

ARCH  
LABOUR

11–13 February 2026, Lisbon  
Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation

COLONIAL AND  
POST-COLONIAL  
LANDSCAPES

III International Congress

**COLONIAL AND  
POST-COLONIAL  
LANDSCAPES  
ARCHITECTURE,  
CITIES,  
LABOUR**

**Book of Abstracts**

## Congress

### III International Congress Colonial and Post-Colonial Landscapes: Architecture, Cities, Labour

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#### Partners

Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation  
Cinematheca Portuguesa, Museu do Cinema

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Paving of 2nd order roads no. 2 Distribution of the Foundation bed. Report by the Directorate of Public Works Services of Mozambique, 1942 (AHU, OP1381)

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### Research Project

[ArchLabour] Architecture, Colonialism and Labour. The role and legacy of mass labour in the design, planning and construction of Public Works in former African territories under Portuguese colonial rule.

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### Host Institution

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## Organisers

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LABOURMAP-MACAO  
Mass labour impact on Public Works in Macau under  
Portuguese administration (1849-1999)

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## Funding



## Partners

Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation  
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## **THE CONGRESS**

After questioning *Architecture, Cities and Infrastructure* (2019) and *Architecture, Colonialism and War* (2023), the third edition of the *Colonial and Post-colonial Landscapes Congress* (2026) will intersect the topics of *Architecture, Cities and Labour*. Although a common topic in colonial historiography, the influence of large-scale labour on the creation of built environments—including the design, construction, and maintenance of infrastructure, buildings and landscapes—has not been fully explored in the context of colonial architecture. The topic has significant implications not only for the description of past societies, but especially for the comprehension and support of present-day communities with colonial pasts and their relationship to the production of space. Connecting architecture and labour in these contexts offers a promising avenue for addressing some of the challenges encountered by postcolonial societies. These include the relationship with “Western” construction technologies and materials, scarcity of traditional building systems and their undervalued insights on climate adaptation and sustainable solutions, and persistent racial and gender inequalities in public works labor environments.

This congress welcomes contributions from diverse geographical, disciplinary, and chronological backgrounds to promote a wide and tough-provoking debate, crossing the history of colonial architecture, labour and social history and construction technology.

### **THE SESSIONS**

The parallel sessions resulted from an open “Call for Sessions”, and represent a selection of the submitted proposals. The themes, approaches and descriptions of each session were proposed by their chair(s), who were also responsible for selecting the communications that constitute each panel. The eighteen selected sessions offer a prism of perspectives on labour and architecture in colonial and post-colonial contexts, spanning throughout the four continents.

**Ana Vaz Milheiro**

Congress Coordinator; Dinâmia’CET-Iscte

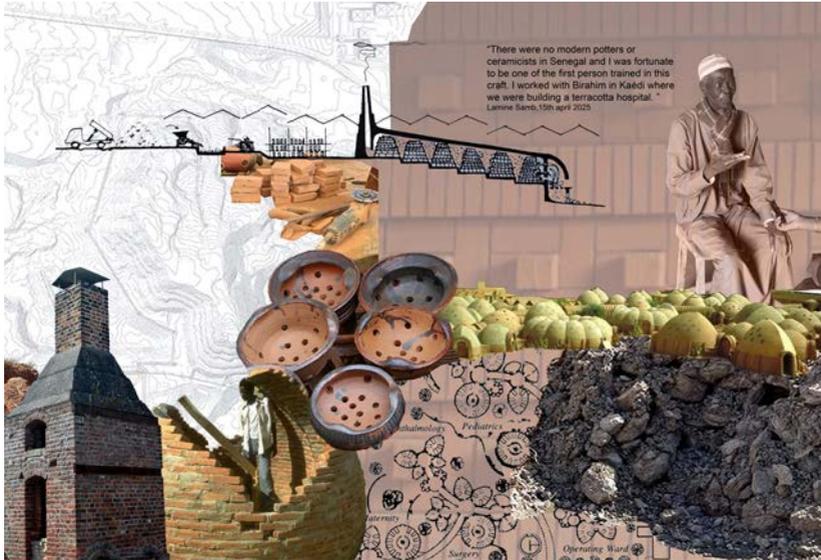




# Keynote Speakers

Purchase of a truck with a steam boiler for public works in Angola, portrait of the workers, 1906, (AHU, OP15461)

## COLONIAL AND POST-COLONIAL LANDSCAPES



Depiction of the human and material ecosystems of ceramic craft that produced some of Senegal's most iconic modern buildings (©CCA c/o Dakar, 2025)

# THE CRAFTS THAT SHAPE(D) SENEGALESE MODERN ARCHITECTURE

Nzinga Biegueng Mboup,  
Worofila

Nzinga Biegueng Mboup is a Senegalese architect and co-founder of Worofila, a Dakar-based practice that specializes in bioclimatic architecture and construction using earth and other local natural materials. Some of her most notable projects include the Ngor Vertical house and the upcoming Rainforest Gallery of the MOWAA Campus in Nigeria. She is also active as a researcher and has made significant contributions to urban and cultural heritages studies in Dakar. Since 2023, Mboup has been collaborating with the Canadian Centre for Architecture as the leader of CCA c/o Dakar, a 3-year research program investigating Senegal's unarchived architectural heritage. She has been appointed to teach an Advanced Architecture Design Studio over the 2025 summer at Columbia University focusing on "Assessing Endogenous Building Practices".

## COLONIAL AND POST-COLONIAL LANDSCAPES



Forced road labour in British Togoland's Ho District, 1930. Courtesy of PRAAD Ho.

**THE SPACES  
AND MOVEMENTS OF  
COLONIAL FORCED LABOUR:  
AN “ECOSYSTEM  
OF RUNNING”, A REALITY  
OF EVERYDAY LIFE, 1918–1962**  
Alexander Keese,  
Université de Genève

Alexander Keese, full professor of Sub-Saharan African history since 2019. He joined the University of Geneva as an SNSF scholarship professor in 2015, after leading the ForcedLabourAfrica research group (ERC Starting Grant) at the Centro de Estudos Africanos da Universidade do Porto in Portugal (2010–2011) and then at Humboldt University in Berlin (2011–2015). He defended his doctoral thesis in modern and contemporary history in 2004 at the University of Freiburg im Breisgau and his habilitation thesis in 2010 at the University of Bern. Alexander Keese was a visiting researcher at the Centre of European and International Studies and Research (CEISR) at the University of Portsmouth in the United Kingdom and a visiting professor at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS). A specialist in the comparative history of decolonisation in West and Central Africa, the history of forced labour and ethnic mobilisation in the context of conflict, he is also interested in several global issues, including a global history of forced labour and a comparative perspective on plantation systems (African and non-African; he has conducted research in Suriname and Brazil, where he has several research collaborations).

**COLONIAL AND POST-COLONIAL LANDSCAPES**



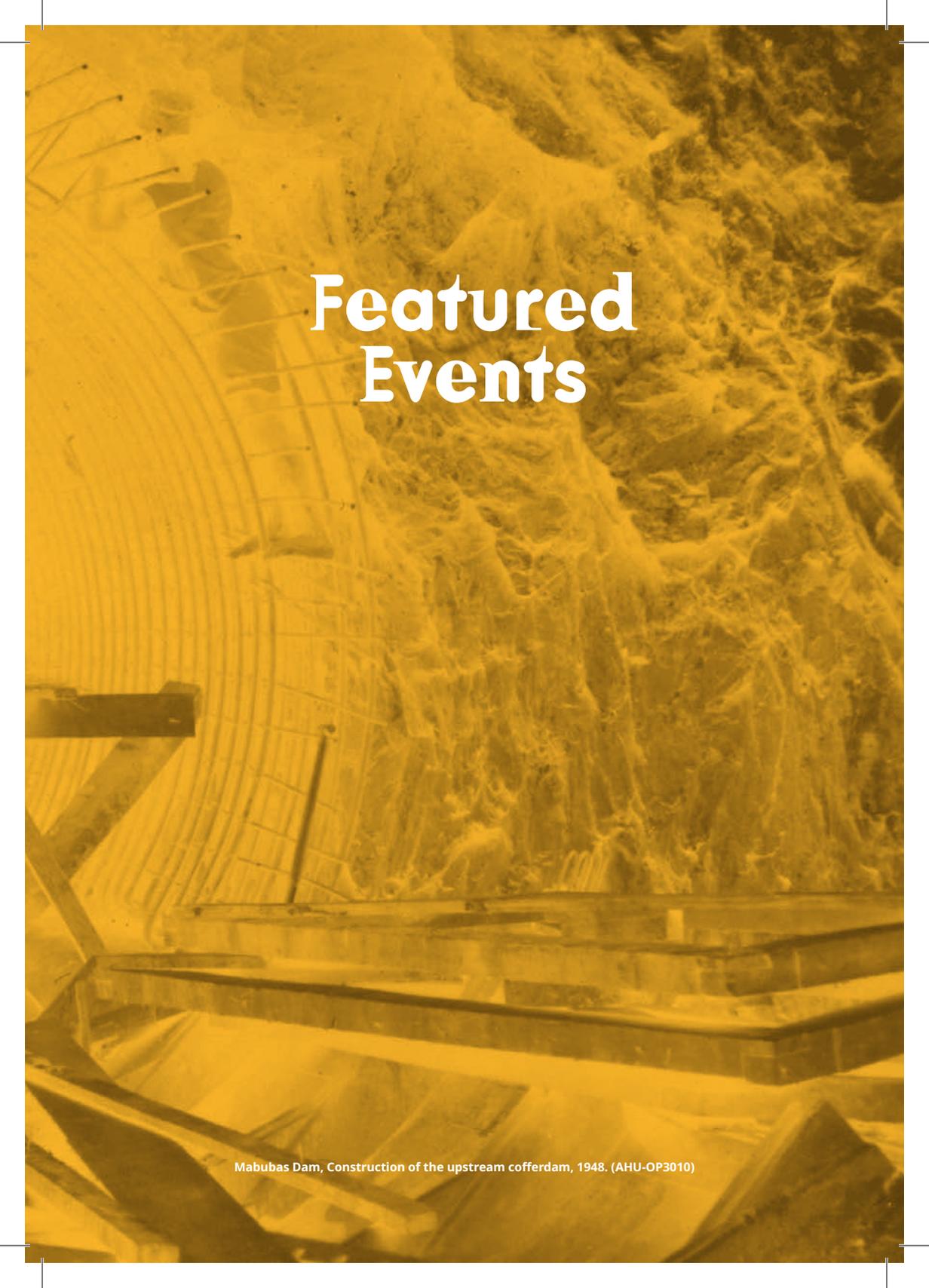
**Celebration of the completion of the second Lion Rock Tunnel, 1978 (© Heather Coulson)**

**PROMISING FORMS  
AND PEOPLE:  
NARRATING  
THE “GOLDEN AGE  
OF CONSTRUCTION”  
IN COLONIAL HONG KONG**

Cecilia L. Chu,  
Chinese University  
of Hong Kong

Cecilia L. Chu is an Associate Professor in the School of Architecture at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Trained as an urban historian with a background in design and conservation, her work focuses on the intersection of professional and popular knowledge of architecture and the built environment. She is the author of *Building Colonial Hong Kong: Speculative Development and Segregation in the City*, which received the 2023 Best Book Award from the Urban History Association and the 2024 International Planning History Society Book Prize. Chu is a co-founder and past president of DOCOMOMO Hong Kong and an editorial board member of the *Journal of Urban History*, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Hong Kong*, *Surveying and Environment*, and *Built Environment*. She received her PhD in Architecture from the University of California, Berkeley.





# Featured Events

Mabubas Dam, Construction of the upstream cofferdam, 1948. (AHU-OP3010)

Alexandra Areia, Architect. Integrated Researcher at Dinâmia CET-Iscte and Invited Assistant Professor of Architectural History at the Faculty of Architecture of University of Porto (FAUP), develops research on the communication and representation of architecture, with a particular focus on filmic formats. Alexandra was awarded the FCT junior researcher contract with the project *Architecture Television (ARCH-TV): The televised dimension of architectural action, from Portugal's first broadcast to the EU digital decade* (2023.05926.CEECIND), which includes the curation of this session.

## FILMS SCREENING

### LANDSCAPES OF LABOUR AND CONSTRUCTION IN COLONIAL FILMS. A GLIMPSE INTO THE ARCHIVAL COLLECTION OF THE PORTUGUESE CINEMATECA

Alexandra Areia, Dinâmica' CET-Iscite

The session *Landscapes of labour and construction in colonial films. A glimpse into the archival collection of the Portuguese Cinemateca* will screen a curated selection of six films from *Cinemateca Portuguesa's* archival collection, illustrating a wide range of provenances, purposes, geographic locations, and historical circumstances. The films will be presented chronologically, from the 1920s to 1969, and will cover different sites in Angola, Mozambique, and Cape Verde. Rooted in propagandistic agenda and in underlying narratives of dominance and oppression, which must be critically assessed and acknowledged, the films produced under Portuguese colonial system provide vivid, nuanced and multidimensional insights into the topic of labour within Portugal's territorial activities in Africa during the 20th century. Considering the political and ideological framework of Portuguese colonialism, this collection of moving images invites reflection on the labour strategies and mechanisms employed by the colonizers in their exploration of African land, nature, and human resources.

The session begins with two amateur films. The first, *FRONTEIRA SUL DE ANGOLA* (192?), was filmed by captain J.L. Canelhas and depicts the most elemental act of territorial demarcation: the construction of border markers at the Ruacaná Falls in southern Angola. Colonised natives, subjected to compulsory labour, assist these works, which are coordinated by the military. The images also show women and children who were forced to pose for the camera. The second film, *GIRAUL-MOSSAMEDES-BIOPIO* (1948), was presumably recorded by an employee of *OMES*<sup>1</sup>, a Lisbon-based metal construction company that worked on the Moçâmedes railway line. The reel contains images of a European employee's daily life in Africa, including wearing a suit while supervising foundation work, spending time with his family in company housing, and hunting wild game for recreation. Following these amateur registers that inadvertently expose the systemic disparities colonial labour, the session continues with a propaganda film produced by the *Agência Geral das Colónias*, a *Estado Novo* (New State) agency. *LOURENÇO MARQUES* (1950) was directed by a Spanish filmmaker, Felipe de Soms, who travelled to Mozambique with a permit from the *Ministério das Colónias*, later renamed *Ministério do Ultramar*. According to a script established by the ministry in cooperation with several

public and private entities, the film portrays Lourenço Marques as a modern city, albeit a segregated one, full of new buildings, many of which were still under construction. The images capture the rapid urbanisation processes under the Portuguese rule, while the voice-over narration praises ideas of progress and Christian civilisation, contrasting the city's modernity with the land's original "swampy and wooded" state.

The other three films in this session are documentaries made by "independent" filmmakers. *CONSTRUÇÃO DE ESTRADAS EM MOÇAMBIQUE* (1958) was directed by a local producer, António de Melo Pereira, who had established residence in Lourenço Marques (now Maputo) to launch a monthly newsreel series illustrating everyday life in Mozambique. As a documentary about road construction, this film reflects Portugal's growing overseas investment in transportation infrastructure after World War II. It also reveals the ideological shift that occurred after the 1951 constitutional revision, when the Portuguese regime adopted the narratives of "lusotropicalism" and the creation of a mixed-race society in the tropics. This film strategically features images of labour activities suggesting racial integration and gender equality among workers performing higher-level tasks. In the next film, however, the precarious nature of colonial mass compulsory labour is ultimately exposed. *O HOMEM E O TRABALHO* (1960) is a travelogue about Cape Verde directed by Miguel Spiguel, a Turkish filmmaker living in Portugal. Filmed in colour, the documentary begins by showcasing the archipelago's natural resources and indigenous crops, such as corn, bananas, and sugarcane, which are harvested by young women in beautiful garments, thereby unveiling the effort made by the empire to set an agricultural economy within the archipelago. It then gradually transitions to the infrastructural projects promoted by the Portuguese state, and still under construction, which are mostly carried out by large numbers of local labourers working in extremely vulnerable and unsafe conditions. These projects include water supply networks, roads, an airport, and a new port on São Vicente Island. Finally, *CABINDA CASSINGA* (1969) was directed by Belgium filmmaker J. N. Pascal-Angot and commissioned by the *Secretariado Nacional de Informação* (SNI). Intended to promote Angola's economic and industrial development, the film captures

the extensive urbanisation and infrastructure networks, as well as the substantial manpower required for oil and iron exploration in the region. Aiming to project a respectable image of the Portuguese presence in Africa, the film features a specialised multicultural, multiracial workforce. However, it mostly exhibits a highly mechanised production system, implying that by the end of the empire, with all that machinery, Portugal no longer needed to exploit people for labour.

1 One of the film's images exhibits a sign "Entry is expressly prohibited to individuals not involved in the work of OMES" ("*É expressamente proibida a entrada a pessoas estranhas aos trabalhos da OMES*"). The reference to OMES (*Obras Metálicas Electro-Soldadas, Lda*) was found in the *Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino* in one document entitled "*Caminho-de-ferro de Moçâmedes. Variantes e pontes do Bero e Giraul. Adjudicação à firma OMES*" [PT/AHU/ID-OP/OP02816].

Piçarra, Maria do Carmo (2016). *O império contra-ataca: a produção secreta de propaganda feita por estrangeiros para projecção internacional de "Portugal do Ultramar"*. Braga: Centro de Investigação Media e Jornalismo (CIMJ).

Piçarra, Maria do Carmo (2018). *A Coleção Colonial da Cinemateca: Campo, contracampo, fora-de-campo*. Viseu: Cine Clube de Viseu e Aleph – Rede de Acção e Investigação Crítica da Imagem Colonial.

Pimentel, Joana (2020). *A coleção colonial da Cinemateca = The colonial collection of Cinemateca*. Lisboa: Cinemateca Portuguesa-Museu do Cinema.

Ramos, Alexandre; Martins, Paulo Miguel (2023). *Biografias do Cinema Colonial: Moçambique (1951-1975)*. Évora: Publicações do CIDEHUS.

**CINEMATECA**  
**6 FILMS**  
Total Length: 69'



**FRONTEIRA SUL DE ANGOLA:  
QUEDAS RUACANÁ:  
CONSTRUÇÃO DOS MARCOS**

Director: José Luís Gonçalves  
Canelhas (General)

Portugal, 192(?)

Genre: Amateur film

Length: 00:06:13, 16 fps

Format: 16mm, BW, silent

AR: 1:1,37



**GIRAUL-MOSSAMEDES-BIOPIO**

Director: unknown

Portugal, 1948(?)

Genre: Amateur film

Length: 00:05:47, 18 fps

Format: 16mm, Colour, silent



**LOURENÇO MARQUES**

Director: Felipe de Solms

Agência Geral das Colónias

Portugal, 1950

Genre: Documentary

Length: 00:10:19, 24 fps

Format: 35mm, BW, w/ sound

## FEATURED EVENTS



### **CONSTRUÇÃO DE ESTRADAS EM MOÇAMBIQUE**

Director: António de Melo Pereira

Portugal, 1958

Genre: Documentary

Length: 00:17:56, 24 fps

Format: 16mm, BW, w/ sound



### **O HOMEM E O TRABALHO (CABO VERDE)**

Director: Miguel Spiguel

Portugal, 1960

Genre: Documentary

Length: 00:15:04, 24fps

Format: 35mm, Colour, w/ sound

AR: 1:1,37



### **CABINDA CASSINGA**

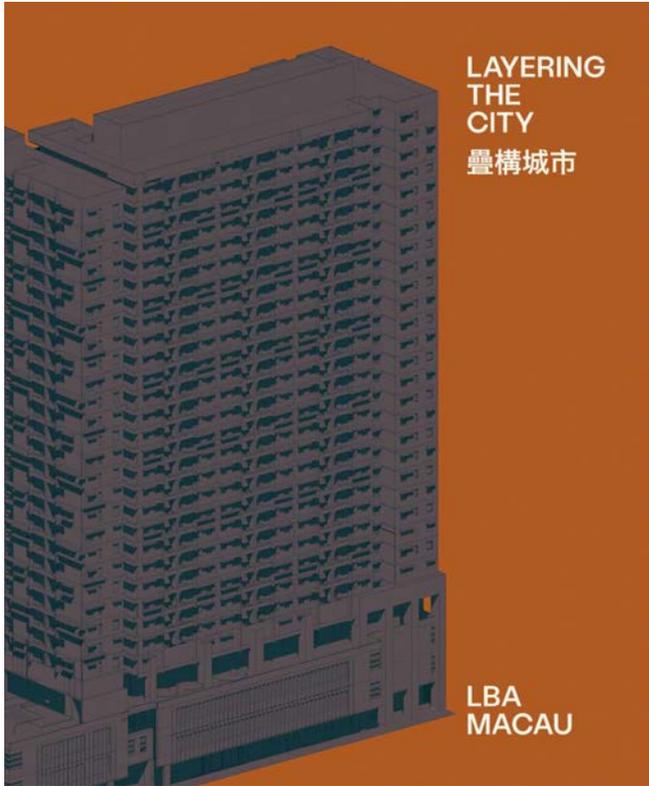
Director: J. N. Pascal-Angot

Portugal, 1969

Genre: Documentary

Length: 00:16:31, 24 fps

Format: 35 mm, Colour, w/ sound



## BOOK PRESENTATION

### LAYERING THE CITY RESEARCH ON INFRASTRUCTURE AND PUBLIC SPACE IN MACAU

Rui Leão, F. Carlotta Bruni, LBA Macau

LBA Architecture and Planning is an architectural practice based in Macau, co-founded by architects Rui Leão and F. Carlotta Bruni. The firm specializes in designing projects that integrate contemporary architecture with the historical and cultural context of the region. LBA has contributed to shaping Macau's urban and architectural identity during the past 20 years of rapid urbanization.

The intellectual contributions of LBA are further evidenced through their spatial narratives that integrate complex urban contexts with culturally sensitive design strategies. The firm emphasizes the importance of creating spaces that harmonize with their surroundings while addressing the functional needs of modern urban living. This approach is particularly relevant in Macau, where the juxtaposition of old and new is a defining characteristic of the city.

In summary, LBA Architecture and Planning stands as a paradigm of architectural excellence, dedicated to shaping public spaces that are not only functional but also enrich the urban experience. Their work in Macau serves as a testament to their capacity for thoughtful integration of historical contexts and innovative design, contributing significantly to the evolving identity of the city.

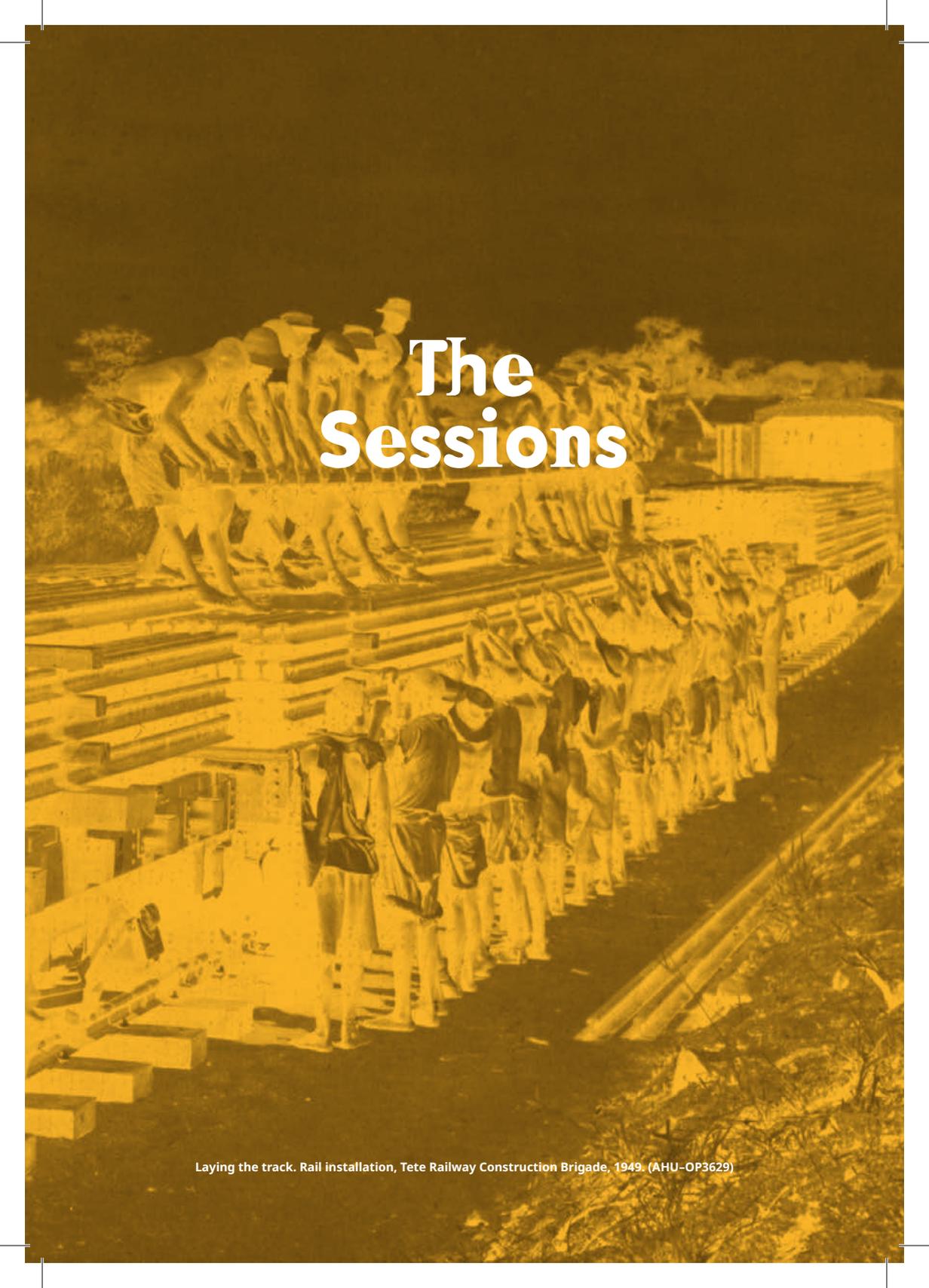
With contributions from

Jorge Figueira, Jun Jiang, Nicholas Boyarsky, Ana Vaz Milheiro

Book Presentation with Rui Leão

moderated by Regina Campinho Ministry of Culture, France





# The Sessions

Laying the track. Rail installation, Tete Railway Construction Brigade, 1949. (AHU-OP3629)



Workers preparing reinforcement for the foundations of La Pyramide, Abidjan.  
Photograph by Rinaldo Olivieri, 1972, Rinaldo Olivieri Archive, Verona, Italy (© Rinaldo Olivieri Archive).

**THE PHOTOGRAPHIC DIALECTIC:  
LABOR AND POST-COLONIAL AGENCY**  
Guillermo S. Arsuaga, Princeton University

Construction photographs from colonial and post-colonial contexts present a compelling paradox: while created as instruments of surveillance and control, these images now serve as crucial evidence of labor agency in architectural production. This dialectic—between the colonial gaze and its unintended documentation of subaltern presence—offers new methodological possibilities for architectural historiography. Building on photography’s role as both an imperial technology (Azoulay 2019) and an apparatus of architectural documentation, this session examines how this medium, through which colonial labor practices were documented and managed, could be mobilized to reveal complex tensions between imperial oversight, historical evidence and reinvigorate inadvertently preserved subaltern agencies. Of particular interest are methodological approaches that reveal how these images, despite their original function as instruments of technical control, now enable critical readings of worker agency and expertise in architectural production.

Contributions might examine:

- Construction photography’s dual role in reinforcing and undermining colonial power structures
- Methodological frameworks for reading worker agency in technical documentation
- Networks of expertise revealed through photographic archives
- Contemporary implications of archival access and historical recovery
- Comparative analyses of official, personal, and technical photographic documentation

The session welcomes papers advancing architectural historiography’s engagement with colonial photography beyond documentation, positioning these images as complex sites where power, representation, and agency intersect.

Guillermo S. Arsuaga, a PhD Candidate in History and Theory of Architecture at Princeton University, researches colonial labor documentation through construction photography and architectural development in West Africa. An MRC fellow at MoMA, his work on architectural historiography and colonial contexts has been presented at major international conferences including the European Architecture History Network and the Society of Architectural Historians. He is currently lecturing at the AA London at the HCT MA and Diploma level.

## Speakers

Ella Halpern-Matthews, Columbia University,  
London School of Economics

**Labouring at the Margins: Photography, Spatial  
Control, and Indigenous Bedouin Presence  
in Israeli-Occupied Sinai**

Maria Luisa Palumbo, Independent scholar

**The Garden and Its Enemies: Image and Narrative  
in an Italian Colonial Agrarian Survey**

Savia Palate, University of Cyprus

**Constructing with local masons:  
Achieving a low-cost “palace” in colonial Cyprus**

Robby Fivez, Vrije Universiteit Brussel

**The Contractor’s Darkroom: developing  
narratives from the photographic collection  
of the Compagnie Congolaise de Constructions**

Andrew Scheinman, Cornell University

**Portraits of Workers or Documents of Work?  
Slippage and Authority in Machadato Construction  
Photography**

## **Labouring at the Margins: Photography, Spatial Control, and Indigenous Bedouin Presence in Israeli-Occupied Sinai**

Ella Halpern-Matthews, Columbia University, London School of Economics

The Israeli occupation of Sinai (1967-1982) generated an extensive photographic record documenting settlement construction, infrastructure, and the expansions of Zionist spatial order beyond Palestine. Israeli colonial photographs depict Sinai as a wild frontier, sparsely populated by primitive camel-riding Bedouins, in the process of being tamed by pioneering Jewish settlers. These images mirror planning documents that identify Bedouin communities as a problem to be managed through sedentarisation, surveillance, and spatial confinement within designated “living zones.” However, photographs by foreign photojournalists — often anonymised and without captions — capture Bedouin men labouring at construction sites, riding on settler tractors, and guiding Israeli groups, disrupting the visual coherence of Zionist materials.

