

Architecture _ Computing (Karlsruhe, 3-4 Sep 26)

Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT), Sep 3-04, 2026

Deadline: May 20, 2026

Maryia Rusak

All architectural workers know it. That feeling you get behind your eyes after staring at Revit or Rhino for too long. Working overtime with computer fans raging against the digital entities you manipulate, themselves shadows of the information shared on some shadowy server. Emails whizz back and forth, networking the whole globe into the ecology of architectural production as building materials and digital commodities circulate from “sacrifice zones” to architectural offices, consultant workspaces and construction sites. This moment of intensified global digitalisation offers an opportunity to re-evaluate and reflect on architecture’s encounters with, and imbrications in, digital technologies.

Beyond this contemporary technological bubble, architecture has long been intrinsically intertwined with computing. From calculations of architectural masses and volumes of building materials to bills of quantities and payments for construction labour and architectural works, architecture has relied on a range of computational practices. Over time, these practices have been gradually standardised, automated and digitised. Tables, pattern books, and quantity lists translated diverse environmental parameters into computable form, streamlining architectural decision-making and construction works. Housing standards, cost calculations, climatic diagrams, and modular coordination systems functioned as computational frameworks, embedding rules and constraints into architectural design long before automation. Even the word “digitalisation” bears an intrinsic imprint of the human body, of the invisible labour behind today's abstract processes of computing. In the 20th century, architectural practices became increasingly legible to growing computer applications, as new computerised tools influenced architectural design.

The conference then aims to focus specifically on the “_” —on the in-between of architecture and computing, investigating the long histories of this interface. We are interested in the range of relations, whether mutually supportive, overlapping or conflicting, formed between and across the concrete material practice of architecture and the abstract premise of computing.

We welcome contributions that address case studies, projects, practitioners and practices situated at the interface between architecture and computing in its broad sense. We are interested in historical investigations of practices of architectural computing and quantification before the 20th century, as well as more recent developments in the 20th and 21st centuries. We are interested in both conceptual and spatial overlaps between architecture and computing, not limited to single projects, but also inquiries into the spaces and architectures of computer practices.

In doing so, the conference seeks to challenge the exclusive technocratic logics of contemporary architectural computation, bridging it with historical case studies and focusing on conceptual overlaps rather than exclusions. Rather than dividing contributions into “historical” and “contemporary”, we will aim to create productive pairings across historical timeframes, fostering new

avenues for dialogue and discussion.

Potential investigations might fit within the following areas of interest:

Architectural Computing before Computers:

- ☒ Pre-electronic modes, methods and models of architectural and engineering calculation;
- ☒ Tables, diagrams, nomograms, and rule-based design systems;
- ☒ Non-GUI early computing practices for architecture: quantity surveying, mass-calculations, accounting, standardisation, and bureaucratic computation;
- ☒ Building manuals and procedural knowledge as computational media.

Big Data Collection & Processing for Architecture:

- ☒ Large-scale architectural data collection and processing prior to contemporary instruments;
- ☒ Statistics, housing surveys, environmental data, demographic data, and planning systems for architecture;
- ☒ The interface between architectural practice and data aggregation prior to the 1980s.
- ☒ Data collection and calculation departments in architectural offices;

Spaces and People of Computers and Computing:

- ☒ Rooms, offices, laboratories, and institutional settings of computation;
- ☒ Early data centres, control rooms, and infrastructural interiors;
- ☒ Spatial arrangements that enabled, constrained, or embodied computation, including infrastructural systems—heating, ventilation, etc.
- ☒ New and transformed architectural support roles around computing (secretarial staff, IT support, financial management, architectural PR, law/insurance)
- ☒ Digitalised sites for architectural criticism and knowledge production (e.g. memes, newsgroups, websites, forums and group chats)

Format

The conference will take place at Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) in Karlsruhe, Germany. It is planned as a 1.5 day, single-stream in person event, structured around three thematic blocks (morning and afternoon), each combining short paper presentations with discussion.

Submissions

Please submit an abstract of 300 words, along with one image and a short biographical note (100 words) as a single pdf, to joshua.silver@kit.edu by May 20, 2026. Acceptance notifications will be sent by early June.

We will work towards developing these papers toward a publication.

Reference:

CFP: Architecture_Computing (Karlsruhe, 3-4 Sep 26). In: ArtHist.net, May 6, 2026 (accessed Jun 21, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/52388>>.