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Paths of Approach

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INTRODUCTION



The Architecture of Global Governance: Paths of Approach

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ABSTRACT

International organisations and global governance studies typically refer to “architecture” as the structures of decision-making, power distribution, or financial flows. This position paper challenges this conventional understanding by delving into its primary meaning—the built environment. It charts ways in which architectural design, historiography, and criticism become relevant for the study of international organisations and, inversely, how multilateral diplomacy (e.g. “informal” networks such as the G20) questions existing architectural typologies and narratives. The study focuses on the meanings and expectations embedded in the spaces utilised by global governance actors. By evaluating the architectural discipline’s ability to conceptualise these spaces beyond their symbolic dimension, we emphasise the material characteristics and cultural connotations that shape negotiations, agreements, and treaties. Understanding their agency highlights the influential but often overlooked spatial dimension within international diplomacy and unveils how the built environment contributes to the imagination and materialisation of international governing.

KEYWORDS

international organisations;
multilateral diplomacy;
symbolic dimension; global
governance; decision-
making

From World Government ...

While planning the United Nations (UN) headquarters in New York, chief architect Wallace K. Harrison poignantly asked: “If a series of architects can’t get together to plan a series of buildings, how can we expect the nations to get together on a plan of peace?”¹ This sentiment about the “workshop for peace,” as the planners for the new UN premises were then called, highlighted the challenges inherent in building for international relations in the 1940s. It proved to be quite different, and far more difficult than designing for empires and nations had been in the preceding century for lack of a “tradition” on which to fall back. Yet, throughout history, (political) powers have always left their imprint on the built environment, using architecture as both an instrument and an expression of their rule.² In doing so, each political “regime” has produced its own typology: fortified castles in the Middle Ages as strongholds for defence in feudal wars; splendid palaces in the seventeenth century as expressions of absolutist power and unlimited resources; parliaments and presidential residencies in

the nineteenth century as tokens of recently acquired sovereignty, national identity, and institutional democracy. The pacifist climate that followed World War One, together with increasing internationalism and inter-governmental cooperation, necessitated a new type of building that not only expressed the “new” values of peace, universalism, and solidarity, but was also able to house the ever-expanding bureaucratic machinery for consultation and consensus-making that such cross-border collaboration inevitably seemed to entail.³

Similar to the belief that the very existence of institutions like the Permanent Court of Arbitration (1913), the League of Nations (1919), and the UN (1946) would foster understanding and cooperation between nations and peoples, the seats of such bodies gave rise to high aspirations for architectural renewal. Indeed, a whole pantheon of projects for “world capitals,” “peace palaces,” and “monuments for international brotherhood” testifies to the enthusiasm—as well as the naivety—with which architects, urban planners, and philanthropists alike embarked on the idea that one day, all people united would be ruled by a single “world government.”⁴ Yet, whether based on utopian beliefs, pacifist ideals or occultist principles, either these hopes either remained unrealised or their architectural manifestations failed to satisfy their ambitious institutional worldviews. The Peace Palace in The Hague, for example, was criticised by contemporaries for its resemblance to “a chateau in the north of France,”⁵ and eventually became a symbol for the failed attempt of establishing an internationalism based on Anglo-Saxon philanthropy and private wealth.⁶ The international competition for the League of Nations, in turn, produced a modern Versailles. Unable to select a winner from 377 worldwide entries, the organisation also failed in its purpose to prevent World War Two and was replaced twenty-six years later by the UN.⁷ The latter’s headquarters in New York then became associated with an office campus of corporate bureaucracy and big business, affirming its institutional proximity to global capitalism or its patronising attitude “towards lesser breeds who have not acquired the American way of life,” as Lewis Mumford discredited it.⁸ As William Curtis noted, “Mumford doubted the appropriateness of a slab to the symbolic aspirations of the new post-war congress of nations, until he reflected that perhaps the bureaucracy would be the most notable feature of the organization.”⁹ The building indeed seemed to corroborate the equation, in many people’s minds, between international democracy and ineffective bureaucracy, confirming them in their idea of inter-governmental cooperation as an unworldly affair. This went hand in hand with a growing scepticism towards international organisations at the end of the twentieth century for their alleged ineptitude and incapacity to prevent armed conflicts—as epitomised, for example, by the failure of the UN and the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) in preventing the atrocities committed during the Balkan War in the 1990s. Beyond that, international organisations have been widely criticised as instrumental to western political control, historically perpetuating inequalities that disadvantage under-represented countries, non-western organisations, and former colonial territories.¹⁰