This paper examines the role of photography in articulating and concealing the labour regimes that underpinned Israeli settlement in Sinai. Drawing on theories of modernity and settler colonial space (LeVine), the politics of infrastructure (Appel and Gupta), photography as an imperial technology (Azoulay), Yiftachel’s concept of “grey space” and liminality, and my own research detailing the contours of Zionist settler-nationalist planning ideology, I use visual materials from official Israeli archives and non-Israeli photographers to read traces of internal ruptures in the settler-colonial visual order. The indigenous Bedouin presence captured within these images exposes the logistical dependencies underpinning Zionist territorial expansion and undermines the central nationalist myth of Jewish pioneering. By foregrounding these disruptions, the paper aims to complicate scholarly understanding of how colonial space is not only planned and built, but also mediated, obscured, and unsettled through the photographic lens.

( S.01 )

## The Garden and Its Enemies: Image and Narrative in an Italian Colonial Agrarian Survey

Maria Luisa Palumbo, Independent scholar

This paper draws on more than three hundred photographs included in the final report of the Franchetti Mission in Tripolitania—one of the major scientific expeditions conducted in Libya in 1913 following the Italian invasion—as an overlooked archive of primary sources. Aiming to relocate thousands, if not millions, of landless southern peasants overseas, Italian political and cultural authorities framed the colony as the nation’s Fourth Shore. Immediately after the military conquest, agronomy and agricultural economics—the central sciences informing the Franchetti survey—were mobilized to describe and assess the region’s agricultural potential and envision its transformation into an outlet of Italian migrants. Through textual accounts and the use of photography as a tool to produce an objective narrative, the report constructed the largely pastoral local economy and nomadic populations not only as backward, but as actual environmental threats. Photographs of Roman ruins—dams, cisterns, oil presses—amid treeless steppes and dry streambeds opened the survey. Accused of deforestation or, at least, of having ‘adapted’ to environmental decline rather than resisted it, Arab and Berber populations were blamed for the degradation of lands once rich in water and vegetation. Yet, while Italian experts denounced nomadism and pastoralism as “enemies of the garden” and called for a “scientific war” against the desert, several of the report’s photographs revealed otherwise. Images documented techniques of dry and irrigated gardening, the construction of wells, cisterns, and canals, and the careful layout of land into beds bordered by raised earth. Others showed the use of plants as windbreaks, barriers against herbivores, and protections from shifting dunes. Despite their intention, therefore, these photographs reveal sophisticated practices of landscape design and valuable environmental knowledge—carefully observed and appropriated by Italian experts. By exposing this appropriation, the images reconstitute agency to Libyan populations silenced in colonial archives.

**Constructing with local masons:  
Achieving a low-cost “palace” in colonial Cyprus**  
Savia Palate, University of Cyprus

The Presidential Palace of the Republic of Cyprus was once the new Governor’s House of the British colonial government, constructed after the 1931 Greek-Cypriot revolt (Oktovriana) burnt the old one. To reinstate its power, the colonial government aimed for a grandiose structure designed and built by a British architectural firm to mediate the ideological repercussions of the revolt. However, limited financial resources raised a conflict between two colonial bodies, which resulted in the incorporation of local craftsmanship. Whereas this incorporation could be read as cheap labor, the construction of the Presidential Palace embraced traditional construction methods and skills that were documented on-site in an extensive photographic archive.

Drawing from archival correspondence and the photographic archive produced during the Palace’s construction, this paper unfolds the debate between the Public Works Department (PWD) of the colonial government and the Secretariat of State in London after the latter appointed a British architectural firm for the design of the new Governor’s House instead of assigning the work to the PWD (also headed by British architects), which was typically both the architect and contractor for colonial buildings in Cyprus. The dissatisfaction of the PWD and the failed decision of the Secretariat of State raised financial, social, and ideological arguments, putting the locals’ instrumentality at the forefront of delivering a building seemingly designed to re-establish the colonial government’s power over the colonized population. The on-site photographic archive is analyzed here to investigate the relationship between local craftsmanship and the British architectural firm on site, which embodies, on the one hand, inherent hierarchies of colonial know-how presumption and the oriental perspective of the colonial gaze in capturing portraits of local craftsmen, and on the other, an exchange of tacit skills and labor transfer, a “constructing-with” approach, that eventually achieved the goal of a low-cost “Palace.”

## The Contractor's Darkroom: developing narratives from the photographic collection of the *Compagnie Congolaise de Constructions*

Robby Fivez, Vrije Universiteit Brussel

From its establishment in 1949, photography was an essential part of the communication between the head office of the Belgian contractor Blaton and the colonial operations of their subsidiary, the *Compagnie Congolaise de Constructions*, in the Belgian Congo's colonial capital of Léopoldville. The hundreds of photographs —recently digitized by CIVA, Brussels— have a rich variety of subjects, like 'untouched' building sites, construction site machinery, building site incidents or accidents, on-site artisanal workshops, ongoing construction works, etc. Despite serving a clear agenda of control over the remote building sites, most of these contractor's photographs are also —as visual historian Elisabeth Edwards phrases it— important keys for "the gradual opening of spaces for 'indigenous counter-narratives', fragmenting the authoritative and monolithic power of 'The Archive'". (Edwards 2001) While some construction site photographs indeed escape this overly simplistic reading by the typical method of focussing on what "remains in the margins" (Azoulay 2008), others challenge the tired tropes of colonial history through their subject matter in the very center. Spanning a period from 1949 to 1975, the photographic collection allows me to explore the (enduring) colonial power structures both before and after the DR Congo's independence. Through a selection of both unexpected and 'typical' images, the paper highlights the African workers —their expertise, agency, working and living conditions— on the (post-)colonial construction site, to challenge the constant paternalistic and racist descriptions of them in the contractor's written archival sources. If history's role, as Penny Edwards contends, is indeed to "make elastic was official written accounts pin down in ink as the truth, the one and only truth", photographs are an important part of the "darkroom of history where what emerges from the developing tray are visions of the past melded to the present through the exercise of historical imagination" (Edwards 2017).

## Portraits of Workers or Documents of Work? Slippage and Authority in Machado's Construction Photography

Andrew Scheinman, Cornell University

In 1929, several thousand builders of Havana's new Capitolio were staged on its steps for a propagandistic photograph marking the second inauguration of Cuban president Gerardo Machado. Grouped by trade and backdropped by a banner crediting the New York-based construction firm Purdy and Henderson, the pictured workers both actualize and complicate a transnational building project. The Capitolio—designed as a hybrid of the US Capitol, the Panthéon in Paris, and St. Peter's Basilica in Rome and conceived to house the Sixth International Pan-American Conference—was, as Joseph Hartman observes, the centerpiece of Machado's "dictator's dreamscape," an architectural projection of republican virtue that masked its absence in politics. In the image, however, workers begin to gesture away from this geopolitical genealogy. Climbing scaffolds and drifting out of frame, they disrupt the ordering logic of the camera, instead embodying a plural and incomplete modernity at odds with their neoclassical set piece. This paper looks to the photographic archive of Machado's Secretary of Public Works, alongside building records, to argue for the construction site as a key arena in the spatial and symbolic articulation of US-Cuba relations. Reading into these images what Tina Campt describes as their "social life," I hold that slippages in the abstraction of these workers into instruments of state production reveal a range of transnational entanglements—from invitation to contestation of architectural authority and expertise from across the Florida Straits. These photographs, I argue, are not merely byproducts of processes otherwise inscribed in text and extinguished in the finished building; as unstable, becoming images, they render the ideological work of construction photography visible. Captured on camera, the building site emerges here as a nexus at which Cuban political futures and imperial entanglements were materially and visually negotiated—always nearly, but never fully, set in stone.

( S.01 )



Foyer Karl Marx Sonacotra in Argenteuil (France), 1970.  
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( S.02 )

## **HOUSING ARCHITECTURE FOR COLONIAL AND MIGRANT WORKERS. CONTROL, EDUCATION AND EVERYDAY ORGANIZATION**

Ahmed El-Amine Benbernou, CRH-LAVUE, ENSAPVS  
Laura Guérin, Mosaiques-LAVUE, University of Paris Nanterre

This panel proposes to investigate colonial and postcolonial landscapes through the architectural traces of housing for colonial and migrant workers. By focusing on housing designed for (or by) workers and inhabited by them, this panel aims to put different national contexts and historical periods into perspective.

First, this comparison will provide an opportunity to examine the different actors involved in the production of housing for colonial and postcolonial migrant workers (employers, governments, associations and civil construction workers who may also be migrants) as well as the architectural characteristics of the buildings. Depending on the historical context (period of independence, crisis or war) and geographical location (in the colonial empire or in Europe), we would like to describe and compare the multiple objectives of these actors (surveillance and control of the population, education through housing, etc.) and the architectural forms they took. Secondly, this session will also be an opportunity to question the ways in which the workers have appropriated the dwellings (collective organizations, transnational dynamics). How are these dwellings invested in and transformed on a daily basis by their inhabitants? Finally, we will consider the durability of these architectures, the memory of the colonial period and the history of immigration that they convey. What changes (rehabilitation, destruction or patrimonialization) are taking place as the resident population evolves (ageing, relocation, changes in housing policies, etc.)?

Papers can be submitted on any of these three themes, but we also welcome other works that intersect architecture and migrant housing in the (post-)colonial period.

Ahmed Benbernou is an Architect-Urbanist. Ph.D. Student, he is attached to the Center of Research on Housing (CRH-LAVUE) at the School of Architecture of Paris Val-de-Seine where he teaches. He works on colonial architecture and urban planning in Algeria. He has published in the journal *Africana Studia* 39 (2023) : "The « Plan of Constantine » and the modernist utopia". He worked as an architect in Algeria then as an architect-programmer in France. He is currently in charge of administrative coordination at CRH-LAVUE.

Laura Guérin is a sociologist with a PhD from the Université Paris 8 Saint-Denis, France. Her research focuses on social housing and West-African migrations in France, with an emphasis on the role of architecture in the inhabitant's everyday life. She is currently working at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture Paris Val-de-Seine where she teaches social sciences for architecture. She published recently "From tolerating informality to formalizing prohibition: Religious practices of West African migrants in France (1960s–2020s)" in *Urban Planning* (2024).

## COLONIAL AND POST-COLONIAL LANDSCAPES

### Speakers

Curt Gambetta, Dept. of Art History,  
Dartmouth College

**Housing Labor, Making Laborers: the material  
afterlives of soil-cement worker housing  
in Bangalore, India**

Dhara Ramesh Patel, Technical University Darmstadt

**Segregation by Design: Private Landlords, Racial  
Capitalism, and the Architecture of Migrant Housing  
in Frankfurt am Main**

Émélie Desrochers-Turgeon, Dalhousie University

**Hierarchies at Home: Domestic Architectures  
and the Identity-Property Nexus at the Central  
Experimental Farm**

Manlio Michieletto, German University in Cairo

Victor Bay Mukanya, ISAU Kinshasa DR Congo

**Typological Contrasts in Colonial Kinshasa:  
From Tower Rigidity to Rowhouse Transformation**

Michele Rinaldi, Politecnico di Torino, KU Leuven

**The Villaggio Torino in Addis Ababa:  
Housing for Single Workers and the Politics  
of Labour under Italian Colonial Rule in Ethiopia**

Rami Msallam, ETH Zürich

**Fascist Faith and German Technology:  
Zoning, Architecture, and Racialized Labor  
in Colonial Eritrea's Mining Towns, 1936-1941**

## **Housing Labor, Making Laborers: the material afterlives of soil-cement worker housing in Bangalore, India**

Curt Gambetta, Dept. of Art History,  
Dartmouth College

This paper examines the production and afterlife of soil-cement housing constructed for migrant and other industrial workers in the southern Indian city of Bangalore during the late 1940s, after India achieved Independence in 1947. By tracking different perspectives on the social consequences of materials used in housing, the paper proposes a “recursive analytics” (Stoler 2016) of material experiments in worker housing and work regimes, spanning from the late colonial period to the present. In the late 1940s, city engineers projected that soil-cement worker housing would improve the conditions of industrial workers “physically, mentally, and morally” by broadening their access to durable, affordable housing, echoing anxieties among city elites in late colonial Bangalore about the lifestyles of workers. Decades later, in the mid 1970s, scientists associated with the Indian Institute of Science documented the same houses as examples of labor-intensive construction, drawing attention to the process and materiality of their making rather than their potential for social reform, as municipal authorities in the 1940s had first envisioned. Labor mattered in different ways than before: instead of housing urban workers, manual stabilized and compressed soil construction created opportunities for wage labor among the unemployed rural poor, incorporating them into a wage economy. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork in remaining examples of worker housing, oral histories of present-day residents and IISc scientists, and archival documentation of their construction, the paper argues that the materiality of worker housing is a lens for understanding changing conceptualizations of labor and social welfare among elites in late colonial and postcolonial India. But, in tracing soil-cement houses constructed during the 1940s to their occupancy and ownership by municipal employees in the present, the paper will also show how residents rework the materiality of worker housing to address what earlier programs of social reform and postcolonial welfare ignored: workers’ aspirations.

( 5.02 )

## **Segregation by Design: Private Landlords, Racial Capitalism, and the Architecture of Migrant Housing in Frankfurt am Main**

Dhara Ramesh Patel, Technical University Darmstadt

This paper investigates the spatial politics of migrant housing in contemporary Frankfurt by focusing on the emergence of informal architectural geographies shaped by private landlords leasing disproportionately to Indian Highly Skilled Migrants (HSMs). Despite being one of the fastest-growing and most financially mobile migrant groups in Germany, Indian HSMs are routinely excluded from the mainstream rental housing market, resulting in their concentration into ageing, substandard housing stock. This phenomenon unfolds not through formal planning, but through racialized landlord strategies that effectively produce de facto segregation. The significance of studying Indian HSMs lies in the analytical paradox they embody: although economically privileged, they are racialized as undesirable tenants, revealing the limits of class mobility in postcolonial Europe's urban regimes. Their case challenges the conventional binary of 'vulnerable' versus 'successful' migrant and offers insight into how racial capitalism and neoliberal housing regimes intersect to reproduce spatial exclusion – even for the most skilled.

Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork and urban mapping, the paper traces how these dynamics generate a shadow architecture of control, one that mirrors colonial logics of containment under the guise of market rationality. By positioning private landlords as key actors, the paper exposes how speculative and racialised housing practices contribute to the architectural production of migrant segregation. This emerging typology – spatially peripheral, degraded in condition, and racially targeted – offers a critical lens into how housing is weaponised as a tool of governance in the postcolonial city.

( S.02 )

## **Hierarchies at Home: Domestic Architectures and the Identity-Property Nexus at the Central Experimental Farm**

Émélie Desrochers-Turgeon, Dalhousie University

This paper examines the spatial organization and domestic architectures of the Central Experimental Farm (CEF) in Ottawa at the turn of the twentieth century to interrogate how housing design was deployed as a tool of colonial management and social control. At the CEF—a flagship state agricultural institution founded in the late nineteenth century—housing for managerial staff was carefully differentiated by class and occupational rank, materializing hierarchies within settler society. From the elevated and ornamented director's residence, equipped with observation turrets and spaces for leisure and reproduction, to the more modest but still symbolically charged house of the Dominion Animal Husbandman, and finally to the sparse cottage of the farm foreman, architecture rendered visible the ideals and exclusions of settler colonial governance. These domestic typologies were designed not merely to shelter workers, but to stage white, middle-class, patriarchal family life as a civilizing and stabilizing force within Canada's agricultural imaginary. The conspicuous absence of on-site housing for the majority of seasonal and manual laborers—many of whom were migrants—highlights the erasure of racialized and precarious labor from official representations of agricultural progress. Such omissions worked in tandem with promotional materials, including CPR posters and public events at the CEF, which cast settler agriculture as a harmonious, prosperous, and white enterprise. Drawing on Brenna Bhandar's concept of the identity-property nexus, this paper argues that CEF's domestic architectures played a key role in cultivating settler subjectivities, codifying entitlement to land through property ownership, domestic order, and aesthetic control. Ultimately, these homes did not merely reflect existing social relations but actively shaped and reproduced them, enacting a spatial pedagogy of settler permanence while masking the exploitative conditions underpinning agricultural production.

( 5.02 )

## **Typological Contrasts in Colonial Kinshasa: From Tower Rigidity to Rowhouse Transformation**

Manlio Michieletto, German University in Cairo

Victor Bay Mukanya, ISAU Kinshasa DR Congo

This paper investigates the architectural legacy of colonial housing in Kinshasa through two emblematic case studies: the Sabena Towers, constructed in the 1950s for Belgian airline personnel, and the Bandalungwa (Bandala) settlement, a neighbourhood of rowhouses developed by the colonial administration for Congolese civil servants. These contrasting housing typologies reveal how architecture served as a mechanism of spatial control and a framework for postcolonial transformation. Commissioned by SABENA and designed in a tropical modernist language, the Sabena Towers functioned as a vertical enclave for colonial elites—pilots, technicians, and administrators—providing a self-contained environment detached from the surrounding urban fabric. The rigidity of the tower structure, defined by standardised units and centralised infrastructure, has largely prevented substantial modification, preserving its colonial spatial logic and limiting postcolonial adaptability. By contrast, Bandalungwa's low-rise, horizontally organised rowhouses—developed as part of a broader effort to regulate and “civilise” the African workforce—offered a more flexible typology. In the decades following independence, residents transformed these units through extensions, infills, and informal reconfigurations, producing a vibrant, layered urban fabric responsive to evolving family structures, economic practices, and cultural norms. The research adopts a qualitative methodology based on architectural redrawings and comparative spatial analysis, supported by a critical literature review on colonial urbanism, housing typologies, and postcolonial adaptation. Moreover, the paper examines how architectural form reflected colonial objectives and enabled or constrained everyday appropriation through a comparative analysis of these two housing typologies. It also reflects on the current condition of these sites, interrogating how they register the memory of colonialism and adapt to shifting urban dynamics in Kinshasa today. Ultimately, the study contributes to a broader understanding of how architecture mediates the intersection of labour, governance, and lived experience across colonial and postcolonial contexts.

( 5.02 )

**The Villaggio Torino in Addis Ababa: Housing for Single Workers and the Politics of Labour under Italian Colonial Rule in Ethiopia**  
Michele Rinaldi, Politecnico di Torino, KU Leuven

On 9 May 1936, Benito Mussolini proclaimed the birth of the Italian Empire following the conquest of Ethiopia. Beyond its political symbolism, this event triggered an extensive effort to industrialise and urbanise the newly conquered territories, particularly within Italian East Africa (Africa Orientale Italiana, AOI). Among the initiatives promoted in the early years of colonisation was the Villaggio Torino: a hybrid industrial-residential settlement comprising a high-capacity mill, a pasta and biscuit factory, and a village for employees and workers. Designed by engineer Giorgio Rigotti for the Subalpine Colonial Company (Colonalpi), the settlement was built between 1937 and 1939 in Kalliti, near Addis Ababa. Focusing on this case study, the paper examines pivotal aspects of early development in AOI, particularly the design and implementation of workers' housing as a tool for spatial organisation, social control, and moral regulation. This is especially evident in the settlement's differentiated housing typologies for single male workers and 'indigenous' female labourers, shaped by racialised and gendered norms. In the same year, the regime extended to the colonies the bachelor tax already in force in the metropole—further institutionalising a patriarchal and moralised vision of society. Yet, daily realities often diverged from these ideological models. The paper thus investigates the broader contradictions of Fascist colonial policy, as expressed in the ways rigid racial hierarchies frequently clashed with pragmatic needs, leading to forms of negotiated occupation and unregulated coexistence.

Drawing on unpublished materials from the Rigotti family archive, including photographic documentation of construction site visits, the paper explores how colonial ideology was negotiated through housing solutions. Ultimately, it contributes to recent debates on housing and labour in colonial contexts by showing how architectural production and labour expectations intersected, exposing the fragility of imperial ambition when confronted with local contingencies, conflicting objectives, and the politics of race and gender.

## **Fascist Faith and German Technology: Zoning, Architecture, and Racialized Labor in Colonial Eritrea's Mining Towns, 1936–1941**

Rami Msallam, ETH Zürich

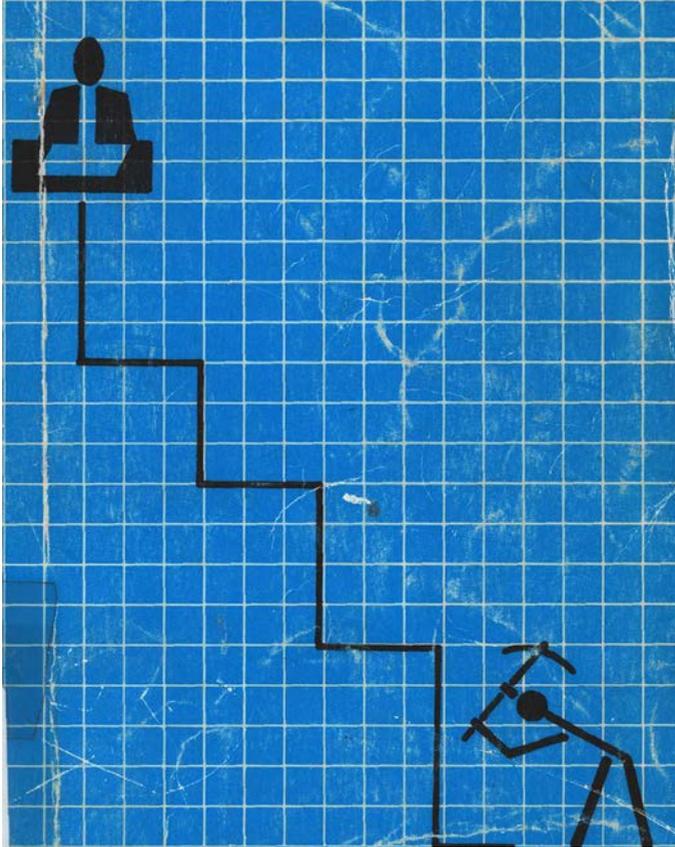
Following the Italian colonization of Ethiopia in 1936, the Fascist regime established the Azienda Miniere Africa Orientale (AMAO), a mining enterprise composed of 51% Italian and 49% German capital. This venture marked the state's direct entry into the extractive sector, reactivating mines originally opened between 1900 and 1914. Despite initially finding limited success, the regime constructed a violent imaginary of a prosperous imperial landscape—one rich in gold and platinum, sustained by the rhetoric of rational planning and industrial efficiency.

This fictive imperial order was materialized through two key mechanisms: the deployment of German-engineered cyanidation plants and industrial machinery capable of processing 100 tons of ore per day, and the systematic and racialized exploitation of indigenous labor. Eritrean workers were relegated to the most physically demanding tasks, with wages so low that an Eritrean would need to work an entire year to earn what an Italian received in a single month. However, this ideology of “rational” Fascist efficiency extended beyond machinery and labor policies; it was embedded in the very fabric of architectural design and spatial planning.

Through a forensic analysis of satellite data, archival images, architectural plans and sections, a 3D reconstruction of the mining town Ugaro enables a deeper spatial analysis. This reveals how architecture was employed—and weaponized—weaponized as a technology of segregation and control. Indigenous settlements, once arranged in circular and culturally embedded forms, were systematically restructured into rigid orthogonal grids designed to optimize surveillance, labor discipline, and extraction. By interrogating these spatial transformations, the paper situates Fascist mining towns within broader colonial strategies of domination, racial hierarchy, and exploitation—illuminating how architecture and masterplanning were mobilized in the service of Empire.

( 5.02 )





Detail from the cover of John B. Abban, *Prerequisites of Manpower and Educational Planning in Ghana* (Baafour Educational, 1986).

## EDUCATION FOR HU/MANPOWER: ARCHITECTURE, PLANNING, AND CONSTRUCTION

Albert Brenchat Aguilar, Bartlett School  
of Architecture, University College London

**'Manpower Planning'** was a currency worldwide after the Second World War and the demise of Western empires, and it formed the cornerstone of development plans in newly independent countries and countries rebuilding from the war. It comprised multidisciplinary fields of study and practice for the optimal use of populations in two forms: the training and development of expertise (or the management and hierarchy of valid knowledge) and the distribution of population (or the management of migration). These two strands translate into educational systems producing output workers who became input workers in hu/manpower systems. This session explores the conception, establishment, and use of education for the formation of hu/manpower in colonial, post-colonial, and post-independence international infrastructural relations. In doing so, this session builds on studies of primary, vocational, and higher education, and so-called radical pedagogies for architecture and construction; self-help, report-based, and policy-making modes of knowledge transference for planning and construction; and considerations of Human Capital, Hu/manpower Planning, Labour Force planning, Indigenisation projects, and other institutional, national and international labour processes where education and hu/manpower were somehow intertwined. What were the epistemic and political relations in post/colonial education for hu/manpower? What kinds of education were promoted? What kinds of education were dismissed as not useful, functional, or applicable enough? How did utilitarian approximations to education conflicted with a notion of radical pedagogy in post/colonial architecture education? What forms of utilitarian education offered emancipatory approximations and which not? How do we include histories of post/colonial education that were left behind or sidelined as not useful, rapid, growth-oriented enough? How do these postcolonial educations envisioned new labour relations? And how can we consider them in today's changing educational landscape? What labour practices were seen as forms of education? Who counted as educator and educated? How much were these categories socially constructed? How ideas of education for woman-power, human-power, more-than-hu/man power, post-hu/man power can change utilitarian paradigms in times of scarcity?

Albert Brenchat Aguilar is a Lecturer and the co-Director of Public Programme at the Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL. He was lecturer at Greenwich U. and the AA, curator of the Institute of Advanced Studies, UCL, editor of *Ceramic Architectures*, and architect in *Bombas Gens Arts Centre*, Spain. He has edited *As Hardly Found: Art and Tropical architecture (AA 2025)* and coedited *Wastuary: A bestiary of waste (UCL Press 2023)*. He has published in *Architecture&Culture* and *Architecture Theory Review*, and curated shows at the AA and UCL. His work was funded by the Graham F., Henry Moore F., and others.

## Speakers

Adarsh Lanka, Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London

**“Raising up a Class of Subordinates for the Superintendence of Public Works”: Early Technical Education in 19th Century Bombay Presidency**

Alistair Cartwright, University of Liverpool

**Re-Engineering Construction Labour: Mauritius, 1968-1990**

Erica Morawski, Pratt Institute

**Architects and Microbrigades: Education and Work in 1970s Cuba**

Isabel Rousset, University of Technology Sydney

**Building Independence at the Papua New Guinea Institute of Technology, 1971-75**

Lara Melotti Tonsig, Instituto de Arquitetura e Urbanismo da Universidade de São Paulo (IAU-USP)

João Marcos de Almeida Lopes, Instituto de Arquitetura e Urbanismo da Universidade de São Paulo (IAU-USP)

**Reclaiming Construction: Labour, Pedagogy and Postcolonial Critique in Architectural Education**

**“Raising up a Class of Subordinates for the Superintendence of Public Works”: Early Technical Education in 19th Century Bombay Presidency**  
Adarsh Lanka, Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London

Well before Charles Wood’s Education Despatch of 1854 (in the context of colonial India), which made education a state obligation, and in response to which Universities were established in Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay, there existed in the latter two, state-instituted mechanisms to train subordinates for state bodies involved in built environment production. (Technical) education was a pragmatic consideration prior to its metamorphosis into a legitimating tool of Empire, and remained indispensable to the colonial project. While it expanded in scope in the late 1860s Bombay Presidency, permitting a growing number of Indians to become full-fledged civil and mechanical engineers in public and private sectors, it was initially intended to produce various classes of cheap(er) subordinates capable of understanding, mediating, and constructing civil works.

Restricting itself to this earlier period, the paper will explain (briefly) why this need for subordinates arose, and (primarily) how they were conditioned in the classroom and on-the-job to serve these needs. Designed largely by military engineers, programs were formally taught but heavily supplemented by ‘practical’ training, due to the dominant culture of engineering training back home (apprenticeship/pupillage) and the unfamiliar landscape of Indian construction, which necessitated learning-by-doing. They were expected to be jacks-of-all-trades (surveying, drafting, estimation, report-writing, supervision, construction), resourceful, literate in English, physically fit, and conduct themselves well. Even so, they were not guaranteed employment, with colonial officials reasoning this would induce complacency. They also remained closely surveilled, with biannual or annual reports listing their contributions, and were sporadically accused of incompetence and/or corruption. Despite their apparent utility and skill, their labour was undervalued and their prospects for promotion quite dim, with only a handful being promoted to the engineering ranks. Their emergence did, however, lead to a reorganization of social relations in the building sphere, which will be remarked on in closing.

( 5.03 )

## Re-Engineering Construction Labour: Mauritius, 1968-1990

Alistair Cartwright, University of Liverpool

The years following Mauritius' departure from the British Empire in 1968 saw, as with many other recently independent nations, a concerted attempt to expand the country's engineering and construction skills. The new University of Mauritius played an important role in this effort. This paper will unpick the relationship between engineering and architectural knowledge – then undergoing a process of 'indigenisation' that was both institutional and (tentatively) ecological – and construction labour, whose local composition and character can be traced back to the very lack of an indigenous population on the former sugar colony, and hence a complex process of cultural creolisation during more than two centuries of colonisation, forced-labour importation and free migration.

