
POSITION PAPER

EAHN Conference, Dublin June 2–5, 2016: Closing Remarks

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A summary of the EAHN conference in Dublin in 2016, *EAHN: Fourth International Meeting*, and an overview of the state of the field.

Keywords: architectural history; state of the field

Closing Remarks

Since so much of European history has happened elsewhere, as Stuart Hall, Salman Rushdie and others reminded us long ago, it is only appropriate that, the ‘European’ in its title notwithstanding, the EAHN is a network with a founding vision of global outreach and interconnectedness. I find this especially admirable at a time when isolationist views are on the rise in world politics: those in Europe and North America closing in out of fear (of terrorism, of refugees, of difference) and those in other parts of the world, out of nationalist hubris, nativism and aversion to liberal democracy.

Given the EAHN conference’s immense scope and diversity, summarizing it is a daunting task. With all the parallel sessions, I was able to hear only a few of the 142 papers in the program and I cannot possibly address the richness, diversity and stimulating content of what I have heard in these two and a half days without doing serious injustice to the papers presented. Nevertheless, I will make some general observations, discern several tendencies that cut across this very interesting array of papers, point out continuities with earlier work and identify emerging topics that are most likely to preoccupy us in the near future.

Geographical Scope

In her keynote address for the conference in Brussels in 2012, Mary McLeod observed the opening up of the field beyond its core geography of Western Europe: she noted the large number of papers focusing on the European periphery (especially Ireland, Mediterranean, Eastern Europe and the Balkans) and the inclusion of sub-Saharan Africa, neglected in 20th-century architectural surveys until then. Today, based on my very rough count of site-specific papers in this conference, I can state the obvious: the expansion of our world map seems to be a strong trend.

Not surprisingly (this after all is the EAHN), the largest chunk of papers focused on continental European topics: 33 on Western Europe and Scandinavia (France and Germany at the top); 16 on Southern Europe (mostly Italy and Portugal) and 15 on Eastern Europe, the Balkans and Russia. Regions that Mary McLeod had observed as underrepresented in 2012 also seemed to have a strong presence in this year’s paper topics: in particular North America (11), the Antipodes (8 – with an entire session focused on Australia and New Zealand) and Asia (8 – mostly southeast Asia, where the European colonial legacy is strong). The total absence of Latin America in this tally is rather curious, since it too has European colonial legacies and it too has strong connections to European modernism. Meanwhile, with five papers on North and Sub-Saharan Africa and six on the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East we can claim some progress there as well – although Iraq and Syria are conspicuously absent for obvious reasons.

As addressed in the roundtable chaired by Mark Crinson, ‘Europe’ is a geographically and conceptually contentious topic and so is the history of its architecture. European identity formation has been intricately intertwined with non-European others through wars, trade, colonialism, international geopolitics and of course, transfer of architectural ideas, design expertise and building technologies. These rich cross-cultural links were addressed by several papers: from the famous ‘Rome or the Orient’ debate of the 19th century (evoked by Vimalin Rujivacharakul’s paper on the cross-pollination of European and Buddhist architecture) to the construction of the Balkans as a non-European region within Europe in the early 20th (especially by Le Corbusier, as we heard in Mirjana Lozanovska’s paper), and to various ‘de-centered modernisms’, as art historian Partha Mitter once put it, and the numerous ‘middling modernisms’, selective appropriations and domestications by the practices of non-European actors (for example, in Egypt, as discussed by Mercedes Volait).

Where does European architecture stop beyond Europe? What does it borrow from other places? Is it still ‘European architecture’ or something else when it travels

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beyond the continent of Europe? Are its interlocutors in other geographies also its co-producers? These are questions with complex answers, but whereas once there was a dearth of such questioning, the conference confirms that we now have an exponentially growing and diversifying scholarship of critical trans-national histories.

