

International Journal of Islamic Architecture, special issue: Hinterland Forces

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CALL FOR PAPERS International Journal of Islamic Architecture (IJIA)
Special Issue: "Hinterland Forces: Architectural Responses at the Margins"
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The hinterland is a realm beyond the known, beyond the confines of the urban core, or beyond the acceptable iterations of religious praxis, cultural identity, political affiliation, and ways of being. The hinterland is a notional locale and a physical one, operating as a geographical reference, a spatial designator, and a conceptual frame. Those who stray or are forced into hinterland spaces may be at the frontiers of new thought, interactions, and technologies, but they are also at the margins. In current parlance, "marginality" describes a state that is the result of societal conditions that should be ameliorated. In other words, those at the centre (of power, urbanisation, settlement, scholarship, education, religious decision making, economic stability, etc.) have superior resources to those on the margins and may even be the source and cause of their peripheralisation. The marginalised may face state and societal pressure to conform or face punitive actions, including physical relocation, or the loss of access to important shrines, prayer spaces, schools, and other resources including hospitals, banks, and government offices. The architectures of persecuted, disadvantaged, and vulnerable people showcase unique adaptive strategies, which, in the writings of French thinker Michel de Certeau, reflect "tactics" that co-exist with the long-term and therefore spatially entrenched "strategies" of those in power (de Certeau, 1984).

This special issue of the International Journal of Islamic Architecture invites papers on architectural responses at the margins, including examinations of the forces that create the hinterland categories of marginalisation, the tactical approaches of the marginalised, and the strategic efforts to destroy sites, limit spatial agency and access, and control people. We particularly welcome papers on regions and communities not widely covered in the published record of Islamic architectures, sites and responses, including but not limited to western and coastal China, sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast Asia, and Latin America. The margins are in constant flux; this is both the result of and cause for outright conflict and restrictive policies. Indeed, scholarly emphasis is sometimes determined by the accessibility of study sites and regions. Subjects that may exist beyond the traditional scholarly scope of the field and outside what is often considered the geographical heartland of the Islamic world, and work on those living at the extremities of cultural and doctrinal expectations for communities entrenched in either predominantly Muslim or majority non-Muslim surroundings are also welcome.

In the Islamic context, marginalization creates specific architectural responses that are often

dynamic, transient, temporary, mobile, or executed in an everyday/vernacular idiom. Whether these are the mosques of the Uyghur minority in western China, the prayer rooms of Muslim students in Latin American universities, or the schools and dormitories of the recently besmirched Hizmet movement in Turkey, these sites and the people that make, care for, and use them are frequently at risk. Built environments made marginal, or made by or for the marginalised, can draw the ire of the central power structure, even long after the historical period of their construction. The iconoclastic destruction of shrines and manuscripts in Timbuktu, Mali in 2012 is a case in point. In other contexts, such buildings may escape the notice of those expecting “mainstream” approaches to religious and social life by providing hidden congregational spaces and sanctuaries for the people and activities within.

A number of historical Muslim communities formed on the outer reaches of the early Islamic world. Muslims settled seasonally and permanently along Chinese and Southern African coastal cities, on islands and peninsulas in the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean, and on the frontiers of sub Saharan trade routes, bringing Islamic beliefs and practices with them. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the move from empires to nation states, the end of colonial rule, and shifting sources of international financing have created heretofore unknown categories for people and their architectures in marginal zones. Social theories of the dichotomies between steppe and savannah, rural and urban, nomadic and settled, centre and periphery have been used as a framework for many historical studies. Yet, dynamic forces persistently cause people to interact and to intertwine their lives, so that populations grow and change. Ideas about “purity” in race, religious heritage, practice and behavior in Islamic society deny the social realities of the hinterland. Language, cuisine, doctrine, the use of space, and design preferences at the margins take on new aspects precisely because they are subject to hinterland forces. These innovations and adaptations are not always accepted by the broader community, or are seen as a threat by those in power.

