

The 4th MAAN conference in Shanghai in 2004 was focused on how the network could contribute to safeguard, to revitalize, and to map Asian historical districts, industrial heritage, and 20th century architectural modern heritage and its historiographies. Shanghai also set a stepping stone for MAAN's wider engagement with architectural pedagogy and hands-on experience by holding an international design workshop to revitalize an ex-industrial site in the heart of the city. Some of the ideas were strengthened in the 5th conference held in Istanbul, Turkey, 2005.

In November 2006, Tokyo hosted the 6th conference with respect and sensitivity to what is particular – and maybe peculiar – in Asian urban heritage. In this conference, docomomo International stressed the necessity of MAAN and docomomo have a common platform for discussing modern architectural heritage beyond boundaries, in order to have a critical re-appropriation of modern discourse in architecture. The discourse on the "otherness" was raised further by docomomo International in 2007 with the publication of the docomomo Journal 36 with the theme "Other Modernism: A Selection from The Docomomo Registers".

In Indonesia, MAAN went further by engaging local communities (in several cities) to build up urban architectural inventory activities as well as stirring up discourse on the bases of heritage listing. The years of 2007-2008 also marked MAAN's further involvement in documenting and preserving an archive of modernist Indonesian architects. In the 7th

conference, in New Delhi, 2009, MAAN continued to discuss Asian cities as legacies of modernity as well as of recognizing Asian communal lifestyles, sustainability, and future challenges. Inspired by the Shanghai workshop, MAAN was invited to host a similar activity in 2009 to preserve and to revitalize the Indarung cement plant owned by Semen Padang, the oldest Portland cement factory in Southeast Asia (established in 1910).

In 2010, Singapore hosted slightly a different MAAN conference by bringing much younger participants to exchange creative ideas about the future of the historic Kallang airport site and to talk about empowering "the city makers" in Asia. In 2011, MAAN was also invited by PT Timah – Indonesia's tin mining company – to provide ideas and a working plan on how to revitalize the historic tin mining city of Muntok through the company's historic assets. MAAN's experiences in industrial heritage sites provided the network with a rich social and historical context, thus, in turn, providing interesting insights on how MAAN perceives sites and architecture in Asia. In 2011, MAAN explored even further the uncharted vast terrain of Asian modern heritage by visiting and rethinking the Union Carbide factory site and the city of Bhopal in India where the Bhopal gas tragedy happened in 1974. The tragic event sets a very strong gravity to our understanding of what we consider as a "heritage site" and further enhances the way we anticipate "modernity" in Asia. The 2011 MAAN conference took place in Seoul, consequently taking the theme "industrial heritage" as the main focus.

Asia, Southeast

In 2015, born out from MAAN, a new initiative called The MASEANA Project was created by **docomomo** Japan, with the collaboration of **docomomo** International, to continue bringing the focus back on architecture and architects. "MASEANa" stands for "modern ASEAN architecture" with a lower case "m" and "a" standing for the 10 members of the Association of South East Asian Nations (Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Philippines, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Brunei Darussalam, and Myanmar). The MASEANa Project sets out to form a 5-year collaborative platform for researchers working on the documentation, inventory, historiography, as well as preservation of modern Southeast Asian architecture and architects[1].

The challenge of the MASEANa Project lies in the very essence of Southeast Asia as a historical and a socio-political entity. Geographically, Southeast Asia consists of a vast region made up of an archipelago and a peninsula. Being part of the Asian continent, the peninsular part is occupied by most of the Southeast Asian countries, including the few countries formerly grouped as Indochina. The archipelago comprises a vast territory held by Indonesia and a portion at the northeast by the Philippines.

Historically the region was considered "Greater India" from as early as the 5th century BC due to strong Hindu-Buddhist cultural influences lasting until the rise of Islamic influences in the 12th century. Despite the strong influence of Indian culture on the Southeast Asian kingdoms,

the vast territory still hosts thousands of tribal communities living their indigenous lifestyles. Among them, tribal maritime communities consist of sea nomads and sojourners that have been roaming the waters since as early as 10,000 BC. Waterways act as bridges to form a population as well as cultural exchange, and help to form linguistic genealogy that spans from Madagascar to Polynesia, from Taiwan to New Zealand. Even after the massive spread of Islam and Christianity, many of these communities retain their thousands-of-years-old social structures and customs; some retain a simpler form of communal life while others have turned into more sophisticated societies.

