Archaeological excavations on the site of the «Half Moon Camp», Wünsdorf near Berlin, 2015. © Jokeair Luftaufnahmen

International Online Conference «Architectures of Colonialism: Constructed Histories, Conflicting Memories»

Organizers: Vera Egbers, Christa Kamleithner, Özge Sezer, Alexandra Skedzuhn-Safir, Albrecht Wiesener

Host: DFG Research Training Group 1913 «Cultural and Technological Significance of Historic Buildings» (Brandenburg University of Technology Cottbus-Senftenberg; Leibniz Institute for Research on Society and Space, Erkner; Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)

Place: Online (Cottbus/Berlin)

Date: 16–19 June 2021

Authors: Katelyn Williams, BTU Cottbus-Senftenberg

With the Black Lives Matter movement, debates about the conflicted heritage of colonialism have gained momentum, leading to the toppling of statues all over the world and growing requests to decolonize perspectives. The International Online Conference on «Architectures of Colonialism» at Brandenburg University of Technology organized by Vera Egbers, Christa Kamleithner, Özge Sezer, Alexandra Skedzuhn-Safir, and Albrecht Wiesener took up this call and confronted the fields of architectural history, archaeology, and heritage studies with the difficult question of the memorialization of colonial sites and architectures and how we can take a decolonial approach to their history.

In the first keynote of the conference, ITOHAN OSAYIMWESE (Providence) discussed the longer history of the decolonial approach to architectural history, which is rooted in a rich body of postcolonial architectural history that has emerged since the 1970s and especially the 1990s. While the recent discourse stresses that coloniality persists and new epistemologies are necessary to decolonize the legacies of colonialism, the older scholarly work of postcolonial researchers has already revised the methods of architectural history and shifted the focus from questions of architectural style to social processes and bodies in space. Scholars from around the globe like Swati Chattopadhyay, Ola Uduku, and Hannah Le Roux have provided examples of an architectural history that drew on new archival materials, counter-sources, and indigenous voices by focusing on issues such as the construction of identity, knowledge practices, local agency, and materiality and technologies.

In the first section, «Colonial Building Networks,» the introduction of industrial materials and modern building/planning techniques within colonized territories was discussed together with the role of the various stakeholders involved in the built and imaginary construction of the colonies. BEATRIZ SERRAZINA (Coimbra) demonstrated how private companies exploiting raw materials in African colonies used modern planning strategies to consolidate their power and emphasized the long-lasting effects of the «grey and mundane» built landscapes that had once been
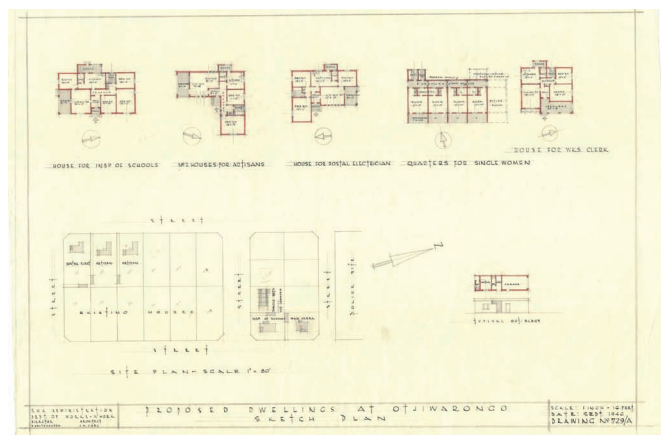
A typical housing scheme of the South-West Africa Public Works Department. Source: Namibian Ministry of Work and Transport Drawing Archive, Dwg. No. 729/A

