

6th International Meeting “The Architect’s Journeys” (Karlsruhe, 6–7 Nov 25)

Karlsruher Institut für Technologie, Nov 6–07, 2025

Deadline: May 31, 2025

Marco Silvestri

Architects and Engineers: Journeys in the Polytechnic Culture. Networks, Media, and New Destinations Since 1794

Two centuries ago, engineer Johann Gottfried Tulla and architect Friedrich Weinbrenner played pivotal roles in establishing the Polytechnische Schule in Karlsruhe. Their efforts were preceded by Tulla’s official study tour to France between 1801 and 1803, during which he observed state infrastructure projects in water management, dike construction, and lock engineering. Most influential, however, was his time as a student at the École Polytechnique in Paris—founded in 1794—where he gained lasting insights that would profoundly shape the curriculum and methods at the new Karlsruhe Institute.

It was at this intersection that the distinct travel traditions of Tulla’s Ingenieurschule (engineering school) and Weinbrenner’s Bauschule (architecture school) converged. During a period of profound societal transformation, scientific and technological revolutions also redefined the nature of travel culture. The aristocratic Grand Tour rapidly evolved into bourgeois tourism, spurred by the expansion of the European railroad network and the advent of steam navigation. As Orlando Figes explores in *The Europeans* (2019), this shift contributed to the emergence of new cosmopolitan identities within the framework of increasingly global nation-states. These identities were reflected in the architecture of elite travel destinations such as Baden-Baden, which became hubs of cultural innovation. In an age of political, social, and technological upheaval, the newly compact travel guidebooks offered a normative educational canon that inspired the reform of cultural institutions across Europe—including schools of architecture and engineering. Polytechnic universities were deeply embedded in this cultural transformation. The rise of cosmopolitan identities influenced the development of architecture and engineering as both scientific and artistic disciplines.

Over the broad span of time from the late eighteenth century to the late twentieth century, how did the gaze of architects and engineers trained at polytechnic schools evolve through travel? What were the points of convergence and divergence between architects and engineers in observing the material, technical, and structural aspects of buildings or infrastructures? And what types of travel were involved? Beyond educational journeys, architects and engineers trained at polytechnic institutions often undertook professional travels—among them, missions commissioned by private clients or public bodies.

On the occasion of the bicentenary of the Karlsruhe Polytechnic School (now the Karlsruher Insti-

tut für Technologie) the conference invites participants to explore the evolution of the polytechnic travel culture through international case studies, focusing on the role of travel as a dynamic cultural practice. Since 1794, architect's and engineer's journeys have helped to shape polytechnic culture in the midst of tensions between revolution and tradition, nationality and cosmopolitanism, technology and art, as well as general education and vocational training.

Programm

- 4 panels in two days with 16 presentations in total
- Keynote speakers: Andrea Maglio (Naples), Werner Oechslin (Einsiedeln – to be confirmed)
- Optional trip to Baden-Baden: Saturday 8th of November

Abstract Submission

- Submission deadline: 14:00 h (GMT+1) May 31, 2025, via: <https://bg.ikb.kit.edu/1645.php> or bag@ikab.kit.edu
- Abstracts (2500 characters maximum, spaces included) + short author biography (500 characters maximum, spaces included)
- Notification of abstract acceptance or rejection: June 30, 2025

Languages

The official languages of the meeting are English, French, German, Italian and Spanish.

Organizing Institution

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