Climate is the common feature of the area. The region is dominated by an equatorial climate which is generally hot and humid with little variations of temperature during day/night throughout the year. In the northern-most tip of Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam there may be a wet and chilly winter due to the humid subtropical climate. Torrential rainfall could happen almost anytime, but more at the beginning of the year, according to the monsoonal cycle. Lush vegetation dominates the natural landscape, while wet-rice cultivation is the common view in inhabited fertile volcanic regions. Communities residing in the hinterland enjoy slightly cooler temperatures than the ones in the coastal regions. The eastern tropical savannah islands generally have more dry months compared to the western part, and consequently people tend to develop different cultures.

Responding to the climate, Southeast Asian communities developed specific lifestyles and dwelling types. Elaborate and extensive roof types dominated the overall expression of Southeast Asian traditional dwellings. The use of hardwood timber for primary columns and beams is common, while soft and flexible materials, like bamboo, are employed for roof coverings, ties, and tensile elements. Dried grass and leaves are common materials for roof coverings, while terracotta tiles are popular only in some regions. Building floors are commonly raised at considerable height, away from the frequently wet (or even flooded) ground; some even have their houses on stilts above rivers, lakes, and sea. Livestock is kept below, while the spaces between the buildings are usually considered immediate extensions of the living activities of each household. People generally do almost all activities outside or under the shade of trees and roofs. Indoor spaces are commonly occupied only at night time, during heavy rain, or restricted to storing food supplies.

Heavily influenced by Indian culture, early states were comprised of maritime kingdoms like Funan, Champa, and Srivijaya. These "centers" created "concentric realms" with subordinate states around the metropole. This political system was very dynamic and unstable, as smaller kingdoms could break off and join other centers accordingly. Throughout two millennia, Southeast Asian waters witnessed political and cultural dynamics through maritime trading activities. Similarly, land-based agrarian societies developed advanced hydrological engineering to utilize the wet lands for rice growing. Channels, moats and man-made lakes along with vast rice fields, elaborate temples, and ancient settlements are evident in the ancient remains of

Angkor, Singhasari, Majapahit, Pagan, and Ayudhya. Masonry – stones and bricks – were commonly reserved for the temples and other political-religious edifices.

The region was also subject to "foreign" territorial claims. Southeast Asia was once associated with a Sinocentric label "Nanyang", literally meaning "South Seas", indicating the growing political influence of China and the massive emigration of Chinese which lasted until the early 20th century.

During the early 16th century, Portuguese maritime explorations persistently pushed the eastward-bound route to the east, passing the Cape of Good Hope to Asia and consequently setting the course of European presence – Spanish, Dutch, and British – in the region. Much later, the era of colonization divided the region into parts which eventually, in the mid-20th century, became separate nations. In the 19th century, colonialism became a state-enterprise, resulting in each "colonial nation" becoming increasingly conscious of themselves as members of territorially defined nations. The colonial territories eventually led to the demarcation of sovereign national territories. The vast territory of the former Dutch East Indies became Indonesia, while British Borneo – the northern side of Borneo Island – now largely belongs to the federation of Malaysia, joining the peninsular territory. The Philippines territories reflect the former possession by Spain – and afterwards, the United States, while the eastern tip of Timor island ruled by Portugal became Timor Leste. The division of Papua is a result of occupation of the island by the Dutch in the western half and the Germans and Australians in the eastern half and, after WWI, by Australia governing the entire eastern half.

The European rule imposed decision to grab further potential natural resources, land and minerals. To support the distribution of commodities and services, the European rulers invested in transportation infrastructures and industrialization. By the early 20th century, European settlers – firstly men and later women – were coming with private corporations seeking opportunities in the colonies. Roads and railway lines were built to connect cities and ports with production centers, which in turn also mobilized populations to cities. Laborers were deployed in remote mining areas creating new immigrant communities, while natural landscapes were changing drastically into production sites. Southeast Asian cities were expanding and equipped with modern amenities like offices, factories, banks, post offices, schools, satellite towns, "garden cities", restaurants, hotels, railway stations, hospitals, and public services. This was the point in history when Southeast Asian colonies were exposed to the massive influx of buildings, modern infrastructures and modern lifestyles.

