



# TRADITIONAL DWELLINGS AND SETTLEMENTS REVIEW

JOURNAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF TRADITIONAL ENVIRONMENTS

**CONSERVATION DESIGN IN  
POSTWAR BEIRUT**

*Robert Saliba*

**SIMULATED IMPERIALISM**

*Stephanie Malia Hom*

**ARCHITECTURE, MATTER  
AND MEDIATION IN THE  
MIDDLE EAST**

*Pamela Karimi*

**MYTH, MODERNITY, AND  
MASS HOUSING IN CLEVELAND**

*Jennifer Donnelly*

**REIMAGINING THE  
HIGHLAND LONGHOUSE**

*Helena Webster*

**BOOK REVIEWS**

*Bashir A. Kazimee*

*Jini Kim Watson*

*Stephen Hamnet and*

*Dean Forbes*

*Liane Lefavre and*

*Alexander Tzonis*

*Mrinalini Rajagopalan and*

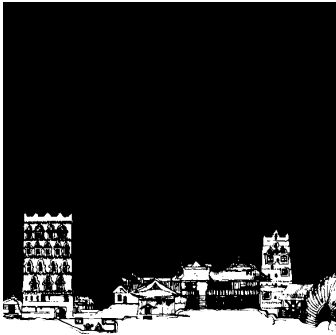
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# TRADITIONAL DWELLINGS AND SETTLEMENTS REVIEW

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# Contents



**6 EDITOR'S NOTE**

**FEATURE ARTICLES**

7 Historicizing Early Modernity – Decolonizing Heritage: Conservation Design Strategies in Postwar Beirut  
*Robert Saliba*

25 Simulated Imperialism  
*Stephanie Malia Hom*

45 Architecture, Matter and Mediation in the Middle East  
*Pamela Karimi*

55 Myth, Modernity, and Mass Housing: The Development of Public Housing in Depression-Era Cleveland  
*Jennifer Donnelly*

**FIELD REPORT**

69 On the Other Side of Sorrow: Reimagining the Highland Longhouse  
*Helena Webster*

**81 BOOK REVIEWS**

*Heritage and Sustainability in the Islamic Built Environment*,  
edited by Bashir A. Kazimee

REVIEWED BY HASAN KHAN

*The New Asian City: Three Dimensional Fictions of Space and Urban Form*,  
by Jini Kim Watson

REVIEWED BY SUJIN EOM

*Planning Asian Cities: Risks and Resilience*, edited by Stephen Hamnet and  
Dean Forbes

REVIEWED BY WAIKEEN NG

*Architecture of Regionalism in the Age of Globalization: Peaks and Valleys in the  
Flat World*, by Liane Lefavre and Alexander Tzonis

REVIEWED BY ELISA BRUSEGAN

*Colonial Frames, Nationalist Histories: Imperial Legacies, Architecture, and Modernity*,  
edited by Mrinalini Rajagopalan and Madhuri Desai

REVIEWED BY LAWRENCE CHUA

*The Neoliberal Deluge: Hurricane Katrina, Late Capitalism, and the Remaking of  
New Orleans*, edited by Cedric Johnson

REVIEWED BY KAREN TRAPENBERG FRICK

**90 CONFERENCES AND EVENTS**

92 2014 IASTE CONFERENCE CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

94 GUIDE FOR PREPARATION OF MANUSCRIPTS

## Editor's Note

As *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review* reaches its twenty-fifth anniversary, changes are in the works. Recently, I assumed a more ceremonial role as President of IASTE, with Mark Gillem taking over many of the administrative responsibilities of the association as its current Director. It is equally my intention to involve a new generation of scholars in running this journal. Although IASTE has a very active Executive Board, which has often served as an editorial committee for *TDSR* (with a further large group of IASTE members serving as advisors and peer reviewers), it is time to establish a formal editorial board and possibly appoint associate and book review editors. It is my hope this body and these individuals will be named before, or at, the next IASTE conference.

To move on to the business at hand, this issue begins with Robert Saliba's insightful examination of conservation strategies in the central district of Beirut, Lebanon. His study of recent design efforts to preserve, re-create, and reflect on the city's colonial heritage argues that such practices cannot be understood apart from the postcolonial/post-civil war contingencies of the city, nation and region. In particular, he describes how aspects of the city's early colonial modernity have now been fully historicized and decolonized in the service of profit and postmodern (or late-modern) image making, with mixed empirical results. Stephanie M. Hom next deconstructs the cultural effects of the Disney Company's themed attractions — in particular, how the It's a Small World ride presents a deceptively idealized global heterogeneity that spatializes the forces of contemporary imperialism. Although the article emphasizes how practices of "simulated imperialism" fabricate meanings out of essentialized hyperreal signifiers, it also suggests the possibility for resistance in the destabilized space between empire and hyperreality. Our third article, by Pamela Karimi, interrogates the relationship between material culture and architectural practice, using case studies drawn largely from Iran. Her examples of how material culture informs social practices of spatial transformation range from interior design, to building structure, to the "immaterial" effect of air pollution and dust in the built environment of the Middle East. Last, Karimi engages with contemporary technology and its creation of virtual worlds as a further area of interaction between social forces and architecture.

Moving from the Middle East back to the U.S., the theme of modernity is central to Jennifer Donnelly's analysis of the attempt to alleviate poverty through a program of slum clearance and public housing in Depression-era Cleveland. Donnelly argues that the idealism of the Modern Movement placed an undue burden on the residents of new public housing estates, at the very time the program institutionalized racial bias and locked the poor into a declining urban center. Finally, this issue includes a field report from Helena Webster, who looks at one specific architectural practice on Scotland's Isle of Skye. In the context of a re-awakened Scottish nationalism, Dualchas Architects has been able to revive interest in the vernacular Gaelic longhouse as a contemporary design referent by drawing critical ties between identity and the imaginary.

I would like to end this note by encouraging all our readers to join us next December for the 2014 IASTE Conference in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, sponsored by the Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM). Our biennial event will this time explore the theme "Whose Tradition?" encompassing ideas of authorship and agency. By now, members will have received the Call for Abstracts poster, but we also include it at the end of this issue. We look forward to seeing you in Kuala Lumpur in 2014.

*Nezar AlSayyad*

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## Feature Articles

# Historicizing Early Modernity — Decolonizing Heritage: Conservation Design Strategies in Postwar Beirut

ROBERT SALIBA

This article provides a critical overview of the conservation of colonial heritage in Beirut's central and pericentral districts. It argues that in Lebanon's postcolonial/post-civil war context, conservation activities have inevitably been linked to the political, cultural and economic realities of the present as well as to the attitudes of various stakeholders toward issues of modernity, national identity, and authenticity. The article starts by explaining the evolution of Beirut's colonial townscape during the late Ottoman and French Mandate periods. It then discusses recent strategies of urban and architectural conservation along three lines of thought: the market-based, the concept-based, and the institutional-based. The article concludes by framing both the debate over and practice of conservation in Beirut within national and regional contexts.

*[I]t might be more fruitful to understand heritage, tradition, and modernity as strategic political positions, rather than as fixed or essential qualities of sites or cultural practices, much less of individual identities. Individuals routinely shift from one cultural position to another, adopt one identity or another, as occasion demands.*

— Dell Upton<sup>1</sup>

*Robert Saliba is a Professor of Architecture, Urban Design, and Planning at the American University of Beirut, Lebanon.*

For the past two decades, since the end of the Lebanese civil war, the practice of heritage conservation in Beirut has given rise to a wide range of architectural and urban interventions; it has also instigated heated debate about the definition of heritage and the nature and scope of conservation and planning legislation.<sup>2</sup> The time may now be ripe, however, to take stock of all that has transpired in discourse and practice during this period to characterize and assess Beirut's specific response to postwar conservation and frame it within regional and global contexts.

Most of what has been, and still is being, debated pertains to Beirut's colonial heritage, i.e., to the period from the second half of the nineteenth century to the first decades of the twentieth century. During this time the medieval city was partially razed as part of the Ottoman modernizing reforms (1900–1916) and then duly Haussmannized under the French Mandate (1920s–1930s). Because of this timing, the buildings and townscapes of this period may be qualified simultaneously as “colonial” and “early modern.” On the one hand, their conservation thus raises the issue of assimilating the colonial legacy as an integral part of national heritage, and on the other, it raises the issue of qualifying early modern architecture as eligible for conservation.

This article argues that in a postcolonial/postwar context like that of contemporary Beirut, conservation activities have necessarily been reframed according to the political, cultural and economic realities of the present as well as the attitudes of various stakeholders toward modernity, national identity, and authenticity. It also argues that postwar reconstruction has been the catalyst for redefining the city's position toward its colonial heritage. To discuss these issues, the article articulates a conceptual framework around two contemporary intellectual movements: postcolonialism and poststructuralism. The first is used to reposition colonial heritage vis-à-vis the local production of modernity; the latter helps redefine heritage as a constructed and dynamic notion subject to multiple geographical and temporal contingencies. Spatially and formally, the article also invokes the much-debated notion of “facadism” to qualify and discuss the diverse design strategies used to promote architectural and townscape conservation.

The article first provides an overview of the evolution of Beirut's colonial townscape and describes how such a landscape is replete with the continuing dialectics between modernity and national identity. It will focus here on Beirut's central district and its periphery, where the highest concentration of late Ottoman and French Mandate structures are still to be found (and are therefore also threatened by development). This is also the area where the most heated debates about diversified attempts at conservation have been conducted for the past two decades. The second part of the article then typologizes and discusses these attempts both on ideological and design-practice grounds. The article will conclude by framing Beirut's conservation debate and practice within national and regional contexts.

## REFRAMING COLONIAL MODERNITY: PARADIGM SHIFTS IN HERITAGE CONCEPTION

As Sabine Marschall wrote in “The Heritage of Post-Colonial Societies”:

*Heritage is commonly understood as a process of conscious, purposeful remembrance for the political, cultural or economic needs of those in the present; it involves a subjective representation of valued objects, significant persons, places and symbolic events of the past, closely allied with issues of identity and power. . . . More especially so, post-colonial societies, following their attainment of independence from colonial rule, tend to be preoccupied with issues of representation and defining a new identity, for which selected aspects of the past understood as heritage serve as inspiration or foundation. The seizing of self-representation is often a key prerogative, as these societies attempt to complement (and complete) political freedom with a “decolonization of the mind.”<sup>3</sup>*

This issue of “decolonization of the mind” has emerged particularly strongly in recent literature on cities in the Arab World, where it has instigated a “paradigmatic” shift through the reconceptualization and redefinition of precolonial and colonial heritage and the deconstruction of their dynamic relationship to modernity and national identity.

In light of the extensive literature produced on this topic over the last two decades, this article will focus only on key references relevant to urban and architectural heritage in the Middle East. It will argue that the “decolonization” process in the region is occurring along two intersecting tracks. The first promotes a shift from the “traditional/Orientalist reading,” dominated by a static vision of the past as the only source of authenticity, and by an Islamic perspective that emphasizes the religious basis of urban form.<sup>4</sup> Yasser Elsheshtawy has qualified such a view as “outdated and counterproductive,” leading to “a narrative of loss.”<sup>5</sup> And Shirine Hamadeh has argued that it is rooted in the dual-city construct, “freezing the image of a society in time and space thus maintaining differentiation between the colonizers and the colonized.”<sup>6</sup> By comparison, a more dynamic view has emerged through postcolonial discourse. Here, colonial heritage is positioned as an integral part of the national identity construct, and the provincial city is seen as capable of shaping a unique response to metropolitan modernity. The provincial city has also been reframed within the contemporary globalization discourse, in which the concept of heritage conservation has shifted from the museumification of medieval cores to the “manufacturing of heritage” for tourist consumption.<sup>7</sup>

The second decolonization track, meanwhile, positions local “actors and stakeholders” as participants, rather than passive receivers, in the process of early modernization. Colonialism is thus interpreted as a simultaneous indicator of



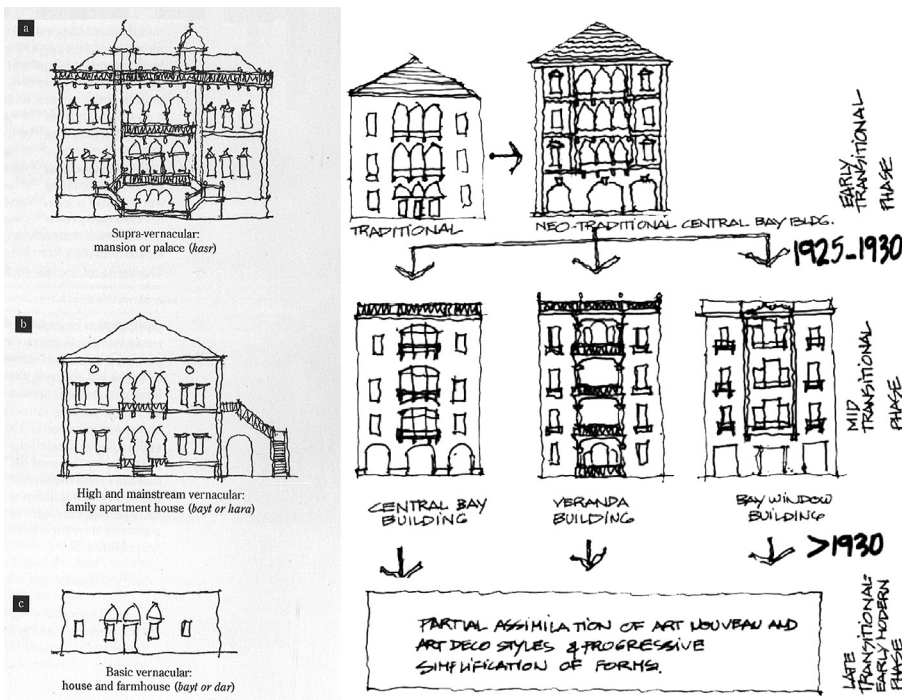


FIGURE 1. Early modernity: evolution of Beirut's residential architecture.  
Source: author.

Western hegemony and a conscious choice by the colonized to join Western modernity. In "Urbanism: Imported or Exported?" Mercedes Volait and Joe Nasr argued that "planning and architectural discourse can be shaped by domestic realities (such as economic and social structures and political intents) as much as by the experience of professional planners (whether indigenous or foreign)."<sup>8</sup> Colonial heritage may therefore be envisioned as the result of a hybridization between "native aspirations and foreign plans," forces which mutually and dialectically affected each other.

This complexification of the historical discourse has permeated the investigation of city profiles as well as single monuments and buildings. In "Weaving Historical Narratives: Beirut's Last Mamluk Monument," for example, Howayda Al-Harithy identified three different narratives of postwar conservation — the religious, the archeological, and the architectural — and showed how all three were woven around the same monument to serve socio-political and/or economic ends. Such an approach is anchored in the awareness of buildings as dynamic signifiers rather than objects with inherent meaning, a view that introduces a poststructuralist perspective to heritage conservation.<sup>9</sup>

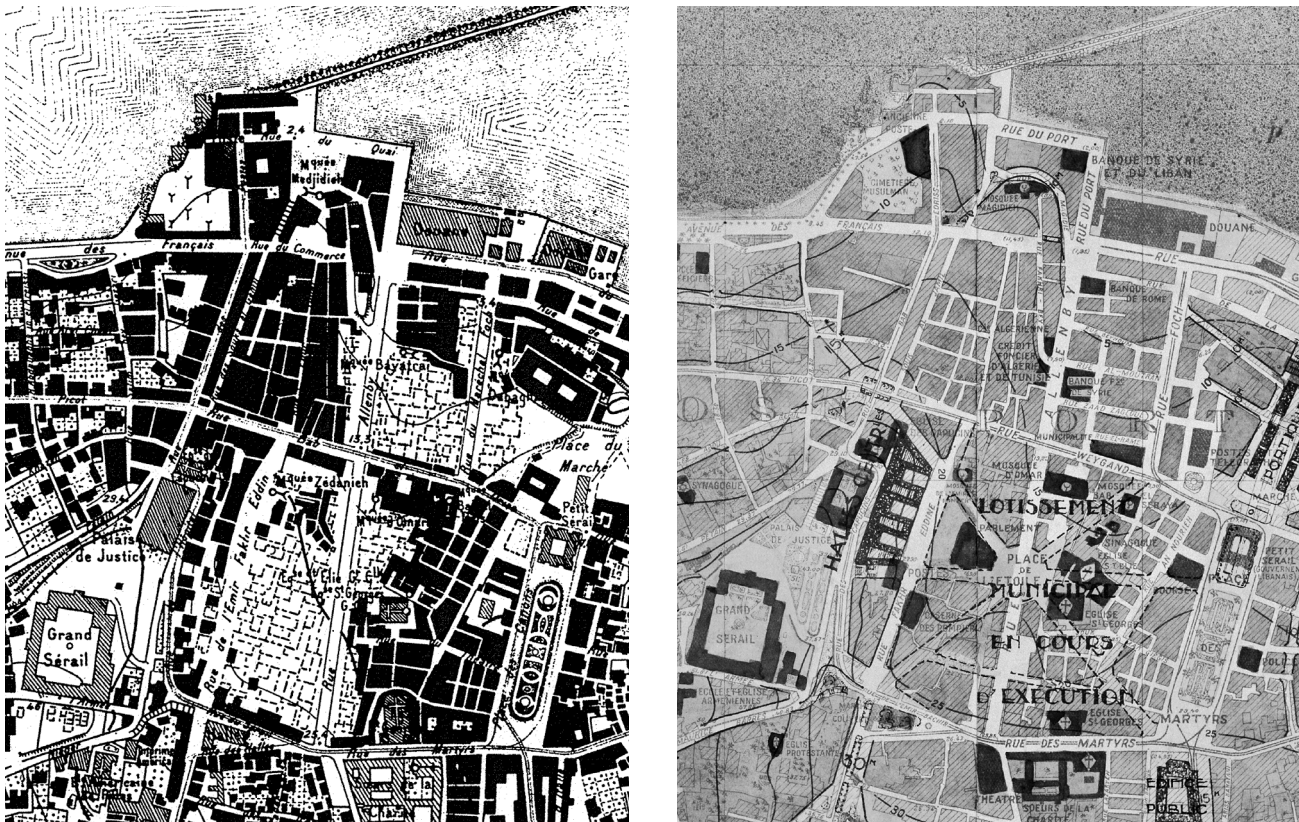
This article builds on both these postcolonial and post-structuralist discourses to investigate recent attempts at conserving early modern/colonial heritage in Beirut. It does this by reframing Beirut's recent urban history in terms of its dialectic relationship with Westernization and modernity. Concurrently, it explores ongoing architectural and urban conservation strategies from a pluralist perspective, engaging the multiple views of actors and stakeholders and their own legitimizing narratives.

#### CONTEXTUALIZING COLONIAL MODERNITY: FORMATION AND TRANSFORMATION OF BEIRUT'S CENTER AND PERICENTER TOWNSCAPES

The townscapes of Beirut's central and peripheral districts are the product of three stages of modernization, each of which generated its own dynamics of physical urbanization as well as its own response to imported architectural and urban models.<sup>10</sup>

*Early modernity: suburbanization/centralization.* As recently as the 1940s and 1950s the city center and its immediate surroundings formed a continuous spatial entity with no major breaks in its urban fabric. These areas were differentiated only by a gradual change in land use from office/commercial and institutional uses to high-density residential. This land-use pattern was established through successive phases of historical growth, initiated in the 1840s by the expansion of the city beyond its medieval walls. In less than a century, the adjoining agricultural hinterland was transformed into a sprawling suburb, then into a series of well-defined urban districts exhibiting a high diversity of socioeconomic characteristics and lifestyles.

Shaped by land speculation and an increasing rural-to-urban migration, Beirut's residential architecture also gradually transformed itself from the suburban bourgeois house (the triple-arched central-hall house) and ornate mansion, to the peri-urban apartment house, and then to the speculative urban apartment building (FIG. 1).<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile, the old fabric of the central district was being razed to accommodate the Ottoman and French urban reforms. This gave rise to two successive waves of early modernization: the Tanzimat and



**FIGURE 2. LEFT:** The Tanzimat city, Beirut Central district in 1920 showing the early modernization of the city center by the Ottomans; two sections of the medieval core were demolished in order to regularize the urban fabric and build rectilinear streets linking the port to the periphery. **RIGHT:** The Haussmannian city, the 1932 Danger plan with the Etoile square superimposed on the medieval fabric.

the Haussmannized city center (FIG. 2). Most notably, during this later period, the Foch-Allenby and Place de l'Etoile schemes, consisting of star-shaped and wide, gallery-lined avenues, were superimposed on the medieval fabric.

A stage-set approach was adopted based on facade competitions that produced models for buildings in both areas. This meant that the traditional central-hall plan was replaced by an efficient office layout, while street elevations were differentiated by diverse stylistic treatments.

During this time the two symbols of local power, the Parliament and the Municipality buildings, also expressed the dual nature of an ambiguous search for national identity. The former adopted an Oriental-revivalist style that articulated historical regional references with neo-Mamluk overtones (FIG. 3). The latter provided a clear expression of the Neo-Islamic style developed in Cairo by turn-of-the-century Western and Western-educated architects (FIG. 4).<sup>12</sup>

*High modernity: decentralization/infrastructural imposition.* The independence period, extending from 1943 until the start of the Lebanese civil war in 1975, brought two major modifications, which would have a decisive impact on the preservation of the early modern heritage half a century

later. First, zoning law (law 70, decree 6285), established in August 31, 1954, created ten concentric zones of diminishing floor-to-area ratio (FAR) extending from the center of the city outward. Today, however, this zoning law, which is still enforced, works against the logic of urban conservation by stipulating that the highest allowable densities must occur in the historic core and its immediate periphery, precisely where the highest concentration of precolonial and colonial structures are found. The second major transformation was infrastructural, and consisted of the superimposition of the inner-city ring road around the central business district during the 1960s (FIG. 5). This created a physical break between the city center and its periphery.

*Late modernity: recentralization/segregation.* This period, also referred to as the third modernity, corresponded with the globalization trend that began in the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>13</sup> It saw the completion of the city's inner ring road through the construction of Avenue Georges Haddad to the east and the widening of Rue Fakhreddine to the west. These infrastructural boundaries in turn set the limits of the post-civil war redevelopment area. This clearly demarcated the central from the peripheral districts, causing two planning systems





**FIGURE 3.** *The Parliament building and the clock tower of Place de L'Etoile. Architect: Mardiros Altounian (1889–1958). Source: ©The Fouad Debbas Collection, Beirut. Used with permission.*

to emerge side by side (FIG. 6). On the central district side, Solidere, the real estate company responsible for downtown reconstruction, is now implementing a detailed master plan with an integrated urban conservation strategy. However, outside Beirut Central District (BCD), the pre-civil war blanket zoning is still operative, leading to the ad hoc development of vacant parcels and the destruction and replacement

of late Ottoman and French Mandate structures by highrise apartment buildings.

How does this dual system affect the remaining colonial townscapes of the center and pericenter, and what are the resulting conservation strategies adopted by the public and private sectors?



**FIGURE 4.** *The Municipality building. Architect Youssef Aftimos (1868–1952). Source: Solidere.*

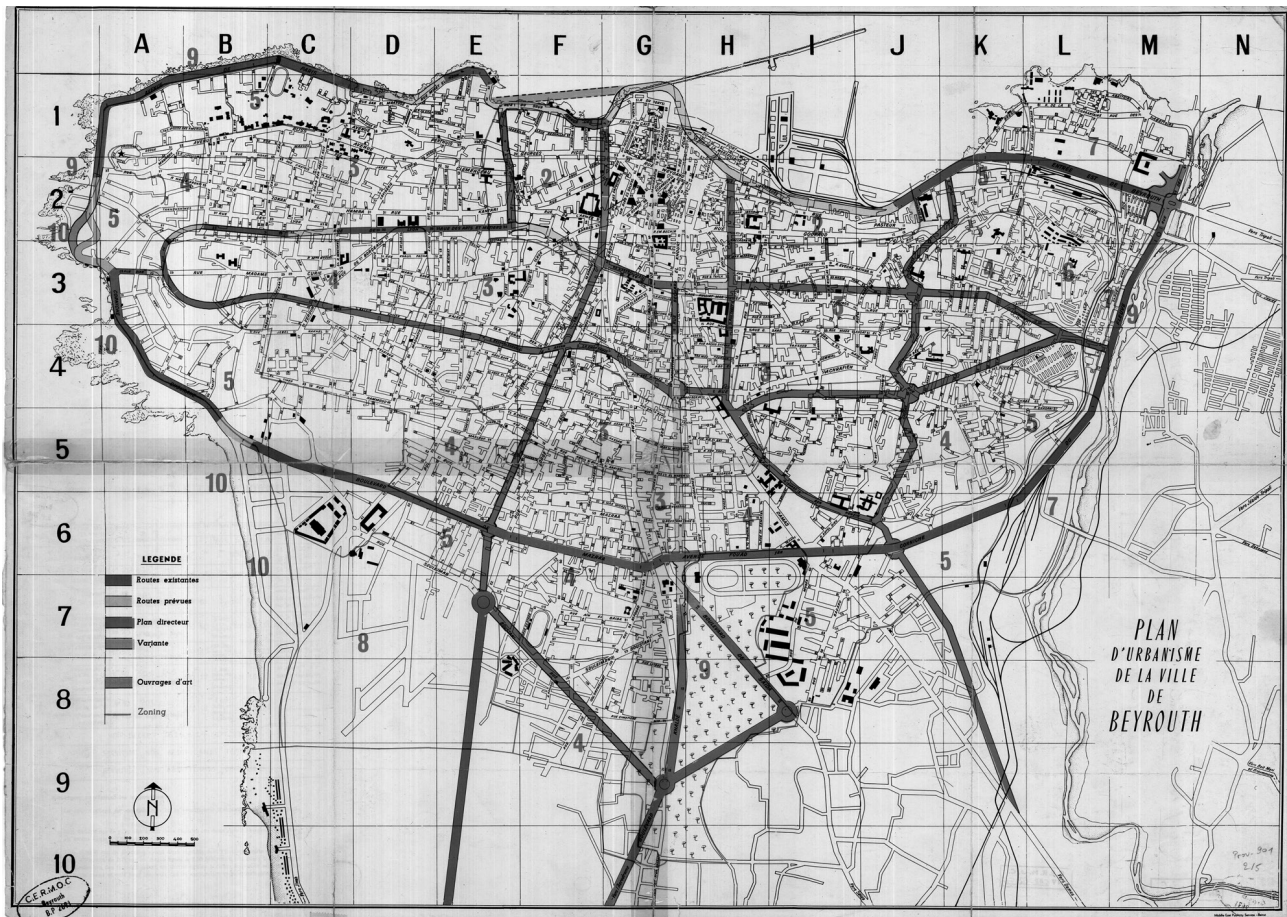


FIGURE 5. Segregation of the urban fabric through zoning and major circulation arteries during the 1950s and 1960s. Source: Institut Français du Proche-Orient.



FIGURE 6. Beirut Central District's detailed master plan contrasts with the periphery, still regulated by an outdated zoning legislation. Source: Solidere.



## TYPOLOGIZING CONSERVATION DESIGN STRATEGIES

I will refer to conservation design strategies in post-civil war Beirut as the outcome of negotiation between a client/developer and a designer, as framed by aesthetic, legislative, functional and economic considerations. Thus, the type and scope of a design intervention is generated by the intersection of the developer's agenda and the designer's conceptual orientation and readiness to compromise. The result is a validating narrative that may be different for each project.

To account for the diversity of interventions, it is necessary to differentiate between three strands of postwar heritage conservation: the *market-based*, the *concept-based*, and the *institution-based*. Each of these strands may be further apprehended through two complementary readings: *heritage as representation* and *heritage as manifestation*. The first reading emphasizes signification — i.e., the intended meaning to be conveyed by the project as agreed upon by the client and the designer, and as expressing their attitude toward the continuity of past, present and future. The second reading is spatial and physical. It addresses the issue of integration — i.e., the dialectical relationship of a building's frontage both to its interior and to the surrounding townscape. This dual spatial orientation necessarily invokes the notion of facadism — not in the reductive sense of preserving the original facades and the construction of a modern structure behind them, but in the more inclusive sense described by Jonathan Richards:

*Facadism presents a critical analysis of a concept that is central to the way in which the modern city is being remodelled. Facadism involves the preservation of historic facades, the creation of facsimiles in front of new buildings, and the decorative exercises of postmodernism. It has been accused of destroying architectural innovation, of divorcing the interior and exterior of buildings, and of reducing townscapes to stage sets. Yet defenders of facadism describe it as the way to link urban tradition and progress.<sup>14</sup>*

The two readings, the semantic and the spatial, represent attempts at articulating the relationship between an *ideological stand* and a *design strategy*. Of course, they must also take into consideration the two main determining factors of scale and context. Scale of intervention may range from individual infill sites, to freestanding landmark buildings, to district streetscapes. Concurrently, context necessitates a response to legislative and market constraints and their differences between center and pericenter districts.

## THE PERICENTER DISTRICTS: FACADISM AS ARCHITECTURAL STRATEGY

*From a market perspective*, Beirut's early modern buildings may be perceived both as an asset and a liability. As an asset, their heritage value can be seen as "symbolic capital" suitable for "the mechanisms of post-modern city marketing — relying on the unique identity of place."<sup>15</sup> Yet the FAR allowed by zoning law in the city's pericenter districts far exceeds the existing level of development. Most buildings dating to the colonial period are walk-up/pre-elevator structures with a maximum of four floors. From an economic point of view, optimizing parcel development thus requires either their vertical extension and/or vertical juxtaposition to compensate for the lost built-up area. Of the two strategies, vertical juxtaposition is the most prevalent solution; it consists of retaining the existing facade (or building) and adding a new highrise structure behind it. This approach liberates the designer from the constraining envelope of the existing structure and offers the freedom to lay out efficient floor plans from scratch.

To promote vertical-juxtaposition projects, developers have attempted to articulate a "double-winning" narrative, positioning themselves both as heritage guardians and providers of fashionable settings for contemporary living. One example is the narrative posted on the Web page of Greenstone, a real estate development company, describing a residential project, l'Armonial, in the trendy district of Furn-el Hayek (FIG. 7):

*Beirut has fallen into a haphazard building boom in recent years, which has seen the unfortunate loss of some of Lebanon's great architecture and neighborhoods. Based on its corporate citizenship philosophy, Greenstone is proud to play its role in safeguarding this rich architectural heritage for generations to come. By incorporating the traditional façade of the French Mandate building into modern residences, Greenstone's clients can purchase a piece of history without compromising their demands for modern living.*

*l'Armonial is a residence like no other in Lebanon. Located in the heart of one of Beirut's most traditional neighborhoods, it combines the 'modern' to the 'traditional'. It offers home-buyers an opportunity to have the modern amenities of new architecture while preserving the soul of the neighborhood.*

*Greenstone accomplished a construction feat by preserving the façade of the original building and actually incorporating it into the design of the new building. With traditional moldings, wrought iron, and additional subtle details, the building not only fits seamlessly into this traditional neighborhood but actually breathes new life into it.<sup>16</sup>*



**FIGURE 7.** *L'Armonial residential tower, Furn el Hayek, Beirut.*  
Developer: Greenstone. Architect: Atelier des Architectes Associés. Photo by author.

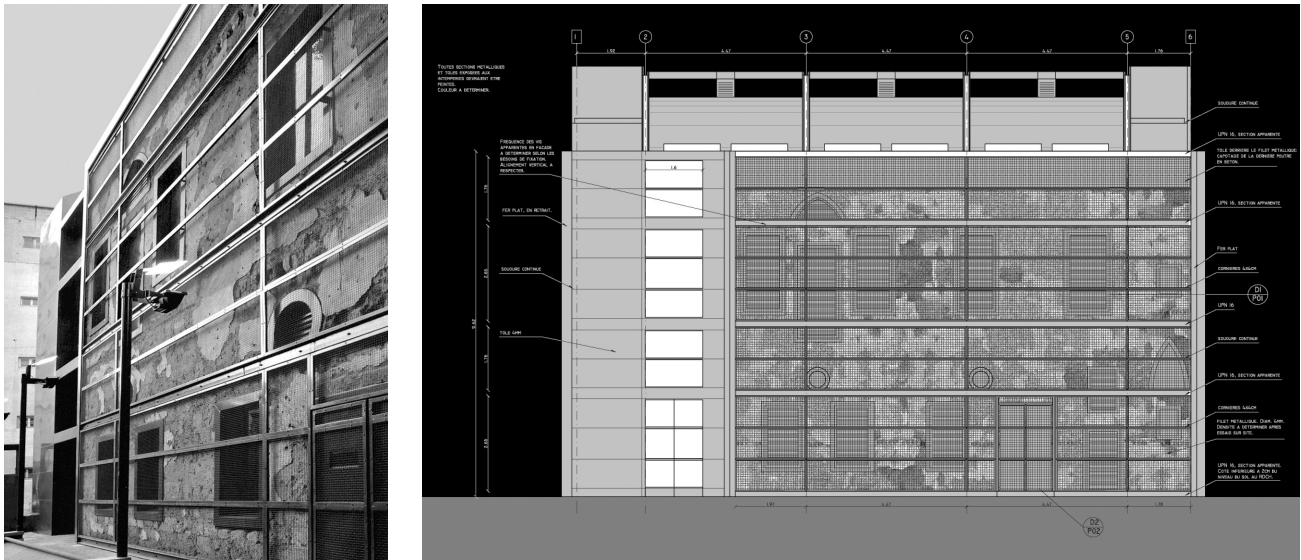
In another project, the architects of *l'Armonial* (Atelier des Architectes Associés, Beirut) opted instead for the vertical extension of a 1930s residential building to accommodate a five-star boutique hotel. In this case, three additional floors were added to the existing four-floor structure to reach the maximum 40-meter height limit permitted by zoning (**FIG. 8**). The hotel was then crowned by a rooftop pool and a terrace bar with a panoramic view. Capitalizing on the original central-hall layout characteristic of pre-1930s residential buildings, the internal partitions were retained and the building's original apartments were turned into individual hotel suites. In keeping with the colonial spirit, the hotel was also branded with an Ottoman-retro theme. This strategy may be qualified as the reappropriation of colonial modernity for contemporary marketing, a trend described by Nezar AlSayyad as “manufacturing heritage and consuming tradition.”

*From the concept-based perspective,* early modern heritage may be left to the personal interpretation of the designer. Here the historical structure is seen as an uninhabited sculpture to be invested with the imagination of the architect. An emblematic project that belongs to this category is the architect Bernard Khoury's Centrale restaurant, “housed in a recuperated ruin of a 1920's residential structure that is placed under historical protection” (**FIG. 9**). As described by the architect:



**FIGURE 8.** *Hotel Alberg, Furn el Hayek, Beirut.* LEFT: original building. CENTER AND RIGHT: later vertical extension. Architect: Atelier des Architectes Associés. Courtesy of Atelier des Architectes Associés.





**FIGURE 9.** Centrale restaurant, Gemayzeh, Beirut. Architect: Bernard Khoury. **LEFT:** photograph of elevation. Photo by Joe Keserwani, Courtesy of DW5/Bernard Khoury). **RIGHT:** drawing of elevation. Courtesy of DW5/Bernard Khoury.

The internal partitioning walls of the building and the slab of the first floor level had to be demolished. In the process of voiding out the interior of the existing structure, the outer envelope of the house had to be reinforced by placing horizontal beams that embrace the skin from the outer perimeter of the façade. . . . The steel beams used in the temporary reinforcement process are preserved. They now imply a new reading of the non-restored façade. Furthermore, we chose not to re-plaster the damaged facade, as it would have been the case in a traditional rehabilitation, instead, it is covered with a metallic mesh behind which the plaster finishing of the old façade remains in a state of decomposition. The mesh now enhances the poetic dimension of decay.<sup>17</sup>

This deconstructivist approach mirrors the radical view of “conceptual urbanists” who “attempt to shake off assumptions of what the city was, is, or should be.”<sup>18</sup> They also seek to “appreciate its fluid instabilities as well as its inertia of material residue.”<sup>19</sup> Khoury’s reading of the past is thus purposefully inessential, and his relation to the future is temporary and fluid. It also betrays a sense of distrust toward the political context of “stable instability” characteristic of post-civil war Beirut. The dialectic between the inside and the outside that constitutes the fundamental problematic of both the market-based and the institution-based approaches is here made banal. For this fashionable restaurant and bar, the designer plays on the avant-garde leanings of local yuppies to express openly the unresolved interface between colonial and postwar modernity.

In contrast to the previous two approaches, the institution-based perspective regards early modern buildings as icons

of high symbolic significance that reference the emergence of Lebanon as an independent, modern state under colonialism. Two prominent buildings illustrate this view: the Grand Serail, headquarters of the prime minister of Lebanon (FIG. 10)<sup>20</sup>; and College Hall, the administration center of the American University of Beirut (AUB) (FIG. 11).<sup>21</sup> Both are monuments of colonial modernity pertaining to the Ottoman period, and their respective clock towers are symbols of a provincial capital brought into the orbit of the Western tempo.<sup>22</sup> Both monuments also occupy unique urban settings that reinforce their landmark status. The first sits on the “Capitol Hill” with a commanding view of the city center. The second is framed by the main entrance to the AUB campus.

