

# Arrière-garde of de-colonization: Critical regionalist research on an Asia-Pacific architecture

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## ABSTRACT:

Ever since the early 1980s, when Kenneth Frampton established Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefavre's concept critical regionalism, definition of its meanings and principles has been a significant discourse in the discipline of architecture. However, along the ever-popular trends of global 'wow architecture,' widely published on the glossy pages of architectural journals, critical regionalism still is not mainstream but rather an underlying stream of thought among a minority of architects, or *arrière-garde* in Frampton's words. Moreover, amazingly little architectural research has been conducted in non-Western cultures in regard to critical regionalism, although its critical undertones appear as successful means in creating context-specific architecture and sense of place, as opposing to the international clichés and uniformity of the built environment across the world.

Hence, this paper explores some possibilities and manifestations of critical regionalism in one geographic setting, that is, the Asia-Pacific region, by providing examples of its applications to this specific framework, including critical analyses of critical regionalism. This is done by examining contemporary architecture in East Asia and Hawaii in terms of cross-cultural and interdisciplinary research. In addition, critical regionalism is discussed as an important and alternative research method of qualitative paradigm in general, and that of emancipatory paradigm in particular. The aim is not only to provide fresh insights into the emerging trends of Asia-Pacific architecture, such as the role of critical regionalism in sustainable design, but also to offer new methods for the research on any culture- and/or context-specific 'language of architecture' with the focus of expanding the discipline's resources both in basic architectural research and design research.

CONFERENCE THEME: Alternative approaches in research methods

KEY WORDS: Tropical architecture; East Asian architecture; Commune by the Great Wall, China; Vladimir Ossipoff, Hawaii; regionalism; sense of place (*genius loci*)

## INTRODUCTION

Almost thirty years ago, in "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance," Kenneth Frampton stated:

Architecture can only be sustained today as a critical practice if it assumes an *arrière-garde* position, that is to say, one which distances itself equally from the Enlightenment myth of progress and from a reactionary, unrealistic impulse to return to the architectonic forms of the preindustrial past (Frampton 1983b).

The term *arrière-garde*, with such connotations as 'out-of-date' or 'backward,' might appear contradictory, or at least surprising, in the context of a search for a new architectural theory, though Frampton's position naturally is its meaning 'rear guard,' as opposing to, or following the modernist *avant-garde* which according to Frampton "can no longer be sustained as a liberative movement" (Frampton 1983b). Scott Paterson interprets this meaning that modernism became "a self-referential entity whose role in societal change is minimized," while he considers critical regionalism an attempt "to put on the brakes of the *avant-garde* pendulum" (Paterson 1995). The same is implied by the subheading of Frampton's second point, *The Rise and Fall of the Avant-Garde*, in which context he argues that modern *avant-gardism* failed in opposing both the negative impacts of technological expansion and the media-fed consumerism of post-modernism; also revealed by the continuation of the above quote:

A *critical* [my emphasis] *arrière-garde* has to remove itself from both the optimization of advanced technology and the ever-present tendency to regress into nostalgic historicism or the glibly decorative (Frampton, 1983b).

These types of comments in the 1980s were, of course, closely related to the controversy over post-modern architecture, though also to the growing awareness of the ecological concerns related to building industry. The discourse was reminiscent of the reconstruction of the concept of regionalism in architecture in the early and mid 20th century; in the US, led particularly by Lewis Mumford who, at first, in his *Sticks and Stones: American Architecture and Civilization* (1924) reacted against the 'imperial' Beaux Art tradition as 'non-American,' like the earlier European regionalists did with their ties to movements of emancipation. It is rather remarkable that the critical regionalists, a few decades later, in their criticism against the dominance of the so-called International Style found inspiration in Mumford's writings; in addition to *Sticks and Stones*, his *Technics and Civilization* (1934), *The South in Architecture* (1941) and his post-WW II column "Sky Line" in the *New Yorker* (October 11, 1947), followed by later works such as *The City in History* (1961) and *The Urban Prospect* (1968). Also, Paul Ricoeur's writings on the phenomenon of universalization, particularly his "Universal Civilization and Natural Cultures" in *History and Truth* (1965), have served as the philosophical basis of this current discourse on critical regionalism.

