

The Third EAHN Meeting in Turin: A Roundup.

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The Third EAHN Meeting in Turin: A Roundup / Rosso, Michela; Ergut, Elvan Altan; Deriu, Davide; Hanisch, Ruth; Hurx, Merlijn; Stieber, Nancy. - In: ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIES. - ISSN 2050-5833. - ELETTRONICO. - 3:1(2015), pp. 1-12. [10.5334/ah.cq]

*Availability:*

This version is available at: 11583/2615751 since: 2021-02-23T17:12:17Z

*Publisher:*

Ubiquity Press open access

*Published*

DOI:10.5334/ah.cq

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POSITION PAPER

# The Third EAHN Meeting in Turin: A Roundup

Michela Rosso\*, Elvan Altan Ergut†, Davide Deriu‡, Ruth Hanisch§, Merlijn Hurx|| and Nancy Stieber¶

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Turin, the home of a lively community of historians and a city that has attracted the interest of architectural and urban historians across the whole 20<sup>th</sup> century, was chosen to host the Third EAHN Meeting in 2014. In accordance with the network's spirit of enhancing communication and encouraging the exchange of research outputs well beyond the boundaries of the European framework, the Third Meeting welcomed a large international community of scholars who delivered and discussed 157 papers and discussion positions. With the aim of recording some of the major outcomes of this very intense programme, seven delegates were asked to review the key issues emerging from the conference sessions, and to outline their underlying methodologies. The result is a cross-section of the discipline that highlights a composite tableau of approaches to the study of the built environment and raises a series of issues affecting our area of investigation, its competencies, instruments, and objects of research.

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## Introduction

### *Michela Rosso*

After the two successful international meetings in Guimarães in 2010 and Brussels in 2012, the EAHN gathered in Turin in 2014 for its third international meeting.

The main venue of the Turin conference, held from June 19 to 21, was the 17th-century Castello del Valentino, the present seat of the architecture department of the Politecnico di Torino and part of the 'Residences of the Royal House of Savoy' inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1997 (**Fig. 1**). The history of the Politecnico is interwoven with the evolution of Turin as an industrial city. Officially, it was founded in 1906, but its origins go back to the Scuola di Applicazione per gli Ingegneri, established in Turin in 1859, and the Museo Industriale Italiano, founded in 1862 under the aegis of the Ministry of Agriculture, Trade and Industry. Today, the Politecnico has 31,800 students enrolled in more than 100 courses, of which 22 bachelor degrees, 30 masters of science degrees, 10 second-level specialization courses, and 14 PhD programs (<http://www.polito.it/ateneo/colpodocchio/index.php?lang=en>).

To accommodate the larger audiences of plenary sessions and lecture keynotes, the organizing committee looked for alternative locations. What was initially a necessity finally turned into the exciting opportunity of providing the conference with two additional architecturally remarkable settings: the alluring interiors of Carlo Mollino's Teatro Regio (**Fig. 2**) and the so-called Salone B, designed by Pier Luigi Nervi within the larger structure of Torino Esposizioni (**Fig. 3**).

### *Towards the Turin Meeting*

For its third meeting the EAHN relied on the organizational efforts of the Department of Architecture of the Politecnico. Arrangements for the meeting began as early as the spring of 2011, when members of the Architecture Department of the Politecnico presented its candidature as host of the 2014 meeting to the EAHN board then gathered at the Bartlett School of Architecture.

The call for sessions and roundtables launched in the summer of 2012 far exceeded the committees' most optimistic forecast: we received 100 proposals, of which 27 were selected by the Scientific Committee during the board meeting held at the Faculty of Architecture of the Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava in early March 2013. These made up the call for papers that yielded more than 500 abstracts. Thanks to this exceptional response, three open sessions were activated. To encourage an exchange between the international scholarly community and the younger, emerging scholars within the Italian PhD programs, the local Executive Committee, in accordance with the Advisory Committee of the meeting, chose to promote two roundtables exclusively devoted to the presentation of studies recently carried on in PhD programs affiliated with Italian universities. The purpose of this initiative was to overcome the difficulties that often

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**Figure 1:** Castello del Valentino in the early 1960s. Credit: Agenzia La Presse, Torino.



**Figure 2:** The hall of the Teatro Regio during the acoustic test: view of the parterre and the stage. Credit: Raffaele Pisani private archive.





**Figure 3:** Torino Esposizioni – ‘Salone B’ during the 32nd Turin Auto Show in 1950. Credit: Archivio Storico Fiat.

hinder the dissemination of some of the most promising outputs of Italian PhD programs by providing them with a truly international arena of discussion. This further call resulted in 37 proposals, of which 15 were selected. Hence, the Turin conference consisted of 27 sessions and five roundtables, offering a variety of themes and discussing different time periods.

#### ***Geographies, Chronologies and Approaches: A General Overview***

In accordance with the statement of the EAHN the goal of the Turin meeting was to encourage the exchange of knowledge and debate among scholars, provide a clearinghouse for information related to the study of the built environment, and promote new directions for research in the field.

In keeping with the past two conferences, the Turin meeting displayed an extraordinary variety of themes, chronologies, and approaches to the study of the built environment, covering different periods and geographies in the history of architecture and urbanism, from antiquity to the present. They included the history of architectural and urban 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.

