

**Thursday, 14 June**  
**9.00-11.45**

Track: Peripheries  
Room: *National Library, Small Conference Hall*

### **EUROPEAN PERIPHERIES IN ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIOGRAPHY**

**Session chairs:** Petra Brouwer, University of Amsterdam  
Kristina Jõekalda, Estonian Academy of Arts

Informed by post-colonial theory and more recent attempts to write alternative histories, architectural historians have increasingly criticized the persistence of the architectural canon and its Eurocentric perspective, questioning its categories, narratives, and terminology.

Our session aims to critically analyse Eurocentrism from the hitherto neglected perspective of Europe's own 'margins'. We take as a starting point that Eurocentrism, as operationalized in the first architectural history surveys from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, comprises only a few countries: Germany, England, France, Italy, and classical Greece. With their exclusive focus on monuments, like Greek temples or French and German cathedrals, as exemplifying stylistic perfection, all other European architecture, be it from the Baltic countries, the Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, or Scandinavia, was deemed marginal. From the late nineteenth century onwards, many of these 'margins' produced their own historical accounts on national or regional architecture. Almost without exception, these accounts explicated their national and regional architecture as a derivation, relying heavily on the historiography at hand. The hypothesis we want to bring up for discussion is that by adopting the method and narrative of the general histories of architecture, these national and regional architectural histories have perpetuated their position in the margins to this very day.

This session addresses the practice of architectural history writing in Europe's 'peripheral' countries and regions from the nineteenth century to the present that address the problematic relationship between the local, the national, and the general. We are not interested in local and national histories per se, but rather in the way they can be positioned within a wider geographical and disciplinary framework. The selected papers set out to explore cultural exchange and transfer (through influence, appropriation, inclusion, opposition, role models) and the local/indigenous (through geography, religion, race, building material, politics, history) in the widest sense. They reflect on the construction of Europe's centres and peripheries with questions such as: To what extent were the books on local and national architectural history aimed at 'filling the gaps' of general architectural history? What alternative approaches were developed? Should we interpret the adaptation of the Eurocentric perspective as a self-colonizing act and the alternatives as subversive, or are other readings possible? How far have historical realities further strengthened divisions between the East and West or the South and North of Europe?

**PAPERS:**

**The Modern Margin at the Classical Centre: Critical Regionalism as Historiography**  
Stylios Giamarellos, University College London

This paper explores Eurocentrism within Europe through the semi-peripheral case of Greece. It argues that Greek architectural historiography echoes the double bind that conditions the relations of Europe with the modern Greek state since the nineteenth century. This double bind supports a dual self-image of Greece: (1) as the founding classical centre of modern Europe, and (2) as a peripheral site whose endeavours are legitimised by their adherence to modern European developments. For western observers, the classical Greece of the past thus overshadows the modern Greece of the

present. Greek scholars have similarly adopted a dual vision of the architectural production of their country: (a) as legitimate regional adaptations of the European avant-garde movements, but also conversely (b) as their authentic or archetypal precedents, ranging from the 'modernist' cubic volumes of the Cycladic settlements to the 'postmodern' work of Dimitris Pikionis. This dual vision in turn enabled Greek practitioners to internalise modern European developments as inseparable parts of their own regional legacy. This is what historically led to the development of an architecture of critical regionalism in Greece.

Critical regionalism has been criticised as a colonialist discourse that actively marginalises the regions it addresses. However, in the case of Greece, it restored the already marginalised modern architectural production of the country in the eyes of western observers. A close reading of Alexander Tzonis & Liane Lefaivre's first theorisation of critical regionalism also shows how a discourse that allegedly promoted the focused return to the region ignored local nuances to answer only to the western architectural concerns of the time. Hence, the paper concludes that critical regionalism remains an unfulfilled project. No longer viewed as a manifesto for the humanistic architecture of the future, it can now become a historiographical agenda for the European 'periphery'.

### **Architect Migrants from the Former Soviet Republics to Western Europe: A *Blind Spot* of Eurocentric Historiography**

Eva Radionova, Amsterdam University of the Arts

Yelizaveta Yanovich, World Bank Group / Independent researcher

This paper questions the representation of the interrelationship between 'peripheral' national and Western European traditions in architectural historiography. It does so by examining the impact of architects who migrated from countries of the former Soviet republics on the architectural practices of Western Europe in the twentieth century. In their respective countries of origin, these architectural migrants have retained their position in national architectural culture, while in the general accounts of Western European architectural history they form a part of their host countries' history. In Western European historiography, their national and local architectural background is ignored.

One could state that there is a blind spot in European architectural historiography because the influence of migrant-architects has largely been misunderstood. This paper argues that this blind spot should be analysed in terms of cultural and post-colonial studies. Following Edward W. Said's *Orientalism*, we suppose that the migrants' culture should be described in Western European architectural history as that of the 'other'. According to the concept of Alexander Etkind and Dirk Uffelman, the integration of architectural migrants in Western European historiography should be understood in terms of internal colonization.