White plastered façades were becoming common, and slowly replaced the humble look of the 19th century verandah of plantation houses. Particular building types and elements, then, were no longer confined to particular communities. Newly introduced materials such as cast and wrought iron, even steel, were available for those who were willing to pay. The shipping of building materials from the metropoles was common practice by the early decades of the 20th century. The development of reinforced concrete in Europe and the United States was soon applied globally, and raised the demand of Portland cement and steel bar imports. The standardized techniques of construction were employed by agencies like the colonial public works department, employing European-educated engineers and (later) architects. Urban sanitizing and rationalization were deployed to maintain orderliness and hygiene in public as well as private spaces to prevent epidemic tropical diseases like malaria.

Being introduced to such unprecedented changes, the landscape and society were set in motion. Colonial society was formed as stratified society, topped by the European ruling class and sometimes accompanied by the aristocratic elites. Along with a socially mobile merchant class, children born to aristocratic elites could enjoy a European education, learn European languages and vocational skills for modern professions. Exposed to liberal thinking and growing self-consciousness, some of these Western-educated elites then became revolutionary in thinking and further developed national awareness among their fellow citizens. The growing popularity of socialist ideologies provided a headwind for emancipation in the colonies. Religious figures and elites were also often playing important parts in developing national awakenings among the native populations.

Nations, Struggles

Until the mid-20th century, Southeast Asian countries and communities had shared an arguably similar fate in modern history. They went through a phase when nationalism grew among the native population which eventually demanded independence from the foreign ruler. The relatively short occupation of Southeast Asian countries by the Japanese armed forces during WWII set a new course for the region. The Japanese campaign of the so-called "Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere" was seen as a promising alliance to end European colonialism, as well as a path towards independence. However, as the Japanese became more oppressive and directed resources to the cause of war, nationalist revolutionaries became increasingly impatient and demanded independence even more. The Japanese occupation was then challenged by rebellions by the Japanese-trained armed forces as well as political activities by the native elites.

Following the defeat of Japan and the end of WWII, some Southeast Asian countries took the momentum by declaring independence or by negotiating the possibility of self-governing status. These were proven far from simple. The devastated European countries were losing their sovereignty in the region and giving way to the victors of WWII – namely the United States, the Soviet Union, and China – who were contesting their way in. These countries paved their way to win sympathy by providing economic aid and military support, while at the same time being involved in creating embargoes, stirring up conflicts among the factions and, in many instances, being directly involved in armed conflict. For the second half of the 20th century, Southeast Asian countries embarked on a bumpy journey as self-governing entities marked with economic and political crises, coup d'etats, political repression, corrupt governments, insurgencies, violent humanitar-

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01 1ˢᵗ mASEANa Meeting – "Conservation Action Priorities for Twentieth Century Heritage. Sharing experience of ASEAN Countries and Japan", Tokyo, Japan, 30 October-2 November 2015.

02 2ⁿᵈ mASEANa Meeting – "Pioneers of Modern Architecture", Hanoi, Vietnam, 12-14 January 2017.

ian crises as well as industrialization, prosperous economic development, and worrisome democratization.

Generally speaking, despite the recent relative peace and prosperity, Southeast Asia nations are still showing the trail of scars and tears from the calamities of 20ᵗʰ century events. This includes the dissociation of the region inherited from the height of the Cold War era when countries were polarized and oriented towards the two ideologies. Southeast Asian countries with liberal market-oriented economies enjoyed the early start of global consumerism and economic growth following the economic boom of the 1970s. Political stability and rich natural resources were the key factors that attracted foreign investment. Some suffered the violent and harrowing fate of being in prolonged conflicts and political crises, causing setbacks in human and economic development.

