

Friday, 15 June
15.15-18.00

Track: Body and Mind
Room: *National Library, Small Conference Hall*

REFORM: ARCHITECTURE AS PROCESS, 1870-1920

Session chair: Leslie Topp, Birkbeck, University of London

The period 1870 to 1920 was marked by both rapid change and a deep ambivalence towards that change. Large-scale urbanisation, mass migration, mass movements in politics, shifting gender and class identity, expansion of empire and national consolidation and aspiration—all these phenomena of the years around 1900 were confronted, embraced and reformulated by architectural culture.

Pevsner's argument in *Pioneers of the Modern Movement* (1936), was that the period was important for a handful of figures who foreshadowed interwar modernism. This reading was challenged beginning in the 1990s, resulting in three main shifts: Art Nouveau, Jugendstil and Secessionism were recast as rich conceptual seams worth exploring in their own terms; the modernism of Pevsner's pioneers was understood to be much more complicated than had previously been acknowledged; and architecture was shown to have played an innovating role in the nationalist movements of the period. But since these scholarly advances were made, the study of the period has slowed.

This session aims to revitalise the study of this period by refocusing on two key concepts.

Reform, a term used across the applied arts in this period, signals a rethinking and reinvigoration that is more open-ended and less anachronistic than 'modernism'. It also transcends restrictive stylistic categories such as Art Nouveau or National Romanticism. It was a term used in a wide international context. It meant an opening up to new audiences and new forms of producer, a reconnection with 'life' and 'reality', a desire both for order and for emancipation, and the impulse towards a heightening of meaning. It indicated both a desire for change and a critique of modernisation.

The linking of architecture to reform points to architecture's mutability in this period and highlights the importance of process. The sense that each new design—built or unbuilt—was an intervention into a developing and mutating world was unavoidable. Even when an architect sought to provide rootedness and stability, he/she was driven by an acute sensitivity to change. Process puts the emphasis on debate, disagreement, connection and contention.

Art historical periodisation defines 1890–1914 as a distinct period. Rethinking the period's parameters as 1870 to 1920 brings phenomena sharing the qualities above into the frame from outside the period as it has traditionally been conceived, opening up new connections and destabilising fixed assumptions.

PAPERS:

Exhibitions, Audiences and the Contradictions of Architectural Reform

Wallis Miller, University of Kentucky

Nikolaus Pevsner never would have included Ludwig Hoffmann in his group of Modern Movement pioneers. Although Hoffmann made a significant contribution to the modernization of Berlin's built landscape as the city's longest serving Director of Architecture and Urban Planning, his work was never recognized as being 'modern' either during his career or, until the 1970s, in the historical literature. He was regularly criticized for his eclecticism, especially in comparison to Alfred Messel, his closest friend and

colleague, whose work was consistently hailed as the best example of the new architecture.

But while Hoffmann maintained a conservative approach to form, he let his practice be shaped by the public, recognizing more clearly than his contemporaries a new constituency for architecture. Not only did he put a lot of energy into cultivating his relationship with journalists to ensure his successful communication with the public, he also put the public at the center of his architecture, using experience, in particular the ways people would see and use his buildings, to guide his design process.

Hoffmann's engagement of the public was at the heart of his enormous 1901 exhibition of his vision for the city of Berlin. Since the 1870s, architects had held architecture exhibitions responsible for improving their public status. Hoffmann's exhibition answered that call by using huge plaster models and mockups to emphasize the experience of his buildings. The critics responded accordingly, calling the exhibition's resonance with the public a triumph even as they criticized Hoffmann's designs for their formal anachronisms. Though not a watershed in the history of architecture, the exhibition, particularly its contradictions, presented an important moment in the process of incremental change that would ultimately produce the exhibitions and the general attention to the public that shaped the new architecture, in all its complexity, during the 1920s.

Urban Reform and Mobilities of Knowledge: The Villa Medici and Ernest Hébrard's Work in Greece

Kalliopi Amygdalou, Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP) / National Technical University of Athens

In the early twentieth century, a group of French Beaux-Arts graduates 'took over' the Villa Medici and pushed for a turn from the study of ancient columns to the study of the urban scale. Tony Garnier, Henri Prost, Ernest Hébrard, and other recipients of the prestigious *Prix-de-Rome* carried out a soft revolution against the academy by looking at ancient sites for answers to contemporary urban problems. This group was also involved in the reformist Musée Social (1895) and the Société Française des Urbanistes (1913). Soon, they started implementing their ideas in colonial and non-colonial foreign contexts—like Greece and Turkey—with the ultimate dream of also implementing them at home.

The most successful international project of French urbanism outside the colonies was arguably the redesign of Thessaloniki, Greece, which burnt to the ground in 1917. The reformist Venizelos government set up a committee led by Ernest Hébrard that included English and Greek architects, with the aim of creating a modern city. However, these different stakeholders (professionals and politicians) had diverging agendas for the meaning and content of 'reform'. How did different schools of thought (English and French) compete during the design process, while also accommodating Greek national aspirations?

