

ARCH
LABOUR

11 – 13 February 2026
Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation
Lisbon, Portugal

COLONIAL AND
POST-COLONIAL
LANDSCAPES

3RD EDITION

COLONIAL AND POST COLONIAL LANDSCAPES

ARCHITECTURE COLONIALISM LABOUR

Call for papers

20th March 2025 – 20th May 2025

more info

www.archlabour.com

ARCH
LABOUR

COLONIAL AND
POST-COLONIAL
LANDSCAPES

A
ARCHITECTURE
INFRASTRUCTURES

dinamia
cet...iscte

iscte

fct
Fundação
para a Ciência
e a Tecnologia

Funded by
the European Union

Funded by the European Union (ERC, ArchLabour, 1101096606). Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Research Council. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

III International Congress

Colonial and Post-Colonial Landscapes: Architecture, Colonialism and Labour

11-13 February 2026

Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon

The Organisation Committee is now accepting abstracts for the 3rd International Congress “Colonial and Post-Colonial Landscapes: Architecture, Colonialism and Labour” in Lisbon, Portugal, February 11–13, 2026.

Please **submit an abstract proposal until May 20, 2025** to one of the 18 thematic sessions. Thematic sessions are listed below.

Submission Guidelines:

1. Abstract must be submitted in English (only) to the following [link](#)
2. Abstract must be under 300 words.
3. Please indicate the author(s) with e-mail contact and institutional affiliation;
4. Please attach a short CV of the author(s) (max 100 words).

The **selection of papers will be communicated on 20 June 2025**.

Authors with accepted proposals are expected to submit a 3000-word paper by 15 November 2025 to receive comments from the chairs.

Please submit any questions to cpclcongress@gmail.com

List of Sessions

- [1. The Photographic Dialectic: Labor and Post-colonial Agency](#)
- [2. Housing architecture for colonial and migrant workers. Control, education and everyday organization](#)
- [3. Education for Hu/manpower: architecture, planning, and construction](#)
- [4. Labor, Infrastructure, and the Built Environment: Colonial Legacies and Racialized Work in the U.S](#)
- [5. The Unseen Hands: Displacement, Erasure, and the Making of the Postcolonial City \(1940s-1980s\)](#)
- [6. The Settlers' Tools Will Never Build the Indigenous' House: Informal Housing as a By-product of Colonial Labour](#)
- [7. Laboring Landscapes: Workers' Agency in Transforming Agricultural Spaces](#)
- [8. Labour-Worlds: Situated frames and methods for labour and building in colonial South Asia](#)
- [9. Building Coloniality: Global Landscapes of Architectural Labour](#)
- [10. Designing the end of the World: Internationalism and construction in late Cold War](#)
- [11. Her Know How: gender and participation in the production of colonial/modern spaces](#)
- [12. Material landscapes of labour exploitation](#)
- [13. Typology, terms and ideas: Freedom aspirations from late modern experiments and belated colonization](#)
- [14. Plantations, Labor, Resistance and the Built Environment in the Plantationocene and its afterlives](#)
- [15. The Labour of Many and The Labour of None: the representation of labour in public art, monuments and memorials, visual art, design and architecture in the postcolonial period](#)
- [16. Undercommons' ever-presence: Labour and Resistance in Colonial and Post-Colonial Space](#)
- [17. Topographies of Forced Labor: \(Im\)mobility, Disposability, and Liminality](#)
- [18. Legal entanglements of labor and architecture in Africa](#)