The struggle for independence in the Philippines started very early. The country had initially proclaimed independence in 1898 but was only granted independence from the United States in July 1946. The Philippines suffered great physical damage during the war between the Japanese and the Allied forces, leaving the city of Manila in ruin. With close ties with the United States, the Philippines developed liberal democracy in appointing the leaders and the representatives. However, during Ferdinand Marcos' (1917-1989) early years of his second term as the president (started in 1969), the Philippines suffered an escalation of crime and civil disobedience. Several separatist movements broke out resulting in Ferdinand Marcos declaring a state of martial law in 1972-1981. During his reign, Ferdinand Marcos ruled the country oppressively, curtailing press freedom, abolishing Congress, arresting opposition leaders and militant activists. Ferdinand Marcos' rule was ended following the successive events triggered by the assassination of an opposition leader, Benigno Aquino, Jr. (1932-1983). A peaceful civilian-military uprising sent Marcos into exile and installed Corazon Aquino (1933-2009) as president in 1986. Since 1986, the Philippines has continued to struggle for political stability, in the midst of natural disasters, corruption, drug wars, and separatist insurgencies.

Despite never been officially occupied by foreign powers, Thailand has been living a precarious political life since the abolition of the absolute monarchy in 1932. Adopting constitutional monarchy, Thailand has been through several coups and conflicts throughout the century as well as adopting a fascist ideology at the dawn of WWII. Despite acknowledging the constitutional monarchy as the form of governance, Thailand had been ruled by a series of military governments with brief democratic periods in between numerous coups. During the late 1960s and 1970s, despite the continuous political instabilities, Thailand went through steady economic growth and enjoyed intensive exposure to American culture and the rise of an educated urban middle class.

After 1945, Malaysia went through several changes before being constituted as it is now. Starting out as the Malayan Union proposed by the British Empire in 1946, Malaysia was restructured as the Federation of Malaya in 1948 to restore the autonomy of Malay states under British protection. Later in 1957 Malaysia was declared an independent nation within the Commonwealth of Nations. The process continued by incorporating the North Borneo territories and federal republican states and sultanates under a federal constitutional elective monarchy.

Singapore's separation from Malaysia in 1965 started as a harrowing process. Following the uneasy union with the Federation of Malaya, the relationship between Singapore – as a state – and Malaysia was filled with problems smeared with racial tensions. Singapore, as an island nation, started its early years of independence by restoring economic and political stability and was very determined to reposition itself in the region by increasing its capacity in shipbuilding and the shipping industry. This resulted in significant economic growth from the 1970s and made Singapore one of the "Four Tigers" (along with Hong Kong, Taiwan, and South Korea) during the Asian economic boom.

Indonesia declared its independence in August 1945, but had to resist Allied-backed invasions. Through diplomatic negotiations, the Netherlands finally recognized Indonesia's sovereignty in 1949. Indonesia only managed to gain the territorial sovereignty of the easternmost province of West Papua in the early 1960s through several armed conflicts with the Dutch and after mediation by the United Nations. The political climate remained precarious throughout the 1950s and reached a climax in 1965 when a major revolution broke out causing atrocities, including the purging of communist loyalists, racial persecution of the Chinese, and overthrowing a civil dictatorial rule only to be replaced by a repressive military regime for the next three decades. Under the oppressive military regime, Indonesia enjoyed unprecedented economic growth and urban development before finally succumbing to a free fall during the 1997 Asian monetary crisis. After 1998, Indonesia embarked on an open ended economic reform, democratization in politics, and massive anti-corruption campaigns.

Ho Chi Minh (1890-1969) declared the independence of Vietnam in September 1945 which was followed by a prolonged war against France. The conflict resulted in France's

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defeat and was concluded by the Geneva Accords of 1954 which acknowledged the independence of Vietnam. The accord effectively separated the country into two: North Vietnam and South Vietnam. The interference of American foreign politics led to a prolonged armed conflict between the two countries from 1955 until 1975. Following the victory by North Vietnam, the country was unified as the Republic of Vietnam. After reunification, Vietnam remained involved at the center of global Cold War politics. Until the 2000s, Vietnam remained in isolation to many pro-USA countries as well as having constant disagreements with China. For the last 20 years Vietnam has been opening up her economy and encouraging the establishment of private businesses and initiatives. As a result, Vietnam is one of the most rapidly emerging economies in the world.

