

Preface

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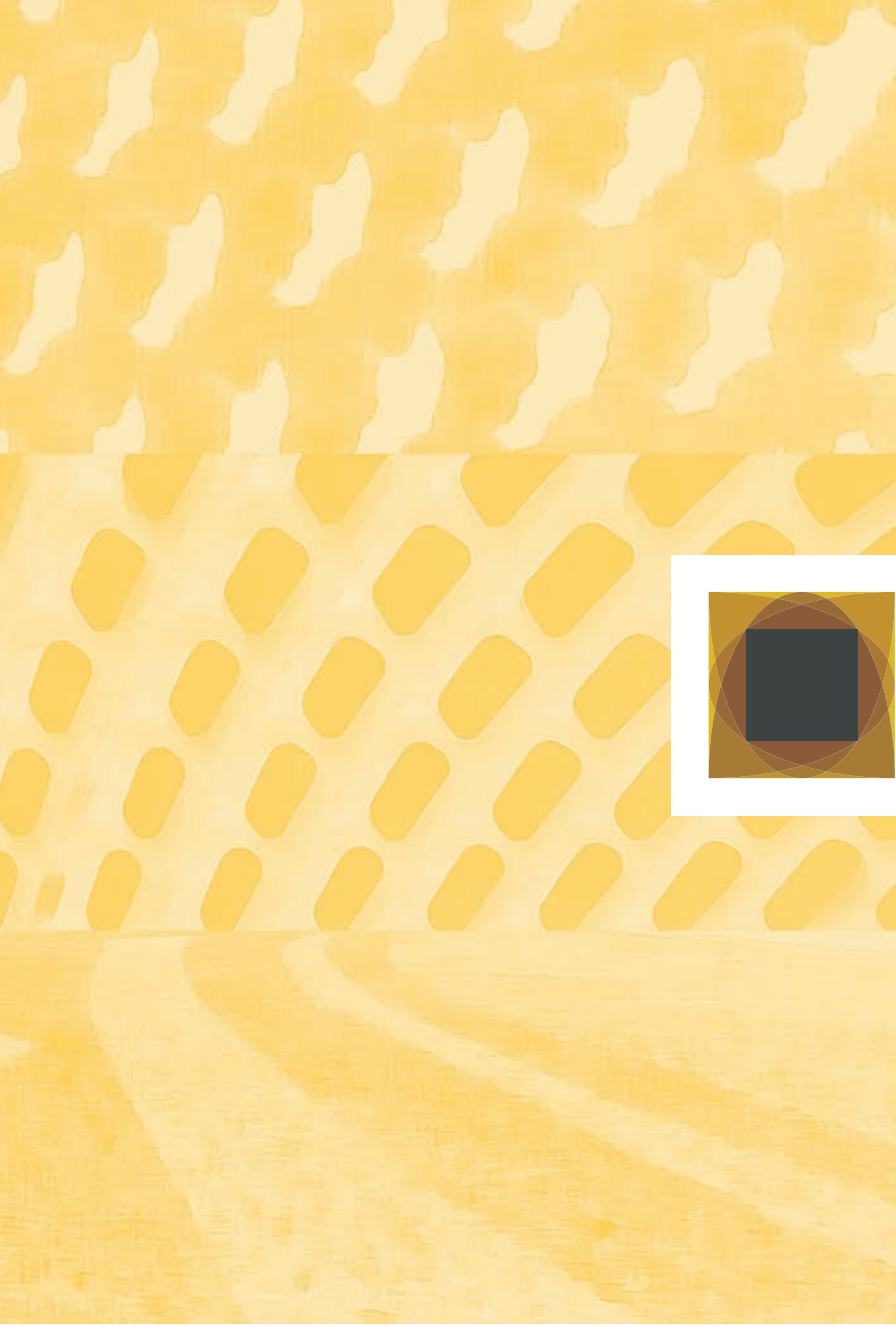
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INVESTIGATING AND WRITING ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY:
SUBJECTS, METHODOLOGIES AND FRONTIERS

Papers from the Third EAHN International Meeting

Edited by Michela Rosso

INVESTIGATING AND WRITING ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY:
SUBJECTS, METHODOLOGIES AND FRONTIERS

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Michela Rosso (ed.)

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Papers from the Third EAHN International Meeting

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INVESTIGATING AND WRITING ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY: SUBJECTS, METHODOLOGIES AND FRONTIERS

Preface

Investigating and Writing Architectural History: Subjects, Methodologies and Frontiers is a digital **open access publication** issued by the Politecnico di Torino containing the full texts of the majority of the papers and position statements presented and discussed at the Third International Meeting of the European Architectural History Network (EAHN) taking place in Turin from 19-21 June 2014¹.