... to Global Governance

While it has been argued that post-war internationalism became a well-chosen trope serving to strengthen dominant nation powers, the fall of the Berlin Wall

and the disappearance of the Iron Curtain in 1989 marked a significant turning point in the balance of global power, paving the way for a new geopolitical order. International affairs suddenly found themselves amidst a complex network of state and non-state actors that globally diversified rule-making and governing. This form of governing comes close to what Michel Foucault has referred to as “governmentality,” namely the “ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations, and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific, albeit very complex, power that has the population as its target, political economy as its major form of knowledge, and apparatuses of security as its essential technical instrument.”¹¹ In other words, “governmentality” suggests a highly dynamic form of power that operates much more subtly, though not less violently through corporations, non-state actors, private enterprises, international agreements, and consortia. Following this line of thought, even “the state is nothing else but the mobile effect of a regime of multiple governmentalities.”¹² This shift became evident not only in the growing influence of such “emerging” nations as China, India, and Brazil, but also perhaps even more so in the advent of a range of increasingly influential non-state actors like non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and (multinational) corporations.¹³ Under this new constellation, inter-governmental cooperation expanded globally, signifying yet a further step in the evolution towards “global governance.”

The notion of “governance” derives from management and originally denoted strategies to involve stakeholders in corporate decision-making processes. It moved into the political sphere in the 1980s when, for example, the World Bank labelled the political situation in the southern Sahara as “a crisis of governance.”¹⁴ In 1992, the term appeared in the newly created UN Commission on Global Governance, the report of which was published as *Our Global Neighborhood* three years later.¹⁵ The political meaning of the term is easiest explained in relation to the notion of “government.” Indeed, in a canonical text on this matter, James N. Rosenau explains government as “activities which are supported by formal authorities, by police powers,” while governance refers to a set of rules that only work if accepted by the majority. “Governance” thus embraces governmental institutions as well as non-governmental bodies and informal actors. Or, put differently, while government can exist even when ineffective, governance cannot, and therefore “it is possible to conceive of regulatory mechanisms in a sphere of activity which functions effectively even though they are not endowed with formal authority.”¹⁶

Simultaneously, the notion of the “global” made its entry into the political discourse. It differs from such related terms as “international,” “transnational,” and “universal,” for it denotes a “historical process involving a fundamental shift or transformation in the spatial scale of human social organization that links distant communities and expands the reach of power relations across regions and continents.”¹⁷ Global networks and information technologies have shaped politics, drastically changing the way that governance is organised, and power is exercised.¹⁸ Globalisation indeed affects all spheres of human activity (economic, cultural, social, technological, political), but not all peoples or areas are equally affected. Thus, globalisation involves and causes both a homogenisation and an increasing

heterogeneity in the form of the reassertion of ethnicities and nationalism. It therefore fundamentally affects the significance of the state system as it questions its monopoly on power and authority.

Putting both notions together, “global governance” can be understood as “the collective effort to identify, understand, or address worldwide problems and processes that go beyond the capacities of individual states. It reflects a capacity of the international system at any moment in time to provide government-like services in the absence of world government.”¹⁹ Put more simply, it is the “global effort to solve those ‘problems without passports’.”²⁰ It comes as no surprise, then, that the number and scope of global governance actors are ever expanding today.²¹ Inter-governmental organisations are indeed more numerous but also seem to become gradually more powerful: although acting in principle as agents of their member states, the European Union Commission or NATO, for example, are increasingly becoming actors in their own right. Further, some NGOs have become highly influential in the sphere of human rights, peace or environmental protection, disaster relief, and humanitarian aid. At the same time, the agency of so-called “epistemic communities,” consisting of experts active in the sphere of development aid and reconstruction, can no longer be neglected. Finally, multinational corporations (private companies with branches worldwide) are increasingly influencing global affairs, for by choosing where to invest or not, they shape the economic development opportunities of individual communities, regions, and even entire countries. Regardless of its precise meaning or genealogy, the wide acceptance of the notion of “global governance” today reveals a general distrust towards formalised political institutions as the sole harbingers of prosperity and peace. Therefore, contrary to the early twentieth-century dreams of a monolithic “world government,” the study of global governance necessarily entails a much wider, multi-actor perspective beyond the nation-state, as the latter now has to share power with international organisations, non-governmental actors, corporations, and various interest groups and citizens.²²