In seeking to reduce or reconfigure the dependence of postcolonial nations on Western planners and consultants, how have the creators of new education and research programmes sought to establish their supremacy over existing layers of construction know-how, embedded in specific populations? In asking this broad question, the paper will look at how building workers in Mauritius responded to the challenges and opportunities of new materials such as concrete, promoted by state organisations as well as British exporters and local importer-producers in the wake of devastating cyclones in 1945, 1960 and 1975. At the same time – and in a seemingly paradoxical inversion of the usual correlation between "natural" materials and vernacular techniques – consideration will be given to the growing scientific interest, partly led by researchers at the University of Mauritius (UoM) in the 1970s-80s, in building materials such as bagasse (milled sugar cane waste), basalt sand, and coral-based calcarenite. The paper asks to what extent this turn to local and bio-based materials was commensurate with educational 'downreach' policies at UoM (reaching more, less-elite students), or whether, on the contrary, it amounted to an ideological sublimation of labour discipline and exploitation.

## Architects and Microbrigades: Education and Work in 1970s Cuba

Erica Morawski, Pratt Institute

In a 1963 speech to architecture professors and students in Havana, Ernesto “Che” Guevara declared a call to arms, imploring the audience to employ architecture as a weapon to be used in service of a global communist society. Using the word *tecnica*, literally technique, Guevara described architecture as a skill deployed in the fight for social justice. This moment marked the reconfiguration of architectural education as something technical, rather than creative-artistic. Less than ten years later, in 1971, the Micrbrigade Movement began as a government effort to construct buildings across the island using everyday Cubans as laborers. Articulated within revolutionary conceptions of a communist labor system, this construction system was possible because it relied upon prefabricated modular systems that required little skill to construct. Citizens of all genders and races now had capacity to build the revolution, realizing in material form the schools, hospitals, and housing that formed the backbone of the government’s agenda for social improvement.

This paper parses out the tensions around education and work between architects and microbrigade workers to illustrate a fuller history of how new labor relations and skills acquisition were realized through this system, both ideally and in reality. Architects were downgraded to technical workers and construction work was democratized for all genders and races. Using archival materials and oral histories, this research not only considers how university-level educational shifts aimed to produce technical designers for social justice, it analyzes the way microbrigade workers, most of whom had no formal training in construction, were educated on the job through informal skills development and had opportunities to advance to higher level positions regardless of race or gender. As such, this paper situates 1970s Cuban design and building as a history that has been overlooked for not fitting into the dominant structures for understanding education and expertise.

( 5.03 )

## **Building Independence at the Papua New Guinea Institute of Technology, 1971–75**

Isabel Rousset, University of Technology Sydney

Following a colonial trajectory of German, British, and (as a United Nations trusteeship) Australian occupation, the Pacific nation of Papua New Guinea achieved independence in 1975. With higher education hitherto monopolized by missions, the Papua New Guinea University of Technology was founded in 1965 as part of Australian efforts to prepare the Territory for independence. In 1971, the University established the School of Architecture—the first such school in the Territory. The new architecture school would be critical in training a generation of indigenous professionals who would replace a predominantly Australian expatriate labour force. This new indigenous elite was conceived as key to developing solutions to problems intensified by the push to decolonize, including urban and rural infrastructural development, the reform of building industries, housing shortage, and the increasing loss of traditional built heritage. Heading the School of Architecture from its inception to the nation's independence was Neville Quarry, a Melbourne-trained architect influenced by the changing pedagogical atmosphere of late 1960s Australia, during which “technoscientific” approaches to design were being tempered by ideas of self-help, appropriate technology, and man-environment studies. As this paper argues, despite advancing a more anthropologically-focused pedagogy, the school nonetheless remained bound, in many ways, to colonial-era understandings of expertise. This paper uses Quarry's archive to examine the emergence and influence of the architecture school in Papua New Guinea, as well as assess its place in a broader colonially-inflected history of the professionalization of building labour in the Pacific world.

( 5.03 )

## **Reclaiming Construction: Labour, Pedagogy and Postcolonial Critique in Architectural Education**

Lara Melotti Tonsig, Instituto de Arquitetura e Urbanismo da Universidade de São Paulo (IAU-USP)

João Marcos de Almeida Lopes, Instituto de Arquitetura e Urbanismo da Universidade de São Paulo (IAU-USP)

This paper explores the colonial legacy embedded in the division of labour between architects and construction workers, a separation that has functioned as both a product and a tool of capitalist and colonial spatial regimes. Focusing on the Brazilian context and drawing on the theoretical contributions of Sérgio Ferro and Paulo Freire, the research examines how this separation is maintained within architectural education systems designed to produce “output” professionals for manpower-oriented development agendas. These systems often privilege abstract, Eurocentric forms of knowledge while marginalizing situated, embodied labour — a hierarchy rooted in the utilitarian logics of human capital planning. By critically tracing the historical construction of this epistemic and political hierarchy, the paper foregrounds the violence inherent in pedagogies that exclude so-called “non-functional” or “non-scientific” knowledges, particularly those of construction workers. In response, and inspired by Freire’s dialogical approach to education as a practice of freedom, the study presents experimental, cooperative pedagogical practices that reinsert construction labour at the heart of architectural formation. These practices include learning experiences that foster horizontal exchanges between architecture students and construction workers directly on building sites, where knowledge is collectively constructed rather than transferred unidirectionally.

The use of low-carbon, traditional materials such as earth and wood — often dismissed in modern curricula as backward or inefficient — is reclaimed as part of a broader effort to question the exploitative premises of manpower education. By addressing these exclusions, the paper argues for a reorientation of architectural education away from the logics of productivity and towards models grounded in justice, sustainability, and cultural rootedness. In doing so, it seeks to recover sidelined postcolonial pedagogies and labour practices that offer emancipatory alternatives in the face of contemporary educational and ecological crises.

( 5.03 )

OPEN SESSION



( S.04 )

“Labor, Infrastructure, and the Built Environment: Colonial Legacies and Racialized Work in the U.S.”  
(Image created by Dr. Asma Mehan)

SESSION 04

**OPEN SESSION**

Asma Mehan, Texas Tech University

Dr. Asma Mehan is an Assistant Professor and Director of the Architectural Humanities and Urbanism Lab (AHU\_Lab) at Huckabee College of Architecture, Texas Tech University, USA. Her research explores architectural humanities, urban theory, and postcolonial urbanism, with a focus on labor histories, spatial justice, and decolonial methodologies. As Editor-in-Chief of PlaNext Journal, published by AESOP, she actively contributes to global academic discourse through research, editorial leadership, and conference organization.

## COLONIAL AND POST-COLONIAL LANDSCAPES

### Speakers

Kathleen James-Chakraborty, University College Dublin

**Ethel Bailey Furman and the Struggle for  
Design Credit**

Zachary Torres, Columbia University in the City of New York,  
Graduate School of Architecture, Preservation and Planning

**Constructing Peasant-Settlerism: Architecture,  
Photography, and Rural Subjectivity in Portuguese  
Angola**

Sara Ather, Cornell University

**Architecture as Ritual Process: Kar Sevaks,  
Sacred Labor, and the Making of the Ram Mandir**

Ersia Stylianou, University of Cyprus Dept. of Architecture

**Laboring Ecologies: Human–Nonhuman  
Entanglements in Cypriot Agricultural Landscapes**

Nina Rappaport, School of Public Architecture Kean  
University, Yale School of Architecture

**Spatial Agency of Factory Workers**

## Ethel Bailey Furman and the Struggle for Design Credit

Kathleen James-Chakraborty, University College Dublin

When Ethel Bailey Furman (1893-1976), the daughter of a building contractor, set out to become an architect, there was no architecture school in the United States that had yet admitted an African American woman. Furman initially trained informally, and it is not clear whether she was ever officially licensed to practice. What is clear is that men claimed credit for two of her documented church designs. In 1962 the *Richmond New Leader* identified one Ernest Cook as the architect of the Sunday school and office addition to Richmond's Fourth Baptist Church for which Furman's autograph drawings survive. A decade later Estelle Sharpe Jackson, a white reporter for the Richmond Times-Dispatch, took the Rev. Leroy M. Bray, Junior, at his word when he claimed to have designed St. James Baptist Church in Virginia's Goochland County, despite having no experience in drafting. In fact, Furman once again made the drawings, as she already had for an addition to another St. James Baptist, this one in Hanover Country, where her client had been Bray's father. Furman's anomalous status as African American woman with the skills to design a building, but without consistent official recognition of that ability, left her vulnerable to such appropriation when she collaborated with builders, some of them also informally contributing their labor, but did not hinder her from exerting political as well as architectural leadership in Richmond's African American community. Her case illustrates that writing more inclusive histories of the built environment entails recognizing the role of builders and those who design for them alongside those of accredited members of the architectural profession, as well as the obstacles that race and gender posed to attaining such professional recognition, if not necessarily to crafting actual buildings.

### **Constructing Peasant-Settlerism: Architecture, Photography, and Rural Subjectivity in Portuguese Angola**

Zachary Torres, Columbia University in the City of New York,  
Graduate School of Architecture, Preservation and Planning

From 1951 to 1953, an anonymous photographer documented the construction and settlement of the Cella colonato in Portuguese Angola. The resulting photograph album spans aerial views, landscapes, construction photographs, family portraits, and scenes of agricultural labor and crops, reflecting the intersection of peasant subjectivities, rural imaginaries, property regimes, architectural aesthetics, and scientific expertise under late Portuguese imperialism. Yet, the photographs' purpose is unclear. Were they advertisements, architectural documents, surveys, or ethnographic evidence? This uncertainty invites critical exploration of our understanding of the depicted labor, the photographer's role as an agent of empire, and the incongruities of colonial subjectivities.

As the photographs exhibit, the Portuguese state deployed a rural housing typology in the Angolan highland to assert territorial sovereignty and discipline its inhabitants into a white peasant identity. The photographs depict Indigenous laborers constructing the colonato, contrasted to images of white farmers engaged in agricultural work, establishing a racialized division of labor and colonial citizenship. In this context, Black laborers built the architecture of a white identity while facing legal exclusion from it, and white settlers cultivated land from which Indigenous peoples had been dispossessed. What labor does the photographer perform to promote or obscure these other types of labor?

While this paper addresses representations of Black construction labor, it focuses on the agency of the white peasant-settler as a subaltern subject. Reading "against the grain," I understand the agricultural photographs as "construction documents," in which white settlers "built" an agricultural landscape for themselves using familiar tools and crops after the state reneged on its promise of expert development. In so doing, we can see how the album reveals both the state's technical failures and subaltern subjects' capacity to resist or adapt enforced subjectivities. For example, what does the uncanny juxtaposition of a traditional ox-and-plow to modern tractors reveal about settlers' agency in enacting Portugal's ruralist imperialism while refusing colonial expertise? In depicting both the tractor and plow, did the photographer subtly resist narratives of technical and white superiority? Ultimately, do these photographs support the state's colonial structures or overcompensate for its own scientific underdevelopment? Read either as a register of social control, scientific propaganda, or instruments of dispossession, the Cella photograph album reveals the possibility of a subaltern white settler agency and fractures in the state's colonial apparatuses.

## Architecture as Ritual Process: Kar Sevaks, Sacred Labor, and the Making of the Ram Mandir

Sara Ather, Cornell University

This paper examines the ritual processes that enabled the demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992 by kar sevaks—(Hindu nationalist volunteers)—and the eventual construction of the Ram Mandir in 2024. It argues that the Ram Mandir project must be understood not only as a religious or nationalist endeavor, but as a neo-colonial project—one that repurposes sacred affect and spatial violence to consolidate a majoritarian political order under neoliberal conditions.

Focusing on the figure of the kar sevak—literally “a servant bound by holy duty”—the paper explores how disenfranchised workers were ideologically converted into agents of sacred destruction and construction. The paper aims to investigate how these transformations were made possible by broader neoliberal shifts in the 1980s that intensified informalisation of workers. By situating the kar sevak within this political-economic context, the paper explores how architecture became a site where religious ideology and neoliberal restructuring converged.

Methodologically, the paper will draw on interviews, journalistic archives and historical accounts to discuss the spatial mobilization campaigns led by Hindu nationalist groups during the 1980s- especially the Ram Shila Puja (Ram: Lord Ram; Shila: stone or brick; Puja: ritual worship), conducted from September to November 1989, within which several hundred thousand “shilas” (bricks) were collected across India, for the construction of the Ram temple and taken across the country by assigned kar sevaks to give a material definition to the spatiality of an emerging idea of a Hindu nation. By offering a material reading of architecture-as-process, this paper argues that the Ram Mandir functions as a pedagogical apparatus of conversion—not only replacing a mosque with a temple, but equally transforming laboring bodies. This paper is a part of my larger body of work that investigates the role that architectural violence plays in enabling the politics of fascism in India.

## Laboring Ecologies: Human–Nonhuman Entanglements in Cypriot Agricultural Landscapes

Ersia Stylianou, University of Cyprus Dept. of Architecture

This paper examines how colonial agricultural practices and territorial frameworks in Cyprus have historically shaped human–nonhuman entanglements with a focus on olive and carob ecosystems. By situating these habitats within the broader dynamics of landscape transformation, the study highlights how both human–nonhuman agents have been crucial in the shaping of the Cypriot agricultural landscape.

The paper draws on relational ontologies and the notion of assemblages (Latour, 2009) to frame landscapes as dynamic and living systems, continually reshaped by agricultural practices. The olive–carob ecosystem is understood as sites of production, relational spaces where labor, agency, and transformation are the means of continually reshaping space across humans–nonhumans.

The paper focuses on processes of territorialisation and de-territorialisation under British rule, reconfigured agricultural landscapes. Economic-driven practices disrupted traditional agricultural labor and ecological relations, altering patterns of cultivation, ownership, and multispecies networks.

The restructuring of land use and agricultural production changed physical landscapes, redefining multispecies and agriculture networks.

Methodologically, the paper combines speculative mapping with archival research to trace historical disruptions and emerging possibilities for re-territorialisation. Speculative mapping challenges colonial cartographic practices by visualising hidden and evolving synergies between humans–nonhumans. In what ways is landscape labor not confined to visible agricultural production, but extending to ecological relations and transformation?

Building on transformational and bioregional design frameworks (Campo and Escobar, 2024), the study advocates for regenerative practices that recognise the agency of human–nonhuman habitats. The focus on olive–carob landscapes as spaces of contested labor and potential coexistence offers a critical rethinking of transformative agricultural futures beyond colonial legacies. This paper proposes an understanding of labor in post-colonial agricultural landscapes—one that includes human–nonhuman entanglements. By foregrounding the political ecologies that bind species together in an ongoing process of territorial transformation, it contributes to critical discussions on how landscapes may be reimagined as sites of coexistence and continuous multispecies collaboration.

## **Spatial Agency of Factory Workers**

Nina Rappaport, School of Public Architecture Kean University, Yale School of Architecture

I will present the American industrial landscape, as an infrastructure embedded with marginalized and often invisible laborers. These workers, especially in the postwar great migration period, are usually cogs-in-the-wheel of the economy and rarely recognized as individuals with rights and values. While labor historians such as Eric Hobsbawn, David Hounshell along with Karl Marx and Frederick Engels discussed the economic and capital value of workers, rarely do we learn of the spatial side of how their movement in a space impacts them and what they are making. These factory workers, who are often underpaid and over worked, shape productive cities, industrial policy, and can influence how their own productive spaces are organized with new agency.

Using examples from factories in Philadelphia, Trenton, and Long Island City I will focus on the role of the worker in relationship to their spaces of production. First in terms of how they are organized whether it be through an assembly line and efficiency methods of Frederick Taylor, the Toyota Kanzan and Lean Manufacturing model, or flexible mass production. Then through interviews, I will show how factory workers have agency and have been instrumental in shaping their own workflow and space to make things. Then this becomes an added value to the object beyond Marx's labor value in the worker's participation in capitalism.

When workers, as part of extractive economy, gain active spatial control it can result in strikes and sit-ins, and thus instill a new relationship between workers and their managers, giving workers more control. This shift in relationships between producers and spaces of production can then create a new paradigm for equitable production infrastructure while focusing on the value of the worker's contributions that become visible.

## COLONIAL AND POST-COLONIAL LANDSCAPES



Beatriz Takahashi and Mehwish Abid, collage incorporating images from Outlook India (2022); Homes of the Day by S.M. Chisty (Lahore, Pakistan: n.p., 1948), 47, collection of Faisal Sajjad, Head of Department, National College of Arts, Lahore, Pakistan; View from the Ministries Esplanade with candangos (1959), unknown author, photograph, Arquivo Público do Distrito Federal; and the cover of Brasília—Revista da Companhia Urbanizadora da Nova Capital do Brasil, special edition, no. 5 (May 1957), Arquivo Público do Distrito Federal.

## THE UNSEEN HANDS: DISPLACEMENT, ERASURE, AND THE MAKING OF THE POSTCOLONIAL CITY (1940S-1980s)

Beatriz da Silva Takahashi, Peter Guo-hua Fu School  
of Architecture, McGill University  
Mehwish Abid, Peter Guo-hua Fu School of Architecture,  
McGill University

This panel examines how labor dynamics rooted in colonial legacies materialized in the built environment of the “Global South” from the 1940s to the 1980s. It explores how labor divisions, based on categories such as race, caste, gender, and religion, shaped postcolonial cities. The withdrawal of colonial powers, following resource depletion, fostered divisions of geographies, identities, labor, and skills. For instance, in newly independent (1947) Pakistan and India, colonial labor hierarchies intensified, resulting in Western-style modern architecture built by a demographically shifted labor force, creating a category of migrant construction labor. Simultaneously, Brasilia’s construction (1956-1960), though with a goal to symbolize national progress, exploited laborers by subjecting them to low wages and brutal conditions based on race, gender and class. This ongoing colonial violence continued even after the slavery’s abolition (1888) in Brazil, highlighting persistence of oppressive labor practices within the architecture, planning and construction. This panel seeks papers addressing postcolonial/post-partition socio-spatial development (e.g., South Asia, Africa, and Latin America) and the erasure of marginalized laborers, Indigenous practices and knowledge. We are interested in the impact and problematization of the erasure of the “Unseen Hands” that have shaped the built environment including housing and public buildings, in the new states. We welcome de/anti-colonial methodological approaches, including oral histories, archival research, and spatial analysis, to uncover “alternative narratives” that center subaltern experiences within the built environment. The panel encourages transdisciplinary and transnational discourses to challenge colonial power structures and meta-narratives. It examines how architectural history contributes to maintaining,

Beatriz Takahashi is a PhD candidate in Architecture at McGill University. Her research, “Laborers: Brasília Seen from the Ground (1956–1960),” examines labor, race, and gender in Brasília’s construction through photography, oral histories and decolonial theory. Besides attending conferences and publishing her work, she has coordinated academic events, and collaborated on editorial projects (Terra Collection-Lisbon Triennale and Circo de Ideias, 2022). Takahashi holds an MA in Art History (University of Porto, 2019) and a BA in Architecture (São Paulo State University, 2017).

Mehwish Abid is a PhD student in Architecture at McGill University. Her doctoral research, *Home as Archive: Post-Partition Housing in Lahore (1947–1977)*, examines the afterlives of colonial housing in the making of post-Partition domesticity. She has taught at leading universities in Pakistan and has published with Springer and Routledge. Her studio practice, grounded in decolonial and anticolonial frameworks, has also been widely exhibited. Abid holds an MA in Architecture from the University of Liverpool (2012) and a B.Arch from COMSATS University Islamabad (2010). She is the recipient of the Visiting Artist Fellowship at Harvard University’s Lakshmi Mittal Institute (2022) and the Virginia Commonwealth University Symposium Fellowship (2025).

negotiating, and contesting continued violence, ultimately revealing spatial narratives and filling gaps in architectural history regarding the connection between architecture, labor, and the postcolonial state. We welcome papers exploring diverse labor forms, such as construction, resource extraction, and domestic labor, and their material manifestations in the built environment of and by the labor.

### **Speakers**

Clarisse Figueiredo de Queiroz, University of Pennsylvania  
**From Air to Altar: Indigenous Hands in the Making of Modern Boa Vista**

Fatema Tasmia, Boston University  
**Unseen Hands and Concrete Modernity: Labor, Erasure and Material Politics in 1960s East Pakistan**

Saba Samee, Saba Samee Consultancy, CROM Lahore, COMSATS University Islamabad Lahore Campus  
**The Colonial Era Auction House of McLeod Road**

Rafael Manhaes, University of Porto  
**Archetypes of detour: Brazilian spaces and exhibitions**

## From Air to Altar: Indigenous Hands in the Making of Modern Boa Vista

Clarisse Figueiredo de Queiroz, University of Pennsylvania

This paper examines the Cristo Redentor Cathedral (1967–1972), the first reinforced concrete building in Boa Vista, as a material expression of Brazil's state-led modernity in the Amazon. Located at the northern frontier, the Cathedral condenses racialized labor, territorial conquest, and ecclesiastical reform into a single architectural gesture. Designed by Italian engineers and promoted by Consolata missionaries amid the reforms of Vatican II, the project synthesized Christian liturgy, Indigenous imagery, and modernist aesthetics—while effacing the subaltern labor that enabled its construction.

Macuxi and Wapixana workers, trained on-site by missionary Pedro Menegon, gathered local materials and adapted vernacular practices to modernist techniques. This improvised school formed a skilled workforce that supported the city's later expansion, but it also reproduced colonial hierarchies, instrumentalizing Indigenous labor while erasing it from architectural authorship.

By framing the Amazon as a zone of geopolitical centrality rather than periphery, the paper challenges its exclusion from official architectural narratives. It traces a genealogy beginning with Hamilton Rice's 1924 expedition—which projected the forest as cartographic void—to the 1944 Urban Plan of Boa Vista, which imposed Beaux-Arts principles of hygiene and control later absorbed into Brazil's ad hoc modernism. Architecture, here, operates not only as a symbolic artifact but as an ecological and epistemological tool of domination, naturalizing extractive violence under the rubric of progress.

Engaging Walter Mignolo, Arturo Escobar, Samia Henni, and Jens Andermann, the paper situates the Cathedral within a broader colonial-modern logic. It shows how Indigenous knowledge systems were continuously appropriated—even mythologized—within the very discourse that sought their elimination. The Cathedral complicates the narrative of modernism as rupture, revealing it instead as a continuity: a layered terrain where whiteness, nature, faith, and cement converge to cast Indigenous presence as both foundational and invisible in Brazil's modernizing imaginary.

## **Unseen Hands and Concrete Modernity: Labor, Erasure and Material Politics in 1960s East Pakistan**

Fatema Tasmia, Boston University

This paper explores the erasure and marginalization of construction labor in post-partition East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) during the 1960s, a period marked by intense nation-building under developmentalist logics. Drawing on archival photographs, technical journals (*The Pakistan Engineer*), and case studies such as the Kamalapur Railway Station built under Louis Berger Inc. (Pak) Limited and a part of Louis I Kahn's National Parliament Complex, the research uncovers how labor dynamics, material scarcity and colonial legacies shaped the built environment and the lives of those who constructed it.

Concrete, celebrated globally as a symbol of progress, was locally improvised through crushing bricks for aggregate, reusing bamboo scaffolding, and hand-casting components. These strategies, born from necessity, were made possible by a cheap labor force often dismissed as "unskilled." Yet this workforce held embodied knowledge and adaptive capacity, challenging Western paradigms of standardization and construction. Despite this, their contributions were routinely excluded from architectural narratives and project documentation. Their agencies and practices were doubted in the terms of faulty workmanship and devaluation. The paper engages with themes of deskilling and Invisibilization of Workers (Sergio Ferro), slow violence (Hannah Le Roux), design of scarcity (Jon Goodbun et. al) and collective authorship, situating construction sites as "laboratories of experimentation" where material modernity was redefined through struggle. By asking why workers were labeled "unskilled" despite demonstrable craftsmanship and by exposing the paradoxes of concrete modernity, the paper highlights the long-term environmental, bodily, and epistemic harm that underpinned postcolonial nation-building efforts. By foregrounding the subaltern laborers whose hands quite literally shaped the architecture of the new state, this study contributes to anti-colonial methodologies that challenge dominant historiographies. It situates East Pakistan within broader transnational circuits of racialized labor and architectural production, revealing how the postcolonial city was forged through the simultaneous extraction and erasure of human effort.

( 5.05 )

### **The colonial era auction house of McLeod road**

Saba Samee, Saba Samee Consultancy, CROMLahore,  
COMSATS University Islamabad Lahore Campus

This is a story of a colonial structure which was built along a colonial era road, within a colonised city, and for the purpose of serving the colonial elite.

In early 1900s, construction of an Auction House began along McLeod Road, Lahore. It was a two storey structure on a corner plot, facing one of the main crossings upon this road. The area already had a cinema, making it a socially bustling urban quarter. After independence, the premises served as a temporary residential space for the inheritors, only to be later converted into offices. The structure suffered neglect and abandonment after these offices were shifted to a new location.

In 2007, the upper storey and the roof area of this structure came into the proprietorship of four sisters, through inheritance. The youngest was an artist, and one of the earliest feminist activists of Pakistan.

She transformed the inner spaces of this structure into her studio.

In sheer ignorance, I took an instrumental part in decolonising this space, a space which has always been used as a male dominant commercial place. Now this space was to be solely used by a woman who is passionate about traditional construction methods, sustainable use of material, rehabilitation of colonial spaces, and gender neutrality.

( S.05 )

## Archetypes of detour: Brazilian spaces and exhibitions

Rafael Manhaes, University of Porto

This paper examines two ephemeral buildings — the altar for the First Mass in Brasília (1957) and the Brazilian Pavilion at the 1958 Brussels World's Fair — as narrative devices that expose the discursive dimension of architectural form. Though distant in material ambition and geopolitical scope, both projects operate symbolically to construct foundational myths of modern Brazil.

The First Mass in Brasília, staged before the city's construction, featured a canvas tent structure attributed to Oscar Niemeyer. Its use of wood and fabric, rather than concrete, referenced vernacular archetypes as caravels, colonial expeditions, and indigenous building techniques; anchoring the modernist project in a national imaginary of origin. The event was heavily mediated by photography and served as a ritualized founding gesture.

A year later, the Brazilian Pavilion in Brussels, designed by Sérgio Bernardes with landscape by Burle Marx and curated by Henrique Mindlin, projected an image of tropical modernity. Despite its refined tectonics of concrete slabs suspended by cables, the pavilion maintained symbolic and spatial echoes of the Brasília tent: a permeable structure, and performative approach. The architectural language merged technical prowess with references to vernacular forms, creating an ambiguous image of progress rooted in tradition.

By analyzing these projects morphologically and symbolically, this paper argues that both functioned as exhibitions of architecture in themselves: devices that staged and disseminated national identity. They reveal how ephemeral structures can serve as curatorial tools, challenging conventional historiographies of Brazilian modernism and proposing an alternative narrative that privileges symbolic construction, material improvisation, and political imagination.



COLONIAL AND POST-COLONIAL LANDSCAPES

THE SETTLERS' TOOLS WILL NEVER BUILD THE INDIGENOUS' HOUSE: INFORMAL HOUSING AS A BY-PRODUCT OF COLONIAL LABOUR



Sidi Othmane housing operation, Casablanca, Marrocos.  
Carrières Centrales © Aga Khan Trust for Culture.

( S.06 )

## THE SETTLERS' TOOLS WILL NEVER BUILD THE INDIGENOUS' HOUSE: INFORMAL HOUSING AS A BY-PRODUCT OF COLONIAL LABOUR

Aqil Cheddadi, Keio University

Safiya El Ghmari, International University of Rabat

Colonial administrations rarely prioritized housing for Indigenous populations, maintaining control through surveillance rather than support. Without official housing policies and amid an influx of migrant laborers, the same communities that served as labour for building the colonial structures constructed their dwellings outside formal projects. These self-built structures—later labeled “informal housing”—blended local knowledge with necessity-driven design, forming resilient architectural solutions that persist in postcolonial contexts. Despite their proliferation, colonial historiography has largely overlooked the role of laborers in shaping these environments, focusing instead on formal infrastructure—such as colonial government buildings and monumentality— and Western construction methods. This session challenges such narratives, highlighting how Indigenous and migrant labor adapted traditional building practices to create a lasting, postcolonial informality.

Informal settlements can be viewed as living embodiments of Indigenous spatial production—surviving models highlighting community-driven resilience, adaptability, and resistance in the face of systemic marginalisation. Recognizing the cultural knowledge and local agency embedded in these settlements, we dismantle colonial planning frameworks and move toward more inclusive, context-sensitive approaches. By exploring informal settlements within colonial and postcolonial landscapes and highlighting the preservation and evolution of traditional systems into new vernacular forms, this session repositions informal housing not as a marginal phenomenon, but as a fundamental force in the production of space—one that continues to shape urban realities today.

Aqil Cheddadi is a licensed architect and Senior Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Policy Management at Keio University Shonan Fujisawa Campus (SFC). Cheddadi received his Professional Degree from the Moroccan National School of Architecture and holds a PhD in Media & Governance from Keio University, where his research focuses on informal and emergent city-making practices, particularly in Moroccan slums and historic towns. He is the joint head of the French Studies section and supervisor of the Critical Urban Studies research group at SFC.

Safiya El Ghmari is an architect, assistant professor at the College of Engineering and Architecture, and researcher at the Urban Innovation & Heritage Lab at the International University of Rabat, Morocco. She holds a PhD in urban sciences from the National Institute of Urbanism in Rabat, focusing on the dynamics of informal housing in Morocco. Her academic journey includes a Fulbright scholarship at the Mansueto Institute of Urban Innovation at the University of Chicago, as well as a scholarship from the Norman Foster Foundation for her work on informal housing.

Contributions are invited to include archival research and oral histories documenting how indigenous and migrant laborers navigated the absence of formal housing policies, creating resilient, self-built, or self-developed settlements. Case studies of specific communities highlighting the adaptive integration of local building knowledge with necessity-driven design are especially welcome. We also invite interdisciplinary approaches integrating historical, sociological, architectural, and urban planning perspectives to challenge dominant narratives on informality and reframe informal practices as deliberate, adaptive strategies rather than mere ad hoc responses.

