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Two Design Paradigms Head to Head: A Comparative Analysis of Hong Kong Design Institute and Jockey Club Innovation Tower

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims to bring two state-of-the art and design school buildings in a comparative analysis. It departs from the idea that behind these two buildings, resides two distinct contemporary paradigmatic positions and two distinct mental orientations in architecture. The aim is to investigate perhaps two of the best epitomes of these distinct views of architecture in an objective comparative analysis would reveal the nature and mind of these two contemporary paradigmatic positions and shed light on the way we see and make architecture today.

Keywords: architectural design paradigms; comparative analysis; formal analysis; 21st Century Architecture, Hong Kong architecture

1. INTRODUCTION

While multiple identities and cultural diversity defines Hong Kong as heterogeneous as one might expect from a typical 21st century world-metropolis, curiously these characteristics also make it unique. Hong Kong's design circles mainly establish themselves on two intermingled but distinct contexts: the local; Hong Kong itself, mainly belonging to larger contexts of Far East and China and so-called universal or global referring mainly to Western design traditions. However, this presents us a more complex situation beyond the cliché where East meets West. Today, despite the over-arching globalization governing everything and evening-out the differences all around the world, many circles in art and design seem to put emphasis on the local cultures; plurality and difference is valuable. In the case of Hong Kong, design seems to be evolving from a relatively local, self-sufficient towards a universal, state; seeking to create global brands while still empowering themselves by the local. In this evolutionary stage, design usually finds its place at centre stage in Hong Kong's visions and its projections of future production and future development, and in turn highly fuelled by this high esteem. This

design oriented production logic becomes a unique phenomenon, a distinctive path to be investigated, thinking the fact that Far East is now the centre of world's mass production. Hong Kong claims to be(come) Asia's design hub. Annual meeting of *Business of Design Week- BODW*, a summit where designers and design educators come together to share and exchange ideas could be interpreted as one of the products of such a climate. What particularly interests us is that star architects invited to the summit each year to participate and to deliver a keynote seem to be the dearest of all: Architecture as one of the oldest design disciplines seems to be gaining once lost respect and prestigious position back in this particular case. It was no surprise to see that recently Hong Kong was crowned by two monumental (the words' widest sense) design school buildings. Surely, Hong Kong skyline has always been the epitome of the state-of-the art world architecture, but the thing is, the motivation of Hong Kong's great support in sponsoring such one-of-a-kind buildings reminds the place and importance of architecture's once primary role in society and in achieving social and cultural changes. Here, what is at stake is not some corporate organization's monumental building, emphasizing corporate identity or imposing some type of symbolism and imposing its image and power over urban fabric; Hong Kong set its new pride through its two brand new design school buildings: Coldéfy & Associés's design Hong Kong Design Institute (HKDI) completed in 2010 and ZahaHadid and Patrik Schumacher's design for The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (POLYU), the Jockey Club Innovation Tower (JCIT) completed in 2013 (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Jockey Club Innovation Tower (Photograph: Sebastian Wallroth - Freely Distributable by Referencing CC by 2.0 License) and Hong Kong Design Institute (Photograph: SRR - Freely Distributable by Referencing CC BY-SA 3.0 License)

This illustrates Hong Kong's determination to be the design hub of Asia and how architecture was cast a leading role towards this vision. It is no coincidence that the brief of JCIT called for a beacon structure symbolizing and driving the development of Hong Kong as a design hub in Asia. The point was not to attain any building basically fulfilling the programmatic needs of a design school: conceptually, it is not a school, it is a *pharos*. HKDI's architects' expression on the other hand makes an emphasis on a point which could be interpreted as *fons et origo* of both buildings: design, design education and beyond, with a special emphasis on what beyond might point to. What was at issue is to establish a connection with the world and to bring social acts and assemblages

concerning design together under the shelter of the institute. Significance here once more is put on the soul of Hong Kong, and the work aims to be an urban patch; claiming to be a small Hong Kong itself.