The post-civil war restoration of the two buildings followed the same conservation design strategy in response to the fact that both were severely damaged during it. This involved replicating the old facades and building new interiors from the ground up to contemporary standards. As indicated by the following promotional descriptions, both projects evince a common narrative of continuity with the recent past while being at the forefront of progress:

*The Grand Serail followed the architectural design epitomizing the new Ottoman military organization known as the “New Order” (nizām cedid). Its elevated location and austere façade copied the Selimiye Barracks in Istanbul. The finished structure consisted of two tall floors with the longer façade spreading over 80 metres (260 ft). . . . Today, the Grand Serail is a blend of heritage architecture with a modern interior and high-tech amenities. Its reinstatement as the seat of the Prime Minister’s offices has consecrated the city center*

as the focus of political life. A faithful adaptation of the original Ottoman structure resulted in a larger, more functional building. The external walls were completely restored and stone from demolished buildings was used in the additional floor, thereby preserving a homogeneous facade.<sup>23</sup>



**FIGURE 10.** The Grand Serail. **TOP TO BOTTOM:** the building as it appeared in its original form, during the civil war, and as a postwar reincarnation. Source: Ayman Trawi.

And concerning College Hall:

When the new College Hall is dedicated in 1996, it will be the most modern academic administration center in the Middle East. The design (by the New York architectural firm of Haines Lundberg Waehler) and construction (by the Lebanese company Karagula) bring sophisticated planning, engineering and systems



**FIGURE 11.** College Hall, American University of Beirut. **TOP TO BOTTOM:** before (source: American University of Beirut/Jafet Library Archives and Special Collections); and after rebuilding (photo by author).



*together within a meticulous duplication of the original building's exquisite 19th century exterior. The new structure pays tribute to the past as it propels the University into the forefront of the information age.*<sup>24</sup>

In the case of both buildings the restoration effort has emphasized their standing as official symbols, legitimizing institutional continuity through an enduring presence in the townscape. Here visibility (the relationship of the building's exterior to its setting), takes precedence over integrity (the relationship of the building's exterior to its interiors). Thus, the restoration effort in both cases involved adding one floor to the original structures, and College Hall was moved 14 meters north of its original location. With a 25 percent increase in floor area and a clock tower that is 106 cm taller than the original, College Hall now also includes a two-level basement. Furthermore, the new College Hall "was designed to withstand earthquakes," while "internally, a central computer will monitor air-conditioning and electrical equipment."<sup>25</sup>

The divorce of the envelope of both monuments from their interiors may, however, qualify as an exercise in facadism not compliant with the ICOMOS Charter of Venice (International Council on Monuments and Sites). This states that "a monument is inseparable from the history to which it bears witness and from the setting in which it occurs. The moving of all or part of a monument cannot be allowed except where the safeguarding of that monument demands it or where it is justified by national or international interest of paramount importance."<sup>26</sup> However, regardless of the changes introduced to their respective envelopes and settings, both buildings are now part of the public consciousness. As intended, they are being assimilated as visual evidence of the capacity of the state and an important educational institution to rebound and to endure adverse historical events. Few question their authenticity.

As illustrated above, the controversy around facadism as a legitimate conservation strategy is far from being resolved. Ironically, it parallels Robert Venturi's postmodern reading of much of Las Vegas's strip architecture as "decorated sheds" where the sign claims precedence over the building.<sup>27</sup> However, in Beirut this controversy has been expanded from the architectural to the urban scale. The trend toward facadism as a "townscape" strategy in Western contemporary cities under the impact of excessive economic liberalism was addressed by an international conference entitled "Facadism and Urban Identity," held in 1999 in Paris.<sup>28</sup> Beirut's Central District reconstruction may be considered a reflection of this trend in a non-Western/postcolonial context.

#### THE CENTRAL DISTRICT: FACADISM AS TOWNSCAPE STRATEGY

At the end of the Lebanese civil war in 1990, the only areas of the BCD spared extensive devastation were the Foch-Allenby

and Etoile areas (the Haussmannian part of the city) and the adjoining Banking Street dating to the early independence period. This colonial/early modern landscape formed a cohesive whole and exhibited a distinct urban character as the financial, governmental and religious nucleus of post-civil war Beirut. Together with the Serail Hill to the west, which overlooks the city center, the areas were designated as a single conservation district (FIGS. 12, 13). They also constituted the anchor around which the remaining BCD sectors, as well as their related network of streets and open spaces, were to be articulated.

The recuperation of these areas posed three fundamental issues: spatial and visual integration with the rest of the city center; urban identity, expressed in the classic duality of tradition and modernity, between facades and interiors, and between intended and perceived meanings; and recovery or reconciliation of architectural conservation with economic revitalization.

*Integration with the traditional city center.* The designated conservation area owes its architectural character to the diversity and distinctiveness of its building styles. This diversity stems from the juxtaposition of three types of frontages: the eclectic fronts of Foch-Allenby streets, the neo-Ottoman fronts of Maarad Street, and the early modernist fronts of the area between Etoile and Banking Street (FIG. 14). This range of design styles reflects the chronological modernization of the city center from the 1920s to the 1940s, with each style expressing the emergence of a new generation of office buildings.<sup>29</sup> Following the tradition of nineteenth-century Paris, all these facades, however, were built to the property line and subdivided into three sections: base, body and crown.

Besides the damage incurred by most of these buildings during the civil war, at the time the conservation effort was initiated their street fronts exhibited a high level of irregularity on account both of design divergence among the original 1920s structures and later additions to them in the 1950s and 1960s (FIG. 15). For example, some structures had not been completed to their intended heights, while others had been extended vertically with a modern body or attic unsympathetic to the rest of the building. The streetwall controls devised for the whole area as part of the conservation plan addressed this issue in a number of ways, allowing for existing structures to be upgraded to their original design, for new infill development to match the neighboring structures, and for the overall street profiles to read as a harmonious entity (FIG. 16).<sup>30</sup> Moreover, the role of streetwall controls was extended beyond the conservation area itself to serve as a means of integration and visual connection between this area and the rest of the central district.

*Integration with the new waterfront extension.* The designated conservation area had traditionally acted as an interface zone between the port and the city. Historically, it had been a domain of interaction between the two, deeply imprinted by the port's accessibility to the hinterland and by the accessibility of the city to the waterfront. In modern times, however, as the port expanded east onto reclaimed lands and progressively acquired operational autonomy, the relationship of this

FIGURE 12. Beirut Central District, the conservation area. Source: Solidere.

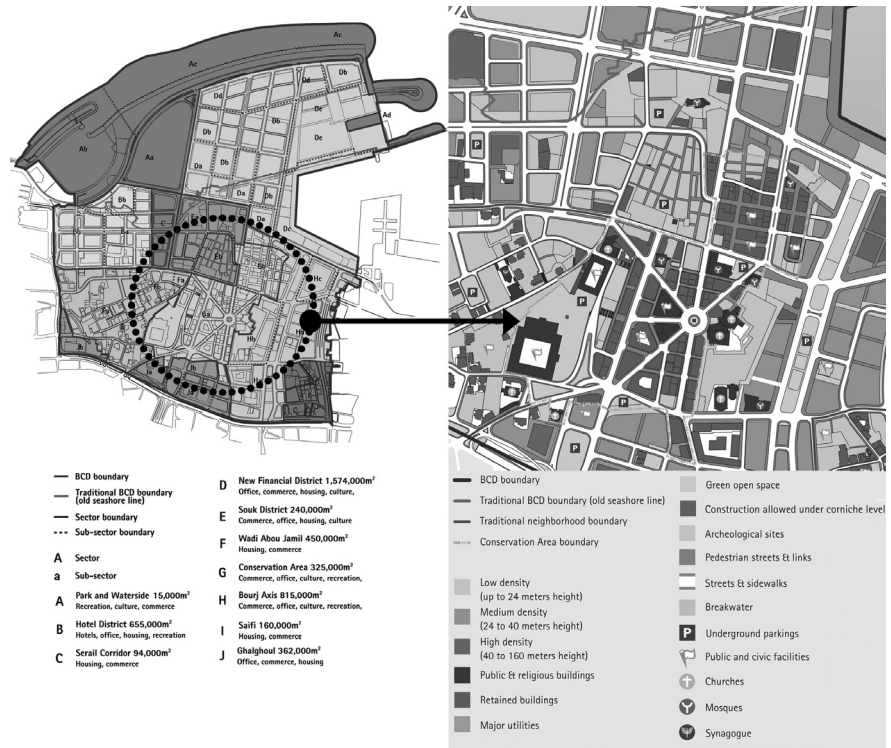


FIGURE 13. Beirut Central District, the conservation area in context. Source: Solidere.





FIGURE 14. (FROM LEFT TO RIGHT) *The eclectic fronts of Foch-Allenby; the neo-Ottoman fronts of Maarad; the early modern fronts of Etoile and Banking street.* Source: Solidere.



FIGURE 15. TOP: colonial frontages and later additions in the 1950s and 1960s. BOTTOM: new street frontages after renovation. Source: Solidere.

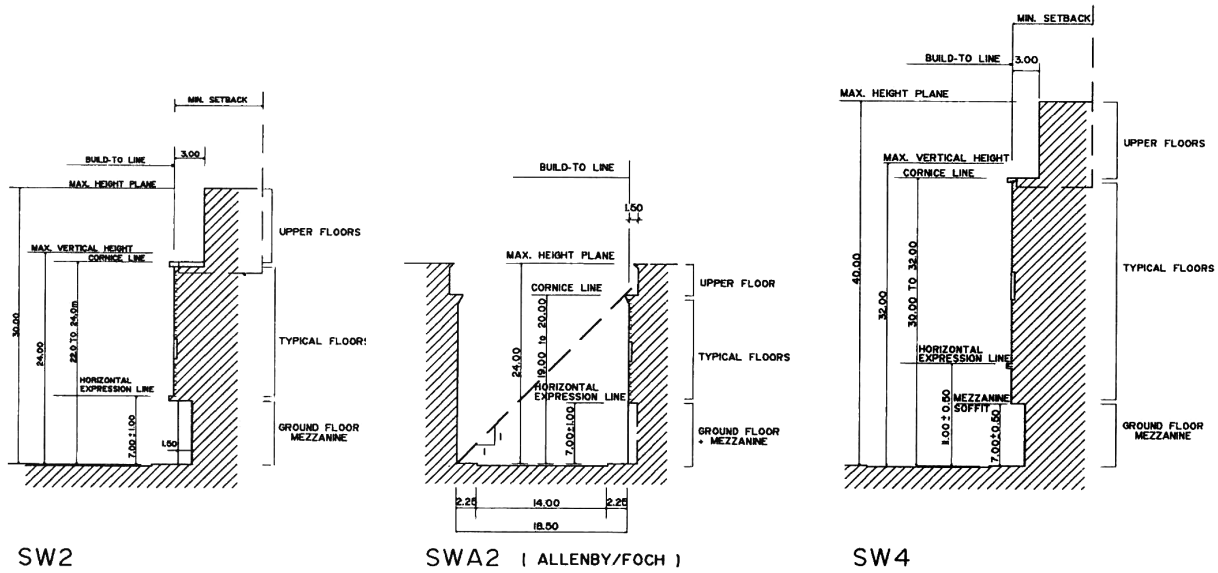


FIGURE 16. Street wall controls by Solidere. Source: Solidere.

area to the seafront was gradually modified. The creation of a new waterfront district to the north as part of the BCD reconstruction has further distanced Foch-Allenby and Etoile from the sea, divorcing it in the process from its ability to call itself a port district.

To address this situation, the new urban structure devised by the BCD Master Plan revolves around the creation

of visual, physical and functional permeability between the historic core, the city center, and the waterfront. It attempts to achieve this by means of the articulation of all BCD sectors around four visual corridors (FIG. 17). These emanate from the conservation area and integrate old and new street patterns: the Serail corridor and the Bourj Square, the Maarad-Allenby and Foch axes.



FIGURE 17. Visual corridors as means for integrating old and new central district. Source: Solidere.



The theme of “grand axes,” first implemented during the French Mandate period through the creation of Foch and Maarad-Allenby Avenues, has thus become an integrating feature for the entire BCD, from its southernmost extremity to its new northern waterfront. Accordingly, street alignment and perimeter-block development patterns from the existing portions of Foch and Allenby Avenues have been applied to their extensions. In summary, then, an urban design strategy reminiscent of mid-nineteenth-century Paris, first applied to Beirut in the 1920s, has been brought to its full potential three-quarters of a century later. Colonial modernity has been both “historicized” and “decolonized” through its full semantic and spatial integration as heritage and as a guiding design principle for the present extension of the city center. Once a showcase of early modernity in the Levant, Beirut is now being re-created as a showcase of late modernity — a model that is being exported to other cities in the Arab World.

On the ideological level, what constitutes the specificity of the conservation approach in the BCD is the inescapable intersection of market- and institution-based concerns. As mentioned above, Solidere, a real estate company entrusted with the reconstruction of the civic and business heart of the city, was faced with the dialectical complexity of being both a developer and a custodian of national identity and heritage. This balancing act was not confined to the architectural scale (as is the case in the peripheral districts); it also had to encompass the district scale. In that sense, Solidere was responsible for reinforcing the presence of single structures in the townscape that celebrate the continuity of the state (such as the Grand Serail), and for creating a memorable townscape experience as a reminder of what the pre-civil war central district was, and what it should again be as a signal of civic pride and belief in the city’s future.

The townscape conservation approach adopted by Solidere has triggered a wide range of responses. At one extreme, the design strategy has been severely criticized as producing a neoliberal stage set, and as being an exercise in facadism for tourist consumption.<sup>31</sup> At the other (more related to people’s experience), the refurbished frontages have been regarded as definers of a coherent streetscape, a quality notoriously lacking in an overcrowded city like Beirut, which is characterized by a chronic lack of public amenities and by general visual chaos. However, the way Solidere has framed its own approach is typical of the market-led response, also seen in the pericenter, in which a developer uses the double-edged narrative of preserving the past while accommodating future needs. Hence, Solidere’s Web page defines restoration as combining “authenticity, based on research and high-quality craftsmanship in stonemasonry, with a progressive outlook and regard to the needs of contemporary life and business.”<sup>32</sup> As such, Solidere justifies its role as both the custodian of downtown heritage and the agent of its postwar economic revitalization — hence, its motto: “Beirut, an ancient city for the future.”

## NEGOTIATING THE VALUE OF HERITAGE

In reference to Sabine Marschall’s statement that “heritage is commonly understood as a process of conscious, purposeful remembrance for the political, cultural or economic needs of those in the present,” it is possible to detect three current readings of early modern heritage in Beirut.<sup>33</sup>

The first reading is *opportunistic*. In this sense, the value of heritage is negotiated between the designer and the developer and determined by the economic and programmatic necessities of the project and the legislative constraints placed on a site. Heritage conservation here becomes a marketing device, legitimized through the double narrative of the developer as a promoter of heritage and a trendsetter appealing to contemporary consumer lifestyles. The accompanying architectural strategy normally involves the reuse of existing facades or buildings and their vertical juxtaposition or extension to optimize site utilization.

Such facadism may be justified in two ways: either because the retention of a building’s elevation is needed to preserve street character, or because the strategic positioning of the new structure foregrounds the historic building as the “star” or “*image de marque*” of the project. This later argument was, for example, used by Ziad Akl, the architect of the Residences Ibrahim Sursock, a tower residence built in a prestigious historic quarter of the pericenter (FIG. 18).<sup>34</sup>



FIGURE 18. Residences Ibrahim Sursock. Architect: Ziad Akl and Associates. Photo by author.

A second reading of heritage is *normative*. This view is typically advanced by academicians, architectural historians, and conservation specialists, who consider themselves to be authorities when it comes to setting standards for urban conservation. Their claims are legitimized by their historical and technical knowledge, as well as by their presumed lack of a profit motivation. This reading, however, vacillates between two extreme positions. At one end, the purists endorse the rational integration between the exterior and the interior of buildings (classical and modernist ideals), and condemn facadism as a dishonest, eclectic and debased practice, qualified with such derogatory terms as “facadomy.” At the other extreme, the postmodernists advocate eclecticism, historicism, and the validity of “complexity and contradiction.” Architectural form is here accepted as both pluralist and fragmentary, following Robert Venturi’s assertion that “it must embody the difficult unity of inclusion rather than the easy unity of exclusion.”<sup>35</sup> By conceptually separating the exterior and the interior of buildings, this view of facadism allows architects to creatively reinterpret the past while engaging in a visual discourse about the global and the local. According to this argument, the separation of external form from internal function also opens new opportunities for historic buildings, helping to ensure their continued relevance and survival within an ever changing physical and socioeconomic context.<sup>36</sup>

The problem with postmodern arguments is that they can easily be distorted by developers to become self-serving rationalizations that use historic preservation to cover up real estate marketing strategies. The same arguments can be used by architects to justify and equate elementary facadist solutions (such as vertical juxtaposition and smart siting) with more sophisticated design interpretations based on a complex and original understanding of the post-civil war environment, as is the case with the Centrale restaurant.

Accordingly, it may be necessary to have recourse to a third reading, an *empirical* one, based on how people perceive through their actual townscape experience the validity of these otherwise diverse views. The central questions to be investigated here include the following. Is the retention of early modern elevations perceived by people as an act of successful integration or just a way of screening the intrusion of highrise structures in historic districts? And are replica elevations with modernized interiors perceived by people as an act derogatory to authenticity or as a successful strategy for securing the future presence of landmark buildings in the townscape? (The Grand Serail and College Hall are the most obvious cases of the latter.)

While no systematic surveys have been conducted to flesh out such an empiricist reading, preliminary observations suggest that people react to facade retention with new structures behind as an act of visual intrusion, irrespective of market-based rationalizations by designers and developers. The same negative attitude prevails regarding the siting of residential towers to frame old structures. On the other

hand, the rebuilding of historic facades with modern interiors is accepted as a necessary townscape strategy for the longevity of historic landmarks, irrespective of the strict perspective of architectural historians and conservation specialists.

The three alternative readings above testify to some of the ways that defining, perceiving and dealing with heritage are contingent on socioeconomic and cultural circumstances and needs. Post-civil war reconstruction in Beirut has acted as a powerful catalyst for dynamically engaging and coming to terms with early modern heritage, irrespective of the diversity of approaches — market-based, institution-based, or concept-based. This reflects Dell Upton’s view that “the rhetoric of heritage, identity, and authenticity . . . [is] typically evoked in times of great political and economic changes.”<sup>37</sup>

Beirut’s early modern heritage has already been assimilated as part of the national patrimony through the designation of a conservation area and its central role in the post-civil war development of the central district. Concurrently, the symbols of Ottoman and French Mandate colonialism have been re-created through their investment with present administrative and cultural uses; in the process their status as visual signifiers has been reinforced as an enduring part of the contemporary townscape. And colonial modernity has been seized upon as a historic asset to be used in real estate promotion in both Beirut’s central and peripheral districts.

This last process in particular is a reflection, in an ex-colonial context, of the same neoliberal trends that have emerged in the last several decades in Western capitals. What was during the early decades of the twentieth century a movement for “beautifying cities” (the Neoclassical/Hausmannian tradition in Europe and the City Beautiful in the U.S.) evolved during the last decades of the century into a movement of “marketing cities.” These two models, which represent a major paradigm shift at the conceptual level, nevertheless accord similar importance to the primacy of a city’s central district, and to the realization that public improvements can be profitable for business and real estate promotion. However, they differ in terms of their attitudes toward conservation. Thus, according to Anne Van Loo, the “culture of the facade” in early modernism has been translated into “facadism” in postmodernism.<sup>38</sup>

Taking the prototypical example of Brussels, G.G. Simeone has identified three successive approaches to conservation in the central districts of European cities: 1) the Neoclassical tradition, where the “cult of the facade” was aimed at framing formal new public spaces (to the extent of erecting provisional facades behind which actual buildings could be built later); 2) the post-World War II reconstruction of cities, which aimed to preserve memory by rebuilding damaged structures exactly as they were, but to house new functions and as part of new city plans; and 3) post-1970s facadism, which has expressed “the contrast between the growing interest in the protection of cultural heritage, and the ever greater contingencies of property speculation.”<sup>39</sup> In the case of Bei-

rut, the same trends prevail, with the main difference being that post-civil war reconstruction has corresponded with the advent of neoliberalism as a predominant economic force, transforming the city center into an arena for corporate real estate speculation. The resulting design strategies are the same, however, in Western and non-Western contexts, “where historical depth is reduced to the dreary flattening of two-dimensionality.”<sup>40</sup>

From a regional perspective, other cities in the Arab World, notably Cairo, have recently exhibited a renewal of interest in their early modern architectural heritage that is similar to post-civil war Beirut, even if it has not produced the same catalytic effect. In their article “Belle-Époque Cairo: The Politics of Refurbishing the Downtown Business District,” Galila El Kadi and Dalila Elkerdany speculated, “It may seem surprising the degree to which a proudly nationalistic Arab state like Egypt takes interest in and dedicates scarce resources to architectural and urban legacies inside its territory which date to an era of foreign hegemony of British

colonialism and Turko-Circassian monarchy.”<sup>41</sup> The answer given by the two authors to the implied question “Why?” may also apply to Beirut:

*Egypt's belle époque, a remarkable phase of innovation, struggle, and creativity, was not 'rediscovered' by European architectural historians or international institutions. Rather, new awareness evolved as the fruit of local initiatives led by Egyptians, reviving our national pride, remembering the birth of our own kind of urban modernity, and commemorating a time of flourishing liberal, revolutionary, cosmopolitan urban life.*<sup>42</sup>

The question remains, however: Are such arguments an outcome of a new heritage consciousness, the “decolonization of the mind” referred to by Marschall, whereby the colonial has been reinterpreted, reframed and reassimilated as an integral part of contemporary national identity in the Arab World?

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3. S. Marschall, “The Heritage of Post-Colonial Societies,” in B. Graham and P. Howard, eds., *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2008), p.347.
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8. J. Nasr and M. Volait, eds., *Urbanism Imported or Exported? Native Aspirations and Foreign Plans* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 2003), p.xiii.
9. H. Al-Harithy, “Weaving Historical Narratives: Beirut’s Last Mamluk Monument,” *Muqarnas: An Annual on the Visual Culture of the Islamic World*, No. xxv (2008), pp.187–214.
10. For a detailed discussion of the evolution of early modern townscapes in Beirut, see R. Saliba, *Beyrouth Architectures: Aux Sources de la Modernité, 1920–1940* (Marseille: Editions Parenthèses, 2009), pp.22–32; and R. Saliba, *Beirut City Center Recovery: The Foch-Allenby and Etoile Conservation Area* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2004), pp.33–43.
11. Saliba, *Beyrouth Architectures*, pp.58–65.
12. Saliba, *Beirut City Center Recovery*, pp.122–23.
13. The notion of “late modernity” is here linked to the “neoliberal urbanism” movement of the last two decades in terms of its impact on Third World cities. In the Middle Eastern context, earlier stages of modernity in urbanism are usually referred to as “colonial urbanism” (pertaining to the late nineteenth century and to the early decades of the twentieth century), and “modernist planning” (pertaining to the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s). Late modernity is illustrated by two extreme cases: the global hub and the postwar city — the first exemplified by Dubai and the second by Beirut. Both cities followed the model of the “entrepreneurial city,” with their emerging downtowns shaped as speculative townscapes financed and implemented by joint public-private partnerships and packaged for tourism development and elite consumption practices. Beirut’s Central District reconstruction model was further exported to Amman in the form of the Al-Abdali Urban Regeneration Project. Compared to the Western context, conservation is taking shape less as a regenerative tool for the restoration of historic cores than in terms of large-scale development projects that strongly contrast with former colonial-period notions of preservation as a museum-related phenomenon. Writing on neoliberal urbanism in Lebanon and Jordan includes R. Daher, “Swift Urban Heritage Donor Recipes and Neoliberal Restructuring: Jordan and Lebanon as Case Studies,” in M. Fawaz, ed., *Urban Heritage and the Politics of the Present: Perspectives from the Middle East* (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 2006), p.48–62; and D. Summer, “Neo-liberalizing the City: Transitional Investment Networks and the Circulation of Urban Images in Beirut and Amman,” MA thesis (Urban Planning) American University of Beirut, 2005. For a regional overview, see M. al-Asad, “The Contemporary Built Environment in the Middle East,” *The Middle East Institute* (2008), pp.26–28, available at www.mideasti.org.

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16. <http://www.greenstonesal.com/LArmonial/Overview.html>
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19. M. Bell and S.T. Leong, "Introduction," in M. Bell and S.T. Leong, eds., *Slow Space* (New York: Monacelli, 1998), as referred to in Schwarzer, "The Contemporary City in Four Movements," p.136.
20. Built in 1853 as the "Imperial Barracks" to symbolize Ottoman state power in a provincial capital, it underwent several semantic switches, first by being converted into a "governmental palace" (*serail*), then into the headquarters of the French governor during the Mandate period, and finally to the presidential and the prime minister's headquarters following independence.
21. Built between 1869 and 1873, College Hall was the first building of the campus, and was particularly famous for its landmark clock tower. Originally, College Hall was a multifunctional structure, including housing, classrooms, the library, a chapel, a faculty lounge, and dormitories. College Hall was the ultimate symbol of the university. College Hall was blown up in an explosion on November 8, 1991.
22. J. Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut: The Making of an Ottoman Provincial Capital* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp.241–47.
23. <http://www.solidere.com/business/grserail.html>
24. From the College Hall Reconstruction Campaign booklet, Beirut, AUB archives.
25. Ibid.
26. The Venice Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites, Article 7.
27. <http://www.an-architecture.com/2010/09/preservation-facadism.html>
28. F. Loyer and C. Schmuckle-Mollard, eds., *Façadisme et identité urbaine [Facadism and Urban Identity]* (Paris: Edition du Patrimoine, 2001).
29. For a detailed analysis, see Saliba, *Beirut City Center Recovery*, Ch.5: "From Khan to Office Building," and Ch.6: "Evolving Frontages."
30. Accordingly, a set of streetwall controls was articulated to ensure continuity between the existing historic context and new development. Building height was confined to 24 meters with a horizontal expression line between 6 and 8 meters delimiting the base of the building, and a cornice line between 19 and 20 meters delimiting the body of the building. A colonnade was a required feature on the Maarad axis, while a setback or a jetty of 1.7 meters was allowed for the remaining streets.
31. For recent articles illustrating this view, see Daher, "Swift Urban Heritage Donor Recipes and Neoliberal Restructuring"; and C. Larkin, "Beyond the War? The Lebanese Postmemory Experience," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol.42 No.4 (2010), pp.615–35.
32. <http://www.solidere.com/project/historic.html>
33. S. Marschall, "The Heritage of Post-Colonial Societies," p.347.
34. Z. Akl, "Autorités opinion publique et architectes dans le collimateur de la préservation du patrimoine," *Al Mouhandess*, No.27 (2011), pp.16–20.
35. R. Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (2nd ed.). (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1977), as quoted in Richards, *Facadism*, p.49.
36. For a detailed and comprehensive discussion of facadism from an architectural and townscape perspectives, see Richards, *Facadism*, ch.1–2.
37. Upton, "Authentic Anxieties," p.303.
38. A. Van Loo, "From Construction to Destructuration of Cities," in Loyer and Schmuckle-Mollard, eds., *Façadisme et identité urbaine*, pp.234–36.
39. G.G. Simeone, "Brussels or the Loneliness of Facades," in Loyer and Schmuckle-Mollard, eds., *Façadisme et identité urbaine*, p.241.
40. Ibid.
41. G. El Kadi and D. Elkerdany, "Belle-Epoque Cairo: The Politics of Refurbishing the Downtown Business District," in D. Singerman and P. Amar, eds., *Cairo Cosmopolitan: Politics, Culture, and Urban Space in the New Middle East* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2006), p.345.
42. Ibid., p.370.

# Simulated Imperialism

STEPHANIE MALIA HOM

Simulated imperialism is a paramount dynamic of the contemporary. It marks the mutual articulations of empire and hyperreality that build signifying distance into imperial formations and their discriminatory operations. The Disney empire is one of its most pernicious forms. This article looks to Disneyland to bring simulated imperialism into sharper relief by detailing its three interlocking movements: the signification of imperial processes generated by simulacra; the amplification of colonizing projects through simulation; and the interpellation of hybrid subjects between (im)mobility and (in)animation. It takes the It's a Small World ride as its primary example. One of the oldest attractions at Disneyland, it provides a multicultural tour of a metaphorical global village wherein animatronic children, stylized in cultural stereotypes, sing and dance in the name of world peace. Yet this simulated world is one of deceptive heterogeneity. In fact, It's a Small World reveals an idealized world to be one erased of all difference in favor of a white, English-speaking, and culturally American utopia. It thus spatializes the forceful presence of empire within its all-embracing discursive formation. To theorize simulated imperialism using this example is to position empire within the domains of unending semiotic breakdown and the globalized (im)mobilities that presently order our excessive, networked, high-carbon societies. This opens a way to think through imperial formations from the destabilized margins of signification, and from these limits, to search out radical possibilities for subversion and resistance in the spaces between the imperial and the hyperreal.

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Behold, Disneyland: degenerate utopia of ideological fragments and childhood wishes.<sup>1</sup> It is a self-declared land of futures, frontiers and fantasies, with strikingly porous boundaries between such symbolic geographies. Space and time press against each other here, passing, without rupture, from the furthest reaches of outer space to Main Street USA,



from robotic futures to irrecoverable pasts determined by manifest destiny. We, too, pass seamlessly through these fictive lands where there are no borders or passport controls. It is a sort of time travel, for these are also the spaces and times of childhood, when a visit to Disneyland was the ultimate dream come true for so many.<sup>2</sup> As children, we dashed between teacups and tiki rooms on a quest to experience every ride. At the end of the day, exhausted, we felt as if we had mastered the park, domesticating its characters and conquering its every land. We were imperialists in a Disney empire.

These sentiments of mastery are the percolations of imperial debris at play in everyday life. They are also markers of a salvage operation that resurrects the pleasures of imperialism linked to a seemingly vanished colonial order. Disneyland, as a place and an imaginary, entangles what Ann Stoler has called “imperial formations,” or processual constellations of decimation, displacement and reclamation that persist in the contemporary.<sup>3</sup> These are the ruins of colonial empires resuscitated as processes that have their own life breath — surfacing and disappearing and resurfacing amidst physical remains (e.g., convict islands) and ruined bodies (e.g., landmine survivors) and damaged psyches (e.g., mental disorders). Imperial formations leave material traces, yes, but they operate more potently as relations of force — allocating, reappropriating, deflecting, excluding, denying, deferring, disavowing — within the politics of the present. How imperial formations persist in the present is exactly the challenge that Stoler set for postcolonial scholarship: to momentarily unbind, and thus to reveal, the sinews that link the “historical blunting” that has come to characterize postcolonial studies with “the political life of imperial debris, the longevity of structures of dominance, and the uneven pace with which people can extricate themselves from the colonial order of things.”<sup>4</sup> It is this task that I take up here.

At Disneyland, imperial formations inhabit the interstices of the hyperreal, pivoting along simulated vectors of the physical and the psychic, interior and exterior, miniature and gigantic, copy and original. Simply put, this is a locus where the (post)colonial and the hyperreal converge. It is also where we can attend to the ways that protracted imperial processes interact with the precessions of simulacra that shape contemporary image society. It is here that a nexus of imperial formations is manifest that simultaneously generates, delimits and denaturalizes the impulse of our present historical moment: *simulated imperialism*.

This essay looks to Disneyland to bring the operations of simulated imperialism into sharper relief. It takes as its primary example the spatial practices of the It’s a Small World ride. As one of the oldest attractions at the theme park, it offers a multicultural tour of a metaphorical global village where animatronic children, stylized in cultural stereotypes, sing and dance in the name of world peace (FIG. 1). This boat ride through an elaborate stage set is a simulacrum within the archetypal simulacrum that is Disneyland. Yet this miniature world is also one of deceptive heterogeneity. In fact, the ride’s spatial practices reveal an idealized world to be one erased of racial, cultural and linguistic difference in favor of a white, English-speaking, and culturally American utopia. Thus, the ride materializes the forceful presence of empire within its all-embracing discursive formation.

What follows is a close reading of the It’s a Small World ride that theorizes the three interlocking operations of simulated imperialism: the signification of imperial processes generated by simulacra; the amplification of colonizing projects through simulation; and the interpellation of hybrid subjects articulated between (im)mobility and (in)animation. It shows the imperial and the hyperreal to be mutually constitutive in the contemporary. Such a theorization reveals



FIGURE 1. Exterior view of the It’s a Small World ride at Disneyland in Anaheim, California.



the positioning of empire within the domains of unending semiotic breakdown and the globalized mobility systems that order the excessive, networked, high-carbon societies of the early twenty-first century.

The built environment is an especially privileged site for this type of analysis because it gives fixed physical form to shifting imperial formations — as many architectural studies of colonial empires have shown.<sup>5</sup> Here, I use the term “colonial” (and its variants) to describe an attitude that desires the forced settling of physical and psychic territories, among them the nineteenth-century European scramble for Africa and strategies of internal colonization. And I take “empire” (and its variants) to mean that curious sway of *imperium* and *emporium* that binds the neoliberal present to these variegated colonial pasts.<sup>6</sup> Empire is thus always-already multivalent. It operates, unevenly and contentiously, across different temporalities and geographies, macro- and micro-scales, and political and economic spheres to establish and reinforce differential sovereignties that continue to subjugate the less powerful.

This essay calls attention to the particular constellation of empire and simulation that builds signifying distance into imperial formations, but that is no less potent in its discriminatory effects than more physical processes. The Disney empire is one of its most pernicious forms. To situate empire within simulation also opens a way to think about imperial formations — and empire — from the destabilized margins of signification. From these limits, we can stake out new theoretical ground that weakens the hold of empire. In other words, understanding the processes of simulated imperialism can renew radical possibilities for subversion and resistance in the spaces between the imperial and the hyperreal. It can create space for a world, small or otherwise, based on truly horizontal forms of belonging and harmonic difference.

#### SIMULATED IMPERIALISM: SOME THEORETICAL NOTES

*Simulated imperialism signifies imperial processes generated by simulacra.* This is best expressed in the built environment, where second-order fictive worlds such as colonial exhibitions and themed casino-hotels short-circuit the reality of a place and duplicate it through signs. Since these simulations arise out of different historical circumstances, the textures of their imperial formations vary accordingly. For instance, distinct gradations of sovereignty and scales of differentiation have been at stake, say, at the Rue du Caire at the 1889 Exposition Universelle in Paris and at the faux Roman Colosseum at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas today. The former, shaped by nineteenth-century discourses of empire, participated in the colonial order(ing) of Egypt, while the latter engages the authentic fakery of Las Vegas’s postmodern monumental excess.<sup>7</sup> Yet both simulacra are dislocations at which imperial formations surface. And both mark a “broader set of prac-

tices structured in dominance,” insofar as the visitors to each experience imperial affinities, becoming metaphorical Orientalists and Roman centurions, respectively.<sup>8</sup>

*Simulated imperialism amplifies colonizing projects through simulation.* It thus brings the colonial past into the hyperreal present, suffusing the aforementioned practices of dominance with nostalgia for colonial space-time. The colonial, then, is always-already the consequence of shifting imperial formations.<sup>9</sup> What is more, simulated imperialism evokes colonial pasts that have always been rooted in fantasy. It produces mirages, hallucinations, specters that do not correspond to historical realities. It is simulation at its best.

For example, the Bab Al Shams desert resort in southwestern Dubai evokes a colonial past that never existed. A self-styled Arabian oasis, it masquerades as a pseudo-Ottoman caravanserai where visitors can indulge their every Orientalist impulse, from gazing upon belly dancers to riding camels. If one so chooses, one can even go “behind the veil” by dressing up in a *burqa*. Thus, it offers a *tableau vivant* of revived Oriental stereotypes, a collision of colonial fantasy and hyperreality where visitors may enjoy the pleasures that once belonged to European colonizers. Disavowal, too, structures this amplification, insofar as Bab Al Shams itself becomes the site of ideological illusion wherein visitors, knowing full well that the resort was built on the backs of modern-day slave laborers and continues to be run by indentured servants shackled to the yoke of the neoliberal economy, behave as if they did not know. In such ways simulated imperialism reproduces what Homi Bhabha identified as the fetishistic logic of European colonial discourse itself.<sup>10</sup>

*Simulated imperialism interpellates hybrid subjects articulated between (im)mobility and (in)animation.* This hybridity is different from, but adjacent to, the hybrid forms scrutinized in postcolonial scholarship; it is hybridity conditioned by globalized mobility systems, in what John Urry has called the “new mobilities paradigm.”<sup>11</sup> Whereas the limits of hybridity generated ambivalence and anxiety within colonial systems of order, simulated imperialism — operating in the interstices between the postcolonial and the hyperreal — interpellates subjects who exist between the mobile and the immobile, and more acutely, between the animate and the inanimate. This mobilized hybridity trades in the melancholic metaphysics of imperialist nostalgia; it is to mourn for what has been destroyed, fantasizing about an idealized former colonial life, and attempting to reconcile that loss through the petrifying fictions of “tradition.”<sup>12</sup> In other words, imperialist nostalgia perpetuates the immobility to which the colonized are always condemned.<sup>13</sup> Simulated imperialism, on the other hand, performs a dialectical trick that seems to celebrate the resurrection of life. In a redemptive move against this fixity and disappearance, it reanimates the colonial subject . . . but only partially.<sup>14</sup> The complete return of such subjects is always kept in check.