1. The Photographic Dialectic: Labor and Post-colonial Agency

Guillermo S. Arsuaga; Princeton University

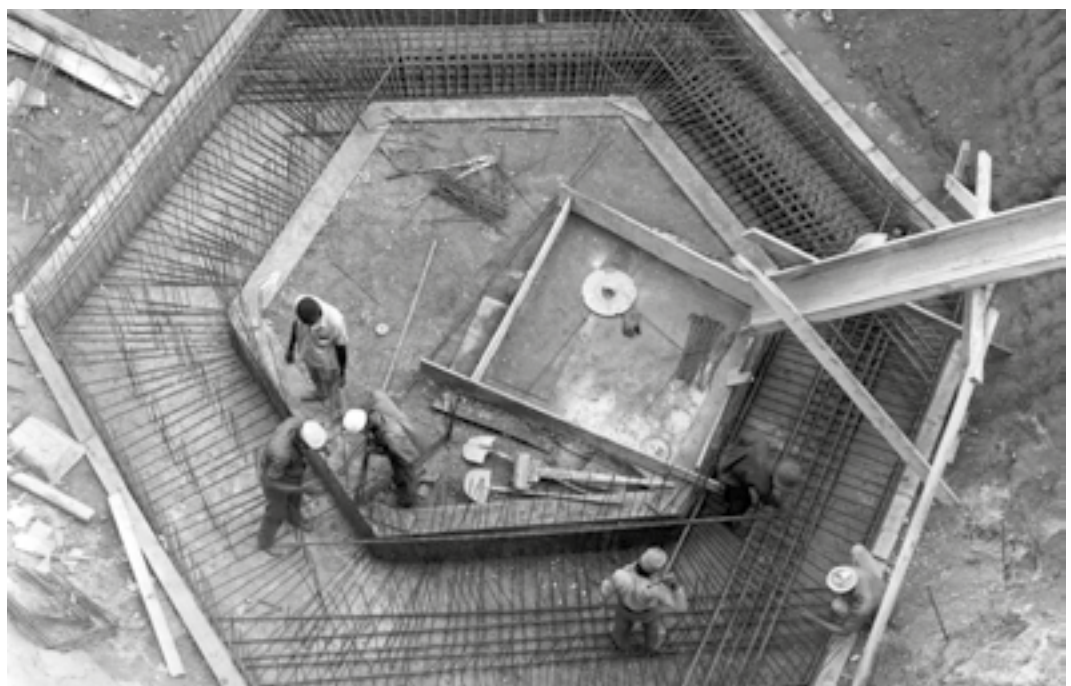
Guillermo S. Arsuaga, a PhD Candidate in History and Theory of Architecture at Princeton University, researches colonial labor documentation through construction photography and architectural development in West Africa. An MRC fellow at MoMA, his work on architectural historiography and colonial contexts 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.

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.



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

2. Housing architecture for colonial and migrant workers. Control, education and everyday organization

Ahmed El-Amine Benbernou CRH-LAVUE / ENSAPVS

Laura Guérin CRH-LAVUE / ENSAPVS

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).

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.



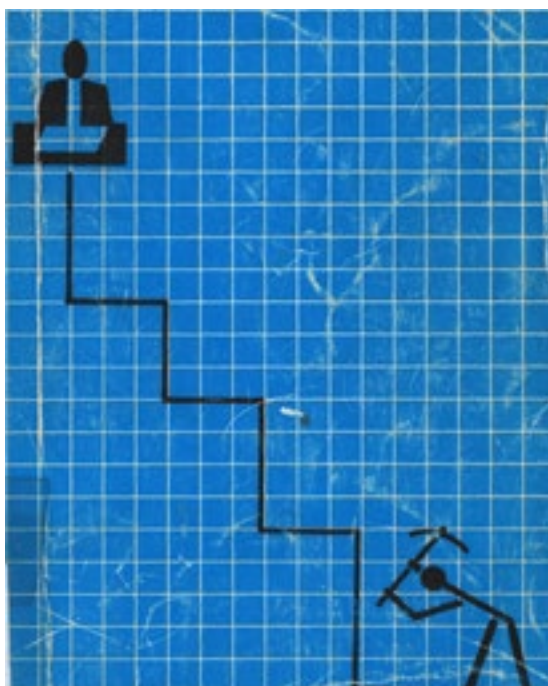
Foyer Karl Marx Sonacotra
in Argenteuil (France), 1970
(© Coll. Génériques/Fonds
Saïd Bouziri)

3. Education for Hu/manpower: architecture, planning, and construction

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

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.

'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?



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

4. Labor, Infrastructure, and the Built Environment: Colonial Legacies and Racialized Work in the U.S

Dr. 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.

The history of infrastructure and the built environment in the United States is deeply entangled with colonial expansion, racialized labor systems, and industrial capitalism. From the forced labor of enslaved peoples in the construction of early American cities to the exploitation of immigrant workers in major public works projects—including railroads, highways, and federal housing—the U.S. urban and architectural landscape has been shaped by marginalized and often invisible labor. This session critically interrogates the intersections of race, labor, and architecture in the formation of U.S. infrastructure, calling attention to the enduring inequalities embedded in these processes.