Actually these buildings have much in common: They are departing from one –greater- ideal concerning Hong Kong and its future, and both were cast a leading role in fulfilling this ideal; they share the same context (physical, cultural, social, climatic, or whatsoever); they are the products of will of the same intellectual climate; technically they address similar programmatic requirements, and so far. Yet it could be easily observed that architecturally, these two works also present us quite distinct cases. The architectural language utilized, their response to and proposed relation with the physical and cultural contexts and also the climate and the environment, their response to the greater ideals of Hong Kong, and of course the way they fulfilled the requirements of the architectural program, their understanding and conceptualization of space and their proposed qualities in this sense almost occupy the two possible extreme poles. The situation summarized to this point presents a framework and implies a strong problem situation to address. Within this framework the present study departs from the idea that behind these two buildings, resides two distinct contemporary paradigmatic positions and two distinct mental orientations in architecture that ruled them all. Investigating perhaps two of the best epitomes of these distinct views of architecture in an objective comparative analysis would reveal the nature and mind of these two contemporary paradigmatic positions and shed light on the way we see and make architecture today.

> *Interest in art begins when interest in literary content vanishes.*
> *—AloisRiegl*

2. THE METHODOLOGY

Although the problem situation and the (analytical) process that would be employed here are no less than obvious, a concise framework concerning the methodology is required at this point. Methodological and epistemological roots of the approach employed in the present paper belongs to a certain line of inquiry belonging to an era starting from 1960s onwards, which could be interpreted as the cradle and the golden age of architectural theory and criticism.

The type of critical inquiry (or if we prefer, architectural criticism) at stake here is related with a and a derivative of genre of architectural criticism, what Michael Hays (Hays 1998) once called a form of mediation that involves production of relations between the formal analyses of a work of architecture and its context (physical, social, cultural or otherwise),

and architecture's basic treatises such as use, program and spatial organization(Özten&Anay, 2017a; 2017b;2017c).

By definition, such a formal (ist) analysis demands various layers of a work residing outside the essential layer (that is the form: what was visible to eye, only eye) are suppressed temporarily. The work is being stripped down to its essence, and it was believed that not only this essence was already infused by some indispensable substance but also it is prone to yield what was unprecedented and previously invisible to an audience. This state of almost absolute autonomous state enabled one to see the work afresh to setup new relations, and to give way to new readings and interpretations; hence, it would lead a new knowledge through a hermeneutic process. Having its intellectual roots in greater formalist traditions from visual arts such as German Formalist Tradition (i.e. works of Wölfflin, Hildebrand, Fiedler, Focillon and Riegl to state a few), and literary theory (i.e. schools of Russian formalism and New Criticism), the emphasis is on the form; through pure perceptual experience, one not only gets closest to the core of the work itself but also the material that is accessible by the pure perceptual process yields some type of –objective– knowledge that is fundamental to a work.What is in question in such a study is not how a work was received by the audience (or users and architectural community in the field of architecture) or how it was expressed or rationalized by their own designers, or how it does fit within the tradition or contemporary trends of architecture; the substance under focus is the work, only the work itself (Figure 2).

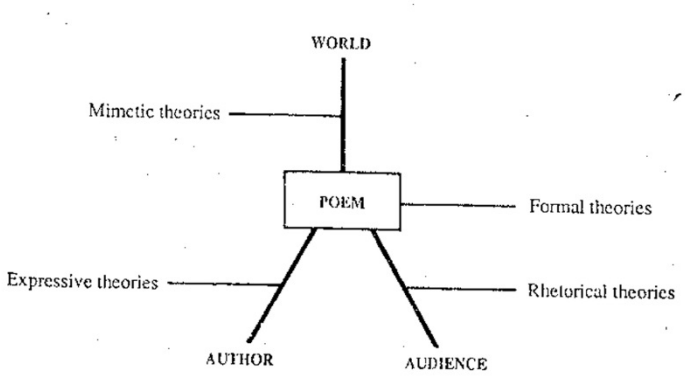

Figure 2. Formal theories as conceptualized by David Richter (Richter 1998)

One of the principal theoreticians who carried this formalist epistemology to the field and sought to adapt its methodologies to the specificities of the discipline of architecture was Colin Rowe. As it was stated by Wölin (Wolin, 1994) Rowe believed that an analytical study based purely on "…what could be seen by eye was" available to us all, and therefore presenting "an accessible and democratic method of analysis" that requires no

special knowledge at all. Formalist epistemology implied here saw form as a knowledge, as it was once nicely but by Peggy Deamer (Deamer 2001) later on Rowe's followers, so called the *Whites* elevated the "form from the condition of design to that of epistemology." Form was seen as "a type of knowledge, indeed an essential type of knowledge."