Compared to even ten years ago, when we organized the 2006 DoCoMoMo Conference with the uneasy title 'Other Modernisms' (you may recall that 'other', 'non-western', 'third world' and many other terms were employed and discarded in rapid succession), histories of modern architecture in peripheral geographies have moved well beyond the simplistic binaries of postcolonial theory: challenging and complicating colonial hierarchies like east-west, north-south, center-margin, metropole-colony, orient-occident, etc., in favor of complex exchanges and negotiations between 'the developed world' and the newly independent nations of the 20th century. Today we view the condition of peripherality as neither pre-given nor unchanging but rather as fluid, historical and geopolitical. Above all, we re-conceptualize 'influence', not as one party giving its goods to an inferior other but as a two-way exchange that involves interaction and agency.

Perhaps as significant as the scholarship, however, are the scholars themselves who largely explain the *deepening* as much as the broadening of our discipline. What we see in this conference and in the field at large is the emergence of younger native scholars from these peripheral geographies, who know the requisite non-European languages and have access to local sources and archives. Many of them work in European and North American academia and almost all work on topics related to the cities, regions and countries to which they are connected by birth and biography. My own experience working on Turkey makes me think that there is indeed a deeper, visceral level of understanding the architecture of a place if one is connected to that context and culture in personal ways that cannot be acquired by academic studies alone.

By the same token, however, it is important to be vigilant against too much insularity and over-specialization in narrowly defined area studies or period expertise. Unlike more specialized venues like DoCoMoMo, for 20th-century modernism, or MESA (Middle East Studies Association), for area studies, the EAHN aspires to invite papers that, while well grounded in site-specific historical research, suggest broader connections and comparative insights. This very delicate balance between area studies (as site- and culture-specific historical research) and architectural history (as a more universal discipline) evokes the relationship between micro and macro histories that Jean-Louis Cohen talked about in his keynote address.

In that sense, while I applaud the broad geographical range of papers, I must confess that I am not fully certain if they speak to each other as much as we would like them to. The study of peripheral regions still seems to be largely dominated by research into colonial networks and European actors rather than local, regional and national perspectives from within those countries. Politics, power relations and production of the built environment still constitute the primary frameworks of analysis in such

studies, whereas papers on architectural theory, philosophy and culture are almost exclusively derived from European material, French and German in particular. While we congratulate ourselves for finally breaking out of traditional Eurocentricism, is it perhaps sneaking back in the way we frame research questions and choose particular sources depending on the geography we are studying? This is a question worth pondering.

Temporal Frameworks

The perennial topic of discussion seems to be the notorious modern/pre-modern (or early modern) divide. Given the EAHN's commitment to an expanded temporal field beyond the modern era, what do we make of the fact that the conference papers are focused almost exclusively on the 19th- to 21st-century time span? (I enjoyed Roger Stalley's keynote talk on medieval architecture so much that the question seems even more pertinent).

Possible answers to this question were discussed in a very stimulating roundtable, 'Pre-modern Architecture and the Shift of Historiography'. The so-called 'modernist bias' of our field is often linked to prevailing educational canons in professional schools of architecture, which tend to marginalize early modern and medieval topics as narrowly defined area and period studies of past epochs viewed from art historical rather than architectural perspectives. Architectural historians of earlier periods, many of them trained as art historians, rightly point out how the 'architectural' view tends to selectively appropriate and instrumentalize the past to affirm contemporary agendas. Bernd Nicolai, for example, mentioned in his paper Venturi and Rossi's postmodern historicism and typology studies, respectively, but we can also remember Sigfried Giedion, who said, 'History is a magical mirror. Who peers into it sees his own image in the shape of events and developments' (Giedion 1948: 2).

This 'usefulness approach' of architects, as Juliana Gavril put it in her talk, or the 'operative' attitude to history, as Manfredo Tafuri famously criticized it, highlights what is in fact a built-in tension in our field between the two terms of our academic identification, namely 'architecture' and 'history' – between our disciplinary affiliation with a generalist design profession and our distinctly culture- and site-specific work as historians. It is a delicate balance that we constantly juggle, as so aptly captured in the title of Gavril's paper, 'A Byzantinist with an Interest in Architecture or an Architectural Historian Specializing in Things Byzantine?'