Studies which examine the impacts of disenfranchisement and the structural conditions that lead to marginalization have strong applications in policy development. In the Islamic context, people on the margins may not fit societal expectations, may have made intentional moves to live outside the “centre,” or may have been forced into the hinterland by their governments, religious leaders, or neighbours. While the role of architecture is not typically central to these discussions, architecture is a significant marker of marginalisation. Social issues, political shifts, neoliberal policies, and transnational design questions are at the forefront of the contemporary built environment, and some aspects of design have abetted the creation of new margins. The term “Islamic” can be used to regulate and restrict design projects, a strategy that is emerging as states with Muslim governance are reacting against international policies and perceived amorality and heterodoxies.

Architectural technologies and media for monitoring spatial change are being used by scholars and activists to assemble data on the destruction of buildings, the movement of people, the shifting of boundaries, and the eradication of ecosystems. Open-source collaborations are positioning architectural approaches at the forefront of hinterland analysis, and while digital reporting once provided a kind of shield for those seeking to disseminate critical examinations of refugee landscapes, crimes against the vulnerable, and spaces of contention, activists and scholars of the marginalised are no longer beyond the surveillance of authorities who may detain, question, and deny them the ability to obtain travel papers and entry visas.

This special issue encourages case studies of architectural forces that have impacted people by relocating them to hinterland positions or emphasising their marginalisation, as well as architectures created, utilized, and envisioned by marginalised groups within the Islamic context. The issue particularly welcomes: scholarship from disciplines and methodological approaches that posit new definitions of what constitutes architecture and space or of what makes architecture “Islamic”; studies that combine statistical analysis and architecture or offer policy assessments alongside architectural matters; positions beyond the design and history of architecture fields (geography, anthropology, religious studies, linguistics and religious studies, gender and children and youth studies, musicology, sociological disciplines, and others); analysis of design solutions for people at the margins; projects at the “academic margins” (reporting on lived experience, traditional teachings on the environment, journalism).

Questions that might be addressed by contributors to this special issue are unlimited but might include:

1. What means are available to investigate the palimpsest left behind by sites that existed for a brief time, were confiscated and converted for other uses, or were razed and removed from the record, even the record of community memory?
2. What is the relationship between state and ethnic geographical margins and groups that gravitate away from doctrinal centrality?
3. How have postcolonial and post-secular tendencies impacted the built environment of the hinterland?
4. What are the possible architecturally-rooted relationships between poverty, labour, impermanence and tenuousness, and marginalisation?
5. How do marginalised communities access emergency services or participate in state and international policy formation during a disease pandemic or a natural disaster? How do such communities cope with legal, health, and supply issues within their own sectors?
6. How do marginalised spaces function when ties are severed to the historical archive of buildings, documents, and oral histories?
7. How do the areligious and antireligious function in devout societies, and how are believers marginalised amongst non-practising communities?
8. How are new technologies used in capturing, recording, and disseminating information about and from the margins, including photographic methods, satellite mapping, social media, and open-source collaborations?
9. Why are some subjects more readily available in the published record or course offerings?
10. How does focusing linguistic training for researchers on Arabic and Persian, or emphasizing connections to what are frequently called the “central” Islamic lands, seemingly push western Chinese, Southeast Asian, Sub-Saharan African, Eastern European, and Latin American Islamic architectures to the hinterlands of the publishing and scholarly realms of Islamic fields? Furthermore, do conference topics, journal entries, the parameters for research grants, and the wording of job applications support or defy what lies on the margins?
11. How do the margins operate, conceptually and physically, to quarantine people to certain sites and spaces?

Articles offering historical and theoretical analysis (DiT papers) should be between 6000 and 8000 words, and those on design and practice (DiP papers) between 3000 and 4000 words. Practi-

tioners are welcome to contribute insofar as they address the critical framework of the journal. Urbanists, art historians, anthropologists, geographers, political scientists, sociologists, and historians are also welcome. Please send a title and a 400-word abstract to the guest editor, Dr. Angela Andersen (angela.andersen.53@gmail.com), by 15 June 2020. Authors of accepted proposals will be contacted soon thereafter and will be requested to submit full papers by 30 January 2021. All papers will be subject to blind peer review. For author instructions, please consult: www.intellectbooks.com/ijia

Reference:

CFP: International Journal of Islamic Architecture, special issue: Hinterland Forces. In: ArtHist.net, Jun 1, 2020 (accessed Mar 28, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/23169>>.