The epistemology and the attached methodology of which only a sketch was given here is virtually existent in numerous examples of the genre, of course with different emphases and with varying techniques employed according to the theme and the problem situation.It was a powerful tool to employ that enables critic to bring different phenomena together under an analytical study which otherwise would be impossible.This trajectory as it was illustrated in the works of scholars such as Colin Rowe, Stanford Anderson, Alan Colquhoun, Reyner Banham, John Summerson, Robert Somol, Anthony Vidler and many others employed the basic logic and structure of architectural criticism with an emphasis on their own position and epistemological framework. The approach and methodology employed here on the other hand particularly refers to the works of Colin Rowe and Alan Colquhoun and shares the same epistemological framework. For example, one remembers one of the genre's oldest and well-known text; Rowe's seminal "Mathematics of the Ideal Villa," of 1947 where he brings two buildings belonging to totally remote cultures, geographies and even periods; build by different materials, different construction techniques and having different style together under a comparative analysis with a special emphasis on geometry and mathematics (Rowe, 1977). His two Transparency articles written later on together with Robert Slutzky the idea is adopted to illustrate a certain concept and his "Bibliotheca Alexandrina: An Also-Ran," article focuses on the competition-winning project, first setting a critical framework by revealing its context or surrounding conditions and putting DiMaio-Palmore's entry as a comparative case (Rowe & Slutzky, 1963; 1971; Rowe, 1996). Although perhaps Rowe was one of the important figures of the genre Alan Colquhoun's few works are the best cases that illustrate the power of the approach: first that comes to mind is "Displacement of Concepts in Le Corbusier" where Colquhoun sets a relation between Corbusier's architectural pieces and their counterparts in architecture and industry and show how there was a strong conceptual relation; a displacement of concepts (Colquhoun, 1981a). In this study for example he brings together and analyse an ocean liner and Corbusier's *Unitéd' habitation* as if they belonged to a same sphere of design/cultural production. But perhaps, methodologically the article that could be interpreted most closest to the position and the methodology employed in the present paper is his "Formal and Functional Interactions: A Study of Two Late Buildings by Le Corbusier" where Colquhoun illustrates two different approaches to architecture and two different mental orientations

operational at the background of two selected works of Le Corbusier (Colquhoun, 1981b). Following these discussions is particularly important to see how far a method could reach; it could even be applied to works within a single architect's portfolio to identify and distinguish the essential intellectual differences lying behind their conceptualization.

To be worthy of criticism a building must possess qualities.

—Colin Rowe

What if criticism is a science as well as an art?

—Northrop Frye

3. JCIT VS. HKDI: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

JCIT is a part of POLYU campus is located in an urban area consisting of relatively low-rise public buildings and green areas. A highway bound the campus' North and East borders while South and West are relatively open to city, consequently main access to the campus is given from the South. It is a part of the urban Hong Kong (Kowloon district) and accessible by the pedestrian. The complex consists of more than 20, mostly inter connected network of buildings with various functionalities.

As examined at both architectural and urban levels, the campus' compositional entirety and correspondent geometry and order is the first thing that catches the eye. On the phenomenal level, this situation is supported with its almost picturesque design at certain nodes, and furthermore by the utilized architectural language (i.e. the use of materials, construction technique, overall style, etc.) which in turn makes the campus a harmonious whole. It seems that climatic and environmental conditions have primarily been influential on the main design preferences/decisions. For example, there are a lot of wide sheltered and shaded open and semi-open spaces; courtyards with less paved and more green areas, in a number of nodes building blocks were cut and lifted from the ground permitting nature and air flow underneath the buildings. Here, one remembers Le Corbusier's Unitéd' habitation which could be conceptually linked to the HKDI, and such, both seem to be architectural responses towards the local climatic conditions and the environment (Figure 3). Sub-tropical Hong Kong climate is humid, heavy rain is an issue in certain periods, and most of the time weather is quite hot beyond comfort limits. In addressing this problem, logically one has to provide some type of through and continuous ventilation in the buildings, and open spaces as well; adjust the orientation of the buildings to control sunlight; provide shaded (or sheltered) semi-open spaces to avoid sun and heavy rain to support daily life. Shaded and sheltered pathways, and semi-open courtyards supported by green areas would be of great help in this sense thinking the fact that lifestyle of the citizens of Hong Kong involves to be being at outdoors most of the time. The closely-knit relations between the units, the open and

semi-open spaces as well as the relation of all these with the nature creates a strong inner-context and an accompanying microhabitat. Continuity and physical transparency is two of the dominant characteristics. Consequently, despite the fact that it is a confined complex cut from the city in certain parts, (i.e. by a highway towards North), by these characteristics it also establishes a contextual relation with the near surrounding and with the urban Hong Kong.