It would be wrong, however, to believe that global governance is an exclusively twentieth-century phenomenon. While 1919 is often seen as the pivotal moment when the study of international relations emerged as a distinct field, this founding myth has been contested for not only the roots but also the practice of modern international relations thinking, which extend back deep into the long nineteenth century (1776–1914).²³ Several prominent NGOs, including the Young Men’s Christian Association and the International Red Cross, were formed in the 1850s and 1860s, as were issue-based groups such as those seeking to improve animal welfare, promote the arts, and formalise academic subjects ranging from botany to anthropology. Some authors go even further by stating that from the early 1600s, it was company states (such as the Dutch and English East India Companies in Asia; and the Hudson’s Bay Company in North America) that played the most important role in driving Europe’s worldwide commercial and colonial expansion into the East Indies and the South Pacific. Therefore, as the argument goes, these company states must be seen as key progenitors of the modern global international system, foreshadowing the current situation of international politics as a game played by a diverse range of actors, and not just sovereign states.²⁴

Architecture of/and/for Global Governance

The questions that interest us in this issue of *ATR* relate to the architectural ramifications of this phenomenon of global governance. How does the evolution from centralised government to decentralised governance affect the role of architecture in imposing, organising, expressing, and maintaining political, economic, and cultural power? What spaces and places are imagined, produced, and used by the actors of global governance? What meanings are these buildings or ephemeral structures supposed or expected to convey; and to what extent is architecture as a discipline capable of incorporating and transmitting them? Has this process fostered the emergence of new types, forms, ideas, or practices, and how? Finally, bearing in mind the ambiguous effects of globalisation (propelling wealth, mobility, and communication, but causing resource exploitation, extraction, and climate crisis at the same time), to what extent is the work carried out by OMA, BIG, SOM, or Foster for the EU, Google, NATO, and Apple respectively, to be considered as the vanguard of “today’s global” in architecture?²⁵

The relevance of these questions for the field of architecture goes beyond the symbolic, the metaphorical, or the aesthetic, for there is a fundamentally spatial aspect to the processes of international cooperation and diplomacy. Indeed, the seats of international bodies not only symbolise international law and politics but literally perform it in the sense that agreements, legal texts, and declarations take shape in the plenary halls, the adjacent lobbies, or the offices of the permanent delegations they house. These seats also host the yearly pilgrimages of representatives or heads of states to the rostrum and the accompanying ritual of their arrival; they form the background for semi-improvised or highly formalised meet-and-greets with the press; and they comprise the target and decor of mass demonstrations. Yet, architectural historiography, criticism, and design hardly seem concerned, for little to no research exists about the spatial implications on, and of, multilateral diplomacy. To be sure, this does not necessarily involve buildings, given that some of the more recent, but no less influential, actors on the global governance scene, such as the G7 or G20, do not even possess a formal seat and hold their “summits” each time in a different city.²⁶

While much has been written about the emblematic seats of the UN in New York and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Paris, the focus is mostly on the design(ers) and the role of these structures as the culmination of architectural modernism.²⁷ Architectural scholarship highlighting these structures from a different angle is rare.²⁸ Consequently, many buildings of note designed by lesser-known architects have passed under the radar, such as the UNO branches in Vienna and Nairobi; the splendid World Health Organization (WHO) building by Jean Tschumi in Geneva; or the monolithic International Labour Organization (ILO) headquarters by Eugène Beaudouin, Alberto Camenzind, and Pier Luigi Nervi in the same city; the Berlaymont building in Brussels (seat of the ever-more powerful EU Commission) by Lucien De Vestel and the Polak brothers; or the COMECON headquarters in Moscow—to name but a few.²⁹ Other buildings are of interest for the historical events that have taken place there such as the kidnapping of the OPEC ministers at the organisation’s Viennese headquarters in 1975, or the impromptu gathering at the NATO seat of its heads of state in December 1989 to

discuss the New World Order after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Quite telling in this regard is the fact that the inauguration, in 2017, of the latter organisation's new premises in Brussels remained largely unconsidered by the architectural press.³⁰

