Call for Abstracts

The Avie and Sarah Arenson

Built Heritage Research Center at the Technion

Fourth Annual International Symposium

**FICTITIOUS CAPITALS**   
Postmodernism and the Built Environment

Thursday–Friday, March 24th–25th, 2022

Technion, Haifa

The Avie and Sarah Arenson Built Heritage Research Center (BHRC) at the Faculty of Architecture and Town Planning at the Technion will be hosting its fourth international symposium on heritage, history and culture. The symposium will take place at the Technion in Haifa. The public program will be broadcast live on Thursday, March 24th, 2022.

The symposium will bring together scholars to present their current research on architectural transformations within the neoliberal era. Through an international perspective and comparative outlook, we wish to question the historiographic scarcity of architectural studies of the end of the 20th century. We strive to unveil the similarities and differences in the development of spatial practices amid tremendous economic and cultural transformations, specifically since the 1970s and in the face of the rise of neoliberalism.

**The Missing Link – Architectural Culture and the Neoliberal Turn**

Beginning in the 1970s, the decline of socialism and modern-day utopianism in the light of new political and economic realities fostered the emergence of both neoliberal ideologies and new architectural aesthetics. These aesthetics were gradually translated into dissimilar and contradictory branches of postmodern architecture, and also into planning ideologies that were closely tied to notions of locality, progress, and anti-modernist sentiment. However, the influence and translation of neoliberal ideologies and practices into these new spatial aesthetics is still obscure in terms of architectural historiography.

Furthermore, the term ‘neoliberalism’ has been controversial and often attracts incoherent definitions and ambiguous understandings. For our purposes, neoliberalismwill be used as an expression that goes beyond what David Harvey defined as “a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade.”[[1]](#footnote-1) Since the 1970s, almost all Western states, later joined by socialist ones, have embraced some version of neoliberal theory and practice, including deregulation, privatization, and withdrawal from various areas of social provision.

The historiography of modern architecture has traditionally been shaped around questions of style and form, while generally ignoring other external and everyday aspects of the arduous and costly venture of building. Since the 1970s, this stance has been reexamined in ongoing attempts to expand architectural histories with an analysis of financial and real-estate decision-making processes, such as Manfredo Tafuri’s *Architecture and Utopia* (1973) and Rem Koolhaas’s *Delirious New York* (1978).[[2]](#footnote-2) However, these examinations remained focused on the independence of the architectural expression, leaving the role of the economy in the shaping of architecture relatively undiscussed. Drawing on Fredric Jameson’s cultural understanding of late-capitalism and Harvey’s description of the ‘fictitious capital’ as a collective formal yearning for stability after the economic crisis of the 1970s,[[3]](#footnote-3) more recent architectural historians have sought to establish the relationship between space, architecture, and neoliberal economies. Scholars such as Reinhold Martin, Peggy Deamer, and Douglas Spencer have incorporated the economy into their architectural histories.[[4]](#footnote-4) In a recent anthology of studies on architecture and its economic ties, *Neoliberalism on the Ground: Architecture and Transformation from the 1960s to the Present*,Cupers, Gabrielsson, and Mattsson examined how architecture under neoliberalism “hits the ground” and intervenes in “political narratives, organizational conditions, and cultural dynamics” of places.[[5]](#footnote-5)

While acknowledging the historiographical gap, much contemporary research has been reluctant to offer new ways to incorporate the economy or broaden the scope of architectural research. Thus, the missing link of economic features when it comes to our understanding of historical developments in architecture is still understudied. However, technological advancements mean that architectural historiography is now able to better embrace multidisciplinary approaches and rigorous processes of economic analysis in relation to the built environment. Such approaches can improve our limited understanding of how these two fields have interacted through time.

The symposium will focus on the legacy of postmodernism in architecture and in urban planning, from the 1970s to the present day, and question its connection to the contemporaneous economic transformations. In particular, the symposium will promote historiographical research on the following topics:

* Spatial practices and their leading values in the era of the globalized market economy.
* Architectural culture under global and local economic changes since the end of the 20th century.
* Economic readings of real-estate regulation and development ventures and their spatial outtakes.

We wish to pursue these topics in two workshops that will be chaired by Prof. Stephan Trüby (University of Stuttgart) and Prof. Florian Urban (Glasgow School of Art) on 24th March 2022, and invite graduate and post-doctoral researchers to apply to participate accordingly.

**Important Dates**

21st December 2021 – Apply by submitting an abstract and a short author’s biography

7th January 2022 – Notifications of acceptance

24th March 2022 – International Symposium in the Technion

25th March 2022 – Day tour of Tel Aviv

**To Apply**

[**mailto:heritage@technion.ac.il**](mailto:heritage@technion.ac.il?subject=Fictitious%20Capitals%20symposium)

Registration details, keynote speakers, accepted abstracts and the final plan will be posted by email and social media.

**Format of Abstracts**

Abstracts should not exceed 300 words.

Abstracts should follow the directives of *The Chicago Manual of Style* (16th edition).

All abstracts accepted for the workshop presentations will be published either online, in print, or both.

By submitting an abstract, presenters authorize BHRC to publish that abstract online and/or in the printed program.

Abstracts may be reviewed and lightly copy-edited for grammar and consistency of style.

1. David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Manfredo Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1976) [1973]; Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 292. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Reinhold Martin, *Utopia’s Ghost: Architecture and Postmodernism, Again* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010); Peggy Deamer, ed., *Architecture and Capitalism: 1845 to the Present* (London: Routledge, 2014); Douglas Spencer, *The Architecture of Neoliberalism: How Contemporary Architecture Became an Instrument of Control and Compliance* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Kenny Cupers, Catharina Gabrielsson, and Helena Mattsson, eds., *Neoliberalism on the Ground: Architecture and Transformation from the 1960s to the Present* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2020), 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)