The local Organizing Committee of the Politecnico di Torino made the proposal to host this meeting to the EAHN Board in early 2011. The conference is the outcome of a call for sessions and roundtable proposals launched in summer 2012 resulting in 100 abstracts. Of these, 27 were selected by the Scientific Committee gathered at the Faculty of Architecture of the Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava in early March 2013. The subsequent call for papers, advertised in April 2013, yielded more than 500 proposals.

Thanks to the wealth of good abstracts, chairs were able to suggest that some of papers that had not been selected for a specific session be considered for an open session. The result of this further selection was creation of three open sessions.

In addition to this, and in order to encourage an exchange between the main research topics addressed by the international scholarly community and the studies conducted by younger and emerging scholars within Italian PhD programs, the local Organising Committee, in accordance with the Scientific Committee of the Meeting, chose to promote two roundtables exclusively devoted to the presentation of dissertations recently carried out in doctoral programs affiliated with Italian universities. The aim of this initiative was to overcome the difficulties that often hinder the dissemination of some of the most promising outputs of Italian doctorates by providing them with a truly international arena for discussion. This further call resulted in 37 proposals of which 15 were selected.

Hence, here we can present papers from **27 sessions and five round-**

tables, offering a variety of themes and discussing different time periods. Presenters could submit their full papers to have them published in this book, which appears at the beginning of the conference. This was an explicit choice of the Scientific and Executive Committees, to ensure that younger researchers can comply with the rules from their institutions for funding their conference participation, which often require the publication of the paper in the proceedings².

The index of this publication reflects the original conference structure. In order to document the exact context in which the papers published here were originally presented and discussed at the conference, we decided that, along with the texts of full papers, we would also publish the abstracts of those presentations, which, according to their authors' choice, are not published here in their full versions.

GEOGRAPHIES OF EAHN 2014 AND THE EUROPEAN NETWORK

In his concluding remarks to the 2010 EAHN Conference in Guimarães, Antoine Picon began by questioning the appropriateness of the term 'European' chosen to qualify an association of academics, architects and professionals concerned with architectural history. Moreover, he argued how 'Europe, far from being a stable entity or field, appears rather as an open question, a question around which scholars from extremely diverse origins can gather and exchange'.³ At a four-year distance, the increased uncertainty around some of Europe's geographies and boundaries, the difficulty to delineate the contours of a European cultural identity, along with the crisis affecting its political project, have made a shared definition of the European entity even more controversial and subject to debate.⁴

As with the two past editions, this meeting's list of participants shows that the EAHN is much broader than the many possible definitions of Europe, including the seductive allegory provided at the beginning of the seventeenth century by Cesare Ripa, portraying a beautiful woman wearing a dress of various different colours as a signifier of the extraordinary variety of her constituents, superior to those of any other part of the world (Figure 1).⁵

The Turin conference has in fact confirmed, and even strengthened the **network's international appeal**, attracting 226 scholars⁶, from **36 countries** (versus 31 of the previous one).⁷ Of these, 54 come from institutions based in the US, which does not mean, however, that all of them are American. As a matter of fact, the increased internationalization of today's academic trajectories – not only within the US – has considerably diversified the spectrum of scholars' origins and nationalities: the presence of Chinese, Greek, Persian, Portuguese, Spanish and Turkish family names, shows that

EVROPA. Vna delle parti principali del Mondo.



Figure 1. "Europa. Una delle parti principali del mondo." Source: Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia*, ed. Sonia Maffei (Torino: Einaudi, 2012) 395.

the aforementioned figures are far from homogeneous. Moreover, Italy is present at this conference with 41 scholars followed by the UK (19) and, at a distance, by Australia (10), France (10), the Netherlands (10), Belgium (9), Ireland (7), Portugal (7), Switzerland (6), Canada (5), Germany (5), Israel (4), Greece (3), Slovenia (3), Sweden (3), Turkey (3), Brazil (2), Chile (2), Croatia (2), Estonia (2), Hungary (2), Norway (2), Poland (2), Serbia (2), Austria (1), Romania (1), Russia (1), Slovakia (1), Spain (1), China (1), Czech Republic (1), Cyprus (1), Malta (1), Mexico (1) and Singapore (1). The whole picture shows **25 European countries** versus **nine non-European**, plus Turkey and Russia at the crossroads between Asia and Europe. Moreover, among the **149 different universities and research centres** represented in the Turin Meeting, 89 are European, 41 North American, 4 South American, 6 Australian, 3 Turkish, 3 Israeli, 1 Chinese, 1 Russian, and 1 Singaporean.

