

Building Coloniality: Architectural Labour (Lisbon, 11–13 Feb 26)

Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon, Feb 11–13, 2026

Deadline: May 20, 2025

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CALL FOR PAPER

Building Coloniality: Global Landscapes of Architectural Labour

Session 09 at Architecture and Labour, III Colonial and Postcolonial Landscapes International Congress

We invite paper proposals for Session 09 – Building Coloniality: Global Landscapes of Architectural Labour.

In the past decades, architectural history has taken a global turn and acquired an interest in production processes. However, few studies have focused on the intersection between global histories of construction labour and aspects of tacit coloniality. From the end of the 19th century, globalisation of financial capital and expansion of infrastructure materialised in large international construction projects realised through access to comparatively cheap labour. This labour was sourced from economically disadvantaged areas, causing waves of transnational migration nuancing colonial dependencies. Examples of such movements range from the Italian workers building infrastructure in Switzerland and Denmark in the late 19th century or German carpenters moving to Australia to aid post-war reconstruction to contemporary South-East Asian construction workers engaged with Chinese-funded infrastructural projects in Africa and the Gulf Area. The directionality of global construction labour flows directly illustrates and reveals the often-concealed global economic inequalities. While ubiquitous, histories of migrant labourers on large construction ventures remain untold, constrained by limited institutional archives. Nevertheless, these histories can still be traced through tangible artefacts—such as remnants of on-site workers' housing, personal diaries and managerial journals, or less tangible sources—for example, reflected in the tacit skill transfer when construction labourers returned to work on local projects or oral histories passed onwards.

The session welcomes contributions that deal with global histories of architectural labour and coloniality from the end of the 19th century until today. Potential topics might include cases of large construction ventures that relied on transnational labour, micro-histories of people engaged with such projects, studies of temporary on-site infrastructures to accommodate migrant labourers or investigations of diplomatic agreements and legislations developed to relocate construction workers. We welcome contributions from all geographic contexts but are particularly interested in overlooked case studies from countries in the Global South and the former Socialist bloc.

Submission Period: March 20, 2025 to May 20, 2025

Submit proposals (in English) via: <https://forms.gle/TDXj6piGKzhgrSJa8>

Proposal Requirements:

- Selected session (Session 09 – Building Coloniality)
- Title
- Abstract (max 300 words)
- Author(s) name(s), email(s), and institutional affiliation(s)
- Short CV (max 100 words)

For inquiries, please contact:

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Reference:

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(accessed Sep 16, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/49209>>.