Constructing Coloniality: the Built Environment (London, 12–14 May 23)

The Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London, UK, May 12–14, 2023
Deadline: Jan 27, 2023

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Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain Annual Conference 2023.
CONSTRUCTING COLONIALITY: BRITISH IMPERIALISM AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT.

Demands to 'decolonise' have grown louder and louder in recent years, not least in architecture, architectural history and heritage. In Britain public monuments and spaces have loomed large in discussions about the legacies of slavery and empire and the processes of repair, from Edward Colston in Bristol and Cecil Rhodes in Oxford, to Winston Churchill and numerous others in London – as has the 'colonial countryside' manifest in National Trust and English Heritage properties and their interpretation. Meanwhile, the dynamics and effects of British colonialism play out in buildings, cities and landscapes across the world: in the reshaping of the Raj's New Delhi by the Indian government, for example, or in the perpetuation of plantation structures in the Caribbean.

In seeking to forge a decolonial architecture, architectural history and heritage practice amid a polarised debate, it is necessary to deepen our understanding of the built environment's complex entanglements with coloniality – not just the act of colonialism, but also the social, economic and political relations and attitudes that spawned, sustained and endured beyond it. Moreover, the disciplines involved in the production of knowledge about built environments and how they are formed in different temporalities and geographies must take a broader view, scrutinising not just the subjects of research, but the methods deployed and the modes used to disseminate the results.

This conference focuses on the coloniality of architecture and heritage in relation to the British Empire, from the early years of expansionism and the escalation of the slave trade in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, through the physical and political force wielded in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the development of racial capitalism, to the subsequent and ongoing struggles for independence, freedom and justice.

Contributions are welcomed that reassess the built environment in Britain and (former) British colonies in terms of its relationship to colonial systems and ideas, including but not limited to:

- Domestic environments
- Urban environments, including streets, squares, and gardens
- Factories and other sites of industrial production
- Sites of assembly, leisure, and entertainment

- Places of worship
- Buildings for colonial administration
- Infrastructure such as ports, waterways, and railways
- Intercolonial networks and infrastructures
- Experiences of colonial dispossession, displacement, and exclusion
- Heritage sites and conservation

Alongside or in the process of examining such subjects, typologies and morphologies, we welcome reflections on the following historiographical and methodological questions:

- How have the professions, disciplines and discourses of architecture, design and heritage been shaped by and participated in imperialism, coloniality and racism?
- What the knowledge systems and epistemologies are that construct ideas of 'architecture' and 'heritage', and what is excluded and why?
- How teaching and its institutional contexts reinforce these frameworks?
- How financial systems, supply chains and concepts of tenure and relations to the land shape the production of built environments?
- How does the coloniality of architecture and heritage relate to histories of extractivism and energy use?

The conference organisers are Dr Eva Branscome (Bartlett School of Architecture) and Dr Neal Shasore (London School of Architecture), with advice from an International Academic Committee. We encourage participants to submit their paper to the SAHGB's journal Architectural History for consideration. Fuller details about the conference and how to book will be publicised in due course.

Abstracts:
Abstracts of a minimum of 300 words and maximum of 500 words are invited for this major architectural history conference being held in person at the Bartlett School of Architecture in mid-May 2023. Up to three pages of images can also be supplied. However, all of the text/images in each case must be combined together into one single Acrobat PDF file for submission or else will not be accepted.

We invite conventional paper proposals, but welcome other appropriate formats to our subject matter such as poster presentations, films etc.
Prospective contributors should submit titles and abstracts to conference2023@sahgb.org.uk
by 27 January 2023 with participation confirmed by 27 February 2023.

To ensure equal treatment for all submissions, the organisers will not respond to any individual queries about the content of papers or about the thematic categories. The selection panel will assess each of the proposed papers on an anonymous basis.

Applicants need to ensure that they have their own sources of funding available to take part in the conference as online presentations will not be possible.

This three-day conference is hosted by The Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain (SAHGB) in collaboration with UCL and the London School of Architecture.

Reference:

CFP: Constructing Coloniality: the Built Environment (London, 12-14 May 23). In: ArtHist.net, Dec 3, 2022 (accessed Nov 17, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/38083>.