The South-West Africa Pavilion on the opening day of the Van Riebeek Festival 1952 in Cape Town. Source: Die Suidwester, March 26, 1952, p. 1

workers' villages constructed by the Diamond Company of Angola (Diamang). MEENAKSHI A (New Delhi) recalled the importance of examining building techniques beyond visual criteria through her analysis of the emergence and development of Portland Cement in British India. Instead of focusing on the work of single architects, she showed that the new material has been embraced for its ability to establish a codified regularity, leading towards the modernization and standardization of rural landscapes through the construction of roads and housing. MONIKA MOTYLINSKA (Erkner) explored the involvement of German builders' networks in the development of construction techniques dedicated to colonized territories that qualified as «the tropics» in the 1930s and post-1945. Through the analysis of an exhibition entitled «Tropenschau» at the annual Leipzig Spring Fair (1934), she traced the presence of German construction firms and their role in colonial propaganda. In the final talk of the session, JENS WIEDOW (Cottbus) focused on the role of exhibitions in the establishment of racial segregation within colonial society by discussing the Van-Riebeeck Festival in 1952 in Cape Town. By analyzing the architecture and the exhibitions, Wiedow could reveal constructed narratives dissociating the industrial achievements of colonial «civilization» from «indigenous» cultural practices.

In the following session, «Colonizing Space and Time,» KAMYAR ABDI (Tehran) presented a paper prepared with FAEZEH DADFAR (Sydney) providing the history of the columned halls in Pasargadae and Persepolis as part of the Achaemenid Persian Empire and a specific architecture of power in the Caucasus. He distinguished several hierarchies of those architectural features on the provincial and local levels where their presence expressed imperial power and dominance as part of the «Persianization» of the Caucasus region. NUNO GRANCHO (Lisbon) addressed the example of Diu, a former Portuguese colonial city in

India, and in drawing on a comprehensive local urban history revealed that in planning the city, homes were placed according to race and ethnicity, local powers were based on religious affiliation, and the structures for trade were decided upon in line with imperial military imperatives. The following presentation by MATTHEW WELLS (Zurich) discussed the invention of the telegraph and how it operated in favor of the British following the conclusion of the First Indian War of Independence in 1857. He explained how the creation of new networks of communication and building types functioning as data hubs in the center of the British Empire supported the dominance of the British. ZULFIKAR HIRJI (Toronto) continued the discussion of logistical architectures conveying colonial ambitions, but emphasized their effects on the subjects and their everyday lives. In examining how clocktowers and commercially printed diaries transformed perceptions of time amongst Muslim communities of coastal East Africa in the 19th and 20th centuries, Hirji showed that architectures must be studied alongside other objects and archival materials to understand their impact.

The session on «Postcolonial Nation Building» started with a presentation by MOHONA REZA (Edinburgh), who introduced architectural endeavors in Bangladesh in search of a national identity after British and Pakistani rule. She explained how the eclecticist approach during the Bengal Sultanate melted into Islamic forms during British colonialism and then, supported by international organizations such as UNESCO, changed into another form of Islamic modernism. The second presentation by GREGORY VALDESPINO (Chicago) analyzed suburban housing projects in Senegal from 1945 to 1965 through the lens of legitimation policies of French and Senegalese governments. He drew a scheme linking the modernist dreams of French planners with the new attempts in planning after the independence of Senegal in 1960

and demonstrated the continuity of concepts regarding «European bourgeoise domesticity» as a core of the new national identity.

In the second keynote, ANTOINETTE JACKSON (Tampa) discussed the importance of centering everyday experience in heritage work to avoid reproducing fixed ideas established through institutional violence or indifference. She used different stories to frame her discussion, starting with Ms. Mattie Gillard, a descendant of enslaved people who shone a light on those who fought to survive and create a home for themselves on Boone Hall Plantation in South Carolina. Jackson then moved away from the physical space of the plantation to focus on the African American Burial Ground and Remembering Project, which aims to memorialize the numerous burial grounds that have been lost to history due to abandonment. She asked how we can reimagine these spaces, leaving the question open while providing some examples of the role that the state and other institutions could play in this. Jackson closed with a look at the Black Cemetery Network, which emphasizes the power of spaces where people can both learn the history of these places and engage in discussions about their impact on contemporary communities.