### Speakers

Jessica Garcia Fritz, University of Minnesota  
**Dakota Housing as Material Liberation**

Aahd Benchaouch, Aziza Chaouni Projects, University of Utah, College of Architecture+Planning, Ecole Nationale d'Architecture, ENA Rabat

**The Case for A-formality in the Formalist City: Reclaiming the Urban Narrative Through a Phenomenological Study of Neo-Vernacular Dwellings in Sehb El Caid Slums**

Aziz Mouqit, International University of Rabat

**The Creation of the Indigenous Center of Kénitra in 1915: Between Colonial Planning and the Emergence of Future Informality?**

Igor Bloch, Ghent University, VUB

**Formalising the Informal? À Chacun Sa Maison (1953), a DIY Building Manual from Late Colonial Congo**

Hafsa Rifki, Keio University, Hassan II University

Myriame Ali Oualla, University of Bordeaux, School of Architecture and Landscape of Bordeaux (PAVE)

**Savoir-Habiter and Gendered Knowledge: Women's Spatial Agency in Moroccan Social and Informal Housing**

Safiya El Ghmari, International University of Rabat

Aqil Cheddadi, Keio University

**The Settlers' Tools in Indigenous Hands: Adaptation and Resilience in Laayoune's Colonial Housing**

## Dakota Housing as Material Liberation

Jessica Garcia Fritz, University of Minnesota

The United States is not postcolonial. US legal frameworks continue to dominate indigenous relations through broken treaties and Federal Indian Policies that designate indigenous people as wards of the state living within domestic dependent nations. Dakota scholar Elizabeth Cook Lynn notes, “While scholars are quick to use postcoloniality, obvious colonial frameworks continue to advance paradoxical practices and laws, while shifting focus away from indigenous nations.”<sup>1</sup> As “distinct, independent, political communities”, tribal nations exercise power of self-government via sovereignty.<sup>2</sup> Yet threats to this status are substantiated by economic and material dependencies, primarily through housing. For one tribal nation, the Lower Sioux Indian Community (Dakota) located in present-day Minnesota, political sovereignty has strengthened through a 2017 pilot program to produce hempcrete for housing construction. The Lower Sioux Indian Community’s (Dakota) Hemp Project actively rejects US settler colonial frameworks by locally growing, stewarding, processing, and fabricating the materials needed for sustainable building within an extreme climate. This paper presents a case study for contemporary Dakota material liberation through the following methods:

1- Introduce settler colonial material relations in the state of Minnesota through the historical over-extraction and production of white pine lumber for housing construction.

2- Position these extraction and production practices within historical and present housing policies, codes, and specifications primarily through HUD (United States Department of Housing and Urban Development) standards that codify dependency on outsourced manufacturing. Little Earth, the only American Indian preference project-based Section 8 rental assistance community in the US, located in Minneapolis, Minnesota, will serve as an example.

3- Trace the reclamation of labor and means of production for Hempcrete housing in the Lower Sioux Indian community alongside current settler practices.

Beyond the local scale, the Lower Sioux Indian Community Hempcrete project ultimately counters contemporary capitalist material extraction and production in the colonial US. The analysis of this case study will demonstrate this act of political sovereignty through material means.

1. Cook-Lynn, Elizabeth. *A Separate Country Postcoloniality and American Indian Nations*. Lubbock (Tex.): Texas Tech University Press, 2012, pp. 122.

2. Miller, Robert J. “American Indian Sovereignty versus the United States,” *Routledge Handbook of Critical Indigenous Studies*. Edited by Brendan Hokowhitu, Aileen Moreton-Robinson, Linda Tuhiwai-Smith, Chris Andersen, Steve Larkin (London, 2020), 347.

**The Case for A-formality in the Formalist City:  
Reclaiming the Urban Narrative Through  
a Phenomenological Study of Neo-Vernacular  
Dwellings in Sehb El Caid Slums**

Aahd Benchaouch, Aziza Chaoui Projects, University of Utah, College of Architecture+Planning, Ecole Nationale d'Architecture, ENA Rabat

Urban and social dysfunctions across the globe point to a planning paradigm in crisis, particularly in the domain of housing. In Morocco, despite mounting housing needs and efforts to curb slum proliferation, urban policies continue to rely on outdated, bureaucratic frameworks rooted in a top-down colonial legacy. This approach fails to address present-day complexities and often categorizes self-built settlements as “informal,” despite their embodiment of age-old human settlement patterns, ultimately severing citizens’ agency from their built environment and undermining social cohesion.

This research examines colonial urban planning’s socio-spatial legacy in Morocco through the lens of the nation’s former third-largest shanty town called Sehb El Caid, demolished in 2021. This emblematic site demonstrates both the persistent impact of exclusionary planning policies and the indigenous population’s spatial resilience. These “a-formal” settlements manifest qualities transcending conventional form—adaptability and resilience characteristic of vernacular architecture—challenging dominant Corbusian urbanism narratives.

Through phenomenological inquiry, the study investigates how residents live in, appropriate, and transform space. Methodologically, it combines literature review, case study analysis, fieldwork and surveys to evaluate “socially generated neighborhoods,” emphasizing the primacy of lived experiences in urban production. A significant contribution is the development of a qualitative Index of Habiter (dwelling), grounded in urban anthropology, behavioral sciences, and participatory planning principles. This evaluative tool identifies both strengths and improvement areas within the study site, generating context-specific planning recommendations. The research contributes to critical urban theory by repositioning informal settlements as active agents in postcolonial spatial production. It advocates for a paradigm shift toward inclusive, adaptive, community-centered planning that acknowledges vernacular agency as essential to building resilient and equitable urban futures.

( 5.06 )

## **The Creation of the Indigenous Center of Kénitra in 1915 : Between Colonial Planning and the Emergence of Future Informality?**

Aziz Mouqit, International University of Rabat

This presentation aims to analyze the ex nihilo creation of the indigenous center of Kénitra in 1915 under the French Protectorate in Morocco, exploring the inherent tensions within colonial planning frameworks and their potential impact on the later emergence of informal housing. Unlike Moroccan imperial cities with pre-existing medinas, Kénitra emerged as a new settlement where the French administration planned, from 1915 onwards, a specific neighborhood for the Moroccan population, alongside the development of a European city. This initiative, driven by economic imperatives (structuring trade with Fès and Meknès, competing with Spanish influence in Larache), concerns of population management and control, and responses to local demands, represents a notable and relatively rare experiment in the early phases of colonial urban planning in Morocco. Our analysis, based on primary sources such as administrative correspondence and reports from the Intelligence Service (Service des Renseignements), highlights the initial intentions for spatial organization and the regulations envisioned through the drafting of a “Cahier des Charges” (Specifications Document). The creation of “parcels reserved for housing” and considerations regarding the integration or separation of Muslim and Jewish communities reveal a deliberate attempt to structure urban space according to colonial logics of distinction and control. However, although this initiative represents a formal planning attempt, we question its potential to generate, in the long run, informal housing. The imposed spatial segregation, the conditions for lot allocation, and restrictions on property ownership may have limited access to housing for a growing indigenous population, inevitably leading to the emergence of informal settlements on the outskirts of the planned center as a byproduct of colonial labor dynamics and the limitations of official planning. By comparing the case of Kénitra with other colonial and postcolonial cities, this presentation seeks to contribute to a nuanced understanding of the legacy of colonial planning and its complexities, exploring how initial attempts at formal control of indigenous urban space may have paradoxically paved the way for later informal developments.

Keywords : Kénitra, Colonial Urbanism, Morocco, Indigenous Center, Urban Planning, Informality, 1915.

( 5.06 )

## **Formalising the Informal? À Chacun Sa Maison (1953), a DIY Building Manual from Late Colonial Congo**

Igor Bloch, Ghent University, VUB

After World War II, Congolese labourers began migrating en masse to urban centres. Uncontrolled population growth led to the emergence of bidonvilles. The previously neglected housing issue finally drew the attention of the colonial administration, becoming a central concern for economic development under the framework of so-called ‘welfare colonialism.’ The Plan décennal du Congo Belge outlined two main approaches to housing development: (1) the construction of modernist housing estates designed by the Brussels-based Office des Cités Africaines (OCA), and (2) the implementation of site-and-service schemes and economic instruments such as the Fonds d’Avance. The tools employed by the colonisers in support of the second approach included colonial DIY building manuals, such as a number of volumes in the *Beaux Métiers* series published by the Bibliothèque de l’Étoile, and, most notably, *À Chacun Sa Maison*. The latter manual promoted the idea of ‘améliorons l’habitation traditionnelle’ and aimed to offer a compromise between houses built entirely according to European metropolitan designs and the incorporation of modernised local building techniques and customs. Its target audience was skilled and unskilled Congolese self-builders—families who wished either to construct their own homes or act as investors by employing Congolese craftsmen and builders, *artisans libres*.

This paper aims to critically analyse the textual and visual content of the DIY-manual *À Chacun Sa Maison* to assess whether it genuinely facilitated the construction of houses by acknowledging traditional building practices and materials, or whether it functioned as yet another tool of colonial control and an attempt to formalise the ‘informal’. To this end, it examines houses built with the support of the Fonds d’Avance, promoted within the pages of the manual, and how these dwellings were portrayed in archival colonial reports and press materials. These representations are marked by evident bias—ranging from associations with informal housing and bidonvilles, to criticisms linked to housing speculation, and finally to portrayals of such dwellings as evidence of the prosperity allegedly enjoyed by Congolese elites benefiting from Belgian modernisation projects.

( 5.06 )

### **Savoir-Habiter and Gendered Knowledge: Women's Spatial Agency in Moroccan Social and Informal Housing**

Hafsa Rifki, Keio University, Hassan II University  
Myriame Ali Oualla, University of Bordeaux, School  
of Architecture and Landscape of Bordeaux (PAVE)

This paper explores *savoir-habiter*—the embodied, temporal, and situated knowledge of inhabiting space—as a gendered form of agency, grounded in our longitudinal fieldwork in Moroccan social housing and informal settlements. We argue that women in marginalized urban contexts are not passive recipients of imposed architectural models, but actively shape, appropriate, and redefine domestic space. As pivotal actors in family life and its multidimensional articulation, women engage with domestic space across all hours and life cycle, beyond frameworks dictated by binary home/work rhythms, accumulating a comprehensive and deeply situated spatial literacy. This spatial know-how—produced through daily negotiation, repetition, and adaptation—resonates with de Certeau's tactics and *ruses du quotidien*, Veschambre's *mécanismes* of spatial appropriation, and Ségaud's notion of spatial performance as a *mise en scène* of social identity. Drawing on Pinson's *relevé habité*, we approach space ethnographically, as both practiced and narrated. These frameworks support our reading of women's spatial agency as not only reactive but deeply constructive, embedded in material transformations and symbolic articulations of domestic life. By reconfiguring spaces like balconies or kitchens, female inhabitants enact proactive adaptations to align rigid dwellings with lived social, cultural, and gendered needs. This constitutes a form of architectural labor and spatial authorship that often escapes formal recognition. We present residents as vernacular structural experts; their know-how is shaped by both their experience and shared knowledge streams. Our positionality as female researchers plays a methodological role in accessing and interpreting this knowledge. Through immersive and long-term engagement in these communities, we recognize informality not only as a spatial condition but as a fieldwork method—a bridge to insider epistemologies and underrepresented voices. Informality becomes a “superpower”, granting access to women's narratives, strategies, and collective agency, often invisible within dominant planning paradigms. By centring women's lived practices, we rethink colonial legacies and spatial marginalization through a gendered and subaltern lens.

( 5.06 )

### **The Settlers' Tools in Indigenous Hands: Adaptation and Resilience in Laayoune's Colonial Housing**

Safiya El Ghmari, International University of Rabat  
Aqil Cheddadi, Keio University

Colonial administrations in the Moroccan Sahara largely neglected housing for Indigenous populations, prioritizing control over support. Laayoune, founded as a Spanish military fort (1934–1975) and later expanded through forced tribal relocation, retains distinctive colonial housing forms—half-barrels (ness bermil), hexagonal units, and domed half-spheres—originally designed for military purposes. This study examines how Indigenous and migrant laborers, who contributed to the colonial urban fabric, re-appropriated these structures to create resilient, self-built dwellings. Drawing on archival research, interviews, mapping, and a photographic survey of over 2,000 images, it highlights the emergence of colomina neighborhoods, the negotiation of legal ambiguities, and the clustering of tribal, ethnic, and occupational communities within housing units. By integrating local building knowledge with necessity-driven adaptation, residents transformed formal military structures into lived domestic spaces, subverting colonial hierarchies and producing enduring forms of informal housing. These settlements illustrate Indigenous spatial production as deliberate, adaptive strategies rather than ad hoc responses. This case study contributes to postcolonial urban studies by foregrounding the creativity and resilience of communities navigating precarious conditions, demonstrating how laborers' informal interventions continue to shape urban realities and challenge dominant narratives of modernization and formal planning.

( 5.06 )

THE SETTLERS' TOOLS WILL NEVER BUILD THE INDIGENOUS' HOUSE: INFORMAL HOUSING AS A BY-PRODUCT OF COLONIAL LABOUR

COLONIAL AND POST-COLONIAL LANDSCAPES

LABORING LANDSCAPES: WORKERS' AGENCY IN TRANSFORMING AGRICULTURAL SPACES



National Photo Company. Cuba, Loading Sugar Cane. Between 1908 and 1919. Glass negative, 5 x 7 in. or smaller. National Photo Company Collection, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C. <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/npsc.19916>.

( S.07 )

## LABORING LANDSCAPES: WORKERS' AGENCY IN TRANSFORMING AGRICULTURAL SPACES

Natalia Solano-Meza, University of Costa Rica

Silvia Mata-Marín, University of Costa Rica

Sugar cane from the Caribbean and South Asia; aesthetically-perfect, yet pathogen-susceptible bananas from the Philippines, Brazil, Ecuador, and Colombia; trademarked pineapples from Costa Rica; palm oil from Malaysian and Indonesia farms; cotton extracted from Uzbekistan and India; industrial-scale soybeans processed in Argentina; grains from the U.S. Corn Belt; and strawberries grown in chemically-fueled Californian farms. Agriculture has been instrumental in shaping modern space, entangled with colonialism, extraction, consumerism, depletion, and dispossession, with labor at its core. From plantation economies dependent on enslaved and indentured labor to transnational corporations reliant on precarious and underpaid workers, the legacy of agriculture's extractive systems continues to shape livelihoods, land use, and environmental relations. The workforce behind food production transforms rural and industrial landscapes that sustain industrial-scale agriculture. Yet labor as a material force remains largely absent – with exceptions – from spatial and infrastructural analysis of agribusiness. As political scientist Andrés León-Araya argues workers do more than earn a living in agriculture, their labor actively produces the landscapes of agricultural production. The production of agricultural spaces is not neutral; rather, it is the site where the export-driven economy's push to structure space and time meets workers' subjectivities—shaped by bodily experiences. Thus, focusing on labor integrates the experiences of workers who traverse between the physical spaces of agricultural production and their communities into our spatial understanding of agribusiness. Furthermore, we ask: How does exploring labor help us grasp the ways and logics that subvert, negotiate, and reshape agricultural spaces through collective everyday practices?

Our session welcomes contributions exploring the spatial interrelationships among agricultural landscapes, and typologies—fields, mills, cold-storage warehouses, packing plants, factories, laboratories, transport and irrigation infrastructure—and labor. We seek interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches addressing labor's role in the design, construction, and operation of agricultural spaces at bodily, local, regional, and global scales.

Natalia Solano-Meza is an Associate Professor at the University of Costa Rica, teaching at the School of Architecture, and the Doctoral Program in Society and Culture. Guest researcher at Ghent University's Department of Architecture and Urban Planning (2023). Her research explores the intertwining of territorial reordering, environmental depletion, and global powers in colonial and postcolonial contexts. She has written extensively on architectural education, the Global South, the tropics, comfort, agricultural landscapes, and corporate colonialism.

Silvia Mata-Marín is an invited lecturer at the University of Costa Rica where she has taught at the School of Arts, School of Architecture, and School of Anthropology. Former doctoral teaching fellow of Carnegie Mellon University's School of Design and Int. Fulbright Scholar. Her work sits at the intersection between design and critical migration studies, exploring design's complicit nature and conspicuity in re-producing systems of exclusion. Her current interest explores how the designed transformations of the pineapple interact with the material culture generated around it in Costa Rica.

## Speakers

Liz Camuti, Tulane University

**Cultivating Liberation: Black Farmer Cooperatives and the Spatial Politics of Agricultural Resistance in the Deep South**

Ruth W. Lo, University of Houston

**Beyond Settler Colonial Villages:  
The Labor of Agriculture in Italian Libya**

Geraldus Martimbang, Technical University of Munich

**Imperial Commodities, Indigenous Worlds:  
Tea Plantations and Sundanese Labor in Colonial  
Priangan, 1840–1940**

Ineta Šuopytė-Butkienė, Vilnius University, Faculty  
of History

**Reshaping the Rural: Infrastructure, Work Culture,  
and Collective Farming in Soviet Lithuania**

Lucía Riba-Hernández, Universidad de Costa Rica

**Dismantle the Banana Enclave Heritage  
preservation, labor and the exhausted landscapes  
in the South Pacific of Costa Rica**

## Cultivating Liberation: Black Farmer Cooperatives and the Spatial Politics of Agricultural Resistance in the Deep South

Liz Camuti, Tulane University

This paper examines how Black agricultural workers in the Deep South have participated in creating regenerative agricultural systems, evolving from a legacy of collective organizing in the late 19th century. Through historical and contemporary case studies of cooperative models established by Black farmers, this research traces a continuous thread of resistance wherein these groups produce alternative spatial and economic arrangements that challenge the persistence of Plantationocene logics. By mapping and documenting the landscape transformations resulting from these cooperatives, this work aims to elucidate the influence of Black farmers' labor on innovative agricultural practices centered on sustainability, land stewardship, and ecological regeneration, establishing a direct connection between collective resistance and reparative land management.

Early cooperative efforts, such as the Colored Farmers' National Alliance and Cooperative Union founded in 1886, illustrate how these models transcended defensive responses to the post-emancipation sharecropping system, which rendered Black farmers politically marginalized and economically dependent on white planters; rather, they generated new spatial configurations that contested the dominance of a colonial agrarian landscape. These efforts laid the groundwork for subsequent movements, including the interracial Delta and Providence Cooperative Farms of the 1930s and other civil rights-era cooperatives that collectively acquired land and diversified crop production, exemplifying how collective stewardship can enable farmers to reconfigure both economic relationships and physical landscapes.

The evolution of these cooperatives has resulted in contemporary initiatives, such as Jubilee Justice, a non-profit that is working to reclaim a former cotton plantation in central Louisiana, connecting historical struggles to reparative practice. By implementing ecological farming methods and creating "Potlikker Capital" for non-extractive financing, their work is, in many ways, the culmination of a century of evolving cooperative strategies linking collective bargaining to land acquisition and ecological regeneration.

Taken together, these historical and contemporary examples illuminate how workers' collective resistance and reorganization can reshape landscapes originally designed vis-a-vis marginalization and subjugation into regenerative systems rooted in community control.

## Beyond Settler Colonial Villages: The Labor of Agriculture in Italian Libya

Ruth W. Lo, University of Houston

In 1934, the fascist politician Italo Balbo convinced Benito Mussolini to create Italian Libya by uniting three existing colonies into one single territory. In 1938, Balbo facilitated the mass transport of approximately 16,000 colonists to Libya—adding to more than 70,000 Italians already there—primarily to farm. The fascist regime created nearly forty new agricultural villages as a part of state-sponsored “demographic colonization” in the fertile areas of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, including several settlements specifically for Arabs.

Historians have written extensively on the architecture of these agricultural villages, many of which were designed by well-known Rationalists for the Agency for the Colonization of Libya. Propaganda photographs and newsreels featured the starkly white villages with clean lines nestled in “barren” landscapes that awaited Italian settlers to transform them into productive fields. Yet, these depictions portrayed finished architecture—and typically devoid of people—while obscuring the diverse labor force that went into constructing the villages and cultivating the landscape.

This paper examines the different forms of labor that made possible Italy’s agricultural settler colonialism in Libya. It moves beyond the villages, the most propagandized and visible architectural achievements of the regime, to look at the infrastructure that Italians and indigenous Libyans built to facilitate farming. These included canals, waterworks, roads, and railways. In addition, the Italians established agricultural field stations and laboratories that were in constant exchange with research centers in Italy, Somalia and Ethiopia (Italian East Africa), and other European metropolises. This paper’s analysis focuses on the wide range of laborers—farmers, construction workers, infrastructural builders, and agronomic scientists—that collectively altered the Libyan landscape. It thus emphasizes that studying agricultural labor requires a more wholistic view of the workforce beyond farmers to gain a deeper understanding of the ways in which multiple types of laborers are involved in transforming landscape.

## **Imperial Commodities, Indigenous Worlds: Tea Plantations and Sundanese Labor in Colonial Priangan, 1840–1940**

Geraldus Martimbang, Technical University of Munich

The expansion of tea plantations in the Priangan Residence elevated the Dutch East Indies to the world's third-largest tea exporter by the 1940s, at the grave cost of the Indigenous Sundanese cultural landscape. The region was terraformed into a production and transport infrastructure for tea as an imperial commodity, while its people were culturally recast as plantation laborers. Drawing on previously unexamined archival and oral historical sources, this architecture-historical and ethnohistorical study examines several plantations in Priangan from the 1840s to the 1940s as colonial spaces where imperial infrastructures and the economic logic of proletarianization were imposed on Indigenous material culture. The research identifies a structural dualism in which imperial and Indigenous economic and cultural systems coexisted within a racially segregationist spatial regime. Office and supervisory jobs were reserved for the European staff, while Sundanese laborers performed fieldwork – from tea picking to forest clearance – as well as in factories or other menial tasks. The labor, organized around gender, structured laborers' time and plantation's spatial arrangement, embodying the disciplinary and rational logic of an extractive economy. The structural dualism was however coupled with the master-servant relationship between the European planters and Sundanese laborers, where the laborers were given secure settlements within the plantation's confine – an arrangement often considered as motivational incentive for the laborers. There, the laborers carved out forms of spatial agency by cultivating subsistence crops between tea rows and in home gardens, and by organizing cultural events in plantation facilities. Under plantation tourism, however, their settlements and performance arts were commodified as exotic spectacles, even as Indigenous craftsmanship was incorporated into plantation architecture and landscapes. The findings contribute to an entangled historical understanding of colonialism that resists framing global imperial interventions as totalizing, instead revealing how European imperialism imposed exploitative relations upon, yet remained intertwined with, persisting Indigenous material cultures.

( 5.07 )

## Reshaping the Rural: Infrastructure, Work Culture, and Collective Farming in Soviet Lithuania

Ineta Šuopytė-Butkienė, Vilnius University,  
Faculty of History

This paper examines how Soviet collective farm architecture reshaped Lithuania's rural landscape, tracing the shift from standardized complexes to designs addressing environmental and social concerns. The introduction of collective farming during the Soviet occupation brought sweeping changes to the Lithuanian countryside. Large-scale agricultural complexes were established, prompting the relocation of individual farmsteads to facilitate extensive land improvement projects. Modern farming equipment was introduced, and new settlements along with industrial infrastructure began to emerge. The main objective of these early agricultural complexes and residential areas was to provide infrastructure for collective farmers and position them near their new workplaces. Utilitarian structures were erected to meet the demands of modern farming practices and machinery, often with little consideration for the natural landscape, terrain, or the preferences of local residents and workers. Working conditions were harsh and unhealthy: vibrations from equipment were excessive, ventilation systems were poor, and workers, such as machine operators and milkmaids, endured long hours in uncomfortable positions. Over time, as collective farms became more financially stable, concerns about environmental impact and worker well-being gained importance. Wealthier collectives began investing in landscaping their agricultural sites, creating green buffer zones to shield settlements, managing waste more responsibly, and developing infrastructure to support workers' welfare. This included the addition of lounges, hydrotherapy pools, and recreational facilities featuring light and sound therapy. However, simply building infrastructure was not enough – fostering a new work culture demanded more than physical developments alone.

## **Dismantle the Banana Enclave Heritage preservation, labor and the exhausted landscapes in the South Pacific of Costa Rica**

Lucia Riba-Hernández, Universidad de Costa Rica

From 1937 to 1984, the United Fruit Company (UFCO) developed a colonial project in the South Pacific region of Costa Rica, radically transforming thousands of hectares of tropical forest into banana plantations. This project was not only a strategy to control land but also to dominate the bodies of migrant workers who became the labor force that enabled millions of dollars in profits for the first modern multinational corporation. Such violent transformation entailed the imposition of new urban and architectural forms arranged by numbered geometries, known as “fincas”, all administered under the urban hierarchy of “Division Cities,” where housing, labor, recreation, and mobility were organized and categorized by class, race, and gender. Golfito, the main Division City in this enclave system, exemplifies how the banana plantation enclave reshaped and produced a landscape of exploitation and dispossession, masked by the propaganda of the “Compañía” and echoed by Costa Rican governments. This silencing was later reproduced in the official designation of some enclave period buildings as national heritage. This paper discusses the need to dismantle those narratives that center UFCO as the primary agent of development and instead argues for placing at the forefront, the labor force that has been erased and romanticized by the official discourses. Through a review of documents and images, this reflection is structured around three key points: the recognition of preservation as a colonial practice; the treatment of Division Cities and its architecture as instruments of power; and the understanding of the transformed landscape, as noted by Donna Haraway and Anna Tsing, as a product of movements that induce being and non-being territories, shaping exhausted landscapes, bodies and ecological dynamics, which can be placed on the center of built heritage preservation narratives associated with the Banana Enclave system.

( 5.07 )

COLONIAL AND POST-COLONIAL LANDSCAPES



Household workers in the grounds of a European gentleman's bungalow,  
Garden Reach, Calcutta, c. 1851-52.  
Frederick Fiebig, watercolour on photograph [Copyright: British Library Board, Photo 247/ 1 (45)].

## LABOUR WORLDS: SITUATED FRAMES AND METHODS FOR LABOUR AND BUILDING IN COLONIAL SOUTH ASIA

Megha Chand Inglis, The Bartlett School of Architecture,  
University College London

Tania Sengupta, The Bartlett School of Architecture,  
University College London

This session invites contributions that explore labouring worlds in relation to the built environment in colonial South Asia. It seeks out people, practices and lived landscapes associated with building work itself as well as those engaged in forms of labour bearing various other relationships to colonial buildings and spaces. The notion of 'labour-worlds' that we propose goes beyond understandings of the 'labour process' (creation of surplus value within capitalist production) to encompass varied, contextually situated life worlds, imaginaries, vantages and affects. It foregrounds stories of material, technological, cultural and political practices often assimilated within or sharing the ground with colonial paradigms of technocracy or bureaucracy but not merely driven by or reducible to those. Such labour-worlds tilt our concerns towards composite, layered and alternative imaginaries, as well as communicative practices and translations across multiple paradigms and building sites. They also bring into their ambit transnational and transcultural scenarios, for example, in the mobilities of material and labour. We particularly recognise the difficulty with tracing these accounts of labour-worlds within colonial archives and ask how building practices, places, material traces and worlds made on and from the ground can inform and shape new methods of enquiry or rework existing ones. What sort of methodological moves or transgressions might these involve? How might colonial architecture also be accessed these involve? How might colonial architecture also be accessed in other ways such as through colonial-era vernacular imaginaries/sources/texts or in the 'postcolonial present' through contemporary living practitioners and communities engaged in maintenance or repair in embodied ways?

We welcome papers exploring, among others, the following themes in relation to the built environment: **Building labour; labour within buildings; • Words, labour-worlds and language; Labour, the divine and the supernatural; Composite labour categories, social division, caste, race, gender; Labour and time; Labour mobilities across sites/frames (colonial/beyond); Labour and affect; Rethinking labour/work; work/non-work.**

Megha Chand Inglis is Associate Professor at the Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London. Her research and publications are focussed on conjunctures of long-standing Indian temple-building cultures, and global modernity. Megha has served as affiliated researcher on the UK-Brazil research project *Translating Ferro/Transforming Knowledges in Architecture, Design and Labour* for a New Field of Production Studies and is currently completing her book *Companions of Stone: Architectural and Cultural Life-worlds of the Sompura Hereditary Temple Architects of Western India*.

Tania Sengupta is Professor of Colonial and Postcolonial Built Environment and Director of Architectural and Urban History and Theory at the Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London. She works on histories of built environment in colonial South Asia and global postcolonial contexts. Her research on spaces of colonial-Indian paper-bureaucracy received the RIBA President's Research Medal 2019. She is Co-chief Editor of the journal *Architecture Beyond Europe* and Co-curator of the curriculum *Race and Space* (2020). Her recent co-edited book *Reclaiming Colonial Architecture* (2024) explores critical responses to colonial architecture today.