For example, the gondoliers and *carabinieri* [policemen] who wander the artificial canals and *calles* of the Venetian

Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas are hyperreal subjects who have been psychically settled by “Italy.” More accurately, they have been subjugated by the simulacrum of Venice, a melancholic city always on the verge of disappearance.<sup>15</sup> At first glance, these figures are apt mimics of Italians-as-subjects, *trompes-l’oeil*, predictably in keeping with colonial discourse.<sup>16</sup> As such, they become inscribed into an “Italian” order of things and interpellated as colonized subjects of the hyperreal. Not so predictably, however, they also appear to be quite mobile, strolling in silence as perfectly costumed copies of Italians elsewhere, resurrected in the American desert (of the real): mute *flâneurs* among simulated passages. These hyperreal Italian subjects reflect the very work of simulation itself.

According to Jean Baudrillard, “the subject is simultaneously itself and never resembles itself again, which haunts the subject like a subtle and always averted death. This is not always the case, however: when the double materializes, when it becomes visible, it signifies imminent death.”<sup>17</sup> Thus, when confronted with their simulated doubleness — say, by a professor (me) who insists on speaking Italian with them — these gondoliers and *carabinieri* retreat into a colonial freeze-time, unable to speak or even look one in the eye, metaphorically re-fixed into a world of statues. In one instant, I witnessed the death of the hyperreal subject and the partial return of a colonial one, a figurative reanimation of the colonial. Simultaneously, I found myself sifting through the ontological borderlands between the mobile, animate, simulated subject and the fixed, inanimate, colonized one: hyperscapes where the hybrid subjects of simulated imperialism inhabit the space between.

#### THE WORLDS WITHIN: EXHIBITION RESIDUES, OR THE SIGNIFICATION OF IMPERIAL PROCESSES

In his study of the 1964 New York World’s Fair and the first iteration of the It’s a Small World ride, Lawrence Samuel speculated that Elias Disney’s experience as a carpenter at the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair inspired his son, Walt, to create magical universes of his own.<sup>18</sup> And magical worlds he did create — from kingdoms (Disneyland), to suburbs (Celebration, Florida), to feature films, to an “Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow” (EPCOT). Since the mid-twentieth century the Disney name has become synonymous with simulated worlds — be they microcosmic, animatronic, celluloid, suburban, or other. These hyperreal worlds constitute the so-called Disney empire.

Jean Baudrillard famously commented that Disneyland in Anaheim, California, exists as an imaginary to conceal the fact that we (Americans) live entirely among orders of simulation.<sup>19</sup> As he wrote, Disneyland is merely a “deterrence machine” to rejuvenate fictions of a real that doesn’t exist; it is a space to regenerate the imaginary, wherein the recycling of “the dreams, the phantasms, the historical, fairylike, legend-

ary imaginary of children and adults is a waste product, the first great toxic excrement of a hyperreal civilization.”<sup>20</sup> How, then, might we clarify this imaginary and dissect the differential toxicities within it?

Rather, one might observe how the imaginaries are multiple at Disneyland. Each of its magic lands — future, frontier, fantasy, adventure — is linked to varying ideas of what is real, and each engages distinctive mechanisms of deterrence and imagination.

In Adventureland, the popular Jungle Cruise, one of the park’s original attractions (largely unchanged since 1955) circumnavigates a manmade river dotted with animatronic wildlife: hippos, elephants, crocodiles, and even spear-wielding “natives” (FIGS. 2, 3). Visitors queue within a boathouse



FIGURE 2. (TOP) An animatronic elephant rushes out of the trees on the Jungle Cruise at Disneyland.

FIGURE 3. (BOTTOM) A “native” automaton stares menacingly at passersby. The human skull mounted on the stake behind him sends a threatening message that also marks him as “savage.”

that belongs to an expedition company in an unnamed British colony of the 1930s. Material evidence of the colonizing project is everywhere — supply crates, photographs, ammunition, radios. And visitors wind their way through this detritus before boarding modified riverboat steamers with names like *Congo Queen* and *Mekong Maiden*. They then proceed into the wilderness, allegedly never to return (FIG. 4). Yet every visitor *does* return from the simulated “jungle” with its menacing headhunters, and thus temporarily actualizes the fantasy of dominating nature — a fantasy that collapses indigeneity with the flora and fauna around it.<sup>21</sup>

The point here is that the deterrence and imaginaries at work in the Jungle Cruise are different from those of Disneyland’s other attractions. It actively perpetuates a fantasy of domination over nature, as played out on a simulated river in a simulated colony — an attempt to recuperate both a colonial real and a mastery of nature that never, in fact, existed. Yet Disneyland is not one, but multiple hyperrealities. Where the Jungle Cruise provides a simulated experience of dominating nature, the theme park’s other boat-themed attraction, It’s a Small World, aspires to nothing less than world cultural domination.

*World’s Fairs as Simulated Imperialist Precedents.* Fittingly, the origins of It’s a Small World lay not in the park itself but in an expression of American cultural dominance in the postwar era: the 1964–1965 New York World’s Fair. As laboratories of modernity, inventories of the world, and shrines to progress, world’s fairs (a.k.a. international and universal exhibitions) have articulated and embodied complex historical moments and cultural contexts.<sup>22</sup> Walter Benjamin famously declared them to be “sites of pilgrimages to the commodity fetish.”<sup>23</sup> Contemporary scholarship on them is extensive, much of it concerned with exhibitions as battlegrounds of signifying practices.<sup>24</sup>



FIGURE 4. The simulated riverboat — here named *Congo Queen* — is the instrument through which visitors conquer and domesticate pure nature.

One of the most ideologically charged practices at these fairs, as Timothy Mitchell’s study of visions of Egypt has shown, involved their representation of European colonizing projects.<sup>25</sup> Whether along the Rue de Caire at the 1889 Exposition Universelle in Paris or within the Libya and Albania pavilions of the 1940 Mostra Triennale d’Oltremare [Triennial Exhibition of Overseas Italian Territories] in Naples, these events both created and distanced the colonial object-world from its observer, establishing a simulated reality that was picture-like and legible, and thus able to be possessed. In terms of strategy, they referenced a world, inert and permanent, outside the exhibition, a world staked on the fixity of its synchronic essentialism. According to Mitchell, the effect they created “would always appear as though it were a conceptual structure . . . an order of meaning or truth existing somehow before and behind what would now be thought of as mere ‘things in themselves.’ Political authority itself would now more and more reside in this effect of a prior ordering truth.”<sup>26</sup> Yet in these colonial worlds-as-exhibitions, he added, authority presided without ever really being present, and the political order(s) expressed were never quite accessible. What was novel about these exhibitions were the ways they rendered abstractions of authority into interlocking representational regimes of objects and order.

These worlds-as-exhibitions were simulacra par excellence, copies of an “original” artificially resurrected under the auspices of the “real.” As Mitchell wrote, “everything both imitates and is imitated — there is no simple division into an order of copies and an order of originals, of pictures and what they represent, of exhibits and reality, of the text and the real world, of signifiers and signified.”<sup>27</sup>

These processes of denaturalization and simulation were even more pronounced at colonial exhibitions staged on colonial soil, such as the Fiera di Tripoli [Tripoli Trade Fair], an annual exhibition staged in Italian-occupied Libya between 1927 and 1939. The event began as a series of temporary shed-like installations set along Tripoli’s seafront esplanade, but it was soon transformed into a sprawling 50,000-square-meter fairgrounds of permanent pavilions in a new, Italian-built neighborhood west of Tripoli’s medina (FIG. 5). Similar to the exhibitions staged in the metropole, the Fiera re-created the architectures of quotidian colonial life in situ, from a *sug*, to metal workshops, to an Arab café, complete with “natives” on display.<sup>28</sup> Visitors could observe this cleansed and enframed colonial order of appearance, and then, unlike at the exhibitions in Paris or Naples, they could walk outside the fair’s boundaries to observe the colonial “reality” with their own eyes. Yet Tripoli’s built environment had by then been entirely reconstructed — or, technically “re-cleansed” (*ripristino*) — by Italian architects. Its streets, buildings and monuments — indeed, the entire plan of the “real” city — had been manipulated and reformed by Italian colonial administrators since the 1900s.<sup>29</sup> Architects and administrators alike had worked to rebuild Tripoli, in part, to conform with an ideal of the Orient that had never existed.<sup>30</sup> Thus, the city itself no longer





**FIGURE 5.** Visitors explore the colonial pavilions that lined the central thoroughfare of the Fiera di Tripoli [Tripoli Trade Fair] circa 1930 in Tripoli, Libya. Image reproduced with permission from the collection of the Visual Media Center, Department of Art History and Archaeology, Lantern Slide Collection, Columbia University.

bore any relation to reality; it was its own pure simulacrum. Together, the relation between the Tripoli Trade Fair and the city of Tripoli proper was that of two simulated environments bound up in an infinite calculus of figural exchange.

Put another way, a strategy of *mise en abyme* typically structured imperial processes generated by simulacra. In these entangled orders, things were not just mimicked or doubled, but perpetually multiplied and enframed . . . and misrecognized.<sup>31</sup> *Mise en abyme* thus lent a false sense of wholeness to these simulated appearances of order. The Tripoli Trade Fair, for instance, attempted to isolate and represent a coherent colonial reality. Yet the reality on the ground in Libya was entirely different than the idealized world presented at the trade fair. Gunfire still reverberated from skirmishes outside Tripoli; construction of infrastructure suffered long delays; and the eastern territory of Cyrenaica remained in a constant state of civil unrest. For decades, the nascent Italian empire was caught between the real and the hyperreal, an unsteady enterprise of unreal subjects and signifying distances. The bonds between coloniality and hyperreality coalesced around the limits of subjectivity (i.e., natives, Italians, Arabs) instantiated at the fair. And such ambiguous limits also opened up spaces of violence and disavowal outside the fair's walls — for example, implicitly making way for the genocide that occurred within the Italian-built concentration camps of Cyrenaica from 1929 to 1933.<sup>32</sup>

The Tripoli Trade Fair emphasized the successes of Italian empire, insofar as visitors to it saw only the benefits of colonialism — e.g., modern buildings, agricultural produce, pacified natives — which reinforced the impression among Italians of themselves as good colonizers, or *brava gente*.<sup>33</sup> Yet, at the same time that *mise en abyme* structured the simu-

lated imperialism at work at the fair, it also intensified the misrecognition of colonial order(s). It represented this order to be complete and productive, and in doing so, shored up the edges of Italian empire. In short, simulated imperialism lent a false integrity to Italian imperial formations.

*Workings of the Disney Empire.* Like Italy's empire in the past, the Disney empire of the present insists upon the totality of its entangled simulacral orders. Moreover, as history's first copyrighted urban environment, it adamantly polices its imperial boundaries. The Walt Disney Company is famed for its litigiousness, going so far as to sue a childcare center in Florida over the unauthorized use of the image of Mickey Mouse on painted murals (it eventually forced the center to destroy them).<sup>34</sup> And it engages a multiplicity of apparatuses (legal, cinematic, architectural) to safeguard the misrecognition of itself as an organic whole. Disney represents itself as a total imperial formation, an empire that transcends all locations. Michael Sorkin expanded this thought in his oft-cited meditation on Disneyland:

*But the empire of Disney transcends these physical sites; its aura is all-pervasive. Decades of films have furnished a common iconography of generations. Now there's a television channel too. And years of shrewd and massive merchandising have sold billions of Disney things — videocassettes, comic books, pajamas, paper cups, postcards, and mouse-eared coin purses — which vaunt their participation in this exponentially expanding system of objects. The litter of Disneyland is underfoot in streets from New York to Shanghai. More people know Mickey than Jesus or Mao. Who doesn't live in Disney World?<sup>35</sup>*

Disney's imperial detritus literally surrounds us. It infiltrates, co-opts and adorns our daily lives, hanging on our bodies and infusing our thoughts, often without us knowing it. We willingly accept Disney's imperial totality, and we even pay to consume it. We pay for the debris, financially and psychically, for our own piece of its exponentially expanding object universe. We pay to participate in its imperial formations — that is, in Disney's "ongoing quality of processes of decimation, displacement, and reclamation."<sup>36</sup> We pay to imbricate ourselves in Disney's imperialist order.

Some, too, pay more than others. Among them are those who choose to live within Disney's own suburb of Celebration, Florida.<sup>37</sup> Michael Pollan famously described it thus:

*The town of Celebration represents the Disney Company's ambitious answer to the perceived lack of community in American life. . . . But Disney's expertise is in building theme parks for paying guests, not towns for citizens. A real community is messy, ever changing and inevitably political — three adjectives that pretty much sum up everything the culture of Disney cannot abide. Very soon after the first homeowners moved into Celebration, Disney got its first taste of the unpredictability of community life. . . . Disney's expertise at making places and synthesizing urban experience cannot be separated from its legendary obsession with control. . . . At Celebration, however, Disney has set in motion a story whose script it can only partly control.<sup>38</sup>*

Celebration residents pay between \$200,000 and \$1 million for houses in the town that was founded in the mid-1990s. As residents, they also acquiesce to Disney's need for image control, signing nondisclosure agreements that prohibit them from speaking about the community if they choose to move. They further agree only to decorate their houses in accordance with Disney's Pattern Book — a set of strict covenants, codes and restrictions that dictates everything from curtain colors (white or off-white only), to garage sales (only one per year), to political signage (a single 18-by-24-inch sign), to parking (no on-street parking for pickup trucks). Residents live in an extension of Disneyland, the so-called "happiest place on earth," and in doing so, actualize the misrecognition inherent in simulated imperialism; by living in Celebration, they literally buy into the place as a complete, productive, total community.<sup>39</sup> With the curtain colors and garage sales and election signs, these residents live among the material residues of the Disney empire. In such ways, they integrate imperial formations — now thoroughly Disneyfied — into the practice of everyday life.<sup>40</sup>

Returning to the theme park itself, each ride boasts a different heritage of simulation.<sup>41</sup> Whereas the Jungle Cruise hearkens back to a fictive British colony, others are linked to the movie screen (e.g., Buzz Lightyear Astro Blasters, Peter Pan's Flight). Others still provide grist for a semiotic transfer

that moves in the opposite direction. Most notable here is the Pirates of the Caribbean ride, which inspired the eponymous blockbuster film tetralogy. In turn, however, the original version of the ride was refurbished in 2006 to include characters from the films, including Captain Jack Sparrow and Davy Jones, voiced by the original actors. Here, "real" and "reel" collapse, engaged in a reciprocal representational exchange, which establishes a heritage of simulation that vacillates between screen and site.<sup>42</sup>

In the case of It's a Small World, it was not the screen but the 1964–65 New York World's Fair that provided this heritage. The fair opened at a tenuous moment in U.S. history — not long after the Cuban missile crisis and John F. Kennedy's assassination, at a time when the Civil Rights Movement, the rapid escalation of violence in Vietnam, and the Cold War generally were threatening America's sense of itself and its place in the world. It showcased American commerce, and proselytized the benefits of science and technology for a consumer-based society. As such, it was an attempt to mask the profound insecurity that gripped the nation. Yet the New York World's Fair did not aim to merely assuage those fears of cultural upheaval; it disavowed them entirely. Thus, the fair's president, the famed Robert Moses, enlisted Walt Disney's help in creating a tightly controlled universe that reinforced the utopian promises of the postwar era. As Lawrence Samuel has put it, "By bypassing the uninviting near future for a more palatable far-distant one, the Fair offered its millions of visitors hope and confidence that utopia or something like it was not an entirely lost cause."<sup>43</sup> The fair was to become another Disney-built "happiest place on earth" in Flushing Meadows. Or, put another way, the idealistic promises of science and technology, coupled with the temporariness of the exhibition, suffused the 1964–65 New York World's Fair with both senses of utopia: *ou-topia* (nowhere) and *eu-topia* (the place of happiness). It was to be, like Disneyland, the happiest place/non-place on earth.<sup>44</sup>

Like the fair, the It's a Small World attraction was a world-as-exhibition in miniature. It was developed on a crash schedule, with Mary Blair as lead designer. Having worked on numerous Disney films, she provided the graphics and color styling for the ride. However, it was Walt Disney, himself, who imagined its purpose: to create an "enchanted voyage around the globe [that] captures a simple, but profound idea — that the children of the world understand our commonalities and can create a harmonious future."<sup>45</sup> The ride was the centerpiece of a Pepsi-sponsored pavilion, and it proved to be one of the fair's most popular attractions. Visitors stood in line for as long as two hours, and had to buy an extra 95¢ ticket (in addition to the \$2 admission fee to the fair) for the twelve-minute ride. Proceeds from the extra ticket sales went to benefit the United Nation Children's Fund (UNICEF). In 1965, at the fair's closing, Walt Disney bid to turn the fairgrounds into a permanent theme park, but he was blocked by Moses, who envisioned a great public park in its place.<sup>46</sup>

Disney packed up the ride and moved it to Disneyland, where it remains, almost unaltered, to this day. The attraction, too, has been replicated at all subsequent Disney theme parks; this “Small World” now has a global reach.

At each of these worlds-as-exhibition — the 1927–1939 Tripoli Trade Fair, the 1931 Paris Exposition Universelle, the 1964–65 New York World’s Fair, and present-day Disneyland with the It’s a Small World ride — imperialist projects accreted upon and against one another. They informed, transacted and conditioned genealogies of imperial formations and nostalgia for past imperialist projects. The heritage of simulation was and is multiplex. Simulated imperialism operates through the messy strategies of disavowal, displacement and dislocation. These exhibitions thus became representational apparatuses that were always-already mechanisms of distancing, for they at once brought the future of an imperialist utopia close, but also kept it at bay. In this push and pull, an oscillation typically develops that allows us to gaze upon imperial futures, but which limits our participation within them. It is within this interstice that simulated imperialism interpellates its subjects — it is just one of its many mechanisms of control.

#### MODES OF CONTROL: SPACE AND MINIATURIZATION, OR THE AMPLIFICATION OF COLONIZING PROJECTS

At these exhibitions, the built environment proved the stage where simulated imperialism exercised its interpellative control. The practices of space delimited the values, subjects and futures contained within and marked by imperial formations. Parsing these spaces has been the task of many scholars, although few have considered how these built environments — colonial exhibitions, world’s fairs, Disney rides, and the like — were almost always staged in miniature.<sup>47</sup> The spaces were, of course, metonymical — parts that represented a whole — but they also never reproduced the “real” at full scale. Subjects constantly negotiated between the multiple scales at play within these built environments. Yet it was the miniature, rather than the gigantic or the exact, that expressed a world frozen in space and time that could seemingly be possessed and dominated. Simulated imperialism, unsurprisingly, pivots on the worlds of the miniature.

To date, the most rigorous theorizations of the miniature, by Gaston Bachelard and by Susan Stewart, have approached it obliquely — that is, through representation in language.<sup>48</sup> Both have interrogated the relationship between the miniature and the individual perceiving subject, and in different ways, asserted that the miniature allows that subject to dominate and possess. According to Bachelard: “The cleverer I am at miniaturizing the world, the better I possess it. But in doing this, it must be understood that values become condensed and enriched in miniature. Platonic dialectics

of large and small do not suffice for us to become cognizant of the dynamic virtues of miniature thinking. One must go beyond logic in order to experience what is large in what is small.”<sup>49</sup> For Stewart, it is possession executed with the body. For Bachelard, it is the potential for dreaming.

Yet, this, too, is a misrecognition. According to Stewart, what is involved in this process is the possession of the fictive, of a second-order world — of “an arrested life of a miniature object placed in the still context of infinite detail.”<sup>50</sup> What is more important, then, is the significance that the miniature assumes in the distance between its representation and one’s perception of it. There is a gap between the representation of the miniature (i.e., in language, in physical form) and the experience thereof. And it is the subject’s perception of overcoming that gap that constitutes a possessive act.

This is possession from afar. As Bachelard wrote: “Distance disperses nothing but, on the contrary, composes a miniature of a country in which we should like to live. In distant miniatures, disparate things become reconciled. They then offer themselves for our ‘possession,’ while denying the distance that created them. We possess from afar, and how peacefully!”<sup>51</sup> We use our imaginative faculties to make this leap of possession to imbue the miniature, *multum in parvo*, with all the sensual diversity of the world of lived experience. As such, according to Stewart, the miniature transcends any limited context of origin, and simultaneously contains a neat and ordered universe.<sup>52</sup>

In these acts of possession, a psychic resettling also occurs, situated between the meaning and materiality of the miniature. The miniature brings the world inside, a microcosm that attempts to reconcile an exterior, “real” world with one’s own interior, psychic world. It is both an experience of interiority and a process by which interiors are constructed.<sup>53</sup> Yet the reconciliation is an impossible one, for the miniature is always an allusion to a space-time that is no longer (and never has been) available to us — an allusion that can only be recovered in fantasy. It is nostalgia embodied. What the miniature produces, Stewart wrote, “not only bears the tangible qualities of material reality but also serves as a representation, an image, of a reality which does not exist. The referent here is most often the fantastic, yet the fantastic is given ‘life’ by its miniaturization.”<sup>54</sup> Psychic resettling also occurs with an act of disavowal: one knows that the miniature’s anteriority is unrecoverable, that reconciliation between exterior “real” and psychic interior is impossible, but one attempts to capture it anyway, as if one did not know. Rooted in this fetishistic logic of disavowal (as Bhabha has argued of colonizing projects generally), the miniature’s existence always hinges on the act of possessing and dominating a “neat and ordered universe.” In short, the moral consequence of the miniature is an imperialist attitude.

Indeed, all imperial formations are relations of force. And acts of possession and domination, violent by nature, condition the relationship between the miniature and the



individual perceiving subject. Through our imaginary capacities to possess and dominate, we “penetrate” the miniature. We observe its every detail. We rule it with our gazes and our bodies. We live out fantasies of omnipotence. Thus, acts of violence — possession and domination — subtend the space between the meaning and materiality of the miniature. These are the values engulfed, enriched and condensed within the miniature’s worlds — values that, according to Bachelard, cause men to dream.<sup>35</sup> In the miniature, we find that possession and domination are both the values and the processes that constitute the foundational violence of simulated imperialism.

#### THE DREAM OF IT’S A SMALL WORLD

What, then, of the miniature in its built form of world-as-exhibition? At Disney’s It’s a Small World, simulated imperial formations amplify colonizing projects by way of miniaturization. They reinforce the fixture of colonized subjects into a petrified, Manichean order, and transform apparent colonizers into the colonized. The colonizer becomes but an illusion, imbricated in an unending multiplication of colonized subjects. Simulation builds distance into these proceedings. In and through the spaces between representation and reality, as well as meaning and materiality, simulated imperialism masks this second order of interpellation. We thus remain entirely unaware of this imperial effect that surreptitiously lingers among us, choosing to believe instead in fantasies of possession, domination and omnipotence.

*Imperial prétérrain.* It’s a Small World begins long before one boards a mechanized boat and embarks on the “happiest

cruise that ever set sail.” Disneyland’s *prétérrain*, or the places that one has to go through and be in relation with to get to “the field,” is complex, composed of a series of *détours* and *retours* that compel visitors to travel in circuits.<sup>36</sup> The first circuit takes one from parking garage to the ticket booth by way of motorized tram, winding through the back roads of Anaheim and the Disneyland hotel. The salient points of this circuit are marked by monetary exchange — parking passes, tips, an entrance ticket. Characteristically, the latter is not a ticket but a “passport” that allows access to this simulated empire. In this imperial *prétérrain*, the dirty business of capital exchange takes place outside Disneyland’s well-policed borders. It is the final transaction that must take place in the “real” world before one can enter the happiest place/nonplace on earth.

Upon entering the park, another circuit begins — one conditioned by nostalgia. There is no choice but to walk down Main Street USA, the only route in and out of the park. This street marks the beginning and end to all visits. It is lined with shops under a pseudo-Victorian arcade with antique horseless carriages ferrying consumer-visitors up and down the street. Like many structures in the park, Main Street exists on a diminishing scale (FIG. 6). Every building becomes smaller with each story, so that the lowest level is built at full scale, the second story at 7/8, and the third at 5/6. This technique — forced perspective — fosters a sense of intimacy, making the buildings appear taller than they are without seeming too large and impersonal. With forced perspective, according to Disney’s own *Imagineering Field Guide*, “the designer plays with the scale in the real world in order to affect the perception of scale in an illusory world.”<sup>37</sup> Thus framed by the diminishing scales of an illusory world, Main Street USA slides into miniature.



FIGURE 6. Forced perspective along Disneyland’s Main Street USA.

**FIGURE 7.** *The It's a Small World ride is overwhelming to eyes and ears.*



As an illusion, too, Main Street is an idealized construction of a small-town America that never was.<sup>58</sup> The street was supposedly modeled on Walt Disney's hometown of Marceline, Missouri (as well as Fort Collins, Colorado, the hometown of Disneyland's first director, Harper Goff). However, several scholars have shown that Main Street was more a "mediation of a version of community that was already well established in popular American memory" than a replica of Walt's nostalgic memories for his boyhood home.<sup>59</sup> Main Street leads to the space of fantasy (quite literally, Fantasyland), and "the utopian place to which Main Street USA leads is the fantasmatic return of reality, [a] hallucinatory presence."<sup>60</sup> The circuit of nostalgia ends at Cinderella's castle, where other circuits then begin. One opens onto the fictively scientific futures of Tomorrowland; another to the colonial spaces of Adventureland; yet another to the American West of Frontierland. Borders are porous, and one may slip in and out of these space-times with little effort.

In a far corner of Fantasyland, there stands a blinding white-and-gold edifice reflecting the Southern California sun. From three hundred feet away, one hears a rhythmic ticking, of the sort used by hypnotists. There is also an instrumental version of the famed "It's a Small World" song repeated ad nauseum. Upon closer observation, the source of the ticking is a smiling clockface with pendulous eyes mounted atop the ride's central tower. Its syncopated ticking underlies but does not fall in rhythm with the instrumental song. It is as if the ride deploys two competing forms of acoustic torture upon the waiting crowd in an effort to overstimulate and control them. The sensory assault embodied by *It's a Small World* is so effective and complete that Disneyland employees have nicknamed it "the Asylum" because of its capacity to drive employees and visitors insane.<sup>61</sup>

*The Imperial Terrain.* The gleaming white-and-gold exterior of this self-proclaimed small world represents a two-dimensional world in miniature. On the one hand, abstract, geometric forms comprise the exterior — squares, circles, triangles, turrets — set against one another. There are also moving parts — pinwheels and discs — that spin in rhythm

to the ticking clock. Visually, the ride's exterior is overwhelming; the eye does not know where to look first (FIG. 7).

Abstractions of several famous monuments stand out amidst this shimmering geometric collage, among them the Eiffel Tower, Big Ben, the Parthenon, the leaning tower of Pisa, St. Peter's Basilica, the Tower Bridge, and Venice's campanile. These are monuments of a "Eurocentric" and "Western" civilization, but they are also imperial debris symbolically abstracted and affixed to the ride's exterior (FIG. 8). Each of these monuments signifies an empire of the past: Greece, Rome, Venice, etc. The only recognizable symbols that might be considered "non-Western" are two domes, which could be interpreted as elements of an Ottoman-style mosque (yet another empire). Alternatively, they might recall the architecture of Eastern Orthodox Christianity, such as St. Basil's Cathedral in Moscow — an association which only reinforces the dominating Occidentalism of this small world.



**FIGURE 8.** *Most of the ride's exterior designs are abstract, geometric shapes, but a few distinctly Occidental monuments are immediately recognizable.*



While geometric forms overwhelm and disguise these abstracted monuments, the latter foreshadow what is to come in the psychic interior of the ride. Moving from exterior to interior, the small world expands from two dimensions to three, passing from physical to psychic realms. Put another way, the exterior presages the values enriched and condensed within this particular miniature. The glistening white exterior celebrates monuments to Occidentalism — and implicitly the values predicated upon an imperialist fantasy of a successful, dominant, Western, and particularly American civilization. They are values that espouse racism, classism, violence, and all the other trappings of colonizing projects. In sum, this is a small world — a miniature — where all racial, cultural and linguistic differences have been erased in favor of a white, English-speaking, culturally American utopia.

*The Spaces of the Small World.* To enter this interior, one waits and watches until it is time to board a mechanized boat with a dozen other people and depart for the miniature world inside (FIG. 9). The boat rounds a corner, and in an instant, the blinding whiteness of the exterior disappears into the blackness of an interior tunnel that consumes all. This is the miniature's threshold between outside and inside, light and dark, white and black. At this threshold, a sign declares the ride to be "The Happiest Cruise that Ever Sailed!" This is a preemptory move to set a positive tone for the experi-



FIGURE 9. Mechanized boats ferry visitors through the small world.



FIGURE 10. The entry sign announces the "Happiest Cruise that Ever Sailed" and the corporate-sponsored sun implies a vague promise of illumination.

ence to come; it is the rhetoric that validates the imperialist fantasy staged inside. Beneath the sign, the logo for Sylvania, a lighting company and the ride's corporate sponsor, is also stamped onto the image of a sun (FIG. 10). The ride thus implies that illumination is yet to come, another symbolic legitimization of its imperialist values — or perhaps, a compensatory gesture for the moral darkness contained within.

The tunnel opens into a cavernous chamber, and the boat is thrust into an explosion of multicolored lights, moving stages, singing and dancing animatronic dolls, cruising boats, and repeated musical refrains that bombard the senses. Here, the small world is divided into regions and marked by stereotypes. As arrested, fixated forms of representation, stereotypes deny the plays of difference within psychic and social relations. In this small world, colonial bodies are forever on display, and the shorthand of the stereotype inscribes them with racial and cultural difference.<sup>62</sup> The bodies here are not "real" but mechanized, vivified by microelectronics. They take the form of animatronic dolls — simulated children — whose stilted movements seemingly resist the fixity of stereotypes even as they perpetuate them in broad strokes.

The tour begins in the Arctic, where fur-clad Eskimo dolls sing in Inuit among walruses and igloos. From here, one "sails" to Canada, the Baltics, and Europe. The exterior monuments to Occidentalism get reprised here, and countries are reduced to cultural stereotypes. Italy is Pinocchio, gondoliers, and the leaning tower of Pisa; Holland is a windmill, tulips and clogs; France is the Eiffel Tower and *can-can* dancers; Spain equals flamenco guitar; etc. (FIG. 11). Next, the boat leaves Europe and sails to the Middle East, where a visual display signals Orientalism to be very much alive in the contemporary. There are snake charmers, flying carpets, a minaret, and belly dancers, all singing the "It's a Small World" song in Arabic. Every female doll wears a veil, as does the sun,





**FIGURE 11.** Gondolas, Pinocchio, the leaning tower of Pisa, and dolls dressed in folk costumes signify Italy at *It's a Small World*.



**FIGURE 12.** The niqāb and the image of the veiled female emerges the master signifier of the Middle East.



**FIGURE 13.** A kimono-clad doll and an abstraction of a Shinto shrine represent Japan.

covered by a long *niqāb*. All the diversity of the Middle East and northern Africa is collapsed into a well-worn Orientalist fantasy animated by child-like automatons (FIG. 12).

The circuit continues through Asia, where the displays of cultural stereotypes involve pandas and acrobats (China); a Shinto shrine and kimono-clad dolls (Japan); rice paddies and water buffalo (Thailand); and the Taj Majal and classical dancers (India) (FIG. 13). The boat next rounds a corner, and a surfeit of animal sounds (highlighted by monkeys) marks its arrival in Africa. Here animals outnumber people. There are hyenas, a rhinoceros, a lion, an elephant, giraffes and monkeys, yet few children. The dolls, black-skinned and dressed in tribal fashions, sing, dance, and make music with the animals (FIG. 14). It is the only display in which

the dolls do so. A rhinoceros keeps rhythm on a drum right next to a child who plays a flute while straddling a lion. Put another way, the attraction equates Africans with animals, a not-so-subtle expression of racism. Like the *Jungle Cruise*, it perpetuates a fantasy that collapses indigeneity with the fauna around it.

Riders then float out of Africa and into Latin America, the master signifier of which is a giant sombrero. Almost every doll wears a sombrero, and they sing the “Small World” song in Spanish. Like the Middle East, all the cultural diversity of the continent is collapsed into singular stereotypes — sombreros, donkeys, brightly colored rugs — which recall a world that has never, in fact, existed. Pacifica is next on the tour. Comparatively, this is a small display of Polynesian

**FIGURE 14.** *There is a figurative symbiosis between dolls and animals in the display that represents all of Africa.*



island cultures, with stereotypes ranging from kiwis to hula dancers. While the Latin America display recalls a non-existent past, Pacifica references an imaginary past that is, to some extent, “real.” This is because it includes Disney cartoon characters — Ariel from *The Little Mermaid* and Lilo and Stitch from the eponymous movie — in reference to a “reel” history accessible to visitors familiar with Disney’s cinematic oeuvre. Here, the artifacts of the cinematic screen penetrate the imperialist attitude of miniature, wherein “real” and “reel” subtend simulated imperialism.

The United States comprises the penultimate display of the Small World tour. The country is reduced to a single dyad of stereotypes: cowboys and Indians (FIG. 15). In this U.S., a cowboy sits atop a haystack set among a pastoral landscape



**FIGURE 15.** *Three Native American dolls in the background welcome the (musical) conquest of the guitar-playing cowgirl in front.*

of Midwestern farmland. Nearby, a cowgirl dressed in chaps plays guitar against a backdrop that clearly references the Southwest, possibly Monument Valley. Above her, almost marginalized from view, three Native American dolls dance and sing in English. Bedecked in turquoise jewelry and surrounded by pottery, they welcome the cowgirl with arms outstretched, allowing her to take center stage. It is almost as if they are welcoming her (musical) conquest.

The domination of Native Americans inherent in the United States display foreshadows the imperialist conquest implicit in the ride’s climax. Here, all the dolls from previous displays become united in a sort of “white wedding” finale (FIGS. 16, 17). They are all dressed in white, and dance and sing in English. The white-and-gold color scheme of this final interior now matches the attraction’s exterior, and in this way, inside and out, physical and psychic symbolically realign in space. While ethnic and national types are still grouped together, all cultures on display have been whitewashed, both literally and metaphorically, in a sort of Fanonian reversal. It is a world-in-miniature where racial, cultural and linguistic differences have been erased in favor of a white, Anglophone, Americanized utopia. These are the values enriched and condensed in this miniature. Thus, the ride’s built forms and spatial practices impose a simulated civilizing mission upon simulated global populace. It is a mission that advances a fantasy of American imperialism, exactly of the sort imagined in the mid-twentieth century when the ride debuted at the 1964–65 New York World’s Fair. As visitors set their penetrating gazes upon this miniature world, they are put in the metaphorical position of colonizers.

In the miniature, this second-order fictive world recalls an irrecoverable space-time that never existed. Likewise, interpellation is always partial and evasive. Subjects surface in





**FIGURE 16.** The “white wedding” finale of the *It’s a Small World* ride. All cultural, linguistic, and racial differences have been erased in favor of a white, Anglophone, Americanized utopia.

moments, becoming and unbecoming, the psychic embodiments and intimate residues of imperial formations. Simulated imperialism complicates the dialectic between colonizer and colonized, which, like the dialectic between outside and inside, “are always ready to be reversed, to exchange hostility,” according to Bachelard. “If there exists a border-line surface between such an inside and outside, this surface is painful on both sides.”<sup>63</sup> In simulated imperialism, the painful borderlines of interpellation inhabit the articulation between (im) mobility and (in)animation. It is here, in these ontological borderlands, that new forms of partial and hybrid subjects emerge — short circuits born of a hyperreal imperialist order.

#### THE SUBJECTS OF SIMULATED IMPERIALISM: INTERPELLATION IN THE SMALL WORLD

It is fitting that a giant, hypnotic, ticking clock anchors the exterior of *It’s a Small World*, for the clock was the first automatic device to be applied to practical purposes (FIG. 18). Walter Benjamin noted that the whole theory of the production of regular motion was developed through the clock.<sup>64</sup> He grouped the clock under the category of dolls and automatons, for all possess the bewitching power of automation. It is the motion — or rather, the mobility — that arises from automation that enchants. Yet automation, or mechanized mobilities, interpellates subjects who, for Benjamin, were repulsive. As he wrote: “the evil spell of this slippery path [of automation] readily take[s] the form, even today, of large animated dolls.” And, he added, “You have no idea how repulsive these automatons and dolls can become, and how one breathes at last on encountering a full-blooded being in this society.”<sup>65</sup>

Automation rules Disneyland’s society. Mechanized carriages make their way, driverless, up and down Main Street. On the *Jungle Cruise*, animatronic elephants spray water at



**FIGURE 17.** A close-up of the animatronic dolls, now dressed in white and singing in English, shepherded into simulated subjugation.

visitors on cue. At *Space Mountain*, the rollercoaster stops and starts at precise intervals, transporting new groups of visitors into outer space every 2 minutes and 48 seconds. In short, the park could not function without automation. *It’s a Small World* depends on it. The clock’s pendulous, anthropomorphic eyes and its hypnotic ticking depend on the mechanics inside. So, too, do the boats, which, instead of floating through the ride’s interior are propelled along a fixed track by well-timed water jets. Most importantly, the crux of the



**FIGURE 18.** The anthropomorphic clockface on the exterior of *It’s a Small World*, which ticks rhythmically but not in syncopation with the never-ending broadcast of ride’s distinctive theme song.



attraction — its 300 singing and dancing animatronic dolls — are entirely controlled by automation.

