

Aplenc is a folklorist by training, and for that reason, she is interested in looking at how socialist authorities treated places that did not fit with their ideas of modernity and, in turn, how locals and other actors articulated and advanced their own views of these places and tried to shape their futures. While planners and architects are key actors in the story of Trnovo, so are preservationists and informal home builders. Importantly, Aplenc positions these actors not as antimodern or antisocialist, but as active participants in shaping Slovene socialist modernity.

The monograph begins by exploring how Slovene planners went about defining specifically Slovene socialist planning practices, informed by the broader Yugoslav vision of the good life, characterized by stylish modern living. In particular, Aplenc notes the appeal of Scandinavian design to Slovene planners, architects, and designers. Slovene planners adapted the concept of the *mikrorayon* (microdistrict) to the Slovene context, calling it the *soseka*. This ethos shaped Ljubljana's first master plan in 1966, which was to govern Trnovo's modernization through the development of a new neighborhood of high-rises as well as some single-family housing.

As Aplenc notes, although not an important place, Trnovo had some significance in the Slovene national imagination, immortalized in literature as a picturesque pastoral landscape of vegetable gardens. Moreover, the famous architect Jože Plečnik had left his mark on the local landscape, designing a bridge and the river embankments. None of these elements featured in the socialist planners' vision for the future of the district. Instead, Trnovo became the site of a model single-family home development, Murgle, designed by France and Marta Ivanšek. Aplenc argues that in contrast to the high-density housing prevalent in places like Belgrade, this low-rise housing development came to epitomize socialist modernity in Slovenia.

Yet socialist modernity in Trnovo was also a story of unsanctioned, informal housing development in the neighborhood known as Rakova Jelša. Here, Aplenc argues, far from representing a premodern impulse or expressing an oppositional stance to the socialist authorities, the unsanctioned construction of housing represented an effort to take part in the

socialist project. In taking a close look at how these rogue builders made their claims, she highlights their efforts to align their discourse with the official discourse, asserting that this signaled their genuine buy-in to the promises of socialism.

One of the insights of the book is the way that disciplinary boundaries rendered contemporary vernacular architecture invisible—whereas architects were interested only in a future-oriented built environment, ethnologists relegated vernacular architecture to the past. Aplenc also provides valuable insight into the regulatory mechanisms governing periurban land that facilitated (or failed to prevent) unsanctioned construction. Echoing my earlier work in *Designing Tito's Capital*, she notes the authorities' inability to prevent the flourishing of unsanctioned building or to come to some kind of agreement with builders after the fact.<sup>1</sup>

In the final chapter, she traces the evolving preservationist discourse on Trnovo, from a valorization of its medieval heritage in the 1950s to a growing appreciation for Plečnik's interventions later. Particularly intriguing is the shift in narrative in which the urban area of Krakovo came to be seen as a rural settlement. To Aplenc, this signals a discursive alignment of preservationists in the 1960s who accepted the idea of urbanity as socialist and modern. Finally, she discusses the gradual embrace of Plečnik, who initially fit uncomfortably in the socialist canon of modernism and therefore was marginalized. Ironically, his legacy was secured in part as a result of backroom dealings between the construction company charged with updating the plan for Trnovo and the architect Stanko Kristl, whose design included more housing because it was more profitable. Yet, by the 1980s, Plečnik had come back into fashion, and his architecture became the defining heritage of the district.

With this study, Aplenc opens up several avenues for further inquiry. She invites us to think about the ways in which the history of more peripheral urban spaces in state socialism differs from that of major cities as well as the reason we need to read about such places to get a complete picture of socialist planning. She also challenges facile ideas about what is modern and what is not. Her focus on how experts in different disciplines (urbanists, architects, preservationists,

and ethnologists) framed places spatially and temporally in dynamic interaction with one another makes an original contribution to the scholarship.

Aplenc writes with a deep appreciation for, and knowledge of, the local history of Trnovo and the wider Slovene context, and this lends a richness to the discussion. By staying so focused on the local and national scale, however, she misses the opportunity to compare her findings with the broader historiography on Yugoslav cities and socialist urbanity more generally. Such comparisons would enable us to better evaluate her claims about the specificity of the Slovenian approach to architecture and urban planning, for example. How distinctive, really, was Trnovo in its planning approach, in relation to Belgrade, Zagreb, and other localities? By comparing unsanctioned building in Trnovo to the same phenomenon in Belgrade, for instance, Aplenc could have allowed us to consider to what extent this was a Yugoslav-wide phenomenon, and whether it exhibited place-specific idiosyncrasies. Moreover, some may find that her broader argument sometimes gets lost in the detailed discussion of archival documentation. Yet scholars of urban planning who are willing to immerse themselves in this case study of a beloved periurban neighborhood on the edge of Ljubljana will find much food for thought.

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## Note

1. Brigitte Le Normand, *Designing Tito's Capital: Urban Planning, Modernism, and Socialism in Belgrade* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2014).

