

CALL FOR PAPERS: Special Issue: Boundaries, Flows, and the Construction of Muslim Selves through Architecture

Contact Email: fskarim@ku.edu

URL: <https://www.intellectbooks.co.uk/journals/view-Journal,id=204/view,page=2/>

This special issue of the *International Journal of Islamic Architecture* takes as its starting point how a new sense of 'boundary' emerged from the post-nineteenth-century dissolution of large, heterogeneous empires into a mosaic of nation-states in the Islamic world. This new sense of 'boundary' has not only determined the ways in which we imagine and construct the idea of modern citizenship, but also redefines relationships between the nation, citizenship, cities and architecture. Whereas political debates today question the compatibility of Islam with the concept of the nation-state, the construction of the twentieth-century Islamic world was embroiled in debates around the nature of the modern state itself. Such debates oscillated between Islam as a political ideology and Islam as a personal belief system. These debates were often troubled by novel uses of 'boundary' in both physical and conceptual forms linked to the phenomenon of the nation-state. These boundaries were further challenged by flows of persons, materials, and ideas that destabilized the political configuration of the nation-state itself.

Hence, in this special issue of the *International Journal of Islamic Architecture* we invite papers that bring critical perspectives to our understanding of the interrelation between the accumulated flows and the evolving concepts of boundary in predominantly Muslim societies, and within the global Muslim diaspora. This special issue seeks to investigate how architecture mediates the creation and deployment of boundaries and boundedness that have been devised to define, enable, obstruct, accumulate and/or control flows able to disrupt bounded territories or identities. More generally, it proposes to explore how architecture might be considered as a means to understand the relationship between flows and boundaries.

Questions of nationhood and boundary-making critically define the modern era. This is particularly true for global Muslim communities. Nation-building efforts have gone through phases of creativity and disillusionment ranging from the Israel-Palestine question, the creation and fragmentation of Pakistan as a spatiotemporal utopia, the Islamic revolution in Iran, to the post-oil prosperity in the Gulf countries, the repercussions of 9/11, the disenchantment of the Arab Spring, and the rise of South East Asian countries as global powerhouses. The plausible image of an ideal Islamic society vis-à-vis the nation-state has shifted along with these major transformations, and an incongruity between ideals and realities has informed resulting spatial expressions as well.

This special issue seeks to explore alternative definitions of bounded identities, facilitating new approaches to spatial and architectural forms. 'Boundary' can be 'hard', such as the geopolitical boundaries regulated by states. These boundaries often result in conflicts over

the ownership of territory and geological resources or even over history, authenticity, and the nature of the past. Yet boundaries can also be 'soft' such as those demarcated by religious, cultural, and linguistic differences among different Muslim factions, or associations of a Muslim population within a predominantly non-Muslim society or vice-versa. Through the transition from empires to nation-states, 'boundary' has acquired new ideological meanings in response to questions about Muslim selves and citizenship.

The concept of boundary is further intricately entangled with the concept of flows. In the era of global flows of information, commodities, resources and people, boundaries work together with flows as two corresponding factors in constructing the spatial experience of Islamic societies. Several issues nevertheless complicate the relationship between boundaries and flows. For instance, Muslim diasporic movements, through voluntary migration seeking a better life elsewhere or forced displacement due to war, genocide or climate change, challenge our normative view of Islamic architecture outside of the normative Islamic world. The Muslim diaspora creates its own niches that confront and conform to complex global flows of socio-cultural dynamics, ranging from hate crimes and political resentments to a global awareness of diversity and minority.

Against this context of global flows, several phenomena prompt us to rethink the relationship between architecture, urban planning and boundaries. For instance, the transnational flows of heterogeneous Islamic groups as radical as the Taliban and as moderate as Tablighi Jamaat problematize notions of national 'hard' boundaries. Or, while the contemporary media presents the international networks of madrasas and mosques as nothing more than a breeding ground of Islamic radicalism, other roles that these spaces play in serving as transnational nodes in an expanding spatial network remain largely unexplored. This special issue seeks to explore how architecture and urban discourses can shed light on these new forms of identity politics and resulting internal dissonances within Muslim and global communities. How, for example, could an architectural imagination bring a critical perspective to the idea of jihad, notions of the umma, and potentials for a pan-Muslim society?