This, I will argue, is a productive tension that benefits our discipline as a whole. Having just been to Venice Biennale before coming to the EAHN conference, I had the opportunity to ponder this relationship (or lack thereof) between architecture as a design practice and architecture as object of history. If the 1980 Biennale was about the return of history or 'the presence of the past', the 2016 one was all about the global future, a bleak one to be sure. As expected from Alejandro Aravena's curatorship, the Biennale produced a clear mandate for architecture to re-engage with pressing social and environmental issues. The prominent themes were migrants, refugees,

environmental and humanitarian problems, ecology, sustainability and spatial agency – topics that will be with us for the foreseeable future. These are still largely outside the radar of architectural history. I therefore appreciated Itohan Osayimwese's acknowledgement of such topics where she called for a 'militant historiography' and 'a new spatiality of migrant spaces'. Jorge Figuera's discussion of refugee camps, tourists and migrants also explored topics outside the traditional scope of architectural history. Also largely missing from our discourse are histories of construction, materiality and fabrication – practices that feature in a big way in Venice.

Ultimately, although the temporal focus of the papers in this conference is the modern period, and scholars of earlier periods may be justified in their feelings of marginalization, the modern/pre-modern divide is a conceptually problematic one, created and reproduced by established art historical conventions, periodizations and specializations. At a deeper level, beneath such institutional demarcations, I believe we engage with history as a temporal continuity. Even when our focus is one specific period, decade or century, we think about it in relation to what came before and what followed afterwards, and this relational thinking informs our particular way of studying our subject matter. After all, architectural history is itself a product of modern historicism, as it emerged in 18th and 19th centuries. Historians of earlier periods are, by definition, engaged with not just historical research into ancient, medieval or early modern architectures but also historiography, which pulls them into modern periods, since most of their scholarly sources were written in modern periods. Historians of modern architecture, on the other hand, having dismantled canonic historiography's portrayal of modernism as a total repudiation of history, now trace the myriad hitherto unacknowledged historical references that went into the making of modern architecture.

It is therefore exciting to imagine the field expanding along trans-historical investigations across time, not unlike the calls we made for trans-national studies across geography. I believe there is a lot to gain from attention to diachronic connections, along with synchronic studies of a period from within its own time – or rather, from the inseparable togetherness of synchrony and diachrony in our work (I am using synchronic and diachronic as theorized by the late Carl Schorske) (Schorske 1981: xxii). During the conference, Bernd Nicolai suggested several possible themes around which this may happen: for example, cultural transfer, migration, urban culture and multiplicity in Antiquity and the Middle Ages, especially in the Mediterranean basin, offer evocative precedents for today's globalization. Or, to give a more specific example, Samantha Martin MacAuliffe's paper on the Classical Athenian Agora, while historically grounded in Antiquity, invites trans-historical contemplations of the way civic spaces are structured, perceived and used at any time.

This emphasis on temporal continuities rather than sharp periodizations manifests itself in two other ways. The first is what I see as a more discernable trend towards dissolving the interwar/postwar divide in histories of

modern architecture – something Mary McLeod was particularly keen on recommending at the 2012 conference. In this 2016 conference, there are more papers on the interwar period, and there is no sign of 'fatigue' with the interwar Modern Movement – there was an entire session on Russian avant-garde, for example. And many, many more on postwar modernism, which, as a critical moment for rethinking modern architecture in the light of the new social and technological realities after the Second World War, continues to engage architectural historians.

At the same time, as I argue elsewhere (Bozdogan 2015: 9–26), we cannot forget that postwar modernism carries different meanings in the rapidly decolonizing 'global south', and in the non-aligned nations camp, than in Europe. When Europe was dealing with 'anxious' modernisms and revisionist ideas, the rest of the world was just embracing modernism as a symbol of optimism, progress and development, aided no doubt by a confident modernization theory and the newly minted institutions of international economic cooperation. Such time lags (for example, the heroic period of the modern being the interwar period in Europe and postwar for the rest of the world) not only underscore the artificiality of the interwar/postwar divide, but also urge us to think about differential temporalities, time lags and delays and, as Jean-Louis Cohen pointed out in his keynote address, continuities in patronage and institutions across political ruptures and regime changes.