One of the milestones in establishing the concept of critical regionalism was, without doubt, the Pomona Meeting in 1989 at the College of Environmental Design of the California State Polytechnic University in Pomona, California, with the *Proceedings* published in 1991 and edited by the prime organizer of the meeting, Professor Spyros Amourgis. In his Introduction to the *Proceedings*, Amourgis states: "While opposing meaningless modernization and vernacular sentimentalism, Critical Regionalism emphasizes context, sensitivity to the environment, history and culture" (Amourgis 1991). Among the many conference papers, Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre further emphasize that "What distinguishes 'regionalist' from the simply 'regional' is that it incorporates regional elements into design as a means not only of adapting to local conditions but also of criticizing an architecture of order that claims universal application" (Tzonis and Lefaivre 1991). Regarding Mumford, they also point out the allegories of his thinking:

As in every allegory where the *personae* are chosen because of deep structural analogies, so in Mumford's lectures the term "regionalism" is chosen because of the analogies between the old "despotic" order of the Roman Empire and the imperialist "colonization and conquest of Asia, Africa, the Americas" and the new "mechanical order" of the "no less ruthless control of the new kings" of industry with the old academic tradition and the new "international style" (Tzonis and Lefaivre 1991).

Although the term critical regionalism was introduced by Tzonis and Lefaivre in their article "The Grid and the Pathway" as early as in 1981, its definition is yet to be undisputedly established – when comparing the many attempts to define critical regionalism, it is elucidating that most explain what it is *not*. Therefore, the term is here used in its Kantian, or rather neo-Kantian, sense as "test of criticism" and simply as "contemporary regionalism in order to distinguish it from former approaches," to quote Alexander Tzonis in his Preface to the more recent *Critical Regionalism: Architecture and Identity in a Globalized World*, again coauthored with Lefaivre (Tzonis and Lefaivre 2003). Reflecting the many controversies in regard to the meaning of critical regionalism, Tzonis mentions that they have even publicly suggested replacing the term regionalism by realism, "hereby erasing the middle part of 'region'-alism" (Tzonis and Lefaivre 2003).

Nevertheless, emphasized by Tzonis in the introductory chapter of the above book as well, the concept of critical regionalism is still prevalent and perhaps even more prominent than before, due to the conflict between globalization with international interventions, including those in architecture, and the simultaneous search for local identity with, in many cases, the desire for ethnic insularity. On the other hand, in his article "Placing Resistance: A Critique of Critical Regionalism," Keith L. Eggener points out that:

If so-called critical regionalist designs exemplified an "architecture of resistance," it is ironic that writers discussing the places where these designs appeared so often emphasized one architect's interpretation of the region over all others: Tadao Ando for Japan, Oscar Niemeyer for Brazil, Charles Correa for India, and Luis Barragán for Mexico. In other words, a single correct regional style was implied, or imposed, sometimes from inside, more often from outside "the region" (Eggener 2002).

Eggener also criticizes the Euro-America – centralized critical regionalist analyses which “on more than one occasion led to an interpretative flattening of diverse cultural materials, and a misunderstanding or devaluation of their founding intentions and most immediate meanings” (Eggener 2002). By quoting Jane M. Jacobs, he goes even as far as describing critical regionalist rhetoric as “a revisionary form of imperialist nostalgia that defines the colonized as always engaged in conscious work against the ‘core’” (Eggener 2002). From the perspective of de-colonization, this is clearly a relevant point, particularly in terms of the center/periphery thinking, which according to Eggener implies that “No matter how vital, the peripheral is other than, deviant from, and lesser than the center, the norm” (Eggener 2002).

A counter-argument could, however, call attention to the two Scandinavian architects, Alvar Aalto and Jørn Utzon, repeatedly used by the same writers as not only the prime examples of either Nordic regionalists or early critical regionalists (depending on the publishing year). But they also are international designers and global practitioners with influences from various cultures and regions, which Eggener does not mention, though he does emphasize Barragán’s international character, as opposing to his image “romanticized by European and North American – based writers” (Eggener 2002). From the perspective of this paper, for instance, though not revealed by Frampton either, it is worth noting that in an interview in 2004 Utzon, a widely travelled and cosmopolitan architect, mentions that his source of inspiration for the Bagsværd Church in Denmark came from “a vast sandy beach in one of the Hawaiian islands Oahu” (Bløndahl 2005). Utzon’s sketch from the time when he started to design this church illustrates the clouds brought to this beach by the regular trade winds from the northeast and the effect of the sunlight falling through the clouds down to the sand: “It’s a natural space that gives a profound spiritual peace [...] So the natural space that gripped me has been turned into the body of the church” (Bløndahl 2005). For Frampton, in turn, “the only precedent for such form” is “the Chinese pagoda roof,” while the “intent of this expression is, of course, to secularize the sacred form” (Frampton 1983b). Frampton does, though, expand this interpretation to some extent in his ‘third point’ by ‘pointing out’ that “yet paradoxically, this desacralization at Bagsværd subtly reconstitutes a renewed basis for the spiritual, one founded, I would argue, in a regional reaffirmation” (Frampton 1983b).<sup>2</sup>

