

Session 2B

Abstracts

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The City That Lost its Soul: World Heritage, Development, and Contemporary Architectural Design in Edinburgh's Old and New Towns

The Old and New Towns of Edinburgh have long been a popular destination, but the sense of uncontrollable inundation by visitors is a phenomenon of recent decades. While many have claimed the tourist boom is positive and to be further encouraged, residents have decried the loss of their city's soul. The debate about 'over-tourism' in Edinburgh has become a common topic in the local press: the pro-tourism side argues that the city is a living, evolving entity that cannot be locked in a museum case, while the anti-tourism campaigners allege that Edinburgh is quickly falling victim to 'Disneyfication'. This threat of a loss of 'authenticity' is particularly important in the context of Edinburgh's historic built landscape, as the Old and New Towns precincts have been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1995. They were listed because of the global significance of 'a remarkable blend of the two urban phenomena: the organic medieval growth and 18th and 19th century town planning' (UNESCO, 1995). Indeed, Edinburgh's distinct townscape and architectural appearance is a significant factor in its tourism success: millions visit each year to see Edinburgh Castle, the medieval and 18th century tenements of the Royal Mile, and the Classical Revival New Town. The conservation of existing structures and the introduction of new architecture is, in theory, strictly controlled to maintain heritage values. In practice, however, there have been numerous examples of developments that have challenged Edinburgh's architectural status quo. This paper will explore two recent examples of contemporary architecture in hotel developments within Edinburgh's historic centre that have attracted a range of reactions from the public and press. In doing so, the increasingly irreconcilable needs and outcomes of tourism, community management, urban planning, architectural design, and heritage conservation will be highlighted.

Habib Ghassemi

Unknown

An Urban Volcano in the Making: Cartography of the Social- Spatial Transformation of Shahyad Square in Iran

Shahyad Square might be the most iconic building of Iran and finds its way to TV screens and media from time to time. The strong monumentality of the structure, however, overshadows the significance of space that encircles it. The square has been the context of two revolutions and unrest in the last five decades, and all of them took this monument as their triumph of victory. The paper investigates the question of how does a monumental space with a carefully inscribed image endure these dramatic remaking and multiplication of purposes?

This study by analyzing Shahyad Square as the case study shifts focus from *what* space is to *how* space works in the moments of instability. Based on Rancière's thesis Shahyad Square is framed as a political space that is signaled by the sudden disruption of the given arrangement through supplementing with a part of the no-part. Here, the political is not equal to politics and does not refer to the power relationship as a given notion. Instead, it observes political space within the society in the state of the alternation. The aim is to explore the internal function of space and transformative initiatives to trace the articulation of space throughout its trajectory.

By using the Actor-Network Theory, contextual constructs exploded to the constituting heterogeneous elements, and the trajectory of Shahyad Square is mapped within the resulted web. The paper describes Shahyad in an ongoing process of making and shows the interactions of diverse entities, which carry an unintended impact and cause unexpected results in the (re)formation of the square.

Hamed Tavakoli
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Spatial Liminality as a framework for evaluating revitalisation programs in historic Iranian cities: The case of Imam-Ali project in Isfahan

This paper develops the theory of liminality as a guideline for evaluating revitalisation programs in historic cities. Since historic cities exist as a transitional phenomenon, spatial liminality is identified as a proper epistemological tool for their investigation. To do so, this article explores the association between socio-spatial vulnerability and dilapidated-abandoned buildings (DABs) through the lens of spatial liminality, which may occur as a result of implementing modern socio-spatial revitalization programs. An interdisciplinary approach was employed in this study, which recognises liminality as a condition of socio-spatial vulnerability applicable to historic cities. In this case, spatial liminality of Dilapidated Abandoned Building (DABs) in historic cities has become associated with the influx of non-local disadvantaged residents who compete for cheaper housing options while remaining in a state of limbo. The study is quantitative in nature and consists of a questionnaire survey and on-site observation. The investigation was conducted in three urban blocks, located in a significant urban tissue in historic Isfahan, which has gone through several revitalization schemes since the 1920s. Results demonstrate that the aftermath of revitalization programs has generated a significant association between the formation of DABs, the existence of refugee settlements and the overall distribution of liminal refugees. Such spatial liminality accompanied by the accumulation of refugees indicates that current revitalization programs have generated DABs, functioning as liminal urban fabrics. The study allows practitioners, policymakers and academicians to evaluate the negative aftermaths of revitalisation programs in historic cities, to move out of spatial liminality.