In the simulated imperialist fantasy of the miniature, interpellation hinges on mobility. To be clear, interpellation occurs in the space between mobility and immobility. But this is hardly a straightforward process, for “mobility” itself is a nebulous concept. It’s a Small World exists in perpetual motion, yet this motion is completely automated. One might then ask: if it is a miniature that is not freely mobile, is this but an illusion of mobility? Does interpellation exist only in the *potential* for a self-determined mobility: *moveor ergo sum?* Or can automation and mobility together condition interpellation? If so, what kind of subjects might they create? At first glance, the answer is deceptively simple: all subjects interpellated by simulated imperialism are automatous. At It’s a Small World, we see this most clearly with the animatronic dolls that “sing” and “dance.” They broadcast an illusion of spontaneity, or better yet, an illusion of agency, with their movements. Yet this mobility is not their own; it is generated and mediated by machines: they are automata.

Etymologically, “automation” and “automaton” both stem from the ancient Greek word αὐτόματος meaning “acting of one’s own will, of oneself,” which, in turn, has roots in αὐτός (“self”) and μάτος (“thinking, animated, willing,” a derivative of μεμονέναι, “to be minded, to have purpose, to intend”).<sup>66</sup> In Greek, αὐτόματος could refer to people acting of their own will, but it could also refer to events and natural phenomena spontaneously happening in and of themselves. Most interestingly, αὐτόματος could refer to inanimate objects acting of themselves — that is, objects that come to life. In Homer’s *Iliad*, for instance, Hephaistos’s self-moving tripods are described as αὐτόματα, or “acting of their own will.”<sup>67</sup>

Building on this Homeric reference, Aristotle engaged these animated tripods in *Politics* to ponder the nature of property, including human beings, particularly slaves. He yearned for a device that, like a slave, “could accomplish its own work, obeying or anticipating the will of others.”<sup>68</sup> Yet he considered slaves to be animated instruments too, for as beings without agency, they were not entirely human. Likewise, Benjamin linked Aristotle’s conception of slave-as-animated-instrument with the dolls and automata of the twentieth century.<sup>69</sup> In such ways, the animation of objects opens up a space wherein agency infuses the realm of the inanimate and allows for mechanized objects to mimic life. With automata, we, too, move into the realm of the fable, as Benjamin noted — or perhaps more accurately, into the texture of the dream-work, into the “sublime dreams of living machines.”<sup>70</sup> In the small worlds of simulated imperialism, then, mobility interpellates subjects in between human and machine — a mechanistic humanity.

In Disney’s *It’s a Small World*, the doll-machines imitate human movements on a miniature scale. Some perform stiltily as *can-can* dancers in “France.” Others sway robotically as they perform the hula in “Hawaii.” Still others

haltingly strum guitars and play trumpets in time with the music. Their movements are almost the same as human, but not quite. Whereas Paris’s famed Musée Grévin housed full-scale wax figures that were so “real” that Benjamin observed that one even had “eyes of provocation,” the animatronic dolls at It’s a Small World clearly do not belong to this brand of simulation.<sup>71</sup> Instead, they belong to a different strategy of simulating the real, one that does not hinge on clone stories, but rather on the execution of automated mobilities.<sup>72</sup> In simulated imperialism, individuals are still destined to serial propagation, just as in other simulations of subjects (i.e., the Musée Grévin, genetic cloning, etc.); however, it is their mobility that both determines their “reality” and marks their “fakery.” We perceive these dolls to move like humans, singing and dancing and playing instruments; yet we know that these automated movements, so robotically spasmodic, are unlike any human movements. It is as if these doll-machines are caught in limbo between mobility and immobility.

Thus, we detect the ideological fantasy of simulated imperialism among the mechanized mobilities of automata. We know very well that we are not seeing “children from around the world” on the “happiest cruise that ever set sail”; but we continue — and the ride insists — to proceed as if we did not know. We overlook their halting movements. We overlook their miniature scale. We overlook the illusion of these living machines that structure this small-world reality, and we go on the ride anyway, making it one of Disneyland’s most popular. In simulated imperialism, ideological fantasy reveals itself in the relationship between mobility and automata. It is here, too, that we encounter the interstitial spaces of interpellation.

These in-between spaces of It’s a Small World, coupled with the automaton’s vacillations between mobility and immobility and the fetishistic logic of ideological fantasy, recall the salient features of colonial discourse.<sup>73</sup> It is this discourse’s productive ambivalence, Bhabha argued, that constructs colonial subjects. How, then, might the subjects of simulated imperialism reflect and embody colonial discourse? At second glance, the mobility that interpellates in simulated imperialism complicates the subject positions of colonized and colonizer.

Colonized subjects emerge as automata in simulated imperialism; these are the animatronic dolls of It’s a Small World. For the most part, they are like statues, fixed into a compartmentalized world divided into stereotypical stagings of Africa, Asia, etc. As Frantz Fanon pointed out, the colonized subject is condemned to immobility — that is, to a Manichean, petrified world. These doll-machines can never move between regions, nor step down from their perches, nor move in any way that is not preprogrammed by mechanics. In this miniature world, simulated imperialism concretizes the positions of colonized subjects by evacuating the possibilities for self-determined mobility. Agency is predicated upon mobility in simulated imperialism. Here, colonized subjects in the form of automata are almost entirely immobile, while

colonizers, in the form of theme park visitors, pass by in their boats, peripatetically penetrating this small world of (automated) statues. In such ways, the imperial formation always stays in motion.

These doll-machines clearly incarnate the well-worn trope of the colonized-as-child. Edward Said described it thus: “The Oriental is irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, ‘different’; thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, ‘normal.’”<sup>74</sup> Likewise, William B. Cohen noted: “The European imperial powers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries viewed their African and Asian subjects as children, as men not fully grown, whose destiny had to be guided by the presumably more advanced states of Europe.”<sup>75</sup> At It’s a Small World, the immobile, automatous, colonized subjects are quite literally children. There is not one adult doll-machine in the entire attraction. Instead, these children have been symbolically domesticated and thrust into performing adult duties. They dance provocatively, tend sheep, charm snakes, and even cultivate rice with a water buffalo. And the ride’s spatial stagings (especially the finale) reveal these automated children — colonized subjects — to be easily disciplined, transformed and whitewashed to conform with a white, Anglophone, Americanized miniature utopia. It is both a simulated imperialist fantasy and a simulated civilizing mission fulfilled.

However, these successes are but illusions. Here, the relationship between colonizer and colonized is also reversed, even collapsed, by the attraction’s spatial practices. The movements of seemingly hypermobile colonizers — theme park visitors — are controlled and disciplined by the ride itself. Like the doll-machines, visitors, too, can never move freely. They must go where the boat takes them, submit to its predetermined pace, and direct their gazes along prescribed vectors. Visitors are fixed into the boats, unable to move until the ride comes to an end. Thus, the small world imbues its visitors with an illusion of mobility — much like the stilted movements of its automata — through the preprogrammed mechanics that control its operation. In simulated imperialism, the possibilities for self-determined mobility vanish even among “colonizers” — as do their possibilities for agency.

Technologies of surveillance make sure these possibilities stay vanished. Video cameras constantly monitor visitors. The threat of discipline is everywhere: among the pernicious employees directing crowds, the multilingual warning signs (“Do not get out of the boat!”), and even the low ceilings of the entry and exit tunnels that portend severe head injury. Visitors who appear to be colonizers at first, dominating the small world with their gazes and bodies, instead become colonized subjects. This double bind of (im)mobility conditions interpellation in simulated imperialism. Or rather the vacillation between mobility and immobility hails the subjects of simulated imperialism into being. Fixed into mechanized boats, immobile, they become obeisant cogs within the infrastructure of a greater simulated imperialist superstructure, Disney’s empire.

Without mobility, we cannot exist as full subjects. If we cannot move, we cannot live. In such ways, all subjects of simulated imperialism are metaphorically paraplegic. For a few moments, we are frozen through and within simulacra only to have our fixity reflected back to us by the Other subjects of simulated imperialism — automata — which, in turn, cause us to question: “Who am I in reality?”<sup>76</sup> This is the psychic debris of simulated imperialism.

At third glance, this question provokes us to question the ontologies of animation that are evoked by simulated imperialism, for bound up with animation is the very question of the soul. Returning to etymology, animation stems from the Latin *animus*, which referred to the “rational soul in man” in the most general sense.<sup>77</sup> This was rooted in the Greek word *ἀνεμος* meaning “wind; air; breeze,” but also “breath; exhalation.” Even further, this double meaning came from the Sanskrit *an* (“to breathe”), *anas* (“breath”), and *anilas* (“wind”). Thus the soul is tied to the breath, and there cannot be life without breath. Animation thus evokes the greatest border of all: that between life and death.

Given the stilted movements of the doll-machines and mechanized mobilities generally, what is the relationship between animation and interpellation in simulated imperialism? What shift occurs in the relationships between the soul, breath and life of these subjects? How might the partial (re)animation of these doll-machines change their ontological conditions? What does this mean for life and death? The subjects of simulated imperialism — literal and figurative automata — are kin to other (im)mobile subjects, who are either automatically animate (that is, animate without breath) or who hold the potential for (re)animation: cyborgs, vampires, mannequins, robots, clones, zombies, and the like. These are subjects that inhabit the in-between spaces and porous borders between life and death — and in many cases, between human and machine. They exist at the intersection of (im)mobility and (in)animation. They travel the boundaries of human and inhuman.

Yet in Disneyland, as in most simulacra, there is no place for death. Literally, one cannot die there. The theme park polices its borders to the extreme, particularly with regard to the dead and dying. If a guest suffers from a massive heart attack, employees call a supervisor first and then the ambulance. If that guest happens to die, she cannot be declared dead within the confines of the park. The guest’s body is whisked out of public view and shuttled out into the parking lot (or elsewhere off property), where paramedics can officially declare death. The Project on Disney has even described an incident in which a guest committed suicide by shooting himself in the head, and although dead on the spot, was not declared dead until long afterwards, far outside the park.<sup>78</sup> In such ways, Disney can legitimately claim that no one has ever died on its property. It is a space outside and beyond death. It is a space where all subjects can live out “the blind dream of defeating death and achieving immortality.”<sup>79</sup>

It is this fantasy of immortality that renders it the happiest place/non-place on earth.

In simulated imperialism, and at Disneyland specifically, death is a fiction, often a parodic one. Sometimes this is quite blatant, as at the Haunted Mansion, where the undead quite literally intermingle with visitors. Sometimes it is more subtle, as with the automata of *It's a Small World*, whose ontological status as children intimate a time far removed from death (childhood) as well as the conquest of death through automation. At Disneyland, ghosts, automata, robots and animatronics embody the fantasy of resurrection, and they actualize the possibility of (re)animation. In short, the subjects of simulated imperialism perpetually come back to life. They defeat death through the artificialization of life. They successfully realize the immoral desire that is the fantasy of immortality.

In simulated imperialism, the fantasy of immortality marks our passage out of the (human) species and into the machine. Baudrillard, addressing the metaphysics of simulation, noted that we are now crossing a point beyond which nothing is human or inhuman anymore: "alone of all species, the human being seeks to construct his immortal double — crowning natural selection with an artificial selection."<sup>80</sup> We are sacrificing the human species, he wrote, for the privilege of unlimited experimentation in pursuit of immortality. It is in the realm of the virtual, the simulated, that we come closest to achieving this desire — our digital traces remain long after our physical bodies have gone, traces that might be reconstructed as a "self" in perpetuity. As Baudrillard added, "the human species, left to itself, can only duplicate or destroy itself."<sup>81</sup> True, simulated imperialism duplicates and destroys, but it also resurrects: it interpellates the living dead articulated at the intersection of human and machine.

Yet simulated imperialism covers over these operations of interpellation with the illusion that we still live in a deterministic society, rational and governed by dialectic relationships. It trades in distinctions between inside and outside, living and dead, acknowledgement and disavowal, colonizer and colonized, mobile and immobile, human and machine, presuming continuity and reciprocal exchange between all of these dialectics.

I, too, have been working under these presumptions, trending toward a general principle of equilibrium. But what if, instead, we thought of imperial formations as predicated on relations of nonequivalence? Can there be such a thing as discrete imperialism? Disneyland, for instance, has no meaning outside itself for which it can be exchanged. There is no equivalent to Disneyland but Disneyland itself. Thus, Disneyland, the ultimate venue for simulated imperialism, is founded on what Baudrillard would call an impossible exchange.<sup>82</sup> This is an eccentric state of existence, wherein the sphere of the real is no longer exchangeable for the sphere of the sign. Both lose their force. It is a state in which illusion is the fundamental rule, and discontinuity alone is probable. What, then, if we were to think of imperial formations as radically unpredictable

movements, their subjects shifting in and out of a quantum void? Such analyses would be challenging, yes, but I hope my analysis here has offered an idea of how simulacra might bring such imperial processes into sharper relief.

Finally, let us return to the subject to pose Fanon's question once again: "Who am I in reality?" For Fanon, colonialism's systematic negation of humanity inspired this existential angst. In simulated imperialism, this angst resides in the quantum void, that is, the irrational distance between "real" and "simulated," in the unpredictable space between. Because simulation builds distance into interpellation, the subjects of simulated imperialism are seemingly once-removed from "reality" — members of a collective tele-subjectivity and a mechanized humanity rooted in simulation. It is not just the "I" but also the "reality" that is always in question. Likewise, the subjects of simulated imperialism emerge from the quantum void tentatively and temporarily, struggling to find an anchor on these unpredictable grounds. They can only ever exist as partial, for simulation insures their continual destabilization with its serial propagation of ever-shifting imperial formations.

With simulation, and simulated imperialism generally, there is no end to imperial formations . . . and thus, no end to colonizing projects, imperialist impulses, violent acts of possession and domination, colonized subjects immobilized, fantasies of immortality, the erasure of boundaries between human and inhuman, and the collapsing of any distinction between life and death. The living dead are resurrected from the void, reanimated as automata. Imperial refuse that refuses to die. They are both remains and remainders: remains of the undead and imperial processes, remainders of the hyperreal.

#### CODA

Somewhere under Disneyland, urban legend has it, Walt Disney remains suspended in a vat of liquid nitrogen, flash-frozen into cryostasis at the moment of his death. Disney's personal fantasy of immortality becomes writ through this cryogenic body, hovering between life and death, as it awaits technology's divine hand of reanimation. Fittingly, he is said to be suspended under the *Pirates of the Caribbean* ride, far below the animatronic buccaneers and boat-ridden visitors above. Tubes and chemicals and monitors dutifully preserve him, now both human and machine — an automaton. Locked into this cryogenic freezer, Disney is condemned to immobility, not unlike the colonized subject fixed and frozen into a world of statues. And there he waits and waits, in limbo, somewhere between man and machine, life and death, surrender and resurrection: this emperor of discrete simulations.



## REFERENCE NOTES

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59. Philips “Consuming the West,” p.31. See also Marin, “Disneyland: A Degenerate Utopia,” pp.56–58; and S. Zukin, *Landscapes of Power: From Detroit to Disney World* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), pp.217–50.
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All photos of Disneyland and its attractions were taken by the author in August 2010.



# Architecture, Matter and Mediation in the Middle East

PAMELA KARIMI

This article presents a series of case studies that capture aspects of how architecture may be informed and mediated by material things. Due to the historical burden of the architectural canon, material culture has not always merged easily into studies of Middle Eastern architecture. But instances are numerous in which buildings have been appraised vis-à-vis material culture. In this article, I foreground the place of material culture in the historiography of Iranian architecture, in particular. The range of objects that function as material mediators is vast, but I have limited the scope of my investigation in three ways. First, I look at objects that involve aesthetic design considerations, such as furnishings, decorative items, and applied imagery. Second, I look at three-dimensional objects whose functional capacity is more significant than their aesthetic value, such as wall claddings. Third, I look at materials that are conceived as immaterial due to their apparent indiscernibility in everyday life, such as pollution (caused by gasoline-burning engines) and dust (a pervasive reality in the desert). While materials like oil and dust might escape our attention, they play an important role in granting a unique identity to the built environment of the Middle East. Finally, I highlight the importance of technology and the emergence of immaterial, virtual pathways that mediate between people and their built environments.

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*To live together in the world means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common, as the table is located between those who sit around it: the world like every in-between relates and separates men at the same time. What makes mass society so difficult to bear is not the number of people involved, or at least not primarily, but the fact that the world between them has lost its power to gather them together, to relate and to separate them. The weirdness of this situation resembles a*

*spiritualistic séance where a number of people gathered around the table might suddenly, through some magic trick, see the table vanish from their midst, so that two persons sitting opposite each other were no longer separated but also would be entirely unrelated to each other by anything tangible.<sup>1</sup>*

These are the words of Hannah Arendt from her book *The Human Condition*. Rather than arching over us, the material world hovers in the gaps that separate and contain us. Our relationship to space and its contents is one that beckons input, placing commoners in a position to disrupt the deeded structure. This dynamism among the people inhabiting a structure, the things that populate it, and the structure itself highlights the dynamic nature of the built environment, a condition that must be closely considered when examining architecture. Set in this context, architecture is not just a matter of architectonics.<sup>2</sup> In other words, the point of departure for this article is the social dimension of space, which has otherwise often been presented as static and imposed.

Since the publication of Sigfried Giedion's *Space, Time and Architecture* (1941) and Arnold Hauser's *Social History of Art* (1951), the scholarly melding of divergent foci into a single discourse implies, it would seem, an underlying indivisibility. Architectural historians have taken up diverse topics — from the complex interactions between designers and patrons to the objects of material culture that mediate between design and the consumer. And by doing so, the scope of their concern has gone beyond iconography, stylistic classification, and manifestations of the individual genius.

This changed attitude is particularly manifest in areas of the world where architecture has come about as the project of shifting social orders rather than design innovations — places where architecture is a byproduct of a gradual bottom-up development, rather than a top-down process decided by experts. The former Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc countries have recently provided such an animated domain for the study of material culture and architecture. These regions created distinctive spaces fashioned from ideological templates, such as monumental parade grounds and Red Squares. However, rather than focusing on such edifices, many scholars, such as Svetlana Boym, David Crowley, and Susan E. Reid, have studied those things that mediated between the people and their state-designed architectural environments. The Soviet communal, according to Boym, was a site where occupants transformed their predetermined spatial parameters through singular, oddly original gestures. In particular, their desire to collect mass-produced, cheap consumer products, including rubber plants, presented a challenge and acted as a confrontation to socialist, utopian views. Boym thus depicted a space that was interrupted by this groundswell of collected, extraordinary, bizarre objects and furnishings, as well as by fields of ordinary experience. Following this logic, if we continue to associate these spaces with socialism — or any larger

socio-political agenda — we must take account of the shifting and multilayered interactions between things, people and architecture.<sup>3</sup>

Consequently, one might also consider the work of Oskar Hansen, the Polish architect and a member of Team 10, who as early as the 1950s, attempted to create potential opportunities for the “. . . user[s] to be able to change what [they have] been given, in line with the standards.”<sup>4</sup> Beyond being of interest among humanitarian designers, the notion of the user's active involvement has been a topic of study for a variety of scholarly approaches to the built environment. These have ranged from Pierre Bourdieu's anthropological examination of the Kabyl House to Constantinos Doxiadis's consideration of people's ways of life and their impact on their built environments, rather than following the “universal” standards of Modern architecture.<sup>5</sup>

Due to its paradoxical relationship to the material world, the Middle East is an apt milieu for the study of matter and how it overlaps with architecture. Islam, the region's dominant religion, encourages the belief that human reproductions of the form of the deity — tangible renderings of the holy realm — reduce worship to mere idolatry.<sup>6</sup> This belief, which engenders a radical immateriality, has at times been so strong that in the early caliphate the imprinting of Qur'anic inscriptions on coins was substituted for the imprint of the caliph's head, a practice carried over from Roman and Byzantine rule.<sup>7</sup> According to the anthropologist Bill Maurer, this practice of replacing representational images with the sacred word on the most worldly of objects, golden coins, implied a dissociation from the object basis of the material world. Its goal was to convince believers that the coins themselves were actually “countenanced” by divine authority.<sup>8</sup>

This paradox from the early caliphate has lingered into our time, affecting how the material world is perceived and treated by contemporary groups in the region. Thus, in “War of Images, or the Bamyān Paradox,” the cultural critic Jean-Michel Frodon contended that the Taliban betrayed themselves, because in destroying the rock-cut Buddhas of Bamyān they too “did politics with images.”<sup>9</sup> As Frodon suggested, progress toward immateriality actually implies prior engagement with the realm of matter, disclosing an inherent contradiction — the impossibility of transcendence without first engaging materiality. In Daniel Miller's words, “Just as there is no pre-objectified culture, there is no post-objectified transcendence.”<sup>10</sup>

The paradox of coinage is likewise applicable to other instances where the materiality of the built environment intertwines with things that, owing to their divine connotations, yield a kind of immaterial appeal. Consider, for instance, the epigraphy of the sacred words from the Qur'an that appear on the walls of thousands of mosques built throughout the history of Islam (FIG. 1).

**FIGURE 1.** A modern mosque and huseyniyah in Isfahan, Iran. The facade is mediated by Qur'anic texts that are inscribed in both traditional and modern ways. They appear on both ceramic tiles and murals painted on the brick walls. Photograph by author.



#### MATTER, MEDIATION AND ARCHITECTONICS

In scholarship on Islamic architecture the dominant methodological concerns of the field have often prevented material culture from emerging as an area of emphasis, although there are some buildings that have been appraised vis-à-vis material culture. Gulru Necipoğlu's study of paper scrolls and how their distribution influenced innovative architectural revetments at the time of the Timurids is a good example.<sup>11</sup> In *The Topkapı Scroll: Geometry and Ornament in Islamic Architecture*, she explained how the process of transmitting architectural design became possible in the Islamic world between the tenth and sixteenth centuries via the agency of these large paper scrolls.

Another significant study in this vein is Sussan Babae's exploration of the material constituents of the Safavid feasting ceremonies and their impact on the shape of the palaces of seventeenth-century Isfahan. In *Isfahan and Its Palaces, Statecraft, Shi'ism and the Architecture of Conviviality in Early Modern Iran*, she showed how ceremonial preparations defined access and proximity to the king, and thereby established the physical contours of an institutionalized form of feasting that structured everything from the scheduled rhythm of eating, drinking and entertaining to the giving of food or wine by the king to a favorite subject.<sup>12</sup> Thus cultural practices ascended until they occupied the space traditionally occupied by the designer. Indeed, as a result of such habitual cultural practices, the *talar* palace, a new typology in Islamic design, emerged. In contrast to previous practice under a different set of customs, it substituted the agency of ritual for the freedom of the designer to determine how people would circulate spatially. Thus, design took on a rebel character when it revolved around matter.<sup>13</sup>

By the end of the nineteenth century, architecture again came to be mediated in Iran by paper items and kitchenware. However, this time the effect was literal, as exotic items — imported Turkish and Chinese earthenware and cheap European oleographic prints — came to animate the interior surfaces of upper-class homes. As their real use value faded, paper goods and kitchenware acquired exhibitionary value. As Karl Marx once noted, it is through such processes that a simple commodity, what may at first appear to be “a trivial thing,” may become “a very strange thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties.”<sup>14</sup> In this case, simple imported goods were turned into validated signifiers of high culture and taste. They were also able to fill the vacuum left behind in the absence of tradition (FIGS. 2, 3).<sup>15</sup>

If exhibitionary value allowed bowls and oleographs to transform the late-nineteenth-century Iranian interior, in pursuit of international high-culture norms, the early-twentieth-century home became devoid of all decorative items. Simultaneously, however, demand for and appreciation of Persian carpets in Western (and, in particular, American) contexts provided the cultural imprimatur for carpets to continue to exist in wealthy Iranian homes rather than die out. Although walls were white and simple, and furnishings were predominantly imported, because of the pervasive presence of these carpets, an important tradition was safeguarded on the floors of these homes.<sup>16</sup>

These examples show that, far from being influenced by top-down processes based on decisions of the state or the intervention of elite and ambitious architects, architectural design may often be driven by concern over such common items as food, paper, carpets, and cheap imports. And this notion that design results from cultural preferences, rather than rational choices, is echoed in the context of many cul-



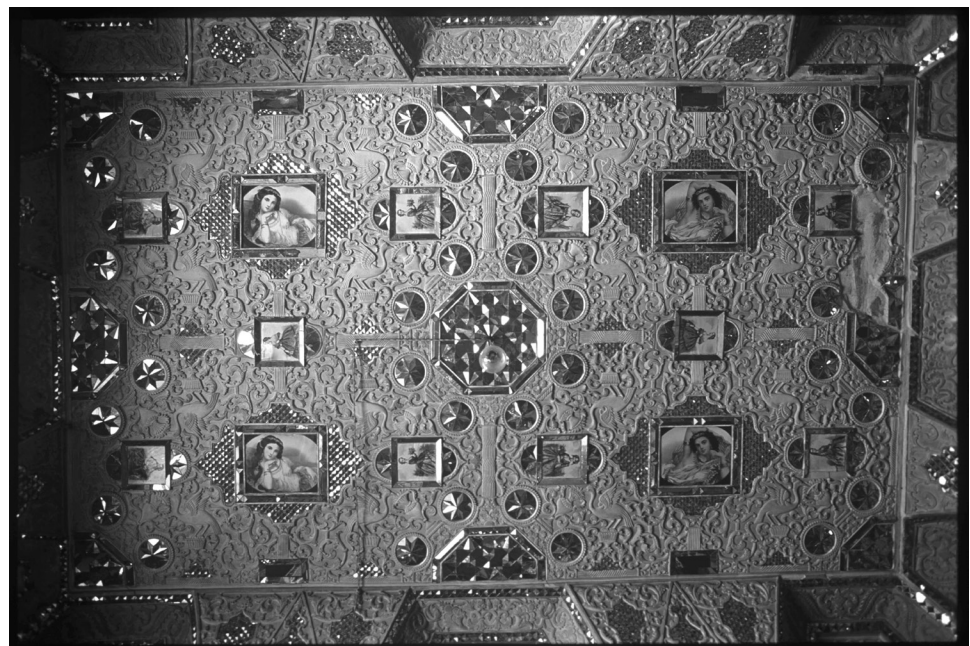


**FIGURE 2.** Interior view of the living room in Abrishami House, Rasht, Iran (circa 1910), with imported earthenware inserted into the masonry of the walls. Courtesy of Jassem Ghazbanpour.

tures throughout history. Thus, Giedion, in *Mechanization Takes Command*, described the world of material objects in the daily life of medieval Europe. Most domestic furniture at that time, he wrote, took its cue from monasteries; none of it was designed with attention to issues like “how the body might best relax in a chair.”<sup>17</sup>

Similar observations were made by Mary Helms in her now more-than-twenty-year-old book *Craft and the Kingly Ideal: Art, Trade, and Power*. Here, Helms explored the power ascribed to objects imported from faraway places, arguing that objects of long-distance trade become popular among elites not because of their use value but because they connoted honor and power. By making this suggestion, Helms provided a new model for understanding how criteria for preference concerning designed objects are based in culture. Her conclusion is enlightening when seen in the context of societies that have benefited from an abundance of resources for producing a particular item, such as a chair, and yet have still sought to acquire a type that they deemed unique, imported from a distant, exotic place.<sup>18</sup> Like people, these objects have lives, whose meanings change in response to the different contexts within which they are found.<sup>19</sup>

It is also important to remember how ordinary things have played a central role in great works of philosophy, including Martin Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, a book that discusses cooking pots, pitchforks and lampshades, allocating next to no discussion to higher culture.<sup>20</sup> This approach obliges me to enter into a dialog with other ostensibly distinctive Middle Eastern matters — namely, dust and petroleum. Below, I refer to these as “tacit matter,” things that are, in the words of Henri Lefebvre, at the same time “the most obvious and the best hidden.”<sup>21</sup>



**FIGURE 3.** Details of a ceiling in Shahshahani House in Isfahan (circa the late nineteenth century), with framed oleographic prints or chromolithographs of European women. Courtesy of Jassem Ghazbanpour.

## TACIT MATTER

In the latter part of the nineteenth century England went through its industrial airborne pollution phase.<sup>22</sup> Experts at the time strove to solve the problem by cleansing buildings of soot and dust.<sup>23</sup> Dust, in particular, came to be seen as a cumbersome residue that tainted everything. Already in 1851 the Crystal Palace boasted a structural feature whereby the wooden planks that constituted its floor were left slightly detached, allowing for a curious vacuum which assured the removal of dust.<sup>24</sup> Yet, prior to industrialization, the dust and rust of the old and dilapidated had been romanticized in Great Britain.

In *The Ethics of the Dust*, John Ruskin praised the architectural works of the medieval world. With their dusts (which were, in his view, miniature variants of stones), these old, decaying buildings were deemed authentic. And, according to the architectural historian Jorge Otelo Pailos, in matters concerning the conservation of old buildings, it was specifically important to preserve them in their authentic form.<sup>25</sup> This desire to preserve the past exactly as it is was persuasive among art audiences, and, as a mentality, it was clung to most passionately by admirers of the art and architecture of the Middle East, the cradle of civilization and the site of biblical tales. Here, artists and photographers often attempted to depict decaying buildings when there were no human subjects around. In this way, they hoped their images would present a sense of near timeless distance.

Noteworthy among those who traveled to the holy land was Francis Bedford, a British photographer who in 1862 accompanied the eldest son of Queen Victoria, the future King Edward. One of Bedford's most notable coups was permission to enter the "Noble Sanctuary," to photograph the Dome of the Rock at close quarters for the first time. By this time, the Dome's original gilt cupola had been stripped, yet its present bronze/aluminum cover was not in place; likewise, the Persian tiles that coated the building had fallen from its walls, exposing gaping plaster with nail holes.<sup>26</sup> Yet the shrine, beckoning to Bedford's lens, had a mellow and grounded beauty.<sup>27</sup> Dust and rust turned the sacred building inside out, accentuating the concrete aspect of its existence rather than its religious and political connotations.

If dust and rust were essential to the project of symbolically reconstructing the Middle Eastern past, petroleum has been important to envisioning its future. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, concessions for oil in the Middle East were held by foreign companies, which controlled the rate of extraction, ran the oil refineries, and supervised exports to the world market. For both the locals and the British and American companies that generated fortunes from these activities, the endeavor truly did represent the gift of Prometheus — for its first product was kerosene for illumination. This was, however, soon followed by gasoline for automotive propulsion, natural gas for cooking and heating, plastics for commercial products, and artificial fertilizers

and pharmaceuticals to feed and heal the world's growing population. However, like the later development of nuclear energy (another Promethean gift that promised unlimited energy and progress, yet also brought Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Chernobyl), petroleum turned out not to be a panacea. Rather, this gift has also brought sinister long-term consequences in the form of wars, social conflict, and environmental degradation.

Conflict first emerged in the oil cities of the Middle East in the form of social hierarchies, as neighborhoods segregated based on nationality, occupation and class. These divisions, set in place by the British, were initially deemed necessary because of the influx of a large number of rural migrants seeking work. But these problems lingered into later decades. When Michel Foucault visited the oil city of Abadan in Iran in 1978–79, he articulated the situation there in these terms:

*[T]he misery starts around the factory with a sort of subtropical mining village, then very quickly one enters the slums where children swarm between truck chassis and heaps of scrap iron, and finally one arrives at the hovels of dried mud bathed in filth. There, crouching children neither cry nor move. Then everything disappears in the grove of palms that leads to the desert, which is the front and the rear of one of the most valuable properties in the world.<sup>28</sup>*

Later, oil poisoned the Middle Eastern cities' traffic-heavy roads, and wreaked terrible havoc on the delicate environmental balance of the region.

In *Cyclonopedia: Complicity with Anonymous Materials*, a work of theoretical fiction about the Middle East, the philosopher Reza Negarestani reflected on the region's "tacit matters." Included among his concerns were the petroleum of its basins, the dust of its air, and the stain of its old built environment, as well as its rotting sun — all of which are, according to Negarestani, manifestations of "outside" forces. This so-called outside, characterized in Negarestani's text by sorcerous cults during the Persian and the Assyrian Empires, in modern times attracts fanatical jihadists and oil-thirsty capitalists toward each other in an unwinnable war, which is nonetheless capable of liberating the desert.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, the War on Terror has dragged the United States into a lopsided involvement with what Negarestani refers to as occultists, whose beliefs are ancient, incomprehensible, and oil-sullied. As Negarestani elaborates, "It is as if war itself is feeding upon the war machines, leveling cities into the desert, seducing the aggressors into the dark heart of oil."<sup>30</sup> Although a work of fiction, *Cyclonopedia* bears witness to how humans slough off and relegate practical and moral responsibilities, assigning them to objects that act on their behalf, leading to social networks composed of human and nonhuman matters like oil.<sup>31</sup>

To concur with Negarestani's ideas, one can see how oil and dust have gone from serving as a subject for romantics,

entrepreneurs and novelists to being a mere “fog” in contemporary oil-rich Middle Eastern countries. In Tehran, where new buildings turn black in the span of a few years, architecture is thus subordinated to petroleum. And the pressure to modernize, so prevalent in Iran’s oil-boom years of the 1970s, has brought nothing but a kind of forged comfort that feeds upon itself. Thus it was that the very air left many dead in Tehran in 2011 during the height of its pollution crisis.

Referring to the chaos of traffic in Tehran, the Turkish author and Nobel Laureate Orhan Pamuk, in an article in *The Guardian* titled “Road to Rebellion,” described the unpleasant consequences of the abundance of petroleum and automobiles and the craze of drivers:

*When, after his brief attack of indecision in the outskirts of Tehran, my friend the driver took the short cut, went into the wrong lane, and made the turn without causing an accident . . . we both felt the rush that can only come from breaking a rule and felt so very clever that we could not help exchanging smiles. The sad thing was knowing that . . . the only time we could break the law in public was when we were behind the wheel of a car, and that the laws we broke governed traffic and nothing else.<sup>32</sup>*

#### ORDINARY MATTERS IN EXTRAORDINARY TIMES

In scholarly writings about the built environment of the modern Middle East, the works of sociologists and anthropologists are most helpful when it comes to recognizing the power of marginalized human agents and their use of commonplace mediators to generate shelter or transform architecture. Rather than exploring canonical sources in art and architectural libraries, the sociologist Asef Bayat emphasized the agency of the most ordinary of citizens, who use commonplace mediators to transform their built environments. In *Street Politics: The Poor People’s Movement*, Bayat detailed neighborhood communities constructed by the poor during and after the 1979 revolution in Iran.<sup>33</sup> These illegal settlements were constructed on unused urban lands and in the empty homes of wealthy families who had fled the country. Instead of being guided by what architecture *does*, Bayat focused on how ordinary people create and alter architecture.

Even when professional architects are involved, inhabitants have played a significant role in transforming design rather than adapting to it. Take, for example, *Remaking the Modern: Space, Relocation and the Politics of Identity in a Global Cairo*, Farha Ghannam’s examination of Cairo’s architectural landscape from the perspective of its poor.<sup>34</sup> Through an ethnographic study of Al-Zawiya al-Hamra (a housing development built for a population relocated from Bulaq during the efforts by Anwar Sadat to redesign Cairo), Ghannam provided rich descriptions of how people altered the visible forms and uses of spaces allotted to them by the government.

She also showed how the poor appropriated the powerful forces that controlled their living environments. Ghannam’s study thus challenged the seeming intractable ideology of top-down architectural modernity, ordinarily construed according to Western standards, which non-Western cultures are expected to emulate.

However, even when the role of ordinary people as active agents is brought to the fore, there is still too little emphasis on the importance of three-dimensional material objects. In fact, outside of formal economics, the implications bound up with the production and consumption of daily-life goods has been conspicuously absent in the study of the modern Middle East. Much has been written about how revolutionary regime change can reframe the meaning of a monument (think of Tehran’s Azādi/Freedom, formerly known as Shahyād/the Shah’s Memorial). But little attention has been paid to how readily available objects of daily life, such as air conditioners or chairs, may likewise be readapted and reframed. They may lose their original meaning and gain new ones as soon as they are brought into a house. These objects help create new ways of being modern, assist in promoting new senses of nationalism, and facilitate a novel appropriation of gender roles. This is not to mention their influence on any spatial organization that they enter.