## Speakers

Gauri Bharat, Professor, Anant National University

**From curved walls to cast columns: Decoding labour and early 20th century construction sites in India**

Mehwish Abid, McGill University, School of Architecture

**Labour-Worlds of Repair: Feminist Practices and the Afterlife of Colonial Ornament in Post-Partition Homes**

Namita Vijay Dharia, Rhode Island School of Design

**Post/Colonialisms of Rest and Rest Infrastructures in Mumbai**

Nuno Grancho, Iscte – University Institute of Lisbon,

Dinâmia'CET, Centre for Socioeconomic and Territorial Studies,  
The Royal Danish Academy - Architecture,  
Design and Conservation

**Building Labour and the Colonial Built Environment in Portuguese Goa**

Saptarshi Sanyal, National University of Singapore,

Dept. of Architecture

**Traces of Learning: Art pedagogy and spatial practices as building labour in Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan (1920s–40s)**

## From curved walls to cast columns: Decoding labour and early 20th century construction sites in India

Gauri Bharat, Anant National University

Construction of the Tata Iron and Steel Company began in 1908 around Sakchi, a village in eastern India. A small city - what is Jamshedpur today - emerged around the factory, comprising bungalows, schools, clubs, and a hospital, interspersed with labour camps. The Tatas brought in global engineering expertise for the project, while construction labour was drawn from adivasi (indigenous) villages in the region. The earliest bungalows and institutions were constructed in brick walls, arched verandahs, with timber or jack arch roofs. These details were in the prevailing style and commonplace, but curiously, disappeared entirely by the end of the decade. Following World War 1, the factory and city expanded. Private building contractors arrived on the scene and large scale building works were underway. More importantly, the language of architecture changed. The exposed brick walls and arches gave way to plastered walls, reinforced brick slabs, and precast concrete columns. I analyse these architectural details to unpack the labour skills required for its production. I also trace the construction landscape of the city before and after the war using archival photos, company reports, and memoirs. Putting the two together, I show how the labour regime changed from prominently regional brick masons to trans-regional circuits of concrete specialists and prefabricators. The construction landscape across the Indian subcontinent was transitioning in early 20th century - from artisanal builders and the public works department as the key players to the rise of private contractors and companies. Jamshedpur with no pre-existing building industry, uniquely reveals the contours of this transition.

I argue that in the absence of other design protagonists and the context of resource optimisation, labour emerges as a singular agent of architectural possibilities.

( 5.08 )

## **Labour-Worlds of Repair: Feminist Practices and the Afterlife of Colonial Ornament in Post-Partition Homes**

Mehwish Abid, McGill University, School of Architecture

This paper grows from a domestic and feminist labour-world shaped by memory, displacement, and the quiet acts of repair that follow rupture. It draws from The Archive of Repair, a curatorial research project I developed through my solo exhibition *The South Asian Narratives: Reclaiming and Retelling* (Harvard University, 2022), where I worked with everyday objects—mirrors, consoles, carved wood panels—carried by families who migrated during the 1947 Partition. These objects are not just remnants; they hold rhythms of care, spiritual endurance, and the labour of women who made homes in uncertain times.

Two pieces I worked closely with—the Asghari Begum Console and the Asghari Begum Peeray, a low-rise wooden seat used for Quran recitation—traced a path from Delhi to Lahore. Though inherited within my own family, both objects are also colonial in origin—crafted within material regimes shaped by empire, and later dislocated by the rupture of Partition. Their cracked surfaces, sun-bleached edges, and improvised repairs carry stories of adaptation and quiet resistance. The methodology includes oral histories with family members, a photographic archive of the objects across homes, engagement with Lockwood de Forest's colonial drawings, and the physical repair and restoration of both items. These interwoven methods treat domestic care as epistemic labour—rooted in survival, love, and everyday dignity. This paper revisits Lockwood de Forest's *Indian Domestic Architecture* (1885), a colonial visual archive documenting architectural fragments from Lahore, Multan, and beyond. While often read as extractive, I follow Sarita Sundar's more layered interpretation, where even fragments like the "post-seat" reflect entangled labour between colonial patrons and local artisans. In contrast, The Archive of Repair returns these fragments to lived context—surrounded by touch, memory, and co-authored narratives. This project builds on my broader research on post-Partition housing in Pakistan, where the Muslim home becomes a site of epistemic fracture and slow reconstitution. Repair, here, is not just mending—it is feminist historiography, care work, and a way of remembering otherwise.

( 5.08 )

## Post/Colonialisms of Rest and Rest Infrastructures in Mumbai

Namita Vijay Dharja, Rhode Island School of Design

This paper explores the entanglements of labor, the built environment, and rest in post/colonial Mumbai, India. It studies mobility infrastructures – such as footpaths and bridges built by the British in the modern suburbs of Wadala-Dadar-Matunga-Sion, Mumbai – and the deployment of these infrastructures as spaces of rest and stasis by post/colonial Mumbai's working classes. The Wadala-Dadar-Matunga-Sion suburban scheme proposed by the Bombay Improvement Trust (BIT) was one of the first instances of British urban planning in India (Rao 2013), and the textile mills of the area were the site of modern India's first rest-based activism. The urban epistemology of the Wadala-Dadar-Matunga-Sion area therefore contains a fundamental tension between urban economic and infrastructural expansion and labor rights – a tension that deploys and manifests itself in contemporary times.

The paper uses contemporary ethnographic data from construction and daily wage laborers who sleep on the pavements of Mumbai, as well as archival data and secondary literature. The paper examines the ways in which the post/colonial city and workers mobilize history and the present to make critical commentaries on infrastructure and labor. Interrelationships between labor and buildings involves both the labor of building as well as buildings for laborers. This paper examines the implications of both through spaces and experiences of worker sleep and rest. It explores infrastructures of sleep and rest as primary to laboring life and argues that discussions of laboring worlds in architecture must include the non-productive moments of laboring life.

( 5.08 )

## Building Labour and the Colonial Built Environment in Portuguese Goa

Nuno Grancho, Dinâmia'CET-Iscte and The Royal Danish Academy - Architecture, Design and Conservation

This paper explores the Rachol Seminary in Goa as a site where intersecting forms of labour—spiritual, manual, intellectual, and coercive—coalesced into a complex colonial built environment. Erected on the ruins of a Bahmani-Vijayanagara fort, it was shaped by overlapping political and religious imperatives of Portuguese imperialism and Jesuit missionary ambition. Its transformation from a fortification into a religious-educational complex – college, church, hospital, catechumen house, and school – depended on layered forms of labour.

Though historical records privilege elite ecclesiastical narratives, their architectural features – monumental façades, vaulted chapels, intricately carved altars – point to the indispensable, often unrecorded, contributions of artisans, craftsmen, and labourers and a stratified labour force. The layered construction – from earth to stone, from Jesuit structures to Baroque forms – mirrors a division of labour and material culture marked by mobility, coercion, and translation.

The paper investigates how architecture encoded social divisions: caste and gender shaped access to building trades; racialised bodies were rendered invisible yet essential to construction; and local knowledge systems were exploited and erased. We propose that it is not only a religious or colonial monument, but also a record of contested, embodied, and affective labour histories.

By situating the Seminary within the framework of 'labour-worlds,' we depart from reductive accounts of colonial architecture as mere imposition, instead highlighting how building work was embedded in affective, caste-inflected, and gendered everyday experiences. Its layered history—its partial destructions, reconstructions, and use—invites methodological transgressions: attending not only to built form and archival traces, but to embodied memories, linguistic practices, and the semantic repair in the postcolonial present. In doing so, we ask how such composite, vernacular worlds of building and maintenance might subvert the bureaucratic linearity of colonial documentation, and what they reveal about the subterranean social orders that both sustained and unsettled the colonial built environment.

### Traces of Learning: Art pedagogy and spatial practices as building labour in Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan (1920s–40s)

Saptarshi Sanyal, National University of Singapore, Dept. of Architecture

This paper employs pedagogical practices, particularly in the visual and performed arts, as a critical lens to historicise creative forms of labour within building and spatial production. Focusing on the settlement of Santiniketan in eastern India during the subcontinent's colonial rule, it pursues the idea of labour worlds through how such practices animated spaces, buildings, surfaces, or landscapes which, in turn, sustained the very pedagogies that produced them.

Associated with the Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore, in 1921 Santiniketan became home to Visva-Bharati, an experimental, educational and village reconstruction project Tagore created and closely helped shape. Santiniketan's growth marked an explicit critique of the prevailing, didactic paradigms and rigid environments dominating education in colonial South Asia. As a result, content and teaching/learning methods developed in Visva-Bharati have attracted historical scholarship from varied perspectives. Yet, these studies overlook how the pedagogies translated into and drew from built or spatial practices. Meanwhile, architectural readings of Santiniketan, in the main, remain descriptive, formalist accounts of select buildings, overlooking their complex meanings and dynamic production processes.

To bridge this two-fold gap, my research adopts the Bengali term *paribesh* to view composite experiences of labouring within buildings and space in Santiniketan's educational practices. As a spatial register, whilst similar to concepts like 'aura' or 'atmospheres', I argue that *paribesh* remains irreducible to them. Rather, it helps to uncover how, in particular, teachers and students together created built structures, embedded works of art in and around them, even theatrical sets, in effect, representing processes of becoming in building and space across temporalities and scales. The notion of *paribesh* therefore transgresses binaries like permanent/ephemeral, human/inanimate, visual/performed, and natural/man-made. Through a close reading of varied archival sources, recollected accounts, and fieldwork, the paper brings forth rich interactions between Visva-Bharati's pedagogies, art practices, spaces, buildings and lived experiences, a labour world bearing tangible and immaterial traces of learning.



"Photograph depicting S.S."Marilu" carrying prefabricated houses for the Queensland Housing Commission for Legnami Pasotti, Carina, from Genoa Italy, accompanied by the assembly workers."  
DR1651, Queensland State Archives, 01/06/1952, Queensland Government. Public Domain.

## BUILDING COLONIALITY: GLOBAL LANDSCAPES OF ARCHITECTURAL LABOUR

Angela Gigliotti, Eastern Switzerland

University of Applied Sciences, Syracuse University

Maryia Rusak, Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, Architecture History,  
Institute for Architectural Design, Art and Theory

In the past decades, architectural history has taken a global turn and acquired an interest in production processes. However, few studies have focused on the intersection between global histories of construction labour and aspects of tacit coloniality. From the end of the 19th century, globalisation of financial capital and expansion of infrastructure materialised in large international construction projects realised through access to comparatively cheap labour. This labour was sourced from economically disadvantaged areas, causing waves of transnational migration nuancing colonial dependencies. Examples of such movements range from the Italian workers building infrastructure in Switzerland and Denmark in the late 19th century or German carpenters moving to Australia to aid post-war reconstruction to contemporary South-East Asian construction workers engaged with Chinese-funded infrastructural projects in Africa and the Gulf Area. The directionality of global construction labour flows directly illustrates and reveals the often-concealed global economic inequalities. While ubiquitous, histories of migrant labourers on large construction ventures remain untold, constrained by limited institutional archives. Nevertheless, these histories can still be traced through tangible artefacts—such as remnants of on-site workers’ housing, personal diaries and managerial journals, or less tangible sources—for example, reflected in the tacit skill transfer when construction labourers returned to work on local projects or oral histories passed onwards.

The session welcomes contributions that deal with global histories of architectural labour and coloniality from the end of the 19th century until today. Potential topics might include cases of large construction ventures that relied on transnational labour, micro-histories of people engaged with such projects, studies of temporary on-site infrastructures to accommodate migrant labourers or investigations of diplomatic agreements and legislations developed to relocate construction workers. We welcome contributions from all geographic contexts but are particularly interested in overlooked case studies from countries in the Global South and the former Socialist bloc.

Angela Gigliotti is an architect, educator and researcher. Over the past decade, she has served as a Tenured Lecturer and Research Faculty at DIS Copenhagen, and as of Fall 2025, she has joined Syracuse University in Florence. Since 2021 she has been Academic Guest at the Institute for History and Theory at ETH Zürich – Chair of the History and Theory of Urban Design. Currently she is a Postdoctoral Fellow in the SNSF-funded project “Aerial Spatial Revolution” (2025-2027) at Eastern Switzerland University of Applied Sciences. Within the field of History and Theory of Architecture she investigates architectural professionalism production studies and transnational modes of architectural production under instances of Danish Welfare State Danish colonialism and Swiss coloniality.

Maryia Rusak is an architect and architectural historian who works with transnational histories. She is currently a Junior Research Fellow at Karlsruhe Institute of Technology. Recently, she has been an ETH Postdoctoral Fellow (2022-24) at the Chair of the History and Theory of Urban Design, ETH Zurich. Her postdoctoral project investigates the Nordic architecture of foreign aid in postcolonial Africa. As a researcher, she is particularly interested in the histories of everyday objects, networks of bureaucracy, obscure intricacies of architectural production and, in general, how buildings are made.

## COLONIAL AND POST-COLONIAL LANDSCAPES

### Speakers

Asuru Lutherking Petercan, Rivers State University

Duke Abigail, Rivers State University

**Structures of Servitude - Slavery and Colonial Space in Forcados**

Yonca Erkan, Professor of Built Heritage,

Faculty of Design Sciences, University of Antwerp

**At the Crossroads of Colonialism: Halal Labor in Ottoman Railway Infrastructure**

Samuel Fox, Columbia University, GSAPP

**Shepherds of Empire: Circulating Stocks, Flocks, and Faith in Britain's South Atlantic Colonial Frontier**

Tiffanie Paré, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology of Lausanne (EPFL)

**Counted Here, Missing There: Seasonal Workers in Zschokke's "Swiss-made" Infrastructure**

## Structures of Servitude - Slavery and Colonial Space in Forcados

Asuru Lutherking Petercan, Rivers State University

Duke Abigail, Rivers State University

This study examines the entangled histories of forced labour, colonial architecture, and spatial production in Forcados, a former British colonial outpost in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. As a key node in both the transatlantic and domestic trade networks, Forcados played a critical role in the extraction of palm oil and other resources. Yet, the physical infrastructure that enabled this exploitation—ports, warehouses, administrative buildings, and roads—remains underexplored in relation to the enslaved and coerced labourers who constructed and maintained them.

This study bridges colonial architectural history with labour and postcolonial theory to interrogate how built environments in Forcados were shaped not just by imperial design, but by the physical and symbolic violence of slavery. Drawing from archival sources, colonial maps, missionary records, oral histories, and site analysis, the research reconstructs the material history of key structures and the labour conditions that produced them.

The paper argues that these colonial buildings are not neutral remnants of the past, but enduring monuments of servitude and control. It further explores how postcolonial communities navigate, remember, or erase these spatial legacies, and considers their implications for heritage, identity, and contemporary debates on sustainable and equitable design in postcolonial societies.

By foregrounding the role of enslaved and subjugated labour in shaping colonial space, this research contributes to broader discussions on the legacy of empire, the politics of memory, and the need to critically reassess inherited infrastructures. Forcados serves as a microcosm through which the hidden labour histories embedded in colonial architecture can be unearthed, reinterpreted, and reconnected to present struggles over land, identity, and historical justice.

## **At the Crossroads of Colonialism: Halal Labor in Ottoman Railway Infrastructure**

Yonca Erkan, Faculty of Design Sciences, University of Antwerp

At the turn of the 20th century, railway construction across Anatolia became a major arena of imperial competition. Ottoman territories emerged as a strategic playground for foreign investors, engineers, and laborers, illustrating the growing transcontinental mobility of manpower across Europe and Asia. This influx of largely Christian-origin workers into Ottoman lands was not always welcomed—particularly amid rising nationalist sentiment, clashing cultural norms, and religious tensions. Combined with growing awareness of labor rights and resistance to foreign economic encroachment, the presence of foreign laborers—especially in conflict with traditional caravan-based transportation networks—posed significant challenges to railway expansion across Thrace and Asia Minor. These tensions culminated in the first recorded strike among railway workers in the empire.

Against this backdrop, the construction of the Hejaz Railway—intended to connect Istanbul with the Islamic holy cities—marked a turning point. Promoted as a pan-Islamic project “built by and for Muslims,” the Hejaz Railway explicitly linked the religion of labor to the legitimacy of infrastructure. This paper reinterprets the deployment of Muslim labor not simply as a logistical choice, but as an early articulation of a “halal labor” ethos—a religious and political branding that positioned Muslim workers as ethically legitimate alternatives to colonial or foreign manpower. By exploring the interplay between religion, labor, and empire, this paper interrogates how the Ottoman railway project became a site where infrastructure, ideology, and identity intersected—challenging dominant colonial labor paradigms and offering a uniquely Islamic mode of development.

## Shepherds of Empire: Circulating Stocks, Flocks, and Faith in Britain's South Atlantic Colonial Frontier

Samuel Fox, Columbia University, GSAPP

The Falkland Islands in the nineteenth century was a site of transnational labour, colonial infrastructure, and theological discipline, intersecting where required to sustain imperial order and flows of capital. Governed by the monopolistic Falkland Islands Company (FIC), the colony's viability depended on wool exportation and the importation of landless Scottish shepherds to grease the cogs of its single-commodity economy. These migrant labourers—drawn by persecution at home, coercion, and hopes of landowning freedom—formed the core of a settler society whose architectural and ideological apparatuses reveal a layered coloniality. Central to the FIC's control strategy was the importation of prefabricated corrugated-iron churches—British-manufactured “tin tabernacles”—that served dual roles as religious concessions securing employee fealty as well as spatial discipline. These lightweight, transportable structures socio-spatially isolated Presbyterian shepherds while consolidating Anglican hegemony, embedding British denominational hierarchies into the distant colonial landscape. Simultaneously, disillusioned labourers were poached by Argentina, whose fluid frontier presented enticing imaginaries of primitive colonial accumulation beyond British imperial oversight which FIC-backed provision for religious heterodoxy aimed to cauterize. Foregrounding architectures of labour stabilization, this paper contends that such infrastructures—like the shepherds themselves—were transient carriers of colonial ideology. Their materiality indexed ethic, class, and denominational stratification, while their deployment functioned to deposit labour through moral-spatial governance, rendering spiritual infrastructure as a logistical tool within Britain's broader imperial project. Through the lens of labour migration, settler infrastructure, and prefabricated architecture, this paper intervenes in global histories of colony construction, positioning the Falklands as a nodal point at which capital, ideology, and transnational movement cohered in structures designed to pacify, extract, and eventually disperse labor. In so doing, it uncovers the tacit colonial logics embedded in the built forms and bodies that constituted the British Empire's distant peripheries.

( 5.09 )

## Counted Here, Missing There: Seasonal Workers in Zschokke's "Swiss-made" Infrastructure

Tiffanie Paré, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology of Lausanne (EPFL)

Under the seasonal permit regime, formalized in 1931 and mobilized extensively after the Second World War, the Swiss construction industry imported cheap labor (approximately 60% of all construction workers held this permit) to manage production on a massive number of infrastructure construction sites operating simultaneously across the country. Motivated by a drive for infrastructural self-reliance, Switzerland built at unprecedented scale, speed, and efficiency. This paper centers on the seasonal workers who built Switzerland's mid-twentieth-century infrastructural landscape. Working with the archives of one of the country's largest contractors, Conrad Zschokke SA, the archival investigation reveals how these workers were invisibilised through bureaucratic procedures, biased statistical calculations, and the demeaning use of terms such as "unskilled" or "temporary". Despite the archives' sheer size, only a narrow paper trail of this heritage remains within the company's employee administrative tabs, bearing the traces of these migrant workers' role on the construction site. By examining the administrative apparatuses of government and the company, the paper presents stories that aim to restore these seasonal workers' authorship, foregrounding their skills, power, and agency in the construction of national projects. Whereas architecture histories have relegated contractors and their labor force to the margins, this paper argues for the centrality of migrant seasonal work in shaping the twentieth-century built environment. By treating their tacit knowledge as a material force - traceable across permit files, unemployment statistics, documentation, and placement offices records - the paper recovers part of their contribution and reframes "Swiss-made" as not only the outcome of Swiss but rather of mobile migrant seasonal labor.





## DESIGNING THE END OF THE WORLD: INTERNATIONALISM AND CONSTRUCTION IN LATE COLD WAR

Claudia Gastrow, North Carolina State University

Nikolai Brandes, LMU München

While the 1970s and 1980s have often been framed as decades of decline and economic collapse across the African continent, for many countries they were moments of imagining new potentialities. After decades-long anti-colonial wars, many newly independent African states began to forge relationships with a variety of countries as they sought to build socialist nations. In doing this, they faced an increasingly complex international order, in which the ideals they espoused of internationalist solidarity were already being undermined by the rise of neoliberal economic currents and institutions. As they worked with allies to enact their visions of sovereignty and development, they created cosmopolitan worlds reflective of the shifting alliances of world politics with a multiplicity of often seemingly oppositional partners such as Brazil, Cuba, the GDR, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States providing housing, infrastructure and expertise to them. This panel explores the circuits of labor, expertise and technological exchange that formed the material and human connections of internationalism in the late years of the Cold War. From the movement of individual architects between multiple countries, to the large-scale mobilization of construction workers and new prefabrication technologies, the panel shows how the relationships emergent from architectural and engineering collaborations were central in imagining new futures while being forced to accommodate the foreclosing of socialist aspirations at a global scale. As such they reflect on how construction collaboration was central in the emergence of a new international order in what came to be the waning years of international socialism.

Claudia Gastrow is an assistant professor in Sociology and Anthropology at North Carolina State University. Her work explores processes of city making across Africa, with a specific interest in the built environment mediates contemporary politics. Her book, *The Aesthetics of Belonging: Indigenous Urbanism and City Building in Oil-Boom Luanda*, explored how aesthetics became a medium through which political belonging was negotiated during the early 2000s oil-boom. Her work has been supported by the Wenner-Gren Foundation and the American Council for Learned Societies among others. Her most recent research explores Angolan-Cuban cooperation in the area of construction during the Cold War.

Nikolai Brandes is an art historian at the Ludwig Maximilian University Munich. He studied political science in Berlin and Coimbra. He received his PhD from the Freie Universität, followed by a fellowship at the Danish National Museum. He was a fellow at the German Historical Institute in Rome and at Technical University Dresden. He has received funding from the Heinrich Böll Foundation and the Cultural Foundation of the Free State of Saxony. Nikolai's current research interests include the history of architecture in Africa in the 1980s and 1990s and the work of GDR architects abroad.

## Speakers

Nikolai Brandes, Ludwig Maximilian University Munich  
**War Ecologies. East Germany, Ecological Experiments,  
and the internationalisation of housing construction  
in Maputo, 1979-2002**

Sanja Horvatinčić, Institute of Art History, Zagreb,  
Durham University  
**Yugoslav Architecture and Monument-Making Practices  
in Post-Colonial Guinea-Bissau**

Anat Falbel, EAHN Urban Representation Interest Group,  
Cahiers de la Recherche Architecturale Urbaine et Paysagère  
**Anatole Kopp: a French architect and the change  
of "mode de vie" in Alger**

Claudia Gastrow, North Carolina State University  
**Prefabricated Solidarities: Cuban construction in Angola,  
1976-1990**

**War Ecologies. East Germany, Ecological Experiments, and the internationalisation of housing construction in Maputo, 1979-2002**  
Nikolai Brandes, Ludwig Maximilian University Munich

From the late 1970s onwards, the GDR's (German Democratic Republic) foreign trade agencies made a determined effort to develop an attractive portfolio of construction services for the export market. The country had an excellent reputation in the field of industrialised housing construction and hoped that this would generate much-needed foreign currency in the medium term.

After liberation from Portuguese colonialism in 1975, the Mozambican government commissioned the GDR to provide technical expertise and production facilities for the construction of pilot developments. The plan was to build up to 100,000 residential units using East German prefab technology. While Mozambique sought to counter rapid urbanisation, the GDR saw this cooperation as an ideal laboratory for improving its export portfolio for the lower middle classes in countries as diverse as Yemen, Nigeria, Iran and Nicaragua. However, the institution in charge, the Bauakademie's (Building Academy) Muster- und Experimentalprojekt soon had to deal with economic embargoes, material shortages and an extensive war in the country.

This paper follows civil engineers and architects from Mozambique and the GDR. They responded to their challenging circumstances by radically simplifying their prototypes and experimenting with local construction methods and building materials that by today's standards could be considered ecological. To analyse these processes, this paper follows the concept of war ecology (Charbonnier et al). It argues that in the case of this cooperation the contracted transfer of knowledge and technology from Europe to Africa was ultimately reversed, thus offering a critical perspective on the instrumentalisation of an epistemology of the South (Santos).

## Yugoslav Architecture and Monument-Making practices in Post-Colonial Guinea-Bissau

Sanja Horvatinčić, Institute of Art History, Zagreb, Durham University.

Yugoslavia supported Guinea-Bissau's war of independence in the 1960s and continued to do so in various ways after 1973, when the country gained independence from Portugal and the bloody anticolonial war, led by the Communist African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC), came to an end. Due to Yugoslavia's political alliance and personal connections in the public works sector, Yugoslav experts greatly influenced the country's cooperation sector in the 1970s and 1980s. Yugoslav architects contributed to numerous public works, but they also planned, designed, and supervised projects of their own, ultimately dominating the country's architecture despite the growing presence of other approaches brought in by Guineans studying in the Soviet Union or Cuba.

This paper examines the experiences of Yugoslav architectural experts who worked in Guinea-Bissau following its independence from Portugal in 1973. Drawing on archival documents and oral testimonies, I explore how these professionals were motivated to participate in technical cooperation programs established through Non-Aligned Movement frameworks and Yugoslavia's political commitment to decolonization. The research investigates how these experiences transformed their personal and professional lives, both during their assignments and upon returning to Yugoslavia. By focusing on individual narratives, the study reveals the complex interplay between official political ideologies, professional aspirations, and personal connections that shaped this transnational exchange. The paper demonstrates how Yugoslav architects influenced Guinea-Bissau's built environment while simultaneously being influenced by local conditions, Portuguese colonial modernism, and the emerging architectural scene. This case study illuminates how technical cooperation transcended formal agreements to create lasting impacts on both countries' architectural landscapes and professional communities. By examining these personal journeys within broader political contexts, the research contributes to our understanding of how Global Socialism and Non-Alignment manifested through lived experiences and material legacies that continue to resonate in contemporary Guinea-Bissau.

( 5.10 )

**Anatole Kopp: a French architect and the change of “mode de vie” in Alger**

Anat Falbel, EAHN Urban Representation Interest Group, Cahiers de la Recherche Architecturale Urbaine et Paysagère.

The first perspective concerns the context of Kopp’s work shortly after independence under the government of President Ahmed Ben Bella, as well as the challenges and changes in direction in design and technical conception resulting from the country’s political and social transformations over almost two decades. The architects’ first initiatives in Algeria will be analyzed in contrast to General De Gaulle’s previous Algerian colonial project.

The second analytical perspective concerns the influences of the Algerian experiences on Anatole Kopp’s theoretical formulations regarding discussions on the third world and construction for the large number, as they were presented in the 1970s, both within the journal *Espaces et Sociétés*, directed by the architect together with Henri Lefebvre, as well as in his work at the École spéciale d’architecture (ESA).

**Prefabricated Solidarities: Cuban construction  
in Angola, 1976-1990**

Claudia Gastrow, North Carolina State University

Between 1976 and 1990, Cuba collaborated with Angola in the construction of approximately 25,000 residential apartments across Angolan territory. The “Cuban buildings” as they came to be known stood at the center of experiments in socialist state-making. In the effort to construct the buildings, Angola and Cuba created new companies, institutions, and training programs. This presentation uses archival materials from newspapers and periodicals to explore how this cooperation in the area of construction was represented in domestic, Cuban and international press. In doing this, I focus on how architecture and specifically prefabrication as a technique were imagined as key to the creation of socialist subjects and political worlds.





## HER KNOW HOW: GENDER AND PARTICIPATION IN THE PRODUCTION OF COLONIAL/MODERN SPACES

Mariana Moura, University of Antwerp

Katie Lloyd Thomas, Newcastle University

All too often, where we find few women 'on the tools' on formal construction sites, their absence is essentialised as if related to innate strength or preferences. Such assumptions fail to recognise the role of capitalism in gendered relations, where women are paid less for jobs deemed 'unskilled' or 'semiskilled', or excluded from building work because their low pay threatens men's wages. These assumptions also ignore that in many parts of the world, today and in the past, women have been actively involved in various construction sites, holding specific building know-how.

This panel aims to expand the ongoing collective discussions of the Her Know Group to explore how women's participation in the production of space has been shaped under a colonial/modern gender system. Proposed by María Lugones, this framework highlights the inseparability of the binary gender formation from racial and sexual classifications under capitalism. We are interested in how women's participation in building work unfolds within contexts of coloniality, examining the extent to which racialized gendered relations follow exclusionary tendencies, or alter them. Papers could address:

- How has coloniality shaped women's involvement in building – from large-scale public works to self-building sites? What jobs are women doing and how do they differ from men's?
- What policies and technologies have excluded women from building sites or denied them access to building skills? What roles did colonial/modern projects play in their introduction?
- Conversely, what work gave women 'back door entry' to construction, such as those focused on social reproduction or the manufacture of building materials?
- How have emancipatory struggles against coloniality altered women's inclusion in construction? What contradictions did women overcome or continue to encounter in the building practices?

Mariana Moura Professor of Architecture at the University of Antwerp's Faculty of Design Sciences. Her research focuses on informal and self-organised spatial practices, drawing from decolonial and feminist theories. She was an MSCA postdoctoral fellow at the University of Antwerp (2024-2025) and a postdoctoral researcher in the Translating Ferro / Transforming Knowledges project (2021-2024), where she co-edited *Design and the Building Site* (Mack, 2025) and *Architecture from Below: An Anthology* (Mack, 2024). Since 2023, she co-coordinates the Her Know How group, a network of scholars and practitioners that meets monthly to discuss women's contributions to architecture and construction.

Katie Lloyd Thomas was Professor of Theory and History of Architecture at Newcastle University where she currently holds a Visiting Professorship. Her research is concerned with labour, materiality and technology, and their intersections with feminist practice and theory. Publications include *Building Materials: Material theory and the architectural specification* (Bloomsbury, 2021) and with Tilo Amhoff and Nick Beech *Industries of Architecture* (Routledge Critiques, 2015). From 2020-2024 Katie was PI for the Brazil-UK project *Translating Ferro / Transforming Knowledges of Architecture, Design and Labour for the New Field of Production Studies*.