While addressing critical regionalist architecture and acknowledging the many views on it, including the critical analyses of critical regionalism, it appears that today there is even more diversity in approaches than before. In fact, this is exactly what Lefaivre states as well: “Not surprisingly, given the unprecedented scale of globalization today, for the first time in history regionalism has become a global movement, or rather a series of movements.”

Moreover, at the turn of the 21st century, it also seems that, instead of resisting any international *style* per se, a *critical* *arrière-garde* is even more than before needed to resist – or at least stabilize – the global practices of ‘starchitects’ and capitalist strategies of big international corporate design firms. But to what extent has this resistance actually taken place in the past decades in architecture and urban planning? And what has been or could be the impact of critical regionalism on the post-postmodern world and new narratives of de-colonization? Further, and most importantly for this paper, what are the potentials of the developing countries to resist, on the one hand, the nostalgic return to the vernacular models as historicist form giving and, on the other, the negative impacts of global architectural practices?

## **I. RESISTANCE VS. DIVERGENCE**

Looking from Hawai‘i in the heart of the Asia-Pacific region, it appears, indeed, that many of the critical regionalist analyses misinterpret, or at least flatten (to use Eggener’s expression) the meanings of the regional/cultural and/or sub-cultural issues of this particular context. There would be countless examples to discuss in this regard, though in this paper I focus on a few projects in China and Hawai‘i; first of all, in the name of the hermeneutics of phenomenology in having personally experienced these projects, or their sense/spirit of place, if you wish. Second, the goal here, within a very limited space, is to provide information on some projects not included in the book *Tropical Architecture: Critical Regionalism in an Age of Globalization* by Tzonis, Lefaivre, and Stagno which covers much of South and Southeast Asia (in addition to some other cultural spheres in tropics and subtropics) and

well-known tropical regionalists (added with works of the contributors of the book), but also less-known Sri Lankan Minette de Silva and Brazilian Lina Bo Bardi; the latter two underlining the role of the female architects in the discourse on regionalism as well.

But before delving into East Asia and the Pacific region, we might look at Latin America in order to elucidate the meaning of critical regionalism from the viewpoint of Argentine Marina Waisman, according to whom “the Latin American version is quite different from that proposed by Kenneth Frampton, or Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre” (Waisman 1994). She goes on stating that the Latin American culture, as part of “the general movement of history”, is a “unification of the spirit of times and the spirit of place” and, hence, Latin American contemporary architecture should be “understood as a movement of *divergence* rather than resistance (the term which Frampton prefers.)” Eggener puts the same as follows:

In other words, contemporary Latin American architecture of regionalist character is not primarily a reaction to the West, or to ‘world culture,’ as the word *resistance* would imply, but a response to local circumstances. It should be seen not as a marginal practice, but as a development parallel to contemporary architecture in the industrialized West (Eggener 2002).

Actually, also Lefaivre, in explaining what makes Mumford’s regionalism critical, emphasizes that it “is seen as an engagement with the global, universalizing world rather than by an attitude of resistance” (Tzonis and Lefaivre 2003).<sup>3</sup> She further points out that it “stems from his radically critical rethinking of traditional definitions of regionalism” with which Lefaivre refers to the critical philosophy of Immanuel Kant and the Frankfurt School, though she also acknowledges the differences in thinking of these philosophers (Tzonis and Lefaivre 2003).