William Carruthers

### **Flooded Pasts: UNESCO, Nubia, and the Recolonization of Archaeology**

Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2022, 336 pp., 2 maps, 29 b/w illus. \$59.95 (cloth), ISBN 9781501766442

I read William Carruthers's *Flooded Pasts* as a Nubian woman. Consequently, I do not claim a neutral position, nor do I seek one. As I read, the ghosts of my ancestral flooded land loom large in my consciousness. I appreciate learning from the archival investigations that appear throughout

this book. In Egypt, institutional archives are now kept behind a wall of security clearances and permits that are seldom issued to Nubians. Many archives outside Egypt are also inaccessible to Nubian researchers, most of whom are local historians in displacement without affiliations with academic institutions or access to their resources.

Nubians were displaced from their ancestral land by the construction of the Aswan High Dam in 1964. This was not the Nubians' first displacement; it was preceded by the building of the Aswan Low Dam, constructed on the First Cataract by British colonialists in 1902 and subsequently heightened twice, in 1912 and 1933. While my people struggled through the twentieth century, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the international community focused on what they considered to be more pressing: salvaging the large number of archaeological sites that were threatened by the dams.

*Flooded Pasts* offers a critical examination of the power dynamics at play in archaeological salvage operations and raises important questions about the role of UNESCO and Western archaeological practices in relation to local communities. In doing so, it asks readers to rethink the underlying assumptions and methodologies of archaeological work. Carruthers explores the complex dynamics between UNESCO and the Egyptian and Sudanese governments in the context of the International Campaign to Save the Monuments of Nubia, the archaeological salvage operation that was carried out before the construction of the Aswan High Dam. Using archival evidence, he presents a critique of the field of archaeology by showing us its colonial roots.

In his introductory framing, Carruthers situates the subjugation of Nubia in historical context, calling out the practices that produced the current archaeological conceptualization of Nubia as mechanisms through which "new nations" asserted themselves during the Cold War. Hence the plural "pasts" in the book title refers to this split of Nubia into Egyptian and Sudanese Nubias. These understandings, as the author explains, come from "the view from the boat," an Orientalist and extractive gaze through a Western frame. The critique alludes to the racial factors shaping the

production of Nubia by archaeologists, citing their interest in a certain image of our ancestral land as well as their disregard for Nubians.

In a chapter titled "Documenting Nubia," Carruthers looks at the methods used by both Western and Egyptian experts to document the archaeological "site." This chapter specifically, and the book generally, presents a critique of documentation and archiving practices, raising a point about their failed transversality across French, British, and Egyptian realms. It is more amusing, however, to learn about the limits and malfunctions of these operations under UNESCO, which was highly influenced at the time by the French bureaucracy. Moreover, these practices clashed with and contradicted those of Egyptian institutions, but they eventually worked harmoniously with the national interests of Egypt, which in turn utilized archaeology and Egyptology as tools to write the metanarrative of the new, modern Egypt.

The author highlights the line between Egyptian Nubia and Sudanese Nubia, a division that is a sad matter of fact for Nubians. The institutional mechanism under which Egyptian Nubia operates is completely different from that of Sudanese Nubia. Carruthers narrates the involvement of various governmental and international actors in both countries.

He provides evidence that Egypt's interest in Egyptian Nubia and its documentation, as well as the consecutive planning for its excavations, was based on Nubia's value for Egypt's efforts to represent itself to the world, and many Egyptologists served that political interest. Carruthers makes the crucial link between the date of the declaration of the regions that would be flooded and the date of the recognition of their importance by the Egyptian Department of Antiquities. This declaration came before the actual work of planning for any excavation and research efforts and significantly before any budgeting for them. As the author demonstrates, Nubia was mobbed by the power of paperwork.

Carruthers crosses the border to Sudan in his fourth chapter, "Making Sudan Archaeological," in which he looks at the initiation of the documentation centers that came into being in the light of the Nubian campaign. These centers had fewer resources than the ones

in Egypt. He demonstrates how the Sudanese constitution enabled and activated the disciplinary and professional efforts that were then getting under way. Moreover, he presents the entanglements between the perspectives of development and the production of Sudanese Nubia as an archaeological subject.

The author draws a connection between the British colonial legacy in Sudan and the implementation of British archaeological methodologies in the area. Sudan was deemed fruitful, easy to access, and an easy target for experimental archaeologists. Carruthers scrutinizes the use of field and aerial photography in a colonial practice described by Nicholas Mirzoeff—in reference to the more recent technology of drone warfare but also applicable to this case—as "a plantation future of the overseer's visual footprint over his 'plat,' a line drawing of an estate as if from an aerial viewpoint produced by (inaccurate) surveying to distinguish one colonized piece of land from another."<sup>1</sup>

Carruthers argues that unlike Egyptian Nubia, which was defined by the International Campaign to fit into the nationalist metanarratives of Gamal Abdel Nasser's Egypt, Sudan was made through Nubia. He discusses the role of the Nubia campaign and the relationship between UNESCO and Ibrahim Aboud's government in the context of defining the story of Sudan as a newly minted nation-state, and he asserts that archaeological campaigns have produced Nubia as a transnational de-peopled object between Sudan and Egypt.