To reveal the blind spot in architectural historiography, this paper analyses the reception as well as the biographies of three architectural migrants: Berthold Lubetkin (UK), originally from Ukraine; Nikolay Zagrekow (also Sagrekow, Germany) and Nikolaus Izselenov (France), both originally from Russia. Our research into the architects' biographies in 'peripheral' national and Western European historiographies, aims to clarify the disjointed nature of the interpretations in the respective discourses. This paper explores the cultural mechanisms of denial of 'peripheral' influences on the canonical architecture of Western Europe. It allows architectural historians to evaluate the potential of a new historiography of architectural migration.

### **Peripheral and Central Stances in Portuguese Architecture Culture**

Ricardo Costa Agarez, University of Évora

In his acceptance speech for the 2011 Pritzker Prize, architect Eduardo Souto de Moura explained how, when he began practicing after the 1974 revolution, the shortage of

affordable housing in Portugal demanded his (belated) modernist approach: To 'build half-a-million houses with pediments and columns would be a waste of energies'. Furthermore, he argued, postmodernism made little sense in a country where there had 'barely been any Modern Movement at all'. A 'clear, simple, and pragmatic language' was needed, and only 'the forbidden Modern Movement could face the challenge'. Moura's words perfectly encapsulate the country's post-revolutionary architectural culture tropes, which have dominated published discourse since: modernism, not postmodernism, deserved a place in 1980s Portugal because it had been resisted by a conservative dictatorship. This rationale also explained why Portuguese modern architecture was not strong—or worthy—enough to be included in international architecture surveys.

The exception were the works of two other Portuguese exponents, Fernando Távora and Álvaro Siza, co-opted by survey authors since the 1980s in their drive towards global comprehensiveness: Kenneth Frampton, William J. R. Curtis, and most recently Jean-Louis Cohen all celebrated these architects' site-sensitive, vernacular-infused modernism, occasionally straight-jacketed into critical regionalism constructs. Such recognition was promptly embraced by contemporary Portuguese architects and critics, eager to see their culture associated with a 'good brand' of regionalism, resistant and profound; most felt it was the 'bad', retrograde regionalism of the 1940s which, manipulated by the regime, countered modernism. Thus a two-pronged 'forbidden modern movement' / 'redeeming critical regionalism' tale flourished in Portugal.

By borrowing the conventions and constructs of international historiography in a politically sensitive and conscience-searching moment of national life, contemporary Portuguese architectural culture effectively narrowed down its own relevance to a handful of names and works, thus flattening the country's diverse forms of modernism: from the tentative to the mature, local, cultural, technological, and material, specificities determined a richly textured production that requires re-examination by a scholarship emancipated from the canon.

### **From *Tendenza* to *Tendenzen*: Rewriting Ticinese Architecture, 1975–1985**

Irina Davidovici, ETH Zurich

'Now it's the Ticinese's turn.' Conceived as an intellectual sequel to Aldo Rossi's ETH tenure, the exhibition *Tendenzen. Neuere Architektur im Tessin* of 1975 was more than a mere survey of the architecture produced in the marginal canton of Ticino in the 1960s and early 1970s. Rather, the curator Martin Steinmann construed from this built production a programmatic message that fed into current debates on disciplinary autonomy and Realism.

The label *Tendenzen*, while stating the pluralism of co-existing Ticinese positions, placed them in a subservient position to the Italian *Tendenza* and particularly the work of Rossi, to whom an emerging generation of Swiss architects were intellectually and formally beholden. By means of a theoretical framework only loosely connected to Ticinese architecture's historical and cultural specificity, Steinmann assembled an emancipated text-based discourse with much wider applicability, subsequently circulated in numerous professional and academic publications such as *archithese*, *A+U*, and *L'architecture d'aujourd'hui*. This paradoxical emancipation of discourse from architectural production was highlighted by Kenneth Frampton's subsequent interpretation of Ticinese architecture as a notional 'Ticino school' in the journal *Oppositions* (1978), later instrumentalized in his definition of critical regionalism as 'an architecture of resistance' (1983).

This paper examines the interconnected textual narratives woven by Steinmann and Frampton around 1970s Ticinese architecture and their contributions to two major theoretical currents of the 1980s: postmodernism and critical regionalism. This premise invites an examination of Ticino's intriguing status as peripheral territory which, temporarily, became culturally more productive than the intellectual 'centres' towards

which it gravitated. Shaped by prominent outsiders like Steinmann and Frampton, and detached from the actual conditions of production, the architectural historiography of Ticino architecture only consolidated its peripheral status in the longer term.