As for parallel developments beyond the ‘West,’ one sign of the above attitude on contemporary regionalist architecture as divergence rather than resistance in the Asia-Pacific region is the Commune by the Great Wall in China (below simply the Commune for short). This architectural competition, launched by the developer couple (SOHO China Ltd.) Zhang Xin and Pan Shiyi in 2000, was one attempt to showcase Asian architecture with a focus on the use of local materials. The invited Asian architects designed eleven weekend houses and a clubhouse on a scenic site in the Shuiguan Valley outside of Beijing, close to the popular place to climb the Great Wall in Badaling. These twelve projects are: Suitcase House by Gary Chang (Hong Kong), Furniture House by Shigeru Ban (Japan), “See” and “Seen” House by Cui Kai (China), Airport House by Chien Hsueh-Yi (Taiwan), Cantilever House by Antonio Ochoa (China), Distorted Courtyard House by Rocco Yim (Hong Kong), Bamboo Wall by Kengo Kuma (Japan), The Shared House by Kanika R’kul (Thailand), The Twins by Kay Ngee Tan (Singapore), Forest House by Nobuaki Furuya (Japan), Split House by Yung-Ho Chang (China), and the Clubhouse by Seung H-Sang (South Korea). According to Ricky Burdett: “Not only was it the first major Chinese project to be exhibited at the Venice Biennale [in 2002], but it scooped one of the event’s three most prestigious prizes” (Burdett 2004) and as such the Commune certainly was the first time when Asian contemporary architecture attracted international attention to this extent.

Gary Chang’s Suitcase House is included in *Critical Regionalism: Architecture and Identity in a Globalized World*, but examining some other buildings and the complex at large might shed more light into the meaning of critical regionalism in China. From the perspective of Chinese residential typology, namely, the courtyard house, two projects in the Commune are particularly interesting. One is the Distorted Courtyard House, in which Rocco Yim interprets courtyard typology in a deconstructivist way by intertextual, decentered, and dispersed elements (Fig. 1). Another application of the courtyard typology is Yung-Ho Chang’s Split House, in which the two-wing structure splits down in the middle, creating an open courtyard that is connected with the interior spaces of various angles on the sloping site with a small stream (Fig. 2); a classical Chinese method of expressing the macrosystem in miniature. The building also features traditional building techniques and materials, in this case, rammed earth walls besides the timber frame.

In regard to local materials, Kengo Kuma’s Bamboo Wall is not only a rather obvious application of bamboo as the vernacular building material in Asia, but also, and much more importantly, an example of the spatial layering using the undefined, yet distinct, boundaries created by bamboo screens of various types and intensities (Fig. 3). This is a rather similar design technique Kuma had



**Figure 1:** Floor plan of the Distorted Courtyard House by Rocco Yim, Commune by the Great Wall, Badaling, China, 2002. (Burdett 2004)



**Figure 2:** Floor plan of the Split House by Yung-Ho Chang, Commune by the Great Wall, Badaling, China, 2002. (Burdett 2004)

previously applied to the Hiroshige Ando Museum in Batoh, Japan. This latter is another East Asian project included in *Critical Regionalism: Architecture and Identity in a Globalized World*, in the usage of timber latticework and a grid layout described as “a natural tribute to the centuries-old tradition of Japanese wood architecture,” while “sometimes the grid patterns transform into a solid translucent pane, and at other times they become transparent” (Tzonis and Lefaivre 2003)<sup>4</sup>; I assume this is the authors’ reference to the *shouji*, *fusuma* and *sudare* screens as well as other movable ‘layers’ of traditional Japanese architecture, added with transitional verandas, or *engawa*.<sup>5</sup>



**Figure 3:** Spatial layering in the Bamboo Wall House by Kengo Kuma, Commune by the Great Wall, Badaling, China, 2002. (Photo by the author)

On the other hand, if we analyze the Commune from one particular criteria of critical regionalism, that is, Mumford’s emphasis on communality, it is obvious that – in spite of its name – it has never been a living commune of any kind. In discussing the wine-growing communities of Burgundy in *The South in Architecture*, for example, Mumford states that the “kind of co-operation and re-adaptation and development is what is necessary to produce a truly regional character” (Mumford 1941) which does not apply to the artificiality of the Commune. In fact, the Kempinski Hotel chain now runs the Commune and has turned it into a highly exclusive and expensive luxury resort for visitors, not for a permanent community. Anyhow, from a purely credulous perspective, it is rather interesting that, in spite of the extremely high prices, this resort (with initial investment of \$24 million) became so popular that several replicas of the original eleven houses have been added in the complex in order to meet the increasing demand for hotel space, and the area now also serves as what could be called ‘an outdoor museum of contemporary Asian architecture.’ In this, we can see similarities to Barragán’s elitist architecture, romanticized in many critical regionalist analyses, which

Eggerer criticizes exceptionally hard:

While Mexican modernist contemporaries such as Juan O’Gorman, José Villagrán García, and Mario Pani built the low-cost, utilitarian schools, housing, hospitals, offices, and factories that were so badly needed in their developing and recently war-torn nation, the aristocratic, elitist, aggressively capitalist Barragán speculated in real estate. He built private refuges in which privileged people of means and sophistication might share in his Proustian meditations on memory, nostalgia, and loss. [...] His elegant walled compounds, elite subdivisions, and equestrian enclaves may, as Frampton has suggested, mark a kind of critique, but it is worth keeping in mind just what sort of critique this was: hardly critical or progressive, but romantic and reactionary (Eggerer 2002).