These questions also disrupt typical approaches to architectural history. The architectural forms of twentieth- and twenty-first-century nation building is often narrated through the pivotal forces of the Cold War, Bretton Woods financial policy, the emergence of development studies, and contested theories of modernization, Islamization, and postcoloniality. Within such a context, the global flows of ideas, money and technical expertise took place through intergovernmental agencies such as the United Nations, the European Union, Commonwealth and Muslim League, and the economic and political interest of funding agencies such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, European Development Fund and USAID. These contested groups of international stakeholders aimed at creating local technical experts and cultivated architects as development agents. The constituent forces of boundaries and flows eventually materialized to disrupt these forces, as architectural and urban projects ranging from small-scale community development schemes such as low-cost housing and rural development

programs to large-scale modernization efforts such as the establishment of nuclear research centers.

Gradually, the flows of architectural philosophies regarding the meaning of Islamic architecture in contemporary time created their own sphere of intellectual debate within Islamic societies. Views were exchanged through symposia, professional meetings, architectural magazines and manifestoes. In addition to Euro-American pedagogical and professional establishments, a parallel educational infrastructure – the madrasa – also enabled formidable transnational flows of knowledge and people across the Islamic world.

The focus of the contributions to this special issue of IJIA should follow these variant forms of disruptive flows and address the question of how architecture – defined broadly – creates nuanced definitions of Muslim selves. With an objective to better understand how, in the age of global capital, architecture mediates the forces that constitute flows and boundaries, the contributions should address architecture not only as the by-product of socio-political forces, but also as the active promulgator of those forces.

Themes that might be addressed include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. How might architecture be used to explore the ways in which the diverse formation of nationalism within Islamicate worlds cater to trans-local exchanges of ideas, ideologies, and human migration across geopolitical borders? Historically, how were different experiences of partition (i.e. in the Indian subcontinent or the Middle East) and nation-building efforts informed by architectural developments and urban planning?
2. Who are the agents of the exchanges of architectural knowledge and expertise? How are the international flows of ideas, money and expertise defined in competition and collaboration between local and international professionals? In the global context, how do practicing architects tackle the challenges of boundaries? Questions to address include refugee housing or strategies for negotiating cultural identities of immigrant populations in a 'foreign' land.
3. How could the architecture of the Muslim diaspora be used as a means to better understand Islamicate societies in the contemporary world? How is architecture located at the junction of the experience of war, genocide, migration, and partition? What might the architectural expression of a migrant Muslim community tell us about the politics of construction and destruction of the Muslim self?
4. How do flows of discourse and expert knowledge navigate between institutions (universities, NGOs, intergovernmental agencies etc.) within and beyond Islamic countries? What is the role of architecture in that process? How do these flows work at the intersection of the training of 'local' experts in international institutions and thus contribute to the discourse on 'modern Islamic architecture'?

Essays that focus on historical and theoretical analysis (DiT papers) should be a minimum of 6,000 words but no more than 8,000 words, and essays on design and practice (DiP papers) can range from 3,000 to 4,000 words. Contributions from practitioners are welcome and should bear in mind the critical framework of the journal. Contributions from practitioners

and scholars of art history, anthropology, diaspora studies, sociology, and geography and building construction are particularly welcome.

Please send a 400-word abstract with essay title to the guest editor, Farhan Karim, University of Kansas (fskarim@ku.edu), by **30 October 2017**. Those whose proposals are accepted will be contacted soon thereafter and requested to submit full papers to the journal by **15 May 2018**. All papers will undergo full peer review.

For author instructions regarding paper guidelines, please consult:
www.intellectbooks.com/ijia

Contact Info:

Farhan Karim

Assistant Professor

Department of Architecture

University of Kansas