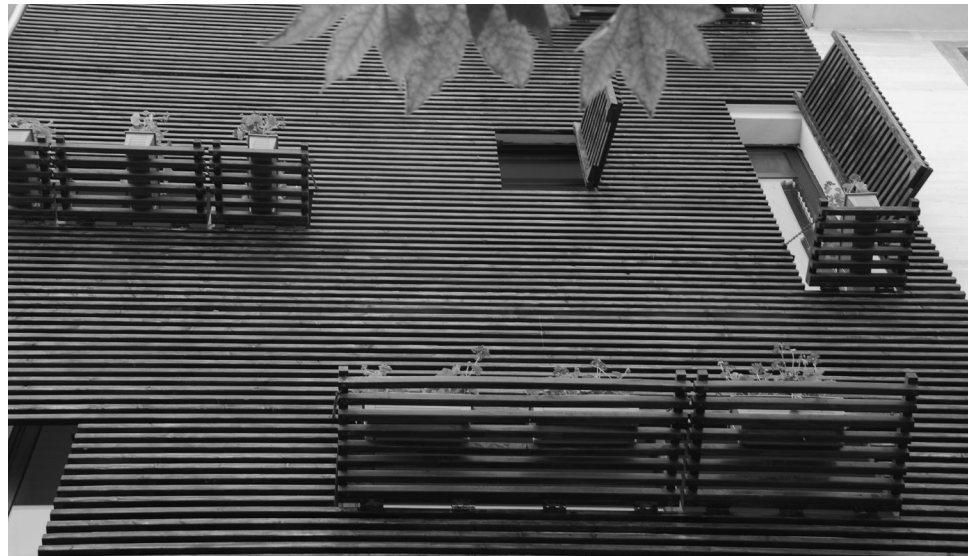
The potential act of agency can even be performed by architectural elements themselves, as described by the anthropologist Setrag Manoukian. He has suggested that free-standing ancient-looking columns play a part in defining and defending particular collective identities within the city of Shiraz in Iran’s southern province of Fars.

*The skilits and sutuns [skeletons and columns] are at once material and conceptual signposts that direct attention towards the spatio-temporal configuration of contemporary Shiraz. Their ubiquitous presence and the degree of investment they attract make them into crucial matters of concern in the city. The result of financial, architectural and political networks, iskilits and sutuns are themselves webs of relations that delineate a territory. [They] . . . orient and delimit the city, changing the multiplicity of forces that invests them. . . . Rising higher above the average vertical cityscape, skilits point towards visions of modernist utopias. . . . Sutuns are often decorative surplus on private and public buildings, statements of affluence and nationalism that overflow current boundaries of money and nation.<sup>35</sup>*

By this account, simple objects, including parts of architecture, are active agents that inform collective identity through their performative, emotive and expressive capacities. Not only do they allow for shared identities, but they also create a *lieu de memoire*, sustaining the will for the past’s remembrance. According to the historian Andrew Jones, collective remembrance is an “interplay between people and things.” As he elaborated:



**FIGURE 4.** *The Dowlat II Residential Complex by Alireza Shirafati of Arsh Design Studio, 2007. View of the facade with opened wooden lattice screens. Photograph by Arsh Design Studio, courtesy of Aga Khan Trust for Culture, Geneva.*



*Although the material world provides a framework for remembrance, it is the social practices in which artifacts are engaged which determines how remembrance is socially experienced and mapped out. In this sense we can consider the material world as a kind of “distributed mind,” not only spatially distributed, but also temporally distributed.<sup>36</sup>*

There are also instances when commonplace mediators allow for subtle political negotiations. A case in point is the Dowlat II Residential Complex, completed in 2007 by the Tehran-based firm Arsh Design Studio, a multilevel residential complex of only 535 square meters that was nominated for the 2010 Aga Khan Award for Architecture. Its main facade is covered by a cladding system that allows inhabitants to change its configuration. While carefully separated from the public, the private life of the inhabitants can be made visible to passersby if the wooden lattice screen, which cloaks the building like a veil, is altered. One may posit that the architect, while not wishing to change or disrupt the sanctioned way of life, aimed nonetheless to suggest an alternative lifestyle using the system’s own dictates. By concealing and revealing their interiors from and to the outsider’s gaze, the inhabitants may take control of their private lives. At the same time, residents may make a public pronouncement of their variance from a seemingly imposed design. To borrow from the cultural theorist Michel de Certeau, the designers as well as those who occupy this building inhabit the “text” like a “rented apartment.” They build on the existing sanctioned status quo and create new meanings in response to it, making it their own.<sup>37</sup> Thus, Iranian designers and architects in Iran have asserted agency in changing their own lives as well as those of others, but this “agentival capacity is entailed not only in those acts that resist norms but also in the multiple ways in which one inhabits norms” (FIG. 4).<sup>38</sup>

With the Middle East going through a series of revolutions, occupy movements, and civil wars, it is worth addressing the importance of mediators and material things and the ways they complement what Asef Bayat has called the “spatiality of discontent,” or spaces that foster revolutionary acts.<sup>39</sup> As images of the pepper-spraying of Istanbul Technical University professor Ceyda Sungur spread over the Internet during the recent Occupy Gezi Movement, so did the public’s criticism of the use of pepper spray and tear gas by the police there.<sup>40</sup> Many of the materials used by citizens to communicate their thoughts about Sungur’s message to preserve Istanbul’s green spaces — as well as their criticism of the use of tear gas and pepper spray — were cheap and unimportant (paint and stencil used for graffiti, for example) (FIG. 5). Yet these politicized matters continued to engage passersby after the event in what the Situationists in the 1960s referred to as “detourment,” culture jamming, or the rerouting of messages to create new meanings.<sup>41</sup> But, more often than not, these political messages are now delivered in immaterial ways, as indicated below.

#### TOWARD IMMATERIALITY

The 2009 Green Revolution in Iran allowed for peculiar expressive forms. One might think, in particular, of the dark and blurry images of YouTube videos, which were frequently captured and posted under harsh circumstances (when the revolutionary guard was present, for example), and were combined with an array of sounds and words.<sup>42</sup> Yet, despite its poor quality and shoddy appearance, according to the musicologist Michel Chion, this type of audio-vision is capable of creating powerful effects, sensations and meanings.<sup>43</sup>

This audio-vision (i.e., hearing first and then seeing), which produces a delay in “getting” the image, thus becomes



**FIGURE 5.** The text adjacent to the image of the tear-gassed urban planning professor Ceyda Sungur reads: “The more you press, the bigger it gets.” Stencil on the ground in Gezi Park, June 4, 2013. Photograph by Christiane Gruber.

an important site of encounter between human beings and processes of subject formation.<sup>44</sup> As immateriality thus becomes increasingly relevant, it seems as if all that was solid

has indeed melted into air. And this even transcends the two-dimensional images that Guy Debord articulated as such in *The Society of Spectacle*:

*When the real world changes into simple images, simple images become real beings and effective motivations of hypnotic behavior. The spectacle as a tendency to make one see the world by means of various specialized meditations . . . naturally finds vision to be the privileged human sense which the sense of touch was for other epochs.<sup>45</sup>*

Current cutting-edge thinking in science suggests that the fundamental nature of the spatial three dimensions of the universe may in fact be nothing more than the projection of a deeper, more fundamental two-dimensional surface.<sup>46</sup> We may therefore construct our entire reality at every second via projections of this “holographic universe,” just as we may now interpret the world mediated through digital data conveyed to us from all points on the globe, in real time.<sup>47</sup> Thus it is apt to conclude by saying that in this era of dematerialization, it is worth contemplating the role of the virtual pathways that have already begun to mediate between us and architecture.

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17. S. Giedion, *Mechanization Takes Command: A Contribution to Anonymous History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), pp.268–304.
18. For more, see M.W. Helms, *Craft and the Kingly Ideal: Art, Trade, and Power* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993), particularly, “Naturally Endowed Goods and Skillfully Crafted Goods,” pp.146–59. By contrast, it is important to be attentive to the views of the historian Jared Diamond as expressed in his landmark *Guns, Germs and Steel*. Historically speaking, some

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# Myth, Modernity, and Mass Housing: The Development of Public Housing in Depression-Era Cleveland

JENNIFER DONNELLY

During the Great Depression planners and architects in Cleveland, Ohio, initiated sweeping housing reforms, and by 1943 seven public housing estates had been constructed across the city. The initial success of these residences solidified Cleveland as an important vanguard in the history of public housing in the United States. At the center of the myths and realities of housing reform was the notion that modern dwellings could alleviate the social and urban conditions of impoverishment. The symbolic burden of this vision was placed on the residents of public housing, whose corporality became the pivotal space of modernization and reform.

In July of 1933 Cleveland hosted the first National Conference on Slum Clearance, at which housing advocate Ernest Bohn declared that Cleveland would become the nation's "housing laboratory."<sup>1</sup> Driven by Cleveland's acute need for jobs during the first years of the Great Depression and a firm belief in the social and financial benefits of slum clearance, Bohn and his colleagues were at the time planning extensive housing reforms in Cleveland's poorest neighborhoods. To facilitate this effort, in 1933 Ohio became the first state in the nation to pass legislation enabling the creation of housing authorities.<sup>2</sup> Shortly thereafter, under the directorship of Bohn, Cleveland established the nation's first housing authority, the Cleveland Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA), now the Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority. Cleveland subsequently received financing for three Public Works Administration (PWA) Housing Division projects, a large number for a city of its size. And by 1937 Cedar Central Apartments, Outhwaite Homes, and Lakeview Terrace were completed.

The early efforts of Bohn and the CMHA propelled Cleveland to the forefront of the national housing reform movement. Lakeview Terrace, in particular, was held out as an

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exceptional model. And by 1940 the CMHA not only managed the city's original three estates but had embarked on an ambitious program to build four more: Valleyview Homes (1940), Woodhill Homes (1940), an extension to Outhwaite Homes (1942), and Carver Park Apartments (1943). Yet, while Cleveland's public housing policies did successfully generate desperately needed jobs for the unemployed during the Great Depression and provide certain families with well-equipped housing that was publicly praised by both city leaders and new residents, housing reform in Cleveland also allowed local elites to dismantle low-income neighborhoods, restructure urban communities to isolate the poor, and embed racial segregation in public policy.

#### NATIONAL MYTHS AND REALITIES

In 1940 the housing activist Catherine Bauer published *A Citizen's Guide to Public Housing* to introduce federally funded housing to middle-class Americans. Bauer began her guide by juxtaposing a photograph of an outhouse surrounded by a cluster of old clapboard cabins and a much more appealing photograph of new townhomes on a tidy tree-lined street. The reader was asked to choose "This . . . or This?"<sup>3</sup> The conclusion one might be expected to reach was clear: public housing was a cleaner, safer, and more attractive option for the poor than unplanned private slums.

Using examples of American housing estates constructed during the late 1930s, Bauer then illustrated that the distinction between "houses" and "housing" was essentially that the former were an individual concern while the latter was a "public responsibility."<sup>4</sup> Under the headline, "Will families from slums appreciate decent modern homes?" Bauer explained that even the poorest Americans can be "modernized" through access to better housing.<sup>5</sup> She thus established public housing as a unique architectural project with requirements distinct from those of a typical American home: homes were an expression of individualism, while public housing would develop its residents from slum dwellers into proper citizens.

Bauer's optimism about the potential of modern housing to solve social problems and her subversive assumptions about the modernization of the poor shaped the policies, reception and criticism of public housing into the late twentieth century. However, in 1991 Katharine Bristol challenged many of these assumptions in her article "The Pruitt-Igoe Myth." Bristol targeted the architecture critic Charles Jencks's well-known pronouncement that the implosion of the Pruitt-Igoe public housing complex in St. Louis marked the "death" of modern architecture as epitomized by mass public housing schemes. Instead, she argued that the established critics of modernism had failed to historically contextualize public housing within the economic policies and racial discrimination that had contributed to its decline.<sup>6</sup> Jencks's

focus on the shortcomings of architectural design and modernist theory thus obscured the more systemic institutional and structural problems of public housing programs in the United States.<sup>7</sup> According to Bristol, the Pruitt-Igoe myth "naturalizes the presence of crime among low-income populations rather than seeing it as a product of institutionalized economic and racial oppression."<sup>8</sup>

At the heart of Bristol's criticism lay a series of arguments traceable in the housing literature to the urban planner Peter Marcuse's article "Housing Policy and the Myth of the Benevolent State." Despite persistent popular belief that the primary concern of government housing programs was to promote the welfare of all citizens and ameliorate social ills, Marcuse pointed out that these very programs often led to the decline of targeted neighborhoods, the isolation of poor urban areas, and racial segregation.<sup>9</sup> Public housing residents were not merely housed; they were economically and often racially hemmed in by an institutionalized apparatus with many ultimately negative consequences.

The myths and the realities of public housing in Cleveland centered on the assumption that modern housing could and would solve social, economic and political problems. Toward this end, public housing of the 1930s and 1940s was intended for the so-called "deserving poor," or the lower-middle class.<sup>10</sup> Following these guidelines, many Cleveland estates were initially successful communities. However, the detrimental cost of racial segregation, uninhibited slum clearance, loss of industry, and competing subsidies for suburban investment would cripple many of these neighborhoods by the latter half of the twentieth century.

As the corporal subject of the vision of modernity promoted by housing activists, public housing residents increasingly shouldered the symbolic burden of social reform. Looking specifically at three estates — Lakeview Terrace (1937), Outhwaite Homes (1937), and Woodhill Homes (1940) — this article examines the architecture, public art, and urban policy of Depression-era Cleveland by considering the ways in which the historicized, segregated and modernized body of the resident became the pivotal space of architectural reform.

#### HISTORY OF HOUSING IN CLEVELAND

Cleveland grew from a frontier canal town into a center for commerce and production during the Civil War. The nascent industries needed to support the war thrived there because of the city's favorable location on the eastern shores of Lake Erie, its proximity by rail and canal to other growing urban centers, and its access to large quantities of raw materials. By the late nineteenth century, iron and steel mills, meatpacking plants, foundries, machine shops, shipyards, and factories all flourished in Cleveland.<sup>11</sup> During this Gilded Age the wealthy built grand mansions along Euclid Boulevard, named "Millionaire's Row," just east of downtown, while laborers



lived in modest wooden rowhouses scattered throughout the city.<sup>12</sup> Though two houses were typically built for working families on a single lot, the wide dispersal of industry in Cleveland during the nineteenth century stalled the emergence of the overcrowded tenements that plagued many other industrial cities of the time. Indeed, in 1890 the average number of persons per dwelling in Cleveland was well below that in many other American cities.

The rapid increase in population needed to support Cleveland's transformation into an industrial powerhouse, however, inevitably created social pressures. European immigration doubled Cleveland's population between 1900 and 1910.<sup>13</sup> Industrialization also took a heavy toll on the environment, as many neighborhoods were severely polluted and waterways were clogged with industrial waste and sewage. As the population swelled, housing conditions among low-income families also inevitably worsened. Single-family homes were subdivided into apartments for multiple households, and the wealthy abandoned Euclid Avenue for streetcar suburbs like Shaker Heights, Cleveland Heights, and Garfield Heights.<sup>14</sup> In 1904 these changes led the Cleveland Chamber of Commerce to issue a report titled *Housing Conditions in Cleveland*, which claimed that the city had a "serious housing problem," and concluded that poor housing was the source of a litany of social evils and immoral behaviors.<sup>15</sup>

In 1903, as Cleveland was emerging as one of the world's preeminent manufacturing centers, its leaders also unveiled a major beautification project intending to bring order, elegance and distinction to its growing business district. Designed by Daniel Burnham, John Carrere, and Arnold W. Brunner, the Group Plan envisioned prominent government buildings extending along an axial green mall from downtown to the lakefront.<sup>16</sup> According to W.D. Jenkins, the project signaled Cleveland's transition from "the personal, piecemeal, and privately funded planning of a nineteenth-century city to the public, comprehensive, and government-funded planning of a mid-twentieth-century city."<sup>17</sup> The transformation also led city leaders to become more actively involved in housing and slum clearance. In 1903, to make way for the future green mall, officials ordered the destruction of the working-class neighborhood that included Cleveland's vice district.<sup>18</sup> However aesthetically ambitious and grand, the Group Plan thus also inaugurated the practice of slum clearance in Cleveland, and it provided local elites the pretext to remove brothels, gambling casinos, and working-class housing, inhabited by African Americans and recent immigrants, from the downtown.<sup>19</sup>

The 1920s were a period of buoyant prosperity and municipal progress for Cleveland. Public and private largesse expanded popular access to the arts, medicine and education, as city leaders erected many prominent buildings, created public parks, and expanded the city's infrastructure. However, labor unrest and racial discrimination also intensified. Historically, Cleveland had cultivated a reputation for toler-

ance and racial equality, and during the nineteenth century Cleveland's small African-American population had been part of a relatively integrated community.<sup>20</sup> World War I, however, slowed European immigration while stimulating an industrial boom, prompting thousands of African Americans to migrate to the city to fill its open labor positions. As the African-American population swelled, racial discrimination became increasingly aggressive, and economic and educational opportunities for African Americans dwindled.<sup>21</sup> By 1930, 90 percent of the African-American population of Cleveland lived in the overcrowded Cedar-Central neighborhood, bounded by Euclid and Woodland Avenues and East 14th and East 105th Streets.<sup>22</sup> Meanwhile, the wealthy continued to move to the suburbs, and the mansions on Euclid Avenue were sold off or abandoned. In the neighborhood that had once boasted Millionaire's Row, African-American tenants paid higher rents than their white neighbors for the same underserviced apartments. A typical housing unit here (frequently labeled substandard) was the "kitchenette," a tiny apartment with shared kitchen and bathing facilities created by subdividing a single-family home.

On the eve of the Great Depression, Cleveland was a booming industrial center. The 1920s had been a period of unprecedented growth, and by 1930 it was the sixth largest city in the United States.<sup>23</sup> However, by 1931 100,000 persons had lost work, and by 1935 Cleveland's unemployment rate reached 23 percent.<sup>24</sup> African-American laborers were hit the hardest, with some neighborhoods suffering 91.5 percent unemployment.<sup>25</sup> By 1933 many workers had also lost their homes, and shantytowns lined the lake and riverfront.<sup>26</sup> The Great Depression was devastating for Cleveland; indeed, it could be argued that the city never fully recovered from it. However, due to its activist leadership, Cleveland also became an ideal site for many important New Deal building projects.

The initial steps by the federal government to promote national economic recovery were taken during the Hoover administration. In 1932 the U.S. Congress established the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC), an independent agency authorized, among other things, to issue limited-dividend loans for the purposes of constructing low-income housing.<sup>27</sup> The 1932 housing program was, however, limited in scope, and only one estate was built under its authority.<sup>28</sup> In 1933, however, the newly elected Roosevelt administration intervened much more substantially in the housing sector as part of its New Deal. The National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933 placed the RFC housing loan program within the new Public Works Administration (PWA) Housing Division. This division was then given the authority to buy, condemn, sell or lease property for the development of housing, and provide loans to private limited-dividend corporations and public organizations for the purposes of slum clearance.<sup>29</sup>

Ohio's landmark housing legislation of 1933 rendered its new public housing authorities eligible for RFC loans.<sup>30</sup> The CMHA was formed in 1933 under this law as an advisory

and coordinating entity in Cleveland to eliminate slums and improve housing conditions for low-income families.<sup>31</sup> Ernest Bohn's early directorship of the CMHA was influenced in this effort by the sociologist Robert Navin's 1934 dissertation "Analysis of a Slum Area," which examined health, crime and poverty statistics for the low-income neighborhood between East 22nd and East 55th Streets. Navin found that the decrease in tax revenue relative to city services in that neighborhood resulted in an annual subsidy of \$78.78 by the city of Cleveland for each of its residents.<sup>32</sup> He also concluded that many of the problems related to health and crime there were due to inadequate housing, and, focusing on tuberculosis statistics and police and fire services, he emphasized how substandard housing was an economic liability for the city.<sup>33</sup>

The primary goals of the PWA projects were to provide relief to the unemployed and stabilize the economy. Navin, however, cast housing as a moral issue, and concluded that better housing could also solve the city's social and economic problems.<sup>34</sup> Navin's findings appealed to Bohn, a devout Christian and a lifelong Republican trained during the Progressive period, who believed that public housing was "not socialism, but necessary for capitalism."<sup>35</sup> The study galvanized Bohn, local architects, and city officials to dedicate themselves to improving or eliminating undesirable housing conditions in Cleveland.

During the 1930s a two-tiered housing program emerged in the United States. On the one hand, the National Housing Act of 1934 created the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), which allowed the government to underwrite and insure mortgages so that more families would be able to purchase their own homes.<sup>36</sup> On the other, the Wagner Steagall Act (United States Housing Act) of 1937 established the United States Housing Authority and gave it the power to loan or grant funds to local housing authorities. By this second measure the federal government took permanent responsibility for the construction of decent low-cost housing.<sup>37</sup> These policies contributed to the symbolic and semantic separation of "housing" from "houses" by simultaneously producing public housing for low-income families to rent and offering subsidized mortgages to middle-income families to buy private homes.

Adding to this distinction between public- and private-sector roles was the fact that public housing tended to be concentrated in cities, while most FHA-insured homes were built in the suburbs. In *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*, Kenneth Jackson scrutinized the reasons behind the problematic spatial distribution of housing created by these policies. First and foremost, he noted, the application for federally subsidized housing was voluntary, and therefore a municipality that did not want public housing could simply refuse to create a housing authority.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, because cities were able to choose where public housing was built and who would live in it, public housing estates had the effect of reinforcing racial segregation. Finally,

according to Jackson, the prominent citizens and officials charged with making decisions about government programs often had as much financial interest in clearing undesirable neighborhoods and protecting real estate values as they did in providing decent housing.

In Cleveland, after the passage of the Wagner Steagall Act in 1937, the CMHA ceased simply being an advisory body. Under the direction of Bohn, it took over the operation of the PWA Housing Division estates of Cedar Central Apartments, Outhwaite Homes, and Lakeview Terrace, and began developing, constructing and managing its own low-rent housing estates.<sup>39</sup> Slum clearance factored centrally into the location of these new projects. Beginning in 1938, the CMHA and the city of Cleveland cooperated in the "equivalent elimination of substandard dwellings." Thereafter, they agreed, one "substandard" residence would be either demolished or brought up to code by the city for every unit of public housing constructed by the CMHA.<sup>40</sup> Because the demands of the business elite directed those on work relief, this meant that those employed in the municipal programs were now charged with tearing down the shantytowns and clearing the low-income neighborhoods of less fortunate working-class Clevelanders.<sup>41</sup>

Racial segregation was also informally enforced through the CMHA's tenant policy. No official race policy was in place. Instead, the CMHA practiced "racial tokenism": a few African Americans were placed in otherwise white estates, and a few whites were placed in otherwise African-American estates.<sup>42</sup> But of the seven residence estates built by 1943, Cedar Central Apartments, Lakeview Terrace, Valleyview Homes, and Woodhill Homes were clearly intended for white occupancy, while Outhwaite Homes, Outhwaite Extension, and Carver Park Apartments were dedicated for African-American tenancy.<sup>43</sup> The architectural standard for all the estates was essentially the same; however, white occupancy homes were scattered across the city, while all the African-American-occupancy homes were built within a few blocks of one another and isolated in one neighborhood.

Across the country, the spatial redistribution of the urban population due to suburbanization and slum clearance provided the larger framework for the geographic isolation of public housing. Residents of public housing were marooned within increasingly abandoned cities and branded with the stigma of poverty and government dependency. Meanwhile, the suburbanization funded by FHA loans created homes that symbolized individualism and financial autonomy. Within this national schemata, the policies of Cleveland, like those of many other cities, reinforced and racialized the seclusion of the urban poor in certain neighborhoods. Among the effects of these policies was to transfer the symbolic burden of Cleveland's urban reform effort onto its residents.

## THE NATION'S HOUSING LABORATORY

An important distinction divided the work of the curators of the Museum of Modern Art's exhibition on avant-garde architectural design in the spring of 1932.<sup>44</sup> Rather than showcasing housing design as an integral aspect of the Modern Movement in architecture, housing was presented in a separate exhibition with a separate catalogue. The exhibition on "Modern Architecture" was arranged by Philip Johnson and Henry-Russell Hitchcock, while that on "Housing" was organized by Clarence Stein, Henry Wright, and Catherine Bauer. As Richard Pommer has shown, the alienation of housing from general architectural design in the U.S. segregated social doctrines from the aesthetic principles of high art in a way that would have been incomprehensible for European modernists, for whom housing was the epitome of the new architecture. As a result, in the American context, the sociological problems of mass housing were not intimately related with the principles of high design espoused by Hitchcock and Johnson. Americans, according to Pommer, "could not see that the social and large-scale aesthetic bases of European modernism were two sides of the same coin."<sup>45</sup>

In the years that followed, housing design in the United States became more and more removed from the art of modern architecture, as American modernism turned inward and evolved to produce increasingly formalistic "*objets d'art*."<sup>46</sup> Public housing designers developed unique functionalist vocabularies, an "Americanized" International Style that was neither integrated into the vernacular context of the neighborhoods that surrounded them, nor totally accepted, as their European counterparts had been, into the legitimate high-design agenda of the International Style.

The first public housing estates in Cleveland were large-scale, low-density representations of the Americanized International Style, sited on ample blocks of green space in dense urban areas. Begun in 1935, Lakeview Terrace was built on a steep, irregular site on the shore of Lake Erie. Like Cedar Central Apartments and Outhwaite Homes, the construction of Lakeview Terrace was sponsored by Cleveland Homes, Inc., a limited-dividend corporation founded by the architect Walter McCormick in 1932 to obtain RFC loans.<sup>47</sup> The design of Lakeview Terrace was executed by a group of Cleveland architects — Joseph Weinberg, William H. Conrad, and Wallace G. Teare, with Stein and Wright serving as design consultants. A total of 184 homes were demolished to clear the site, and 620 units were constructed in 44 new residential buildings to replace the lost housing stock.<sup>48</sup> Lakeview Terrace was infused with the lessons of hilly Chatham Village, a successful planned neighborhood in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and by European modernist housing complexes that had also had to contend with difficult sites, such as Neubühl Siedlung in Zürich.<sup>49</sup>

Of all the housing estates in Cleveland, Lakeview Terrace came closest to an expression of the European fusion of high design and social solutions. Hitchcock and Johnson had defined the architecture of the International Style as embodying several key principles: an expression of volume rather than mass, an attention to surface materiality, an emphasis on regularity and balance rather than axial symmetry, and a lack of applied ornament.<sup>50</sup> Responding to this design agenda, the volumetric forms of Lakeview Terrace commanded open space with cantilevered balconies, concrete canopies, and stark ornament-free facades (FIG. 1). And to adapt to the contours of the site, the low residential buildings were asymmet-



FIGURE 1. Lakeview Terrace, 1937. Source: Herman Gibans Fodor, Inc. — Architects.





FIGURE 2. *Lakeview Terrace, 1937. Source: Herman Gibans Fodor, Inc. — Architects.*

rically arranged in a fanlike pattern on a curving loop road or at a 45-degree angle to a diagonal axis (FIG. 2). Different building types were utilized for different terrains: taller apartment buildings framed the top of the site; two-story townhomes followed the loop road; and at the very bottom of the site, smaller apartment blocks acted as embankments.<sup>51</sup> And all of the housing units were carefully oriented to take in as many views of the lake as possible. Typical of all early Cleveland estates, however, the architects ignored the European predilection for pure white forms, as Lakeview Terrace was constructed of concrete and brick. When it was completed in 1937, the estate was praised and exhibited as a model of superior public housing design.<sup>52</sup>

Lakeview Terrace was also socially innovative in that it was the first public housing estate in the nation to incorporate a community center.<sup>53</sup> Intended to cultivate a coherent, close-knit community, this provided workshops for women, offered a playground for children, and served as a medical center.<sup>54</sup> Lakeview Terrace was located just west of downtown, in a predominately Irish and German neighborhood a few blocks from the West Side Market, the largest public market in Cleveland. Indeed, Lakeview Terrace's loop road was meant to open into this commercial district. However, the community extension of Lakeview Terrace would be limited shortly after the estate opened due to competing infrastructure developments.<sup>55</sup> The construction of the Main Avenue Bridge in 1939 and roadway expansions in 1940 cut Lakeview Terrace off from the West Side Market community and sequestered it between the lake and a major highway.

Like Lakeview Terrace, Outhwaite Homes was begun in 1935 and completed in 1937 using RFC funding. The design of Outhwaite Homes, by Maier & Walsh Architects, also sited low-density residences on large garden blocks; however,

the site differed significantly from that of Lakeview Terrace. Outhwaite Homes was built in the densely populated and underserved Cedar-Central neighborhood that had been the subject of Navin's analysis, and its construction provided city leaders the opportunity to simultaneously accomplish an extensive slum-clearance project. A large commercial and residential swath of the Cedar-Central neighborhood, including 524 homes, was demolished to clear the site for 579 new housing units at Outhwaite Homes.<sup>56</sup> The estate, which stretched from East 40th Street to East 55th Street, consisted of block after block of serpentine, flat-roofed residential buildings. Unlike the bold volumetric forms and asymmetry of Lakeview Terrace, the repetitive, low brick buildings of Outhwaite Homes were symmetrically organized around alternating courtyards (FIG. 3). Community activity was dispersed into the courtyards where residents could interact with their neighbors and children could play (FIG. 4). The homogeneity of this site design was, however, broken by graceful colored brick patterns, which provided texture for the facades and subtle detail around windows, doors and balconies.

Outhwaite Homes was constructed for African-American occupancy only. By the 1930s a steady migration of African Americans from the South had stretched the housing resources of the Cedar-Central neighborhood.<sup>57</sup> African Americans had few housing options beyond the overcrowded community, and those who qualified for public housing in 1937 could only live at Outhwaite Homes. Furthermore, the construction of Lakeview Terrace and Cedar-Central Apartments, both white-occupancy estates, had destroyed existing African-American housing.<sup>58</sup> As a result, Outhwaite Homes was quickly occupied, prompting the CMHA to build an adjacent extension to it in 1942, adding 449 more units.<sup>59</sup> Yet, despite the CMHA's construction efforts, the housing

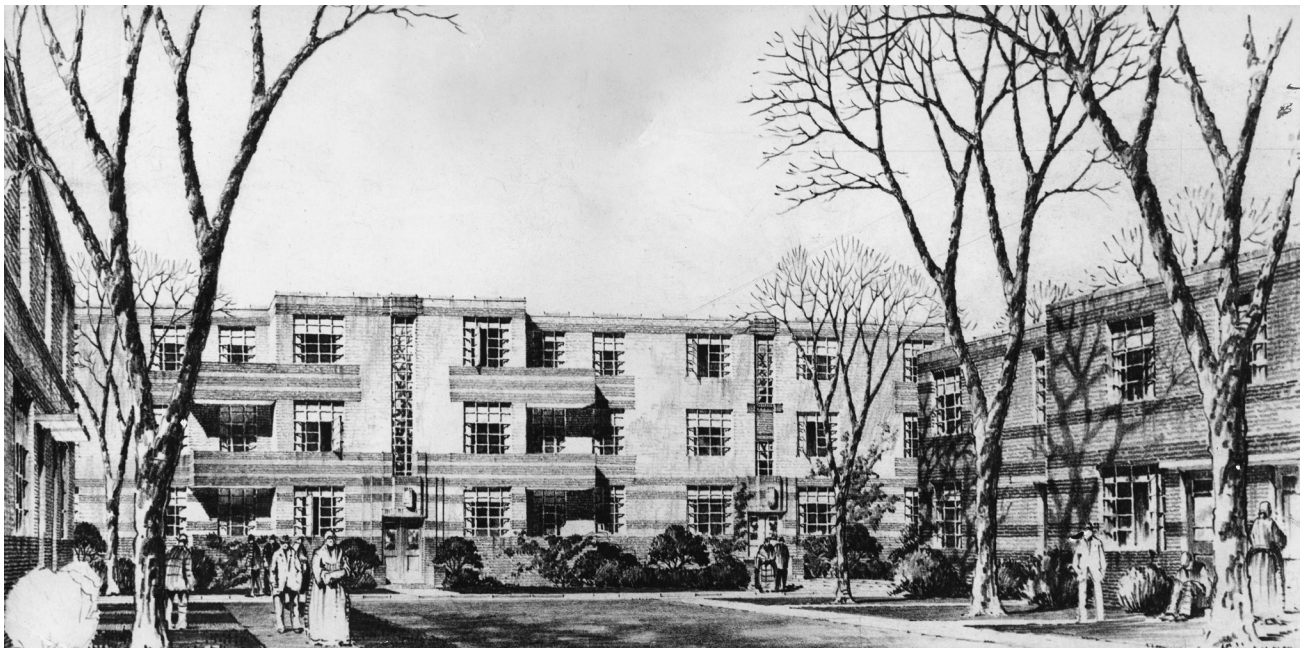


**FIGURE 3.** *Outhwaite Homes, 1937. Source: The Cleveland Press Collection, Special Collections, Michael Schwartz Library, Cleveland State University.*

demand in the dense Cedar-Central neighborhood did not abate, as Outhwaite Homes, Outhwaite Extension, and the African-American community at large became increasingly isolated from the rest of the city.

After the passage of the Wagner Steagall Act in 1937, the CMHA embarked on a further prolific building campaign that produced (in addition to the Outhwaite Extension) Woodhill Homes, Valleyview Homes, and Carver Park Apartments.

Begun in 1938 and completed in 1940, Woodhill Homes was designed by Abram Garfield, a well-established Cleveland architect and the son of President James A. Garfield. Woodhill Homes was constructed in the midst of a predominately Hungarian community on the former site of Luna Park, a popular amusement park that had closed in 1931. The estate occupied a single, massive garden block and encompassed 63 unembellished brick buildings in which there were 560



**FIGURE 4.** *Outhwaite Homes, 1937. Source: The Cleveland Press Collection, Special Collections, Michael Schwartz Library, Cleveland State University.*





FIGURE 5. Woodhill Community Center, 1940. Source: *The Cleveland Press Collection, Special Collections, Michael Schwartz Library, Cleveland State University.*

new dwelling units.<sup>60</sup> Woodhill Homes was distinctly less indebted to the International Style than Lakeview Terrace, despite its similarly steep terrain. The estate was organized on a Beaux-Arts axis that converged on Woodhill Community Center, which was prominently situated as the focal point of the entire site (FIG. 5). The residential buildings radiated symmetrically from the central axis, pivoting toward the community center, or faced each other — rather than engaging with the surrounding streets. The community center referenced Hitchcock’s and Johnson’s vision of the International Style in its bold forms, terraces, and stark lack of ornament. However, Woodhill Community Center was deeply embedded in the earth and, like Outhwaite Homes, lacked the volumetric clarity of Lakeview Terrace. The surrounding housing units systematically alternated between vernacular gabled roofs and modernist flat roofs, in mixed reference both to the International Style and to the homes of adjacent neighborhoods.

The architecture of Lakeview Terrace, Outhwaite Homes, and Woodhill Homes was visually identifiable and distinct from the vocabularies of traditional houses in the surrounding communities. Embracing neither the design principles of international modernism nor the vernacular traditions of Cleveland residential design, the aesthetic homogeneity of the three estates minimized the particularity of place and references to the past. The residences were also physically sited so that they turned away from the surrounding community and could not be casually engaged from city streets. In many respects, this tendency reflected the desire of city leaders to instill order on low-income neighborhoods, and thus modernize the poor through their housing. Sweeping aerial photographs of Lakeview Terrace and Outhwaite Homes reveal how each attempted to impose a clear geometric rationality on the city’s dense fabric in an attempt to unify, rationalize and control the disorder and heterogeneity of its urban communities. The aerial photographs likewise paralleled Bauer’s “This . . . or This” choice in

*A Citizen’s Guide to Public Housing.* They clarified for a broad public the clean modernity of the public housing resident as opposed to the unruly resistance of the slum dweller.

#### THE PEOPLE, THE PAST, AND PUBLIC ART

Through the effort of Ernest Bohn and William Milliken, the director of the Cleveland Art Museum, the CMHA received fifteen federally funded art commissions between 1937 and 1941. These projects not only enhanced Cleveland’s housing estates, but they also visually represented the residents as the historical and corporal subjects of the vision that modernity housing activists hoped to implement. The Treasury Relief Art Project (TRAP), established in 1935 by a grant from the Works Progress Administration (WPA), funded the first four projects installed at Lakeview Terrace.<sup>61</sup> However, shortly after the inception of the TRAP, the WPA decided to commence its own art program, called the Federal Art Project (FAP), and the subsequent eleven works installed at Woodhill Homes, Outhwaite Homes, and Valleyview Homes were created under the WPA/FAP.

Like many New Deal projects, both the TRAP and the WPA/FAP were intended to create jobs, in this case for unemployed artists and craftsmen. As a condition of public support, however, artists were encouraged to work within the umbrella of the American Scene genre, which typically celebrated the common man, American community life, and socially useful labor. In Cleveland, Milliken suggested that artists create a “Cleveland Scene” and focus on the infrastructure and industries that brought Cleveland to life, such as Cleveland’s bridges, avenues, factories, mills and waterfront.

Of the fifteen commissions received by CMHA from the TRAP and the WPA/FAP, fourteen were distributed between white-occupancy estates. Outhwaite Homes was the only African-American estate to receive a commission. Generally, the subject of each project was the result of a discussion that involved the artist, the architects, administrators such as Milliken, and often residents.<sup>62</sup> Aside from the projects intended for children’s playrooms and playgrounds, the artwork at Lakeview Terrace and Woodhill Homes fell into one of two themes: the historicization of Cleveland based on heroic myths and pastoral pasts, and the celebration of the body as a space of reform. At Outhwaite Homes, on the other hand, the subject of its one mural was the history of impoverishment shared by the public housing residents.