Figure 3. POLYU Campus (photographs: author)

The campus' newest unit JCIT is located at the North-Northeast end of the complex running along its border in Southwest-Northeast direction. The building is originally named as tower, perhaps with reference to its original conception as a *pharos*. However, in terms of its basic morphology (i.e. linearity) and in terms of its relation with the campus, it is more of a wall surrounding and ending the campus from this side. This is further supported by building's overall affect as experienced from within the campus. Possibly the morphology and location of the site originally reserved for the building has been influential upon the morphology and orientation of the building itself, of course not directly by describing it but as a passive filter limiting and bounding it and forcing it to be in a certain way. However, apparently these conditions and others such as environment and climate do not bring about the only, at least the most influential affect upon the design of the building. The primary determinants seem to be the building's main concept and its consequent preferred style, which actually could also be observed in architects' oeuvre. For example, horizontal strip shading devices going all around the building could be interpreted as a type of *brisesoleil* to control powerful South sunlight, which would be a logical design move thinking about the climatic conditions (Figure 1 (upper) and Figure 3). However, these elements since they are circumferential, at least become useless on

East and West facades in this sense, and using them would be senseless on the North. Apparently, these were primarily due to stylistic preferences of the architects, perhaps utilized as formal elements towards achieving a certain effect as a part of their architectural language. While these urges could be perfectly legitimate as far as architecture is concerned, as such, JCIT begs for heavy mechanical air conditioning as many other buildings do in Hong Kong.

Although it is bounded by the outer walls of the campus and the highway at one side, other three sides of JCIT are open to the campus. Providing a powerful context, the campus on the other hand not only to imply but also to impose and demand certain aspects from any newly introduced intervention. Vice versa, it is not only a matter of preference for a newly introduced building to add and contribute, to such a context or at least respond to it in a certain way, but a requirement to fulfil. Apparently, this does not amount to merely mimicking, obeying, or repeating; reversal, contrast, estrangement, *différance*, or otherwise similar approaches would be perfectly legitimate responses to contribute to what was already there. Contrarily, JCIT prefers altogether different path to follow: on the one hand it refuses to establish any type of relation with the existing campus: morphologically, spatially, geometrically, scale-wise, material-wise, and architectural language-wise. Nevertheless, this could not be interpreted as a failure but rather a projection of determined strategies of ignorance or a dismissal, which actually is made apparent and rigorously emphasized by the designers. On the other hand, if one examines JCIT with total isolation in itself without reference to anything that is external to it, another characteristic comes into being. If one considers the bigness of the building, it would be expected to have a power and tools to set and impose new relations with its surrounding, and a building complex at this scale even might have a chance to propose a context within itself and to its surrounding. Here apart from architectural modernist's few approaches to urban scale architecture, one particularly remembers their rivals' "mat buildings," and their present day projections so-called "mat-building revival," (Allen 1997; 1999; Sarkis, Allard, and Hyde 2002) or the famous but wrongly interpreted discussion on "bigness" once startled by Rem Koolhaas (1995). Although this would also be a logical path to follow, while refusing to establish any relation with the context, the JCIT neither provides nor cares to suggest one itself. For example, take the main gate of the building as a means of establishing principal communication with the main campus. This seems to be a tiny hole opened almost at a random place on the body of the main block, confronting to the scale or monumentality of neither the campus nor the building. Programmatically, it seems hardly capable of providing a fluid communication between the building and the campus. After the gate, an empty lobby meets the visitors, but this scale-wise tiny lobby, its location and spatially confined characteristics fail to satisfy a

need for a space of transition and orientation, and fail to set a relation between the entrance sequence and other spaces as one might expect from such a space. On the other hand, the bridge-like linear platform that connects the main entrance and the level of the main campus almost has a characteristic of a *pasarella*, just put down from a boarded ship; it only touches the campus at one point. If seen from this point of view, apart from its visual resemblances, conceptually JCIT is a ship that was just boarded POLYU campus, moored to its temporary berth, awaiting for its momentary leave (Figure 4).

Figure 4. JCIT (photographs: author)

HKDI on the other hand does not have a campus organization to be integrated into. The building's site is located on a relatively peripheral location, within a dense, newly developing suburban area facing *Junk Bay*. The site is flat, has a well-defined geometry; almost a perfect rectangle, running along Southwest-Northeast direction. It is bounded by streets on all sides, and spatially defined by high-rise building blocks confining three sides of the lot while from the Southeast it is open to Junk Bay. Since the site is located on a relatively remote location, its interaction with urban Hong Kong relies heavily upon commuting; mainly by Hong Kong metro and secondarily by other means of urban mass transit. Concerned urban transportation node(s) are combined with a series of shopping facilities and all concentrated on the Southwest corner of the site.