In contrast, the fields of legal theory and global governance studies manifest a growing interest in architecture and art. While the notion of "architecture" is usually relied on here metaphorically in expressions such as "security architecture" and "financial architecture," the field is witnessing something of a "material turn" borne out of an understanding of the intrinsically cultural dimension of law and rule-making.³¹ One of the central questions in that regard is what makes international law "tangible" for its audience and constituency.³² Scholars have started to examine, for example, how the physical architecture of law courts not only metaphorically expresses certain values and ideas about the law (via sculpture, art, etc.) but also "performs" its principles; or how evolutions in international law-making are expressed in, and experienced through, the architecture of the seats of its organisations. Seeking to understand how the international community is visualised, imagined, and materialised, legal scholars Tanja Aalberts and Sofia Stolk state, for example, that the Peace Palace in The Hague and the gifts it received are crucial to the ritualistic act that "makes" the international community. As they argue, "[t]hey embody a vision of an international community that reflects a collective aspiration as well as a presentation of autonomy."³³ Thus, while the ideals behind international arbitration and the conceptualisation of the international community may have changed over time, the building preserves some of these original aspirations and conflicts—which raises the question: to what extent do these ambitions still affect today's imaginary of international law and the global community?

Similar connections between architecture and broader patterns of international legal and political change are also drawn by Miriam Bak McKenna in her comparison of the original seat of the ILO (discussed later in this volume), the Palace of Nations, and the UN headquarters. As she states, "these buildings generate the material space in which international law is practiced, and in which ideas about international law and the identity of the international legal community can be expressed and experienced."³⁴ Thus, their varying physical manifestation is emblematic of the evolving modes of self-expression of, and the relationship between, international law and (the function and role of) international organisations. This is true indeed not only for their functional or spatial aspects but also for their aesthetic qualities, since buildings communicate a visual identity and project a range of institutional ideals, functions, and values. Inversely, by allowing us to understand how international law and its values are perceived, studying the architecture of global governance through the lens of its seats may produce new insights into the impact of law on social realities and vice versa. In this respect, Bak McKenna's paper is representative of a new strand of legal scholarship seeking to examine law beyond the perimeter of treaties, journals, or academic writing, by situating it in a wider material and political context instead—thus disrupting the positivist concept of law as immaterial, universal, and abstract.

Some legal scholars are taking this "material turn" a step further by developing specific research methods that put law's "material objects" at centre stage. Denoting the "eventisation" of international law, whereby international courthouses stage public

photo exhibitions and offer audio tours, and the buildings of international organisations become top tourist destinations (a phenomenon allegedly deriving from the increasing demands on institutions to deliver on legitimacy, transparency, and accessibility), Sofia Stolk and Renske Vos have coined the concept of “International Legal Sightseeing,” interrogating not only what is being shown in such cases, but also how, and to whom.³⁵ To this effect, Stolk and Vos organised a workshop in and on Marcel Breuer’s former American Embassy in The Hague. Once one of the most heavily secured and highly inaccessible buildings of the city, this brutalist icon was now posited as a prism through which to explore connections between art and international law—and gauge the capacity of “legal sightseeing” to affect, advance, or disrupt current methods in the field of international law.³⁶

A similarly “disruptive” approach to law-making from a social and cultural perspective can be found in the field of anthropology, where the study of interpersonal behaviour and intercultural exchange in global organisations has become a field of its own, with some scholars comparing them to a theatre production in which everyone plays a role.³⁷ However, in most of this research on the daily routines, the unwritten rules and practices of these organisations and their employees, the material and spatial dimensions of the stage upon which they are performed is only tangentially addressed. A rare exception is Niels Schia’s study on the decision-making processes of the UNO Security Council, which reveals how they occur within a complex web of interconnections between formal and informal spaces and settings that are not so easily defined.³⁸ While the former are marked by strict rules of procedure and a complex diplomatic etiquette, the latter concern places off the UN premises, such as bars and cafés. As Schia claims, experienced actors in the Security Council are able to switch between these different levels of formality and behave accordingly, which gives them significant advantages in international diplomacy—a phenomenon that enforces inequality among the member states to a greater extent than is evident through the formalised veto right alone.³⁹