In comparison to today’s China, in many respects the situation is different from that of post-war Mexico, although real estate speculation certainly dominates China, too, in the so-called ‘socialist market economy,’ a rather paradoxical concept invented by the Chairman of Chinese Communist Party, Deng Xiaoping, for his new ‘open doors policy’ in the late 1970s. Well, it seems that in the unprecedented economic growth of China that followed, the foreign and Chinese architects alike have interpreted Deng’s famous slogan “It doesn’t matter whether the cat is black or white, as long as it catches the mice” in a way which allows profitable practices and exclusive designs for the emerging Chinese nouveau rich, whereas in a developing country, with unacceptable living and working conditions for majority of people, the development of schools, housing, hospitals, offices, and factories as well as infrastructure in general would be in dire need.

As for the global market economy, we should, at the same time, bear in mind the global competition, including that in the field of architecture. Take, for instance, the Beijing Olympics in 2008 for which all the major venues were designed by foreign architects, most notably the main stadium, or the ‘Birds Nest,’ by Herzog and de Meuron (Switzerland) and the swimming stadium, the ‘Water Cube,’ by PTW Architects (Australia), thereby negating the usual advantage of the Olympic Games as an opportunity for the local architects to gain international exposure. The same applies to the various other high-tech building projects, such as the CCTV Headquarters, the ‘Twisted Doughnut,’ by Rem Koolhaas (OMA, the Netherlands) and the National Theater, the ‘Alien Egg,’ by Paul Andreau (France), launched before the Olympics with the intention of portraying China to the rest of the world as a developed and modern country – the nicknames of the buildings given by the local populace expressing better than anything else their perception.<sup>6</sup> In this respect, the Commune by the Great Wall, however elitist it has become, can be seen as a parallel phenomenon to the development of contemporary architecture across the world, such as the Case Study House Project in California in the 1940-50s (a precedent for the Commune Project), in creating specific sense of place with a particular, new language of Asian architecture; similar to the Californian Case Study Houses, which evolved into regional modern architecture of the US West Coast (also rather elitist, even though the goal was inexpensive mass production of these prototypes). Tzonis and Lefavre describe this characteristic of critical regionalism as follows: “Defamiliarization is at the heart of what distinguishes critical regionalism from other forms of regionalism and its capacity to create a renewed, versus an atavistic, sense of place in our time” (Tzonis and Lefavre 1991).

## 2. PLACE VS. IDENTITY

Since critical regionalism, especially regarding the concept ‘loss of nearness’ caused by the uniformity of the built environment across the world, revolves around the phenomenological concept *genius loci*, or ‘sense of place’ also translated as ‘spirit of place,’ Martin Heidegger is naturally a philosopher of interest for critical regionalists, besides Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Christian Norberg-Schulz who even more directly address architecture in their writings. However, there are some fundamental differences when comparing Mumford and Heidegger, although both worked simultaneously and were concerned with the juxtaposition of place and community as well as civilization and technology. As pointed out by Lefavre, Mumford understood regionalism as democratic multiculturalism in the spirit of Walt Whitman and Ralph Waldo Emerson, which was in a stark contrast to Heidegger’s nationalistic concept *Volk*, defined by common ethnicity, identity, language, and soil (the place-earth-land-home). This distinction is definitely important to bear in mind in order to avoid ethnic insularity in the search for local identity which sometimes is done in the name of critical regionalism and/or de-colonization.

Mumford expresses the view of regional diversity especially in his *Report on Honolulu* that included a master plan for the city, his only design proposal, published in 1945 and based on his consulting trip to Honolulu in 1938. He describes the place, still very accurately (though he forgets one of the largest ethnic groups, the Philippines), “as a multicultural city, made up of original Polynesians, Japanese and Chinese, and various *Haole* groups (western) which makes it a significant experiment in hybridization of cultures” (Tzonis and Lefaivre 2001). In his plan, Mumford applied the American regionalist ideas of 1930s with greenbelts and superblocks to a garden city, or a “great park,” as Mumford called Honolulu (Tzonis and Lefaivre 2001). Although he did not mention the concept *ahupua‘a*, the traditional land division of Hawaiian island from the mountains to the sea which has recently seen a rebirth in some community plans in Hawai‘i, important in his plan for Honolulu was to provide views of the mountains from the city and its park zones.