The conference also offered a panorama of chronologies, from classical and medieval to early modern and contemporary architecture, urbanism, and theory. As at the two previous conferences, the 20th century dominated other historical periods (101 out of 157 papers), and postwar architecture and urbanism were still the chief focus of most of the papers (41). Nevertheless, the attention of many scholars was on topics before and beyond this period: along with eight papers dealing with pre-war years, ten devoted to the interwar decades, and thirty-two on the 1960s and 1970s, we registered twenty papers set in the most recent past, the thirty years between the early 1980s and the first decade of 21st 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 indistinct.

The physical and geographical dimensions at which scholars tackled their objects of study varied considerably: from micro-histories of buildings to larger territorial perspectives embracing regional, national, and transnational stances. Patient investigations delving into the individual genesis of projects and buildings – and processes of their conception and construction – have been a frequent scale of analysis. Moreover, a few sessions chose the history of building types as the convenient lens for analyzing and comparing a number of different versions of the same category of buildings. While no session was exclusively

devoted to urban history, the city – at its different scales – was 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 as well as non-Italian scholars. Nation-states were employed by a number of papers as the preferred scales of their research. Studies devoted to the 19th century and to post-independence nation-building strategies and their architectural implications almost naturally fell in this group. Moreover, sessions focusing on architecture in socialist regimes adopted the national framework as a convenient dimension for a series of extensive overviews that made transnational comparative analyses. A specific track of sessions probed 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 scholars, in and outside Europe, since it was the heart of the EAHN's themed conference in São Paulo in 2013, *Architectural Elective Affinities*.

As in past EAHN meetings, the Turin conference confirmed, and even strengthened, the network's international appeal, attracting 226 scholars as chairs and speakers, from 36 countries. Of these, 54 were affiliated with institutions based in the US. However, the growing internationalization which is so typical of today's academic trajectories – not only within the US – and the consequent diversification of the spectrum of scholars' origins and nationalities made amply clear that the aforementioned figures were far from homogeneous. Italy was present at this conference with 41 scholars followed by the UK (19) and, at a distance, by Australia, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Ireland, Portugal, Switzerland, Canada, Germany, Israel, Greece, Slovenia, Sweden, Turkey, Brazil, Chile, Croatia, Estonia, Hungary, Norway, Poland, Serbia, Austria, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Spain, China, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Malta, Mexico and Singapore. The whole picture showed 25 European countries and 9 non-European, plus Turkey and Russia at the crossroads between Asia and Europe. Moreover, among the 149 different universities and research centers represented at the conference, 89 were 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 came from institutions based in countries that fall into at least one of the various shared definitions of Europe, one major distinction should be made inside the vast collection of geographical singularities and cultural specificities displayed at the meeting. The conference showed how the geographies of this continental framework have been further enriched, in comparison with the past two meetings, by the inclusion of an unprecedented number (17) of scholars affiliated with Eastern European institutions. The exceptional presence of this community of scholars is not coincidental, and can be at least partly explained as the result of the Scientific Committee's deliberate policy to include three sessions

specifically devoted to themes related to former socialist governments. This tendency is further developed by the EAHN board's recent choice of the Serbian capital as the venue for the next EAHN themed conference planned in October 2015, entitled *Entangled Histories, Multiple Geographies*.

Although only three among the 32 sessions and roundtables at the Turin conference explicitly referred to Europe in their titles, a general overview of the subjects being addressed revealed how for the majority of these researchers, Europe, as a broadly defined entity, still remained the main object of enquiry and field of study. However, the picture would not be complete without mentioning those works whose geographical scopes were 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 found their preferred grounds of investigation in the architectural and urban histories outside and beyond Europe.

The diversity of the regions and the further expansion of the EAHN's geographical spectrum calls into question a crucial issue touched upon during the past two conferences, and yet destined to remain – at least partially – unanswered. How do we provide a viable means of dialogue to a growing community of researchers whose singularities, specific identities, and 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 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 by avoiding anglicizing the original names of speakers' institutions. Thus, from the long list of affiliations written in their national languages, we can get a more nuanced portrait of the variety of the local cultural identities, which form such an integral part of this international meeting.

### **Six Paths for the Conference**

For organizational purposes and to ensure that sessions appealing to the same kind of audience were not scheduled in the same slot, we grouped them into six strands. We realized that what may at first appear as a practical subdivision could also act as a convenient framework through which the richness and diversity of the materials presented in Turin could be organized, approached, and commented upon, and indeed this is well demonstrated by the six texts that are presented in the following pages. The definition of each single track was not an easy job, though: 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 second track, 'Representation and Communication', brought together those sessions that were concerned with how architectural ideas and buildings are represented and conveyed through a plurality of media and genres, both visual and textual. The track 'Questions of Methodology' assembled 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. Under the track 'Theoretical and Critical Issues' were gathered sessions that took a closer look at conceptual problems in the history of architecture. Beyond the usual interpretation of the term 'theoretical', commonly referring to poetics or figurative theories of design practices, this track proposed to group 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 20th century was acknowledged by its own track of papers. Finally, under the title 'Circulation of Architectural Cultures and Practices' were those sessions that dealt with the dissemination and diffusion of architectural ideas, histories of cultural exchanges, and transfers of technicians and professionals as well as models and practices.

The cross-section of the discipline shown by the collection of 157 papers discussed in this conference provides a highly composite tableau of approaches to the study of the built environment and naturally opens up a series of very broad issues impinging on our area of investigation, on its competences, instruments, methodologies, and objects of research. While for the majority of speakers, aesthetic values did not seem an indispensable prerogative for inaugurating research on a given subject, the conference speakers substantially expanded the scope of the discipline. They explored uncelebrated landscapes of everyday practices as well as the histories of failures and flops, achieving a transition from a history of the built environment as a narrative of single authors and their masterworks to an account of milieu, people, and environments.