The Kingdom of Cambodia was formed amidst the political turbulence in the Indochina War (1946-1954). The fight was largely caused by the conflict between the French forces and Viet Minh involving the neighboring French Indochina territories of Laos and Vietnam. Cambodia became independent from 1953 and its status was then ratified in the Geneva Conference in 1954 along with peace agreements among the conflicting territories. From 1966, Cambodia fell into disarray due to military coups and conflicts. In 1970, a coup by the right-wing element toppled the government and led Cambodia into a military dictatorship, resulting in the formation of the Khmer Republic. In 1975 another coup by the pro-left element, the Khmer Rouge, successfully overthrew the government and formed Democratic Kampuchea. During the reign of the Khmer Rouge, Cambodia went through the worst political purges and violence. The atrocities by the Khmer Rouge were ended after the invasion led by the Vietnamese army and the Kampuchea United Front for National Salvation. In 1993 the United Nations initiated a ceasefire and an authority to lead the country through a peaceful transition. In 1993 Cambodia held an election, successfully decided on a new constitution, and elected Hun Sen and Norodom Ranariddh to be the second and first prime minister respectively. Another coup in 1997 managed to oust Norodom Ranariddh that resulted in Hun Sen remaining in power until now.

Myanmar went through a bloody transitional period before becoming fully independent in 1948 as the Union of Burma. Between 1948 and 1962 the country was torn by internal conflicts between political groups which ended in the 1962 military coup. From then on, Myanmar was governed by a repressive military rule which lasted from 1962 to 2011. Under central planning, many aspects of society were under strict government control. Sporadic protests and uprisings were almost always violently suppressed, while steps closer to democratic society were taken slowly. The military junta was abolished and paths toward reconciliation were taken. Nowadays, despite the promising future towards democracy, Myanmar is still facing worrisome internal conflicts involving ethnic and religious groups.

Laos is a landlocked country surrounded by neighboring Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, Myanmar, and China. Once part of the French protectorate, Laos was granted auton-

omy by France in 1949 and declared her independence as a constitutional monarchy in 1953. As the result of the 1955 election, Laos formed a short-lived coalition government led by a monarch prince. After the 1960 coup, Laos was unable to form a stable government and succumbed to a long civil war. Laos adopted one-party socialism controlled by military figures in 1975. Until 1991, Laos was heavily influenced by Vietnam and received aid from the Soviet Union. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Laos government no longer maintained centralized control and has shown significant economic progress in recent years.

Amidst the on-going problems and conflicts, steps towards future development and shared economic prosperity have been taken by the Southeast Asian countries. Motivated by the common fear of communism during the height of the Cold War, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was established in 1967 by Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. Over the years, following the economic liberalization in communist countries, ASEAN has recently incorporated Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam. The bond grows stronger with the signing of the trade bloc agreement, ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA, first signed in 1992)[2], the association mantains good relations with India, China, Bangladesh, Timor Leste, Papua New Guinea, Australia, South Korea, and other communities.

Architecture, Culture

Despite a common history and cultural background, Southeast Asian countries are far from being homogenous. The region hosts hundreds of ethnic groups living in different localities, governed by different rules and different paces of life. Southeast Asia is also the home of cultural paradox.

Some of the world's fastest growing metropolises perform as the economic machines of the region, while some remote villages still maintain natural lifestyles inherited from thousands of years ago.

Within the last two decades we are witnessing an intensifying exchange in architectural ideas within the region, especially the ones that cater for the growing tourism industry. The infrastructure for Southeast Asian tourism includes the design and idea development for specific types of accommodation – hotels and villas – as well as airports and cultural tourism attractions, and the restoration and preservation of important historic sites and cultural properties. Architects have been experimenting with so many ideas to cater for the growing demands of tourism in Southeast Asia, including exploring how to bring "authentic" local experiences to the visitors. The wealth of Southeast Asian vernacular architecture serves as the reference: Balinese houses and temples, Thai vernacular houses, Malay platform houses, Chinese urban shop houses, ancient Buddhist and Hindu monuments, and many variations of "primitive huts". Forms and materials are appropriated into modern hotel designs, and transplanted into different localities. The tropical climate and beaches serve as the common dominating theme for Southeast Asian tourism. Publications on "tropical" architecture and interior design in the 1990s