If the majority of scholars come from institutions based in countries that fall into at least one of the various common definitions of Europe, one ma-

For distinction has to be made inside the vast collection of geographical singularities and cultural specificities displayed here. Thus, the conference shows how the geographies of this continental framework have been further enriched in comparison with the past two meetings so as to include an unprecedented number of scholars affiliated with **Eastern European institutions** (17). The exceptional presence of this community of scholars is not simply fortuitous, though, and can be explained as the result of the Scientific Committee's policy to include three sessions specifically devoted to themes related to former socialist governments. Moreover, this tendency is further reinforced by the EAHN Board's choice of Belgrade as the venue for the next EAHN themed conference 'Histories versus History' in 2015.

The diversity of the regions and the further expansion of the EAHN geographical spectrum call into question another crucial issue, already touched upon during the past two conferences, and yet destined to remain – at least partially – unanswered.⁹ How do we provide a **viable means of dialogue** to a growing community of researchers whose singularities, specific identities, cultural and linguistic differences often demand to be acknowledged? Is the hegemony of English, as a standard and accessible means of communication for the EAHN biannual meetings, always justified? Although we are aware that the great expense of simultaneous translations does not allow us to plan multilingual meetings in the future, we attempted to provide, already at this conference, a first, provisional answer to the aforementioned question by avoiding anglicizing the original names of speakers' institutions. From the long list of affiliations written in their national languages, the reader will then be able to get a more nuanced portrait of the variety of the local cultural identities, which form such an integral part of this international meeting. Although only three among the 32 sessions and roundtables at the Turin conference explicitly refer to 'Europe' in their titles, a general overview of the subjects being addressed here shows that for the majority of these researchers, **Europe**, as a broadly defined entity, still remains the main **object of enquiry** and **field of study**. However, the picture would not be complete without mentioning those works whose geographical scopes are situated outside this continental frame, or which cut across geographical locales to embrace broader perspectives of border-crossing relationships. Among the 157 papers presented and discussed in Turin, a number of researchers find their preferred grounds of investigation in the architectural and urban histories beyond Europe.

Apart from more expected contexts such as the US and Canada, and – to a lesser extent – Australia, these include areas of the **southern hemisphere**, such as Africa, Southern Asia and Latin America. Most of these geographies evidently spring from the many legacies of the European colonialism,

although the perspective adopted by many scholars tends to demonstrate how the colonialist past represented but one aspect of larger multifaceted histories and how such transcontinental encounters and exchanges were far from unilateral, entailing repatriations, remigrations and returns, as well as webs of reciprocal influences and fertilizations between western and non-western contexts. Within this approach, the session 'European Architecture and the Tropics' gathers papers that explore the mutual interactions and hybridizations between European temperate environments and tropical contexts such as northern Australia, Lagos, colonial India, Somalia and Hong Kong. The session 'Southern Crossings' probes a field that has been traditionally marginalized by 'an architectural history still dictated by a northwestern discourse': those bi-directional routes of ideas, architects and practices that have linked the Iberian peninsula and Latin America throughout the twentieth century. But, besides the aforementioned sessions, papers situated within non-European geographies are scattered throughout the conference and include sixteenth-century Maghreb; eighteenth-century French Guiana; postcolonial India; 1970s Angola; socialist China; and twentieth-century Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay. A distinctly separate place in this meeting is occupied by the **Middle East**, an already well-established area of study, considered in its widest extension, from Egypt to the Horn of Africa and the Chinese frontier, including papers that are set in fifteenth-century Cairo, Byzantium and Sasanian Iran, seventeenth-century Isfahan, Ottoman Anatolia, 1930s Ankara and contemporary Tel Aviv.

AN EXCURSION INTO THE CONFERENCE'S PATHS

Given that the session themes were mostly the result of a call for proposals, there was no preconceived structure, nor thematic coherence underlying this conference. Thus the 32 sessions and roundtables cover different periods and geographies in the history of architecture, extending from antiquity to the present and touching a variety of disciplines and approaches to the built environment. These include historiography, the history of decorative arts and interior ornament and their interactions with buildings, the history of construction, the intersections between art (theories and practices) and architecture, the history of landscape and urban history. An interesting chronological and thematic balance was then achieved, providing an extensive overview of the research trajectories being followed at this time.

For organizational purposes and in order to ensure that sessions appealing to the same kind of audience were not scheduled in the same slot, we grouped them into **six thematic threads**. Besides the practical nature of this choice, we then realised that this instrumental subdivision could also act

as a convenient framework through which the richness and extreme diversity of the materials published here could be organised, approached and more easily commented upon.

The definition of each single track was based on different sets of criteria: threads were singled out according to chronologies, critical and methodological approaches, and thematic issues.