HKDI is an outcome of combination of ideal geometries brought together to form an ideal comprehensible composition. Same as JCIT, the overall impression (or affect) of the building is of primary importance and emphasized by design. On the other hand, a will towards upholding a certain a-priori style seems to be hardly influential on the building's overall morphology. Main idea (might be expressed as a rectangular horizontal box raised above the ground on four corner towers resting on a podium) has a formative characteristic and as a dominant. It controls the overall scheme of the design, its morphology, and the program. It creates an inner context and sets relations with what resides outside the building; the near surrounding, or its context. For example each of four towers are reserved for one major design departments, and the horizontal raised block is accommodating programmatic needs common to these departments (library, common studios, meeting places, canteen, common places for students, etc.), while spaces underneath the ground level podium is reserved for public programs (such as visitor's centre, meeting spaces, reception, museum, exhibition etc.) and designed particularly to interact with outside. While trying to accomplish its spatial organization and its deserved overall affect the building does not try to hide its underlying systems of structure and construction. On the contrary, it expresses these as a part of its overall impression. All these at least could be named as a perfect conceptual clarity, accompanied by "truth in expression and material in building's approach to structural system and construction.

Context finds a specific response in the design of HKDI building. The suspended horizontal box raised above ground might be interpreted as building's answer to major climatic (and environmental) conditions. First, such a morphology permits (and forces) air and nature flow underneath the building; a clever move in such hot and extremely humid conditions to provide air ventilation and remove humidity and heat. Second, the suspended horizontal mass literally works as a canopy to provide shaded building blocks

and open spaces underneath it (Figure 5). As such, the building functions almost as a giant pergola providing a micro-climate. The response is purely architectural: Combined with the building's overall form, orientation and location one could easily guess the effectiveness of such a move towards the climatic conditions. Same entity might also be interpreted urbanistically: Such a form not only permits air and nature flow through the building but also provides some type of urban-scale continuity and flow through and into the building. This is a type of permeability, a way to relate to and incorporate with the urban fabric. Combined with the building's orientation referencing major commuting nodes, existing urban fabric, sea, dominant wind, etc. it could perhaps better be interpreted as weaving together the conditions and the form of the building.

Figure 5. HKDI (photographs: author)

As far the relations between the interior and exterior on the ground level is concerned, JCIT has a very few apertures, and supported with the effect of the *Béton brut*, it offers some type of physical and virtual impermeability and emphasizes this with its form and utilized architectural language. On the other hand, in HKDI, the ground level and a number of levels above the ground level are reserved for public spaces and they are designed to be accessed and used freely from outside the building (lot). The main body of the building that incorporates the functions internal to the institution actually is raised and suspended above ground, leaving the building lot to the use of the city and its residents almost completely. Curiously, a reinterpretation of a regional pattern: We could observe multiple occasions of it (leaving the ground levels of the buildings to the public

use and/or providing an urban transparency and continuity at the ground levels of the buildings) in a considerable number of buildings in Hong Kong Island. However, this case particularly seems to be related with Sir Norman Foster's HSBC Bank building in Hong Kong Island. Here in HSBC, the main body of the building, as it was raised above the ground, provides a transparency and flow between two major parallel avenues: a permeability in South-North direction. The main access to the main building level which actually is detached from the ground is available either by the vertical circulation shafts, located at two sides of the lot, recessed and hidden from the apparent view to support the flow and transparency also as an effect, or by a more exposed long escalators located at the very centre of the left-space penetrating through a transparent and overhanging layer of glass which further promotes it. The building could best experienced by detaching from the ground, raising towards the sky (into the building) slowly. Curiously, this design story is fully applicable to HKDI; actually, apart from a few tweaks it is virtually impossible to distinguish the two buildings in terms of such a description. In HKDI the emphasis once more on the detaching slowly from the ground by a long escalator towards the sky, into an overhanging horizontal block. Actual vertical circulation cores are hidden within the four corner towers to emphasize the transparency and the permeability effect furthermore.