helped feed the idea back to the professionals who in turn appropriated the idea into projects outside the tourism industry[3]. Amidst this trend, reflections on Southeast Asian architecture as a unified cultural expression, as well as individual national ones, emerged from architects and scholars. The Aga Khan Awards for Architecture (AKAA) – started in 1977, and awarding from 1980 – has put the region onto the global stage engaging academics and professionals in (but not limited to) Southeast Asia. In its early years, the AKAA focused the discourse of architecture, not only as space and language, but also as an expression of identity. This was extended through publications and conferences. AKAA established Concept Media, a publication house based in Singapore. Concept Media published *Mimar: Architecture in Development*, the architecture journal of the AKAA, which consistently covered and promoted the wide range of practices on regionalist approaches between 1981 and 1992. The journal helped to counterbalance the dominance of European-American architectural publications and spread architectural developments in non-European/American countries. *Mimar* published 43 issues over the years and gained readership among students, academics, architects in the region and among other developing countries.

In 1983 the AKAA invited prominent architects and scholars from nine Southeast Asia countries to discuss the discourse on identity in architecture at an international conference held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. It turned out to be an inspiration from where further publications and exchange of ideas were developed not only among the Southeast Asian countries but also in the African continent, South Asian subcontinent, and the Middle East. A special proceedings publication was issued to document the discussion highlighting concerns and exploring ideas from well-known Asian (primarily Southeast Asian) architects. From then on, the AKAA continued to provide a good resource for Southeast Asians to know more about their own traditional and modern architectural developments. Between 1986 and 1989 Udo Kultermann (1927-2013) contributed several architectural surveys on inventories of four "Southeast" Asian countries; Indonesia and Thailand were published in 1986, Malaysia in 1987, and Hong Kong in 1989.

The term "critical regionalism" was an overwhelming professional discourse in the early 1980s, especially among Southeast Asian architects[4]. They were having a moment of reflection on their current practices by looking back at

recent decades of architectural developments in the region. Renowed Malaysian architect, Kenneth Yeang (1948-) grounded his practice on such a stepping stone. He published *Tropical Urban Regionalism* and *The Tropical Verandah City* in 1987 discussing the inevitable climatic nature of the changing Southeast Asian cities and the local architectural traditions as his source of inspiration. Apart from conceptual sketches, thoughts on technical skill were also deemed an important aspect to bring the idea of regionalism into practice. In *Architectural Detailing for The Tropics* (Singapore University Press, 1988), Evelyn Lip and Bill Lim from the National University of Singapore collected architectural detail solutions on dealing with the hot-humid tropical climate from the works of Singaporean and Malaysian architects[5]. Sumet Jumsai na Ayudhya (1939), a prominent Thai architect and painter, took a more philosophical approach by considering the mythical dragon-like serpent figure "Naga" as a symbol of a common cultural "roots" among the Southeast Asian communities, which governs the many ways of living adopted into so many traditions of architecture, crafts, and arts in the region[6]. Johannes Widodo in *The Boat and the City* (2004) explores the common urban and architectural roots shared widely by almost every Southeast Asian city[7].

Apart from being attentive to the vernacular tradition, some Southeast Asian architects and scholars cover architectural works, especially the ones originating from the 19th century and early 20th century. Exemplary projects on architectural restoration in Southeast Asian old port "colonial" cities – from Singapore, Bangkok, Jakarta, Malacca, Manila, and others – set the momentum further for historic urban preservation initiatives. Sharing common cultural roots and historical events, we cannot afford to isolate our architectural and urban knowledge only to particular spots and simply ignore the intertwining course of history. A common thread of cosmopolitanism and European interference are imbedded in those cities. We learn that the nature of "colonial" architecture was initiated as an act of recreation of familiar environments in alien locations; as something that was dislocated and relocated in the process of cultural exchange. Equally this idea also applied to the later form of architectural exchanges. In the past 10-15 years, the attention spans even wider to cover the formative historical periods of many Southeast Asian countries, mainly in the period between the 1950s and the late 1970s.