We grouped four sessions under the heading of **'Early Modern'**, dealing with time periods extending from 1400 to 1800 and including a variety of approaches, from the history of building types, to attribution studies, the history of construction and historiography. The session 'Fortified Palaces', presents a number of case studies chosen throughout Europe that explore and illustrate how the *palazzi in fortezza* evolved from previous building typologies and were transformed from the fifteenth century onwards. Cases range from Early Modern Sicily to Cremona under the Sforzas, from the construction campaigns undertaken by Alfonso, Count of Ourém at Porto de Mós, to the Moscow Kremlin and the seventeenth-century fortified villas in the County of Gorizia. The relationship between 'Architecture and ornament in the Early Modern age' is put under scrutiny by a panel which proposes to re-unite two traditionally autonomous fields of investigation by studying the collaborations between architects and various categories of craftsmen, including plasterers, carvers and painters. 'On the way to Early Modern' is one of the three open sessions in this conference gathering a heterogeneous group of studies, encompassing the history of Renaissance theory of proportions and design methods and the spatialization of conflicts in Early Modern Italy and sixteenth-century Maghreb. Piedmontese Baroque architecture and historiography are the focus of a roundtable that aims at critically re-assessing the heritage of the 1960s scholarship in this field.

The second track **'Representation and Communication'** brings together those sessions that are concerned with how architectural ideas and buildings are represented and conveyed through a plurality of media and genres. A number of papers deal with the role of the specialist press in providing legitimization strategies to architectural and aesthetic practices. A whole session analyses the relationship of texts and pictures as seen in books, architectural periodicals, catalogues and more popular genres of printed publications, as the early twentieth-century illustrated magazines. Another panel concentrates on exhibitions, periodicals and educational institutions seen as 'discursive platforms', shedding light on their theoretical discourses, the rhetoric underpinning their critical projects and their pivotal roles in the transcontinental dissemination of architectural ideas from the 1960s well into the 1980s.

Under the track **'Questions of Methodology'**, the reader will find papers

following underexplored research paths, employing unconventional source materials, proposing new modes of studying historical evidence and re-discussing the very objects of the discipline. Methodological concerns are the focus of the session dedicated to the most up-to-date digital technologies for the documentation of classical architecture and urbanism. Lesser explored materials and sources are the point of departure for papers that investigate the implications of walking and its impact on architectural history. In turn, traditional research fields for the history of architecture are reconfigured and treated in a non-conventional way, as in the case of the session 'Producing Non - Simultaneity', where the construction yard is interpreted as a place of production incorporating divergent notions of temporality, and an ambivalent – often contradictory – idea of modernity. A less elitist approach towards the selection of archival materials, finally, is proposed by 'Bread and Butter and Architecture' and 'The Architecture of Bureaucracy': by moving from similar premises, they both deal with the middle landscapes of standard building practices and the often neglected histories of those architects and technicians who worked for local and central authorities or commercial undertakings.

The track **'Theoretical and Critical Issues'** groups sessions that take a closer look at conceptual problems in the history of architecture. Beyond the usual interpretation of the term 'theoretical', commonly referred to figurative theories and poetics of design practices, this track proposes to group those papers tackling a series of key issues –environment, conflict, postmodernism, anarchism and the question of origins of architecture– and using them as lenses for re-reading buildings, cities, architectural theories and texts, or as vehicles to reframe contemporary discussions on specific themes, from democracy and representation in decision-making and planning processes to today's most urgent environmental concerns.

The quantitative dominance of the **twentieth century** is confirmed also by this conference and acknowledged by an entire track regrouping papers set in this broad chronology. Along with the postwar period that is the specific object of two sessions, the interwar years along with the most recent past are also well represented.

Under the title **'Circulation of Architectural Cultures and Practices'** are grouped sessions dealing with the dissemination and diffusion of architectural ideas, histories of cultural exchanges and transfers of professionals as well as models, and practices. Most of the papers in this track imply narratives of travel and migration both in space and time, through continents as well as over historical periods (e.g. the sessions 'Afterlife of Byzantine Architecture'; 'Lost (and Found) in Translation'; 'Southern Crossings'; 'European Architecture and the Tropics'). Others, by connecting traditionally separate

fields of enquiry, address the dialectic between architectural publications, theories and material processes ('Building by the Book?').

Subjects, methodologies and possible frontiers: a synthetic overview

The task of drawing some of the key issues at stake in a conference like this one encompassing such a vast array of studies and lacking a specific thematic focus, demands a certain degree of impersonality on the part of the author: little or no space at all is left for the expression of individual allegiances, and in-depth analyses privileging specific themes, periods or approaches at the expense of others should be avoided. Although a number of sessions and papers have naturally triggered my curiosity more intensely than others, I will attempt to be as neutral as possible in treating such rich and heterogeneous material, by avoiding emphasizing the work of certain scholars and marginalizing that of others.