The second way in which temporal continuities informed the conference is that even more recent periods, from the 1980s to the present, are now brought on board. Several papers and a specific thematic panel ('Architecture and the Neoliberal Turn') addressed how the integration and deregulation of global markets, the demise of the welfare state and the rise of postmodern formal experimentation have been transforming architecture and urban environments across the globe. For example, new architectural typologies are emerging, such as the shopping mall, the gated residential development and, as Amy Thomas has investigated, the new financial workplace. Most interestingly, our modernist conceptions of space and time, including the notion of *zeitgeist* so central to the historiography of modern architecture, are being contested by the emerging historical condition of neo-liberalism. How do we re-conceptualize architecture's relationship to time and temporality and critically rethink what *zeitgeist* might mean in the face of plural, fragmented and conflicting perceptions of this relationship?

The session on time travel was particularly thought provoking, addressing issues of periodization, newness, authenticity, obsolescence (Daniel Abramson), extinction (Marika Trotter) and anachronism (Anne Bordeleau), among others. Many other related questions were implied: what is the time of the 'early-modern' and how far back can we extend it? What is the time of the 'modern' (the question that has been haunting DoCoMoMo since its inception): was it a period style that is now over, delegating modern architecture to preservationists, or are the set of ideas, concerns and attitudes that gave rise to it in the first place still relevant today – 'back from utopia', according to Hilde Heynen (Henket and Heynen 2002).

Judging by the incredible richness and diversity of papers on modernism – interwar, postwar and everything in between – it seems to me that it is not yet the time for ‘histories finally relieved of the modern’ (as I understand Arindam Dutta put it at the 2012 conference). In fact, I will suggest that history of the modern is charged with a renewed relevance in the face of developments since the 1980s. I feel particularly strongly about this because in Turkey we now have a new political regime that has openly declared early Republican modernization and westernization ‘a bracket that has been closed’ – an aberration of history to be restored by re-embracing the country’s Ottoman and Islamic past. As a result, the modernist architectural heritage of the 20th century is seriously threatened, either by outright demolition and redevelopment or by calculated neglect.

The Focus on the City

Few would disagree that architecture, as a design discipline and as an object of research, is experiencing a scalar shift, from building to city to territory. Architecture, urbanism and landscape have more or less merged into one large and interdisciplinary constellation of design disciplines, and architectural history is seeking to reposition itself accordingly, as also evidenced by several papers. I believe we will continue to see not just more urban history but also more landscape history, environmental history and especially histories of infrastructure (dams, canals, roads, bridges and other engineering structures) coming into the fold of architectural history. During the conference, for example, I caught the tail end of one most interesting discussion on infrastructure as national identity construction. We can have many more studies examining, for example, how successive governments in peripheral geographies have sponsored many grand infrastructural projects as literal nation building or as a form of visible politics – a politics of performance.

I discern two contradictory directions in the way the scalar expansion has been unfolding.

On the one hand, it entails a de-emphasis on the historical definitions and municipal boundaries of cities, which, it is argued, are increasingly irrelevant in a globally interconnected world of neo-liberal market economies. What we see today are stretches of undefined ‘operational landscapes’, as Neil Brenner called them, that link city to region to territory – an expanded urbanism or even a ‘planetary urbanism’ again using Brenner’s terminology (Brenner 2014).

On the other hand, there is a rekindled interest in the city itself as the site of public space, civic architecture and participatory processes (all of them increasingly threatened by neo-liberal urban policies) – especially the city as the primary site of resistance and dissent.

One major symptom is that the reading and re-reading of Henri Lefebvre, David Harvey and Manuel Castells has skyrocketed across the world in the past couple of years in the aftermath of urban revolts in Tahrir, Taksim, Meydan and Zuchotti Park, among others.

