

## **Call for Papers: Field as Archive / Archive as Field. *International Journal of Islamic Architecture (IJIA)***

This special issue of the *IJIA* focuses on the experience of carrying out archival work or fieldwork in architectural research, including research-led practice. How might this experience, with all its contingencies and errancies, be made into the very stuff of the architectural histories, theories, criticisms and/or practices resulting from it? This question is rendered all the timelier due to recent and ongoing developments across the globe, not least in the geographies relevant to the *IJIA*'s remit. The fallout from the so-called 'Arab Spring' has escalated social, political, and economic crises and, in certain cases like Libya and Syria, has taken an overtly violent turn. Major countries with a predominantly Muslim population, such as Turkey, Egypt and Indonesia, have witnessed restrictions on civil liberties. Moreover, the word 'Islam' has become embroiled in various restrictive measures introduced in countries whose successive administrations have otherwise laid claim to being bastions of democracy and freedom, such as emergency rule in France and travel bans in the US. Others with significant Muslim populations, such as India and Russia, have seen nationalist and/or populist surges, often with significant implications for their minorities. Such developments have engendered numerous issues of a markedly architectural and urban character, including migration, refuge, and warfare, protest and surveillance, as well as heightening the risk of contingencies and errancies affecting archival work and fieldwork. Whereas this risk and its materializations are typically considered unfortunate predicaments and written out of research outputs, how might a focus on architecture at this juncture help write them back into history, theory, criticism, and practice? What might this mean for the ways in which architectural research is conceived and carried out under seemingly 'ordinary' circumstances—those that appear free from the risk of contingencies and errancies affecting archival work and field work?

As evident in the joint emphasis on fieldwork and archival work, these questions are methodologically animated by a convergence between two prominent venues of architectural research conventionally seen mutually discrete if not antipodal: field and archive. In fact, when considered spatially, both fields and archives have more in common than that which separates them. Access to both is monitored by gatekeepers: fieldwork in the anthropological sense demands a significant degree of rapport with individuals controlling entry into the field, while archival research requires negotiating access with archivists and involves official letters, application forms, ID cards, stamps, and signatures. Findings of archival work and fieldwork are then disseminated through academic knowledge production; this is yet another realm characterized by gatekeeping mechanisms, in which case researchers themselves are implicated as gatekeepers. One way of thinking archives and fields together architecturally, then, is to ask exactly what might be at stake in the relationship between the mechanisms of gatekeeping involved in fieldwork, archival work, and knowledge production?

Conventional approaches may limit this question to practicalities; they may categorically celebrate the permission to enter the archive or the field, and lament being denied entry. Doing so perpetuates received wisdom regarding the epistemic authority of officially sanctioned institutions, methods and communicative modes being greater than that of others. Contrarily, contributions to this special issue are invited to adopt a critical and self-reflexive approach by treating the denial of access as empirical material to think with, or the granting of access as a selective and politically charged phenomenon. This is to directly probe how power structures shape what is accessible and inaccessible, placing them at the heart of what it means to engage in archival work and fieldwork. It is to ask, for instance in cases where

access is denied: in what ways was denial communicated; what reasons were given; how might these be considered as part of the content of the research itself? Or, in cases of seemingly trouble-free access: what documents or information were required to gain access; who gave the final decision; what conversations were had; what, if any, were the limitations and restrictions; in what ways might the answer to these questions speak to the research itself? Such questions may also apply to the notion of participation, which is central especially to fieldwork. Participation is conventionally understood as an instrument that enhances the extent to which research outcomes represent the needs, thoughts and feelings of interlocutors or beneficiaries. Instead, this issue invites contributors to approach participation as a political mechanism through which power-knowledge structures are regulated (rather than alleviated or invalidated) by various actors involved in or impacted by the research, including researchers themselves. On a broader level, thinking archives and fields together in such a way has implications for how time and temporality are considered in architectural research. The prevalent tendency in this respect is to associate archives with history and fields with that which is recent or contemporary. Contributors are encouraged to reconsider this tendency by showing how archives might speak of the present and how fields might offer novel understandings of the past. Finally, to scrutinize issues affecting fieldwork and archival work critically and self-reflexively—that is, beyond such categorical oppositions as permission versus rejection or compliance versus refusal—is to avoid limiting the imperative for such scrutiny only to geographical and/or historical contexts deemed ‘turbulent’. It means to posit the obligation to account for power structures as the very condition of rather than the exception to archival work and fieldwork.

Paper proposals should work from the framework outlined thus far to offer insights relevant to the *IJIA*'s remit, which is defined broadly as ‘the historic Islamic world, encompassing the Middle East and parts of Africa and Asia, but also the more recent geographies of Islam in its global dimensions’. Contributors should fully exploit the self-reflexive potential of this framework by addressing the role of architecture and architectural research as not just the product of the various issues affecting archival work and fieldwork but also their instigator. Specific questions that contributors might wish to explore include but are not limited to the following:

1. What are the potentials and limitations of a research focus on architecture when negotiating contingencies and errancies affecting archival work and/or fieldwork?
2. How might architectural research help unpack the ethics and politics of access to fields and/or archives beyond the question of physical entry or the lack thereof?
3. How might an architecturally focused approach to archives as fields (and vice versa) help complicate linear approaches to history and historiography? How might it help complicate the sweeping identification of certain historical and/or geographical contexts with conflict, unrest, crisis, and oppression as diametrically opposed to post-conflict, peace, prosperity and freedom, and offer a nuanced appraisal of the agency of researchers and interlocutors operating in such contexts?
4. What are the ways in which the positionality and reliability of architectural researchers, gatekeepers, interlocutors, or participants shift during archival work and fieldwork? How might these shifts be exploited, rather than glossed over, during the research towards attuning to non-institutional methods of knowledge production? How might they be integrated into, rather than written out of, the histories, theories, criticisms and/or practices resulting from the research?

5. How might a convergence between the concepts of field and archive help architectural researchers negotiate the dynamics between intellectual autonomy and responsibility towards others involved in or impacted by the research?

6. What might be the role of language and that of other communicative modes in engendering or negotiating contingencies and errancies affecting fieldwork and archival work? What new forms, structures, and styles—be they textual or material—might result from a close and nuanced attention to this role?

Articles offering historical and theoretical analysis (DiT papers) should be between 6000 and 8000 words, and those on design and practice (DiP papers) between 3000 and 4000 words. Practitioners are welcome to contribute insofar as they address the critical framework of the journal. Urbanists, art historians, anthropologists, geographers, sociologists, and historians, whose work resonates with architecture are also welcome. Please send a title and a 400-word abstract to the guest editor, Eray Çaylı, London School of Economics and Political Science ([e.cayli@lse.ac.uk](mailto:e.cayli@lse.ac.uk)), by **30 July 2018**. Authors of accepted proposals will be contacted soon thereafter and will be requested to submit full papers by 28 February 2019. All papers will be subject to blind peer review.

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