## Speakers

Adil Mansure, Harvard University

**A world in a coconut no more: Making sennit lashings in Oceania in the late nineteenth-century**

Arzu Kusaslan, Architectural Association School of Architecture

**Back Door' Masters and the Transmission of Construction Knowledge in the Late Ottoman Empire: Construction of Dolmabahce Palace in Istanbul in the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century**

Carina Guedes de Mendonça, Arquitetura na Periferia  
Mariana Barbosa Miranda Borel, Arquitetura na Periferia

**From Margins to Tools: Feminist Practices and Decolonial Strategies in "Arquitetura na Periferia"**

Siham El Rharbj, University Mohammed VI Polytechnic Benguerir

Fatima Zohra Saaid, National School of Architecture, Marrakech

**The Process of Horizontal Segregation in the Architectural Profession since the Postcolonial Era in Morocco**

Silke Kapp, Escola de Arquitetura, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais

**Labour of (the) architecture behind the scenes**

## **A world in a coconut no more: Making sennit lashings in Oceania in the late nineteenth-century**

Adil Mansure, Harvard University

Pre-European contact, along the shores of British New Guinea, rolling strands of coconut husk or fibers on her thigh and braiding them into string and eventually rope, made for much pastime and the social life of Pacific Islander women. In a world of little to no metal, lashing together with sennit or coconut husk rope was the chief means of assembling everything from canoes to longhouses. One of the most ancient technologies—rope—have long been the domain of women, especially at the most micro, granular, and elemental scales of production. A question here is, how do twisting, tying, and looping constitute forms and ways of knowing? My focus on the technics of rope in both maritime and architectural contexts here seeks to decenter both tectonic and stereotomic frameworks of architecture, as the latter are focused on man-ual and industrial labor. In Oceania, by the nineteenth century, because of the drastic demand for copra or coconut meat (chiefly used for coconut oil) in Europe, much of this labor had to be diverted towards coconut plantations, to essentially one part of the coconut. Whereas every part of the coconut from frond to husk to meat to water was utilized by Pacific Islanders, waste at plantations increasingly became associated with coconut trees. In a region where coconut is a not only a resource but constitutes their very cosmos (one could survive a remote island with all a coconut tree provides) what did such a skew in the need for islander women's labor mean? How do the valuing processes of labor, plant life-forms, and resources shift—and shift in relation to each other? Such questions guide understanding *longue durée* histories of women's work in Oceania. Key sources here include documentation by the anthropologists AC and Kathleen Haddon, and their travels in Melanesia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

( S.11 )

**Back Door' Masters and the Transmission of Construction Knowledge in the Late Ottoman Empire: Construction of Dolmabahce Palace in Istanbul in the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century**  
Arzu Kusaslan, Architectural Association School of Architecture

By focusing on gender formation under capitalism, this paper reveals how the industrial construction system in the 19th century kept women away from constructions in the late Ottoman Empire, which contrasts with the active trace of women involved in different aspects of construction in earlier periods. The paper demonstrates how the significant gender divide in construction in the late Ottoman period arisen due to external pressure from industrialised Europe and the propagation of colonial modernity. Drawing from my research on the construction of Dolmabahce Palace — one of the first buildings where new construction techniques, materials and systems of management were used — the paper provides evidence of builders' workshops in which women played crucial roles in acquiring, developing and transmitting specialised construction skills alongside family members in the Ottoman Empire. While the use of machines and information about construction details were mainly controlled and passed on amongst male masters coming from Europe and architects trained in Paris or other European cities, women were the 'back door masters', as significant professional partners of their fathers, brothers or husbands, of jointly developing and organising the transfer of new technologies and construction applications amongst the networks of influential families and specialised workshops and trades. Despite the segregation of categories of work and classifications of skills in the arising construction system that serve the demands of the expansion of colonial modernity, transitions between categories were possible in the lives of families and women with knowledge and skills were agency that connects the interlayers between different subjects and social domains. While women were kept away from formal constructions that built according to the principles of industrialization in 19th century, in workshops women actively continue to contribute to innovation of construction technology, which were often only attributed to their father or other male family members in the gendered historical documentation. Moreover, in the informal areas of the city, women participated in the construction process alongside family members as part of a culture of mutual support. Buildings that make up the majority of the city and are considered informal are, in fact, the primary force of formation of urban fabric, towards which women as 'back door' masters should be recognised.

( 5.11 )

## **From Margins to Tools: Feminist Practices and Decolonial Strategies in “Arquitetura na Periferia”**

Carina Guedes de Mendonça, Arquitetura na Periferia

Mariana Barbosa Miranda Borel, Arquitetura na Periferia

This paper explores how feminist practices in the Arquitetura na Periferia (Architecture in the Urban Periphery) project challenge the gendered and colonial structures that continue to shape labour and access to architectural knowledge in Brazil.

Operating in urban peripheries, this initiative enables low-income women to design, plan, and build their own homes and community spaces through cooperative organization, technical training, and access to financial resources. It also builds local networks, fostering broader connections among women to strengthen their actions and nurture community bonds. Brazil's built environment reflects a long history of colonial exploitation and racialized inequalities, which continue to manifest in the systematic exclusion of black and peripheral women from the skilled labour of building. In this context, the project reclaims this space through knowledge sharing, collective decision-making, and hands-on training, fostering autonomy and technical literacy in a field still dominated by men. Additionally, by integrating bioconstruction techniques, historically rooted in women's knowledge and often marginalized within conventional building practices, the initiative moves away from colonial frameworks while challenging the extractive, industrialized model of mainstream construction.

However, this process faces significant challenges. Most participants are single mothers juggling care and household head responsibilities with project activities, often amid gender-based violence and economic insecurity. Persistent biases against women in construction, coupled with capitalist production cycles that overlook the time required for learning, impose further barriers to their meaningful engagement.

Rather than treating women's absence from construction sites as natural or passive, this approach foregrounds how structural barriers — shaped by capitalism, racism, and patriarchy — have historically limited their participation. It also shows how feminist architectural praxis can open new paths toward emancipation, by challenging the monopolization of tools, skills, and authorship in the built environment, reimagining the construction site as a space of resistance, care and self-determination.

( S.11 )

## The Process of Horizontal Segregation in the Architectural Profession since the Postcolonial Era in Morocco

Siham El Rharbi, University Mohammed VI Polytechnic Benguerir  
Fatima Zohra Saaid, National School of Architecture, Marrakech

In the conservative context of the postcolonial era, Morocco gradually witnessed the emergence of a generation of architects trained both abroad and in national institutions. This process helped shape a modern Moroccan architectural identity that reinforced male authority in both production and discourse. At the same time, the role of Moroccan women in this field was defined by a dual dynamic: on the one hand, by a post-war modern and universalist model influenced by discourses of emancipation and modernization; on the other, by continual adaptation to local social codes and cultural norms specific to Morocco.

Within this framework, it is crucial to interrogate the deep-rooted social barriers of Moroccan society, where women in positions of authority—particularly on construction sites—remain widely unaccepted. Construction, perceived as physically demanding and male-dominated, is often regarded as incompatible with roles traditionally assigned to women.

This gendered division of labour reflects a conservative social order in which male dominance is seldom questioned, and the idea of a woman exerting authority over men continues to provoke resistance. Yet this uniform portrayal deserves closer scrutiny through the lens of Morocco's mountainous regions. In these areas, where self-construction has long been a social achievement, it is worth examining whether women's roles in vernacular architecture are (or are not) more accepted than those of female architects on formal urban sites. Does the community-based character of rural building practices enable a more flexible perception of gender? This regional contrast invites a reconsideration of women's place in architectural production—beyond institutions—to encompass local, collective practices.

From this perspective, the research asks whether the prominence of contemporary Moroccan and Arab female architects has genuinely legitimized women's presence in gender-segregated spaces such as construction sites, and whether such recognition is reflected in daily practices still shaped by cultural resistance.

( 5.11 )

**Labour of (the) architecture behind the scenes**  
 Silke Kapp, Escola de Arquitetura, Universidade Federal  
 de Minas Gerais

Two layers of labour have remained hidden in the historiography of architecture. One is the labour on building sites as such, which Marxist architect and theorist Sérgio Ferro and others have been uncovering for some time. The second is the labour necessary to (re)produce the labour-power expended on these construction sites. This paper focuses on the second layer of labour and the mechanism of its invisibility through a analysis of Brasilia's construction sites between 1956 and 1964. While an expansive archive of visual and material media produced at the time helps rewrite the history of the first hidden layer of labour, that second layer demands a more exhaustive revision of the official archive and discourses, which stated that only men migrated to Brasilia's building site to live in camps provided for by the state and that the few women who came did so essentially as sex workers. Yet census records show many of the male workers brought their families with them and lived in self-built settlements maintained and cared for by women. These other, hidden workforce of Brasilia not only produced labourers, and thus the labour-power that capital needs. Women also created their own spaces and technologies, inventing in the process a self-sustained, communal architecture and everyday life — one that would be, violently and somewhat ironically, removed to ensure the image of a flawless modern city, and even erased by flooding to create the artificial city lake of Brasilia.

( S.11 )

COLONIAL AND POST-COLONIAL LANDSCAPES

MATERIAL LANDSCAPES OF LABOUR EXPLOITATION



( S.12 )

Reparation d'une maison (Reparation of a House).  
Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, ca. 1920, A. Autru, HP.1980.55.1-79.

## MATERIAL LANDSCAPES OF LABOUR EXPLOITATION

Robby Fivez, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, VUB

Simon De Nys-Ketels, Université Libre de Bruxelles, ULB

Despite international efforts to restrain forced labour practices in the first half of the 20th century, with the 1930 Convention on Forced Labour by the International Labour Organization as prime example, many colonial states continued to rely on forms of forced labour throughout their history. While historians have studied these labour practices in spearhead sectors like mining, agriculture or manufacturing, the construction industry —the key ‘scaffolding of Empire’ that buttressed these essential sectors, as Peter Scriver described— has remained largely overlooked. According to strands of architectural theory, labour conditions can be read in architectural artefacts. Following these assertions, this thematic session proposes to critically explore materialities in the (post)colonial built environment, as lenses to understand the labour regimes under which they were realized. Imported construction technologies and building materials, for instance, seemingly innocent, could also be read as political tools in the deskilling of the construction site, enabling and maintaining forced labour practices. Following interpretations of concrete as a capitalist ‘weapon’ in the deskilling of the construction site, for instance, one could similarly read the many concrete projects realized under colonial political projects, as testimonies of continued forced labour practices. Likewise, the self-supporting roof elements, widely used in housing schemes throughout colonial Africa, can be understood as a means to mobilise unpaid labour in such ‘self-built’ projects. While such power inequalities are inevitably embedded in colonial built environments, the attention for materiality can also disclose more subversive narratives. Through a strong reliance on forced labour, colonial construction reluctantly yet inadvertently incorporated local building technologies and materials, generating a complex landscape of new and hybridized architectural typologies that bore witness to indigenous agency and building know-how. While the (shifting) forced labour regimes can be seen quite directly in large-scale infrastructural projects, such other narratives are often relegated to more ad-hoc building practices, for instance to smaller typologies (warehouses), to everyday adaptations to buildings (outdoor hospital kitchens) or even to the temporary equipment of large buildings sites (such as workers’

Robby Fivez works as postdoctoral researcher at VUB and UGent. His research is driven by a fascination with the material and social processes of construction. With a particular focus on the architectural history of the Belgian Congo, he seeks to shed light on the historical externalities of Western building practices: its reliance on ‘cheap labour’ and ‘cheap nature’. Insights from this specific historical research can be extrapolated to other geographic and temporal settings.

Simon De Nys-Ketels works as postdoctoral researcher at ULB and UGent. He is interested in governmental and bureaucratic practices behind construction and architecture. His PhD questioned tenacious myths of Belgian Congo as a “medical model colony” through medical architectures. His current research charts the professionalization of architects, contractors and construction workers within Belgium’s building sector, to understand how various occupational categories developed different forms of legal and technical expertise.

housing). In this session, we explicitly aim to further question the 1930 definition of forced labour, in particular the way it excluded 'disguised' practices such as military, penal or conscripted labour, community service, self-building or compulsory upkeep work by (psychiatric) patients, pupils, and citizens. While such strategic omissions conveniently served coercive colonial logics of extraction and labour exploitation – the main focus of this session – papers thematizing how these colonial practices are continued in other temporal and geographical settings are warmly welcomed.

### Speakers

Clarisse Genton, ACS Laboratory, ENSA Paris-Malaquais,  
PSL University

**Jerusalem stone, the materiality of industrialization  
and exploitation of the Palestinians**

Nomalanga Mahlangu, University of Johannesburg

**Commutes of Dispossession: Tracing the Labour  
Geographies of the former Kwa-Ndebele Bantustan  
and Pretoria**

Sonali Dhanpal, Columbia University

**Caste, Craft, and the Classroom: How do we  
understand "labour" in the history of the  
architectural profession in colonial South Asia?**

Willem Bekers, Ghent University

**"Breaking the rocks of Shinkakasa (DR Congo,  
1891-1909): Reading a topography of labour  
in military construction site photographs"**

## Jerusalem stone, the materiality of industrialization and exploitation of the Palestinians

Clarisse Genton, ACS Laboratory, ENSA Paris-Malaquais, PSL University

In the context of the Occupied Territories' occupation since 1967, the State of Israel has embarked on a vast enterprise of colonization of East Jerusalem and the West Bank, which has never stopped, and which has accelerated even further in the last two years. This colonization undertaking necessarily involves the large-scale construction of mainly residential towns and neighborhoods, and thus a chain of organization of work leading to the building of these entities. In this paper, I propose to look back at the whole of this organization, from planning to design, and at its historical evolution, which saw the imposition of neoliberal logics on colonial logics, to explore the exploitation of construction workers, a workforce almost exclusively made up of Palestinians. The aim is to understand the conditions of their exploitation in this organization, by looking more specifically at the work of workers specialized in stone, the obligatory roofing material for buildings in Jerusalem and its suburbs. Visible sign of this exploitation, what does this material tell us about the coloniality of the architecture built from it? Where is this stone extracted, by whom and how? Most deposits come from quarries on the West Bank, whose resources are exploited for Israeli settlement purposes. How are they spatially organized? A singular industrial landscape emerges in the Palestinian landscape, radically altered by more than five decades of colonization. In addition to these contemporary issues, the communication will look back at the construction of the Israeli nation, which literally relied on a genuine effort to build its cities during the pre-state period (before 1948), and its paradoxical relationship with exclusionary work. This research is based on both field surveys and several interviews conducted to trace this organization in a historiography of the present day.

( S.12 )

## **Commutes of Dispossession: Tracing the Labour Geographies of the former Kwa-Ndebele Bantustan and Pretoria**

Nomalanga Mahlangu, University of Johannesburg

Every morning before sunrise, buses and minibus taxis depart from the former Bantustan of Kwa-Ndebele (now part of Mpumalanga), carrying thousands of workers on a gruelling one- to three-hour journey into Pretoria. This daily migration, established under apartheid, persists today. This paper investigates the enduring legacy of apartheid-era labour geographies by focusing on the historical and contemporary commute between Kwa-Ndebele and Pretoria.

Under spatial segregation, Kwa-Ndebele was designed as a peripheral Bantustan(also known as Homeland) economically disconnected yet vital through its supply of cheap black labour. Drawing on archival records, oral histories, and spatial analysis, this research traces the infrastructural systems and social conditions that enabled and constrained the mobility of workers: from apartheid-era state-subsidised buses and militarised checkpoints to today's long-distance taxi routes and informal transport networks. It explores how this forced commuter regime shaped Pretoria's urban economy and the lived experiences of those confined to the periphery.

By centring the labour that built and maintained the city while remaining structurally excluded from it, the paper interrogates the colonial foundations of South Africa's urban-rural divide. Situating the Bantustan system within a broader Global South framework, it reveals how dispossession and infrastructural erasure continue to define urban labour flows. It argues that this enduring commute is not merely a logistical burden but a form of infrastructural dispossession and temporal displacement that structures black working-class life in post-apartheid South Africa. Ultimately, this contribution challenges dominant urbanisation narratives by foregrounding the peripheral labouring geographies that remain essential yet unseen in the making of the postcolonial city.

## **Caste, Craft, and the Classroom: How do we understand “labour” in the history of the architectural profession in colonial South Asia?**

Sonali Dhanpal, Columbia University

A turn to historical materialism in architecture aims to demystify the creation of surplus value within capitalist production by revealing the congealed labour embedded in building construction. Scholars have begun to demonstrate how the history of architecture has maintained and adapted to the profession’s capacity to build while denying the labour power involved in its production. Less discussed is how architecture is also the site of various labour systems organized alongside the wage contracts, notably enslavement, but also sharecropping, forms of bondage, or existing hierarchies of caste. To further this point, I turn to the question of caste and the profession of architecture in colonial South Asia. Caste as a system, as Ambedkar described, was not merely a division of labour but also a division of labourers. I examine how the division between occupations of knowledge and service that underpin the graded caste hierarchy (former associated with upper castes and latter with lower caste groups), is remade through who conceptualizes and who does the hands-on work in the modern architecture profession under colonial capitalism.

With few notable exceptions, the history of the architectural profession in South Asia was part of the technical education of engineering, emerging with the entrenchment of the British colonial state as an infrastructural and administrative apparatus. A well-discussed historiography shows how this new technical education and branches of the state built an array of utilitarian buildings and infrastructure across the subcontinent while reinforcing the architectural profession’s racial exclusivity. Turning to caste divisions that emerge from this process, I draw from scholars who show how engineering before its modern professionalization was associated with lower caste groups, precisely because upper caste groups disdained hands-on labour (left to artisanal castes practising craft). I bring these insights from scholarship on engineering in the subcontinent and race, craft, and labour more broadly to trace how architectural education in South Asia maps onto caste.

( S.12 )

## **Breaking the rocks of Shinkakasa (DR Congo, 1891-1909): reading a topography of labour in military construction site photographs**

Willem Bekers, Ghent University

Against the advice of his counsellors, who considered static fortifications obsolete in a continent and era of gunboat diplomacy, Belgian King Leopold II took a resolute stand. Upholding the doctrine of positional warfare that had long defined Belgian defence strategy, he ordered the construction of Fort Shinkakasa near Boma—the then capital of the Congo Free State—in 1891. Intended as the most formidable concrete fort in Central Africa, its design was compromised by remote planning from Belgium, with little regard for local construction realities. Furthermore, a misreading of the terrain by its planners rendered the fort vulnerable, prompting modifications and, ultimately, its declassification shortly after completion. In line with the growing interest in building site photography as a documentary source, our earlier research on Shinkakasa has highlighted the value of close visual analysis in reconstructing the fort's layered construction history, documenting colonial labour practices, and uncovering the complex social stratification of the military-colonial building site. We contend, however, that these qualitative interpretations can be significantly deepened through the integration of systematic, topography-based analysis.

By shifting focus to the transformation of the landscape—specifically the extensive manual excavations reaching depths of up to eight metres in the quartz of the Shinkakasa plateau—we plotted building site photographs onto a terrain model developed from historical survey maps. This approach enabled us to reconstruct the site before, during, and after construction. Contextualised in this manner, the same photographs vividly illustrate the immense manual labour involved in terrain modification, including trench carving, rock crushing for concrete, and the transport of materials across the site. The microtopography serves as compelling evidence of the extreme working conditions endured by the *soldats-travailleurs* of the Force Publique—conditions that ultimately culminated in the Shinkakasa mutiny of April 1900, when the fort's construction was only halfway complete.





## **TPOLOGY, TERMS AND IDEAS: FREEDOM ASPIRATIONS FROM LATE MODERN EXPERIMENTS AND BELATED COLONIZATION**

Rui Seco, CITAD, Research Centre on Territory, Architecture and Design

The 'Team 10 Primer' expressed the goal to "overcome the 'cultural obsolescence' of most mass housing" (Smithson, 1962) by finding new solutions that could, among other issues, contribute to comprehensibility, that is, clarity of organisation, stated as the aim of urbanism. The criticism to CIAM solutions and their postwar concretizations was a foundation of the document, expressed by the "opposition to the arbitrary isolation of the so-called communities of the 'Unité' and the 'neighbourhood'". Association and density were pointed as means to achieve social cohesion, and a reflection on the terms used in urbanism was set, unravelling embedded ideas in the face of a changing social reality, in which houses, streets, squares, districts and cities were reshaped.

Team 10 was founded in the admiration of the innovative experiences conducted in North Africa by Candilis and Ecochard, among others, presented at CIAM 9, which opened a new mindset towards experimentation to a young generation of architects that did not acknowledge the crystallization of pre-war modernism. The intensified late colonial developments had paradoxically paved a liberty space for architectural experimentation, which would resonate in homeland production and in the debate that engaged the new generations.

This session proposes an examination of late modern innovative solutions in typology and design, also welcoming the study of architect's conceptions and reflections of the time. How did evolve urban and housing conceptions in the third quarter of the 20th century? Did colonial contexts produce or influence relevant experiences? What role did they play approaching the final stages of modernism? Could potential unrevealed developments point ways out of the dead ends of the debate on the city and its architecture, then and today?

*Rui Seco* is an architect (FAUTL), urban planner, teacher, editor and researcher on architecture and urbanism, studying the city, modern architecture and the evolution of urban concepts throughout the twentieth century. Post-graduated in Planning and Design of the Urban Environment (FAUP); MSc in Architecture, Territory and Memory (FCTUC); PhD candidate (FCTUC). Held scholarships by the Marquês de Pombal Foundation and FCT. Lectured architectural design, urban theory and city history at Coimbra Arts College (EUAC); co-funder and editor of A[#] architecture journal. Currently develops research at CITAD.

## Speakers

Excellent Hansda, University of Liverpool

**Middle-Class Dwellings, Domestic Spaces and Suburbanization in Late Colonial Bombay (1920s-50s)**

Asu Tozan, Eastern Mediterranean University

**“Supra-Political Aesthetics” in Cyprus? Tracing the Origins of an Architectural Postwar Modernism**

Fatima Zohra Saaid, National School of Architecture, Marrakech

Siham Elgharbi, University Mohammed VI Polytechnic Benguerir

**From the idea of type to the invention of urban model in the late-colonial context in Morocco.**

Kieran Gaya, Independent Scholar

**Le Corbusier’s Chandigarh and Doxiadis’s Islamabad: The cities they built in India and Pakistan, a decade apart**

Joana Borges Pereira, Universidade Lusíada de Lisboa, Faculdade de Arquitectura e Artes

**The future of the Past: A look into the Kinaxixé Market and the Kuwait National Museum legacy**

Inês Lima Rodrigues, Dinâmia’CET-Iscte

Maria Alice Vaz de Almeida Mendes Correia, Universidade Agostinho Neto - Universidade Lusíada de Luanda - Instituto de Planeamento e Gestão Urbana de Luanda, Angola

**Typology in Transition: Modern Housing and Postcolonial Urbanism in Luanda**

**Middle-Class Dwellings, Domestic Spaces and Suburbanization in Late Colonial Bombay (1920s-50s)**  
Excellent Hansda, University of Liverpool

The paper investigates the domestic architecture of middle-class residents within the context of suburbanisation in late colonial Bombay. It discusses the complex development of dwelling forms in suburban towns of Bombay, particularly in relation to the mobility of middle-class people from both the chawls of Bombay and the villages in Salsette (an island, north of Bombay). The existing scholarship on Bombay has primarily focused on the inner core of Bombay city and the housing of the elite and the working class—colonial bungalow and chawls, respectively. While recognising the importance of these two typologies in fulfilling the historical needs of Bombay, this article highlights other sites and models of domestic spaces that were equally part of the colonial spatial landscape of Bombay. It investigates the socio-spatial cultures of the middle class that moved to the suburbs of Bombay and formed a new typology of detached two-storied bungalow-type houses, in a context of newly established town planning schemes and municipal bylaws, the birth of architectural education and profession and the production of new construction materials.

The article, firstly, highlights the agency of the Indian middle-class in shaping the suburban landscape and producing newer paradigms of domestic spaces. Secondly, it focuses on the evolution of the suburban dwelling as a site of utility and convenience in order to meet the demands and aspirations of the middle-class in a context when the influence of West-trained architects and their take on modern architecture dominated the landscape. Thirdly, it investigates the essential urban and rural attributes flowing into the domestic spaces, forming a composite site that offered flexibility in the usage of spaces and developments like private gardens. Using archival research, close reading of twentieth-century vernacular text and site observations, the article adds to the scholarship on architectural and urban historiography of colonial cities.

( 5.13 )

## **“Supra-Political Aesthetics” in Cyprus? Tracing the Origins of an Architectural Postwar Modernism**

Asu Tozan, Eastern Mediterranean University

In Cyprus the last decades of the British colonial period (1878-1960) and the early postcolonial years of the Republic (between 1960 and 1974), were characterized by intensifying internal conflicts between the Greek and Turkish Cypriots. Scholars interpreted the debates around the design of new government offices in the capital Nicosia (built c. 1973) and, based on the case of the Golden Sands Hotel (1973), the development of a modern hotel “leisurescape” in Famagusta-Varosha between the mid-1960s and 1974 as a reaction to the intercommunal conflicts. A new “supra-political aesthetic”, an international postwar modernism without references to the supposedly discredited colonial past and to the vernacular, is seen as a purely postcolonial element of nation-building, expressing “shared nationhood”. This paper aims to reassess this notion and therefore to trace the beginnings of a “neutral” architectural postwar modernism in Cyprus, focusing on residential architecture, including examples of New Brutalism. It is based on a thorough literature review and architectural surveys in major Cypriot towns.

The emergence of an international postwar modernism with “supra-political aesthetics” began already several years before the independence of Cyprus from colonial rule. This is evident by approximately 20 designs and/or executed buildings, among them no less than 11 public buildings. A few multi-unit residential complexes, built both by private and public developers, go back to the second half of the 1950s while several private residences with these aesthetics date back even to the late 1940s/early 1950s. Therefore, the notion that a “neutral” modern architectural vocabulary with the potential of expressing “shared nationhood” is a purely postcolonial development is obsolete. Moreover, it is questionable if a deliberate, coherent effort of national architectural modernization ever existed, considering that this interpretation is based on the debates around only two architectural cases of the 1970s.

( 5.13 )

## **From the idea of type to the invention of urban model in the late-colonial context in Morocco**

Fatima Zohra Saaid, National School of Architecture of Marrakech

Siham Elgharbi, University Mohammed VI Polytechnic Benguerir

Following the Second world-war, the colonial administration in Morocco appointed a second group of professionals in the Town Planning Department, so as to address urban challenges due to “informal housing” and speculation in the main cities such as Casablanca and Rabat. This Department brought together a group of young European architects and urban planners affiliated as the North African section of CIAM, lately known as The GAMMA-Group. Led by Michel Écochard, the group defined an innovative urban model les “Cités satellites” grounded in novel methodological framework.

From the dwelling to the city, from the street to the neighborhood, the Town Planning Department approach was far beyond from reproducing the pre-war planning and architectural Western models on the colonial ground. The universalist doctrinarian value of modernism was supplanted by a contextual approach rooted in architectural and urban typologies depicted on the cultural and social reality of the colony ground. This paper focuses on how Écochard and his multidisciplinary team developed new practices in architecture and urbanism during the late colonial period in Morocco informed by a methodological shift that echoes Enlightenment rationalist theories focused on the notion of Type and Model. It further discusses how this new approach shaped in the colonial ground contributed to the emergence of new conceptions of architectural design and urban planning in the late modernism, which would resonate lately in the Global North.

( 5.13 )

## **Le Corbusier's Chandigarh and Doxiadis's Islamabad: The cities they built in India and Pakistan, a decade apart**

Kieran Gaya, Independent Scholar

In 1950, Le Corbusier embarked on a modernist tour de force, Chandigarh in East Punjab, at the invitation of independent India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. In 1960, Constantinos A. Doxiadis submitted his masterplan for the new Pakistani federal capital, Islamabad. The nation's military government, led by Field Marshal General Ayub Khan, had decided to enter the fray of nation building through capital construction. Chandigarh was intended to be emblematic of modern India while replacing iconic Lahore as the capital of Indian Punjab whereas Pakistan's new capital was expected to be representative of national life, politically as well as religiously. Both cities were to be active as intrinsic catalysts of national identity formation. Even so, how do the arrangements of the built areas and open spaces, differ? What did Doxiadis do differently from Le Corbusier? Which typologies did he actively develop to suit the brief for Pakistan and which ones came in reaction to Chandigarh?

Team 10 was a generation of designers' reactionary assessment and regrouping to actively contrast what was believed not to be suitable. Le Corbusier's clinical approach with his Unité d'Habitation and orthogonal isolation for the sake of the plan that rules could be seen to flail in the need for a more humanistic approach to the engendering of social cohesion in the aftermath of war and displacement as with the intention to create inter-related communities, especially so in the Global South. The study of Islamabad as a reaction to Chandigarh, in emulation and contrast provides insight as to how post-war transnational city planning was an application of an ideology on an imaginary blank canvas whereas what happened a decade later showcases the laboratorial journey of using theories of seed settlements, dynamic growth, and culturally sensitive development as part of the ethos for building cities.

( 5.13 )

## The future of the Past: A look into the Kinaxixe Market and the Kuwait National Museum legacy

Joana Borges Pereira, Universidade Lusíada de Lisboa, Faculdade de Arquitectura e Artes

It was after World War II, that the desire for change began to grow. The CIAM (Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne) movement enabled different paths for the Architecture of the second half of the 20th Century, that spread across all latitudes. The need to build with an umbilical connection between the architectural piece and the place and culture was – after multiple experiences – evident and necessary, especially in the territories with less technical and technological resources.

That was the belief of the architects Michel Écochard (1905 | 1985) and Vasco Vieira da Costa (1911 | 1982). Inspired by Le Corbusier's modern ideals, both authors surpassed the CIAM master's orthodoxy, aiming for architectural pieces that directly dialogued with their whereabouts.

That was the case of Luanda's Kinaxixe Market (1950-58) from Vieira da Costa and the Kuwait's National Museum (1960-83) from Écochard. Both buildings were created as centers of "urbanity". The first, connected the "old" and the "new" Luanda, while the second stood near the Persian Gulf shore, in the Kuwait City's Cultural and Arts District.