When taken formally, it could easily be observed that JCIT and HKDI are established upon two clear, recognizable, yet distinct set of principles, and design approaches the employ permitted conceptual clarity, formal comprehensibility, and formal qualities thereunto. JCIT consist of a number of floor plans with varying (or evolving) profiles, a stacking one on another, in total lofting an amorphous, sculpturesque building.Here one could identify that lofting refers to a term borrowed from computational solid modelling. It refers to a technique in making solid models by preparing several cross sections of an object then fluidly combining them into a whole. HKDI's morphology on the other hand is a monumental composition, made up by combination of platonic solids, or geometric primitives to use a more recent term.The term geometric primitives is also borrowed from computational modelling, particularly constructive solid geometry. It belongs to a modelling technique based on solid primitives and the Boolean operations in-between these primitives.Both employed a top-down approach, and there seems to exist a basic formal idea in both cases, controlling the buildings' overall form from above.

But then, what was primarily dominant and operational in JCIT's conception involves two related but distinct matters: style and design towards achieving a certain effect. Apart from its own specific distinct/unique expressions, JCIT seems to be designed as a propagation of a certain style and architectural language of which variations could be

observed from architects' previous oeuvre.Actually although it seems to be a little bit out of fashion, discussion on style is still on agenda. For example, one can check Rem Koolhaas' discussions on his CCTV architecture in Beijing claiming to have no style whatsoever, but merely as an outcome of requirements/functions inherent to the building. The signature formal aspects of this style or language could be identified by an amorphous form (read: non-platonic or *non-standard geometry*) articulated by a series of horizontal strip shading devices *circumfering* the building, putting an accent to the amorphous form furthermore (Figure 6). Architects describe one of the essences of their design as having a fluid form, which here seems to be foregrounded and emphasized curiously not as a formal quality but primarily as an impression of fluidity or effect to be expressed. Here the relation between the final form of the building and its relation to architects' architectural style seems to be reciprocal. To the degree form is determined by the style to that degree it was designed for the style.

Such a determination comes with its own cost: all other aspects such as the relation between interior and exterior spaces, building's spatial organization, its structural aspects, its relation to environment, etc. all seem to be either suppressed for the sake of expressing this effect or all these are arranged or bended to serve and help to express this ultimate aim. The effect, namely fluidity in consideration here is something concerning the external appearance of the building, and its influence on the above-mentioned aspects of the building presents a one-way relation, mostly.

