

MIGRATORY ARCHITECTURE AS EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESILIENCE

RE-LEARNING FROM CARAVANSARY BUILDING TYPES

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explores how we can learn from vernacular
caravansary building types to respond to
the crises of the 21st century

With the increase in numbers and types of migrants and refugees, and with average 17 years spent in camp like conditions, it is evident that architects need to be an integral part of the humanitarian field. Many of the emergency responses are architectural with the need to provide housing and infrastructure for large number of people in a short time. While there is some integration between humanitarian, architecture, and construction sectors, this clearly at present is not enough.

PREPAREDNESS AND RESILIENCE

For effective and holistic integration, the architecture community needs to consider preparedness and resilience on an entirely different scale and level. Emergency Preparedness is a key

word in the humanitarian field; United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) defines it as 'the knowledge and capacity developed by governments, recovery organisations, communities and individuals to anticipate, respond to and recover from the impact of potential, imminent or current hazard events, or emergency situations that call for a humanitarian response.' Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) suggests that preparedness and resilience is key to saving lives and livelihoods, while at the same time aiming to reduce negative impacts of urbanisation, food insecurity and climate change.

Economic migration due to urbanisation (rural, internal or external), forced migration due to conflicts or disasters, and the recently recognised environmental or climate change migration are

simultaneously considered to be politically sensitive, socially and culturally diverse, economically challenging, and enormously demanding for future resilience and sustainability. More importantly global migration is a rapidly emerging urgent urban phenomenon, which needs to be envisaged on a large scale. Given that migration and refugee crisis is a recurring factor, it is imperative that the architecture community is deeply involved and adequately prepared.

This preparation is possible through 'Migratory Architecture', which targets and prepares for moving societies; this type of architecture, a physical manifestation of a 'plural community', could act as a binder for bridging gaps between communities.

offering nomadic travellers all possible comforts and shelter while away from their homes. Hans were initially designed as simple dormitories and overtime developed into complex establishments called 'ribat' (inns) with facilities to provide food, shelter, and drinks for people, animals and cargo along with services such as maintenance, treatment and care. These structures sprouted along trade routes at calculated intervals by estimating travel times. Its architecture and function were solely dependent on available local materials, climatic conditions and security aspects. Every caravanserai had basic minimum services including baths, faith based components, fountains, infirmaries, cookshops (cafés), storage areas and shops. Professionals

GIVEN THAT MIGRATION AND REFUGEE CRISIS IS A RECURRING FACTOR, IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT THE ARCHITECTURE COMMUNITY IS DEEPLY INVOLVED AND ADEQUATELY PREPARED.

Examples of migratory architecture have been abundant throughout history, though the terminology may not be distinctly defined. People have migrated since antiquity, and their resulting migration routes and activities have influenced architecture over time. Noah's ark, architecture of the trade routes such as Silk Route (e.g. caravansaries, khans, hans), colonial cities, and remittance houses of Mexico are just some examples.

such as blacksmiths, moneychangers, tailors, cobblers, physicians, and veterinaries had to be represented within each structure. Moreover hans were built around courtyards incorporating public and open space planning.

Many thousands of hans were known to have been built, and this traditional concept of migratory architecture shows that regionally migration was considered to be ordinary, recurring and acceptable phenomenon, which ultimately brought social, cultural and economic enhancement to the locality as well as the migrants. It shows that the locals along the trade routes were 'prepared' for the

SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL ACCEPTANCE THROUGH 'CARAVANSARIES'

Hans or caravanserais building types evolved out of social needs in Central Asia



Entrance to Hanul' lui Manuc or Manuc's Inn, Bucharest: Built in 1808 as a 'khan' by Armenian diplomat, Manuc-bei. The oldest inn, now a national heritage, was an important commercial complex with 15 wholesalers, 23 retail stores, 107 rooms for offices or living, two receiving rooms and a pub.

