

Exploring UNESCO and UIA (online/Zurich, 21–22 Nov 24)

Online / Institut für Geschichte und Theorie der Architektur (gta Institut), ETH Zürich, Schweiz, Nov 21–22, 2024

Deadline: Jul 31, 2024

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Exploring UNESCO and UIA – Histories of Architecture and Bureaucracy in Development Contexts. International Workshop, gta Institute, ETH Zurich.

Organised by Frederike Lausch and Andreas Kalpakci.

International organisations had a profound impact on the global architectural culture of the Cold War period. Two of them stood out: UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, an intergovernmental organisation) and UIA (the International Union of Architects, an international association of architectural societies). Their respective roles in the institutionalisation of heritage conservation and in the promotion of the architectural profession are well documented. Rather, this workshop places particular emphasis on the relationship between UNESCO and UIA. This relationship began in the formative years of both bodies in the immediate post-war era and continues to this day in areas such as architectural education and international architectural competitions.

As a discipline and discourse, architecture participated in the development regime that sought to restructure societies in the pursuit of socio-economic “progress”, thereby perpetuating colonial power dynamics. Exploring the relationship between UNESCO and UIA builds on recent scholarship that links bureaucracy to architecture’s involvement in development contexts, defining practices, directing information flows, and mediating legitimacy. Both organisations have been engaged in development contexts, from the 1963 UIA congress on “Architecture in Countries in the Process of Development” to the work of UNESCO’s Division for Human Settlements and the Socio-Cultural Environment, established in 1976. How did these organisations interact in terms of cooperation, competition, and interdependence? How did they provide training, knowledge transfer, and technical assistance to so-called “developing countries”? How did they mediate architecture in these contexts, contributing to nation-building and international exchange?

This workshop aims to explore critical histories of the multifaceted relationship between UNESCO and UIA in development contexts. It will address various aspects of their partnership, including environmental initiatives, housing programmes, school buildings, professionalisation efforts, heritage campaigns, international networking, and media strategies. The workshop will also serve as a platform for exchanging research methodologies, archival sources, and historiographical perspectives.

We invite papers that explore the relationship between UNESCO and UIA as development actors during the Cold War in a wide range of geographical contexts. Papers are free to focus either on the relationship between the two organisations or on each organisation individually. Topics may include the situated histories of specific projects (e.g. buildings, publications, exhibitions, and conferences), the agency of lesser-known voices (e.g. international experts, civil servants, and local stakeholders), and the interactions between Paris (the headquarters of both organisations), national professional societies of architects, and the often abstract “target audience”. Contributions are welcome from a variety of disciplines, including architectural history and theory, art history, cultural studies, international relations, cultural sociology, and the history and philosophy of science.

The workshop will take place from 21 November 2024 (half day) to 22 November 2024 (full day) in Zurich, Switzerland and will be available via live streaming. We aim to cover travel and accommodation costs, although the format (in person or hybrid) will depend on the availability of funding.

Please submit an abstract of no more than 300 words and a short bio of no more than 100 words to Frederike Lausch (lausch@arch.ethz.ch) and Andreas Kalpakci (andreas.kalpakci@gta.arch.ethz.ch) by 31 July 2024.

Reference:

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