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Atlas

Architectures of the 21st Century

Asia and Pacific

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Martand Khosla, cafeteria of JMI University, Delhi (2005)

itself of the responsibility for managing and delivering projects. Consequently, large-scale firms' culture did not develop in India and the profession was ill prepared for the global corporate practice now patronized in the new global economy. The Indian practitioner's inability to respond to large-scale infrastructure with the same competency and speed of a global firm resulted in outsourcing to global firms from Singapore, America, and some parts of Europe that now command the largest share of infrastructure and large-scale building projects in India.

Weapons of Mass Construction

The nature of these projects ranges from developer-initiated housing schemes for the upper and middle classes to high-end luxury hotels, shopping malls, and master planning for large-scale township and special economic zones. However, recently, the most representative and visible projects are the

information technology (IT) parks set up outside growing IT cities: Cyber-Abad in Hyderabad, Electronic City in Bangalore, and Tech Park in Chennai are good examples of these developments. Zaha Hadid's ILPL Project in Chennai, Fox & Fowle's Tech Park in Noida and Pei Cobb Freed & Partners' Wave Rock in Hyderabad are poignant examples of global flows landing on the ground as alien objects sans a reality check on the locale. Designed, crafted, and engineered in the West, they represent the impotency of global architecture (if it can be called a style) to inspire or respond to the locale. Their inefficient response to basics such as climate, light, and air, and their dogmatic use of glass make them uneconomical and unsustainable propositions. However, their power lies in their ability to potently represent the power of capital and its universalizing symbolism. Thus, they serve as iconic beacons for investment in new terrains, reassuring other capital that it

is safe to land there. Interestingly, developers who have a larger stake in the special economic zones or IT parks in which they are located usually underwrite these iconic buildings. In short, it is a particular nature of patronage supporting these global follies. Recent work by Indian architect Hafeez Contractor on the Infoysis campus in Mysore and the numerous Singapore-style shopping malls under construction in Bangalore, Hyderabad, Gurgaon, and Mumbai testify to this blatant and aggressive onslaught on India's terrain by these weapons of (global) mass construction.

Interestingly, other infrastructure-related projects (e.g., new airports, housing estates) are subject to greater reality checks from the locale and thus tend to become somewhat more culturally specific. Social norms, densities of occupation, and many other related aspects must be negotiated in these projects, unlike the autonomous nature of IT parks and office buildings. Airports



Morphogenesis, Pearl Academy of Fashion, Jaipur (2008)