At the same time this conference confirmed the presence of at least two major approaches seldom co-existing in the same studies, though not necessarily conflicting with each other. On the one hand, scholars often tend to push the disciplinary boundaries into other fields of study, from geography to anthropology, social, cultural, and visual studies, while on the other, some scholars are assuming an almost positivistic, and more factual research attitude, well rooted in the practice of highly documented, rigorous, archival investigation.

A remarkable result of the meeting has been the publication, corresponding with the beginning of the conference, of the conference proceedings, *Investigating and Writing Architectural History: Subjects, Methodologies and*

*Frontiers*, issued by the Politecnico di Torino as an online, open-access volume, containing the full texts of the majority of the papers and position statements presented and discussed in Turin.

### ***In and Around Turin***

The Turin meeting also introduced conference attendees to some highlights of Turin. The cultural and architectural heritage of this city has attracted the interest of architectural and urban historians throughout the 20th century. Turin has recently been reshaping its economic identity by promoting and being host to a broad range of cultural activities related to its rich and complex history.

The EAHN local organizing committee offered a vast array of guided visits, which the public participated in, with over 400 subscriptions (see <http://www.eahn2014.polito.it/tours.html>). The tours were the outcome of a collective effort, coordinated by three doctoral student volunteers from the PhD program in history of architecture and led by over thirty experts – architectural and urban local historians, practising architects and structural engineers, members of EAHN committees, conference chairs, independent scholars, faculty members, and doctoral students. Residents were kind enough to open their private homes' doors to the visiting public.

The program of tours encompassed a wide gamut of architectural and urban episodes of this city's fabric. In-depth visits to major buildings and sites were planned, including the masterpieces of Guarini, Juvarra, and Vittone, the landmarks of 20th-century interwar and postwar architecture and urbanism, the Baroque quarters, and the remnants of the industrial plants of Fiat Lingotto and Mirafiori. Visitors had the privilege of accessing a series of important archival fonds, not normally available, related to the history of Turin and its architecture. Some of the highlights experienced by smaller groups included seeing the maps, prints, and drawings in the precious, renowned, and much quoted 'sezione Corte' of the Archivio di Stato housed in a Juvarra building from the 1720s and the collection of a drawings, photographs and correspondence kept in the Carlo Mollino's archives held at the Politecnico's Central Architectural Library. For those who took the 20th-century itineraries, special visits of interiors were also arranged, such as those to one of the apartments of Gabetti and Isola's infamous Bottega d'Erasmus, the nineteen-storey Torre Littoria built in the 1930s by the Officine Savigliano steelworks, and the structures of Torino Esposizioni and Italia 61. Such themes as the history of construction focused on insider views, rarely accessible even to the most informed tourist: Antonelli's complex masonry structure of the Mole Antonelliana and the 17th-century timber frame structures of the roofs of Castello del Valentino. A series of post conference day-tours headed out to the surrounding region, to discover Ivrea and the architectural patronage of Adriano Olivetti, the medieval settlements of Val di Susa, and the other Piedmontese centers of Baroque architecture, from Venaria Reale to Chieri, Carignano, Mondovì,



Vicoforte and the Canavese (see <http://susanklaiber.wordpress.com/resources/re-visiting-piedmontese-baroque-architecture/>). Images documenting the tours and taken by some of the participants are visible at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/125666919@N08/>.

## Early Modern

### *Merlijn Hurx*

The great diversity in approaches and explored geographies in the Early Modern track reflects the broadening horizons beyond the narrow framework of 'Renaissance' architecture, so well described in Alina Payne's keynote lecture. The sessions addressed problems of patronage and representation, architectural production and design principles, the interaction between centre and the periphery, as well as the historiography on style. In particular, the case studies presented in the session 'Fortified Palaces in Early Modern Europe, 1400–1700' covered a large geographical area. The session explored the conjunction of palatial residence and military defense in the Palazzo in Fortezza and the contradictory demands of increasing comfort and ceremonial requirements and the new Italian bastioned defense system. Examples from the 'center', Cremona, and the 'periphery' – Sicily, the County of Gorizia, Portugal, and Moscow – demonstrated that the combination of bastions with such typical medieval military features as towers and crenellations were not a matter of a lack of understanding of central Italian models, but rather a deliberate continuation of medieval forms that emphasized the noble lineage of the owner of the palace. Thus the session provided an insightful way of reconsidering problems of center–periphery and the persistence of 'medieval' forms in the Renaissance.

The related problem of the uses of geographic-stylistic designations was at the heart of the roundtable 'Piedmontese Baroque Architecture Studies Fifty Years On'. This discussion critically examined the diverging approaches and methods of historiography since the flowering of studies on Piedmontese Baroque in the 1960s. What can still be learned from the towering figures of Argan and especially Wittkower, and what new paths have been explored since? Particularly, the ways Baroque in Piedmont has been described in terms of its regional artistic identity or has been tied to political space were discussed. In addition, special interest was paid to the reception of Guarini's architecture, which played a crucial role in the formation of the concept 'Baroque', as 18th-century criticism censured Guarini as the single 'Baroque' architect. Instead, the study of his treatise, *Architettura civile*, contributed to a greater appreciation of Guarini's work in the 20th century, as it was perceived as providing a theoretical foundation for modern architecture.