Finally, scholars in the history of technology have pointed out the impact of material networks and private enterprises as institutional–technological complexes on international treaties and transnational dependencies.⁴⁰ Early broadcasting actors and networks have for example been traced to give insights into the roots of contemporary internet protocols, data regulations, and technology oligopolies.⁴¹ Historicising global governance from this angle allows the drawing of continuities of infrastructural networks, international standardisation, and multi-stakeholderism from the age of empires to the present. While there has been a body of work dedicated to revise infrastructures and international quality standards (ISO) as the catalysts of global trade and development, the history of standardisation in architecture points to the engagement of scholars with governmentality as the combination of protocols, rules, structures, and institutions.⁴² This has brought about a literature in the field of architectural history engaging with the question of how architecture governs through norms and networks that range from the individual household to the global scale. However, the extent to which architecture and the built environment can be studied under the perspective of multilateralism, technical governance, and soft policies remains a blind spot, much like its consideration as part of a larger global governance framework.

The same can be said for another type of actor that often remains obscured in the historiography of the built environment, namely financial institutions. They, too, have played a major role in shaping the architectural and spatial processes underlying the governmental function of economic conditions. This has been explored in a previous issue of *ATR*, “Terms and Conditions: Financialized Space,” which in its scope ranged from capital flows of the Ottoman Empire to interior spaces of risk management in the insurance agencies of London.⁴³ However, looking at international organisations as executive bodies instead of their policies allows one to decentre the discourse into multilateral actor dependencies while shedding light on the architectural manifestations of international relations that drive “governance.”

A Challenge for Architectural Scholarship

The reasons behind this selective blindness for the spaces of international diplomacy and rule-making would require further investigation. But as a working hypothesis, we could relate, for example, to Mark Crinson’s suggestions as to why the notion of internationalism has received so little attention in architectural scholarship despite its fundamental significance for twentieth-century architectural culture. Perhaps, as he states, it may constitute a long-term aftereffect of the anti-modernist ethos of the 1970s, when internationalism was seen as compromised by association with grand narratives and teleology, not to speak of colonialism, neo-colonialism, development policy, and a rampantly globalising capitalism. In such a climate, Crinson states, “for architecture to be internationalist, so the argument went, could only mean its complicity with the forces of planetary homogenisation and exploitation.”⁴⁴ The international organisations discussed here were precisely the expression of these forces, in both operational and symbolic terms. Yet, a simpler but perhaps more fundamental reason behind the conspicuous absence of a discourse on internationalism in architecture could reside in the fact that, as opposed to nationalism (which has produced abundant scholarship because the very discipline of architectural history emerged in the context of nation building), the architectural expression of supra-national identities is a much more rigorous undertaking—even to the extent that one can ask, with Crinson: is it possible within our sense of what identity means “to have such a thing as internationalism?”⁴⁵ This explains perhaps the technical pragmatism of so many seats of international organisations—as if out of fear of referring to any coded form or symbol, their architects or clients choose to refrain from any expression at all. Another problem is that, perhaps owing to its “amorphous” understanding as a concept (a “consequence” of nationalism, its cumulative form, or complement), internationalism itself never seems to have been considered by architectural scholars as a sufficiently worthy worldview. Architectural scholarship on, for example, the ideas of Paul Otlet (beyond his connection with Le Corbusier) has arrived fairly recently.⁴⁶ And finally, just as with modernist architecture, there is also a history of perceived failure behind internationalism, which is corroborated in the popular association between international democracy, bureaucratic lethargy, and colossal office buildings, as outlined above.

But apart from filling the blanks in the existing scholarship, there is a more fundamental or pressing reason why the architectural field should engage with global governance studies. As many international organisations are not democratically elected and increasingly develop an agency of their own, there are ever-louder calls for accountability, transparency, and efficiency. It is our contention that such research as that presented in the papers that follow can form a counterweight to the often monolithic and opaque (self-)representations of these bodies. In particular, we believe that architectural scholarship—be it from a design, critical, or historical perspective—can contribute to a more holistic understanding of these institutions as well as suggest ways to increase their performance. Beyond the symbolic dimension, this research can shed light on how a dynamic variety of actors and processes relates international top-down intentions to bottom-up local negotiations through institutions, materials, finance, and knowledge. Such a situated approach is both novel and necessary: a better understanding of how such bodies function and operate in a spatial setting contributes to a broader, more inclusive framework to assess and even enhance their effectiveness. In addition, better insight into the mutual interference between legal procedures, bureaucratic cultures, and spatial practices may stimulate the imagination of designers, scholars, and policy makers, and enhance the architectural ambition of international organisations as centres of global governance.

