

Representations of power in architecture

This issue of **arq** considers how power becomes represented in architectural form. In the opening article, Mohamed Gamal Abdelmonem examines recent architecture and urban design in Belfast city centre, produced out of that city's distinctive political troubles, divisions and power relations (pp. 130–152). 'Inscribed by memories of conflict and violence', he shows, 'ground floor façades are mainly solid, disengaging and do not encourage fluid movement.' The design of new buildings and public spaces in central Belfast 'characterise attributes of a reciprocal reproduction of memories of fear' – both resulting from the political situation and reproducing its effects. Meanwhile, writing about the Chinese Pavilion at the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition, built shortly after China's Boxer Rebellion, Yinrui Xie shows how the choice of certain royal and vernacular motifs, and by extension the omission of others, 'reflected the Chinese government's early self-vision of its global image in an age of political turmoil' (pp. 153–168). Presenting a particular 'architectural "Chinese-ness" in the early twentieth century', the design illustrates the characterisation of political power in articulating and producing architectural form. In contrast, Michael Asgaard Andersen and Mette Boisen Lyhne study the empowerment of inhabitants in design processes, examining how *bofællesskaber* – or cohousing – in Denmark results from power relations at work in procurement processes (pp. 197–208). Since the 1970s, they show, the commissioning of such developments has become increasingly top-down. The authors argue for a return to 'co-creation in cohousing' to 'contribute to a more diverse and affordable development of mainstream housing and neighbourhoods'.

Testing the analytical potential of creative architectural representation, Esen Gökçe Özdamar reviews the use of a *zoetrope* to read İstiklal Street in İstanbul – a thoroughfare associated with state power, political action, and its suppression – in forming the identity and collective memory of the city (pp. 169–183). The mechanical device 'was used not to direct the viewer's gaze, but rather as an inhabitable space that [participants] could enter'. Frank Lyons, however, is concerned with how designers exert power, through architecture and urban design, over the everyday lives of inhabitants (pp. 185–196). 'In constructing urban environments', he argues, 'we seem to have forgotten that form has power; that poor form makes us feel poor; ill-conceived form makes us feel ill.' Indeed, Lyons suggests, the 'misuse of the "silent" power of form is perhaps one of the greatest threats to our cities and to city life'. This is an issue so subtle, he suggests, that it 'goes unnoticed by most'.

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