The open session 'On the Way to Early Modern: Issues of Memory, Identity and Practice' dealt with two distinct subjects: design principles and the symbolic power of architecture. The first two speakers addressed the problem of reconstructing the geometrical and arithmetical principles that guided the designs of Renaissance architects in Italy. The other presentations investigated spatial and

architectural strategies used to affirm Portuguese rule in Morocco (the only paper in the track that went beyond the boundaries of Europe) and to legitimize banking activities in those early centers of capitalism, Florence and Rome.

The last session, 'Architects, Craftsmen and Interior Ornament 1400–1800', manifested the renewed scholarly interest paid to ornament. Challenging the hierarchy implied in the separation of decoration from structure, proportion, and mass and space, which have been considered as the essentials of architecture since the 18th century, this session explored the importance of ornament in the Early Modern period. Particular attention was paid to the roles of architects and craftsmen in the design of ornament. Were craftsmen mere executors of the architect's ideas or were they fully fledged actors with considerable influence on the design? Who were arbiters in taste and who were disseminated new forms? Tied to this problem was the question to what extent architecture should be considered as an individual product or as the result of a collaborative act; and how these multifaceted social interactions fit in the narrative of architectural history.

## Representation and Communication

### *Nancy Stieber*

When the scientific committee for the 2014 EAHN conference assembled the accepted sessions, it uncovered the themes of representation and communication. At the conference, what emerged from these themes was, on the one hand, a comparative focus on the representational scope of particular media, for example, the potential of the drawing, the print, the scale model, the plaster cast, the photograph, to convey architecture visually, and on the other hand, communication studied through the institutional frameworks implied by the book, the periodical, the slide show, the exhibition.

From what I witnessed in the sessions, it seems that architectural history is continuing to reap harvests from major studies like Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, from 1962; Svetlana Alpers' founding of the periodical *Representations*, in 1983; and Jonathan Crary's *Techniques of the Observer*, of 1990, to arbitrarily list a few – in other words, works that have opened inquiries into general issues of representation and communication relevant to pre-modern, modern, and now post-modern studies over the past thirty or more years.

Papers considered various means of architectural communication, including those requiring the physical presence of the audience, such as the history of architecture represented through displays of casts, exhibitions, or narrated slide shows. Another strain of interest was the publication of multiples accessible simultaneously to a dispersed mass audience: prints, books, periodicals, postcards, catalogues. These discussions raised issues about audience: Who is being included in or excluded from the architectural conversation? What is permitted to discuss and what not? Such issues arose in such disparate cases as the curious opening of architecture to public criticism through anonymous pamphlets in the Netherlands of the 18th century or the heavy hand of government-controlled

ideology in the dangerous landscape of changing correct attitudes in 1950s China.

The question of agency then follows. Who participates, initiates, is invited into architectural communication? Papers examined exchanges among the arts, among architects within the profession, and between the profession and the public. They also addressed structures for such communication – for educating the public, for response from the public – and the various limits, restrictions, degrees of openness, and legal parameters influencing communication.

Naturally, we continue to examine modes of communication among architects through their internal disciplinary discourse. Ongoing research has highlighted the role of journals in cultivating the postwar Italian synthesis of the arts and postmodern discourse. Such studies usefully extend an established research trajectory. Other papers explored how architecture itself becomes a medium of communication, a conduit for the exchange of ideas between disciplines – for instance, among the arts, which the organizers of the session on Italian modernism called intra-aesthetic dialogue.

But there was also interest in the various publics outside the architectural discipline, as conversational partners, critics, and audience. For instance, we learned how the popular French press moved its presentation of the Manhattan skyscraper from documentary text to spectacularizing image in a mere sixteen years in the attempt to shape public perceptions of architecture in the first decades of the 20th century.

Accordingly, the sessions demonstrated that a focus on architecture and communication is useful in shaping questions about the ways that architecture operates in the imaginative sphere, the public sphere, and even the legal sphere, each of whose histories can inform us as we extend our understanding of how architecture works, whether through the disciplinary dialogue or the dialogue with the public.

As for representation, a few years back a friend commented that one doesn't look at buildings anymore, just their reflections in various modes of representation. Certainly, the ongoing interest in the rhetorical use of photography has become well anchored, as we saw in the historiography implicit in pre- and post-Bauhaus representations of Gropius' Fagus factory. However, two areas in the study of representation emerged that show particular potential. First, an important new discussion related visual means of representation to textual means: how word and image function in tandem or tension. Here the modernists probably have much to learn from the methods already developed by the pre-modernists who have been examining this nexus for a long time. The privileging of image over text is apparent in the modern era: and the historians seem as seduced by image as the intended audiences. What about text?

Another issue that kept appearing is the study of seriality and the sequencing of images as narrative structure. Short of cinematic representation, the experiential encounter with architecture or the city can be simulated with sets

and collages of images. The issue of seriality arose not only in the sessions of the track, but also in the pre-conference workshop on urban representation.

One thing is clear from the productive discussions that ensued from the sessions in this track: we need to continue mapping the roles that modes of representation and modes of communication play in shaping the architectural imaginary and the architectural possible. How these have already been altered by the digital revolution and how they will further develop was not raised in this track in Turin but is surely a subject for future research.

