

Call for Papers

Para-colonial – Colonial – Post-colonial: Influences and Transactions in the Architecture of Oceania (1840–1990)

Held at Unitec Institute of Technology, Auckland/New Zealand, 29 June–1 July, 2022

Joint symposium by Unitec Institute of Technology (Auckland, New Zealand) and Technical University Munich (Germany)

The beginning of global contact with the South Pacific is often automatically associated with the first explorative travels of James Cook in the 18th century. However, it was the late 19th century which culminated in a complex process of multinational developments, backwards and forwards, battles even. Imperialist interests already dated back many centuries, but in realising the trading potentials in this part of the world, the major colonising powers – such as Great Britain, France, USA, the German Reich and others – occupied and took ‘possession’ of island countries in the Pacific during the latter part of the 19th century. This development reached its first peak around and after 1900. However, before this direct colonial impact, trading firms and missionaries had already caused a first – ‘para-colonial’ – wave (indirect, not yet official colonial), introducing and implementing foreign concepts and customs. This dynamic process of constant negotiations and change of power continued well into the first half of the 20th century: in the context and aftermath of the First World War, countries neighbouring the Pacific from the west, east and south – like the USA and Japan to Australia and New Zealand – took over Mandated Territories from collapsing German colonies in the region, but at the same time acted themselves as de-facto colonisers in the concerned island countries from the Marianne Islands to Papua-New Guinea all the way to Samoa. Today, the impact of these 100 years of para-colonial, colonial and postcolonial experiences of more than a century is still widely felt. The recent apology for the dawn raids of the 1970s offered by New Zealand’s Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern reflects this.

Taking the Courthouse in Apia/Samoa as an example, we can see how much different actors and cultures have interacted and how historical building from contested pasts continue to be in the centre of contemporary heritage debates: this building, designed by a German architect in 1902 but built with material from the US and other overseas places, first represented German colonial administrations, then New Zealand’s military administration, and finally housed the Samoan Prime Minister’s office. Unfortunately, the Courthouse was dismantled in 2020 despite many attempts to save it.

How, then have the different changes of powers from outside or the inside – from incoming trading firms and missionaries to whole imperialist powers with their established colonies on the one hand to the colonised island populations on the other – impacted on architecture? How have the various ruling powers in the South Pacific conceived and appropriated pre-colonial local architectural traditions (or not)? How did they develop and implement new forms of architecture in the Pacific Island nations? And how did gradual political independence in the region affect architectural production? And finally: What of all these architectural fragments from a century of constant changes of power has survived until today? What kind of architectural heritage is it and for whom? And how can we ‘read’ this complex, multi-layered architectural legacy?

Connecting existing knowledge with new research

Knowledge on colonial architecture in the South Pacific is still sparse. Connections with pre-colonial settings and the post-colonial afterlife of this built legacy are often missing. In this sense, this call for papers particularly welcomes contributions within the targeted time span c. 1840–1990, embedded in the larger South Pacific region. These contributions would attempt to link their concrete architectural case studies of buildings, ensembles and urbanist projects with reflections on the influences of and transactions between locals and foreigners, colonials and colonised, and their changing allegiances, even across changing political powers.

Keywords and thematic approaches could be:

- political actors, cultural brokers, firms and agencies, institutions and national regimes
- contact and encounter, competition, collaboration to local and regional forms of resistance and/or exchange
- normative strategies, aesthetic choices of particular styles in relation to the representation of power, implicit or explicit cultural references
- building practices, materials, technical and logistical aspects, applied building norms and eventual results of structural hybridisation in form, function, material and style

‘Oceania’: a geographic area as focus of the symposium

While denominations such as Pacific, Pacific Ocean, Pacific Islands etc. are equally varying in their geographic and cultural definitions and comprise of an enormous region of the world which lies beyond the manageable scope of the symposium, we would like to use the term ‘Oceania’ here to narrow down the core area of investigation: as the specific historic and geo-political entity which Germans referred to as *Ozeanien* (Oceania) or *Stiller Ozean* (Silent Ocean) during the 30 years (1884 to 1914) of their colonisation.

During this period, the German Reich took as colonies the Northern Mariana Islands (*Marianen*), Federated States of Micronesia and Palau (*Karolinen*), the Marshall Islands (*Marshall-Inseln*), north-eastern New-Guinea (*Kaiser-Wilhelmsland*), New Britain Archipelago (*Bismarck-Archipel*) and Western Samoa (*Deutsch-Samoa*).

We particularly invite contributions about these specific territories, while case-studies on neighbouring island regions, such as Fiji or Tonga, in their own para-colonial, colonial and post-colonial contexts, are equally welcome.

As a consequence, Pacific nations like Australia, New Zealand, the USA or Japan are not targeted as geographical entities per se during the symposium, however they are explicitly included as political players and national actors related to building practices.

Format and thematic sessions of the symposium

Our intention is to hold the symposium at the School of Architecture at Unitec Institute of Technology in Auckland, **from Wed 29 June to Fri 1 July, 2022.**

This will encompass an evening event with introductions and keynote, two days of symposium, conference dinner, and a separate poster event for Master of Architecture students.

With worldwide uncertainties around the possibility of travel, we are equally planning the symposium to take place as a hybrid event or alternatively entirely online. A decision about online or in-situ will be made in March/April 2022.

