Architecture and Empire in East Europe and North Eurasia (Helsinki, 7-9 Jun 23)

Helsinki, Jun 7–09, 2023
Deadline: Sep 15, 2022

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States in Between: Architecture and Empire in East Europe and North Eurasia. EAHN Thematic Conference Helsinki.

The ongoing war in Ukraine has made it clear that there is a need to re-evaluate and retune ourselves towards the practices of colonialism, empire-building, and centre-periphery relations, and to ask questions about national identity and built heritage in Eastern Europe and Northern Eurasia, including the histories of Soviet and Russian art and architecture.

For architectural historians and other scholars working on histories of these areas, the current conditions present a need to rethink and reframe their scholarship. This conference offers an opportunity for this reframing and aims to bring together a broad variety of scholars working on histories of architecture and the built environment in this wide geographical area where the tensions of particular imperialisms and colonialisms are present. It seeks to enrich this field methodologically by sharing and developing vocabulary and approaches through which histories of these areas can be de-colonized.

The conference thus sets to revise the histories of architecture built under the influence and tension of small nation states and national groups, the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union and other formations in Eastern Europe and Northern Eurasia. It sets to map imperial architectures in the many “states in between” that are located at the border lands or within large empires, be they indigenous lands, colonized nation states or neighbours struggling to stay independent; and to disentangle the often complex power-relations and agencies at play.

The “states in between” here refers not only to tensions of geographic areas and borders, but also to various nuances of exchange and impact on culture, ideology, and politics, as well as ethnic, social, class and gender identities. The aim is to invite discussion of the ways in which power relations, national identities and practices of empire building conditioned and materialized architecture and urban spaces from St. Petersburg to Helsinki, Moscow to Warsaw, Kyiv, Kharkiv, Tbilisi, Astana, Tashkent and beyond. This conference will provide a new framework for assessing histories of Russian and Soviet architecture in a long perspective from 18th to the 21st century.

The conference seeks papers that address questions of:

– colonial power structures and practices of empire-building in relation to the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union and “states in between" with an analysis of how this power became visible in the

built environment
– relations between centres and peripheries in the built environments of East Europe and North Eurasia
– colonizing processes in East European and North Eurasian space and the global resonances of such relations
– post-colonialist methodologies in the study of Russian imperial and/or Soviet architecture and urbanism
– architecture, revolution, war, heritage and reconstruction
– spatial and formal strategies, iconographies, styles, traditions and epistemic breaks in relation to nation- or empire-building, wars and revolutions
– material histories, territorial projects and ecological histories in relation to architecture and colonialism
– intersectional histories of architecture and empire, and their manifestations through class, race, gender and sexuality
– revisiting institutional histories of institutions for construction, architecture and art as well as their education and mediation
– the shifting geography of archival landscapes, research materials, and methodologies on histories of the built environment of the region as a result of Russia's political isolation
– colonialist or anticolonialist architectures and urbanisms in the "States in between" from Finland or Poland to Ukraine, Georgia to Kazakhstan, Mongolia and in many more places.

We welcome and encourage proposals by researchers from around the world, at any career stage and a broad range of disciplinary backgrounds and methodological approaches to architecture and the built environment – from heritage to art and literary studies, urban to political histories and beyond.

– Conference dates: 7–9 June, 2023
– Conference location: University of Helsinki
– Send proposals (300 words, 1 image), bio (200 words) to eahn@helsinki.fi
– Deadline: 15 September 2022.
– Scientific committee of the conference will go through, select and organize proposals around themed sessions. Notifications on participation will be sent by November, 2022.
– more info: https://www.helsinki.fi/en/conferences/states-between

The registration fees for participation will be 175 / 75 (discounted) euros covering conference registration, coffee and lunch. There is no separate fee for EAHN membership. We are working to make a limited number of grants to cover registration and travel available to participants whose universities don't cover their travel costs.

Special architectural excursions to sights in Helsinki and its environs will be organized on the days following the conference.

On behalf of the conference's Organising and Scientific Committees,
Markus Lähteenmäki,
General Chair of the Conference, Postdoctoral Fellow at University of Helsinki

Reference:

CFP: Architecture and Empire in East Europe and North Eurasia (Helsinki, 7-9 Jun 23). In: ArtHist.net, Jun 28, 2022 (accessed Nov 11, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/37030>.