## Questions of Methodology

### *Davide Deriu*

The 'Questions of Methodology' track was perhaps more elusive than others, in that the sessions did not always address methodology in explicit ways. Interestingly enough, the term 'methodology' itself was only sparsely evoked. Oftentimes, the conference displayed the signs of a healthy discipline intent on expanding its range of subjects, areas, and periods through well-established research methods. While listening to some truly excellent case studies based on rigorous archival research, one would have been forgiven for ignoring the thematic track they were placed in. Nevertheless, the five panels did raise a number of interesting and thought-provoking issues, which felt like breaths of fresh air in a sweltering Turinese week.

A key issue that emerged from this track concerns the multiple temporalities in which architectural history is implicated. One way in which this was addressed was through a session on the production of 'non-simultaneity'. While focusing on the specific field of construction history, the eponymous session debated the critical potential of this concept for architectural historians. The term 'non-simultaneity' (formulated by Ernst Bloch in the mid-1930s) referred, for instance, to the slippage between the stages of design and construction, when they appear to belong to different temporalities, or to architectural projects that are non-synchronous with the dominant practices of their place and time. While there is undoubtedly some mileage in this concept, it was made amply clear that the coexistence of different temporal planes is invariably informed by a certain view of history that needs to be articulated.

Temporality was also central to the session on historiographies of the present, which tackled questions of methodology perhaps more directly than any other. Prompted to reflect on Rayner Banham's quote, 'Can we find new bottles for new wine?', the panel insisted on the need for new frameworks to understand our recent past. Among the critical views presented was a call to recognize how the social movements of our times, along with emerging art practices, might instigate a renewed empathy for material objects and collective formations. It was proposed that creative ways of teaching, combined with research, might provide architects-cum-historians with the means for bottling some of this wine.

Further questions were raised as to how contemporary design practice can influence our evaluation of



architecture from the past, thereby redefining what is worthy of attention when we turn to a historical subject. It was refreshing to hear papers that sought to expand the temporal categories of architectural history by proposing imaginative ways of ‘telescoping the past through the present’ – in Walter Benjamin’s famous phrase. New methods were discussed with regard to the study of the ancient past as well as the more recent one: a roundtable presented various applications of advanced techniques, from remote sensing to digital modeling, to the study and visualization of classical architecture, while also debating the pedagogical implications of these emerging tools.

As one may expect, questions of interdisciplinarity did not escape the methodology track. Special attention was paid to architectural history’s engagements with other discursive fields, such as cultural studies and environmental science, whose long-term impacts have only just begun to be assessed. These critical perspectives point to a lingering anxiety about instrumentality in our discipline. Sooner or later we may have to think about an evolutionary history of architecture: one that charts the genealogy of its mutual exchanges with other disciplines, and its oscillation between a quest for autonomy and the lure of cross-fertilization. Moreover, as one speaker proposed, interdisciplinarity does not have to be considered exclusively in a ‘horizontal’ manner (i.e., operating across disciplinary lines); it can also be construed as a ‘vertical’ project where the practising architect is actively engaged in the production of theory and history – an idea that evokes the rounded intellectual from other eras.

Professional practice was, indeed, a recurring theme of this strand. It was discussed especially in two sessions that looked at the role of the architect after World War II. ‘Bread and Butter and Architecture’ mapped an area of research concerned with the figure of the salaried architect and its involvement in the political and social institutions of that period. New light was shed on how different design approaches were adapted to the changing needs of everyday life, but also on how various negotiations between individual and collective agencies reshaped postwar societies in western countries. A further session probed the links between ‘The Architecture of Bureaucracy’ and the institutions of state power that emerged in the same period. To appraise the architect’s contribution to the social production of space, historians have been ploughing through ever broader sets of documents; as a result, a new chapter in the historiography of the profession appears to be in the making.

Questions of practice were also articulated beyond the realm of the design professions. The session titled ‘On Foot’, in particular, discussed the significance of walking for the production of architectural knowledge. The aim of the panel was to step away from the notion of architecture as the ‘persistent shell’ of human experience so as to embrace, instead, the experience itself as a historical subject. From pilgrimage to perambulation, walking was shown to be central to the social practices of different places and times. The session threw open some questions that will no doubt deserve further research. How can we

study a practice that is inherently ephemeral? And how can we represent its historical occurrences?

The latter session echoed a wider concern with architectural history as an embodied practice. Indeed, if one issue had to be singled out from this track, it would be the intimation to expand the researcher’s toolkit and to confront architectural history through more expansive types of fieldwork. The call to embrace what a speaker called ‘the physicality of research’ challenges us to develop new ways to bring historical knowledge to life, but also to lay bare the methods and procedures through which such knowledge is produced.

## Theoretical and Critical Issues

### *Hilde Heynen*

In her concluding keynote lecture for the EAHN conference in Brussels in 2012, Mary McLeod reminded us that architectural history and theory are necessarily intertwined: to produce good scholarship, architectural history needs to be theorized, just as architectural theory needs to be historicized. Only by wielding the tools of theory can architectural history do more than take buildings at face value, only by relying on history can architectural theory anchor itself in the experiences of practitioners, clients, and users. Architectural history in recent decades has indeed interacted quite thoroughly with theory, and more specifically with critical theory. Critical theory, in the broad sense of the term, is the body of knowledge that consciously operates in view of a horizon of a better, more emancipated and more just future of society, asking how and why the present and the past fell short of such notions. To this end it critically examines common notions, concepts, and understandings to reveal their unstable nature, their disciplining effects, or their emancipatory potentials.