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approaching large number of travellers or migrants passing through on a daily basis. The structures were designed and built prior to and during migration events, in order to future proof and safeguard local communities, migrants and resources from added influx of new people. The migrants were ensured secure and dignified shelters, and above all, a welcoming gesture from society.

ARCHITECTURE IN THE HUMANITARIAN SECTOR

In face of migration crises and a rise in terrorist activities, some countries have engaged in hostile and alienating architecture, such as inhospitable detention centres, registration camps, border walls and fences. While these structures may be necessary to some extent, this rising trend of hostile structures needs to be reversed with hospitable and inclusive architectural examples. Migratory architecture can embody and promote the concept of plural identity and common heritage. It can be socially, culturally and economically welcoming; integrating, accepting and inclusive that evolves around the needs of static and transitional societies simultaneously.

The absence of architecture community in humanitarian world is often pondered upon; in a recent article by architect Richard Gatti, he wonders why architects are not talking about migration crisis, and considers 'architectural press to be largely silent' on this topic. Innovative shelter solutions are developing, however these are considered to be few and far to make a large-scale impact. Last year, The United Nations issued a request for a design proposal to build semi-

THIS TRADITIONAL CONCEPT OF MIGRATORY ARCHITECTURE SHOWS THAT REGIONALLY MIGRATION WAS CONSIDERED TO BE ORDINARY, RECURRING AND ACCEPTABLE PHENOMENON

permanent refugee settlements from adobe in less than a month. The adobe houses would be 'first homes' before the refugees are relocated to a more permanent location. The next wave of refugees will then take over the adobe dwellings thereby ensuring sustainable and continued use. In a recent debate, it was highlighted that the architects, who are involved in emergency architecture, often focus solely on the product - 'the shelter', rather than looking at the problem holistically. They are further restricted by neophilia (novelty of the 'new'), impractical innovation and design complexities, and need for publicity.

CHALLENGES FOR THE ARCHITECTURE COMMUNITY

It is possible that all these issues arise due to the limited and narrow design framework made available to them. Architects, governments and humanitarian actors together need to perceive architectural interventions through targeted lens of holistic concepts surrounding migration and refugees including political, cultural, urban and environmental challenges. The time scale itself is challenging; whole new communities now need to be built within a very short time frame. Though recent technology may allow speeding up the construction process, it is probably

sensible to be prepared beforehand for future large-scale migrations. With today's scientific data and inventions, migratory routes can be mapped and predicted beforehand, which would enable us to prepare and future proof critical routes and cities with migratory architecture.

There is an urgent need to shelter people humanely, with comfort and with dignity. Home is more than a place to rest; it is the extension of the human self, their identity. Uprooted from their original surroundings, this 'home shield' is no longer available for migrants and refugees. With limited resources, the only option left is to make do and build a home from the shelter provisions made available to them. In such dire situations, when physical and psychological circumstances are critical, it is essential that the shelters are already built and in a good enough condition to be considered as future 'homes'. The provisions could be basic but these structures need to be permanent, habitable, and to certain extent agreeable and aesthetically pleasing to the occupant. The migratory structures can be readapted, rebuilt, and reintegrated innovatively into the community once the crisis has passed.

WHAT'S ON THE HORIZON?

The materialisation of migratory architecture is an extremely complex and uphill task, and certainly not in the hands of the architects alone. The stringent border control regulations, security, cultural and social concerns, planning and management issues make it evident that it should be debated with various parties at different levels. Recent endeavours like the United Kingdom Built

Environment Advisory Group (UKBEAG) consortium launched at the 2016 Habitat III conference could bring together collective skills and expertise of built environment professionals to support a range of humanitarian and development partners to prepare for and respond to humanitarian crises. However, more importantly, it is imperative that the debate should commence immediately with a wider audience without delay. It is also essential that future architecture students embed this concept of migratory architecture in their studies and experiences. Architectural preparedness and resilience needs to be mainstreamed in the humanitarian sector to increase a common understanding of migration, and enable the exchange of ideas between local and transient communities.

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