

The Rise of Asia in Global History and Perspective 70 years after Bandung: What possibilities to build the world anew?

International and Interdisciplinary Conference, March 5-7, 2025, Paris and Le Havre

The “Bandung Spirit” in Architecture and Urbanism of the Global South: Paradigms, Projects, and Practices

Special Session / Panels / Round tables

co-organised by GERPHAU/ENSA Paris-La Villette and GRIC/Université Le Havre Normandie

Chairs: Jim Njoo, ENSA Paris-La Villette and Darwis Khudori, ULHN



Place markers in preparation for the Bandung Conference, 1955. © Photo by Howard Sochurek/Life Picture Collections

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This special session is open to individual and group paper presentations, as well as round table proposals. The conference will be organised in person according to Paris time zone but is open to online presentations as well. Those wishing to participate are invited to submit their abstracts until November 30, 2024. Notification of selected abstracts will be communicated to their authors by the end of December 2024. Presenters and participants are to cover their own participation expenses (visa, international and national transport, accommodation). No travel grant is provided by the organising committee to any participant. Abstracts of approximately 200-300 words (excluding figures, tables, and references) and basic personal data regarding the authors are to be submitted online: <https://forms.gle/zmWFCzk2P1unChV96>

Abstract

In 1955, the leaders of 29 states from Africa and Asia met in Bandung, Indonesia, for the historic Asian-African Conference – a diplomatic summit of the emerging postcolonial world. The sense of common purpose and solidarity, and the shared principles put forth at the meeting as the basis for reimagining the global order against the backdrop of the Cold War, gave birth to the expression the “Bandung Spirit” as a way of characterising the collective sensibility of the event and giving an identity to decolonisation. Although the idiom has never been defined in any official document, it may be summarised on the basis of the shared declarations that aspired towards 1) a peaceful coexistence between nations, 2) the right to self-determination and national/state sovereignty liberated from any kind of hegemonic order, 3) the equality of races and nations, 4) solidarity towards the poor, the colonised, the disenfranchised, and those being exploited by hegemonic regimes, and 5) emancipation through development based on people’s common interests. Another way of defining the “Bandung Spirit” has been in terms of “non-alignment”, as in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) of developing countries that was formalised at the 1961 Non-Aligned conference in Belgrade, following Bandung. During the Cold War, this meant non-alignment to the two prevailing superpowers and their respective ideologies, namely the West (American capitalism) and the East (Soviet communism). Today with the dissolution of the Eastern bloc and China’s transition to a free market economy, non-alignment can be interpreted as non-alignment to neo-liberal globalisation. One could even argue that the globalising forces of capitalism were inherent in the promise of decolonisation. For example, as a number of postcolonial authors have noted, the paradox of Bandung was that the road to postcolonial emancipation was modelled on Western development or modernisation. Indeed, Indonesian President Sukarno, the most outstanding

spokesperson for the aspirations of Bandung, warned that colonialism came in many guises, including its “modern dress ... in the form of economic control, intellectual control, [and] actual physical control by a small but alien community within a nation.” Sukarno called to “build nations and break empires”, recognizing all the while that the very institution of the nation-state was a Western invention.

The implications of the “Bandung Spirit” have been discussed in a variety of fields as a touchstone to engage with colonialism, decolonisation and postcoloniality, but rarely in architecture and urbanism. Although postcolonial and feminist studies, not to mention critical theory, have made significant contributions to unpacking architecture’s complicitous relationship with power, less attention has been devoted to the strategies of solidarity, cooperation and alternative world-making that have also played a key role in shaping our built environment – and that one may argue embody the very essence of the “Bandung Spirit”. This call for papers aims to fill this gap by considering how the legacy of Bandung – as a manifesto for solidarity, cooperation and equality, but also a contested site of modernity and polity – has manifested itself in the architecture and urbanism of the Global South since the historic summit of 1955. With the terms architecture and urbanism, we wish to engage a multidisciplinary field of thought, action and imagination that concerns the built environment at large, including rural areas and natural milieux. Is it possible to rewrite the architectural and urban/rural history of decolonisation and postcoloniality in terms of the Bandung manifesto? Is it possible to speak of a “Bandung effect” in African, Asian and Latin American architecture? Is it possible to identify projects and practices that renew with the spirit of Bandung in response to today’s global challenges, such as climate change, social justice, health, migration, security, affordable housing, mobility, infrastructure, and depleting resources? And how do these works de-center, challenge or reinforce the canonical Western or Eurocentric narrative of (architectural) modernity? Or, to borrow the words of Sukarno once again, how have architects, engineers, planners, policymakers, educators, activists, and other actors of the built environment in the Global South, contributed “to build the world anew”.

Case studies may take as a point of departure a *project* such as a building or building type, an urban development or informal settlement, a disaster or crisis relief campaign, an infrastructure, a legal plan, etc., or begin from a *practice* by identifying a specific actor or network of actors (e.g. an architectural office, a planning institute, an NGO, etc.) and focusing upon their *modus operandi* in relation to the Bandung legacy. Papers are also invited to unpack the subtending *paradigms* that condition the works in question, such as concepts, theories, policies, ideologies, and cultural values. By making evident the paradigms at work in the production of cities, buildings and spaces in the Global South, and at specific moments in history, we wish to chart possible “paradigm shifts” in the legacy of the “Bandung Spirit”. According to Thomas Kuhn, who popularised the notion of paradigm in his study of scientific revolutions, a paradigm shift is a “fundamental change in the basic concepts and experimental practices of a scientific discipline.” Even though Kuhn limited his use of the term to the natural sciences, the concept of a paradigm shift has been used in numerous scientific and non-scientific contexts to define a profound change in a fundamental model or perception of events. For example, what are the fundamental models used in African, Asian and Latin American urbanism today, and how do they differ from the era of colonialism? How do cities and territories across the Global South compare with regard to architectural and urban/rural development? And what lessons can be shared – for example, in terms of urban informality and planning – to improve their quality? In the context of this conference, the concept of paradigm may help us to reflect on how the “Bandung Spirit” in the architecture and urbanism of the Global South has evolved, from the post-war era to the present, and what might its continuing relevance be in the future.

For more information on the conference and other special sessions see: <https://bandungspirit.org/>