

Organizing Architectures (Frankfurt a. M./Darmstadt, 17 Jun–15 Jul 26)

Frankfurt am Main, Goethe University / Darmstadt, TU Darmstadt, Jun 17–Jul 15, 2026

organizingarchitectures.org/event/organizing-architectures-coloniality/

Kristin Otte (DFG Research Training Group "Organizing Architectures")

Organizing Architectures: Coloniality

Modern architecture and the built environment have been organized by networks of colonial power. To explore the regimes of this organization, this lecture series suggests shifting attention from colonialism to coloniality. Colonialism commonly denotes a historical system of territorial expansion, political domination, economic exploitation, and cultural hegemony, implemented by European powers from the 15th to the mid-20th century and characterized by military occupation, the imposition of foreign institutions, the extraction of resources, and the subjugation of local populations. In contrast, coloniality is a critical theoretical concept developed in the context of decolonial thought, particularly by scholars such as Aníbal Quijano, Walter D. Mignolo, and María Lugones. It refers to the enduring patterns of power, knowledge, and subjectivity that outlast the formal end of colonial rule. Coloniality operates through the continued global dominance of Western epistemologies, the marginalization of non-Western knowledge systems, and the persistence of racial hierarchies and economic dependency in the postcolonial world. Quijano's notion of the coloniality of power articulates how colonial forms of domination have become embedded within the project of modernity itself. The lecture series probes coloniality as an analytical framework to understand modernist architecture and urban planning in various geographical contexts. It asks: How are these persistent knowledge systems, hierarchies, and dependencies still organizing architectures? In which architectural institutions, networks, and discourses does the coloniality of power survive or even thrive? Which spatial practices, processes, or techniques may oppose these tendencies? The lecture series invites critical, interdisciplinary, and situated inquiries into the ways in which coloniality continues to shape architectural thought and practice.

Programm

17 June 2026, 7–8:30 p.m.

Location: Goethe University Frankfurt, Campus Westend, Seminarhaus 2.105

#5 Monumentality, Coloniality, and the Rewriting of Public Space

Lecture by Mechtild Widrich (School of the Art Institute of Chicago)

In the polarized context of Trump's second presidency—with renewed attempts to enshrine a singular national past through hero gardens and restored Confederate monuments—debates over

how historical space is shaped and contested have intensified. This talk examines artists, curators, and activists who challenge such state-backed monumentalism and the colonial narratives sustaining it, moving beyond the “take down/leave up” (and now “bring back”) frame toward more distributed spatial forms of commemoration.

A brief comparison with spatial commemorative traditions in Europe during and after the Fascist era highlights the contrast between authoritarian monumentality—rooted in permanence, scale, and narrative closure—and practices that resist it.

Placed in dialogue with these histories, contemporary U.S. practices prompt renewed questions about what architectural and spatial forms commemoration might take when permanence is no longer the organizing principle. Artists and communities are experimenting with site-specific interventions, reshaping how bodies move, gather, and remember in public space, cultivating more plural and situated modes of reception.

The event will be in English. Free admission, no registration required.

Members of the Architektenkammer Hessen (AKH) can earn 2 credit points for participating.

The lecture is organized in collaboration with the Chillida Visiting Professorship at the Institute of Art History at Goethe-University and is made possible by the Etxepare Basque Institute in Donostia-San Sebastián.

24 June 2026, 7–8:30 p.m.

Location: TU Darmstadt, Schloss, Room: S3 I 13 10

#6The People’s Workbook, 1981. Development Geometries of an Anti-Apartheid Homesteading Manual

Lecture by Hannah le Roux (University of Sheffield)

“The People’s Workbook: Working together to change your community”, was published by South African anti-apartheid activists to support people displaced by apartheid as it dispossessed rural Black communities of traditional land. Intended to empower these victims of forced removals to the Bantustans, instructed by outreach officers, the workbook represented the transition from in situ agricultural projects of missionaries and colonists to replicable techniques.

The talk considers the workbook’s graphic visualisations, and the way it mapped the stages through which a generic homestead could be established and sustained. In contrast to these images reproducing labour, a graphic essay shows women at work before colonisation. They use field-hoes, or “amageja” in Zulu. This frame is at odds with the sequenced and captioned visual content in the balance of the workbook that show how to do rural labour such as farming.

I argue that the techniques illustrated subtly displace knowledge already embedded in material cultures of tools, indigenous plants, and their processing, and that the Manual would struggle to reproduce. With attention to the microtechnés it codes as productive, we can read how this Manual – amongst others like it – represents development space as something dispersed, as well as the ontologies lost beyond it.

The lecture will be in English. Free admission, no registration required.

Members of the Architektenkammer Hessen (AKH) can earn 2 credit points for participating.

8 July 2026, 7–8:30 p.m.

Location: TU Darmstadt, Schloss, Room: S3 | 13 10

#7 Between Aesthetic Justice and the Right to Beauty: The Aesthetics of Self-built Settlements in Latin America

Lecture by Jessica Pineda-Zumaran (Centro de Investigación en Teoría Urbana y Territorial URBES – LAB, Peru)

Noticeably, Latin American urban planners, city managers and design professionals often consider urban aesthetics to be trivial and of no consequence to the quality of people's lives. The virtual absence of aesthetic control and the limited inclusion of aesthetics in design education programmes are evidence of this disregard. This belief is seemingly reinforced by the persistent dismissal, and sometimes contempt, of alternative aesthetics, such as those of self-built neighbourhoods. The urban aesthetics of these places exhibit features that are rather different to those observed in formally built, professionally designed neighbourhoods. This is the result not only of the gradual mixed use of materials and building systems, but also of homeowners' deliberate selection of colours, shapes, and finishing materials. Arguably, these choices have cultural roots, mostly stemming from Latin American Andean traditions. Drawing on Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital, this lecture reflects on how the professional definition of 'acceptable' urban aesthetics can lead to the exclusion of certain communities and even to self-segregation. The lecture then delves into the production and reproduction of aesthetic justice, contrasting this notion with the call to reclaim the right to beauty from Western professional and academic circles in architecture and design. The lecture aims to re-engage the audience in a renewed, multidisciplinary and enriched debate on urban aesthetics in the capitalist era.

15 July 2026, 7–8:30 p.m.

Location: TU Darmstadt, Schloss, Room: S3 | 13 10

#8 On Famine Codes, Relief Camps, and the Making of Rural Poverty

Lecture by Dr. Ateya Khorakiwala (Columbia University, Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation)

Famine was near endemic across the long nineteenth century in rural India. This talk considers an unexpected metabolic relationship between two late-nineteenth century administrative departments—the building codes of the Public Works Department and the famine codes of the Land Revenue Department—in relation to famine relief. The computational logics of the latter were built on the quantitative focus of the former. The resulting architectural and spatial forms prescribed for famine relief works continually tested the capacity of workers to determine their condition of health: on how little food can a body work, survive, or thrive? Architectural techniques enforced utilitarian principles of quantity and time: not too much food, and given not too soon. Mining the archive of documents of famine—inquiry commissions, codes, reports, famine papers, and the diaries and biographies of administrators—this talk argues that public works and famine were intimately intertwined, not in how they counteracted the effects of each other but rather in how they worked together to remake the countryside and the relationship between administration and peasantry in the late nineteenth century up until the end of colonial rule.

Reference:

ANN: Organizing Architectures (Frankfurt a. M./Darmstadt, 17 Jun-15 Jul 26). In: ArtHist.net, Jun 13, 2026

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(accessed Jun 13, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/52697>>.