Another dissimilarity between Mumford and Heidegger is their attitude towards technology. While “Heidegger’s thought is grounded in a deeply anti-modernist attitude [...], Mumford believed that regionalism was synonymous with modern,” according to Lefaivre (Tzonis and Lefaivre 2001). Mumford was, however, also concerned with what is today called sustainable design, which he described in the *Technics and Civilization* as the “biotechnic age” of the future, following those days’ “neo-technic order” (Tzonis and Lefaivre 2001). In short, the aim of this biotechnic regionalism was the balance between man and nature, including conservation and restoration of soils and forests. Quite contradictorily to sustainability, though, but in line with modernist ideas, Mumford supported the use of air conditioners in his *Report on Honolulu* and the modernist ‘belief in machine’ is also expressed in his *Technics and Civilization*.

A totally different response to Hawaiian climatic conditions is seen in the works of Vladimir Ossipoff – some say “the best kept secret of Hawaiian architecture.” (I do wonder why was he not among the regionalists in the *Tropical Architecture* by Tzonis, Lefaivre, and Stagno?) Ossipoff himself is an interesting and cosmopolitan personality; he was born in 1907 in Vladivostok, Siberia, spent most of his childhood in Japan where his father was the Russian czar’s military attaché, studied architecture in 1927-31 at the University of California, Berkeley, and after his graduation worked in Hawaii till his death in 1998. In terms of de-colonization, it is worth noting that his career coincided with the transition of the annexed Territory of Hawai‘i into the statehood in 1959, making Hawai‘i the 50th state of the United States, in which process place making was momentous in the creation of the new identity of Hawaiian islands. And Ossipoff’s architecture was part of it, in contrasting to the historicism of the colonial period, as described by Dean Sakamoto in *Hawaiian Modern: The Architecture of Vladimir Ossipoff*:

Ossipoff participated in the appropriation of the principles and materials of modern architecture and transformed them into a specific local geographic manner that was adapted visually and ecologically to a sound engagement with the environment and with the cultural reality of the region (Sakamoto, Britton, and Murphy 2007).

Among Ossipoff’s numerous public and private buildings, only the Liljestrand House is discussed here, as in this limited space it sufficiently represents the main ideas of his design philosophy (Fig. 4). Not surprisingly, in this house built in 1952, as in most Ossipoff houses, Japanese influence is seen in deep eaves, open floor plan, indoor-outdoor connection, verandas, natural wood and timber members, built-in cabinets, and understated, confined entry that opens into a magnificent view over the city. These as well as other carefully designed details that hide and reveal the interior and exterior features are clearly similar to Japanese design methods and, indeed, in his article “The Japanese House” Ossipoff even states that “Japanese house is better suited to Hawai‘i than it is to Japan” (*Hawai‘i Architect*, March 1986). Given the impact of the Japonisme movement on modern architecture, these features can, of course, be seen as integral part of modernism as well.

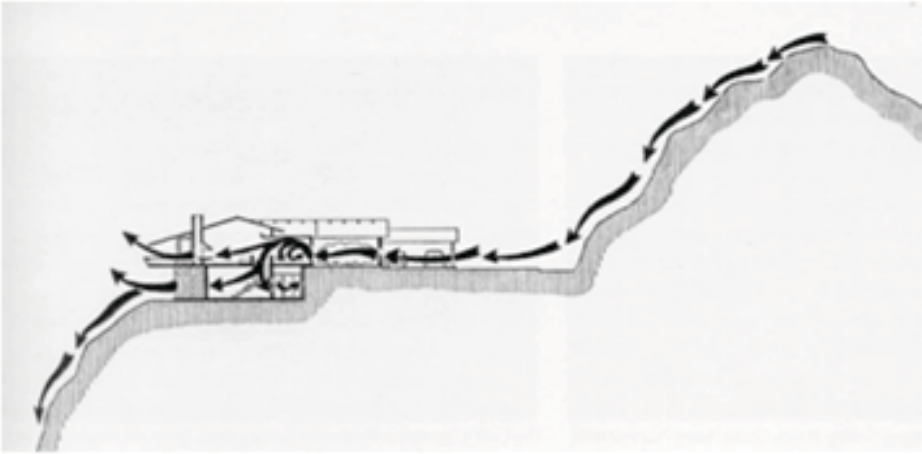
Significant in all Ossipoff’s projects was a careful analysis of both the macro and micro climate of the site, not only leading to excellent siting, but also to the maximization of the trade winds and the passive cooling of natural ventilation. No air conditioning is needed due to the clever use of Venturi principle according to which a flow of air from the smaller openings on the windward side of the building, with larger openings on its leeward side, allow constant ventilation through the house without causing too strong drafts (Sakamoto, Britton, and Murphy 2007). In Liljestrand House, this is achieved by small louvers above the corridor windows on the mountainside in the north (above 6s in the floor plan, Fig. 5) and wide sliding doors on the other side on both floors (Fig. 6).