Whether to re-conceptualize the city across scales or to explore its potentials for a more democratic public sphere,

the common denominator is a renewed focus on the city. As is evident in several papers presented at the conference, architectural (and urban) history has a lot to contribute to these topics. First, although these new discussions are triggered by developments since the 1980s, there are historical precedents to thinking in terms of scalar expansion and the territorial perspective. Environmental historians like William Cronon have already paved the way for looking at cities not as bounded entities but within their regional contexts and rural hinterlands (Cronon 1991). In this conference, two excellent panels, ‘The Modern Nature’ and ‘The Modern Village’, compellingly dissolved received binaries like nature–culture, natural–artificial, city–country, urban–rural and of course modernism–regionalism (as Mary McLeod has argued with her analysis of Le Corbusier’s syndicalist regionalism). Other papers have given us very interesting and informative new case studies of rural planning, agrarian reform, model villages and resettlement projects, from Matera to India to Zambia, as part of the modernist vision of the 20th century. In fact, as Lukasz Stanek has suggested elsewhere, the ‘mondialization’ of the postwar world can be looked at as an earlier reiteration of Neil Brenner’s planetary urbanism.

Secondly, the debates concerning the ‘right to the city’ by its inhabitants seem to be mirrored in historical research. Top-down histories of master planning and urban design, and their primary actors such as architects, planners and local and national governments, are still major topics of urban history; but there is increasingly more work on bottom-up histories of their reception and use by the people. I am delighted to see many papers on spaces of everyday modernity, especially spaces of leisure and public recreation such as, for example, the panel on Asia. Lawrence Chua’s work on Bangkok cinemas or Paul Clark’s on Beijing’s public park as a symbol of modernity and newness resonated with me. Recently, I have also been working on spaces of everyday modernity in early Republican Istanbul (specifically beaches, cinemas, music halls, etc.), which have given me new insights into the myriad of ways in which citizens are modernized and nationalized by new regimes, beyond the official programs of the state, which are typically enacted in schools, exhibitions, government buildings, etc., that are often the first to be studied by architectural historians.

Thirdly, the focus on the city is intimately connected to what is clearly an increasingly strong track of research in EAHN scholarship: the topic of housing. The connection between urbanism and housing is of course indispensable to the history of modern architecture, but revisiting that history seems to have acquired a new significance in the light of recent developments. Given the aggressiveness of neoliberal urban policies everywhere, a certain degree of nostalgia for the public housing programs of the 20th-century welfare state is perhaps to be expected. Many scholars are looking deeper into histories of housing, not just in terms of design and typology but also from newer angles of financing, regulations, agency and the relationship between real estate markets and design choices – as in the case of two informative and provocative panels: ‘Housing and the Grassroots’ and ‘Housing Representing

Finance'. Papers like Florian Urban's discussion of bottom-up agency and unconventional patterns of home ownership in Berlin and Sheila Crane's look at Casablanca's *bidonvilles* as the 'prehistory of neoliberalism' offer comparative insights for some of the world's most pressing discussions.

I will add, however, that although the demise of the welfare state and the withdrawal of governments from the production of housing is indeed a mark of neo-liberal urban policies everywhere, the picture is in fact more complicated in peripheral geographies of the world. Many authoritarian governments beyond Western Europe and North America now work with new public-private partnership models, and far from disinvesting from housing, they are major players in the real estate market. The Turkish state is a paradigmatic example – today the Mass Housing Administration of the national government –TOKI– is the country's biggest developer. One can also look at China and Russia for similar practices. The result is often what scholars call 'state-sponsored gentrification', displacing the poorest and least powerful groups in society.

Shift of Focus: From Objects to Processes

As Mary McLeod noted in 2012, the traditional art historical focus on singular buildings and individual designers has shifted towards a study of processes, actors and networks. McLeod cited Michael Hays' observation that 'we have passed from a history of authors and objects to a history of people and environments', and judging by this year's papers we can safely assert that this trend is strong and evolving. The production of the built environment is increasingly seen as the co-production of multiple actors and stakeholders beyond the heroic figure of the architect; we now look at clients, developers, local and national governments, consultants, financiers and of course, users. For example, Cieran O'Connor's opening talk made me think about the still largely understudied histories of state architects and architects of anonymous bureaucracies whose relationship to political authority perhaps offer a counterpoint to Jean-Louis Cohen's biographic investigation of known architects.