At Lakeview Terrace and Woodhill Homes, murals and sculptures temporally redefined the history of Cleveland by representing the residents of public housing as the descendants of mythological histories and agrarian utopias. William McVey executed two large projects, both depicting the origins of Cleveland, on the exterior walls of Lakeview Terrace Community Center in 1937. On its east wall a carved brick mural, *The Founding of Cleveland*, illustrated the har-





FIGURE 6. Paul Bunyan Digging the Great Lakes, William McVey, limestone, 1937. Source: Herman Gibans Fodor, Inc. — Architects

monious meeting of a group of Native Americans and a band of American settlers in a simplified, stylistic manner. On the north wall, McVey installed *Paul Bunyan Digging the Great Lakes*, a limestone relief recalling the myth of the giant lumberjack who formed the Great Lakes as a watering hole for Babe the Blue Ox (FIG. 6). McVey's work emphasized a distant romanticized past and the mythical origins of Cleveland. Similarly, at Woodhill Homes in 1939, Edris Eckert designed terra-cotta plaques for numerous buildings on the site. The plaques portrayed idealized men, women and children surrounded by agricultural abundance, animals, and the fruits of agrarian labor (FIG. 7). Within the gymnasium of Woodhill Community Center in 1940, Leroy Flint painted a large mural representing the people of Woodhill migrating from a pastoral paradise embraced by a god-like figure of agriculture to a glorified industrial landscape (including Woodhill Homes in the corner) protected by a god-like figure of industry. In the center of this hyper-idealized scene, a worker relaxes with his wife and child (FIG. 8).

In all these works the industrial realities of the neighborhood were replaced with Arcadian fantasies. By focusing on myth and bucolic reverie, the murals and sculptures framed Lakeview Terrace and Woodhill Homes as sites of displaced memory historically isolated from the actual past. No references to the former neighborhoods were retained: the material legacy of the past was simply erased along with

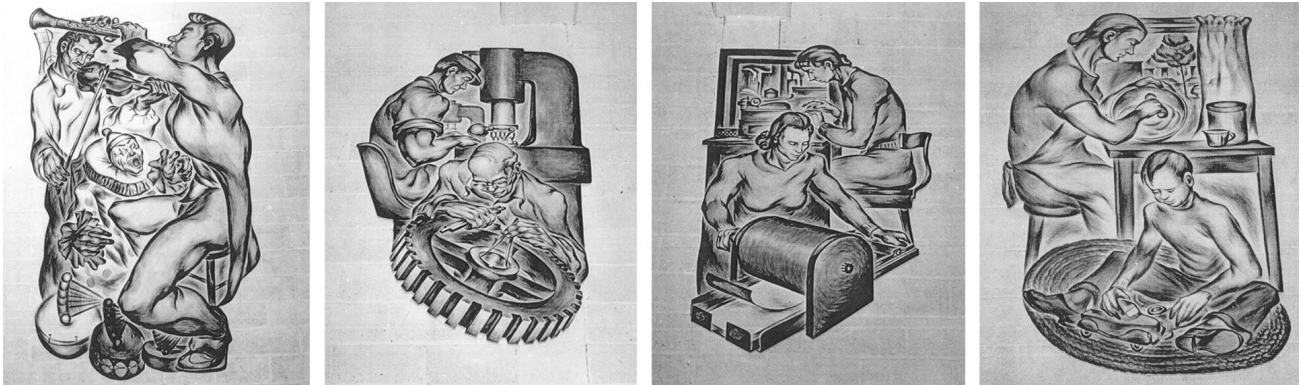
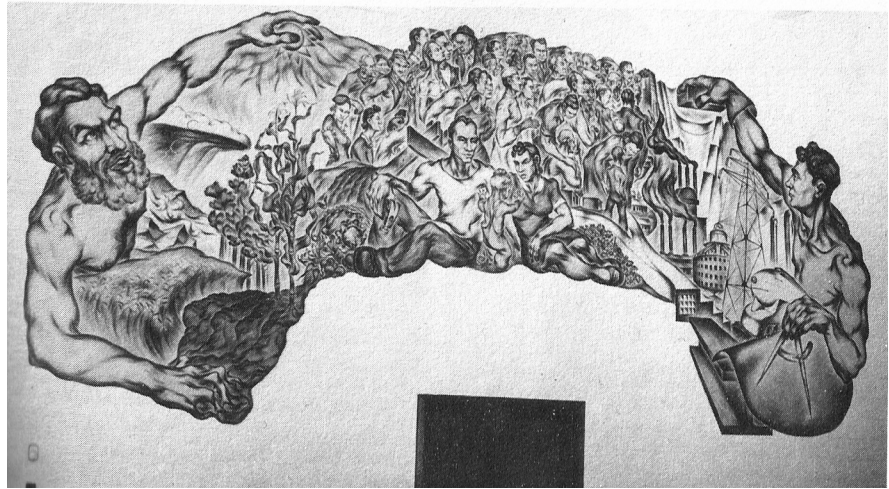


FIGURE 7. Plaques at Woodhill Homes, Edris Eckert, terra-cotta, 1939. Photographs by author.

any symbolic memory of impoverished, overcrowded urban conditions, vibrant, colorful immigrant communities, or even Luna Park at Woodhill Homes. Instead, the undesirable realities and cherished landmarks of the actual past were replaced by romanticized myths and idyllic illusions.

Depictions of the body of the resident in murals and sculptures at Woodhill Homes emphasized traditional gender roles, the nuclear family, and proper forms of work and leisure. In 1940 Flint painted a series of six panels that accompanied his larger celebratory mural in the gymnasium of Woodhill Community Center (FIG. 9). These panels portrayed normative behaviors for residents: women caring for children while working as typists; men playing baseball and musical instruments after laboring as machinists. On the terrace of the Woodhill Community Center in 1941, Alexan-

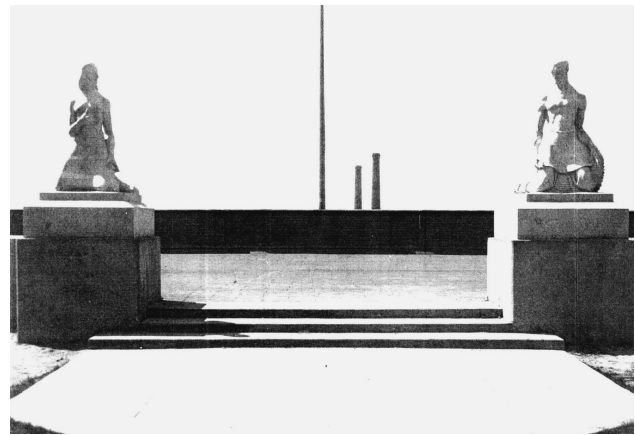
**FIGURE 8.** *Woodhill Community Center Mural, LeRoy Flint, mural on masonite panes, 1940. Source: The Bohn Collection, Special Collections, Kelvin Smith Library, Case Western Reserve University. Reproduced with permission from the Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority.*



**FIGURE 9.** *Woodhill Community Center Murals, LeRoy Flint, murals on masonite panels, 1940. Source: Ernest J. Bohn Papers, Photographs, Woodhill Homes, WPA art, Murals, ca. 1937. Special Collections, Kelvin Smith Library, Case Western Reserve University. Reproduced with permission from the Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority.*

der Blazys installed the sculptures *Working Man* and *Working Women*, two stylized nude figures celebrating the salubrious vigor of the body dedicated to useful labor (FIG. 10). This proclivity to consider the healthy body as the preeminent symbol of community well-being extended beyond the purview of the artists and administrators, and it was embraced by the residents as well. Thus, Lakeview Terrace residents rejected Charles Campbell's 1937 mural *Children at Play*, and demanded its removal soon after its installation because the children in the painting appeared to be too gaunt and sickly.<sup>63</sup> The emphasis on the health and productivity of the body at Lakeview Terrace and Woodhill Homes reinforced the public's faith in the modernization, and thus the middle-class assimilation, of public housing residents.

At Outhwaite Homes, meanwhile, the historicization and modernization of the resident was depicted quite differently. In his 1940 mural *Outhwaite*, Charles Sallée, like Flint at Woodhill Homes, illustrated the movement of people into public housing. Yet, where Flint's interpretation represented



**FIGURE 10.** *Working Man and Working Woman, Alexander Blazys, cast stone, 1941. Source: Ernest J. Bohn Papers, Photographs, Woodhill Homes, WPA art, Sculpture, ca. 1937. Special Collections, Kelvin Smith Library, Case Western Reserve University. Reproduced with permission from the Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority.*



**FIGURE 11.** Outhwaite, Charles Sallée, mural, 1940. Source: *The Cleveland Press Collection, Special Collections, Michael Schwartz Library, Cleveland State University.*



the residents as heroic and triumphant, Sallée portrayed Helen Smith, the wife of the first director of Outhwaite, as leading African-American children out of squalor and into the harmonious environment of public housing (FIG. 11). This distinction of having to be led out of poverty, rather than moving from one idealized landscape to another, represented a further conceptual isolation of African-American public housing residents. In effect, it historically legitimized racial segregation.

Though Sallée did attempt to demonstrate the physical conditions of the actual past, where the artists at Lakeview Terrace and Woodhill Homes did not, his interpretation of it, in which children needed to be rescued from poverty, infantilized the abilities of the residents of Outhwaite Homes. Whereas the residents of Woodhill Homes and Lakeview Terrace were the proud successors of a glorified agrarian past, the African-American residents of Outhwaite Homes were the symbolic inheritors of a history of impoverishment and dependency. The competing messages of the murals and sculptures of Lakeview Terrace, Woodhill Homes, and Outhwaite Homes exposed the fundamental contradiction of housing reform: the simultaneous social inclusion, racial isolation, and historical displacement of the public housing resident.

#### WHO WERE THE DESERVING POOR?

Cleveland's first housing estates were opened with fanfare and celebration, and many residents offered tours of their new homes. The housewives who opened their doors to journalists from a local newspaper, *The Cleveland Press*, in Au-

gust 1937 enthusiastically praised the new residences. They proudly lauded the modern white-enamel range, the iceless refrigerator, the bright, airy rooms, the cleanliness of the new estates, and the community that had been created for their children.<sup>64</sup> Each woman emphasized the convenience and ease with which housework could be completed in the modern homes. As Mrs. Sam Sahigian explained, "It's no task at all to do the washing" with a basement washing machine. And Mrs. Joseph Jackson of Outhwaite Homes expressed profound appreciation for her new surroundings: "We moved here from a single room with an old fashioned ice box, a coal stove, and no means of disposing of our trash . . . there is absolutely no comparison."<sup>65</sup>

However, several months earlier *The Cleveland Press* had interviewed residents who had been displaced from the properties cleared for the construction of the new housing estates. And the journalists had found no one who had been living in the old neighborhoods who had been able to afford the rent of the new residences.<sup>66</sup> At Outhwaite Homes, units rented for the monthly rate of between \$18.10 for two rooms and \$30.44 for six rooms, while rents at Lakeview Terrace ranged from \$25.00 for three rooms to \$33.75 for five-and-a-half rooms.<sup>67</sup> The typical displaced resident, however, could not afford to pay more than \$4 per room a month, and these estates replaced homes that had rented for between \$10 and \$15 a month.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, the CMHA enforced rigorous residency conditions, and to ensure payment, it stipulated that tenants demonstrate that they earned at least four times the monthly rent.<sup>69</sup> Tenants were further not allowed to take in boarders; no more than two persons were permitted to oc-



**FIGURE 12.** WPA Posters from Cleveland. Artists: far left, Eric Schuler; middle left, artist unknown; middle right, Stanley T. Clough; far right, artist unknown. Source: Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.



copy the same bedroom; and unmarried men could not rent an apartment.<sup>70</sup> Therefore, the displaced families found lodging nearby, in similar or worse conditions to those that had been dismantled for the construction of public housing.

The CMHA’s advertisements for the housing estates promoted the same salubrious benefits praised by Mrs. Sahigian and Mrs. Jackson. Lakeview Terrace, Cedar Central Apartments, Valleyview Homes, and Woodhill Homes were the subjects of WPA posters that featured bold cartoons of smiling children and happy workers in front of abstract illustrations of the estates. The images were accompanied by inviting slogans like “Your Children Like These Low Rent Homes” and “Live Here at Low Rent” (FIG. 12). The bright and cheery Cleveland posters emphasized the positive outcome and the healthy domestic atmosphere that embodied the promise of public housing. Interestingly, the WPA posters for public housing in New York City presented a starkly contrasting image. They concentrated on the behaviors that needed to be reformed to achieve the same charming result promised by the Cleveland posters. The New York City posters, like Sallée’s mural for Outhwaite Homes, focused on the social ills that public housing intended to eradicate. They often featured stylized images of squalor and crime, and slogans like, “Rotten Living/Decent Living Through Planned Housing,” and “Cure Juvenile Delinquency in the Slums by Planned Housing” (FIG. 13).

The two sets of posters revealed two sides of the same message, much like Sallée’s and Flint’s murals. Impoverished living in the slums was portrayed as morally bankrupt

and unsanitary, while public housing offered an architectural investment in the improvement of the individual. However, the emphasis on the body of the resident as a space of reform in the artwork and advertisements of public housing demonstrated the philosophy of environmental determinism that was driving housing reform. And this philosophy meant it would be the residents of the public housing estates who would ultimately be held accountable for their success through their ability to live model lives there.

To help ensure this success, the first families selected to live in the new housing estates were chosen because they had the financial ability to live up to the middle-class domestic ideal promoted by housing activists. However, the structural composition of poverty in Cleveland remained unchanged, as the very poor who were being priced out of the “slums” where the new housing was being built were simply displaced and into other nearby neighborhoods.

THE FRUITS OF MISUNDERSTANDING

The symbolic potency of the belief in the ability of better housing to alleviate social ills propagated an idealized, localized vision of modernity in Cleveland. Cleveland’s first public housing estates were successful communities that improved the living conditions of many of their initial residents. However, this was because the CMHA’s strict tenant policy ensured that the first tenants had the financial means to acquire the accouterments of normative, middle-class home-

**FIGURE 13.** WPA Posters from New York City. Artists: far left, Benjamin Sheer; middle left, John Wagner; middle right, attributed to Herman Kessler; far right, Walter C. Pettee. Source: Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.



making. However, as urban conditions deteriorated due to uninhibited slum clearance, loss of industry, and competing government investment in the development of the suburbs, public housing became a site of stigma, increasingly isolated in the decaying urban core.

At the center of both the promise and failure of the Cleveland housing program was the myth that the body of

the resident was itself a space of reform, and that the modernization of the body equated with redemption from poverty. Ironically, though public “housing” was differentiated from “houses” as a public responsibility, the obligation to realize the ideals and promises of housing reform became the individual burden of the public housing resident.

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The initial research for this paper was completed during a graduate course led by Dr. Mrinalini Rajagopalan in the Department of History of Art and Architecture at the University of Pittsburgh. The author would like to acknowledge Dr. Rajagopalan for her advice and guidance, as well as the support of the Department of History of Art and Architecture of the University of Pittsburgh.

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## Field Report

# On the Other Side of Sorrow: Reimagining the Highland Longhouse

HELENA WEBSTER

In the context of contemporary debates about Scottish devolution and identity this report investigates the re-emergence of the highland longhouse typology on the Isle of Skye after nearly two hundred years of decline. Following an introduction to post-devolution discourse on Scottish identity and to the postmodern notion of “reimagining,” the report looks specifically at one architectural practice, Dualchas Architects, which has been active on the Isle of Skye for the past seventeen years and is attempting to reimagine the highland longhouse for the highland community today. The report concludes by suggesting that through the act of reimagining, a process of taking from the past that which serves the practical, political and cultural needs of the present, Dualchas Architects have triggered a renewed interest in the highland longhouse as a progressive and specifically “highland” architecture.

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*Beyond the lochs of the blood of the children of men,  
beyond the frailty of the plain and the labour of the mountain,  
beyond poverty, consumption, fever, agony,  
beyond hardship, wrong, tyranny, distress,  
beyond misery, despair, hatred, treachery,  
beyond guilt and defilement: watchful, heroic,  
the Cullin is seen rising on the other side of sorrow.*

— Sorley MacLean, *The Cullin*, 1939<sup>1</sup>

Many visitors are drawn to the Scottish highlands because their seemingly “wild,” “ancient,” and “untamed” landscapes offer relief from, and a foil to, the intensity, complexities and frustrations of urban life.<sup>2</sup> Yet it is important to remember that people’s responses to landscapes are to a large extent subjective. Thus, Robert Macfarlane, in his engaging survey of cultural perceptions of mountains through history, *Mountains of the Mind*, wrote, “. . . our responses (to landscapes) are for the most part culturally devised. . . . [W]e interpret their forms in the light of our own experience and memory, and that of our own shared cultural memory.”<sup>3</sup>

This kind of reflexivity leads to a realization that visitors’ perceptions of the highlands will inevitably be multifarious and almost certainly different from that of the highlanders themselves. If one engages with highland history through its music, poetry, literature, and the memories of the highland people, it becomes clear that many highlanders see their landscape as bearing the scars of three centuries of exploitation by “outsiders.” These scars include the ruins left by the nineteenth-century clearances, the soil erosion resulting from the introduction of large-scale sheep farming, and the planting of nonindigenous conifer forests in the twentieth century.<sup>4</sup> One also begins to understand why a people whose history of oppression is inscribed so starkly in the landscape are currently being so vociferous about asserting their right to choose independence from England (devolution) and the need to articulate a new identity based on a “reimagining” of their Gaelic past.

The term “reimagining,” introduced by the social anthropologist Adam Lerner in his seminal work *Reimagining the Nation*, is used here to denote an understanding of the way social groups use the past to inform shared notions of national identity.<sup>5</sup> Underpinning Lerner’s term is the postmodern notion that individuals and cultural groups subjectively “imagine” their identities based on individual and shared memories, myths, beliefs, experiences and values, and that these identities are constantly re-created, or “reimagined,” through a process of creative and dynamic negotiation between the old and the new. This postmodern notion is useful because it deflects the discourse on individual and collective identity away from modernist concerns of the authentic versus the inauthentic and the modern versus the traditional, which have tended to preoccupy architectural debates on place, identity and architecture. Instead, it moves the discussion toward questioning why one identity is imagined rather than another, and, of particular relevance here, why one history is remembered rather than another.<sup>6</sup>

Scotland in the period since the 1976 referendum on devolution provides a particularly rich example of the cultural reimagining of identity. Through this period both Scottish institutions and the Scottish people have produced a heterogeneous set of reimaginings of Scottish identity that share three tendencies. First, they use highland identity as a metonym for Scottish identity, when in reality the highlands

are only one part of a larger Scotland. Second, they cast off both the romantic image of the highlands constructed by the British in the eighteenth century and the pre-devolution self-identification by the highland people as victims of centuries of British colonial oppression.<sup>7</sup> And finally, the reimaginings seek to (re)connect with the cultural values of pre-Union (i.e., pre-1707) Gaelic/highland culture (particularly the notions of communitarianism and environmentalism). In recent years these reimaginings have begun to be reified in the policies of the Scottish government and the Highlands and Islands Council, including the Right to Roam policy, support for the purchase by local communities of estates from “outsiders,” the introduction of Gaelic language studies into schools and universities, and free higher education and care for the elderly. The success of these policies became apparent when the 2012 National Well-Being Survey reported that people living in Orkney, Shetland, and the Western Isles were among the happiest in Britain.<sup>8</sup>

For the purposes of this report, however, what is of particular interest is the role of cultural producers — artists, poets, musicians, architects, etc. — in the process of reimagining identity. If one accepts Pierre Bourdieu’s notion that cultural producers are not destined to reflect or reproduce culture, but have agency, albeit limited by their context, then it follows that their work can actively contribute to creating culture anew.<sup>9</sup> In this respect, there has been a veritable renaissance in Scottish high and popular culture over the last twenty years or so, particularly in the areas of art, music, food, textiles, poetry and literature, much of which has drawn on personal and collective notions of pre-Union Gaelic culture.<sup>10</sup> For instance, contemporary highland poetry from writers such as Kathleen Jamie, Sorley Maclean, and Ian Hamilton Finlay is characterized by a form of reverential realist naturalism that is entirely different from the English romantic tradition.<sup>11</sup>

Noticeably absent from this cultural renaissance is much physical evidence of a reimagining of highland architecture, and even less evidence of a reimagining of the highland dwelling.<sup>12</sup> That said, in post-devolution Scotland the Scottish government has launched a number of initiatives intended to stimulate debate. These have included the launch of the Scottish Executive’s first Policy on Architecture in Scotland in 2001; the opening of The Lighthouse, Scotland’s Centre for Design and Architecture, in Glasgow in 1999; and sponsorship of the first Scottish Housing Expo in 2010.<sup>13</sup> In addition, it is well known that Scottish schools of architecture, and particularly the Mackintosh School of Architecture in Glasgow, have long explored the issue of identity and architecture. Despite the high levels of debate and optimism associated with devolution, however, Scottish architects have had little impact on the landscape of the highlands. A number of factors have contributed to this lacunae, including the relative poverty of the highland people, the ready availability of poorly designed but cheap kit houses, a lack of ambition among highland councils, an enduring cultural association between the in-

digenous highland longhouse (known as the blackhouse) and poverty, and the continued exodus of architectural graduates from Scotland in search of work.

That said, there have been a number of attempts to reimagine the highland dwelling over the last century. These were well documented by Dan Maudlin in his 2009 *TDSR* essay “The Legend of Brigadoon: Architecture, Identity and Choice in the Scottish highlands.”<sup>14</sup> However, of these projects, only the designs published in 1944 by the German ethnologist Werner Kissling explicitly attempted to reimagine the longhouse typology. Kissling’s aim was to “update” it in an attempt to “overcome [its] disadvantages . . . without losing the desirable elements of its character.”<sup>15</sup> His designs outwardly resembled the pre-improvement blackhouses, but internally they subdivided their traditional large high living space to provide bedrooms on the upper floor. They also “modernized” its construction to include concrete foundations, concrete ground-floor slabs, and imported windows and doors.

Kissling’s substantive understanding and admiration for the blackhouse — even though by 1944 there were only a few examples of it remaining in the highlands — led him to suggest that the typology could be successfully adapted to contemporary needs. However, as Maudlin pointed out, Kissling failed to understand that highlanders at that time associated blackhouses with backwardness and poverty rather than with a progressive highland way of life.<sup>16</sup> This bias remains today, although over the last few years a growing number of “updated” blackhouses have been built for the holiday cottage market (FIG. 1).

The highland environment today is characterized by dramatic mountainous landscapes scattered with a mixture of ruined stone, pre-improvement blackhouses, such as those to be found in the ruins of the village of Suisnish (which was cleared by the Lord McDonald in 1853 to make way for



FIGURE 1. Example of a blackhouse reconstructed for the holiday market, Breakish, Isle of Skye. Photo © the author.



FIGURE 2. Ruins of a pre-improvement highland settlement, Suisnish, Isle of Skye. Photo © the author.



FIGURE 3. Highland improvement “whitehouse,” Torrin, Isle of Skye. Photo © the author.

large-scale sheep farming) (FIG. 2);<sup>17</sup> small one-and-a-half-story, white-painted stone houses with slate roofs dating from the improvement era (eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) (FIG. 3); and white-rendered one-and-a-half-story timber kit houses built in the period since World War II (FIG. 4). However, over the last seventeen years Dualchas Architects, an architectural practice located on the Isle of Skye, have been building dwellings that attempt to reimagine the pre-improvement highland longhouse (blackhouse) (FIG. 5). The case study that follows looks at the ethos of the practice, how this has informed their reimaging of the highland longhouse typology, and how their projects have begun to reorient the domestic market on Skye away from the kit whitehouse.





**FIGURE 4.** Example of the now ubiquitous highland kit house, Kilbride, Isle of Skye. Photo © the author.



**FIGURE 5.** The Skye Museum of Island Life at Kilmuir, Isle of Skye, was opened in 1965. The museum preserves a small township of nineteenth-century thatched blackhouses. Photo © the author.

#### REIMAGINING THE HIGHLAND LONGHOUSE

Dualchas Architects, just as Kissling did before them, have declared their aim to serve local community needs through reimagining the highland longhouse typology. On their Web site they explain this commitment: “We . . . wanted a house which was unmistakably highland, yet modern; a house that could be seen as part of the cultural regeneration of the highlands. To do this we sought inspiration from the true vernacular of the highlands — the blackhouse.”<sup>18</sup>

The formal similarities between the pre-improvement blackhouse and Dualchas’s longhouse designs are self-evident to any visitor (FIG. 6). Both nestle into the landscape, have long narrow plans, and use local materials in their raw form. Further, any architect’s gaze will place the quiet mini-

malism of the new longhouses within a modernist lineage that includes such design greats as Alvar Aalto, Mario Botta, Sverre Fehn, Glen Murcott, and Peter Zumthor. Yet, as the architectural historian Keith Eggner has warned, it is all too easy to fall into the trap of assuming that meanings seen through eyes of outsiders, especially architects, are identical to meanings constructed by an area’s inhabitants:

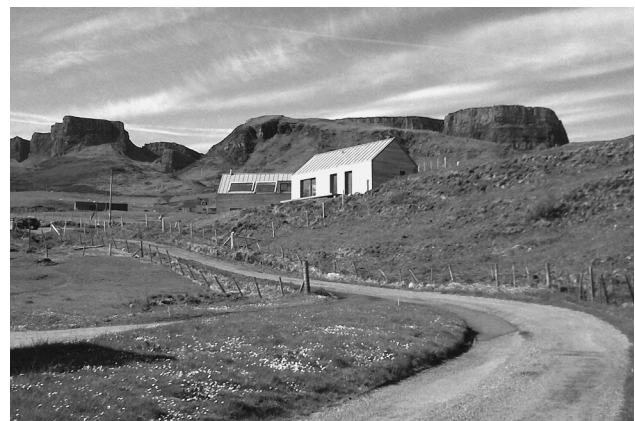
*What is defined as authentic local culture . . . is often imposed from the outside. The outsider sees what they want to see, with little consideration given to local circumstances, operations or perceptions.<sup>19</sup>*

Thus, it is not easy for the visitor to understand whether the similarities between the pre-improvement blackhouses and Dualchas’s contemporary longhouses are poetic, semi-otic references to a bygone typology that appeal primarily to a market of middle-class, culturally educated incomers, or whether they are homologues that resonate with the local community as a meaningful reimagining of contemporary highland identity. However, a first step toward answering this question might be to look at the way Dualchas, as embedded architects, understand their community’s history and identity, and how this understanding has informed their work.

#### ARCHITECTURE, IDENTITY AND POLITICS

In the introduction to this report I described the burgeoning of a national discourse on Scottish identity in the years that followed the referendum on devolution in 1976 and the contribution that artists have made to this discourse. These debates, which have occurred at both national and local levels, have provided the context for the practice of Dualchas Architects.

In this regard, specific insight into the firm’s cultural positioning can be found in the transcript of a reflective lecture given by Alisdair Stephen, one of its two founding broth-



**FIGURE 6.** An example of a reimagined highland longhouse, Flodigarry, Isle of Skye, designed by Dualchas Architects. Photo © the author.

ers, to architecture students at the University of Aberdeen in 2007. During the lecture, Stephen described first visiting his grandparents on Skye when he was a boy, and then again when he was an architecture student in the early 1990s at the University Strathclyde. He recalled his distress on encountering the desecrated landscape and the abject poverty of the community, which he saw as the product of several centuries of systematic symbolic and spatial violence inflicted on the Gaelic language, culture, and way of life by British colonizers and their clan-chief henchmen. As Stephen suggested, “the distance from our language, and often a sense of alienation from our home, has been the inevitable effect of the treatment of past generations. You could call it identity theft, and for its victims the effects are everywhere.”<sup>20</sup>

Stephen went on to explain that he had been so incensed by what he saw that he decided at the end of the fourth year of his architectural studies to move to the Isle of Skye to learn Gaelic, and to carry out research for a local architect, rather than leave for Hong Kong in search of work. Stephen subsequently set up the architectural practice Dualchas Architects with his twin brother Neil in 1996. Neil had previously written his undergraduate dissertation on the blackhouses of Boreraig.<sup>21</sup> The explicit aim of the brothers was to create an architectural equivalent to the renaissance in Gaelic language, music and dance that they saw around them. Even the word “Dualchas” (the Gaelic for “culture” or “heritage”) in the name of their new practice reified the brothers’ ethos.

It is clear from this lecture that Stephen understood the reimagining of the highland longhouse as a political act, one that rejected the conceptual and material signs of the colonized past and sought to reconnect with the long-suppressed Gaelic culture. For him, the reimagined highland longhouse was to be the product of an evolution of traditional forms with “the best elements of the past being altered by advances in building techniques allied to changes in social and cultural patterns.”<sup>22</sup> The challenge for the practice was to produce buildings that lived up to these explicitly political aspirations.

The early work of the practice consisted of small domestic conversions that provided little scope for reimagining the longhouse typology. However, in 1998 the Dualchas practice won a commission to design a new house on the Isle of Lewis for a Scottish nationalist party activist. This house, the Barden House, closely resembled a blackhouse from the exterior with its drystone walls, curved corners, hipped roofs, and clipped eaves. However, with its concrete-block inner construction and subdivided interior, it was really more of a whitehouse in blackhouse clothing. Nonetheless, in subsequent commissions for other private dwellings, Dualchas increasingly freed themselves from the obligation to make direct material and semiotic references to blackhouses. Instead, they began exploring ways in which certain “useful” Gaelic values, which had informed the architecture of pre-Union blackhouses, might be synthesized with the exigencies of contemporary highland life to produce a reimagined highland longhouse. Two Gaelic values in particular — reverence

for the natural environment and strong belief in community — were already prominent in the national and grassroots discourse on Scottish/highland identity, and not surprisingly, these values appear to have informed the architecture of the reimagined highland longhouses.

## ARCHITECTURE AND PLACE

Natural environments have always been fundamental to the construction of human identities and practices. Concepts of the environment are not just products of the imagination; they are also shaped by physical engagement with it. The wind, the rain, the fields, the mountains — these provide the conditions of possibility for human development in any given place. This is never truer than in wild places. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that the highland environment, with its remote, mountainous topology and harsh climate, heavily influenced both the construction and subsequent development of highland culture. This eventually included distinct farming practices (animal husbandry, fishing and subsistence arable farming), settlement patterns (small communities in fertile glens and along coastlines), artistic traditions (particularly poetry and music), and architecture (predominantly dwellings). However, what is surprising, particularly to outsiders, is that the Gaelic concept of the environment was — and arguably is “becoming again” — radically different from the English concept, as underpinned by the Enlightenment premise of man’s superiority over nature and capitalist notions of ownership.

James Hunter, best known for his revisionist account of the highland clearances, has argued that the Gaelic reverence for the natural environment can be traced through the unbroken lineage of Gaelic poetry to the sixth century.<sup>23</sup> This attitude to the natural environment also influenced the form of Gaelic settlements and dwellings. However, unlike the oral Gaelic traditions, the development of the blackhouse typology was halted in the early eighteenth century when the English “modernized” the highlands by imposing a new mode of agriculture (large-scale sheep farming), settlement patterns (crofts and towns), and architectural forms (whitehouses).<sup>24</sup> By contrast, there is now a large body of evidence, including archaeological and historical accounts, folk collections, and oral histories, that combine to produce a rich picture of the way that Gaelic *clachan* (village) and blackhouse (*taighean dubha*, or “thatch houses”) gave material form to the Gaelic notion that man depended on, and therefore had to respect, the natural world.<sup>25</sup>

Dualchas Architects have repeatedly expressed their appreciation of the blackhouse as a form of architecture well suited to the highland environment. For instance, their Web site points out how its low, contour-hugging form, rounded roof, thick walls, and small, east-facing openings helped mitigate the worst effects of the powerful southwesterly winds. It also points out that highland communities, out of necessity,



**FIGURE 7.** *Larch Cottage, Drumfearn, Isle of Skye, designed by Mary Arnold Foster of Dualchas Architects, adopts a long, low form that echoes the proportions of the blackhouse, and that is sited carefully in a natural hollow that protects it from the prevailing winds. Photo © the author.*

used local and often recycled materials for the construction of their blackhouses.<sup>26</sup> However, the Dualchas practice also accepts that the blackhouse remains a symbol of backwardness for many contemporary Gaels, and consequently assert the necessity for “tradition to be an evolving thing” — a reimagining for the contemporary world.<sup>27</sup> But what architectural form could this reimagining take?

By 2001 Dualchas had already produced twenty designs for contemporary longhouses.<sup>28</sup> These were designed to work “with” the topography and the microclimate, in contrast to the older whitehouses or postwar kit houses that were imposed “onto” it in an attempt to symbolize their dominance. For instance, the modest Larch Cottage, designed by Mary Arnold Foster, who joined Dualchas in 1999, adopted a long, low form that echoed the proportions of the blackhouse, and was sited carefully in a natural hollow for protection from the prevailing winds (FIG. 7). The landscaping around the building was also designed to work with the landscape by de-emphasizing the site boundaries and allowing the surrounding ground-cover of heather to come right up to the building. Gone were the picket fences and manicured lawns of the kit houses.

Many of the early longhouses were small and low-cost, designed to attract a Rural Home Ownership Grant.<sup>29</sup> However, as the practice became better known through design awards, publications, and word of mouth, it attracted more prosperous clients, many of whom were successful Gaelic *émigrés* returning to Skye in hope of reconnecting with their heritage.<sup>30</sup> As a consequence, the architects began to secure commissions with increased budgets, which allowed them to work with sites in more ambitious ways. For instance, the longhouse at Boreraig, completed in 2011 for a Buddhist client who inherited a croft from his mother, kept the building form low by breaking it into three separate elements: the living accom-



**FIGURE 8.** *The longhouse at Boreraig, designed by Dualchas Architects, keeps the building form low by breaking it up into three separate elements: the living accommodation, the bedrooms wing, and a studio space. Photo © the author.*

modation, the bedrooms wing, and a studio space (FIG. 8). It also used a natural bowl in the landscape to form a *lochan* (small pool or pond) by damming the out-flowing burns, that became a focal point for near views from the house (FIG. 9). Similarly, the recently completed house at Flodigarry split the accommodation into three parts — a house, an outbuilding, and a self-contained flat — and located the accommodation in three different-sized longhouse forms. These were sited on a hillside in positions that both minimized the necessity for earth-moving and optimized the aspect from the habitable buildings (FIG. 10, REFER TO FIG. 4).

Both the above designs evidence a *modus operandi* that might be termed “constructing the site.” This results in informal collections of buildings that sit gently within the natural contours of the land, but that also manage to create a sense of place in the space loosely bounded by the buildings.



**FIGURE 9.** *Dualchas Architects used a natural bowl in the landscape to form a lochan (small pool or pond) that became the focal point for near views from the longhouse at Boreraig. Photo © the author.*





**FIGURE 10.** *The house at Flodigarrry split the accommodation into three parts — a dwelling, an outbuilding, and a self-contained flat — and located the accommodation in three different-sized longhouse forms. These were sited on a hillside in positions that both minimized the necessity for earth-moving and optimized the aspect from the main buildings. Photo © the author.*

In addition to working with the site to minimize the visual impact of its designs, Dualchas have used the materiality of their buildings to reinforce a sense of “belonging,” both in the literal and metaphorical sense of the word. Although some of their early longhouses were finished in white render, evoking the ubiquitous improvement whitehouse, Dualchas have increasingly used as-found, or “brut,” materials, such as local stone for external walls and internal floors, galvanized steel for gutters and ironwork, and larch planks to form rain screens (FIG. 11).<sup>31</sup> The colors and textures of these materials, particularly when weathered, help the longhouses tonally meld with the highland landscape — in a sense reproducing the camouflage effect created by the markings on the highland stag, wildcat or hare.

Lastly, Dualchas have reimagined the way the longhouse visually connects man with nature. The primary function of the blackhouse was to provide shelter from the elements for families and their livestock. Its perimeter double-skin dry-stone walls and thatch roofs were very thick, and the openings in them small, resulting in a visual disconnect between inside and outside. Yet the Gaels expressed their reverence for their environment — including the animals, the mountains, the weather, and seasons — in their oral traditions, their poetry, folklore and music.

Two hundred years later Dualchas have harnessed the potential of airtight timber construction and high-performance windows to create longhouses that visually connect the inside and outside without compromising thermal efficiency. These connections come in two distinctive forms. First, there are the small windows that frame particular views — a tree, a mountain, a stream — creating living pictures that have a



**FIGURE 11.** *Dualchas Architects have increasingly used as-found, or “brut,” materials in their work, as demonstrated by the larch-plank rainscreen on the house at Boreraig. Photo © the author.*

captivating temporal dimension (FIG. 12). Such windows work in a similar manner to Ivon Hitchens’s millpond paintings (Hitchens painted the same scene over and over with a view to gaining a deeper understanding of his immediate environment). Second, there are the large, full-height windows and sliding doors in the main living spaces, which allow a blurring of the horizontal boundary between outside and inside and offer massive, awe-inspiring, and ever-changing panoramas of the highland landscape (FIG. 13). These panoramas are indescribably captivating. I recall seeing a rain squall approaching from afar and a rainbow set against snow-



**FIGURE 12.** *Small windows, such as this one in the bedroom at Larch Cottage, are used to frame particular views and create living pictures that have a captivating temporal dimension. Photo © the author.*



**FIGURE 13.** Dualchas Architects employ large full-height windows and sliding doors in main living spaces, such as this one at Larch Cottage, to blur the horizontal boundary between outside and inside and offer massive, awe-inspiring, ever changing panoramas of the highland.

covered mountains and dark skies. Such experiences act as a constant visual draw and a humbling reminder of the power and presence of the weather, the mountains, and the sea.