This historical period comes with a special gravity that puts almost every single architectural project from the time in an even wider global cultural exchange framework. With the aforementioned national histories, Southeast Asian countries embarked on a self-conscious mission to modernize many aspects of life through architectural discourse, conceptualizing modern cities, creating monumental buildings, and all forms of appropriated modern aesthetics. Ideas of modern architecture were imported, transplanted, adapted, and eventually gained a new "existential foothold"[8] in Southeast Asian grounds. These grounds are, of course, not neutral, instead they are full of subjectivities and contradicting values; pride, honor, respect, claim, fear, suspicion as well as prejudice and allegation. Essays presented here are gathered from various researchers working under a similar theme but with a wide variety of intentions, social-political backgrounds and exposure to theoretical or historical resources.

In this volume of the **docomomo** Journal, MASEANa are exploring what has been carefully recognized, acknowledged, identified, documented, and analyzed in Southeast Asian countries. Some authors may begin with some architecturally-aesthetically interesting objects while some opt for more historically-charged monuments. Some essays put extra emphasis on the role of "Western" educated figures in the narrative over the "home-grown" talents to build their stories. Many extend to a wider time frame than others to pull the string between the objects discussed. Contributing as representatives of respective countries, some essays inescapably have to deal with a nationalist undertone to address the important themes given in the essays. For the cases presented here, some are quite distanced to present a wider context to enable us to be free from the danger of the overtly subjectified views of the authors, but some might still be immersed in a national context of the case studies. Some readers might feel that particular presentation insinuates a particular point of view to appreciate projects or narrative. As myopic as those might seem, here we would like to bring what MASEANa has on the table whilst paving the way for a shared platform about architectural development in the region. Consequently, here, we are not necessarily sharing a common understanding on ideas contained in terms like "modern", "modern architecture", or even "architecture". Thus, at first, this seems to be an editorial nightmare. However, as clichéd as this may sound, this can also be a good chance to expand our horizons or simply a pause to see a world from a different point of view.

For many Southeast Asian countries, due to their nationalistic and patriotic symbolic values, many modern architectural monuments are protected and highly regarded as one of the countries' cultural treasures. But for some others, the political changes and rapid urban developments had been diminishing the value of modernist buildings and monuments. Unprotected and despised by successive political regimes, many are in a state of neglect and disrepair. Some countries began to notice this crisis and promote evaluation, documentation, and preservation of the mid-century architectural heritage – exactly what MASEANa is doing. After

decades promoting and supporting the restoration and reuse of numerous colonial-era buildings, now more attention is seemingly given to the buildings done in the late 1950s and 1960s. Many ground-up initiatives managed to bring modernist architectural works to the public discourse and resulted in heritage protection listings.

We are more than happy to take the readers on a tour of the region through these essays and a selection of monographs produced on Southeast Asian architectural development. Pen Sereypagna explores the extent of the so-called "New Khmer Architecture" within the time frame of 1953-1970 as a bold movement in the Cambodian search for national identity and cultural engagement. Setiadi Sopandi presents the search for national identity in Indonesian architecture not as an institutionalized movement, but rather as a recurrent underlying obsession among architects practicing in the country. While providing us a rich listing of notable monuments, Gerard Lico exposes the dynamic stylistic development in the Philippines parallel to the important historical events of the 20th century. Pham Thuy Loan and Troung Ngoc Lan systematically provide us with key political events linked with notable architectural projects, enabling us to clearly see how political dynamics and alliances shaped the development of Vietnamese modern architecture. Chang Jiat-Hwee stretches the timeline of the course of modern architecture in Singapore far back from the roles of British and overseas-trained Singapore-born architects in the 19th century and the early decade of the 20th century, thus providing us with information on the introduction of modern materials from Europe to Singapore. The essay from Myanmar is the result of an extensive inventory led by Su Su, Swe Swe Aye, and Win Thant Win Shwin covering the role of British architect Raglan Squire (1912-2004), the establishment of the first architectural training in the country, the importation of Soviet buildings, as well as the design and building of religious architecture, public spaces, and mausoleums. Pongkwan Lassus from Thailand takes a longer introduction to give the readers a wide-reaching narrative she presents as "pre-modernism". Lassus' essay generously provides us with key events and many noteworthy monuments not only up to the 1970s, but also from the 1980s and 1990s. Nor Hayati Hussain discusses the formation of a distinct "national" architectural language produced in Malaysia surrounding the formation years of the Federation of Malaya in the late 1950s. With this breadth of information in a single volume, we humbly hope that **docomomo** Journal 57 will serve the readers as a proper introduction to the course of modern architectural development amidst the rich and dynamic background of the Southeast Asian countries.