The symposium is intended to comprise of five thematic sessions:

Session 1: Para-colonial forms of architecture in Oceania

- The architecture and logistical networks of trading firms
- The architecture of agricultural/industrial production (Copra factories, settler communities etc.)
- The architecture of religious missions
- The place of Oceanian architecture in published primary sources of the para-colonial period
- Ethnographic surveys of Oceanian architecture (e.g. Augustin Krämer or Te Rangi Hiroa about Samoa)

Session 2: Architecture and urbanism during German colonisation (1884–1914)

- Architectural case-studies of German-colonial island regions (see above): building types, forms and functions, styles and materials
- Urbanistic patterns of German-colonial rule: capitals, settlements, harbours, infrastructures
- Tracing individual and institutional actors (architects, engineers, firms, missions, agencies)
- Systems of building know-how/techniques and technological innovation, norms and logistics (prefabrication, transfer from Germany or other places)
- Spectacles of German-colonial Oceania: the Berlin Colonial Exhibition of 1896 and other events
- Publications about German-colonial architecture (handbooks, journals, travel reports, PR-material)

Session 3: Zones of inter-colonial encounter, architectural competition, cooperation, inspiration and knowledge transfer (preferably in relation to the German-colonial contact zone)

- Architecture and urbanism of British-colonial Oceania (e.g. Fiji)
- Architecture and urbanism of French-colonial Oceania (e.g. New Caledonia, Tahiti)
- Architecture and urbanism of US-American Oceania (e.g. Guam, American Samoa)
- Independent neighbour islands and their contemporary architectural manifestations (such as Tonga)
- The role of Australia and New Zealand for the German colonial building industries (Pre-fab building industries, construction material, labour power and knowledge transfer etc.)

Session 4: Mandated territories, protected states and independence – post-colonial building practices

- Architecture and building practices during Australia's mandate over New Guinea
- Architecture and building practices during New Zealand's mandate over Samoa
- Architecture initiated by France and Great Britain in the wake of Oceanian independence
- Architecture during Japan's mandate in Pacific islands previously colonised by the German Reich
- Architecture of independence after the German-colonial era

Session 5: Origins and heritage reconsidered – colonial architecture and indigenous legacies today

- The afterlife of (German) colonial architecture, urbanism and infrastructure today
- The afterlife of architectural knowledge and artefacts from the South Pacific in overseas archives, museums and collections – and their possible return
- The role of (German) colonial knowledge production within the post-colonial rebirth of indigenous/customary architecture in the Pacific (Augustin Krämer's publications etc.)
- Contemporary building practices in the former (German-) colonial Pacific
- Discussions in former colonising countries (such as Germany) about colonial pasts and their remaining architecture (documentation, research, preservation, exhibition, cooperation)

Call for abstracts

The contributions will be published in form of conference proceedings or as a peer-reviewed themed volume. We expect all invited speakers at the conference to agree to contribute their paper for publication.

Please submit your abstracts no later than **10 December 2021** via email to **conference email:** colonialoceania.ltg@ed.tum.de

Acceptance of abstracts to be notified by end of December 2021.

Abstract proposals should cover the following:

- author's name and affiliation (including 100-word biographical notes),
- intended draft title and indication of one of the above-listed sessions,
- an abstract of max. 300 words (indicating structure and intended contribution to the conceptual and thematic approach of the conference, the specific case-study),
- and a short list of relevant primary and secondary sources (not included in the word count).

Once accepted, authors will be invited to prepare a full conference paper by 11 March 2022 (no longer than 4,500 words including notes) which will be subject to peer review.

We expect speakers to include conference discussion in their final papers of the conference proceeding. Full papers will be expected to follow Chicago 17 notes and bibliography style.

Organisers

Conference Convenors:

Michael Falser (TU Munich/Germany), Christoph Schnoor (Unitec Auckland/New Zealand)

Advisory Committee (Unitec/TUM)

Peter McPherson, Semisi Potauaine, Falaniko Tominiko, Dietrich Erben

Both host institutions have generously offered financial support for this symposium. A limited amount of funding assistance for travel and accommodation is available on application. Please indicate informally in your abstract proposal to which extent financial support may be needed.

The conference convenors:

Christoph Schnoor, Associate Professor, Unitec Institute of Technology (Auckland, New Zealand). He has taught at Unitec in Auckland since 2004, in the subjects of history, theory, heritage & conservation, studio and research methods. Research Leader at the School of Architecture ([Webpage](#)). One of his research areas is German colonial architecture, as well as colonial and customary architecture, with focus on Samoa. Publications include a Conservation Plan for the protection of the Courthouse in Apia, 2012, and “Imagery or Principles of the Pacific?” in *Fabrications*, the journal of SAHANZ, 2016. Email: cschnoor@unitec.ac.nz

His research further focuses on history, historiography and theory of modernist architecture, such as Le Corbusier; Austrian émigré architect to New Zealand, Ernst Plischke; US-British historian Colin Rowe. Recently published: *Le Corbusier's Practical Aesthetic of the City* (London: Routledge, 2020); *Ernst A. Plischke – Architekt zwischen den Welten* (Zurich: Park Books, 2020).

Michael Falser, Project Leader and Adjunct Professor at the Chair of Architectural History, Technical University Munich (Germany) is an art and architectural historian and cultural heritage specialist. In his current research project, funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG), he investigates the architectural impact of the German-colonial era (c.1880-1920) between Africa, East Asia and Oceania ([Project Homepage](#)). Email: michael.falser@tum.de

He edited the themed volume “Global Spaces of German Colonialism” in German art history journal *Kunstchronik* (July 2021, [ToC here](#)). Currently, an exhibition project with catalogue publication is planned for April 2023 with a focus on published primary sources about the architectural impact during the German-colonial period ([CfP here](#)).

Other publication projects include *Angkor Wat. A Transcultural History of Heritage* (2 vols, Berlin: DeGruyter, 2020) and *Habsburgs going Global. The Austro-Hungarian Concession of Tientsin/Tianjin in China (1902-1917)* (forthcoming Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna).