TANGIBLE - INTANGIBLE HERITAGE(S) – DESIGN, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CRITIQUES ON THE PAST, PRESENT AND THE FUTURE

• Paper / Proposal Title:


• Author(s) Name:

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• University or Company Affiliation:

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• Presentation Method. I would like to:

  i. present in person (with/without a written paper)
  ii. present via skype (with/without a written paper)

• Abstract (300 words):

After the Blitz reduced parts of London to ruins, town planners needed to decide how to rebuild the city. With the public desperate for housing and a return to normality, they could neither reconstruct historic London in its entirety nor completely modernize the city. Post-Blitz town planning exhibitions across the country presented varying proposals for the reconstruction of London with the goals of gaining public trust, support, and, most importantly, feedback.

This presentation argues that, in the context of town planning exhibitions, planners genuinely attempted to engage the public in reconstruction efforts and the public genuinely tried to get involved in expert-led dialogues. Neither of these attempts was successful entirely. The planners’ usage of colloquial language and attention to visitor experience left visitors with a broad but incomplete understanding of reconstruction ideas. While members of the public were eager to request further information on
planning, they were hesitant and ill-equipped to enter discussions on technical planning proposals. Likewise, without the public voicing their opinions on reconstruction, the planners did not have a complete understanding of the citizenry’s needs. The topic of this paper is explored through a comparative analysis of three exhibitions: The County of London Plan Exhibition (1943), the Greater London Plan Exhibition (1945), and the Poplar Architecture Exhibition at the Festival of Britain (1951). Due to their association with official London reconstruction proposals, these exhibitions dominated the discourse surrounding town planning in the 1940s. Their impacts remain underexplored in contemporary historiography which focuses on the reconstruction ideas that planners implemented rather than the ideas that planners proposed. Historiography also overlooks the evolving and increasingly significant role of public participation in reconstruction efforts. Drawing on letters from planners and the public, reports, newspaper editorials, and exhibition plans, this study attempts to fill these historiographical gaps.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Emily Kahn is an undergraduate student at Colgate University in Central New York. She is majoring in History and minoring in Museum Studies with a focus in historic preservation. Her interest in tangible heritage has allowed her to complete research in multiple countries. She travelled to Central Mexico last summer to work on an archaeological excavation and is currently studying in London collecting research for her Honors Thesis in History. Through working in the National Archives, London Metropolitan Archives, and Royal Institute of British Architects Library, Ms. Kahn has further realized her passion for urban heritage studies. She will continue to explore this passion this summer as an intern at the Boston Preservation Alliance where she will be collecting community opinion on balancing heritage and development. Ms. Kahn is also the youngest alumna of the University of Florida’s Preservation Institute of Nantucket. Through this program, she served as a preservation consultant and pitched recommendations about the ongoing usage of a historic house museum to the Nantucket Historical Association. Her first co-authored book, Repression, Reinvention, and Rugelach: A History of Jews at Colgate, will be published in June.