To kick off the session on «Contested Monuments,» ELIZABETH RANKIN (Auckland) and ROLF MICHAEL SCHNEIDER (München) explored the ever-timely question of what should be done with the monuments of discredited regimes, focusing on the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria. Constructed between 1931 and 1949 to commemorate the Dutch-speaking pioneers who settled in the South African hinterlands, the sheer size of the monument made removal an impossible option. Rankin and Schneider discussed the numerous attempts that have

been made to neutralize its impact by shifting interpretation away from its colonial emphasis, but showed that the monument remains a site of contention between colonial and post-colonial politics. GEORGI VERBEECK (Maastricht/Leuven) discussed the history of the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren and its transformation from 2013 to 2018 as a reaction to the growing criticism of the colonial period in Belgium. Verbeeck acknowledged current criticism of these changes but refrained from taking a clear position on the strength of the museum's efforts, instead presenting the institution's new philosophy as a compromise or an attempt to serve not as an activist institution but as a facilitator for wider public debate.

SHRADDHA BHATAWADEKAR (Cottbus) opened the session «Post/Colonial Place-Making» by sharing her research on the social and political complexities of shaping railway architecture in colonial India and the image-making process involved. Focusing on Victoria Terminus (now Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus in today's Mumbai), which became a central building of British India, she showed how both colonial and local actors influenced this process. YICHI ZHANG (Oslo) presented the case of Victoria Park in Tianjin, an urban space designed by the British settlers according to their taste and functional needs, and explained how the story of the park testifies to the interaction between Chinese and British residents during a period of rapid evolution within Chinese society. In his talk on the case of Singapore's first municipal power station at Cape St. James, TILMAN FRASCH (Manchester) addressed buildings that are under-valued by the regular public, concluding that although these «ugly ducklings» attract less attention, they are an important part of the past of states like Singapore that do not have a longer history of heritage management. In the final presentation of the

Crowds at the Voortrekker Monument for inauguration, Pretoria, 1949. Source: The Illustrated London News, December 31, 1949; courtesy of UCT Thompson, Newspaper clippings, 1938–50

Victoria Terminus, today's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus in Mumbai, 1860s–70s. Source: Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Matthew Dontzin, 1985

Demolition of the Mouzinho de Albuquerque Memorial 1975 in Lourenço Marques, today's Maputo. Source: © Centre for Documentation and Photographic Training, Maputo, Collection Ricardo Rangel

Statues on the grounds of the National Museum of Art, Maputo, 1981 (removed from urban space 1974–75). Source: © Centre for Documentation and Photographic Training, Maputo, Collection Ricardo Rangel

session, YING ZHOU (Hong Kong) discussed examples of the reuse of colonial architectures in Shanghai and Hong Kong that differ significantly from the critical engagements in Western Europe or the United States. By looking at the recent history of the two cities, she clarified the economic and symbolic values that have influenced the conservation of the historic islands in an urbanism dominated by demolition.

JOAQUIM RODRIGUES DOS SANTOS (Lisbon) started the session on «Whose heritage?» with a talk about the Basilica of Bom Jesus in Goa, India, exploring the shifting meanings associated with the site throughout its history. The focus was on the «restoration» of the building in the early 1950s, which included the removal of plaster to visually support the Portuguese regime's idea that Portuguese India dated back to ancient times. An unintended effect, however, was that major conservation issues arose that led to an ongoing debate on the conservation and identity of the place. In the following presentation, MARK DIKE DELANCEY (Chicago) used the example of King Njoya's palace in Cameroon to argue against the predominant focus in architectural history on European-made structures in this region or on African contributions that preceded colonialism. He showed that numerous references in the building went far beyond European elements and were deliberately intertwined by the king to exude an air of power in an uncertain political situation. JORGE CORREIA (Guimarães) then explored the role that Portuguese, Spanish, and French colonialism played in the shaping of cities in the Maghreb. Whereas in most of these cities the colonizers left the historic centers untouched and built new quarters on adjacent land, Ceuta represents a special case. For centuries, the cityscape was adapted in order to promote Ceuta as an eternal Christian city, thus subordinating centuries of Islamic rule. To close the session, NORA LAFI (Berlin) used several case studies

of former Ottoman cities (Casablanca, Algiers, Tunis, Aleppo) that were colonized by the French to examine the current debates on heritagization. Each case study exposed a different layer of the colonial-era paradigms that still linger in the urban fabric of many cities in the MENA region, as well as in the strategies used for dealing with them in heritage conservation policies and actions. Lafi thus finally stressed the need to decolonize the very notion of heritage.