Such conceptual concerns were clearly at stake in Alina Payne’s keynote lecture, as well as in the sessions brought together under the track ‘theoretical and critical issues’. Payne reviewed the concept of ‘renaissance’, arguing that there was no definite consensus as to its chronology, geography, or vocabulary. By focusing on the micro-issue of ‘the relief’, she was able to show how this was positioned as a mediator across different art forms and thus might provide an interesting angle to further question the relationships among the arts, as a possible marker for ‘renaissance’. In the session on ‘Histories of Environmental Consciousness’ the concepts of ‘environment’ and ‘nature’ were scrutinized. In tracing the pre-history of our current discussions on sustainability, the presenters showed how in the postwar decades these terms had connotations that were somewhat different from today. ‘Environment’ in this period referred to notions about climate and thermal comfort, as well as to men’s relation with the earth. The earth evoked for some parties questions of resources, but was framed mostly in terms of an organic unity that was sought after between humankind and ‘nature’. The latter term also was used in many different ways. Sometimes it was imbued with a spiritual sense, embodying a quasi-religious reference to nature as the home of the divinities,

at other times, nature was related to a human scale, and presented as something that was to be directed, controlled and instrumentalized. In both cases, however, the idea that nature would confront humankind with 'limits to growth' was not yet fully part of the discourse.

The session 'Architecture and Conflict, c. 300–c. 1600' highlighted several approaches for understanding the 'agency' of architecture in contested situations. Some presenters stressed how architecture can be used as an instrument of unification, enforcing a sense of identity upon a recently conquered region (as, for example, brick architecture with its specific motives did for Siena). Others zoomed in on architecture's performative powers, by showcasing, for example, how specific building interiors in Constantinople's Great Palace were the stages for diplomatic ceremonies, easing the way for negotiations by consciously emulating certain spatial characteristics of ceremonial interiors in Sasanian Iran. This session was not explicitly 'theoretical' in nature (theoretical concepts were made subservient to an encompassing narrative), but demonstrated very well how recent fascinations in theory, such as agency and performativity, can productively be used as tools to develop rich interpretations of historical materials.

Theory was more explicitly the focus of the other three sessions in this track. Different conceptualizations of 'the origins of architecture' were the topic in the session on primitivism in the 18th and 19th century. This session pitched Laugier's well-known primitive hut against alternate understandings which recognized architecture's origins either in megalith structures and worship rituals (Coussin), or in crafts (Semper), or in the cultivation of the land (Préfontaine).

The two last sessions added an explicitly political dimension to conceptual and theoretical discussions. Socialist postmodernism was questioned from different angles. If postmodernism was indeed 'the cultural logic of late capitalism', as Fredric Jameson famously claimed, what are we to make of its equivalent under socialism in Eastern Europe? If it was a reaction against modernism, was this reaction inspired by dissent with the political regime or rather by appeasement? Case studies in the USSR, East Germany, Poland, and Yugoslavia showed how different logics were at work in different situations, depending on very specific economic, social, cultural, and political contexts. The last session of this track, which focused on anarchist urbanism, discussed various moments of encounter between architecture and anarchism in the 19th and 20th century. Whereas one might assume that there is some affinity between architecture (as 'archè-tekton' dealing with first principles of construction) and the state (as the construction of the body politic), an-archism, as the refusal of first principles, seems to oppose both architecture and the state. The moments of encounter between architecture and anarchism therefore produced remarkable aporias and paradoxes, for example, in the work of Taut, Lefebvre, or Geddes. The potential of architecture to represent utopia was especially shown to often be engaged in contradictory ways within anarchist discourses on the

society-to-come, as in the drawings of Josiah Warren or in the projects of Hector Horeau.

## Twentieth Century

### *Elvan Altan Ergut*

The 20th century has emerged in the EAHN conference of 2014 as a field that is widely studied in current architectural historiography. In addition to the four sessions and one roundtable in the 'Twentieth Century' track, making a total of 25 presentations, many of the papers in other sessions also presented studies on the topic, defining the 20th century as an important area of study for architectural historians. Although various chronologies were covered in the sessions within this track, from the early to contemporary decades, the period after the Second World War appeared as a current topic of wider analysis. The literature on the historiography of postwar architecture, and of more recent architecture – call it postmodern or else – is still limited; yet, as presentations in the conference confirmed, studies have been developing, especially if published works in local languages are also taken into consideration. It could clearly be argued that the EAHN conference provided a platform for these local studies to share their findings and discussions with the wider architectural history audience, in line with the founding aims of the network itself.

Among the studies on postwar architecture, on the other hand, those on the socialist contexts took a prominent place in the 'Twentieth Century' track of the conference – and the presence of papers on this topic in sessions of other tracks should also be mentioned here again. Capitalist contexts of European countries were also the focus of analysis in some others. Hence, many of the studies presented could be defined with reference to political and economic frameworks they appropriated in their analyses and discussions. Almost all of the papers presented significant analyses of architecture and the ideological inputs of different regimes, as well as the wider means of relations of the public with the state – socialist, welfare, or capitalist – and also other possible authorities in these systems, such as financial global actors.

On the other hand, it should also be pointed out that the presentations opened quite a wide perspective by discussing the role of these relations among authorities and the public in architectural production. The speakers introduced a variety of issues that prompt historiographical analyses into new venues beyond the conventional focus on buildings, their architects, or styles.