Hence, besides the aforementioned subdivision into tracks, I have singled out a series of red threads that run throughout the whole conference providing alternative narratives to those already suggested above.

Shifting chronologies for architectural history

Some reflections can be made on the most frequent chronologies and patterns of periodization chosen by scholars. A cursory overview of the subjects highlights the presence of a variety of papers dealing with periods situated outside the most popular recent timeframes: hence, **trajectories alternative to the exceptionally popular twentieth century** are scattered throughout the conference. Besides the papers included in the aforementioned 'Early Modern' track, there are sessions that explore classical architecture and urbanism ('Revolutionizing Familiar Terrain'); medieval and Renaissance contested buildings and projects ('Conflict 300-1600'), and the impact of Early Modern treatises on architectural cultures and practices ('Building by the Book?').

Among the periods covered, a special place is occupied by the **eighteenth century**, presenting two other panels setting their focus respectively on architecture, censorship and the public sphere, and the long-debated issue of architecture's primitive origins. The **nineteenth century** has also gained an increased resonance in this meeting including papers that deal with the role of periodical publications in disseminating ideas about architecture and the built environment; world exhibitions; theories of urban planning; and the diffusion of the historicist revivals worldwide.

Most of the papers, nonetheless, re-discuss and discard timeframes based on clear-cut calendar definitions, by insisting on **continuities** that bridge different historical epochs. These are the cases of the frequent references to the 'long eighteenth century' or of papers based on diachronic perspectives of

analyses, uncovering correspondences and analogies over longer periods and cutting across the conventionally accepted historical breaks marked by major western political and economic events.

As anticipated above, and in keeping with the two previous conferences, the **twentieth century** still dominates other historical periods (101 out of 157 papers). Within this century, **post-war architecture and urbanism** are still the chief focus of most of the papers in this conference (41 papers). On the other hand, it seems that for many scholars the attention has at once shifted to topics before and beyond this period: along with 8 papers dealing with pre-war years (1910s and the last decade of the nineteenth century), 10 devoted to the **interwar decades**, and 32 works on the **1960s and 1970s**, we register themes situated in the **most recent past** (20 papers set in the thirty years between the early 1980s and the first decade of twentieth-first century), a territory contested by a variety of disciplines, where the boundaries between theory, criticism, cultural studies, and the history of architecture and urbanism often become blurry. A whole session, for instance, is devoted to projects of urban renewal and strategies of collective memory and preservation pursued in the last three decades by the local administrations of Paris, Turin, Milan, Prague, and Genoa, whereas the years following 1989 are the privileged focus of some of the papers discussed in 'Artistic Dislocations of Architecture in Socialist Regimes'. 'The Historiography of the Present', is indeed the centre of attention of an entire panel that seems to suggest how the very recent past, as a subject of investigation, is a promising – albeit critical – field of study for the architectural historian. Little concerned with warning against the inevitable collusions between histories and theories of design that had been a typical feature of the first generation of modernist historiography, and all the while aware that any interpretation – independent of the remoteness of its object – is historically bound, this session attempts to contextualise and historicize the growing attention to the recent past shown by contemporary and younger scholars, studying its implications and defining its possible impact on the discipline as a whole.

Buildings, cities, regions, nations and global scales of investigation

The physical and geographical dimensions at which scholars have been tackling their objects of study have varied considerably from case to case: from micro-histories of buildings to larger territorial perspectives embracing regional, national and transnational stances. Case studies delving into the **individual histories of projects and buildings** – and processes of their conception and construction – have been a frequent scale of analysis (e.g. sessions 'Producing Non-Simultaneity'; 'Architects, Craftsmen and Interior Ornament'). Moreover a few sessions chose the **history of building types** as the conve-

nient lens for analysing and comparing a number of different versions of the same category of buildings, as in the cases of postwar **shopping centres** (with examples chosen in France, Sweden, Netherlands, Chile, Australia); Early Modern fortzze in palazzi; 1950s and 60s Swiss **school buildings** ("Architecture That Teaches"); Early Modern Italian **bank buildings** ("Moralizing Money"); **religious architectures** ("Building Identity and Community in the Post-Crusade Morea"; "Sacred buildings in Italy after World War II"); and eighteenth-century **theatres** and **performance halls** ("Audible Disagreements"). Despite there not being a whole session exclusively devoted to urban history, the **city** – at its different scales – has been either the focus of specific papers or the backdrop against which the many histories narrated in this conference have unfolded. In particular, the meeting's **host city** was chosen as a field of historical and critical enquiry by a number of local and non-Italian scholars. In addition to the series of papers concerned with Turin's seventeenth and eighteenth-century architects, builders and craftsmen, these have included studies devoted to the postwar interrelations between Turin's artistic and architectural *milieux* ("The Enchanted Rooms of Carlo Mollino"), and the re-assessment of the most recent policies of heritage affecting this city, on its delicate passage from a manufacturing economy to today's more fragmented and composite post-industrial status (see papers in the roundtable 'The Third Life of Cities').