As the primary theoretical source of this shift, Bruno Latour's Actor-Network Theory (ANT) continues to have a special grip on the imagination of architectural historians. There is almost an emerging sub-field (if I can call it that) focused on colonial public works departments (PWD) across the globe and the constitution of 'tropical architecture', not just as a colonial techno-scientific network for the production of knowledge about building in the tropics, but also as a means for securing continued overseas commissions for European architects after independence. (To my knowledge, Jiat-Hwee Chang was among the first to employ ANT to look at this topic and his new book (2016) is fresh off the press).

Networks bring us to the very hot topic of our times – 'big data', connecting historiography with methodology. This was the topic of the very important and timely panel chaired by Paul Jaskot and Lukasz Stanek, who invited investigations testing the viability, potentials and limitations of new digital techniques (like data mining, pattern

recognition and data visualization programs), for the architectural historian's inevitably 'incommensurable and incomplete' data sets. One paper, for example, was Alice Santiago Faria's use of the ANT-based 'Nodegoat' program to map nodes, relations and connections of the Portuguese Colonial Public Works network (yes, PWD again).

The topic of 'digital humanities' seems poised to be debated and expanded for a long time to come. While some of the criticism directed at it seems justified and some Digital Humanities experiments look 'gimmicky' at best (I am not sure if I am qualified to pass judgment on this, when words like interface, coding and geo-referencing are complete mysteries to me), it is nevertheless very exciting to see how unconventional data sets can produce 'thick mapping' of urban life in historical periods (Presner et al. 2014). For example, a colleague of mine, Professor Murat Guvenc at Kadir Has University in Istanbul, a planner and geographer, is using phone books and Chamber of Commerce registers from the turn of the 20th century to first digitize the information and then to produce maps of land use, commercial activity and residential patterns in Istanbul on a street-by-street basis. Likewise, to my great fascination, graduate students in my Istanbul seminar use historical records, insurance maps and aerial photographs, geo-referenced with Google satellite images, to produce layered maps that 'peel off' to show the transformation of specific urban sites over time.

What is at stake here is a set of very interesting questions regarding the production and dissemination of knowledge: how does one negotiate the collaborative nature of this new research with the historian's craft, traditionally based on individual scholarship? Are current curatorial practices new forms of knowledge production for architectural history (the point made by Ana Miljacki)? What does it mean for historians to be curators? What does it mean, for example, to design open source queries, which bring in anonymous amateur historians as collaborators? Or to look at Trip Advisor for a study of 'architecture of leisure' through hotel reviews (as Amit Srivastava did)? What is the product of architectural historian's work: how is a digital exhibition different from a book? And of course, who is our audience – specialists and fellow academics or the broader public in urban and cyber-spaces of information exchange? And we should not forget the danger pointed out by Lukasz Stanek: Are we heading towards a digital humanities increasingly dominated by programmers, coders, and so on – a digital humanities without the humanities?

Since I am almost out of time, I have to leave out entirely several very interesting other topics and discussions in the conference – history of the profession, ornament, ambience or typology, not to mention the cross-cultural history of the medieval tower-house typology. I will however say a few things on my fifth and last theme.

Nation, Identity, History and Heritage

The pervasiveness of the talk about globalization, networks and flows has failed to obscure what is clearly the enduring power of nation as the primary category of modern identity construction. Historical and vernacular

references continue to be rich resources to which architects resort to in their search for cultural distinction in an increasingly same world. An example of this phenomenon is Karen Burns and Paul Walker's discussion of Australian soft, pluralistic, critical regionalism as a response to the 'demands of the global North for distinctively local content'.