How have racialized labor forces contributed to the spatialization of American capitalism? What role did federal policies, from the New Deal to postwar urban renewal, play in shaping labor hierarchies and spatial injustices? How have marginalized communities resisted, adapted, or reclaimed spaces built under exploitative conditions? By examining these questions, this session aims to uncover how histories of coerced and underpaid labor continue to shape contemporary urbanism, policy, and architectural discourse in the United States.

We invite papers from architecture, urban studies, labor history, and related fields that critically engage with themes such as segregation and labor in public housing, the role of immigrant labor in construction, environmental racism and infrastructure development, and contemporary labor struggles in architecture and urban design. Through historical and contemporary analyses, this session seeks to challenge dominant narratives and propose frameworks for a more equitable built environment.



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

5. 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)

Beatriz Takahashi is a PhD candidate in Architecture at McGill University. Her research, "Laborers: Brasília Seen from the Ground (1956–1964)," examines labor, race, and gender in Brasília's construction through decolonial and critical race studies. Besides attending conferences and publishing her work, she has coordinated and organized international symposiums 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 pursuing her PhD in Architecture at McGill University. Her doctoral research is "Home as Archive: Postcolonial Housing after the Partition of British India (1947-1971)". Since 2012, has taught at prominent Universities in Pakistan. Abid has published with Springer and Routledge and extensively exhibited her work, centering de/anticolonial frameworks. Abid holds an MA in Architecture (University of Liverpool, 2012), and B. Arch (COMSATS University Islamabad, 2010). She is recipient of Visiting Artist Fellowship at Harvard University's Lakshmi Mittal Institute (2022).

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, Brasília'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, 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.



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.

6. 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)

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.

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.

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.



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

7. Laboring Landscapes: Workers' Agency in Transforming Agricultural Spaces

Natalia Solano-Meza (University of Costa Rica)

Silvia Mata-Marín (University of Costa Rica)

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.

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.



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/npcc.19916>.

8. Labour-Worlds: Situated frames and methods for labour and building in colonial South Asia

Dr. Megha Chand Inglis (The Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London)

Dr. Tania Sengupta (The Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London)

Dr 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.

Dr Tania Sengupta is Associate Professor and Co-Director of Architectural and urban History-Theory PhD at the Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL. 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.

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



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)].

9. Building Coloniality: Global Landscapes of Architectural Labour

Angela Gigliotti (ETH Zürich, Chair of History and Theory of Urban Design)

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

Angela Gigliotti is an architect, educator and researcher. She is currently External Lecturer and Research Faculty at DIS Copenhagen, Denmark (s. 2016); Research Fellow at Istituto Svizzero 2024/2025 and Academic Guest at the Institute for History and Theory at ETH Zürich – Chair of the History and Theory of Urban Design Prof. Dr. Tom Avermaete. 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.

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.



"Photograph depicting S.S. 'Marilyn' 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

10. Designing the end of the World: Internationalism and construction in late Cold War [pre-organized session, no open for call for paper]

Claudia Gastrow (North Carolina State University)

Nikolai Brandes (LMU München)

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.

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.

Pre-organised session | preliminary line-up:

- "Yugoslav Architecture and Monument-Making practices in Post-Colonial Guinea-Bissau"; Sanja Horvatinčić
- "Anatole Kopp: a French architect and the change of "mode de vie" in Alger"; Anat Falbel
- "Petrourbanism across the Southern Atlantic: Imagining Luanda at the Dawn of the Post-Cold War"; Ricardo Cardoso
- "War Ecologies. East Germany, Ecological Experiments, and the internationalisation of housing construction in Maputo, 1979-2002"; Nikolai Brandes
- "Prefabricated Solidarities: Cuban construction in Angola, 1976-1990", Claudia Gastrow

11. Her Know How: gender and participation in the production of colonial/modern spaces

Mariana Moura (University of Antwerp)

Katie Lloyd Thomas (Newcastle University)

Mariana Moura is an MSCA postdoctoral fellow at the University of Antwerp. Her research focuses on informal and self-organised spatial practices, drawing from decolonial and feminist theories. From 2021 to 2024, she was a postdoctoral researcher in the international collaboration project TF/TK, where she co-edited *Architecture from Below: An Anthology* (Mack Books, 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 is Professor of Theory and History of Architecture at Newcastle University. 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*.