Despite their architectural significance, both faced destruction during violent conflicts. Angola plunged into a civil war (1975-2002), causing the deterioration of the Kinaxixe Market, while Kuwait's National Museum was looted and partially destroyed, during Iraq's invasion (1990-91).

In the beginning of the 21st Century, the rehabilitation of the buildings was considered by their governments. However, their fate could not be more different: the Kinaxixe Market was demolished, while the Kuwait National Museum was modernized and rehabilitated.

This paper aims to, not only study those buildings as pivotal pieces of the late Modern Architecture in their Countries, but also to shed some light into the consequences of the destruction or preservation of a Country's Architectural Heritage, comprehending how it can affect its cultural identity, in the Future.

## Typology in Transition: Modern Housing and Postcolonial Urbanism in Luanda

Inês Lima Rodrigues, Dinâmia'CET-Iscte

Maria Alice Vaz de Almeida Mendes Correia, Universidade Agostinho Neto - Universidade Lusíada de Luanda - Instituto de Planeamento e Gestão Urbana de Luanda, Angola

The final years of the International Congresses of Modern Architecture (CIAM) exposed a growing rift between universalist urban doctrines and the complexity of local, lived environments. While the Athens Charter had once promised clarity through functional zoning, critiques from the late 1950s, especially since GAMMA in Morocco and the Smithsons in Britain, called for grounded readings of habitat based on real-life practices. These critiques culminated in the dissolution of CIAM in Otterlo (1959) and the emergence of Team 10, which promoted context, collectivity, and typological innovation. This paper examines the resurgence of these shifting debates a decade later in Angola, which was then under Portuguese colonial rule. It will observe how housing impacted the newly implemented public policies as the country advanced into the early years of independence. Fernão Simões de Carvalho and Lobo de Carvalho designed the CTT neighbourhood (1968–1974) in Luanda at the height of modern architecture. Inspired by the Athens Charter principles, the plan introduced more organic layouts, integrated amenities, and mixed housing typologies—reflecting post-CIAM thinking and the influence of figures like Robert Auzelle, Simões's teacher at the Institute d'Urbanisme in Paris. Conceived for a racially stratified city in transition, the CTT project attempted to reconcile modern ideals with social complexity. Even though only one building was constructed, it remains a pivotal case study examining how architectural form was negotiated between colonial control, industrial construction, and emerging urban collectivity. Drawing on archival research and interviews with residents, the study situates the CTT within broader postcolonial transformations—including new centralities such as Kilamba, Sequele, Zango, and others—and examines the ideological CIAM's afterlife in Angola through the lens of the plan Fomento Habitacional. It argues that typological aspirations persist and mutate across the colonial-postcolonial threshold, embedding historical residues and future claims within the urban fabric.

( 5.13 )

TYPOLOGY, TERMS AND IDEAS: FREEDOM ASPIRATIONS FROM LATE MODERN EXPERIMENTS AND BELATED COLONIZATION

PLANTATIONS, LABOR, RESISTANCE AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT IN THE PLANTATIONCENE AND ITS AFTERLIVES

( S.14 )

## PLANTATIONS, LABOR, RESISTANCE AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT IN THE PLANTATIONOCENE AND ITS AFTERLIVES

Michele Tenzon, Technical University of Delft, Faculty of the Built Environment; Wallonie-Bruxelles International

Axel Fisher, Université Libre de Bruxelles, Faculté d'Architecture

Plantations have long been paradigmatic sites where planning, architecture, and labor intersect with the rationales of extractive economies—once under colonialism, and now through neo-imperial ventures. As spaces of forced and/or exploitative labor, plantations have profoundly shaped the built environment of former colonies and continue to do so, especially in the Global South, structuring both local societies and global economies. From worker housing, settlers' and clerks' quarters, and processing facilities to irrigation systems and transport infrastructure, plantations materialize hierarchies of power, control, and resistance that persist—spatially, socially, and ecologically—long after their initial economic models have shifted or collapsed.

This session engages with the notion of the Plantationocene, which situates the plantation as a central force in shaping planetary transformations, linking ecological degradation, racial capitalism, and labor exploitation across time and space. Understanding plantations as architectural and infrastructural projects compels us to interrogate the spatial logics of control, extraction, and segregation that structured colonial landscapes and continue to reverberate in postcolonial and contemporary conditions. We invite contributions that examine plantations as laboratories of architectural production and spatial organization, considering the role of enslaved, indentured, and coerced laborers in shaping these environments. How did architectural design and construction methods evolve within these exploitative settings? What spatial strategies were used to enforce discipline, productivity, and segregation? How did laborers resist, appropriate, or adapt these spaces to their own needs?

Potential topics include, but are not limited to:

- The role of plantations in the development of colonial infrastructure and building technologies

Michele Tenzon is an urban and architectural historian, currently a WBI Excellence postdoctoral Fellow and guest researcher at TU Delft's Faculty of the Built Environment. He holds a PhD from the Université libre de Bruxelles, where he studied village design and rural modernization in late colonial and early independence Morocco. His current research examines plantation territories in Africa, focusing on palm oil in the DR Congo. His recent publications include a co-authored book on the United Africa Company (Bloomsbury) and a Bruno Zevi Prize-winning study on modernist design in Morocco.

Axel Fisher is part-time associate professor at the Université libre de Bruxelles, Faculty of Architecture. He holds a PhD from the Politecnico di Milano. He has held different visiting and research appointments (Technion IIT in Haifa; Université de Liège; TU Berlin) and postdoctoral fellowships (FNRS, WBI.World). He served as CLARA Architecture/Recherche's editor-in-chief, coordinated MODSCAPES—Modernist Reinventions of the Rural Landscape, a collaborative European research project. His research focus on the entanglements between modern architecture, planning, and rural modernization.

- Architectural typologies of plantations and their relationship to labor organization
  - The spatialization and manifestation of power structures among different social groups involved in plantations—including workers, clerks, technicians, settlers, supervising staff and directors—along class, gender, and ethnic lines
  - The circulation of architectural knowledge between metropole and colony in plantation economies
  - Labor struggles and architectural adaptations within plantation environments
  - The afterlives of plantations and their spatial reconfigurations in postcolonial contexts
- By interrogating the plantation as both a site of labor exploitation and architectural production, this session seeks to foster a critical dialogue on how colonial labor regimes shaped the built environment and continue to inform contemporary spatial inequalities within the framework of the Plantationocene.

### Speakers

Elisabeth Sommerlad, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität  
Pedro Pombo, Islands and Small States Institute, University  
of Malta

**Reimagining the Plantation: Spatial Afterlives  
of Colonial Landscapes in Mauritius**

Jasper Ludewig, University of Technology Sydney  
**Mining Sugar: The Infrastructure of Australian  
Resource Imperialism**

Lía Duarte Rodríguez, Hochschule Anhalt, Dessau  
Elke Beyer, Hochschule Anhalt, Dessau  
**Backstage of Global Sugar: Assembling life around  
“batey” plantation settlements in the Dominican  
Republic**

Patrick Jaojoco, School of Architecture, Princeton University  
**The Iwahig Experiment and the Mindanao  
“Problem”: Globalization, Agroforestry, and the  
Evolution of the Philippines’ Prison Colonial  
Paradigm to 1954**

Elliott Sturtevant, Florida International University  
**Planting a Crop, Growing a Territory:  
Architectures of Hawaiian Sugar Industry**

## Reimagining the Plantation: Spatial Afterlives of Colonial Landscapes in Mauritius

Elisabeth Sommerlad, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität  
Pedro Pombo, Islands and Small States Institute, University of Malta

The colonial plantation economy has left an enduring imprint on the social and ecological fabric of Mauritius. Although the country gained independence in 1968, the territorial structures, spatial inequalities, and environmental degradation established during colonial era and rule persist and continue to influence daily life. In this presentation, we explore how plantation landscapes are being transformed and reappropriated in post- and neocolonial contexts, often reproducing colonial spatial logics. In our presentation, we aim to examine three spatial configurations in which the legacy of plantation architecture and infrastructure is being reimagined and touristified for contemporary use: (1) the conversion of former plantation houses and related buildings into heritage sites, museums, restaurants, or event venues; (2) the replication of colonial architectural styles in coastal resorts that market “authentic” plantation aesthetics; and (3) the development of gated real estate projects and smart cities on former sugar cane fields, where colonial land use patterns are overwritten by exclusive and commodified urbanism.

Across these examples, we trace how colonial architectures and spatial imaginaries are mobilised to create cultural, economic, or symbolic value, while often obscuring the histories of forced labour and exploitation on which they were (and are) built. We argue that such transformations do not merely aestheticise the plantation past but frequently reproduce its underlying asymmetries of access, labour, and control.

Drawing on the concept of the Plantationocene, we situate these developments within the broader planetary dynamics of racial capitalism, environmental extraction, and postcolonial dispossession. Our contribution critically unpacks how the plantation as an architectural and socio-economic form continues to structure spatial inequalities in Mauritius long after its ostensible demise.

( S.14 )

## Mining Sugar: The Infrastructure of Australian Resource Imperialism

Jasper Ludewig, University of Technology Sydney

This paper presents an infrastructural history of Australia's overseas sugar industry by tracing the transformation of one of its central elements: phosphorus. It follows the movement of rock phosphate from the islands of Nauru and Banaba to the chemical plants in Sydney where the imported rock was used to produce the fertiliser superphosphate. Large shipments of superphosphate routinely left Sydney at the turn of the twentieth century, bound for the Colonial Sugar Refining Company's vast plantations in Fiji. Each year, hundreds of thousands of tons of raw sugar and its by-products were exported from Fiji back to Australia for the manufacture of foodstuffs, pharmaceuticals, and construction materials. By mid-century, Australia consumed both more phosphate and more sugar per capita than anywhere else in the world.

By dissolving typological distinctions between the (sugar) plantation and the (phosphate) mine, this paper reveals an integrated extractive system that tethered disparate Pacific sites to the Australian consumer base. The carefully designed infrastructure of this system—a network of offices, housing, industrial facilities, railways, and wharves—both intensified the regional circulation of natural resources and enforced racialised distinctions between white wage labour in the Australian metropole and indentured Asian and Islander labour in the Pacific.

( S.14 )

**Backstage of Global Sugar:  
Assembling life around “batey” plantation  
settlements in the Dominican Republic**

Lía Duarte Rodríguez, Hochschule Anhalt, Dessau  
Elke Beyer, Hochschule Anhalt, Dessau

This contribution traces the spatial assemblages of sugar plantation landscapes in the Dominican Republic by combining critical approaches to post-colonial geographies and globalized commodity production systems with a close architectural reading of the “small spaces” (Chattopadhyay, 2024), typologies, and trajectories of community livelihoods. Its focus and entry point is the batey, a particular type of settlement shaped in the 20th century by state and private conglomerates’ interventions to transfer from the rudimentary colonial apparatus to a “modern industrialized one”. Today, the bateyes accommodate agricultural communities whose livelihood is not only structured by the specific conditions of migration and labour in globalized commodity production, but embedded in a complex, multi-sited web of life-sustaining wage-earning and care practices. Cutting sugar cane for international markets is accompanied by preparing the land, growing and selling vegetables or animals, raising children, building and maintaining houses in rural settlements, as well as by seasonal work elsewhere in the country: from other agricultural fields, tourist resorts, construction sites to care domestic work in middle-class households. This paper explores the architectures and transcalar spatialities of these arrangements of life’s work, being situated in the plantationocene territoriality of sugar production, which extends far beyond the sugar fields. Taking a multi-scalar, multi-sited lens, our analysis emphasizes the processes of peripheralization, discipline, and alienation on both macro and micro levels that are distinctive of these settings. Through archival research on architectural and planning documentation, the contribution discusses the state’s efforts in (re)producing spatial assemblages based on the continuation of colonial legacies at different scales: from parcelling the land and establishing infrastructures for sugar production to defining and controlling the various forms of livelihood by establishing specific architectures which echo the labor hierarchy of the sugar scheme. Foregrounding the batey in multiple relations and dependencies allows us to read them not only as a reproductive backstage, constitutive of exploitative global commodity production, but as site of rhizomatic translocal livelihoods.

( S.14 )

## **The Iwahig Experiment and the Mindanao “Problem”: Globalization, Agroforestry, and the Evolution of the Philippines’ Prison Colonial Paradigm to 1954**

Patrick Jaojoco, School of Architecture, Princeton University

Throughout the late nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries, the governance of the Philippines has been variously hailed as an experiment in civilization, liberal & neoliberal democracy, and counterinsurgency. Coupled with this experimentation has been the growth of a Spanish- and American-founded system of prison colonies, in which incarcerated Filipinos are taught the supposed virtues of hard work and good citizenship via export-oriented agricultural production.

This paper highlights the interconnected evolution of three key sites in this process of experimentation—the Colonia Penal de San Ramon/San Ramon Penal Colony in Zamboanga, Mindanao (est. 1870); the Iwahig Penal Colony near Puerto Princesa, Palawan (est. 1904); and the Davao Penal Colony in Davao, Mindanao (est. 1932)—as crucial to the development of the Philippine carceral system. The resulting analysis identifies and defines a prison colonial paradigm of Philippine national development, characterized by architectural and geospatial experiments in ideological containment and plantation economics. These three projects, then, become essential to understanding the history of modern governance across the entire archipelago.

This paper constitutes part of my broader historical project and dissertation, which follows the history of agro-carceral experimentation across the Philippine archipelago to 1973. The projects described above are three of seven experiments in prison colonial development that now constitute the seven national prisons and penal farms in operation in the Philippines today. My geographic, historical, and spatial analysis of these projects highlight the influence of foreign agronomic interest in the foundation of the modern Philippine state; and the evolving reliance on geospatial counterinsurgency techniques to quell the movements for national liberation that have coalesced across the islands since the late nineteenth century. Ultimately, the Philippines’ prison colonial paradigm is foundational to understanding the state’s agricultural policies throughout history and the continued repression of national sovereignty across the Philippine archipelago today.

( 5.14 )

**Planting a Crop, Growing a Territory:  
Architectures of Hawaiian Sugar Industry**  
Elliott Sturtevant, Florida International University

In 1875, after two previously unsuccessful attempts, the Kingdom of Hawai'i signed a Reciprocity Treaty with the United States that worked to realign the flow of goods between nations by removing trade barriers on select commodities, including sugar. These new lines expanded those already drawn on maps of the Hawaiian Islands that traced a proliferating set of infrastructures—cane flumes, irrigation ditches, narrow gauge railways, wire rope transportation systems, and mechanical conveyors—designed to plug the islands' economy into the circuits of nineteenth-century transpacific trade. This paper reads the architecture of Hawaiian sugar plantations along and against the grain to show how agents of American corporate imperialism transformed the islands' ecology to generate higher yields and speed the flow of commodities to mainland markets, while constricting the movement of those brought to the islands to work their fields.

( S.14 )



Benguela Railway, Track laying: alignment and levelling, Cubal Variant.  
CCFB, Variante do Cubal (Trama, 1975).

## ARCHLABOUR: ARCHITECTURE, COLONIALISM AND LABOUR IN PORTUGUESE COLONIAL RULE

Fernando Pires, Dinâmia'CET-Iscte  
Leonor Matos Silva, Dinâmia'CET-Iscte

Who were the workers involved in architecture and construction works in Portuguese colonial territories in Africa? Where did they come from? How were they recruited? What were their expectations? How were they paid? What were their skills and tasks? What materials and construction systems did they work with? What training did they receive? How did they resist and collaborate? What were the repercussions of these (often compulsory) work experiences? How should this legacy be dealt with? Where to find and how to examine construction workers in archives and sources?

In this session, researchers from the ArchLabour project will present their ongoing research and discuss some of the project's questions. The presentations will cover a variety of topics, time frames, geographies and building typologies, ranging from large-scale infrastructure to archival research. The spotlight will be on ArchLabour case studies, main sources and methodologies, including an analysis of construction work on railways, dams, housing and settlements in Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde and São Tomé e Príncipe in the 20th century. Key concepts such as subalternity, policies, race, gender, conflict and resilience will be examined in relation to construction materials and systems, the production of localised knowledge and labour skills and categories.

Fernando Pires, born in Guinea-Bissau (1956), has a degree in architecture and urbanism from the University of Sarajevo (1983), a master's degree in Urban Design from ISCTE (1999) and a PhD in Heritage of Portuguese Influence in the World from the University of Coimbra (2017). Since 2019, he has been an integrated researcher at the Dinâmia'CET Center for Studies on Socioeconomic Change and Territory, ISCTE-University Institute of Lisbon. Between 1988 and 2023 he was a teacher at CED Pina Manique (Casa Pia de Lisboa), where he worked with secondary school and vocational school students. His research focuses on the Cape Verde archipelago and covers the areas of history, heritage, architecture, urban design, urbanism and planning.

Leonor Matos Silva is an integrated researcher at DINÂMIA'CET, ISCTE-University Institute of Lisbon. She was Co-Principal Investigator of the WomArchStruggle project and is currently a Research Fellow on the LabourMap-Macao project (both funded by the FCT), and on the ArchLabour project (funded by the ERC, coordinated by Ana Vaz Milheiro). She holds a PhD from ISCTE on architectural education in Lisbon. She convened the seminar Gender Struggles in Architecture, Colonialism, and Housing (Lisbon, 2024) and chaired the session "Learning from (and for) Africa. Architecture, Colonialism and Conflict" at the CPCL II Conference. In 2025, she was awarded an FCT Scientific Employment Stimulus grant.

## Speakers

Sónia Pereira Henrique, Dinâmia'CET-Iscte

Filipa Lopes, Dinâmia'CET-Iscte

**Tracing Public Works in Historical Archives:  
From the Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino  
to the National Archive of Cabo Verde**

Francesca Vita, Dinâmia'CET-Iscte

**Uncovering colonial labour and construction.  
Building a Database for Cataloguing and Analysis**

Ana Vaz Milheiro, Dinâmia'CET-Iscte

**Building São Januário Hospital: Portuguese  
technical perspectives on Chinese Labour**

Beatriz Serrazina, Dinâmia'CET-Iscte

**Constructing the Benguela Railway: Labour, Skills  
and Materials in Colonial Africa**

Filipa Fiúza, Dinâmia'CET-Iscte

**Building the Cunene Agricultural Settlement  
in Angola: a perspective on Labour**

**Tracing Public Works in Historical Archives:  
From the Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino  
to the National Archive of Cabo Verde**

Sónia Pereira Henrique, Dinâmia'CET-Iscte  
Filipa Lopes, Dinâmia'CET-Iscte

This presentation outlines archival research conducted within the framework of the ArchLabour project and reflects on the methodological potential of cross-referencing between the archives of the former metropolis and local archives in the former Portuguese colonial territories, with Cape Verde as a focal point. The presentation comprises three sections. The first part focuses on the archival processing and study of records from public works conducted over the past 15 years at the Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino in Lisbon. The second section presents a preliminary examination of fonds and records associated with labour and public works within the National Archive Institute of Cabo Verde. Finally, the presentation critically examines the challenges and possibilities of cross-referencing documentation between the two archives, grounded in case studies from the ArchLabour project. The current research examines archival records to gain a technical perspective on architectural and infrastructural projects, as well as the potential to reconstruct administrative networks and reassess local agencies' testimonies. Drawing on personnel files and labour documentation, the analysis enables a contextual understanding of administrative practices and labour experiences within the colonial framework of Cape Verde.

( S.15 )

**Uncovering colonial labour and construction.  
Building a Database for Cataloguing and Analysis**  
Francesca Vita, Dinâmia' CET-Iscte

This paper focuses on the cataloguing, managing and data processing of archival material for studying construction and labour history during Portuguese colonial rule in Africa. As part of the ERC project Architecture, Colonialism and Labour (ArchLabour), which examines the impact of labour on colonial architecture, this paper explores how the ArchLabour team together with a group of visual programming experts has shaped a digital database for the analysis of construction and labour of major colonial infrastructures, including dams, railways, settlements, ports and airports. By dealing with a vast range of archival documents (e.g., technical reports construction logbooks, materials charts, photographic surveys, budget worksheets, etc.) and actors (e.g., marginalised workers, architects, engineers, construction firms, suppliers, contractors, labour welfare institutions, etc.), this paper addresses a series of questions related to labour invisibilities, construction complexity and digital data management. How to create a digital platform that helps to uncover who built colonial architecture and how? How do tools of digital data management can assist the research on colonial infrastructures, unveiling unnoticed aspects of construction and labour? Can digital data management help to reframe colonial archives by reading documents against the grain? How to implement digital tools to recontextualize overlooked histories of labour and construction?

Drawing from ArchLabour case studies and based on archival documentation collected in national and international archives and in different supports, this paper examines the creation of a digital platform of data management for studying labour and construction history, proposing operational ways to unveil invisibilities of construction history, subaltern labour, non-human actors and material agency. At the same time, this paper aims to discuss the limitations of digital support, questioning which aspects of construction processes (e.g., material flows, worker mobility, wages, race inequalities, labour agency, construction costs, etc.) can be meaningfully captured through data, and which cannot.

## Building São Januário Hospital: Portuguese technical perspectives on Chinese Labour

Ana Vaz Milheiro, Dinâmia'CET-Iscte

The historical context of the Conde de São Januário Central Hospital (CHCS) in Macau dates back to the 1870s, beginning with a military hospital under Portuguese administration. This original structure was later replaced in the 1950s by facilities compliant with the rigorous technical standards required for treating tropical diseases. This construction process aligned with the concept of “welfare colonialism,” as described by Bradley (1965), where infrastructure became a tool for legitimizing colonial presence.

This presentation is part of the LabourMap-Macau project and focuses on the construction of this facility across two primary building periods: the 19th century and the post-World War II era. Archival documents from 1873 highlight the Portuguese technical team’s deep interest in the Chinese workforce and the gradual “Westernization” of architectural practices adopted by local laborers. The hospital’s initial construction involved complex bidding processes with companies from both the colony and Hong Kong. During this phase, Portuguese staff faced significant challenges, such as the absence of the metric system among local teams, requiring the development of conversion tables and practical solutions to overcome language barriers and ensure the implementation of European design ideas.

By the mid-20th century, global construction systems had been fully integrated into the region. There was a consolidated confidence in the quality of Chinese labor, and recruitment processes had become more streamlined. Notably, official reports from this era show that women appeared on construction sites as an integrated workforce, with their names explicitly included in technical records. Although both the 1873 pavilion and the 1954 Estado Novo representative building have since been demolished—replaced by a modern structure in 1989—the histories linked to their construction and the dynamics of their labor force remain vital aspects that revive their historiographical presence and cultural legacy in Macau.

( S.15 )

## **Constructing the Benguela Railway: Labour, Skills and Materials in Colonial Africa**

Beatriz Serrazina, Dinâmia/CET-Iscte

The Benguela Railway was one of the most significant infrastructure projects for mobility developed during Portuguese colonial rule in Angola. Construction of the railway took place between 1883 and 1931, with the main objective being to establish a transport network connecting the port of Lobito in Angola to the mineral-rich Katanga region in southern former Belgian Congo. Although the construction was overseen by Pauling's, an English contracting company, it consistently received substantial support from the colonial state, particularly with regard to labour recruitment. A substantial body of research has been conducted into the political, economic, social and territorial impacts of the Benguela Railway. The project facilitated significant inter-imperial connections and the establishment of new settlements along the route, creating an important transportation corridor serving a large area extending over 1,800 kilometres. However, the contribution of the thousands of African workers who participated in constructing this railway line and associated buildings remains to be evaluated.

This presentation examines the impact of African workers on building sites, mobile yards and construction tasks along the Benguela Railway. The range of people involved included British, Portuguese and Greek contractors and engineers, as well as African, Chinese and Indian labourers, artisans and porters, all of whom had different skills and expectations. This paper will explore the various skills developed by these workers, as well as changes in the discourse surrounding these skills over time and in different geographical locations. What insights can be gained by adopting a more nuanced perspective that extends beyond the colonial-rooted dichotomy of skilled versus unskilled labour? The research will draw from various sources, including company and colonial inspector reports, drawings and photographs.

( S.15 )

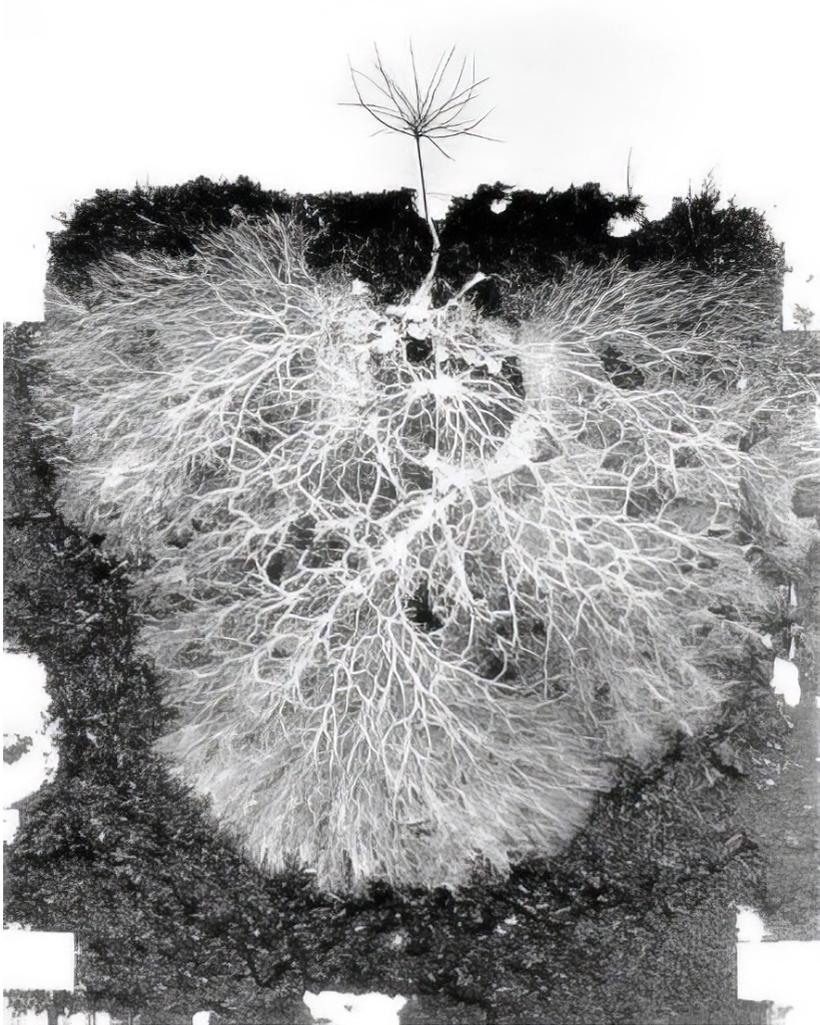
## **Building the Cunene Agricultural Settlement in Angola: a perspective on Labour.**

Filipa Fiúza, Dinâmia'CET-Iscte

This paper analyses the construction of the Cunene Agricultural Settlement in southern Angola through the perspective of labour within Portuguese colonial development and settlement policies. In Angola, European-style agricultural exploitation of the territory began in the late nineteenth century with the settlement of European farmers and became more systematic in the second half of the twentieth century, when technical and financial means converged with colonial strategies that aligned development works with colonial settlement efforts, as articulated by Vicente Ferreira in 1927. The Cunene settlement followed this logic closely. Under the direction of civil engineer Trigo de Morais, the hydroelectric and hydro-agricultural development plan for the Cunene region was initiated in 1953 in the Matala area, based on a preliminary project produced by the Southern Angola Mission in 1946. Moving beyond the amateurism that had characterised earlier agricultural settlements, this large-scale enterprise fulfilled several objectives: generating electricity through a dam to respond to the rapid demographic growth of the province, particularly in urban centres and emerging industries; promoting livestock and agricultural production to supply local populations and external markets; and consolidating territorial occupation in Angola's hinterland through the extension of the Moçâmedes railway and the settlement of migrants from the Portuguese metropole.

Drawing on colonial administrative records, technical reports, planning documents and visual sources, the paper analyses the organisation of construction work, focusing on workforce composition, recruitment practices, wage structures and labour hierarchies that shaped the building of the Cunene Agricultural Settlement, while also reflecting on the methodological challenges of tracing construction workers in colonial archives.

( S.15 )



Extensive network of mycorrhizal hyphae radiating from roots of a larch (*larix*) seedling grown in peat  
(Used with permission: <https://biostim.com.au/>)

## UNDERCOMMONS' EVER-PRESENCE: LABOUR AND RESISTANCE IN COLONIAL AND POST-COLONIAL SPACE

Nuno Tavares da Costa, Dinâmia'CET-Iscte

After questioning Michel Foucault's Heterotopias concept with colonial and post-colonial contexts in the congress's previous edition, this session now intersects it with another critically debated concept: Fred Moten and Stefano Harney's Undercommons (2013). While both concepts address spaces of exclusion, they operate in distinct ways. Unlike heterotopias, the undercommons refers to spaces and communities that function beneath or beyond mainstream institutions, always insurgent, fugitive, fostering forms of solidarity, resistance, and alternative ways of knowing and being.

Hegemonic architecture has long centralised power and recognition within a limited network of players, designers and planners often trained in renowned institutions. This system tends to neglect the bodies, narratives, and contributions of those who, despite possessing empirical knowledge, remain peripheral in architectural production. The history of construction is deeply tied to local material and human resources, particularly forced and underpaid labour. In colonial-built environments, large-scale labour systems coerced rigid spatial and social hierarchies. What was the impact of the undercommons' ever-presence in shaping colonial-built environments? How do these spaces remain as sites of memory and contestation in postcolonial societies? Beyond understanding labour as subjugation, how can we recognise its influence as a form of intelligence and resistance that conditions architectural projects spatially and technically?