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The Science of the Superblock: Rudolf Eberstadt's Image for Greater Berlin, c. 1910

Central to the development of modern architecture in Germany was a programmatic engagement with the problem of urban scale. From the Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne's "minimum dwelling" to Ludwig Hilberseimer's regional "settlement unit", the most enduring ideals of the modern movement emerged from various attempts to identify optimal spatial units through which to negotiate complex social needs and economic processes. Focussing on economist Rudolf Eberstadt's novel concept of the superblock (*große Blockeinheit*) and its materialization in his prize-winning entry to the 1910 Greater Berlin Competition (submitted with architect Bruno Möhring and engineer Richard Petersen), this paper examines a lesser-known but important pre-war endeavour to economize as well as humanize residential living in the modern metropolis. Eberstadt's entry was significant in advancing a new approach to housing provision, whereby pedestrian-friendly residential superblocks would be laid over the traffic network of the city-region, establishing a renewed sense of community in the rapidly urbanizing city of Berlin. Eberstadt's traffic solution was more than simply part of a strategy of urban amelioration. It instigated a shift in thinking about urban scale, whereby housing as a problem of number crunching was brought into new dialogue with artistic considerations advanced within the German urban planning (*Städtebau*) tradition.

Justin Mallia

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Contradiction and synthesis in a Fascist city

Inaugurated in 1934 and completed in only 253 days, the new city of Sabaudia in Italy was designed as one of five “agricultural centres” within the planned urban and social system of the vast reclamation project of the Pontine Marshes. The city was an outcome of key policies and propaganda of the Fascist Italian government regarding the re-ruralisation of Italian society and production, expressed in slogans such as “the battle for wheat” and the “war against hunger.” Through spectacles such as the 1934 “18BL Theatre for the masses, by the masses” the foundation of Sabaudia was associated with the Fascist themes of work, dedication to and sacrifice for the state, and the eulogisation of Italian tradition and identity.

The city was designed by a group of young *Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne* (CIAM) adherents and former *Movimento Italiano per l'Architettura Razionale* (MIAR) colleagues in a “rigorously rational” style, which was deliberately aligned with Fascist political imperatives including the concepts of *corporativismo* and *Romanità*. Today, the built fabric of Sabaudia in its unadorned rationalist style is remarkably well-preserved, complete with the Fascist symbols and inscriptions that are visible throughout the city. Notwithstanding the political circumstances in which it was conceived, in the 1960s Sabaudia attracted notable anti-Fascist intellectuals such as Pier Paolo Pasolini who resided in the city.

Pasolini has suggested that although Sabaudia was created by the Fascist regime, through the passing of time, it is the reality of provincial, rustic, pre-industrial Italy that produced Sabaudia, not Fascism. This paper sets Sabaudia within its founding philosophical, political and architectural contexts as well as posing considerations about the legacy and lived experience of the city over time, re-evaluated in terms of the early Italian rationalist theme of cross-disciplinary exchange in the “new spirit” of modernism.

Nicole Sully

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Urban Planning after JFK: Re-planning the “City of Hate”

Following the assassination of President John Fitzgerald Kennedy in November 1963, Dallas was nicknamed “the city of hate”. In the weeks and months following the assassination and its aftermath citizens of elsewhere wrote to various public forums and officials to express their hatred of the city and its citizens. The planning of the assassination site was silently implicated in the endless interrogation of the crime, through analytical mapping and models, as well as the ever-present landmarks represented in documentation of the assassination. In response to these events, the city introduced a number of new architectural and urban planning gestures to aid in the economic and social recovery from this tragic event. Re-planning and re-building became a literal rather than metaphorical means for Dallas to make amends for the burden of its history. This paper will examine how the built environment was quietly implicated in the death of President Kennedy, and the measures that were taken to redress the negative portrayal of the city throughout America and the world.