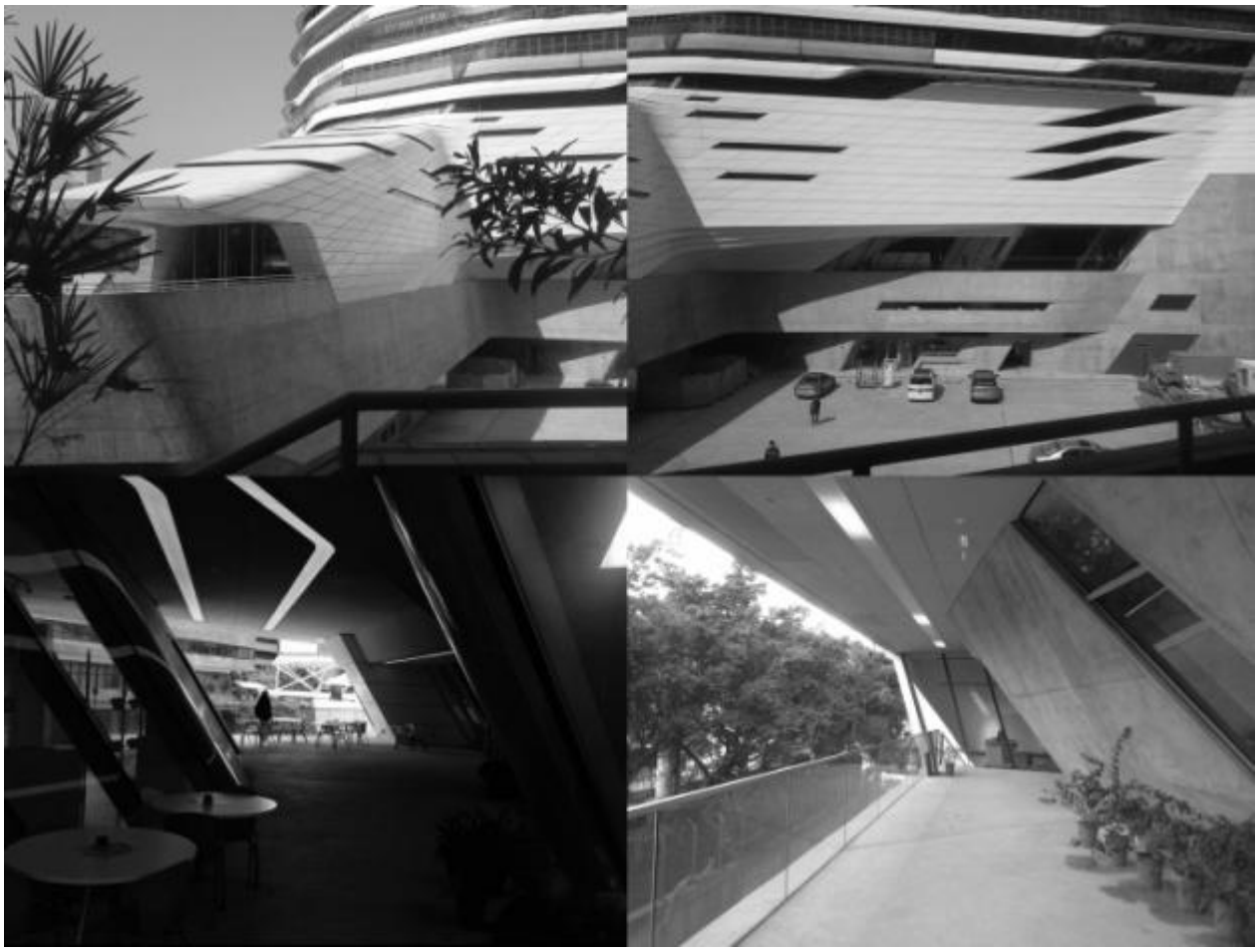

Figure 6. JCIT Strip shading devices versus strip windows (photographs: author)

From bird's eye view and keeping a certain angle, JCIT seems to be high-rise building composed of two amorphous lobes. However, in most cases, especially experienced eye-level on foot, it does not say much or give clues about its overall form. This is due to its approach to architectural form. Yet from a number of angles, its morphology share much with characteristics of a ship that implies issues beyond resemblance.

Both buildings are raised above podiums and in both cases, these parts are reserved for specific spaces for public functions such as public venues, public relations office and spaces that require larger spans such as exhibition and conference halls. However, these podiums are interpreted quite differently. In JCIT, the podium is laid towards the South of the building, and it was designed as a transition element mediated/mediating between the building and its surrounding and the ground by the help of elements such as cracks/apertures on the voids, slopes, and ramps. This seems to be the architectural answer to the building's designers' expression stating that the building was conceptualized as a response to classical typology of tower/podium, by almost literally dissolving it into something more fluid at this point. On the other hand, South part of the

building directly stands upon the earth without such a transitory element or a mediator not even a podium. In HKDI the podium is morphologically more fluidly integrated to the ground rather than the building itself, by the slopes at three sides working as transitory elements between the podium mass and the ground. From a certain point of view, this morphological transformation could easily be interpreted as urban surface propagating or extending towards inside the building itself and its lot, while doing this gaining a characteristic of an urban canopy as well as keeping its own qualification as an urban surface. This surface defines a various spaces underneath it those are virtually imperceptible from outside since they are buried. This organization creates two integrated urban scale elements within the lot: an internal street laying along a valley-like space between the lateral sloped podiums. The spaces under the podium are organized along the valley. These spaces are reserved for building functions that require direct relation with outside world; therefore, they are designed to be maximally transparent to the internal street. The internal street, the valley-like space, and the sloped surfaces of the podium work as a means of integration to and continuation of the existing urban fabric, and they propose multiplication/layering of the urban surface (Figure 7).

Figure 7. HKDI Inner street and Valley (photographs: author)

Although "fluidity" is advertised as one of the departure points of JCIT, one can easily find a type of fluidity of which a piece of architecture might involve particularly in HKDI's design. This is a little bit curious since the building's overall geometry seems to be establishing itself on aspects such as being static, balance, and stability, that would

normally thought to be incompatible with the notion of fluidity. Actually the fluidity of JCIT is basically about an "impression" which the skin or outer surface is trying to impose on us. Otherwise, as far as the spatial organization, or the relations between inside and outside (or between the building and its context) is concerned, the degree of fluidity is only infinitesimal. In HKDI, this situation is just the reverse.