This theme is crucial not only for the history of past societies but also for supporting present-day (marginalized) communities with colonial pasts and their evolving relationship to space and construction. Research based either on case studies or methodological approaches to the theme is welcome, to enable a discussion on the impact of labour within the colonial construction effort. But also, how to reframe it not just as a history of domination but as an ongoing struggle over visibility, agency, and resistance. We welcome proposals that address: labour as architectural intelligence; fugitive practices in colonial cities; and post-colonial legacies.

Nuno Tavares da Costa studied Architecture at FA-UTL and holds a Ph.D. in Architecture from ISCTE-IUL. For the past 25 years, has worked as a Senior Project Architect at Bak Gordon Architects while also teaching at ISMAT and conducting research at Dinâmia'CET-Iscte. His work explores the intersections of architecture, construction practice, history, and consciousness (ethics), with emphasis on resistance, insurgency, and intellectual disobedience, as forms of critique and political engagement for cultural change.

## Speakers

Albert Brenchat Aguilar, Bartlett School of Architecture,  
University College London

**Participative Planning and Situated Study:  
Henry Nii Adziri Wellington, the university's  
undercommons, and urban resistance in Nima**

Alokeparna Sengupta, O.P Jindal Global University

**Establishing identity to counter precarity:  
Street Vending, Bureaucracy, and the  
Undercommons in Postcolonial Delhi**

Vandana Baweja, University of Florida

**Building Tropical Architecture: Division  
of Construction and Intellectual Labor**

Philippe Zourgane, ENSA Lille

**Architectural Free Zone**

Shivani Shedde, Princeton University

**Establishing a Pedagogical Undercommons?  
The Mozambique Institute c. 1965**

**Participative Planning and Situated Study:  
Henry Nii Adziri Wellington, the university's  
undercommons, and urban resistance in Nima**  
Albert Brenchat Aguilar, Bartlett School of Architecture,  
University College London

In 1968, a group of Christian university students in Ghana established Operation Help Nima (OHN) to resist the clearance of Accra's Nima-Maamobi, a borough with a diversity of continental nations, ethnicities, and religions (with a majority of Muslim Northern Ghana's migrants). OHN was led by Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST)'s architecture student and soon lecturer Henry Nii Adziri Wellington and University of Ghana's social science graduate, historian, and linguist James Annorbah-Sarpei. As Undercommons, they took resources from KNUST and its European partnership with the Institute for Tropical Building and Planning in Darmstadt to work with Nima's citizens to revitalise the borough's multicultural coexistence and protect its built environment by writing surveys, planning proposals, lobbying the government, and directly intervening in the street's infrastructure. In turn, Wellington promoted forms of co-housing to enhance a national sentiment through exchanges between the diversity of faiths and community origins gathering at the time in Nima. As The Undercommons suggest: they fugitively planned 'to stay, to stick, and move'.

In so doing, they operated alongside but beyond the labour-removed practice of international leading architects at KNUST such as Max Bond — who barely visited the construction site of his renown Bolgatanga Library — and the network of planning consultants who dictated self-help housing and construction from KNUST. In their work, they fixed themselves instead of fixing others: Annorbah-Sarpei denounced what he termed 'colomentality' and 'churchianity' in his environment and changed his relation to the church through his Christian missionary work in other relevant architecture projects of the time such as Tema. Wellington denounced what he termed 'Euroghanaianization' and changed his lifestyle, and eventually moved from architectural design to conservation and study of the built environment and its inherited histories of oppression. Through The Undercommons, this paper reflects on their engaged architectural practices 'where the work gets done, where the work gets subverted, where the revolution is still black, still strong.'

( S.16 )

## Establishing identity to counter precarity: Street Vending, Bureaucracy, and the Undercommons in Postcolonial Delhi

Alokeparna Sengupta, O.P Jindal Global University

This paper responds to the session's call to reframe the sphere of ordinary work not solely as a space of subjugation but as a form of spatial intelligence, resistance, and community-making. It investigates two hawker markets in Narela—an industrial periphery in northwest Delhi—within the framework of the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014. The Act aims to formalise vending through periodic surveys, Certificates of Vending (CoV), and Town Vending Committees (TVCs). In many ways the legislation is also an act of architecture, delimiting spatial frameworks within which vending can continue in conjunction with the official parameters of urban design. But the Act's implementation reveals a layered reality marked by informal negotiations, bureaucratic opacity, and fragmented power. The study documents how vendors navigate and reshape space through daily interactions with municipal authorities, outsourced surveyors, police, and non-state intermediaries such as pradhans and thekedars. These practices can be grouped under what Moten and Harney describe as the undercommons: insurgent, fugitive spaces that persist beneath formal systems, generating alternative modes of belonging and resistance. Vendors, often cast as nodes to be carefully managed within dominant architectural, regulatory, and urban design narratives, emerge as active agents of spatial (re-)production and re-designation—asserting visibility and negotiating legitimacy within (often) hostile regulatory environments. The interface between an insistent architecture of fixing vending and the relatively more flexible spatial negotiations in the sphere of ordinary work has a long lineage in colonial rule around the region of Delhi, whereby regulatory principles of urban design remained anxiously involved in the management of street vending. But it is also worth specifying a new postcolonial point of departure, as marked by the 2014 Act. Governmentality in this context is expressed not only through surveillance and enumeration but also through improvisational systems of order mediated by those at the margins. Rather than being passive subjects of policy, street vendors actively contest and shape their urban environments, creating what might be read as counter-architectures rooted in survival, solidarity, and resistance.

This paper situates these practices within broader postcolonial urban processes, arguing that informal labour operates as both a critique and a co-author of the city. In doing so, it contributes to ongoing conversations around city space, colonial legacies, and the political and creative agency of those who build, inhabit, and claim space from below.

## **Building Tropical Architecture: Division of Construction and Intellectual Labor**

Vandana Baweja, University of Florida

In 1953, a conference on Tropical Architecture was organized at the University College London (UCL) in London, which eventually led to the establishment of Department of Tropical Architecture in 1954 at the Architectural Association (AA) School of Architecture in London. This paper analyzes the photographic representation of white and black bodies in the conference proceedings titled, Conference on Tropical Architecture: A Report on the Proceedings of the Conference Held at University College, London. The proceedings present a clear racial division of labor—white bodies are represented in laboratories in high-technology settings as the vanguards of intellectual labor, and colored bodies are depicted performing hard labor in the sun. This confirms the neocolonial intent of the production of knowledge in London on tropical architecture. However, if we examine the history of these representations, they present a contradictory narrative of the colored body's relationship to labor. The photos of colored bodies engaged in manual construction have their roots in the nineteenth-century texts that the advocates of slavery of wrote. They argued that colored bodies had a higher tolerance of heat and were conditioned to perform tough labor in the sun. The question this paper addresses is: if the colored bodies already had the heat tolerance, why did they need the physiological comfort of the tropical modernism, which was being offered as a service to the decolonizing tropics? This paper argues that through these photographic representations of construction labor, architects created a promise of modernity for the elite who could attend architecture schools, and in the process allowed people in the tropics to replicate racial hierarchies associated with construction labor, into class divisions. These new hierarchies disrupted the older social relationships between master masons as architects, and their guilds of construction labor.

( 5.16 )

**Architectural Free Zone**Philippe Zourgane, ENSA Lille

The Architectural Free Zone that gives this paper its title is the shadow zone, the notvisible hidden behind that imperial construction. It is a zone off camera that doesn't fit within the framework of the territorial ordering by the plant; a zone off the grid that escapes the table; a zone that doesn't respond to the imposed technical rationality or function via the primacy of vision in urban and architectural planning. The Architectural Free Zone is a radical and pragmatic implementation of escape from the control of the State. The Architectural Free Zone is based on a case study of a neighbourhood on the island of La Réunion in the Indian Ocean. The neighbourhood is one of the communities created by former slaves and their descendants and, as we will see, is defined by its vegetation. In these urban spaces created by the freed slaves or their direct descendants, from the beginning the urgent problem they faced was how to live without a master, how to live without working, of how to live without being arrested by the police and imprisoned for vagrancy (indigenous law).

The Architectural Free Zone is an a posteriori theoretical construct, a theoretical notion that emerges from practice, like Hakim Bey's definition of the TAZ, the Temporary Autonomous Zone, from which I draw. The very definition of the Free Zone - that it must "escape from the surveyors of the State" - refers to the architectural function of ordering and its relationship to the standardization project of the royal sciences and the State, from which it must escape in order to retain the power of freedom. The project of the Architectural Free Zone is committed above all to the destruction of the urban infrastructure or the construction of a community without infrastructure in the architecturally programmed sense. The extension of Bey's concept to transform it into a TAAZ—Temporary Architectural Autonomous Zone, or Architectural Free Zone— designates this unique urban planning, which is already evident in Bey's text.

( 5.16 )

## Establishing a Pedagogical Undercommons? The Mozambique Institute c. 1965

Shivani Shedde, Princeton University

In the aftermath of the CONCP conferences of 1961 and 1965, new struggles for liberation were decided upon by the several revolutionary parties of the Portuguese colonies. They agreed that to achieve independence from fascist rule, new methods of armed struggle needed to be waged, transferring the fight of labour unions in the city to the guerrillas of the countryside. At the same time, these parties agreed that national reconstruction “from below” demanded the implementation of educational programs, healthcare, and technical training, and for that reason began to set up new institutions in liberated areas and in cross border spaces allowed by friendly governments.

This paper looks at the setting up of the Mozambique Institute in Tanzania in 1965, a project of Eduardo and Janet Mondlane. It shows how ideas of “militant education” (Vaz Borges, 2019) were central to its mission, where “mentally decolonizing” (Machava, 2019) members of rural Mozambique could enable the building of the yet-to-be-liberated socialist state. In addition to teaching people the skills required for daily survival, improving general literacy, or even traditional classes in Mathematics and Science, subjects like History and Geography were considered essential for members and theoreticians of the Mozambican Liberation Front. Taking the pedagogical mandates of the Mozambique Institute as a central problematic, this paper situates how ‘geography’ became a site of “undercommons” (Moten, Harney, 2013), where undertaking the labour of construction—beyond that of the school itself—but of space writ large: at local, national, and transnational levels was a crucial aspect of militant ideology.

( S.16 )



Mobility-restricted migrant workers operating the lathes at a workshop of the Abadan refinery. Ca. 1930s.

© Online Archive of Iran Petroleum Museum and Documents. Available at: [www.petro museum.ir](http://www.petro museum.ir)

## TOPOGRAPHIES OF FORCED LABOR: (IM)MOBILITY, DISPOSABILITY, AND LIMINALITY

Qianye Yu, Cornell University  
Ehssan Hanif, Cornell University

Hannah Arendt differentiates the ancient concept of slavery from that of the moderns: while in antiquity it was a matter of avoiding the toiling of life's necessities, for the moderns it is a means of procuring undervalued labor-power with a goal of maximizing profits. As economic imperative increasingly dominates all aspects of human existence, the majority of the society experiences a proletarianization which deprives individuals of meaningful agency within the alienating system of mass production. This panel invites papers that reconsider the built environment not only as an assemblage of aesthetic and technological objects but also manifestations of labor relations – specifically forced labor. The use of forced labor has often been justified through the creation of an inferior “other,” on the basis of race, gender, religion, ethnicity, nationality, and knowledge. Regimes of exploitation – whether corporate entities, state-backed institutions, or sovereign states – subsume outcasts who are deemed less deserving of labor protections into their techno-economic apparatus and utilize spatial interventions to render them obscure from public view, easily relocatable, disproportionately exposed to environmental hazards, positioned at the frontlines of war as expendable subjects, and confined to substandard living conditions.

This panel seeks to interrogate the architectural histories of such acts of violence embedded within the chains of stigmatization, dispossession, and exploitation. We invite reflections on forced labor as a modern phenomenon, where human rights are contingent upon citizenship status and where technical progress gives rise to a more complex built environment which enhances mass subjugation, detention, and exploitation. We welcome papers that critically examine the spatial dynamics of forced labor in both colonial and post-colonial contexts, including indentured servitude, human trafficking, political prisoners, state-mandated public service, and corporate supply chain exploitation.

Qianye Yu is a PhD candidate in History of Architecture and Urban Development at Cornell University. Her dissertation project, tentatively titled “Transactional Friendship: The Role of Chinese ‘Architectural Aid’ in Post-Independence Tanzania (1964–1976),” studies the impact of China’s “architectural aid” on the trajectory of Tanzanian socialism as well as its involvement in the nation-building project of Julius Nyerere’s nascent regime. Her research employs a comparative approach to analyze the various state-led modernization initiatives in Asia and Africa and seeks to illuminate the connections between less known geographies through the transnational flow of architectural expertise and the mobility of construction workers. Yu studied architecture at Huazhong University of Science and Technology and obtained a M.S. in Historic Preservation from Columbia University.

Ehssan Hanif is a Ph.D. Candidate in the HAUD program at Cornell University. In his research, incorporating a postcolonial perspective, he aims to study the interrelations between oil and modernity in the Middle East. Before coming to Cornell University, he worked as an independent researcher and translator. He translated fourteen books from English into Persian, including *Architecture and Modernity* (H. Heynen), *Bourdieu for Architects* (H. Webster), *Benjamin for Architects* (B. Elliot), *Story of Post-modernism* (C. Jenks), and *Aesthetic Theory: Essential Texts* (M.F. Gage). His most recently published work was a review of Pier Vitorio Aurelli’s *Architecture and Abstraction* (The MIT Press, 2024), published in *Khōrein: Journal for Architecture and Philosophy*. He will be Zahedi Family Fellow at Stanford University during Spring 2025.

## Speakers

Lobna Ben Salem, Faculty of Letters, Arts, and Humanities,  
Manouba University

**From Mine to City: The Urban Legacy of Extraction  
in South African Literature**

Dorothea Douglas, DFG Research Training Group “Organizing  
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**The Artisan Prisoner: Circulation and Immobility  
of an Administrative Figure**

Sara Frikech, ETH Zurich

**Dark Waters: The Imfout Dam and the Architecture  
of Forced Labor under Vichy Rule in Morocco**

Tania Osorio Harp, University of California, Berkeley

**The Materialization of Inequality and Difference  
Through Domestic Relations of Labor**

## From Mine to City: The Urban Legacy of Extraction in South African Literature

Lobna Ben Salem, Faculty of Letters, Arts, and Humanities, Manouba University

This paper explores South African literature as a prism through which to examine the enduring legacies of forced labor and racial capitalism. It interrogates how South African authors, namely Zakes Mda and Lauren Beukes, narrativize the physical and ideological legacy of mining—compound housing, labor control systems, migrancy, and the racialized spatial order—that has underpinned (post)colonial and (post)apartheid economies. The paper also traces the potential of literature to document the human costs of mineral extraction and to mourn and critique the dispossession and structural violence embedded in the industrial mining complex. It thus examines how Mda's *Ways of Dying* and Beukes' *Zoo City* negotiate the transition from historical to contemporary forms of labor precarity, and highlights the afterlives of coercion in post-apartheid neoliberal economies. The study uses postcolonial theory insights to argue that post-apartheid South African literature functions as a form of cultural resistance and historical reckoning.

## The Artisan Prisoner: Circulation and Immobility of an Administrative Figure

Dorothea Douglas, DFG Research Training Group “Organizing Architectures” and the Technical University of Darmstadt

The consolidation of the German imperial polity in 1871 hinged the political project of Reichseinheit (territorial unity) on the feasibility of Rechtseinheit (legal unity). Legal codification entailed massive national infrastructure projects to accommodate a novel juridical public, as well as a differentiated prisoner class.

Within the Prussian Ministry for Public Works, a Dezernat (department) was established to plan and oversee all new construction of courthouses and prisons. While representative courthouse construction was largely concerned with a projection of the autonomous and economically rational legal subject of codification, construction of carceral architecture focused largely on the efficient rationalization of arrest. On June 13th 1900, Oberbaurat Eduard Saal, director of this department’s eastern branch, published an article advocating for the use of prison labor in the construction of carceral sites. Reframing concerns about market distortion as a matter of pedagogical care, Saal argued that incarcerated, skilled craftsmen and artisans ran the risk of forgetting their trades if kept idle, increasing their risk of recidivism. Moreover, he projected that the economic savings of prison labor for upcoming construction in the east would allow for more costly and ornate construction elsewhere within the department’s purview. The conventional view of the prisoner as a passive object of control, an idle, morally deficient body to be contained, corrected, and surveilled, is made fertile in Saal’s argument, though reintegration into a flow of generative labor.

Drawing on new archival research, this talk traces the figure of the artisan-prisoner through legal ordinances, departmental guidelines, and informal communications between planners. This penal subject, projected into the “periphery” of the German Empire’s eastern territories, emerges within an administrative pedagogy, oriented toward a telos of productive efficiency. A figure of the techno-economic apparatus of empire, it is embedded within the geographies of exploitation that define the polity’s territorial logic.

## Dark Waters: The Imfout Dam and the Architecture of Forced Labor under Vichy Rule in Morocco

Sara Frikech, ETH Zurich

This paper examines the Imfout Dam as a key site in the spatial history of forced labor under the Vichy regime in colonial Morocco. Constructed between 1939 and 1945 on the Oum er-Rbia River, the dam served both hydroelectric and irrigation purposes, with the aim of supplying water to 250,000 hectares of the Doukkala and Abda plains. Celebrated by French authorities as a symbol of imperial progress and postwar reconstruction, the Imfout project concealed a brutal regime of coerced labor and confinement.

Archival documents reveal that Imfout housed a concentration and forced labor camp for foreign workers, including Jewish and non-Jewish refugees, political dissidents, and former members of the International Brigades. Prisoners faced hazardous working conditions, illness, malnutrition, and isolation. Overseen by colonial auxiliaries and Senegalese infantry under Vichy authority, the camp was one of several across North Africa, including Djelfa and Bou Arfa, where laborers were compelled to contribute to fascist-era infrastructure projects such as the Mediterranean-Niger railway and hydroelectric developments. The Ministry of Industrial Production and Labor administered these facilities and relied on legal ambiguities to criminalize so-called “undesirable” populations and strip them of basic rights.

Rather than viewing the Imfout Dam as a triumph of colonial modernisation, this paper foregrounds the largely overlooked histories of forced labor and incarceration that underpinned its construction. It argues that the dam's celebrated status as a symbol of progress must be critically re-examined in light of the violent, racialised, and coercive geographies through which it was realised. By recovering the histories of concentration camps in colonial North Africa and their entanglement with large-scale infrastructure projects, the paper challenges dominant narratives of technocratic development and reveals how colonial and fascist regimes intersected spatially and politically. In doing so, it seeks to open up new perspectives on the material legacies of colonial and authoritarian governance and their inscription in the built environment.

## The Materialization of Inequality and Difference Through Domestic Relations of Labor

Tania Osorio Harp, University of California, Berkeley

This paper argues that colonial labor relations within Mexican homes have not ended but have modernized alongside the country's social, economic, political, and built environments. During the colonial period, domestic service was a major occupation for Indigenous people, many of whom were coerced into working in Spanish households in exchange for food, clothing, and shelter. Today, domestic service continues to be performed primarily by poor, migrant, and often racialized women. Focusing on Mexico City from 1955 to 1970, this paper examines how modernist architecture helped normalize and "modernize" these colonial relations of labor. Middle-class apartment buildings from this period not only reveal that live-in houseworkers were essential to maintaining both the architecture and their employers' lifestyles. Through the spatial division between workers and the rest of the household, it also demonstrates that architecture codified a system of separation and invisibility that reinforced class and racial inequalities. This paper highlights how such spatial codification reflected an accepted—but seldom questioned—social norm: that there was a certain class of people for whom architects found it reasonable to offer substandard living conditions. These spaces were not incidental but carefully designed. For this paper, I focus on to the work of architect-engineer Boris Albin, whose contributions to cost efficiency, systematization of design, timely construction, and building quality turned further desirable due to his ability and talent for masterfully integrating and separating interior spaces that were sharply marked by social and spatial signifiers within a context of intimacy. Ultimately, this paper suggests that the legacy of this architecture persists in the value we place on the work and the people who clean our homes, take care of our children, and cook our meals.





( S.18 )

South African Mandate over South-West Africa. The housing of natives at the Otavi Mines.  
United Nations Archives at Geneva.

## LEGAL ENTANGLEMENTS OF LABOR AND ARCHITECTURE IN AFRICA

Manuela Camargo, Max Planck Institute

Raquel Sirotti, Max Planck Institute

Colonial and postcolonial infrastructures in Africa were informed by legal and labor regimes, while functioning as an active arena where legal norms were shaped, contested, and redefined through everyday interactions and power struggles. Factories, plantations, compounds, administrative offices, courts and prisons operated as sites of legal and social translation, where abstract norms were not only imposed, but also negotiated and challenged. Likewise, labor regimes were not merely dictated through legal prescriptions; but continually reshaped by the lived experiences of Africans and the socio-material environments in which they operated. This panel explores the entanglements of law, labor and architecture in Africa, considering both colonial histories and their postcolonial legacies. Rather than understanding law merely as a system of state-based rules - legislation, codes, and regulations - we seek to understand the role played by domestic and international legal frameworks in architectural spaces and how these spaces, in turn, shaped legal and labor dynamics. Moving beyond disciplinary isolation, entangling different fields and perspectives allows for a broader understanding of the interplay between discourses, techniques and actors participating in the organization and control of labor and space. By taking architecture and built environments as a medium through which law and labor are shaped, this panel seeks to open discussions on possibilities emerging from intersections between different fields and approaches. Is it possible to think about architecture and labor without thinking about law? How do spaces become legible to law, and how are workers not only rendered as legal subjects but also actively subvert and transform these spaces? We encourage novel and interdisciplinary contributions reading architecture, labor and law through one another and as entangled formations. In doing so, we aim to foster more comprehensive and multifaceted considerations on the connections between the role of law and architecture in organizing colonial and postcolonial realities.

Manuela Camargo de Assis is a PhD researcher at the Max Planck Institute for Legal History and Legal Theory and the DFG Research Training Group "Organizing Architectures" (Frankfurt, Germany). She holds an M.A. in Law from the University of Brasília (Brazil) and a Law degree from the Federal University of Goiás (Brazil). Her research focuses on international legal history, sovereignty, and gender. Her PhD investigates architecture's role in nation-building in Africa and Latin America. She was a teaching assistant for Public International Law and International Economic Law.

Raquel R. Sirotti is a Research Group Leader at the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies and a Postdoctoral Researcher at the Max Planck Institute for Legal History and Legal Theory. She holds a Law degree from Universidade Estadual de Maringá (Brazil), an M.A. from Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (Brazil), and a Ph.D. from Goethe Universität. Her research explores "mutual dependencies" in African colonial legal history, focusing on labor, punishment, and governance in Mozambique. She is also interested in using audiovisual tools, particularly podcasts, for academic research.

## Speakers

Jaco Barnard-Naudé, University of Cape Town

**Colonial Juridicity, Apartheid Overwriting:  
The Authorisation of Architectural Type in South  
Africa Past-Present**

Babere Kerata Chacha, Laikipia University

**The Coloniality of Space and Labour:  
Landscape, Aesthetics, Race, and Urban  
Work Relations in Nairobi, Kenya**

Liora Bigon, Ariel University School of Architecture

Oyewale Oyeleye, Ariel University School of Architecture,  
Osun State University

**Intersections between Colonial “Peanut Railways”  
and Urban Configurations in Colonial West Africa**

Simon De Nys-Ketels, Université Libre de Bruxelles,  
Ghent University

**Law, enforcement, labour: the materialities  
of coercive construction in colonial Congo**

## Colonial Juridicity, Apartheid Overwriting: The Authorisation of Architectural Type in South Africa Past-Present

Jaco Barnard-Naudé, University of Cape Town

The paper is a jurisprudential engagement with the assertion of Iain Low (2022) that colonial and apartheid architecture in South Africa is best apprehended in the terms of an “overwriting” of type in the built environment. From the point of view of nomos as the constitutive spatiality of law, even in the negative form of its large scale failure to concretise its letter and spirit in space (as is the case with the South African Constitution of 1996), I am interested in asking after what an overwriting of the colonial type could be signifying for what Johan van der Walt once called ‘the language of jurisprudence’, here post-apartheid jurisprudence and the law that it engages. Could it be that the failure of the post-apartheid Constitution to spatialise itself in the concrete normativity of a large scale transformation of the legacy of apartheid spatial injustice, is attributable precisely to the continuous writing of the colonial-apartheid ‘type’ in the language of jurisprudence after apartheid? To be sure, there has, at the level of the letter of the Constitution, occurred what Julia Kristeva in a different context called a revolution in language. But it is at the very least suggestible that this is not the case at the level of the interpretation of the constitutional letter, that is, at the level of adjudication. I am interested in considering the extent to which the colonial-apartheid type endures as a paradigm within which to apprehend the hermeneutic task, while I also want to consider recent landmark judgments at the level of the Constitutional Court that have as their subject the legacy of spatial injustice and that have been adjudicated in a way that may be indicative of an overwriting of the enduring colonial type in the language of jurisprudence, such that these judgments may represent the rudiments of a more widespread spatialisation of the revolution in language that has been experienced in the constitutional letter. Therefore, the ‘entanglement’ of labor and architecture that will concern me is doubly ‘legal’ in the sense that the colonial type in architecture was built on the back of the legalised super-exploitation of colonised labor and, secondly, that the labor represented by the adjudicative task of interpretation is by definition a legal form of it that has been made responsible in an unquestionable way, for the transformation of the legacy of architectural / spatial / built injustice that was formed (and normed) in definitive ways by the super-exploitation of labor facilitated by the colonial-apartheid legal system.

## **The Coloniality of Space and Labour: Landscape, Aesthetics, Race, and Urban Work Relations in Nairobi, Kenya**

Babere Kerata Chacha, Laikipia University

This study investigates the colonial and postcolonial production of urban space in Nairobi, Kenya, through the interrelated lenses of landscape, racial aesthetics, and labour relations. It explores how colonial urban planning not only racialized space and aesthetics but also stratified labour in ways that persist in the city's spatial and social organization today. Nairobi's urban form—originating as a segregated colonial railway town—was designed to serve imperial interests by spatially separating Europeans, Asians, and Africans, assigning them differential aesthetic environments, infrastructure, and labour roles. The colonial logic of space rendered African labour both invisible and indispensable, positioning Black workers at the periphery of the city's modernist aesthetic while denying them access to the urban resources they helped build. This study examines how these racial-spatial labour dynamics have evolved in the postcolonial era, particularly in relation to informal settlements, commuter geographies, and contemporary urban exclusion. Drawing on decolonial theory, archival research, ethnographic observation, and interviews, the research interrogates how Nairobi's urban landscape continues to reproduce colonial hierarchies through aesthetic codes, spatial arrangements, and labour inequalities. It argues that understanding the coloniality of both space and labour is essential to reimagining equitable urban futures in Nairobi and similar African metropolises.

**Intersections between Colonial “Peanut Railways”  
and Urban Configurations in Colonial West Africa**

Liora Bigon, Ariel University School of Architecture

Oyewale Oyeleye, Ariel University School of Architecture,  
Osun State University

Our lecture will reflect on some of the prominent colonial railway projects in British and French West Africa, which had been associated with the peanut monocrop production and transportation. Namely, Dakar–Saint-Louis/Niger lines (1885/1924); Lagos– Ibadan/Kano lines (1901/1914); and the Lagos Steam Tramway (1902). It will explore the relations between this vast infrastructure projects and the morphogenesis of urban settlements during the colonial area in terms of urban planning, design and architectural forms.

The analysis will focus on the political and cultural implications of segregationist urban planning practices in association with railway layouts.

A rich corpus of visual data will be incorporated in the presentation, collected from erstwhile colonial archives in the UK, France, Senegal and Nigeria; and from our recent fieldwork in Senegal along parts of the relevant railway line, its urban vicinities and built-up tapestries. A glance on post-colonial developments will be provided as well.

( S.18 )

## Law, enforcement, labour: the materialities of coercive construction in colonial Congo

Simon De Nys-Ketels, Université Libre de Bruxelles, Ghent University

'In each locality, a quarter should be attributed to constructions or houses built in wood or iron, and another reserved for huts, shacks and shanties used by people of colour.' (Decree of 14 September, Boma, 1898)

The first building regulation in colonial Congo had clear segregationist ambitions. Implicitly, however, it also reflected broader racialized views widespread across colonial propaganda, in which 'l'architecture nègre' was scoffed aside as unsanitary, non-durable, and primitive. And yet, much of the (early) colonial built environment – from hospitals and schools to housing – was realized with precisely these materials.

This paper explores how the explanation for this tension between discursive hierarchies and colonial realities may ironically also lie in law, and its enforcement: although the transition from Congo Free State to Belgian Congo led to the official abolishment of forced labour, coercive law enforcement in Belgian Congo still generated an abundant unfree workforce. By combining colonial photography with state archives, I unpack how the 'penal excess' of the colonial juridical system – one in ten male colonized had been incarcerated before WWII – led to a constant supply of cheap penal labour, for which local policymakers could make explicit requests in case of labour shortages (Brown 2002, 403). This African workforce, however, inherently embodied localized know-how on building practices and materials, and the colonial reliance on penal labour thus also led to a far-reaching material hybridization of colonial architecture. Court proceedings of regulated labour conflicts, however, suggests that such dynamics of coercive employment and localized knowledge even extended into Congo's regular construction sector. As such, this contribution aims to highlight the importance of law to fully understand colonial architecture, emphasizing how law and enforcement generated the penal labour and coercive legal hierarchies on colonial construction sites that provided the crucial yet remarkably understudied foundations of the colonial built environment.





# Book of Abstract Participants

Benguela Railway, "Transfer of wagons on April 31, 1913", Angola (AHU, OP17539, Report, 1913)

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Axel Fisher

Aziz Mouqit

Babere Kerata Chacha

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Beatriz Serrazina

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Cecilia Chu

Clarisse Figueiredo de Queiroz

Clarisse Genton

Claudia Gastrow

Curt Gambetta

Dhara Ramesh Patel

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Elliott Sturtevant

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