Architectural history's complicity in constructing nationalist narratives clearly continues to be a very fertile field of research within the EAHN community. We heard several excellent papers showing us how national identity construction is never fixed, always contested and always in flux and how everywhere there is a rich history of competing nationalist narratives, each of which appropriate history differently and shape heritage politics accordingly, and how these narratives change over time. Preservation, museology, photography and media have been particularly effective in constructing and disseminating these narratives, as discussed in the roundtable, 'Architecture and the Changing Construction of National Identity'.

Another roundtable, chaired by Alona Nitzan-Shifan, addressed these issues in the context of war, destruction and reconstruction. It brought into sharper focus the perennial tension between preservation as an institution and the power of the nation state through which it is practiced. As the papers reminded us, particularly important for our conflict-ridden world is the argument, via Chantal Mouffe, that rather than the unrealistic hope of total reconciliation, a 'conflictual consensus' is needed for preservation practices that are more inclusive (Mouffe 2013). This call for what Mouffe calls 'agonistic politics' was echoed in Emily Bereskin's call for social engagement as a way of transcending competing group narratives in Nicosia, Cyprus. Meanwhile, Lucy Maulsby's discussion of the repurposing of fascist party buildings in postwar Italy posed an interesting question that Hilde Heynen elaborated in her comments at the roundtable: is it something specific to architecture (as opposed to factors external to it) that some buildings are repurposed and accepted after the regimes that produced them are discredited, while others are destroyed by the new regimes that replace them? The question reminds us as well of Andrew Hersher's observation that 'material destruction is cultural production'.

When national identities are always contested and defined differently by different groups, what constitutes national heritage inevitably becomes a contested terrain and practices of preservation, intensely political. We had a very telling, almost textbook case of this fact in Istanbul in 2013 when an ill-conceived government scheme to redevelop a park in the modern heart of the city triggered mass demonstrations and the occupation of the now-famous Gezi Park. By way of conclusion, I will bring up this story, which captures so many of the issues I have touched on in this overview.

As you may recall from the media, a full-fledged revolt began in Istanbul in May 2013, when bulldozers entered the Gezi Park to cut the trees and to clear the site for the government's projected shopping mall/mixed use

development. The project, now thankfully stopped by court order (which President Tayyip Erdoğan has just recently promised to reverse), proposed to reconstruct a replica of the 19th-century Ottoman artillery barracks that once stood on the same site but was demolished incrementally in the early 1940s to make way for Gezi Park. More interestingly, the barracks were, in turn, built partially over a former Armenian cemetery.

When we look back at the making of the Gezi Park, we may agree that it was perhaps a mistake to demolish the barracks, although most architects and architectural historians agree that, contrary to the personal preferences of Erdoğan, then the prime minister, the highly ornate, eclectic orientalist style of the building was of dubious architectural merit at best. Nevertheless, no one under the age of 70 remembers the barracks today. Gezi Park not only now occupies a central place in collective urban memory, it is also a rare green breathing space in an already overbuilt metropolis.

Erdoğan's disingenuous claim that rebuilding the barracks is 'a form of historic preservation' – a restoration of the site to what it should have been in the first place – raises very troublesome questions: Why are the barracks historic heritage and Prost's Park is not? Who decides what constitutes historic heritage? Whose heritage? And how can preservation practices negotiate between competing claims to the same site or project?

At the conference, Christian Freigang introduced the roundtable on historiography by observing the gap between the 'modernist bias' of architectural historians and the popular public interest in pre-modern historic setting, especially in tourism and media, giving rise to phenomena like Downton Abbey tours. Sensing an opportunity there, local and national governments and municipal authorities across the globe sponsor fake historical settings, replicas and theme park environments at an alarming speed; China and Turkey are cases in point. To salvage architectural history from such superficial appropriations seems to be one of the key responsibilities of architectural history in the 21st century.

Competing Interests

The author declares that they have no competing interests.

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How to cite this article: Bozdogan, S 2016 EAHN Conference, Dublin June 2–5, 2016: Closing Remarks. *Architectural Histories*, 4(1): 14, pp. 1–7, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/ah.236>

Published: 18 October 2016

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