#### ARCHITECTURE AND COMMUNITY

Social relations have a material component. People are situated with respect to others, in part through the physical environment they inhabit, whether in the form of field boundaries, walls that enclose spaces, or chairs around a table. The maintenance, or transformation, of the patterns of life within a community relates in no small part to the way the physical environment facilitates or denies certain patterns of movement or action, lines of sight, proximity, interaction, and much else. Research on relatively stable and tight-knit premodern communities, most notably the famous study of the Berber house by Pierre Bourdieu, has demonstrated how dwellings may reify the practical and symbolic lives of their inhabitants.<sup>32</sup>

The pre-Union blackhouse provides a paradigmatic example of this phenomenon. In the twelfth century the kings of Scotland replaced tribalism with a feudal system based on kinship and paternalism, in which clan chiefs, loyal to the king, governed defined territories. This social structure remained relatively stable until the 1707 Union with England. Thus, for more than five hundred years the (mainly Gaelic) clans consisted of a disparate collection of small farming communities located on fertile lands. These communities (*clachan*) housed a small number of families living in organic groupings of blackhouses and associated outbuildings, surrounded by communal land, “infields” adjacent to the settlements for cultivation, and “outfields” beyond for cattle grazing. On the one hand, the form and spatial arrangement

of the blackhouses reflected the practical requirements for living, such as providing respite from the weather and a place to cook food. But on the other, they also reflected Gaelic cultural belief in kinship, the symbiotic relationship between the individual, the family, and the community.

The most substantive example of the architecture of kinship was the way the large living spaces in the blackhouses provided a location for social gatherings (*céilidh*). These were typically held around a central peat fire (*teine*) and involved communal storytelling, singing, and music (FIG. 14). Other examples of Gaelic civility, however, included keeping front doors unlocked and providing a stone or block of wood, called a “wanderer’s stone,” just inside the front door as a symbolic, and practical, welcome to strangers.<sup>33</sup> Inside the blackhouse, family relations occupied one half of its space, while the livestock were located in the other. A multiplicity of activities occurred in the living space, including cooking, weaving, sleeping, talking and entertaining. While members of a family would coexist in the same space, their individual roles and status were signified through material objects. For instance, men would sit on “sitting benches” placed against the wall near the fire, while women would sit on low stools around the fire, and dogs and children would sit on the floor.

The relative stability of the highland clan structure and associated way of life was disrupted in the early eighteenth century when Scotland signed the Union with England (1707) and to all intents and purposes became a colonized land. Scotland’s annexation to England was accompanied by a program of “improvements,” a potent mix of Enlightenment thought from England and Scottish Protestantism. These ultimately led to the systematic destruction of highland life, commonly known as the clearances, and the imposition of new forms of agriculture (large sheep farms), settlement



**FIGURE 14.** Reconstruction of a blackhouse interior at No. 42 Arnol, Lewis (c.1885) (owned by Historic Scotland), showing the single living space with its central peat fire. Photo © Crown Copyright, reproduced courtesy of Historic Scotland, [www.historicscotlandimages.gov.uk](http://www.historicscotlandimages.gov.uk).

(crofts, planned towns), and dwellings (“whitehouses”).<sup>34</sup> As a result, the blackhouse typology went into decline and gradually became associated with backwardness and poverty. From the nineteenth-century whitehouses through to the twentieth-century timber kit houses, therefore, it can be argued (as Maudlin did in “The Legend of Brigadoon”) that the domestic architecture of the highlands symbolized an “imposition” of English values, fuelled by Enlightenment notions of progress, ownership and privacy at odds with the inalienable Gaelic values of kinship and community.<sup>35</sup>

It might seem somewhat ironic that the timber kit version of the whitehouse has been the architecture of choice for the resident Gaelic community since World War II. However, as Alisdair Stephen suggested in his lecture to architectural students, this odd choice was a result of a confluence of factors, including the systematic undermining of Gaelic culture over a period of two hundred years, the lack of resources locally to commission architect-designed homes, and a lack of choice (there are a large number of firms that produce kit homes, and their catalogues present a seemingly great number of models to choose from — e.g., “The Strae,” “Harris,” “Aonach Moor” — even if the models are merely variants of the same typology).<sup>36</sup> However, in setting up a practice on Skye in 1996, the Stephen brothers put their faith in the potential of architecture as an agent of change — that is, that an architecture need not merely reflect culture, but that it could be an instrument to reimagine culture. For them, an architectural practice had the power to reimagine the way people lived in their homes.

One aspect of their vision of the reimagined highland home has been remarkably consistent. From their very earliest low-cost projects, built with housing grants, Dualchas has included large communal living rooms with wood-burning stoves in their designs. These open-plan spaces, such as the one in the Larch Cottage, do much more than reproduce the spatial typology of a blackhouse (FIG. 15). In practical terms, they provide space for a number of functions that would otherwise be carried out in separate, “named” rooms (dining rooms, kitchens, sitting rooms, studies, etc.). They also reduce the number of rooms, the amount of circulation space, and the cost of construction (essential for the relatively poor residents of the region) in relation to whitehouses and the antecedent highland kit houses.

Inside this space, the wood-burning stove provides both a symbolic focus and a heat source for the whole house. The impressive air-tightness of the timber-framed houses means that, with the aid of a simple mechanical ventilation system, heating bills can be very low.<sup>37</sup> But, more importantly, the large, airy living spaces alter the way inhabitants dwell in their homes. Dualchas have reimagined the Gaelic notions of kinship into socially progressive ideas about family life. In this regard, the large living spaces allow family members to engage either in the same or in a range of activities simultaneously such as cooking, eating, watching television, and reading. The goal is to break down definitions of gender and age and the hierarchies that go with them and that are sup-

**FIGURE 15.** *Open-plan living spaces, such as the one in the house at Larch Cottage, house a number of functions that would normally be carried out in separate “named” rooms (dining room, kitchen, sitting room, study, etc.). This strategy results in a reduction of the number of rooms and the amount of circulation space needed to support them — therefore also reducing the construction cost. Photo © the author.*



ported by multiroomed houses. In addition, these generous living spaces, which characteristically rise to the apex of the roof, also reinstate the possibility for holding community gatherings (*céilidh*) — which, as Sarah Macdonald found in her recent study of an isolated community on the Isle of Skye, are still of necessity held in people’s homes.<sup>38</sup>

Although the large living space is a characteristic of all Dualchas’s longhouses, it is arguably the living space in the house at Borerraig that demonstrates their most poetic work to date (FIG. 16). Here, the very long, thin living room is divided into functional areas — a study, a kitchen, a dining area, a sitting area — by a series of freestanding elements — a wall, a kitchen unit, a dining table — without destroying the sense of the platonic whole. This sense of a single volume is reinforced by the oak-faced plywood lining the walls and roof, and by the Caithness stone floor, which is laid on a 600-mm. grid. This is architecture whose richly materialist minimalism alludes to Gaelic archetypes.

#### A RENAISSANCE FOR THE HIGHLAND LONGHOUSE

As Dualchas Architects have become better known, their client base has slowly grown.<sup>39</sup> They started by serving local inhabitants who had a pragmatic need for low-cost homes, but they have subsequently attracted *émigrés* returning to Skye, drawn by a notion of returning to their physical and cultural roots. More recently, the practice has also attracted prosperous “outsiders,” drawn to the wild beauty of the island’s landscape. With this shift has come a concomitant increase in budgets for the practice’s designs, and as a result a growing collection of carefully crafted and highly poetic houses. However, in parallel to the practice’s increasing reputation as “architects’ architects,” Dualchas has maintained a strong





**FIGURE 16.** *The living space in the house at Borerraig is arguably Dualchas's most poetic work. This is architecture whose richly materialist minimalism alludes to Gaelic archetypes. Photo © Andrew Lee.*

commitment to serving the island's socially and economically deprived community.<sup>40</sup>

Their sister company, HEBHOMES, promotes and sells a collection of standard longhouse-inspired designs that may be purchased as self-build kit houses or as complete design-build packages.<sup>41</sup> The designs employ Dualchas's own Structurally Insulated Panel System (SIP), that is constructed off site and can be erected very quickly (within a week) (FIG. 17). Dualchas claims that the SIP system uses up to 50 percent



**FIGURE 17.** *An LH102P design taking shape at Kilnaish near Tarbert in Argyll. This is one of the standard house types that forms part of Dualchas Architects' HEBHOMES project. The project aims to provide low-cost housing that continues the longhouse typology. Photo © Dualchas Architects.*

less raw timber than a conventional timber-framed house, and that it is highly energy efficient and thus produces a building shell that is cheap to heat. Prices for a HEBHOME package range from £51,000 to £150,000 (US\$78,000 to \$230,000), plus an extra £10,000 to £20,000 (US\$15,000 to \$30,000) for installation. This process compares favorably with the average house price on the island in August 2013 of £183,000.<sup>42</sup> In addition to responding to the practical needs of the economically impoverished community, the range of HEBHOME designs remains faithful to the central tenets of Dualchas's reimagined longhouse typology: the large, high living spaces, the importance of siting, the use of brut materials, and the visual connection to landscape.

Dualchas Architects have been arguing for a "reimagining" of the highland longhouse for more than seventeen years. Through their words and designs they have demonstrated that "reimagining" — a process of drawing from the past that which is useful for the present — can result in practical and culturally meaningful buildings. There is now plenty of evidence that their arguments are winning converts. Another architecture practice, Rural Design, located in the north of Skye, have also adopted the longhouse typology as their trope (FIG. 18).<sup>43</sup> In addition, the local planning authority, in conjunction with Dualchas Architects, Proctor Matthews Architects, and the kit-house builder Scotframe, produced a design guide for the highlands and islands in 2011 that explicitly promoted the longhouse as the preferred housing typology.<sup>44</sup>

Collectively, these initiatives appear to represent a paradigm shift in the local conception of domestic architecture, a shift that rejects the "imposed" typology of the whitehouse in favor of a "reimagined" longhouse, and one that results in buildings that sit more gently in the highland landscape and that provide their inhabitants with more economically, socially and culturally relevant dwellings.



**FIGURE 18.** *House at Milovaig, Isle of Skye, designed by Rural Design Architects. Photo © Andrew Lee.*

## REFERENCE NOTES

1. This is a translation of the last verse of "The Cullin," a poem written in 1939 by the twentieth-century Gaelic poet Sorley MacLean, in which he sets man's tragic history against the permanent symbolic hope represented by the mountain ranges of Skye.
2. The highlands are used in this paper as a proxy for the northwest Scotland and the Western Isles (i.e., the land of the Gaels).
3. R. Macfarlane, *Mountains of the Mind: A History of a Fascination* (London: Granta, 2004), p.18.
4. J. Hunter, *On the Other Side of Sorrow* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 1995). For a general introduction to the highland clearances, see E. Richard, *The Highland Clearances* (Edinburgh: Birlinn Ltd, 2000).
5. A.J. Lerner and M. Ringrose, eds., *Reimagining the Nation* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1993).
6. For criticism of the way modernist theory has limited the discourse on place, identity and architecture, see N. AlSayyad, *The End of Tradition?* (London: Routledge, 2004); V. Canizaro, ed., *Architectural Regionalism: Collected Writings on Place, Identity, Modernity, and Tradition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007); and D. Upton, "Tradition of Change," *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review*, Vol.5 No.1 (1993), pp.9–15.
7. For more on the romantic construction of the highlands by the British in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); and H. Trevor-Roper, *The Invention of Scotland: Myth and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
8. Office of National Statistics, "Measuring National Well-Being: Survey Result for 2012." Available at [www.ons.gov.uk/ons/release-calendar/index.html](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/release-calendar/index.html) (accessed July 24, 2012).
9. For a straightforward summary of Pierre Bourdieu's ideas on agency and cultural production, see H. Webster, *Pierre Bourdieu for Architects* (London: Routledge, 2011), pp.57–79.
10. For examples of contemporary Scottish artists and their work, see [www.scotland.org/creative-scotland](http://www.scotland.org/creative-scotland) (accessed January 30, 2013).
11. For examples, see K. McNeil, *These Islands, We Sing: An Anthology of Scottish Islands Poetry* (Edinburgh: Polygon An Imprint of Birlinn Limited, 2011).
12. There are a few architects producing work that explores issues of place, identity and architecture, including Malcolm Fraser, Anderson Bell and Christie, and Rural Design, but their oeuvres are not extensive and their work is little known outside Scotland.
13. In 2010 Scotland's Housing Expo (<http://scotlandshousingexpo.com/plot17.php>) provided a showcase for contemporary reimaginings of Scottish housing and was intended to raise the quality of Scottish housing design and give a national focus to the housing debate. However, the Expo received mixed reviews and failed to have the impact hoped for by the Scottish government. Curiously, Dualchas was not represented in the Expo, although Rural Design Architects, the other notable Skye-based practice, was represented.
14. D. Maudlin, "The Legend of Brigadoon: Architecture, Identity and Choice in the Scottish Highlands," *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review*, Vol.20 No.2 (2009), pp.7–9.
15. W. Kissling, "House Traditions in the Outer Hebrides: The Black House and the Beehive Hut," *Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, No.44 (Nov.–Dec., 1944), p.139.
16. Maudlin, "The Legend of Brigadoon," p.10.
17. It is difficult to pin down the beginning of the improvement era in Scotland. If one equates the period with the control and modernization of the Scottish highlands by the English, then this began with the Union in 1707 and gained momentum after the quelling of the Jacobite Rebellion in 1745, when the English army imposed stringent controls on the highland people and their way of life.
18. Dualchas Architects (2012) [www.dualchas.com/Heritage.html](http://www.dualchas.com/Heritage.html) (accessed Oct. 21, 2013).
19. K.L. Eggner, "Placing Resistance: Critique of Critical Regionalism," *Journal of Architectural Education*, Vol.55 No.4 (2002), p.202.
20. A. Stephen, "National Politics, History and the Reinvention of a Scottish Architecture" (2007). Available at [www.dualchas.com/Lecture.html](http://www.dualchas.com/Lecture.html) (accessed February 2, 2013).
21. N. Stephen, "The Blackhouse of Boreraig," unpublished undergraduate dissertation, Glasgow School of Art, 1993. This dissertation included an archeological exploration of the ruined village of Boreraig and an impassioned plea for the reintroduction of the blackhouse. The dissertation included drawings by Stephen of a reimagined blackhouse.
22. Ibid.
23. J. Hunter, *The Making of the Crofting Community* (Edinburgh: Birlinn Ltd, 2010). On the clearances specifically, see Hunter, *On the Other Side of Sorrow*.
24. For the best account of the modernization of the highlands and how this changed the settlement patterns and architecture, see D. Maudlin, *The Highland House Transformed* (Dundee: University of Dundee Press, 2009).
25. The best of these accounts include I.F. Grant, *Highland Folkways* (Edinburgh, Birlinn Ltd, 1995); B. Walker and C. McGregor, *The Hebridean Blackhouse: A Guide to Materials, Construction and Maintenance* (Edinburgh: Historic Scotland, 1966); and Kissling, "House Traditions in the Outer Hebrides," pp.134–40.
26. Dualchas Architects, "The Blackhouse of the Highlands: Response to the Environment." Available at <http://www.dualchas.com/heritage.html> (accessed February 2, 2013).
27. A. Stephen, "National Politics, History and the Reinvention of a Scottish Architecture."
28. For examples of Dualchas-designed longhouses, see [www.dualchas.com/private-residential.html](http://www.dualchas.com/private-residential.html) (accessed February 4, 2013).
29. A. Stephen, "Housing and Gaelic Culture," *PropertyPeople Magazine*, Issue 296 (May 31, 2001), p.8.
30. Ibid.
31. Although spruce planted by the Forestry Commission in the twentieth century is now the dominant timber in the highlands, there are now numerous projects to replant indigenous trees, including larch, oak, and Scots pine, in the highlands in a manner that will be economically sustainable.
32. P. Bourdieu, "The Berber House or the World Reversed," *Social Science Information*, Vol.9 No.2, pp.151–70.
33. C. Sinclair, *The Thatched Houses of the Old Highlands* (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1953), p.28.
34. Hunter, *The Making of the Crofting Community*. See also Maudlin, *The Highland House Transformed*; and C. Dalgligh, *Rural Society in the Age of Reason: An Archeology of the Emergence of Modern Life in the Southern Scottish Highlands* (New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 2003).
35. Maudlin, *The Highland House Transformed*, pp.1–13.
36. Stephen, "National Politics, History and the Reinvention of a Scottish Architecture."
37. Fuel poverty is an enormous problem on Skye. Many postwar houses are dependent on oil-powered central heating.
38. S. Macdonald, *Reimagining Culture: Histories, Identities, and the Gaelic Renaissance* (Oxford: Berg, 1997), p.17.
39. Dualchas Architects have won many architectural awards. These include the Saltire Medal 2012 for the house at Boreraig, Isle of Skye, and Kirk House, Garve, Ross-shire; the RIAS Award 2012 for the house at Boreraig; and the RIBA Scottish Award 2011 for the Community Hall, Isle of Raasay.

40. According to the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, the Isle of Skye is one of least socially and economically deprived areas in the highlands, yet the island community continues to struggle with high unemployment, low incomes, fuel poverty, and high rates of alcoholism and suicide. See <http://simd.scotland.gov.uk/publication-2012/> (accessed Oct. 23, 2013).

41. For more information about the HEBHOMES concept, see <http://www.hebrideanhomes.com> (accessed July 30, 2013).

42. See <http://www.zoopla.co.uk/house-prices/isle-of-skye/> (accessed July 30, 2013) for an average house price index.

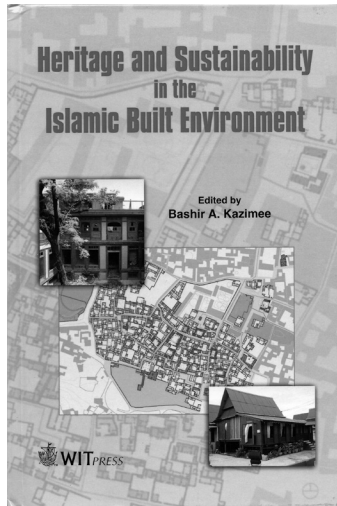
43. For examples of the work of Rural Design Architects, see [www.ruraldesign.co.uk](http://www.ruraldesign.co.uk) (accessed July 30, 2013).

44. The Scottish Government, *Rural Design Future Landscapes: Guides and Projects* (Edinburgh: The Scottish Government, 2011). Available at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/11/09091627/0> (accessed February 10, 2013).

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## Book Reviews



*Heritage and Sustainability in the Islamic Built Environment.* Edited by Bashir A. Kazimee. Billerica, MA: WIT Press, 2012. 240 pp., illus.

Discussions about sustainability in buildings have been widespread in recent decades, and increasing attention is now being paid to sustainability in urbanism and the larger built environment. We know that vernacular architecture was both culturally and technologically sustainable, an aspect lost in recent decades yet once again touted as important to contemporary societies. All good traditional architecture was sustainable; this was a given — rather like having to build with gravity. Considering this, within the Islamic World, notions of sustainability have until now been applied only to historic urban environments and to particular modern buildings. But this collection of essays, edited by Bashir Kazimee, makes the case for examining sustainability more broadly.

One of the most welcome aspects of this volume is that it pays attention to both cultural and technological sustainability. It is comprised of eleven chapters whose subject matter ranges, but which all focus on the Middle East and Western Asia (from Turkey to Afghanistan) — except for one which deals with Malaysia. The essays are, in the main, written by well-regarded scholars who have worked on issues related to Muslim cultures and architectures. They all emerge from recent research in the field and discussion in the classroom dealing with real situations and speculations about place. In his preface, Kazimee tries to frame this effort within a globalizing context. He presents the essays as a “critical discourse” that poses an alternative vision to modernism and urban development. And he makes a case for the vernacular and tradition as vital influences in the layout and architecture of contemporary cities in the Islamic World. Beyond this, however, there appears to be little structuring logic behind the sequence of the chapters in the volume, or indeed their subject matter.

In general, the notion of place related to culture and meaning and transformation over time underlies several of the essays — as does attention to shared elements of urban form and landscape as form-giving elements. There is a certain commonality in the way the architecture of Islamic cities is typically analyzed — from the characterization of spatial patterns and spaces (for example, the bazaar and the *maidan*) to individual building types such as the courtyard house, mosque, and caravanserai. Indeed, much writing tends to categorize the city into a “kit of parts” (my phrase and not one used in the book), which helps us understand and express it within different paradigms. On the other hand, this approach constrains how we may examine place, making narratives more normative, and in some ways, limiting. That said, a number of these narratives are informative, and some posit useful notions for examining the heritage of Islamic cities.

The first essay in the collection is by Kazimee, dealing with “Place and Meaning in Urban Isfahan.” Here, the author looks at a range of typical urban spaces and building forms in that city — from its great Maidan-i-Imam or Maidan-i-Shah (for which it is justly famous) to its covered bazaar, from its mosques to its courtyard houses. The traditional architecture of Isfahan has previously been widely analyzed and presented; however, Kazimee’s emphasizes the relationship between place-making and architecture as an ongoing cultural and spatial practice. In particular, he contends that traditional meanings are still apparent in the city’s older urban forms and architecture, and that they remain relevant to its contemporary life.

Perhaps less well-known than Isfahan is the city of Yazd, a marvelous historic settlement with famous *badgirs* (wind-catchers) and gardens at the edge of the desert in Iran. Rafi Samizay, who writes about it here, laments the insensitive modern interventions that have occurred in it, examines some of the main factors that traditionally shaped its urbanism, and proposes a number of methods to restore a balance between socio-cultural and physical concerns and promote a more sustainable future. Unfortunately, the recommendations, while sound, are general in nature, and little indication is given as to how they might be achieved — which may have been beyond the scope of the piece.

The last essay in the volume, by Kazimee, suffers from the same problem. It focuses on preservation strategies in arid regions, looking for a balance between ecological design and community and house form. Nature plays an important role in the author's deliberations, yet only general recommendations are presented for action, and all-important mechanisms for implementation are hardly mentioned. In spite of this, the essay does provide a general framework for considering this type of built environment, making it an apt companion to Samizay's exploration of Yazd.

The above two essays make several parallel recommendations. Both argue that belief in Westernization and the implementation of imported methods of development have undermined local traditions and cultures. Both advocate for ideas of harmony using "time-honored indigenous solutions." They agree that the issue of in-migration needs to be handled sensitively, and that the social and economic gap between the countryside and the city needs to be addressed. New urban settlements should also afford greater access to open and green space, which in traditional configurations was mainly found in private areas such as house courtyards. Both also recognize that people's aspirations have changed, and that cities must provide for modern infrastructure and services. Finally, both consider attention to the historic urban fabric to be a cornerstone for the revitalization of contemporary living environments.

In addition to such contributions by established scholars, the book presents more speculative work derived from design-student studio projects. In one such chapter, Kazimee looks at a possible new model for housing in Kandahar, Afghanistan, where the research and design work aimed at addressing particularities of place. Ideas about continuity and change in a traditional settlement were explored, and a case is made for using traditional models such as the courtyard house to satisfy contemporary needs. The individual designs themselves, however, are only briefly presented.

Another speculative project, described by William Bechhoeffer, concerns the relationship between sustainable development, ecotourism, and historic place in Bamyan, Afghanistan, site of the destroyed monumental Buddhas. The surrounding valley provided the backdrop for a student studio project attempting to discover critical-regionalist narratives (in the Tzonis, LaFavre, Frampton construct) for the

design of different buildings. The resulting designs "engaged students in . . . suggesting principles and approaches" for an interdisciplinary process to "revive and restore Afghanistan's economy and culture." However, one wonders whether this is a forward-looking enterprise.

The volume also includes an essay on cities in Iran by Faranoosh Daneshpanah and S.M. Mousavisade, which looks at the characteristics of the Islamic city there. Here again an effort is made to look at a kit of parts that may give a sense of place identity. As the authors write, "The concepts of 'unity despite plurality' and 'plurality despite unity' [is] an important ideological principle . . . profoundly influencing the works of art and architecture in these cities." Tile patterns supposedly illustrate this. However, they are presented largely in shorthand, and a deeper, less cursory investigation would have been useful.

In "Urban Recovery: The Case of Historic Kabul," Abdul Wasay Najimi and Jolyon Leslie draw upon their experiences with the Aga Khan Trust for Culture's Historic Cities Program (HCP). They emphasize advocacy as a mechanism for urban development action through community participation and management in an attempt to balance short-term interventions with long-term goals. Although this chapter focuses on the urban heritage of cities in Afghanistan, its approaches have been applied more widely by the HCP. It typifies a holistic approach to development in a historic environment and serves as a good case study for those who wish to undertake this kind of work.

Henry Matthews's essay on the Ottoman mosque and *küllüye* (a built complex of different structures) changes scale to examine a particular building type. His examples of how *küllüye* are still being used raises issues of sustainability and reuse of historic buildings. For example, the *imaret* (soup kitchen) of the Suleymaniye Mosque in Istanbul is now a restaurant. Matthews's position is that these buildings can successfully withstand such changes over time.

Salim Elwazini engages in a very different form of speculation in his cross-cultural examination of a "historic context strategy" for developing a sense of geographical place. He looks both at Middle Eastern examples (in Palestine, Jordan and elsewhere) and at examples in the United States (the Greater Powder River Basin in Wyoming and the Route 66 corridor). Although he presents a methodology and tools for examining such divergent environments, it is hard to ascertain how they might work in practice. Nevertheless, the framework is intriguing.

Finally, Ayad Rahmani uses Khaled Hosseini's novel *The Kite Runner* as a point of departure for a discussion of authenticity in an age of globalization. The book uses two characters from the book, Hasan and Amir, to embody the "authentic" and "inauthentic," respectively. The former relates to tradition, history and culture; the latter to modern, imported values. Rahmani then uses these characteristics to talk about architecture and place. The device is a good one, and the place discussed is Dubai (inauthentic) and Sawa

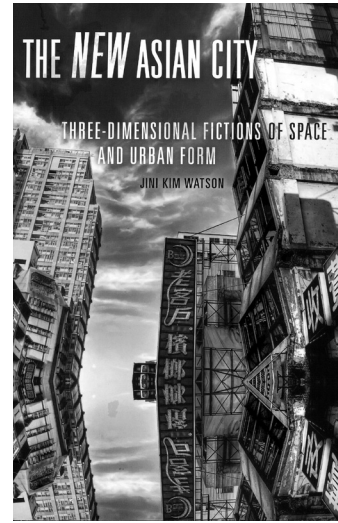
(authentic). This chapter begins to consider what people's aspirations are and how they may be considered in the design of contemporary urban environments. It is an avenue worth exploring further.

I end with an anomaly that occurs in the middle of the volume. Azizi Bahauddin's chapter on the Malay Melaka house is the only one to deal directly with an Islamic setting outside the Middle East and Western Asia. Besides looking at the architectural elements, interiors, and climatic responses of this house type, the author usefully relates it to cultural and religious factors. However, there has been extensive literature on the topic in the past, and the chapter adds little to this discourse, even if it is well presented and useful for readers who are unfamiliar with indigenous architecture in Southeast Asia.

To summarize the above descriptions, one cannot help pointing out how a sense of romanticism pervades the writings and concerns of many of these authors. Yet this "looking back" at traditional models for new design directions remains useful for students and practitioners alike. And the understandings that these chapters propose provide a solid framework of analysis, even though there is a scatter-shot aspect to it. It is good that Kazimee has continued to explore the vernacular and historic environments of Islamic cultures with a number of like-minded scholars. They have given us a useful body of work.

**Hasan-Uddin Khan**  
Roger Williams University

***The New Asian City: Three-Dimensional Fictions of Space and Urban Form.*** Jini Kim Watson. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011. Xi + 312 pp., illus.



Often described as home to "tiger" or "miracle" economies, South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore have long been considered models for Third World development. Jini Kim Watson's *The New Asian City* offers an impressive analysis of spaces and urban forms that challenges such official representations and discourses, and that reaches down to examine the everyday lives of people left out of such success stories.

Two different forms of representation, literature and architecture, are seamlessly integrated in Watson's questioning of "unequal access to, and uneven development of, forms of modernity across the globe" (p.253). While architectural forms give representation to what is conventionally understood as modernity (department stores, railway stations, cafes, etc.) and development (bridges, highrise apartments, hotels, etc.), fiction provides a means for people to imagine and construct their own realities beyond the oppressive present, and so "disrupt [it] by fluid imaginaries and interpretations" (p.95). By exploring such representations of people marginalized by the expansion of global imperialism and capitalism, *The New Asian City* captures otherwise ungraspable spaces of modernity and development in countries that share a history of colonial contradiction and postcolonial desire.

*The New Asian City* should be understood as a project of cross-scale analysis, one which attempts to connect everyday spaces to world systems. Toward this end, it revolves around situating the colonial and postcolonial self in broader social structures. From the Heideggerian notion of "worlding" to *bildungsroman* novels, Watson's analysis focuses on the problematic locations of colonies in the map of global imperialism, and of individuals in the state-led industrializing landscapes of new Asian cities after independence. This not only requires recognizing "how the colonial city is the crucial, interstitial location that gives the global/colonial system its being" (by clearing it to "world" the metropole and global imperialism) (p.44); it also requires exploring the contradictory urban spaces of "triumphant" and "celebratory" development, where the promise of growth hardly reaches down to the people whose labor provided the foundation for underlying new national economies.



*The New Asian City* is divided into three thematic parts: “Colonial Cities,” “Postwar Urbanism,” and “Industrializing Landscapes.” Two transitional chapters between these sections complete the presentation by setting the theoretical framework for the succeeding parts. In “Colonial Cities,” Watson examines colonial literature on Asian cities, to show how Edward Said’s notion of “discrepant modernity” was manifest in the contrasting built environments of colony and metropole. Watson brings three literary works into her discussion here: Yöm Sang-söp’s *Mansejön*, Wu Zhuoliu’s *Orphans of Asia*, and Yi Sang’s *The Wings*. The three novels represent the discrepant modernities experienced and felt most acutely in colonial urban spaces. Watson contends that such works, which fundamentally differed from their Western counterparts, expressed frustration with the reality of life in colonial cities, where the colonized were given unequal access to their own spaces, and even to “the promising surface of colonial modernity” (p.60). That said, Watson’s main argument remains that “all the discrepancies, longings, confusions, and hopes found to circulate through and around the colonial city would actually be the most authentic expression of so-called modern life” (p.85).

The second part of the book, “Postwar Urbanism,” investigates the contradictory and exploitative nature of the supposedly successful experiences and experiments of new Asian cities in the postwar years: export-oriented industrialization and ceaseless urban renewal. While colonies were seen as sites of raw-material extraction and cheap labor, with little opportunity to develop a true urban culture, the postcolonial spaces of Asian cities were imbued with the promise of (and obsession with) “vertical” development at the cost of migrant and female labor. This metaphor of “growth” or “development” is critical to Watson’s analysis of *bildungsroman* novels (“novels of formation”) set in new Asian cities — the content and form of which differs from their Western counterparts, in which individuals are expected to reach reconciliation with society. If *bildungsroman* literature is concerned with personal “growth,” Watson argues this takes on far more complex meanings in postcolonial contexts. The irreconcilability of individuals with society in the new Asian city is best expressed in Cho Se-hüi’s novella *A Little Ball Launched by a Dwarf*. Here, the dwarf protagonist, whose unregistered shack is about to be demolished, is gradually led to his dispossession (and death) in striking contrast to the growth of *chaebols* (state-backed conglomerates) exemplified by gleaming highrise buildings.

The final section of Watson’s book, “Industrializing Landscapes,” provides the most interesting and illuminating discussion of new Asian cities. Evoking images of bridges, railways and roads as an infrastructure of movement and mobility, she examines Singaporean poetry, Taiwanese New Cinema, and Korea’s Minjung literature. These genres not only reveal the violent nature of infrastructure-obsessed urbanism, but they also capture new communal landscapes, in

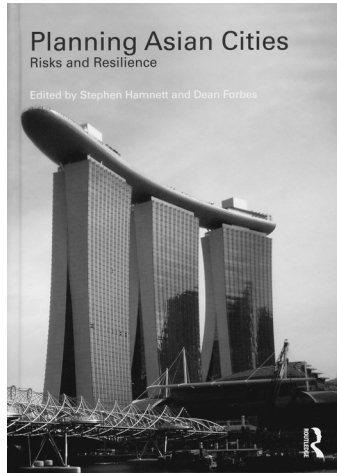
a truly Benjaminian sense, created in the midst of ruins and devastation. As in Hou Hsiao-Hsien’s films, Arthur Yap’s poetry, and Hwang Sök-yöng’s novels, the industrialization of new Asian cities has caused nature to be “subjective to the tidy imperatives of the productive state” (p.190). And in these cities people have been displaced to make way for the circulation of capital in the service of developmentalist economies. Though ephemeral, Watson nevertheless writes that “the road itself is the place to find community and meaning” (p.248). People are offered “the paradoxical, shared experience of being motionless while on the road, the concrete experience of participating in, and being sidelined by,” the “galloping development” of new Asian cities (p.223). The most striking feature of this book is Watson’s keen observations about such new spaces of solidarity and commonality that have emerged out of the very spaces of fragmentation. This is why this book should be seen as “new” in comparison to other accounts of Asian cities.

Despite the author’s commitment to comparative analysis and emphasis on the interrelatedness of Asian cities, the book does fail to fully explore interreferencing practices between them. As many others have noted, Singapore has become a point of reference and emulation for other aspiring Asian cities. Also, the complex relationship between South Korea and Taiwan during and after the Cold War should be given due attention. In this regard, one needs to ask how individual new Asian cities have perceived and interreferenced each other, both in spatial and literary forms — though this may require further research. Still, this book is surely a meaningful contribution to both postcolonial studies and the study of Asian cities, one which challenges the univalent discussion of modernity, expanding the scope and content of both fields and recasting the notion of “region” as a unit of analysis. Furthermore, *The New Asian City* certainly provides a way to reflect on developments in other urban regions of Asia, such as Shanghai and Bangalore, where the colonial past is also conjured up in a postcolonial present shaped by the allure of the future.

**Sujin Eom**

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*Planning Asian Cities: Risks and Resilience*. Edited by Stephen Hamnett and Dean Forbes. Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2011. 330 pp., b&w illus.



*Planning Asian Cities: Risks and Resilience* is a timely review of contemporary planning history and recent urban development in eleven major cities in East Asia (Tokyo, Seoul, Beijing, Shanghai, Taipei and Hong Kong) and Southeast Asia (Manila, Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, Singapore and Jakarta). To assess the present health and future prospects of these cities, the editors use a lens of

urban “resilience,” one which takes into account both the risks the cities face and the mechanisms they have adopted to respond to them.

Countries in Asia tend to be macrocephalic, with a single dominant capital city or metropolitan region that exerts a disproportionate influence over the rest of the country and its external linkages. The twin forces of industrialization and rural-urban migration have contributed to the rise of these Asian megacities. Such cities represent an unprecedented phenomenon that is not fully understood, and this book is a welcome addition to this emerging field.

What the authors mean by “resilience” is the capacity of a city to meet the challenge of potential crises — environmental, economic, political, demographic, etc. They argue that this involves adopting an appropriate mix of urban policies, governance structures, planning methods, and social initiatives. The book thus reflects the recent, gradual shift away from the notion that a “petri-dish perfect” type of sustainable development. Rather, it espouses the idea that cities need to constantly adapt and manage the impact of shifting risks in an unbalanced and uncertain world.

There are many risks faced by Asian megacities. For example, the editors point out, many are situated in low-lying areas around the Pacific Rim where they are exposed to natural hazards (such as flooding as a result of seismic or volcanic activity). Such danger is only exacerbated by poor environmental management. Asian megacities are also at profound risk from the impacts of climate change such as agricultural disruption and sea-level rise. The specter of terrorist attack is also present, as is the impact of the increasingly globalized world economy, to which Asian countries have become inextricably linked (as demonstrated by a series of recent economic shocks).

Attempting to make some sense of these issues and the capacity of Asian cities to respond — the scope of the book — is both an ambitious and daunting task. Not only are the issues wide ranging, but the eleven selected cities are quite heterogeneous in their planning histories. They also face very different challenges — even in those cases where they may be located in the same country.

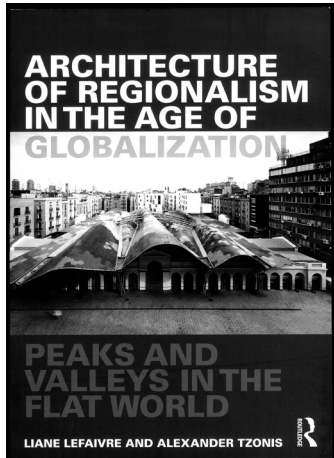
The editors have wisely opted to structure the book to comprise twelve chapters. First comes an introduction by the editors that outlines the main themes and issues and draws out the pertinent aspects of the discussion on the selected cities. This is followed by a chapter on each city, written by a eminent urban planning scholar with knowledge of local conditions. Like other edited publications, the major challenge here is to tie the case studies together within a reasonably cogent framework. In this regard, the editors should be praised for eliciting chapters that take the same approach: each provides an overview of planning history in its respective city to provide background and underlying context, evaluates the city’s evolving role as a “world city” and the impact this has on people and place, and analyzes the risks and challenges faced by the city and the strategies being developed to meet them. However, since each author was not limited to a strict template, differences in focus and writing style inevitably emerge. As a result, this is perhaps not a book to be read at one sitting; nor will its chapters probably be read in the order in which they are presented. Since each chapter is self-contained, I suspect most readers, after reading the introductory chapter, will pick and choose among the rest, reading those that interest them, and accessing the others only when needed.