'Piedmontese Baroque architecture', a common **regional-stylistic designation** based upon a long and well-established tradition of scholarship, was explicitly proposed – and questioned in its validity – by a roundtable exclusively devoted to this topic.

Nation-states were employed by a number of papers as the preferred scales of their research: studies devoted to the nineteenth century and to post-independence nation-building strategies and their architectural implications, almost naturally fall in this group. Moreover, two sessions focusing on architecture in socialist regimes ('Socialist Postmodernism'; 'Ideological Equality') adopted the national scale as a convenient dimension for a series of extensive overviews aimed at making transnational comparative analyses.

As anticipated above, a specific track regroups those sessions which probe how architectural cultures and practices were – and are – transferred at a **transcontinental – global scale**, including western and non-western environments. This is a field of study that has increasingly attracted the attention of a variety of scholars, in and outside Europe, being the focus of at least two other recent projects: the 2013 EAHN themed conference in São Paulo *Architectural Elective Affinities*,⁹ and the recently accomplished COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology) Action *European Architecture Beyond Europe*.¹⁰

Actors, voices and vectors of architectural history

One of the recurrent threads that runs throughout the conference, is the tension towards reformulating – and at once widening – the objects of the discipline: scholars have not only expanded the timeframes of their analysis towards 'younger' histories, but also considerably increased the range of criteria that define the eligibility of specific subject matters to enter the realm of architectural history. Thus, the relatively little place given in this conference to the acknowledged authorial figures of the history of architecture and urbanism (from Guarino Guarini to Sir John Soane, Bruno Taut, Albert Kahn, Le Corbusier, Marcel Breuer, Lucio Costa and Felix Candela) is paralleled by a number of sessions that turn their attention from object masterpieces and monuments (and their authors), to more anonymous structures and the – hitherto neglected – histories of **everyday practices**. A series of 'histories without names' are presented here which mainly deal with the so-called 'grey architectures' and the prosaic, seemingly tedious, jobs of public officials and government bureaucrats. The range of topics extends from the German Institute for Norm ("Bureaucratic Avant-garde"), to French postwar shopping malls ("Shopping à l'américaine in the French New Towns"); the reconstruction of Germany's cities after WWII ("Germany's Grey Architecture"); Portuguese state furniture designers ("Layers of Invisibility"); the re-organization of Swedish public architecture in the 1960s ("Architecture's Red Tape"); the London County Council Architect's Department during wartime ("Humdrum Tasks of the Salaried-Man").

By explicitly reconnecting their research paths to the lineages of two pioneering texts in the historiography of an 'anonymous history' of architecture, John Summerson's *Bread and Butter and Architecture* and H. R. Hitchcock's *The Architecture of Bureaucracy and the Architecture of Genius*, these works tend to dispute common hierarchies of central and peripheral subjects of investigation, towards a more inclusive approach where the 'ordinary' and the 'mundane' – along with the 'noble' and the 'exceptional', have been given the status of architectural historical objects in their own right.

Re-discussing authorship

Although the enduring success of architectural monographs seems to confirm a diffused insistence on the individual as the main target of today's most popular narratives depicting the architectural profession, the conference shows how historians of architecture have unquestionably downplayed the **myth of the architect as artist** in favour of the complexity of patronage relations and professional interactions. Far from being pictured as the unique mind behind the building, the architect – along with the patron, the contractor, the user, and the critic – merely appears as one of the many actors involved in the

complex process of the conception, construction and final reception of architecture. Thus we have papers that treat buildings as complex **'architectures of interactions'** ("Between Technological Effectiveness and Artisanal Inventiveness"; "Architect, Planner and Bishop"; "Building Identity and Community in the Post-Crusade Morea"); or as **collaborative practices of architects and craftsmen** ("Architecture Before the Architects"; "Architects, Craftsmen and Marble Decoration"); or as **political objects materializing disputes of power** (e.g. the session 'Architecture and Conflict, c. 300 – c. 1600'). Others that study the **relations** between *élite* architectural discourses and local construction practices ("The Global Construction Site and the Labor of Complex Geometry"); image strategies and practical functions ("Fortified Palaces in Early Modern Sicily"); architectural theories and iconographic programs ("Foundations of Renaissance Architecture and Treatises in Quinten Massys' St-Anna Altarpiece"); symbolism of spaces and ceremonies of power ("The Chrysotriklinos Within the Great Palace of Constantinople"); wartime government projects and large-scale corporate buildings ("SOM 1939-46").