Notes

1   So far, MASEANa organised four meetings:
- "Conservation Action Priorities for Twentieth Century Heritage. Sharing experience of ASEAN Countries and Japan", Tokyo, Japan, 30 October-2 November 2015.
- "Pioneers of Modern Architecture", Hanoi, Vietnam, 12-14 January 2017.
- "Modern Architectural Heritage in ASEAN and Japan", Tokyo, Japan, 12 March 2017.
- "Modern Architectural Heritage in ASEAN and Japan" – Workshop,

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Tokyo, Japan, 13 March 2017.

2   ASEAN Free Trade Area was first signed by six countries – Indonesia, Brunei, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. Vietnam, Laos, and Myanmar joined in 1997, and later Cambodia in 1999. AFTA's primary goals are to increase ASEAN competitiveness as a production base in the global economy and to attract foreign direct investment to Southeast Asian countries.

3   Architect & architectural photographer, Tan Hock Beng, published a bestselling book of the subject of tradition-inspired contemporary architecture and interior design in four Southeast Asian countries. The book was published by Page One, Singapore in 1994. Tan's selection is dominated by hotels and resorts that emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s from flourishing tourism spots in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand. The book captures romantic aesthetic ideas of "tropical" designs. He focuses on how particular building elements – "imagery", roofs, landscape, gardens, water features, courtyards, "in-between realms", openings, interior, and details – were developed to particular aesthetic qualities and experiences inspired by the traditional and vernacular lifestyles. The publication features at least nine luxurious resorts and private houses: Amanpuri (Ed Tuttle, Thailand, 1988), Club Med (M.L. Tri Devakul, Malaysia and Bali, 1980), Amanusa (Kerry Hill, Bali, 1989), Amandari (Peter Muller, Bali, 1990), Tandjung Sari (Wija Waworuntu, Bali, 1960s), Rantau Abang Visitor Centre and Tanjong Java Beach Hotel (Wimberley Whisenand Allison Tong & Goo, Malaysia, 1980), Precima House and Eu House (Jimmy Lim, Malaysia, 1990), Reuter House (William Lim, Singapore, 1990). This book is the predecessor of the similarly themed publications – on Southeast Asian residential/hospitality architecture and interior design - in the following years.

4   First coined by Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre in 1981, the term "critical regionalism" was developed further by Kenneth Frampton in 1982 and 1983 suggesting critical practice in architecture. Alexander Tzonis initially wrote it in an essay (in collaboration with Anthony Alofsin), "The Girl and the Pathway" published in the book *Architecture in Greece*. Tzonis and Lefaivre continued writing in the subject, publishing *Critical Regionalism, Architecture and Identity in Globalized World* (Prestel, 2001) and *Architecture and Regionalism in the Age of Globalization, Peaks and Valleys in the Flat World* (Routledge, 2011). Kenneth Frampton wrote an article on critical practice in architecture, published in Perspecta (1982) and revised in the collection *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture* edited by Hal Foster. In "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance", Frampton suggests that a critical practice in architecture should remove itself from dependency on the optimization of advance technology and the tendency to regress into "nostalgic historicism".

5   The publication features specific architectural details such as roofs and ceilings (including jack roof, gutter, "chinese tiled roof", ridge detail, jack rafter connections, lean-to-roof, secondary roofing, etc.), windows, doors, skirting and wall finishes, stairs, and other specific elements.

6   Sumet Jumsai published his reflection on "Naga: Cultural Origins in Siam and The West Pacific", Oxford University Press, 1990.

7   Widodo, Johannes, *The Boat and The City*, Singapore, Cavendish Square Publishing, 2004.

8   A term coined by Christian Norberg-Schulz in *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*, New York, Rizzoli, 1980.

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