Based on original research in the French and Greek archives and moving between Paris and Thessaloniki, this paper will show that the period 1870–1920 was neither a mere preparatory period for what was to follow in the discipline of urbanism, nor a period in which a reformist spirit had been fully established across architectural institutions. Rather, it was shaped by a group of architects who shared a strong vision, developed new tools, and tried them out abroad and at home, triggering a mobility of knowledge between metropolis and 'periphery' while establishing French urbanism along the way.

Shaping the World: The Document and the Architecture of *Mondialité*

Michael Faciejew, Princeton University

Between 1870—when the French verb *documenter* ('to document') came into use to designate systematic techniques for furnishing documents—and the end of World War I—when these same techniques were adopted as the infrastructure for new institutions such as the League of Nations—European internationalists and intellectuals deployed reform as a global knowledge project. Thinkers such as the Belgian founder of documentation science Paul Otlet believed that a world blemished by the disintegration of the concert of Europe, the scramble for Africa, and unchecked industrial development could be reshaped only through new, 'neutral' channels of international intellectual cooperation. They advanced classification tables, halls filled with filing cabinets, and other modern spatial instruments to proliferate the idea that, in an era of '*mondialité*,' there was such a thing as global space, and that it was a continuum which could effectively be managed from a centralized position.

This paper examines how an architecture of paperwork was married to the bio-sociological approach to the human sciences which dominated turn-of-the-century Brussels to produce a conception of global civilization as a 'networked organism.' In the problematic context of King Leopold II's Belgium, projects such as Otlet's Institut International de Bibliographie and Constant Bosmans's and Henri Vandeveld's design for the Solvay Institute of Sociology—which blended classical notions of order, art nouveau flourishes, and bureaucratic modernism *avant la lettre*—were developed as laboratories where standardized techniques of intellectual labor would be used to mitigate the prevailing confusion about the shape the international community was taking. I argue that this architecture adopted as its basic unit not the biological 'cell' or the positivist 'fact,' but rather the standardized 'document,' an instrument whose claims to universality were founded on the notion that to organize information was to organize the world.

From 'Reform' to 'Revolutionary' Thinking in Ottoman Palestine's Settlements, 1870–1920

Marina Epstein-Pliouchtch, Western Galilee Academic College / Technion, IIT
Talia Abramovich, Technion – Israel Institute of Technology, IIT

The settlements created in Palestine in the nineteenth to early twentieth centuries were subjected to the forces of modernization: the Industrial Revolution's impact, political and cultural developments under Ottoman rule, and social transformations wrought by World War I. Like many other settlements around the globe, they were influenced by war damage, massive immigration, and concepts of the garden city and social utopias.

The history of modernity in Palestine can be plotted on an axis between two poles, defined as 'reform' and 'revolution'. At one end was the *moshava*, the Jewish colony, founded in 1878 through the philanthropy of Baron Edmond de Rothschild, which exemplified reform thought regarding the traditional village. At the other end were the collective 'Zionist settlements' known as *kibbutz*, first established in 1910, and the *moshav*, dating from 1921, which both realized radical revolutionary concepts.

One fundamental way to interpret these two different types of modernity is to regard them as the product of a dialectical process, an exchange between 'reform' and 'revolution' thinking. These terms represent opposing ethical positions. 'Reform' is based on tradition, with its cultural relativism, regionalism, and passion. 'Revolution' is an ideology of the Enlightenment, of universalism and rationalism. This reform/revolution dichotomy may have been manifest in an array of other dichotomies or conflicts: East/West, religious/secular, ethnic/national.

In this paper, we will reevaluate the history of architectural modernity as an ethical dialectic, embodied in fifty years of Ottoman Palestine's Jewish settlements, and examine how it was reflected in local architecture through case studies of the *moshava*, *kibbutz*, and *moshav*.

Processes of Reform Photography

Peter Sealy, University of Toronto

Nowhere was photography's capacity to furnish images in the service of reform agendas more forcefully deployed than between 1870 and 1920. Jacob Riis' flash-powered muck-raking photojournalism joined the photographs in John Spargo's *The Bitter Cry of Children* (1906) in exemplifying the camera's utility as an agent of (bourgeois) reform. Within the realms of architecture and urbanism, Charles Marville's earlier photographs in support of Haussmannization, Thomas Annan's depictions of Glasgow's slums, and James Burgoyne's views of central Birmingham use the built environment—as opposed to its downtrodden inhabitants—as a metonym for the general health of the polity.

I will present two readings of 'process' latent in 'reform' architectural and urban photography. The first is cumulative: the meaning of Marville, Annan and Burgoyne's serial images unfolds in time and space (an effect only magnified by 'before' and 'after' photographs.) From 1870, serial imagery became increasingly common as architectural representation sought to record spatial experience, dissolving the architectural or urban object into moments of heightened visual interest. Secondly, whether with disdain (Marville) or nostalgia (Annan), the 'reform' photograph inevitably records a condition, a 'this-has-been' in Roland Barthes' formulation, which cannot endure. While received as a frozen moment in space and time (what Robin Kelsey has termed images' 'click' and 'crop'), the catastrophe of an anterior future haunts every photograph. For the portrait, this spectre is death. In the architectural view, it is the inevitability of change. Against the Ruskinian view of the photograph as an agent for arresting change, the mere attempt to record an existing condition inevitably sets in motion its transformation, a power which reformers have productively, if dangerously, harnessed across time.