Reception theory has only sporadically entered the field of architectural historiography, resulting in a number of remarkable works.¹¹ Hence, this emerging interest is mirrored by a few papers in this conference, where urban and architectural facts are reappraised not through the theories and practices of their production – their policy-makers and designers – but from their recipients' angles, depicting the ways in which buildings are – and were – perceived, criticized and even ridiculed, across their expanded social lives after their completion, and through a plurality of voices and media, often coming from outside the self-referential circles of professional practice. Two sessions in this conference specifically address the relationship of architecture to its audiences. One ('Public Opinion') draws evidence from hitherto underexplored sources as broad sheets, newspapers and pamphlets, to focus on reactions of dissonance and resistance on the part of the viewers. Another ('On Foot') delves into a number of sensory experiences of the environment to set the premises of an alternative history of architecture where the user and viewer play equally important roles as the designer and the builder.

CONCLUSION

The **cross-section of the discipline** highlighted by the collection of 157 papers discussed in this conference provides a composite tableau where the outmoded dichotomy between traditionalism and modernism has definitely left the place to highly documented and far more nuanced historical reconstructions of disparate and varying versions of modernism, and where aesthetic values have been definitely supplanted by meanings (cultural, eco-

nomic, social, political, aesthetic...). The great majority of the scholars participating in the conference systematically refrain from expressing any judgment on the architectural quality of their objects of study. If aesthetic values do not seem a necessary prerogative for inaugurating research on a given subject, the scopes of the discipline have been extended as far as to include the uncelebrated landscapes of everyday practices as well as the histories of failures and flops.

Moreover, the dismissal of large-scale explicative narratives that has characterized all the humanities since the crisis of modernity as an all-encompassing project, allows no place for laudatory accounts of architects or buildings: we find no celebrations of heroic figures, nor ingenuous legitimizations of architectural practices. Less concerned with makers, scholars have appeared more and more interested in looking at buildings as complex cultural artifacts.

Whereas the boundaries of the discipline have been naturally pushed into geography, anthropology, social, cultural, and visual studies, nevertheless the fruitful exchanges of information and analytic tools with other disciplines¹², seem to coexist with a return to a more positivistic and factual attitude on the part of scholars, a 'connoisseurship from within',¹³ rooted in the practice of well-documented archival research.

Almost inevitably, the variety of trajectories highlighted by this conference opens up a series of crucial issues impinging on our area of study. Does the cross-disciplinarity shown in current scholarship question the autonomy of our discipline by making its boundaries (and scopes) appear less distinct? Do we have to search for a higher standard of specificity of our field of study, of its competences as well as of its instruments, methods and objects of investigation? Does the body of specialised knowledge related to architectural practice represent an indispensable constituent of scholars' equipment to better comprehend those internal discourses that play such an integral part in the discipline? What are the relationships between the scholars' paths of investigation, architectural education and the current practice of the profession? Why and for whom do we study and write the history of architecture? The answers to these questions are far beyond the scope – and space – of this necessarily overly synthetic text, and would require at least another conference to be properly tackled.

Nevertheless some inkling can be found by looking beyond and from outside the Turin Meeting, to the recently inaugurated 14th Venice Architecture Biennale.

This reciprocity is suggested to me not only by the presence at the EAHN Third Meeting of a number of scholars (7) who have been playing active roles in this international exhibition, some of them being awarded prizes



Figure 2. View of the exhibition section 'Window' at the 14th Venice Architecture Biennale. It shows a fragment of the Brooking National Collection containing 'approximately 500,000 pieces, 5000 of which are complete windows, 10,000 windows' sections and 30,000 sash pullings' Source: *Fundamentals*, catalogue of the 14th International Architecture Exhibition (Venezia: Marsilio, 2014) 211. Photography by the author 7 June 2014

and special mentions.¹⁴ If 'architecture not architects', the motto chosen by Rem Koolhaas and his team to accompany the whole event, finds several echoes within this conference, nonetheless the unprecedented profusion of historical evidence on exhibit at Giardini and Arsenale, from architectural elements, details, and drawings to professional journals, illustrated magazines, newspapers, promotional catalogues and advertisements, seem to suggest that the demand for history expressed by the architectural discipline is stronger than ever (Figure 2). And even more striking is the way in which this demand is formulated and fulfilled: through the deployment of large amounts of factual documentation whose main aim would be to bring architects and their public back to the discipline's fundamental concerns, beneficially re-immersing them into the realities (firstly material, but also social, economic, political, ideological, technological, environmental, aesthetic...) of buildings, cities and landscapes, in an attempt to rise above the linguistic barriers that often distance this field of knowledge from its wider audience of users and viewers. By uncovering the plurality of meanings

and values associated with buildings and incorporated in their components rather than insisting on their authors' discourses, this Biennale seems to advocate a new centrality of our discipline within the contemporary society. Besides indicating a number of potentially fruitful routes of investigation for future researchers in the history of the built environment, it peremptorily reminds us of the public dimension of our studies.