'Modern architecture', the catchword of the 20th century, was not emphasized frequently in the sessions; or rather, the discussions did not specifically concentrate on such a framework – and if they did, they provided other lenses than the conventional to evaluate the 'modern' in architecture. Diverse keywords helped in the analysis of the meaning and role of architectures produced in processes of different relations between the public and political and economic authorities.

Instead of analyzing buildings as single entities, for example, most of the papers of the track discussed the

meaning and role of architecture and space, mainly of public space, in wider frames via the processes of urban planning, town planning, and conservation, aiming to understand the effect of urban transformation or the role of history in that – such as in the roundtable on post-industrial city centres. Discussions of ‘everyday use’ in public space included cases not covered by conventional historiography, as in the session on shopping centers. Some papers chose to discuss architecture and space beyond the meaning and role controlled by political and economic authorities by introducing into the lens of other fields, such art, as in the session on artistic dislocations of architecture. Another approach focused on architects, the producers of architectural space, ‘deconstructing’ their unified identities to understand instead the multiple real identities they acquired, questioning the role of such differences in the process of architectural production and the final architectural product. The papers in the session on women architects was exemplary, introducing the issue of the gender of the architect.

The open session titled ‘Strategies and Politics of Architecture and Urbanism after World War II’ was like a summary of the 20th-century studies presented in the conference. These papers emphasized the production processes of single buildings, introducing analyses of the so-called ‘everyday building’. They also widened the analyses on the architect by acknowledging the existence of other actors, such as the ‘architect-builders’ who were most influential in the production of the built environment. The session also contributed to the discussion of ‘controlled’ architectural stylistic production by analyzing architecture as a process of resistance.

The role of multiple actors in the creation of the built environment emerged as a recurring theme, conveyed through multiple perspectives. Such variation in perspective also appeared in sessions that brought cases from different contexts together. Corresponding to the aims of EAHN as an institution, the presentations in this track were mainly of European cases – western, middle, and especially eastern, as mentioned earlier. The chairs in this track provided a noteworthy discussion platform for the relationship between different actors and geographies. The hope is that future EAHN meetings will include more non-European cases and thus build upon the productive comparative ground for historiographical analyses of 20th-century architecture that this conference provided.

## **Circulation of Architectural Knowledge and Practices**

*Ruth Hanisch*

The track ‘Circulation of Architecture Knowledge and Practices’ united five sessions relating to problems of transfer and how this transfer triggered transformations.

The session ‘Afterlife of Byzantine Architecture in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century’ examined the revival of architectural forms from the Byzantine Empire in Europe and America. Greek Nationalists and French Reform-Catholics of the Pilgrimage Movement in the late 19th century, Jewish communities in the United States

in the 1920s, as well as English Catholics in the 1960s, all referred to Byzantium to demonstrate their distinction from their environment. These Byzantine references were applied with different motivations, but a common aim seems to have been to find an alternative to the Greek and Roman antique traditions allowing for distinction but still remaining within (or at the fringe of) the established frame of the European tradition. On the other hand, the Byzantine model offered a lot of potential for different reform movements, especially the accentuation of the mass and the control of light.

The session on ‘Lost (and Found) in Translation: The Many Faces of Brutalism’ demonstrated how Brutalism, a very English reaction to international modernism, was globally adopted. The ‘translation’ into different national, climatic, aesthetic, and technological ‘languages’ changed the face of Brutalism. With their housing projects on the outskirts of Paris, the AUA (Atelier d’Urbanisme et d’Architecture) projected Reyner Banham’s concept of Brutalism back onto Le Corbusier’s *Unité* in Marseille. In Australia Brutalist architecture could demonstrate the biographical, institutional, and cultural closeness to the Commonwealth, especially London, England (although in later years with an ‘distinct Antipodean strain’). In Angola, Vieira da Costa’s Veterinary Academic Hospital formed an ‘overlap between Brutalism and Africanism’. An international competition for the reconstruction of Skopje after the earthquake of 1963 (won by Kenzo Tange) and the engagement of local architects (who like Georgi Konstantinovski studied at Yale) made the town into the ‘Brutalist capital of the world’. A close reading of two examples of ‘brick Brutalism’ (Sigurd Lewerentz, Markuskirk, Stockholm, in Sweden, and Eladio Dieste, Church of Christ Worker, Atlantida, in Uruquai) pinpointed strong similarities.

In taking a climate zone as common ground, the track ‘European Architecture and the Tropics’ demonstrated a very promising approach. It proved how comparable certain aspects of building and infrastructure can be even while appearing in places as far apart as Africa, China, India, and Australia. At the same time ‘tropicality’ can be seen as a changing historic concept of an ‘environmental other’. The cultural interpretation of the climatic factors formed the main interest in the presentations, which very often proved to be surprising. The so-called Afro-Brazilian Style in Lagos was shown to be of Portuguese (and in parts English) origin. An open-minded pragmatism in the use of the ‘matshed’ system – an indigenous southern Chinese construction – was only gradually replaced by the employment of European construction methods in Hong Kong during the 1840s. In tropical Australia the adversities of the climate were thought to produce a ‘tropical type’ of white Australian people, with help of an acclimatized architecture. The ‘kinship of tropical architecture and tropical medicine’ was investigated with help of British guidebooks, pamphlets, and government reports on the major cities in India.