The relation between their morphologies and their interior space organizations of these buildings is also different. In JCIT, spatial organization is an outcome of the heavy agenda towards attaining a certain effect to be perceived from outside. Apparently, programmatic requirements were considered, but essentially by careful appreciation of amorphous geometry defined by the outer shell. That is to say, spatial organization utilizes the spatial potentialities of the space already provided and defined by this hull, to that degree confined by the limitations of it. In fact, as it was already mentioned, JCIT is essentially based on floor plans. For each level, plan organization tries to address two apparently incompatible things: on the one hand, it tries to establish a spatial organization with reference to the programmatic requirements; on the other hand, it tries to fit itself into the confines of the outer shell, which was already there. As a result one can identify a number of dead-ends, cramped, leftover spaces, or spaces those do not exactly fit to their respective functions. Towards establishing physical and visual relation between the levels, and attaining a three-dimensional organization of spaces (as compared to mere set of floor plans), slabs have been tore down at number of places. One of the most dominant of these is located at the very core of the building (between the two lobes) cutting through all the floors from bottom to top, ending by a skylight giving a visual access to the sky. This element is accompanied by a stair going through all floors, oscillating differentially between the levels, further exposing and emphasizing the vertical relation. In a number of occasions, the aperture located at the core extend towards and touches the outer shell, and as it does, establishes a transparency, a visual relation between the inside and the outside. Abovementioned oscillation adds much to the inner dynamism of the building. In a similar fashion, there are a number of vertical apertures between the floors, located at the periphery of the building, between the outer shell and the floor slabs creating voids within. These are a means of further establishing vertical relation between floors and between the inside and the outside. All these operations seem to be related with establishing some type of spatial fluidity and transparency (Figure 8).

In HKDI, the situation is different. It cannot be claimed that the building is "formed" directly from programmatic requirements, namely from "inside out." On the other hand,

one can easily identify a coherence and a mutual relation between the overall morphology of the building and the programmatic and spatial organization. For example, the four towers at the corners are reserved for the function of education, each assigned to a department, while the horizontal overhanging block is reserved for the functions common to the school while connecting and bringing the four altogether. As it was already mentioned there is also a vertical hierarchy and an order of functions, that is to say the ground level where the building touches the city, is for both the city and the school, working like an interface between the city and building while, as it gets higher, the spaces are assigned to more private, internal affairs. Thus, the relation, the hierarchy, or the structure in both the spheres of form and the sphere of function finds its counterpart in the other realm.

The horizontal overhanging block is actually a container with transparent faces, by definition, presenting an undisturbed, vacant void inside. This void is divided with reference to the programmatic requirements by a number of slabs and transparent surfaces, trying not to disrupt the original spatial implications. The apertures in the slabs amount to a number of voids within the main body help to establish vertical spatial relations between the levels and between inside and the outside (Figure 9). The enormous terrace above the horizontal block is accessible and utilized as a roof garden, almost has a characteristic of an urban surface, further propagating adding to the outdoor spaces, and setting a special relation with the city.

Figure 8. JCIT Interior (photographs: author)

Figure 9. HKDI Interior (photographs: author)

In JCIT, except the ones located at South as it was previously discussed, exterior spaces at the near surrounding of the building and the spaces coming out of a relation between the building and its immediate built environment generally have a characteristic of a by-product. On the other hand, interior spaces tend to open to outside by a number of loggias and balconies accompanied by deep spaces. On the other hand, these elements are not foregrounded much with reference to the architectural language utilized, generally preferred to be hidden or recessed within the main body of the building. Other than these elements, there seems no other mediating element, or a mediatory organization to set up or design a relation between inside and the outside. As such, especially at some points building seems to be not caring about saying a word or take a stance for what happens or what would happen in its immediate surrounding. In HKDI, the situation again seems to be the reverse.

4. CONCLUSION

The two state-of-the art buildings considered under a critical investigation here are the reflections of two distinct mental orientations in architectural design: they are the illustrative cases of two popular views of architecture at agenda today. To the degree they illustrate the present-state of architecture, to that degree they show the way we design, how we relate architecture with its responsibilities, its environment, how we do get and interpret built environment and how we create new environments and contexts as well. But more important, not only they are references, but also they show our present values; and illustrate and provide us “standards of evaluation” operational in

them, which would rule them all: we not only take them as cases or inspiration but also they affect the way we see the world and the way we evaluate it.

That is the reason why it is not a methodological preference to strip them down to their essence and see and investigate them afresh, but it is a necessity for seeing, understanding and evaluating what exists behind all those shiny images and attached discourses.

A true architecture would survive such a test.

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