For all these reasons, with this issue we seek to foster the critical analysis of spaces where global governance is “produced” on institutional, material, financial, and technical levels. How are official plenary rooms and secretariats, as well as their informal counterparts like hallways, offices, archives, and cafeterias, used and appropriated? How is the hierarchical and administrative structure of these organisations laid out in spatial and material terms? And, conversely, how do the buildings, interiors, or infrastructures of international organisations support or obstruct particular processes of negotiation, decision-making, capital flows, and communication? Further, to what extent does the spatial articulation of an organisation’s hierarchy and bureaucracy constitute a distinguishing element? How are cultural differences spatially and architecturally expressed and experienced in diplomatic and bureaucratic procedures?⁴⁷ This ultimately leads to the question of what such infrastructural and organisational aspects reveal about the *modus operandi*, ideological agenda, and cultural differences between the various international organisations.

However, architectural scholarship not only ought to be concerned with analysing how the values and principles of global governance actors are being expressed or transmitted through designed or built form but also should address the question of the agency of the spaces thus generated, and ask how their design and use may stimulate forms of accountability and enhance efficiency. Concerning the first of these, we should go beyond the prevalent focus on the metaphorical and symbolical aspects of designed objects and built form, for—as argued above—international rule-making is itself also a spatial practice. Following Churchill’s famous truism that “we shape our buildings; thereafter they shape us,” we have all reasons to believe that the places where international treaties are negotiated or where summits are held are more than passive backdrops.⁴⁸ Seen as a series of actions that inherently “take place” somewhere and thus engage in a relationship with their surroundings, the procedures

and protocols of international diplomacy not only impose but are also shaped by the spatial setting they engender.

Where the second aspect is concerned—the extent to which architectural design can contribute to the efficiency and clarity of bureaucratic processes—we could ask how the alleged transparency of decision-making procedures is supported (or not) by their physical organisation, and how claims with regard to participation and stakeholder involvement are materialised in the seats of these organisations and their relation to the public domain. This may provide useful clues as to how these bodies could be present, or present themselves in the public sphere, and thus contribute to the enhancement or future design of real or mediated spaces for interaction between global governance actors, their stakeholders, and various publics. Finally, one could also ask how the spatial environment of international rule-making can be designed beyond the metaphorical, and take stock of the ever-more diverse practices of governance that abound today as sources of inspiration. The absence of a formal seat in the case of the G7 or G20 (noted above) is just one example to illustrate how the transnational political constructs of the future require new and imaginative forms of identification and organisation, which could ultimately lead to a typological renewal based on more universal forms of architectural symbolism and more inclusive spatial settings.

Fresh Perspectives

With this thematic issue, we seek to illustrate how, apart from a political problem, the phenomenon of global governance possesses an inherently spatial dimension that challenges architectural design, criticism, and historiography. To this end, we have gathered a set of essays that, each in its own way, interrogate the capacity of architecture to provide spaces for representation and negotiation at the global scale, thereby shaping political culture's procedures, rituals, and norms of governance. While the set-up of each essay is traditional (an in-depth analysis of one particular case), through the variety in methods of analysis, angles of approach, types of organisations discussed, and the geographical scope, they nonetheless significantly expand the boundaries of architectural history, setting a new standard for scholarship on this question.

In “‘Suitable Palaces’: Navigating Layers of World Ordering at the Centre William Rappard (1923–2013),” Daniel Quiroga Villamarín discusses the headquarters of the ILO. Closely related to the League of Nations, this was one of the first (and still most important) international organisations, and its headquarters was also the first purpose-built structure for this new type of institution. Writing from the perspective of international law, Quiroga Villamarín's take is illustrative of the “material turn” discussed above. Contrary to the traditional focus on the intellectual or political trajectories of these international organisations, his analysis takes into account the seemingly banal histories of the “buildings, staff, and letterheads.” Analysing the building's design process and its financing through the lens of various claims made by the ILO's directors, the press, and the general public with regard to its “(in)dignity” and “(un)suitability,” Quiroga Villamarín shows how instrumental the new premises—and

even more so, the iconography of its interior decoration—seems to have been for this young organisation in claiming its authority and building support among its stakeholders. Ironically, when the building was taken over fifty years later by the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), later to become the World Trade Organization, the same discussion started anew, resulting in the covering up of some of the original artwork—a symbolical gesture revealing the ideological oppositions between the old and new tenant. Interestingly, it took another fifty years, on the occasion of additional refurbishment in the 2010s, before the World Trade Organisation decided to rehabilitate the building as well as its artwork—another emblematic act that illustrates how the self-perception and cultural position of such global organisations have evolved over time.