The last section presented «Decolonising Perspectives» from a range of case study engagements. With an emphasis on methodological reflections, these final contributions linked back to Osayimwese's opening lecture and her accentuation of decolonizing research as political engagement and interest in transforming current material conditions. AMY MIRANDA (Aarhus) combined her case of the Captives' Façade in Corinth (in the ancient Roman province Achaea) with the theoretical framework of «relational space». By drawing attention to the site as a network of spatialities – including physical, conceptual, and psychological aspects – Miranda sought to overcome an otherwise Romano-centric and thus colonialist reading of such sites as «peripheral» to the center of the Roman Empire. The joint contribution from ALICE SANTIAGO FARIA (Lisbon), ANTOINETA REIS LEITE (Coimbra) and MAFALDA PACHECO (Lisbon) delved into the topic of decolonization through a focus on the old geography of the Portuguese Empire from a critical heritage studies perspective. With a mixed focus on built environment and social spaces, the speakers used the case studies of the Azores archipelago, Goa, São Tomé, and Mozambique Island to illustrate decolonization not as a binary shift from imperial to local perspectives but as happening through an embrace of the entanglement of different scales. LISANDRA FRANCO DE MENDNOÇA (Guimarães) continued with an investigation of the topography of both loss and liberation resulting

from the process of independence in Mozambique around 1975, with a specific focus on Maputo. By using photographic collections and local periodicals, she addressed the re-semantization of public space, including the removal of sculptures, and showed the complexities of post-colonial nation building. The last contribution came from KARIN REISINGER (Vienna), who located decolonizing capacities in the awareness of her own positionality as a researcher. Drawing on activist engagement with the indigenous community of the Sámi in Malmberget in Northern Sweden, a mining town in the process of dismantling, Reisinger showed that architectures of colonialism do not belong to the past, but can be understood as a prolonged colonialism involved in continuous life-cycles.

In the third keynote, which concluded the conference, REINHARD BERNBECK (Berlin) drew the discussion to a colonial site not far from Berlin and Cottbus: a former World War I camp whose aim was to turn Muslim prisoners of war from French and British colonies into jihadists. Bernbeck not only introduced the history of the camp and its modus operandi, but also gave an account of the archaeological excavations that he was involved in there and the scattered distribution of the materials documenting the site. Since the camp was also used for racist studies, many materials – photographs, films, and sound recordings – can be found in other places. Peculiarly, the sound recordings are now stored in the Humboldt-Forum in the reconstructed Hohenzollern Palace, which was the seat of former colonial rulers – while at the site of the war camp, despite its history, a refugee camp was built. Bernbeck criticized this insensitive way of dealing with colonial history and advocated for the reassembling of these materials to make the war camp's history accessible.

In the end, the conference could only mark one step in the ongoing decolonization of perspectives on architectural history and built heritage. As these four days demonstrated, important preconditions for this process seem to be the intertwining of heritage studies and architectural history, and a more complex approach in which the architectural object is located at the intersection of a multitude of processes of construction, use, appropriation, and identification. The presentations from the various disciplines, including history and cultural anthropology, brought together different actors involved in these processes, drew on new archival material, and revealed the complexity of the social networks and historical layers that architectures of colonialism are embedded in, providing a solid foundation for further action in the future.

Prisoners of war in front of the mosque in the «Half Moon Camp», Wünsdorf near Berlin, c. 1916. Source: Frobenius-Institut, Frankfurt

Conference Overview

Introduction by Albrecht Wiesener and Christa Kamleithner
KEYNOTE LECTURE Itohan Osayimwese (Providence): From Postcolonial to Decolonial Architectural Histories: A Method

COLONIAL BUILDING NETWORKS
moderated by Özge Sezer

Beatriz Serrazina (Coimbra): Colonial Enterprises and Urban Design in Africa: Transnational Knowledge, Local Agency and the Diamond Company of Angola (1917–1975)
Meenakshi A (New Delhi): Portland Cement in British India: Materials, Expertise and Colonial Infrastructures, c. 1900–1940s
Monika Motylinska (Erkner): Selling Tropical Architecture? German Networks of Planning for the Tropics in the 1930s and post-1945
Jens Wiedow (Cottbus): Architecture and the Construction of Colonial Narratives: The South-West Africa Pavilion at the Van-Riebeeck Festival