In a similar way, the session ‘Southern Crossings: Iberia and Latin America in Architectural Translation’ took

language and colonial history as the basis for the examinations of overseas transfers. The close bilateral cultural relations between Spain and Portugal and their former colonies in Latin America are traceable in the architecture of the 20th century, thus proving the 'longue durée' of colonialism. The discussion of Lúcio Costa's book, *Razões da nova arquitetura* (1934), provided the framework for the discussion of a specific tolerant southern position on modernism. It was followed by an investigation of the impact of the first Spanish translation of Giulio Carlo Argan's book, *Walter Gropius e la Bauhaus* (1957), in the labile political climate of Post War Latin America. Biographical connections also worked bilaterally; the Mexican Félix Candela studied in Madrid to become one of the world's leading experts in concrete laminated structures back in Mexico. During the Franco regime many Spanish architects fled to Mexico, whereas Antonio Bonet re-emigrated to Spain after his Barrio Sur urban project failed in Buenos Aires. Unlike the European exodus of architects during the National Socialist regime, these emigrants were obviously supported by the long established cultural links and the common languages.

A different aspect of circulation was discussed in the section 'Building by the Book? Theory as Practice in Renaissance Architecture'. The presentations discussed the tangible influences of treatises on the construction, reconstruction, and regulation of buildings and cities, such as the impact of Serlio's seventh volume on architecture, *Restauramenti e restitutioni di case*, on the reconstruction of Ferrara after the earthquake of 1570. The Order of the Capuchins produced several architectural treatises to ensure the widespread, remote convents were built according to their constitution. Francesco Laparelli backed his plans for the 'City of the Order', La Valetta, with an architectural treatise. Together they formed his legacy for the construction of the fortified city after his departure. So the theoretical books facilitated the circulation of architectural practices.

The track 'Circulation of Architectural Knowledge and Practices' demonstrated valuable results in an ongoing effort to replace the Euro/American-centred view of architectural history with a more balanced description that embraced exchanges among all continents in a 'global turn'. To complete the circle, however, we would have to take more into account the various influences the world has had on European and American architecture. This would imply reinvestigating our concepts of architectural eclecticism from the 18th century onwards. Why is using an Indian dome in England considered as folly while using a Renaissance arch in India a sign of significant influence? Maybe we should look more closely at interior design and crafts, because as Alina Payne observed in her keynote lecture, it was often the small things that travelled easier.

## Conclusion

**Michela Rosso**

In his concluding remarks to the 2010 EAHN Conference in Guimarães, Antoine Picon began by calling into question the appropriateness of the term 'European' 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' (Picon 2010, 7–8; Mengin and Dettingmeijer 2007). As Mark Crinson has recently highlighted, the emergence of the EAHN and of other European-wide architectural history groupings and journals, such as *European Architecture Beyond Europe*, raises the issue of how strongly Europe, either as a geographical or intellectual entity, might be a core element of our work (Crinson 2015). The question opens up possible paths of reflection that will be addressed at the forthcoming Dublin Conference. Is there anything like a 'European architectural history', for example? Which specificities, if any, could we attach to such a history? What would be the potentials and limits of foregrounding Europe as a research framework in architectural history? How would such a framework interact with the uncertainties currently undermining the European political and economic project?

Further issues were at stake at the Turin meeting. For example, one of the recurrent threads that ran throughout the conference was 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 have also considerably increased the range of criteria that define the eligibility of specific subject matters to enter the realm of architectural history. Thus, relatively little time was spent on the acknowledged authorial figures of the history of architecture and urbanism, while a number of sessions turned their attention from object masterpieces and monuments (and their authors) to more anonymous structures and the – hitherto neglected – histories of everyday practices. The conference showed how historians of architecture are definitely downplaying the myth of the architect as artist in favour of the complexity of patronage relations and professional interactions. The question of the building's authorship was reframed in a variety of ways. Some papers treated buildings as complex 'architectures of interactions'; as collaborative practices of architects and craftsmen; or as political objects materializing disputes of power. Others studied the relations between élite architectural discourses and local construction practices; image strategies and practical functions; architectural theories and iconographic programs; symbolism of spaces and ceremonies of power.

Reception theory has only sporadically entered the field of architectural historiography, resulting in a number of remarkable works (Stead and Garduño Freeman 2013; Klein and Louguet 2002). Hence, this emerging interest was reflected in a few papers in the Turin's conference, in which urban and architectural facts were reappraised not through the theories and practices of their production – their policy-makers and designers – but from the perspective of their recipients. By focussing on the ways in which buildings are – and were – perceived, criticized, and even ridiculed across their expanded social lives that occur after



completion, these papers suggested a number of potentially fruitful routes of investigation for future scholars in the history of the built environment.

In addition, sessions raised possibilities for further substantial thinking about our field. For example, whereas the cross-disciplinarity typical of many contributions inevitably challenges the scientific autonomy of our field, it also raises the question as to whether a higher degree of specificity could be attained through the recourse to the body of specialized knowledge related to architectural practice.

Finally, among the many themes that ensued from the fruitful discussions in the Turin meeting, two very broad ones offer some potentially fertile terrain of self-critique. First, how are our paths of investigation related to architectural education and the current practice of the profession? And second, why and for whom do we study and write the history of the built environment?

### Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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**How to cite this article:** Rosso, M, Ergut, E A, Deriu, D, Hanisch, R, Hurx, M and Stieber, N 2015 The Third EAHN Meeting in Turin: A Roundup. *Architectural Histories*, 3(1): 14, pp. 1–12, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/ah.cq>

**Published:** 16 July 2015

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