**Figure 4:** Liljestrand House seen from the pool. (Photo by Robert Liljestrand)



**Figure 5:** Floor plan of the Liljestrand House: 1 carport, 2 entry, 3 living room, 4 dining room, 5 kitchen, 6 bedrooms, 7 master bedroom, 8 study, 9 deck; in the ground floor, a family room below 3, and a recreational room below 6s open to 10 lawn. (Sakamoto, Britton, and Murphy 2007)



**Figure 6:** Section drawing of the Liljestrand House showing the natural ventilation created by the trade winds blowing from the mountains through the building. (Sakamoto, Britton, and Murphy 2007)

Ossipoff's regionalism, like his life, was a vivid juxtaposition of various cultural elements, though deeply grounded in the Hawaiian context and its multiculturalism. Besides the obvious Japanese influence, the architectural education in California is apparent with similarities to the Bay Area and Southern California architecture as well as American Arts-and-Crafts movement; Ossipoff also witnessed the construction of Wright's Imperial Hotel in Tokyo where his family is reported to have had tea parties (Sakamoto, Britton, and Murphy 2007). In the Californian tradition, Ossipoff was following the same line of thinking than Mumford and, in fact, in his "Sky Line" column Mumford argues that the Bay Region style is more international than the so-called International Style because it is a "product of the meeting of Oriental and Occidental architectural traditions" (Tzonis and Lefaivre 2003) and thus allows regional adaptations and modifications. Furthermore, in the foreword of *Hawaiian Modern*, Frampton points out "a transpacific link to the emerging subtropical manner of Minette de Silva and Geoffrey Bawa in Sri Lanka in the 1970s" (Sakamoto, Britton, and Murphy 2007). Ossipoff's architecture also has links to such contemporaneous tropical regionalists as Henry Klumb in Puerto Rico, Ricardo Porro in Cuba, Richard Neutra in Havana and Puerto Rico (besides his works in the US and Europe), Oscar Niemeyer in Brasil, and Paul Rudolph in Florida, to mention just a few.

## CONCLUSION

As one of the goals of critical regionalism is 'place making,' its role in defining the place, the genius loci, is naturally crucial. In addition, adaptive reuse of existing built environment could also be regarded as one of the future possibilities and manifestations of critical regionalism in the Asia-Pacific context in terms of preservation of buildings that are part of the sense of place of their location, thereby giving meaning to the historic layers of the built environment and defining the uniqueness of the place. Because adaptive reuse is evidently related to the '3 Rs' of sustainable design: reuse, recycle, and reduce; while ecological consciousness, in turn, is an integral part of critical regionalism, there is a clear connection between both. And as this juxtaposition is supplemented by the context-specific considerations of the historical, cultural, and social features of the place, critical regionalism is not only one of the parallel design trends within the global context, but also a decisive research tool in analyzing context-specific architecture. Amourgis puts it as follows: "During the course of the Pomona Meeting, three tendencies became apparent, not as singular directions but rather through differing emphases on (a) environmental, (b) historic/cultural, and (c) social values" (Amourgis 1991). The same applies to numerous architects working in Asia and the Pacific, such as those involved in the design of the Commune by the Great Wall in China, as well as to the regionalist

architecture of Vladimir Ossipoff in Hawai'i.

It might also be worth emphasizing that the goal of this paper has not been to label particular architects in East Asia and/or the Pacific as "Critical Regionalists." Quite the contrary, critical regionalism is here regarded as a multitude of critical approaches to contemporary architecture, both in terms of design and research, both with tectonic and tactile considerations.