International diplomacy does not only entail monumental architecture or complex iconography, however. As Olga Touloumi illustrates in “A Seat at the Table: The United Nations and Architecture of Diplomacy,” negotiations usually start by bringing allies or adversaries around a table. Yet, as she points out, there was nothing “ordinary” about the table in the context of planning the UN headquarters, for it became the essential scale and tool with which to humanise this “machine of international relationships.” As every shape of table and seating arrangement mutely installs hierarchies, discussions about the culture of assembly within such a high-profile organisation as the UN could not be taken lightly. In her essay, Touloumi illustrates how seemingly mundane questions such as “Who gets a seat at the table?,” “Does the table have a head?,” “How close or far away should the delegates sit?,” “Who sits next to whom?,” and so forth ran through the delegates’ minds each time a new committee deployed itself around desks. The circular table finally emerged as the preferred tool and technique of multilateralism. A seemingly pragmatic and practical issue at first sight, Touloumi maps the many sensibilities and complexities introduced by the “politics of seating” and shows how they found a compromise in a deceptively simple design solution that would prove to have a major impact on the culture of debate within the UN. Her essay thus perfectly corroborates one of the central tenets of this issue, namely the role that design and architecture play in shaping, and even transforming, global governance.

As mentioned earlier, most international organisations are not directly or democratically elected; their authority and success thus depend to a large extent on the support they gather from a public that did not directly instal them. A case in point was the process of European integration: it required not only cooperation between former enemy states, but first and foremost the embracing, by the public, of a new collective identity as Europeans. To this effect, huge propaganda efforts were made. In his paper “*Europe Builds: The Architecture of a Marshall Plan Exhibition as a Performance of Global Governance*,” Óscar Arnórsson focuses on one particular instance, namely “Europe Builds,” a caravan of expandable trailers and a circus marquee containing panels of photographs and infographics of European integration (through the United States-sponsored Marshall Aid, that is) which visited seven countries in 1950–51, reaching an audience of over a million and a half. As Arnórsson posits, this exhibit was a perfect example of “show, don’t tell,” for it not only visually depicted the future benefits of Marshall Aid but also “performed” the essential values

for which it stood. This is illustrated through three aesthetic tropes: mobility, expressed by the caravan's incessant travelling throughout Europe as if its internal borders had already been lifted; lightness, articulated through the lightweight structural systems that symbolised innovation and productivity; and ingenuity, expressed by the oft-noted effect of the exhibitions' speedy erection on site. Arnórsson shows how while the principles of global governance may be decreed in the monumental seats of international organisations, their effectiveness may benefit from deceptively simple spatial strategies.

The reliance on, and the importance of, ephemeral or mobile structures in the exercise of global governance is also central to Cathelijne Nuijsink and Annamaria Bonzanigo's paper "Humanitarian Aid as Global Governance: The Architecture of the Red Cross's Relief Operations after the 1976 Guatemala Earthquake." As they explain, through an impressive demonstration of logistical efficacy in the emergency phase of this catastrophic event, the national Red Cross agency (Guatecruz) built field offices in the disaster region both to manage the relief efforts and to set up forty-three tent cities. By taking a seat in the disaster zone, as opposed to coordinating from a distant headquarters, Guatecruz became the *de facto* governing body in a large network of different national and international state and non-state actors. As Nuijsink and Bonzanigo claim, this decentralised logic of the "extended seat" introduced an early example of (the now customary practice of) contracting out services that were previously controlled by the government, to NGOs. By untangling a large-scale humanitarian crisis from this viewpoint, this paper provides both a specific institutional history of a non-state actor and a prime example of what the architecture of global governance may look like "in the field." They show how the architectural implications of international organisations extend well beyond their own seats, since their policies regularly have far-reaching and often contested implications for foreign populations through the design of housing programmes and infrastructural works.