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?

Panellists can expect to meet online a couple of times to discuss our research and develop common threads prior to the conference.

12. Material landscapes of labour exploitation

Robby Fivez (Vrije Universiteit Brussel, VUB)

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

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.

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' 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.



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

13. Typology, terms and ideas: Freedom aspirations from late modern experiments and belated colonization

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

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.

The 'Team 10 Primer' expressed the goal to "overcome the 'cultural obsolescence' of most mass housing" (Smithsons, 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, 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?

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)

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

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.

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
- 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.

15. The Labour of Many and The Labour of None: the representation of labour in public art, monuments and memorials, visual art, design and architecture in the postcolonial period

Milia Lorraine Khoury (Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Stellenbosch University, Hasselt University)

Milia Khoury completed a BTEC Diploma in Foundation Studies in Art & Design at Central Saint Martins College in 1999. In 2003 she obtained a BA Fine Arts degree and in 2008 a Master of Philosophy in Fine Arts degree from Michaelis School of Fine Art (UCT). She has taught at tertiary level since 2003 and has published several articles on art, design and architecture. Currently, she lectures in History/ Theory of Art & Design at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. In addition, she is a Joint-PhD in Visual Arts candidate at Stellenbosch University (South Africa) and Hasselt University (Belgium).

In 2019 the Ghanaian artist Ibrahim Mahama's monumental art installation entitled *The Labour of Many* opened at the Norval Foundation in Cape Town, South Africa. In this installation, Mahama covered the floors and walls of the gallery with hessian/ jute produce sacks stamped with "Produce of Ghana". These jute bag installations have become synonymous with the artist, like the covering of grain silos and other industrial-style buildings in Ghana. Here the hessian sacks become not just a residue of the produce it once conveyed from the former colonies like coffee, cocoa, tea, sugar and charcoal but discuss the role of hard labour during colonialism and the sacks become anthropomorphic symbols referencing the labourers' bodies themselves - "the labour of many". This session will extend the notion of "the labour of many" to also include and explore the discussion of the "labour of none". Analysing how from the 20th century onwards and in the postcolonial period through public art, monuments/ memorials, visual art, design and architecture there has been a shift from the representation and commemoration of the "labour of none" to the "labour of many". Prior to the 20th century monuments/ memorials centred around the honouring and celebrating of the monarchy, aristocracy, explorers, land gentry and slave owners, those who benefited from the colonial project and "the labour of many". As Communism rose in the early 20th century, we witnessed a shift in the subject matter in public art and the first monuments celebrating the worker instead of the patron, for instance, the murals of Diego Rivera and the creation of Worker's Square/ Praça dos Trabalhadores in Maputo. This session will further discuss what devices were employed in memorialisation in the colonial and postcolonial periods. Further compounding what strategies have been utilised to decolonise these narratives.

Ibrahim Maham: Mahama Malam Doodoo National Theatre (1992 – 2016). Covering of the national theatre of Ghana in charcoal jute sacks in 2016 as part of the exchange/exchanger project.



16. Undercommons' ever-presence: Labour and Resistance in Colonial and Post-Colonial Space

Nuno Tavares da Costa (Dinâmia/CET-Iscte)

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.

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.



Mycelium growing on a felled tree (Source: <https://hostdefense.com/blogs/host-defense-blog/the-mycelium-network-connects-us-all>)

17. Topographies of Forced Labor: (Im)mobility, Disposability, and Liminality

Qianye Yu (Cornell University)

Ehssan Hanif (Cornell University)

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 Vittorio Aureli's *Architecture and Abstraction* (The MIT Press, 2024), published in *Khôrein: Journal for Architecture and Philosophy*. He will be Zahedi Family Fellow at Stanford University during Spring 2025.

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.petromuseum.ir]

Hanna 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.



18. Legal entanglements of labor and architecture in Africa

Manuela Camargo (Max Planck Institute)

Raquel Sirotti (Max Planck Institute)

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.

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.

Images were sent by session chair(s) to the Organising Committee with the ONLY purpose of the Call for Papers and Congress communication. Please DO NOT use them without authorization.

ArchLabour is funded by the European Research Council (ERC) through an Advanced Grant under the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme [Grant agreement 101096606]. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Research Council. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.