As for the emancipatory aspect of critical regionalism, Eggener points out that "critical regionalism is, at heart, a postcolonialist concept" (Eggener 2002) which is rather obvious in the postcolonial world where the concept appeared. In terms of architectural research on decolonization, critical regionalism is increasingly important critical theory in its transformative approach in addressing dynamics of power and marginalization of social groups. In regard to emancipation, this refers specifically to social, gender, and economic equality, internationally and locally, in the ever-continuing development of architecture as a reflection of the culture that created it – poetically expressed by Juhani Pallasmaa:

The present concern with regionalism has the evident danger of turning into sentimental provincialism, whereas vital products of art in our specialized culture are always born from an open confrontation between the universal and the unique, the individual and the collective, the traditional and the revolutionary (Pallasmaa 2007).

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## ENDNOTES:

<sup>1</sup>Following this rationale, one could also ask, why is Shigeru Ban, one of the most ecologically and socially conscious architects in Japan, not mentioned in any of the critical regionalist analyses, while Tadao Ando is usually regarded as *The Japanese critical regionalist*.

<sup>2</sup>With the Chinese pagoda roof, Frampton refers to Utzon's seminal essay "Platforms and Plateaus" in 1963 – a decade before the design of the Bagsværd Church (!) – while this Hawaiian source of inspiration has, for long, been a part of the 'oral lore' at the UH School of Architecture, where Utzon was teaching in 1971-75. However, the first formal citation I am aware of on the connection between Hawaii and the Bagsværd Church, built in 1974-76, is in the *Jørn Utzon Logbook*, Vol. II, published in 2005 (Bløndahl 2005), which explains why Frampton does not mention this fact in his articles in the 1980s and 90s. Also, although Nordic regionalism is way beyond the scope of this paper, I cannot resist the temptation of mentioning Alvar Aalto's various sources, including not only Finnish, but also international ones, most notably Japanese influence. (I am born and raised in Finland and, due to my architectural education at the Helsinki University of Technology, rather familiar with his works, although I later specialized in East Asian architecture.) As for Aalto's regionalism, I have often wondered why his Säynätsalo Town Hall is mentioned in almost all publications on regionalism *and* critical regionalism – no doubt because of Frampton – even though Villa Mairea would be another relevant example of Aalto's regionalism in terms of expressing true universalism. More on Japanese impact on Villa Mairea and modernist architecture in general, see e.g., Kim, Hyon-Sob, 2009. "Alvar Aalto and Humanizing of Architecture." *Journal of Asian Architecture and Building Engineering*, May 2009/16, pp. 9-16; and Kim, Hyon-Sob, 2009. "Cross-Current Contribution: A Study on East Asian Influence on Modern Architecture in Europe." *Architectural Research*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (December 2009), pp. 9-18.

<sup>3</sup>It must be pointed out, here, that this Lefaivre quote is from *Critical Regionalism: Architecture and Identity in a Global World* (p. 34), published in 2003, and might well be a respond to Eggenger's *Placing Resistance: A Critique of Critical Regionalism*, first published in 2002, though Lefaivre does not cite Eggenger's work.

<sup>4</sup>Despite the typically informative introductions by Tzonis and Lefaivre in *Critical Regionalism: Architecture and Identity in a Global World*, and the excellent article "Critical Regionalism: A Facet of Modern Architecture sine 1945" by Lefaivre (though almost the same than in *Tropical Architecture: Critical Regionalism in the Age of Globalization*), I must say that the project analyses in this book are amazingly 'thin,' unfortunately making it more like a 'coffee table book' than anything more worth citing. I might also add that, although the Great Wall of China is in the close proximity of the Commune, it is not actually visible from the area, as claimed by Tzonis and Lefaivre.

<sup>5</sup>For more on my interpretations of the spatial concepts and layering principles of East Asian architecture, see Sarvimäki, Marja, 2003. "Layouts and Layers: Spatial Arrangements in Japan and Korea." *Sungkyun Journal of East Asian Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2003, pp. 80-108.

<sup>6</sup>For more on critical analyses on the architecture of the Beijing Olympics, see e.g., Lahdenperä, Johanna, and Sarvimäki, Marja, 2005. "Beijing Image: Global and Local in the Promotion and Architecture of Green Olympics 2008." Rockwood, David, and Li, Xiangning (eds.) *Proceedings for the 6th International Symposium on Asia Pacific Architecture*, June 9-11, 2005. University of Hawaii and Tongji University: Honolulu and Shanghai.

<sup>7</sup>More on adaptive reuse in China in my article "Reverse Cultural Revolution: Preserving Bauhausian Architecture in Beijing." *Interventions and Adaptive Reuse*, Vol. 2, 2011.