On the whole, the book presents a commendable survey of the current situation in the eleven cities vis-à-vis urban resilience. Hamnett and Forbes’s opening chapter also provides an excellent introduction to this complex theme, as well as a succinct summary of the issues raised in each of its succeeding case-studies. What is clear from this discussion is that there should be great urgency today to increase the capacity of urban systems to manage impending shocks, and that the fundamental role of political leadership should be to enable urban planners to get on with this job. Unless this is achieved, Asian cities will become increasingly vulnerable to future crises.

I look forward to a second edition of this book, perhaps in ten years time, that evaluates how the resilience capacity of each of the surveyed cities has or has not improved.

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*Architecture of Regionalism in the Age of Globalization: Peaks and Valleys in the Flat World.* Liane Lefaivre and Alexander Tzonis. Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2012. 232 pp.; illus.



The notion of critical regionalism first appeared in print in the early 1980s, introduced by the authors of this book, Liane Lefaivre and Alexander Tzonis. Broadly speaking, it embodies an approach to design which gives priority to the ecological, social and cultural identity of the specific sites to which building projects belong, rethinking architecture through the lens of the region.

This contextual concern is combined with the Kantian concept of “critics,” which stresses a responsibility to examine one’s own tools and assumptions. The use of the concept of regionalism is thus distinguished from its unself-conscious use by previous generations. If understood this way, regionalism is an approach to the future of the built environment complementary to critical historical inquiry.

In the preface to this volume Tzonis (a professor at Tsinghua University and professor emeritus at the Technical University of Delft) and Lefaivre (chair of Architectural History and Theory at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna and a research associate at the Technical University of Delft) clearly define the object of this study along with its tasks. In the process, they make reference to their previous writings: *Die Frage des Regionalismus* (1981); *Why Critical Regionalism Today?* (1990); *Tropical Architecture: Critical Regionalism in The Age of Globalization* (2001); and *Critical Regionalism: Architecture and Identity in a Globalized World* (2003). The book is in debt to this series, especially the last title, but it differs from it because it contains no section of case studies. Rather, this volume enlarges the theoretical apparatus, presenting itself as an introductory book on the theory and history of regionalist architecture, in an effort to examine the degree to which architectural regionalism may provide a vital alternative to globalization.

The book is structured through a discussion of different instances of architectural or cultural regionalism, which follow one another in chronological order. This is intended to allow regionalism to emerge as an aspect of identity that may serve as a counterbalance to global systems. The first chapter traces this dichotomy back to the Classical era, especially to Vitruvius. The second focuses on the Casa dei Crescenzi, built in Rome 1,200 years later. The next two chapters shift

to an investigation of the garden villas of papal Rome during the Renaissance and their imitation around Europe — especially in France and England at the dawn of the eighteenth century — as attempts to capture the particular identity of the region. The fifth chapter looks into the English picturesque, French *physiocratie*, and German regionalism, recalling Rousseau and Goethe; the sixth highlights the situation in France and Germany at the end of the eighteenth century; the seventh examines the figures of Pugin, Ruskin and Viollet-le-Duc; and the eighth looks at the connection between globalization and regionalism in Europe in the second part of the nineteenth century.

After this European section, the book turns to an examination of the world situation in the twentieth century. Chapters nine and ten explore the North American contribution from the 1930s to the 1950s, centering on the influence of Lewis Mumford (who the authors knew well), the New York Museum of Modern Art, and the main architects of the period. The final two chapters present a chronological overview of regionalist architectures from across the world.

Since the book is sparsely illustrated, with its few black-and-white images concentrated in the later chapters, it requires an expert reader who is able to call to mind the innumerable projects the authors refer to. Nevertheless, a readership of scholars might be disappointed by the book’s structure, which jumps in time and space from one example to the next, leaving unexplored fragments in the middle. The result is that some arguments are very well developed, while others seem very synthetic, and the link between the different pieces is sometimes weak.

The investigation of architectural regionalism goes hand in hand with the story of cultural and political movements which have participated in the regionalist debate. Ironically, this constitutes one of the main contributions of the book, but it also represents a critical difficulty, since the space given to the historical events is out of proportion to the space left for the discussion of individual works of architecture. The authors seem to prefer the former, avoiding deep engagement with the regionalist features of the projects they mention. In this reviewer’s estimation, the book could also have benefited from an introduction to the regionalist lexicon, one that might have stressed the etymological difference between the terms “regional” and “regionalist.” This might have revealed the inner limit of the concept of regionalism, which can only be defined through approximation, not directly.

Overall, the book deserves credit for observing regionalism within a vast critical historical perspective, comparing architecture to cultural and social phenomena. The authors believe that architectural regionalism is a function of political and cultural movements, and they are clearly experts on this topic. For a researcher interested in architectural regionalism, the book provides an interesting and valuable resource, offering new ideas for study. Regionalism emerges as an approach concerned with long-term processes, not mere

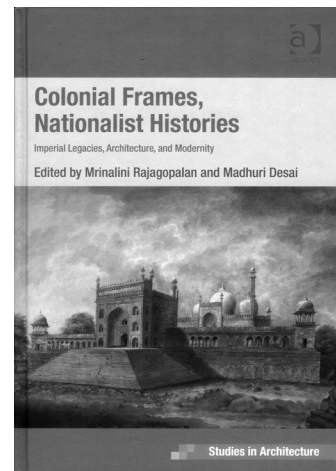


forms. Over the centuries, however, this focus has changed, merging with an environmental and ecological view of the world. Thus, in our time it addresses specific problems and priorities different from those of previous eras.

**Elisa Brusegan**

*IUAV University of Venice, Italy*

***Colonial Frames, Nationalist Histories: Imperial Legacies, Architecture, and Modernity.*** Edited by Mrinalini Rajagopalan and Madhuri Desai. Farnham, Surrey; and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012. xviii + 317 pp., ill., maps.



*Colonial Frames, Nationalist Histories* is an ambitious collection of essays that adds much to the growing body of scholarship on global histories of modern architecture and urbanism. Many of the essays in this volume will be welcome not only by historians of the built environment, but by social and cultural historians of empire, historians of nineteenth-century material and visual culture, and art historians

interested in the representation of landscape through photography and illustration. The editors have cast a wide net in an attempt to tease out the ways that the British, and to a lesser extent the French and American, colonial projects shaped the institutions, forms and spaces of a global modernism. One of the innovations that the editors bring to this investigation is to underscore the dialectical character of the colonial encounters, nationalist imaginings, and postcolonial self-fashioning through which modern architecture was forged. By assigning a more vital role to the interconnections between metropole and colony, this collection does much to challenge modernism's dominant narrative of diffusion, which privileges the European avant-garde as a driving force.

The ten essays here are organized into three sections. The first examines colonial taxonomies and the epistemological foundations of the nation by looking at regimes of knowledge that circulated between metropole and colony. Drawing on nineteenth-century Indian case studies, the three chapters here look at how the architectural profession, travelers' accounts, and the technologies of printing and photography shaped the formal creation of knowledge and its institutions and the circulation of images and modes of viewing the colony. Bernard S. Cohn's *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge* is a frequent, if sometimes unacknowledged, touchstone in these chapters, which affirm and extend his argument that modern forms of knowledge enabled the British to classify, categorize and bind the vast social world of their colonies, in the interest of controlling it.

The second section looks broadly at what the editors describe as "Imperial Designs and the Nation's Fragments." The sustained focus of the first section, bound together by common regional and historical interests, becomes much

more diffuse in this section, whose chapters (on the museum, coffee houses, and urban planning in Paris, Washington, D.C., London, and Hawai'i) interrogate the ways that racial and ethnic difference have been historically managed through architectural form.

The third section, "Global Vocabularies and Local Products," however, returns to the tightly curated pace that the editors set at the beginning of the book, with essays that draw primarily on Southeast Asian case studies to examine how racial classifications created during the colonial era were appropriated and sustained by new nationalist regimes. J.S. Furnivall's work on parallel societies informs much of the writing here, but the authors extend his inquiry and offer a new perspective on port cities, which have typically been characterized as cosmopolitan enclaves of modernity.

The majority of essays in this volume are inspiring in their use of solid historical methodologies and in-depth archival research as the foundation for critical analyses of visual and architectural sources. William Glover's chapter on the conjoined genealogy of the architectural professions in Britain and India makes an important contribution not only to discussions of the forms of knowledge through which empire was furthered and sustained in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but also to the ways that the autonomous discipline of architecture was affected by larger political and social changes in the world. Moreover, three of the chapters in the third section of book work well together to demonstrate how categories like race were not only historically constructed through the built environment during the colonial period, but were adopted by new nationalist regimes. Each of these chapters nicely unsettles earlier scholarship on colonial cities and architecture through historical and archival excavations.

The first of these three chapters, by Amona Pieris, provocatively examines changing ideas of plural citizenship in Singapore during the colonial and postcolonial periods. As such, it opens up new ways of thinking about colonial urban planning beyond the accepted model of the dichotomous settler/native cities. Imran bin Tajudeen's essay then builds on Pieris's argument by demonstrating the ways that the neatly racialized typologies of the shophouse and the "*kampung* house" in Singapore and Melaka belie a more complex, heterogeneous history. He points out how nationalist regimes then extended the colonial project of spatializing race through urban planning and architectural preservation. In the third chapter in the series, Cecilia Chu unpacks the racialized character of the shophouse typology. Using legal documents, maps, and building plans from the colonial period, she examines how it was deployed in the building of Hong Kong into a modern international city. These three chapters will be of great interest to scholars of race, urban studies, port cities, and preservation and planning.

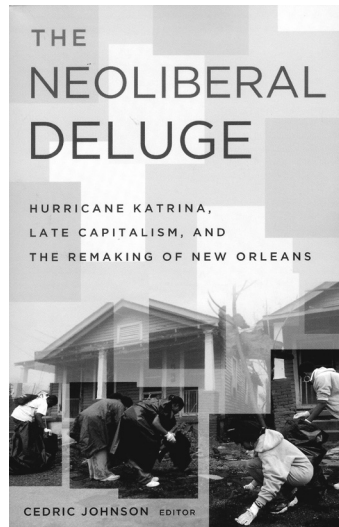
Mrinalini Rajagopalan's insightful excavation of literary and visual representations of the Kashmiri Gate in Delhi rais-

es questions not only about her intended subject but about writing histories of global modern architecture in general. Reading Walter Benjamin's characterization of architecture's collective reception in a state of distraction as "uncharitable," Rajagopalan argues that technologies of reproduction transformed the Kashmiri Gate from "mere architecture to a work of art" (pp.90–91). While this analysis of Benjamin's foundational essay on the mechanical reproducibility of the work of art doesn't allow a consideration of the ways in which such technologies made possible the serialization and dissemination of monuments and relics that were taken up as logos of empire and nation, it does point to a crucial problem that architectural history has inherited from the discipline of art history. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, quotidian and accessible buildings were valuable to political regimes but not to an art history that was driven by a canon that privileged the avant-garde. As the work in this book demonstrates, examining architecture that lies outside of this canon of exceptionalism seems much more important to understanding modernism as a global phenomenon than arguing for the inclusion of additional monuments in an expanded canon.

While this book furthers discussion of race and the built environment, the use of the term "elite" in several chapters points to a lack of more incisive class analysis. A shorthand invented by the political scientists Vilfredo Pareto and Gaetano Mosca in the late nineteenth century, the term "elite" was originally intended to describe those who had power by virtue of merit, not birth (like aristocrats and noblemen), and who controlled positions within longer-term corporate hierarchies. Today, the term seems inadequate for discussing the sometimes competing and sometimes mutually sustaining relationships between different classes in the colonial political economy. A clearer understanding of the ways that a modern comprador class and new, migrant forms of labor circulated in the nineteenth- and twentieth-century world building economy could further illuminate the relationships between the colonial project and the project of modernization.

*Lawrence Chua*  
*Hamilton College*

*The Neoliberal Deluge: Hurricane Katrina, Late Capitalism, and the Remaking of New Orleans.* Edited by Cedric Johnson. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011. 456 pp., 16 b&w photos, 3 tables.



In the *Neoliberal Deluge*, editor Cedric Johnson and collaborators critically examine Hurricane Katrina's 2005 devastation of New Orleans through the lens of neoliberalism. As Johnson argues, "There were many dimensions of this disaster that were not meteorologic at all but rather a consequence of human agency and ideological prerogatives" (p.xix). The book's main argument hinges on this assertion, and it positions

neoliberal governance as the main channel through which these prerogatives were revealed. Of particular concern is neoliberalism's focus on individual and corporate gain, free-market enterprise, privatization of government services, and limited government.

Johnson and the individual chapter authors argue that public officials at all levels supported these ideals, and thus government's failure to act quickly was not surprising given decades of public policies and actions facilitating neoliberalism. They further suggest that government's retrenchment, combined with heightened private-sector participation, created the opportunity for nonprofit organizations to fill the void in social-service provision — disparagingly referred to as "grassroots privatization" or "humanitarian-corporate complex" (p.xxxii). As a result, those residents most in need — the urban poor — suffered acute short-term consequences. These were vividly portrayed in the media at the time, and they are examined here by Paul A. Passavant, who details the lack of public services and government response in the weeks following the hurricane. However, longer-term effects also appeared during the rebuilding efforts. This book shines a spotlight on this "actually existing neoliberalism" (p.xxiv) through case studies across multiple issue areas, including housing, education and immigration.

The book uses an interdisciplinary approach, drawing scholars from political science, history, sociology, geography, race/ethnic studies, and communications as well as science, technology and society studies. The volume contains four core sections of three chapters each: "Governance," "Urbanity," "Planning," and "Inequality." The range of topics is to be commended, with several chapters that could be stand-alone

readings for graduate- or undergraduate-level courses. A noteworthy chapter that challenges common conceptions of New Orleans along a black/white racial binary is Nicole Trujillo-Pagan's depiction of Latino construction workers and the challenges they continue to face in terms of worker safety, immigration status, and living environments. Another chapter by Adrienne Dixon draws out the complexities of school closures as a result of the disaster and the subsequent public policy of looking to charter schools as the predominant mode of rebuilding. Dixon argues that families were left with fewer education options while they also searched for limited affordable housing, because the new schools were highly selective as to the students admitted. Two chapters (by Johnson and Barbara L. Allen) also focus on new single-family homebuilding spearheaded by the private and nonprofit sectors. These highlight the gains that were made, yet they detail a more problematic effect: "such projects obviously entail an ethical commitment to those in need but [they] simultaneously promote market-centric approaches to disaster relief and seek to manage inequality through the inculcation of neoliberal technologies" (p.71).

The book makes some mention of poor urban residents trapped in New Orleans without proper transport. Given the critical nature of this issue in the days and hours immediately before and after the hurricane struck, the volume could have been strengthened through a deeper engagement with transport planning as well as emergency services planning. In addition, it is uneven when it comes to its presentation of research methods and data sources. Thus, in some chapters it was unclear what evidence was used, and how it was collected. Lastly, a final chapter or epilogue would have been useful, setting out the editor's concluding thoughts and helping tie the preceding chapters together. This could also have included Johnson's visions, or recommendations, for the future, to help satisfy readers who may be left wondering "What next?" This is especially true in light of the quote from Mark Purcell's *Recapturing Democracy: Neoliberalization and the Struggle for Alternative Urban Futures* (New York: Routledge, 2008), used to introduce chapter 6 by John Arena (p.152):

*Those who oppose neoliberalization must do more than merely point to its contradictions. . . . We must also find and make known the resistance already taking place. . . . We must understand and learn from their experiences, and we must contribute to their success.*

**Karen Trapenberg Frick**  
University of California, Berkeley



# Conferences and Events

## UPCOMING CONFERENCES AND SYMPOSIA

**“Palimpsest: The Layered Object,” Savannah, GA: February 28–March 1, 2014.** The Fifth Biennial Art History Symposium is sponsored by the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD). The media, techniques and materials of art-making are comprised of layers of knowledge, and the art object changes with the build-up of successive layers or with the erosion of material over time. Both tangible and virtual paint covers canvas; earth subsumes artifacts; weather and environmental effects leave traces; and new layers of thought replace older conventions. The event will explore the connection between aesthetic inscriptions, erasures, and related historical conditions of media, whether drawing, film, incunabula, painting, print, sculpture, textiles, architecture or urban space. For more information: <http://www.scad.edu/event/fifth-biennial-art-history-symposium-2014>.

**“World City Forum,” Amsterdam, Netherlands: March 12–14, 2014.** Both existing and future cities will need smart and innovative technologies to help them achieve long-term sustainability goals. The conference is intended to help cities devise strategies to ensure a brighter future for their residents in terms of clean energy, transportation, food, water, and waste disposal. For more information: [www.worldsmartcapital.net/worldcityforum](http://www.worldsmartcapital.net/worldcityforum).

**“Place, (Dis)Place and Citizenship,” Detroit, MI: March 20–22, 2014.** The Eleventh Annual Conference in Citizenship Studies is organized by Wayne State University’s Center for the Study of Citizenship. Scholars from around the world will gather to discuss issues of location, from nation-state citizenship to community engagement, from local and Detroit-related topics with national and international implications to national and international topics that have local implications. For more information: <http://clasweb.clas.wayne.edu/citizenship/CFP2014>.

**“Urban Equity in Development — Cities for Life,” Medellín, Columbia: April 5–11, 2014.** Online registration will close March 16, 2014. The Seventh World Urban Forum is sponsored by UN-HABITAT. The City of Medellín, host of the forum, endorses the idea that “Equity in Development” can be operationalized at the urban level by the “Cities for Life” concept. This concept, both aspirational and practical, nourishes hopes for a more equitable, socially inclusive world. The Forum aims to identify old and new factors that help promote equity; actors who trigger positive change; and strategies to use and ways finance them. It will also look at the specific roles that territory, institutions, economy, and social, cultural and environmental factors play in the transformation of cities. For more information: <http://www.unhabitat.org/content.asp?typeid=19&catid=767&cid=12344>.

**“International Conference on Conservation of Stone and Earthen Architecture,” Gongju, Republic of Korea: May 20–23, 2014.** This conference will be hosted by Kongju National University and sponsored by ICOMOS-ISCS, the International Scientific Committee for Stone. It will provide a forum for scientists, conservators, owners of cultural-heritage properties, and other experts to focus on scientific and technological matters related to cultural preservation, conservation, and the restoration of stone and earthen heritage. For more information: [http://iscarsah.icomos.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=83&Itemid=136](http://iscarsah.icomos.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=83&Itemid=136).

**“22nd Annual Congress for the New Urbanism,” Buffalo, NY: June 4–7, 2014.** Sponsored by the Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU), this event will gather members from around the world to discuss development practices and public policies, learn from recent innovative work, and advance new initiatives to transform communities. The event will focus on New Urbanist solutions dedicated to the restoration of existing urban centers, the reconfiguration of formless sprawl into real neighborhoods and diverse districts, the conservation of natural lands, and the preservation of our built legacy. For more information: <http://www.cnu21.org/congress>.

**“Facing an Unequal World: Challenges for Urban Sociology,” Yokohama, Japan: July 13–19, 2014.** Sponsored by the International Sociological Association (ISA), this conference will offer an exchange of multi-, inter-, and transdisciplinary work, with the objective of encouraging debate and analysis needed to surmount inequality in the twenty-first century and stimulate public-policy proposals committed to social justice, equality and inclusion. For more information: <http://www.isa-sociology.org/congress2014/#>.

## RECENT CONFERENCES AND SYMPOSIA

**“Vernacular Architecture International Conference CIAV2013,” Vila Nova de Cerveira, Portugal: October 16–20, 2013.** This international conference, organized by the International Scientific Committee for Vernacular Architecture (ICOMOS-CIAV), the Escola Superior Gallaecia, and UNESCO-WHC, gathered experts from two disciplinary areas: earthen architecture and vernacular heritage. For more information: <http://www.esg.pt/ciav2013/index.php/en/>.

**“Filling the Gaps: World Heritage and the Twentieth Century,” Chandigarh, India: October 3–4, 2013.** Organized by the Chitkara School of Planning and Architecture at Chitkara University, this conference promoted understanding of the significance twentieth-century heritage (not only its physical and visual attributes but also its historical, cultural and social dimensions) within the framework of the World Heritage regime, with a focus on the Asia-Pacific region. For more information: <http://icomos-isc20c.org/id15.html>.

**“INTER[SECTIONS]: A Conference on Architecture, City and Cinema,” Porto, Portugal: September 11–13, 2013.** This international conference at the School of Architecture at the University of Porto provided a multidisciplinary debate on the relation between urban space, architecture, and the moving image. The event was organized around the following topics: Urban Cinema, City Symphonies, Space and Politics in Cinema, Spatial Identity on Screen, Spatial Narratives, and Architect(ure)s in Film. For more information: <http://www.rupturasilenciosa.com/INTERSECTIONS>.

**“Cities in Europe, Cities in the World,” Lisbon, Portugal: September 3–4, 2014.** The Twelfth International Conference on Urban History, sponsored by the European Association for Urban History, explored the circulation of knowledge and urban spatial practices from a comparative perspective. For more information: <http://www.eauh2014.fcsh.unl.pt/index.php?conference=conference&schedConf=eauh2014>.

**“CIPA 2013 Symposium: Recording, Documentation and Cooperation for Cultural Heritage,” Strasbourg, France: September 2–6, 2013.** The International Committee for Documentation of Cultural Heritage (CIPA) hosted this international symposium to convene key international figures in cultural-heritage documentation and conservation. For more information: <http://www.cipa2013.org/>.

## CALLS FOR PAPERS

**“The Production of Ornament,” Leeds, U.K.: March 21–22, 2014. Deadline: December 13, 2013.** This two-day conference seeks to explore various ways ornament may be regarded as productive of objects and sites. How might the technologies, techniques and materials of ornament be related to the conception and transformation of modes of object-making? How might ornament be understood to inform its objects, disrupting the spatial categories of “surface” and “structure” and temporal models in which ornament “follows” making? What are the relations between ornament and representation, and what is at stake in the conventional oppositions between these categories? What are the roles of ornament in larger dynamics of copying, hybridization and appropriation between things? In what ways have practices and thinking on ornament staged cultural encounters and engendered larger epistemological and social models? The conference will explore the production of ornament across a broad range of historical and geographical contexts. Proposals are invited from researchers and postgraduates working in any discipline, as well as practitioners, conservators and curators. For more information: <http://www.sah.org/jobs-and-careers/other-opportunities/2013/10/11/cfp-the-production-of-ornament-%28leeds-march-21-22%29>.

**“Society of Architectural Historians 68th Annual Conference,” Chicago, IL: April 15–19, 2014. Call for session proposals deadline January 15, 2014.** SAH will offer 36 paper sessions over two days that will cover topics across all time periods and styles. Sessions may be theoretical, methodological, thematic, interdisciplinary, pedagogical, revisionist or documentary in premise and have broadly conceived or more narrowly focused subjects. Sessions that embrace cross-cultural, transnational, and/or non-Western topics are particularly welcome. In every case, the subject should be clearly defined in critical and historiographic terms, and should be substantiated by a distinct body of either established or emerging scholarship. For more information: <http://www.sah.org/conferences-and-programs/2015-conference-chicago>.

**“The Value of Housing,” York, U.K.: April 15–17, 2014. Call for papers deadline January 31, 2014.** Papers are invited for the Housing Studies Association’s annual conference from academics and practitioners in housing and related disciplines. Papers should focus on one or more of three main themes: the value of housing welfare; a discussion of who is best placed to judge the value of housing; and the value of housing to the national economy. For more information: [www.housing-studies-association.org](http://www.housing-studies-association.org).

# Whose Tradition?

IASTE 2014 CONFERENCE • KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA • UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

Past IASTE conferences have called on scholars to consider tradition's relationship to development, utopia, and most recently, myth. In response, scholars have advanced multiple perspectives regarding the construction of traditions in space and place. These discussions necessarily involve the dimension of time. Utopia implies the construction of a future ideal, whether religious or philosophical, while myth attempts to discover the origins of history, whether in the imagination or in reality. While myth usually invokes an invented past and utopia imagines an alternative future, the dimension of time is paramount. Thus, traditions are revealed never to be the static legacy of the past, but rather a project for its dynamic reinterpretation in the service of the present and the future. To understand how traditions are tied to notions of time and space, it is thus important to consider their subjectivity, authorship, and power. Behind the construction or deconstruction of any tradition also lies the subject, whose interests in the present are often hidden. To reveal this process of agency, one may ask: tradition, by whom?

In examining themes of authorship and subjectivity, this conference will seek to uncover in what manner, for what reason, by whom, to what effect, and during what intervals traditions have been

deployed with regard to the built environment. Our current period of globalization has led to the flexible reinterpretation of traditions via the mass media for reasons of power and profit. A proliferation of environments, for example, adopt traditional forms of one place and period in a completely different contextual setting, while new design traditions may privilege image over experience. At the same time, the advent of new mobile technologies with the power to compress and distort traditional configurations of space and time has allowed for the flourishing of new, empowering practices. Such practices have led to new traditions of urban resistance and uprisings that travel fluidly between such diverse locales as São Paulo and Istanbul, Madrid and Cairo, and give voice to certain populations previously excluded. Questions of power, the other, and changing configurations of time and space will open up discussions of the ways in which traditional practices shape the histories and futures of built environments.

As in past IASTE conferences, scholars and practitioners from architecture, architectural history, art history, anthropology, archeology, folklore, geography, history, planning, sociology, urban studies, and related disciplines are invited to submit papers that address one of the following tracks:

## TRACK I. WHO: POWER AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF TRADITIONS

Questioning ownership and authority of dominant traditions deployed in the making of space is an essential first step. The historical development of any tradition displays patterns of selection that either negate or celebrate certain forms and practices. Which narratives become privileged in spatial practices and to what end? What are the politics of 'choosing' traditions, manufacturing or creating them? Further, what is omitted, negated, or silenced in the interest of those in power at any moment? Thus, to understand

the transmission of traditions between generations, it is essential to examine linkages between tradition, authority, and power. Papers in this track should address traditions that are 'produced' and transmitted or deployed across time and place. Papers should consider spaces and practices that have been created, adopted, or invoked by certain social groups and/or governments for specific purposes.

## TRACK II. WHAT: PLACE AND THE ANCHORING OF TRADITIONS

In order to examine how traditions are manifest in space and time, it is important to consider which versions, particularities, or specificities of tradition emerge and are subsequently anchored in specific places. Understanding where traditions are established in built form and practice is equally as important as understanding whose traditions are privileged. For example, Southeast Asia and other parts of the world are witnessing a revival of urban agriculture which will no doubt influence the future urban form of our cities. How can new settlements incorporate the demands of food security

and urban agriculture within their complex infrastructure and eco-systems? In Track II, papers should actively explore hegemonic spatial practices and their alternatives that either adopt or challenge and contest standard configurations of power and authority. For example, how have disadvantaged groups left out of dominant spatial traditions created their own traditions? How are such these spatial practices transmitted? And how do they subvert established norms, allowing new voices to enter and gain legitimacy? Papers in this track should explore how traditions are anchored in place.

## TRACK III. WHERE: MOBILITY AND THE REIMAGINATION OF TRADITIONS

In a rapidly changing postglobal world, traditions cease to be fixed or attached to given places for very long. The mobile nature of contemporary traditions can negate past forms of ownership and authorship that assumed a top-down power structure that privileged an elite. The celebrations and ways of one culture may be popularized through adoption by others. In many cases, this results in commodification and a loss of original referents. In others, a tradition common to neighboring geographies and communities may be strategically claimed by a distinct subaltern or minority

group for political purposes. Technologies of reproducibility, such as photography, radio, film, TV, and advertising, have undermined the place-based nature of traditions, allowing flexible interpretations as well as the creation of new meanings. In fact, the mass media have created their own traditions. The advent of the internet and wireless media has further facilitated new interpretations of traditions, with flexible temporalities and places. Papers in this track should consider the emergence and establishment of new mobile traditions and their possibility for both disruption and foreclosure.



## CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

### SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Please refer to our website <http://iaste.berkeley.edu/> for detailed instructions on abstract submissions. A one-page abstract of 500 words and a one-page CV are required. For further inquiries, please email the IASTE Coordinator at [iaste@berkeley.edu](mailto:iaste@berkeley.edu).

Proposals for complete panels of four to five papers are also welcome. Please indicate the track in which the panel fits. Panel submissions must include an overall abstract as well as abstracts and CVs from all proposed speakers. IASTE may accept the panel as a whole or only accept individual abstracts and place them in appropriate tracks.

All papers must be written and presented in English. Following a blind peer-review process, papers may be accepted for presentation at the conference and/or for publication in the IASTE Working Paper Series.

Contributors whose abstracts are accepted must preregister for the conference, pay the registration fee of \$425 (which includes a special discounted IASTE membership), and prepare a full-length paper of 20–25 double-spaced pages. Registered students may qualify for a reduced registration fee of \$225 (which includes a special discounted IASTE membership). All participants must be IASTE members. Please note that expenses associated with hotel accommodations, travel, and additional excursions are not covered by the registration fee and must be paid directly to the hotel or designated travel agent. The registration fee covers the conference program, conference abstracts, and access to all conference activities, receptions, keynote panels, and a walking tour.

### CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

Deadline for abstract submission  
**FEBRUARY 17, 2014**

Acceptance letter for abstracts/conference poster  
**MAY 5, 2014**

Deadline for pre-registration and receipt of papers for possible registration in the Working Paper Series  
**JULY 14, 2014**

Notification of acceptance in Working Paper Series  
**OCTOBER 6, 2014**

Conference program  
**DECEMBER 14–17, 2014**

Post-Conference Tours  
**DECEMBER 18–19, 2014**

### CONFERENCE ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

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**Mark Gillem**, IASTE Director and Conference Chair, University of Oregon

**Rahinah Ibrahim**, Local Conference Director, Dean, Faculty of Design & Architecture, Universiti Putra Malaysia

**Priscilla Minaise**, IASTE Coordinator, University of California, Berkeley

**Tomi Laine Clark**, IASTE Coordinator, University of California, Berkeley

**Azmariana Azman**, Local Conference Coordinator, Universiti Putra Malaysia

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### CONFERENCE SUPPORTERS

Universiti Putra Malaysia, Malaysian Tourism Promotion Board, Ministry of Education Malaysia, Perbadanan Putrajaya

### CONFERENCE SITE AND ACCOMMODATIONS

The IASTE 2014 Conference will be held in the Serdang Campus of Universiti Putra Malaysia at the Faculty of Design and Architecture. Food will be catered and provided to participants during the conference duration.

A special IASTE rate has been arranged at the Mines Wellness Hotel <http://www.mineswellnesshotel.com.my>

### CONFERENCE TRIPS

Participants can also opt for several tours, including two post-conference trips and one half-day trip as follows: Putrajaya (half day), Kuala Lumpur and Melaka (one day), and Borneo Tropical Forest Excursion (two days).

### INQUIRIES

Please use the following information when making inquiries regarding the conference.

### MAILING ADDRESS

#### IASTE 2014

Center for Environmental Design Research  
 390 Wurster Hall, #1839  
 University of California  
 Berkeley, CA 94720-1839

**Phone:** 510.642.6801

**Fax:** 510.643.5571

**E-mail:** [iaste@berkeley.edu](mailto:iaste@berkeley.edu)

**Website:** <http://iaste.berkeley.edu>

# Guide for Preparation of Manuscripts

## 1. GENERAL

The editors invite readers to submit manuscripts. Please send all initial submissions to *TDSR* Editor Nezar AlSayyad at [iaste@berkeley.edu](mailto:iaste@berkeley.edu) with a cc to *TDSR* Managing Editor David Moffat at [ddmoffat@aol.com](mailto:ddmoffat@aol.com). Place the title of the manuscript, the author's name and a 50-word biographical sketch on a separate cover page. The title only should appear again on the first page of text. Manuscripts are circulated for review without identifying the author. Manuscripts are evaluated by a blind peer-review process.

## 2. LENGTH AND FORMAT

Manuscripts should not exceed 25 standard 8.5" x 11" [a4] double-spaced pages (about 7500 words). Leave generous margins.

## 3. APPROACH TO READER

Because of the interdisciplinary nature of the journal, papers should be written for an academic audience that may have either a general or a specific interest in your topic. Papers should present a clear narrative structure. They should not be compendiums of field notes. Please define specialized or technical terminology where appropriate.

## 4. ABSTRACT AND INTRODUCTION

Provide a one-paragraph abstract of no more than 100 words. This abstract should explain the content and structure of the paper and summarize its major findings. The abstract should be followed by a short introduction. The introduction will appear without a subheading at the beginning of the paper.

## 5. SUBHEADINGS

Please divide the main body of the paper with a single progression of subheadings. There need be no more than four or five of these, but they should describe the paper's main sections and reinforce the reader's sense of progress through the text.

*Sample Progression:* The Role of the Longhouse in Iban Culture. The Longhouse as a Building Form. Transformation of the Longhouse at the New Year. The Impact of Modern Technology. Conclusion: Endangered Form or Form in Transition?

Do not use any numbering system in subheadings. Use secondary subheadings only when absolutely essential for format or clarity.

## 6. REFERENCES

Do not use a general bibliography format. Use a system of numbered reference notes, located at the end of sentences, as indicated below.

*A condensed section of text might read as follows:*

In his study of vernacular dwellings in Egypt, Edgar Regis asserted that climate was a major factor in the shaping of roof forms. Henri Lacompte, on the other hand, has argued that in the case of Upper Egypt this deterministic view is irrelevant.<sup>1</sup>

An eminent architectural historian once wrote, "The roof form in general is the most indicative feature of the housing styles of North Africa."<sup>2</sup> Clearly, however, the matter of how these forms have evolved is a complex subject. A thorough analysis is beyond the scope of this paper.<sup>3</sup>

In my research I discovered that local people have differing notions about the origins of the roof forms on the dwellings they inhabit.<sup>4</sup>

*The reference notes, collected at the end of the text (not at the bottom of each page), would read as follows:*

1. E. Regis, *Egyptian Dwellings* (Cairo: University Press, 1979), p.179; and H. Lacompte, "New Study Stirs Old Debate," *Smithsonian*, Vol.11 No.2 (December 1983), pp.24-34.

2. B. Smithson, "Characteristic Roof Forms," in H. Jones, ed., *Architecture of North Africa* (New York: Harper and Row, 1980), p.123.

3. For a detailed discussion of this issue, see J. Idris, *Roofs and Man* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984).

4. In my interviews I found that the local people understood the full meaning of my question only when I used a more formal Egyptian word for "roof" than that in common usage.

## 7. DIAGRAMS, DRAWINGS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

Illustrations will be essential for most articles accepted for publication in the journal, however, each article can only be accompanied by a maximum of 20 illustrations.

Digitized (scanned) artwork should be between 4.5 and 6.75 inches wide (let the length fall), and may be in any of the following file formats. Photos (in order of preference): 1) b&w grayscale (not rgb) TIFF files, 300 DPI; 2) b&w grayscale Photoshop files, 300 DPI; 3) b&w EPS files, 300 DPI. Line art, including charts and graphs (in order of preference): 1) b&w bitmap TIFF files, 1200 DPI; 2) b&w grayscale TIFF files, 600 DPI; 3) b&w bitmap EPS, 1200 DPI.

## 8. ELECTRONIC IMAGE RESOLUTION AND FILE TYPE

All images accepted for publication should be submitted as separate grayscale TIFF or JPEG files of at least 300 DPI at the actual size they will appear on the printed page. Images taken directly from the Web are unacceptable unless they have been sourced at 300 DPI.

## 9. CAPTIONS AND FIGURE PREFERENCES

Please include all graphic material on separate pages at the end of the text. Caption text and credits should not exceed 50 words per image. Use identical numbering for images and captions. The first time a point is made in the main body of text that directly relates to a piece of graphic material, please indicate so at the end of the appropriate sentence with a simple reference in the form of "(FIG. 1)." Use the designation "(FIG.)" and a single numeric progression for all graphic material. Clearly indicate the appropriate FIG number on each illustration page.

## 10. SOURCES OF GRAPHIC MATERIAL

Most authors use their own graphic material, but if you have taken your material from another source, please secure the necessary permission to reuse it. Note the source of the material at the end of the caption.

*Sample attribution:* If the caption reads, "The layout of a traditional Islamic settlement," add a recognition similar to: "Source: E. Hassan, *Islamic Architecture* (London: Penguin, 1982). Reprinted by permission." Or if you have altered the original version, add: "Based on: E. Hassan, *Islamic Architecture* (London: Penguin, 1982)."

## 11. OTHER ISSUES OF STYLE

In special circumstances, or in circumstances not described above, follow conventions outlined in *A Manual for Writers* by Kate Turabian. In particular, note conventions for complex or unusual reference notes. For spelling, refer to *Webster's Dictionary*.

## 12. WORKS FOR HIRE

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*Sample acknowledgement:* The initial research for this paper was made possible by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts [NEA]. The author acknowledges NEA support and the support of the sabbatical research program of the University of Waterloo.

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