MICHELA ROSSO

Chair of the Third EAHN International Meeting

1 The conference website was launched in summer 2013 <http://eahn2014.polito.it>

2 Presenters authorized us to publish these full papers under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license, whose summary is available at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>. (Full text of the license available at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>).

3 Antoine Picon, *Some Concluding Remarks*, First International Meeting of the European Architectural History Network, Guimarães, Portugal, Supplement to *EAHN Newsletter* 3 (2010), 7-8. See also Christine Mengin and Robert Dettingmeijer, "President's Message," *EAHN Newsletter* 1 (2007), 7. Both articles are accessible online at <http://www.eahn.org/newsletter-archive/>. On this question a founding member of the network recently said: "European" in the name was never intended to refer to "European architectural history" either in the meaning "history that studies European architecture" or in the meaning "architectural history conducted in European institutions." It was merely meant to indicate this network of architectural history has an institutional base in Europe. There is frequent misunderstanding about the meaning of the name EAHN. It would have been

better to name it "The Architectural History Network" or "The Architectural History Network of Europe." Quoted from a private conversation with Nancy Stieber, 13 June 2014.

4 The discussion over the difficult formulation of a European cultural identity has been recently fuelled on the occasion of the 2014 European Parliament elections, as highlighted in Claudio Magris, "Il passaporto della civiltà," *Il Corriere della Sera* (Milan edition), May 25, 2014.

5 Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia*, ed. Sonia Maffei, (Turin: Einaudi, 2012). Facsimile reproduction of the original edition (in Roma: appresso L. Facij, 1603), 395-6.

6 Of these 226 scholars (52 chairs and 174 speakers), 143 are European.

7 Hilde Heynen, "Welcome to the Second International European Architectural History Network Conference," in *Eahn Second International Meeting*, Brussels 31 May – 2 June 2012, Conference programme, (Gent: Academia Press, 2012) 3.

8 Mary McLeod, *Concluding Remarks* (speech given at the Second International Meeting of the European Architectural History Network, Brussels, June 2, 2012).

9 As we read in the home page of the conference website: 'Correspondences, transfers, circulation and migration – of people

and ideas – have been fundamental in human culture, architecture included, and are crucial in understanding the relations between Europe and Americas. It is important for the first conference of the EAHN outside Europe to embrace such topics which constitute practically an illustration of one of its major goals: fostering inclusive, transnational, interdisciplinary and multicultural approaches to the history of the building environment'. <http://www.fau.usp.br/eahn2013/>

10 From the text of the project's mission statement published in the open access journal *Architecture Beyond Europe*, <http://www.architecturebeyond.eu.>: 'This Action aims to produce a broader understanding of the worldwide spread of European architecture across empires during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by focussing on its vectors, connections, semantics and materiality in a large range of geographic and linguistic contexts engaging both western and non-western environments.'

11 Among the most recent studies on this topic see: "Reception," ed. Naomi Stead and Cristina Garduño Freeman, special issue, *Architecture Theory Review* 18, n. 3

(2013); "La réception de l'architecture," ed. Richard Klein and Philippe Louquet, special issue *Cahiers thématiques. Architecture, histoire, conception*, n. 2 (2002), 43-6.

12 Nancy Stieber, "Architecture between Disciplines," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 62, n. 2 (2003), 176-7; Nancy Stieber et al. "Learning From Interdisciplinarity," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 64, n. 4 (2005), 417-40 and articles by Daniel M. Abramson, Dianne Harris, Carla Yanni, Mario Carpo, Arindam Dutta, John Archer, Hélène Lipstadt, Gwendolyn Wright. See also Dianne Harris, "That's Not Architectural History!" *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 70, n. 2 (2011), 149-52

13 See the discussion on cross-disciplinarity among art historians, in 'Inter/disciplinarity', special issue *The Art Bulletin* 77, n. 4 (1995), with essays by Carlo Ginzburg, James D. Herbert, W. J. T. Mitchell, Thomas F. Reese and Ellen Handler Spitz. In particular Carlo Ginzburg, "Vetoos and Compatibilities," *ibidem*, 534-52;

14 *Fundamentals*, catalogue of the 14th International Architecture Exhibition (Venice: Marsilio, 2014).

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