Just as the latter paper emphasises the Latin-American context, the contribution by Kenny Cupers, Cole Roskam, and Girma Hundessa, "Architecture as Technical Governance at the African Union," sheds light on a region that is traditionally under-represented in architectural historical scholarship in general and of international organisations in particular. In this paper, the (architectural) history of the seat of the African Union in Addis Ababa figures as a prism through which shifting international relations can be seen as they thread through the organisation's longer architectural history. The focus is, specifically, on the forms of local and transnational technical expertise, performance, and management in which this architecture is enmeshed, and its potential long-term effects on development in Africa. Emerging patterns of material, spatial, and administrative organisation undergirding the political economy of architectural gifting to Africa are thus exposed, which, as the authors claim, amount to a distinctive and distinctly architectural mode of "transnational technical governance." With this in mind, the article discusses the institutional settings of the Organization of African Unity around its founding in 1963, showing how modernist architecture embodied new ambitions of Pan-African independence while reflecting the western dependencies and political conflicts that tarnished these ambitions. From there, the article examines how the recently finished Chinese-built master

plan and conference complex and the German-designed Peace and Security Council building foster competing modes of technical governance aimed at bringing divergent approaches to international development into organisational alignment. Thus, by examining one case in a broad perspective (in terms of background, methods, and expertise), this paper reveals how architecture can contribute to a continent's shifting modes of self-representation and governance.

Mark Sawyer, Georgia Lindsay, and Nina Alaily similarly discuss global processes whose current and future ramifications are still uncertain, namely the impact of Big Tech on society, and on governance. Moreover, they deal with Google, an actor that, although not invested with political power, has perhaps more influence on people's life than any official institution. In their paper, "‘Google for President’: Power and the Mediated Construction of an Unbuilt Big Tech Headquarters Project," Sawyer, Lindsay, and Alaily investigate how companies like Google position themselves through media. As they observe, architecture plays a fundamental role in the media representations of such companies, which (perhaps quite paradoxically) constitute a crucial element in their (seemingly) unlimited power and global influence. To this effect, the authors analyse in detail a short YouTube movie launched by Google in 2012 showcasing its proposed project for a new headquarters in Mountain View, California. As they note, the mediatisation of renowned architects and their work (in this case, Bjarke Ingels and Thomas Heatherwick) helps translate the vast digital and financial power of Google into a palatable physical presence in a relatively small town with very local concerns. The YouTube movie indeed mobilises the language of architecture to communicate a fictional future that a corporate actor considers both desirable for the locality that it inhabits and aspirational for a global audience. Thus, as the authors claim, the mediatisation of architecture translates symbolic capital across and between fields, from architect to Big Tech, and vice versa.

This collection of papers can only mark a fragmentary beginning of architectural scholarship and research to explore the architectures of global governance. Much remains to be explored beyond the focus on the western hemisphere, opening up to not only a wider variety of actors but also under-represented areas (Africa and South America), and considering the historical legacies and geopolitical entanglements of under-represented and non-western organisations (such as the Non-Aligned Movement or the All-African Peoples Conference). The political goals embedded in planning interventions aiming at affordable housing (World Bank), cultural heritage (UNESCO), or global healthcare (Aga Khan Development Network) also remain unnoticed. These blanks in architectural historical and theoretical scholarship constitute many "missed opportunities" to enlarge the scope of the discipline and come to terms with the increasingly global dimension of cultural production, economic exchange, human interaction, and political decision-making. This requires a multi-disciplinary agenda that combines architectural history with global governance studies, international law, history of technology, and economics. As power relations are embedded in every technical detail, drawing or building material, following the metaphorical and literal paths of capital, information, and knowledge right through to policymakers, technical administrators, and international organisations, unveils the various roles of architecture as means and aims of governance.

Encouraged by the increasing attention from legal theory and global governance studies in investigating the relationship between international law and material culture, this issue highlights the profound impact of the built environment on broader notions of international legal and political culture. It underscores the idea that such architecture as courthouses or the headquarters of international organisations not only mirrors but also shapes these intricate patterns. By traversing various avenues of exploration, this compels us to foster an impetus for interdisciplinary collaboration. Such collaborations are timely and pertinent not only for their scholarly significance, but also for their capacity to raise critical inquiries into the complex and enigmatic repercussions of globalisation in our present era.

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