COLONIZING SPACE AND TIME
moderated by Christa Kamleithner

Kamyar Abdi, Faezeh Dadfar (Tehran/Sydney): Architecture and Expression of Authority: The Achaemenid Persian Empire in the Caucuses
Nuno Grancho (Lisbon): Decolonizing the Architectural and Urban Histories of the Colonial City of Diu
Matthew Wells (Zurich): Networks, Data, Colonialism: Spatialised Bureaucracies at the India Office, 1867
Zulfikar Hirji (Toronto): Architects of Time: Coloniality, Clocktowers and Calendars on the East African Coast

POSTCOLONIAL NATION BUILDING
moderated by Özge Sezer

Mohona Reza (Edinburgh): Modern Architectural Transition in Post-Colonial Bangladesh
Gregory Valdespino (Chicago): Senegalese Suburbia: Building Homes and Bureaucratic Dreams in Postwar Senegal, 1945–1965

KEYNOTE LECTURE Antoinette Jackson (Tampa): Plantation Spaces and Memory – Heritage Interpretation, Memorialization, and Tensions of Public Use at Antebellum Plantation Sites, USA

CONTESTED MONUMENTS
moderated by Alexandra Skedzuhn-Safir

Elizabeth Rankin, Rolf Michael Schneider (Auckland/Munich): Afrikanerdom, Apartheid, Post-Apartheid: The Voortrekker Monument, Pretoria

Georgi Verbeeck (Maastricht/Leuven): A Belgian «Museum within a Museum»: From Royal Museum for Central Africa to AfricaMuseum

POST/COLONIAL PLACE-MAKING
moderated by Albrecht Wiesener

Shraddha Bhatawadekar (Cottbus): Processes and Politics of Representation: The Image of Railway Architecture in 19th-Century Bombay
Yichi Zhang (Oslo): Victoria Park in Tianjin: British Colonial Heritage Shaped by Interaction with an Evolving Chinese Society
Tilman Frasch (Manchester): Alternate Currents: St. James Power Station, Singapore
Ying Zhou (Hong Kong): Confounding Decolonizing «Etiquettes» and Reusing Colonial-Era Historic Buildings for Contemporary Art in the Global East: Cases from Hong Kong and Shanghai

WHOSE HERITAGE?
moderated by Alexandra Skedzuhn-Safir

Joaquim Rodrigues dos Santos (Lisbon): The Basilica of Bom Jesus in Goa (India) as a Paradigm of Transcultural Heritage: Values, Meanings and Conflicts
Mark Dike DeLancey (Chicago): Colonial-Era Architecture of the Colonized in Early 20th-Century Cameroon
Jorge Correia (Guimarães): Heritage and (Post) Colonialism, Context and Claim: Reading Built Stratigraphy in the Maghreb
Nora Lafi (Berlin): Whose Heritage? The Persisting Ambiguities of the Heritagization of Colonial Architecture in the Middle East and North Africa

DECOLONISING PERSPECTIVES
moderated by Vera Egbers

Amy Miranda (Aarhus): Freeing Rome's Captive Provinces: A Reconsideration of Imperial Architecture
Alice Santiago Faria, Antonieta Reis Leite, Mafalda Pacheco (Lisbon/Coimbra): Inquiring into (Portuguese) Colonial Heritage or how to be a Critical (Colonial) Heritage Researcher
Lisandra Franco de Mendonça (Guimarães): Boxed Empire: Framing Memories, Architecture and Urban Space in Maputo, 1974–1976
Karin Reisinger (Vienna): The Prolonged Coloniality of Mining Towns: Non-Binary Ways of Doing Material Positionality as a Researcher

KEYNOTE LECTURE Reinhard Bernbeck (Berlin): De-Subjectivizing Colonial Prisoners of War: The Wünsdorf Camp near Berlin, 1915–1918