In the chapter titled "Peopling Nubia," Carruthers begins by arguing that the Nubian campaign was bound, shackled, and ascribed by its own paperwork. He moves from institutions benefiting from the Nubia campaign to Nubian voices. Despite the clear purpose declared in the chapter title and the pronounced decolonial approach, this effort falls short. The author starts with a reference to the work of Nubian novelists such as Muhammad Khalil Qasim, yet he practices second-hand citation. Another example is his use of Haggag Oddoul's ideation of Nubian displacement in contrast to the ideas of Idris Aly and Yehia Mokhtar. Such discussion of the voices of Nubian writers could have provided an important contribution had the author unpacked their relative subjectivities and positionalities.

Going back to my initial assertion of reading the book from my Nubian position, I am often searching for my people's voices in the stories of the blights that defined our twentieth century. Especially in "Peopling Nubia," Carruthers could have devoted much more space to Nubian conceptualization, histories, and epistemic grounding. I suggest that future research attempting to people Nubia consider Yasmin Moll's work and her race-conscious analysis of the Nubian stories and Saker el Nour's work that centers peasant struggles around water.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the important localized archival work by Nubian activists and popular historians in Egypt and Sudan, such as Fatma Imam, Moustafa Shourbagy, and Ahmed Eltigani Sidahmed, could contribute to the goal of re-peopling Nubia by Nubians.

Despite this particular shortcoming, *Flooded Pasts* provides a rigorous archival study of the UNESCO salvage operation and the archaeology project in Nubia, examining the power dynamics and colonial legacies while allowing us a peek into the inner workings of the International Campaign through archival evidence. The book reflects on the implications of the salvage campaign and the politics of development, highlighting the socioenvironmental impacts and the legacies of displacement and dispossession experienced by Nubian communities.

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## Note

1. Nicholas Mirzoeff, "Artificial Vision, White Space, and Racial Surveillance Capitalism," *AI & Society* 36, no. 4 (2021), 1300.
2. Yasmin Moll, "Narrating Nubia: Between Sentimentalism and Solidarity," *Racial Formations in Africa and the Middle East*, no. 9 (2021), 81–86.

Miles Glendinning

### **Mass Housing: Modern Architecture and State Power—A Global History**

London: Bloomsbury, 2021, 688 pp.,  
150 color and 40 b/w illus. \$115 (cloth),  
ISBN 9781474229272; \$39.95 (paper),  
ISBN 9781474222501

Miles Glendinning's *Mass Housing* is a monumental history of one of the most

comprehensive global enterprises of modernity: radical modernization through housing for the vast majority. It covers a long period, from the mid-nineteenth century to the present, offering a renewed historiography of modern architecture revolving around mass housing. This comprehensive work is based on archival and field research of state-produced mass housing on four continents, encompassing varied political economic contexts and languages, with attention to emergencies, deep transitions in state apparatuses, and political economy. The result is a grand narrative, echoing Peter Hall's *Cities of Tomorrow* (2014), Lewis Mumford's *The City in History* (1961), and Lawrence Vale's *From the Puritans to the Projects* (2000), works that have had immense impacts on the discipline of urban history.<sup>1</sup> Following this tradition, *Mass Housing* is as ambitious as its inspirations.

Mass housing is a perplexing object of inquiry for architectural historians, for how can the repetitive forms of mass housing be researched from a cultural production perspective? In this book, Glendinning makes a bold methodological proposal for the subfield of housing within architectural history. He employs the grand narrative approach offered by Hall and Mumford yet utilizes it to challenge the established comprehensive and unified view of post-World War II housing for all. While typically works of architectural history explore exemplary case studies of mass housing and assume their relevance for many other housing projects, Glendinning's research demonstrates the differing consequences of mass housing, as well as how we can meaningfully research them architecturally. The book offers a fascinating history that transcends the case study method and provides both an overarching view of a vast global enterprise and a high level of detail, with attention to principles and variations. For example, Glendinning makes a fascinating distinction between the stakes embedded in mass housing in northern Europe and those in southern Europe, largely overlooked for the study of the post-World War II period of "three worlds." He discusses features such as circumference yards versus courtyards as architectural characteristics that differentiate northern from southern European housing in specifying social versus individual spaces.

The vast nature of the subject of modern mass housing, its spread and scope, renders Glendinning's undertaking in this book an ambitious exploration of the methodologies of architectural history. The book, therefore, is not only a historical overview of mass housing as a transformative modern architectural type but also an important exploration of how we conduct inquiries into our built environment. As such, Glendinning's contribution goes well beyond his historical findings; he repositions the scope and nature of research questions, data repositories, and research objects of our discipline.

Glendinning examines this architectural typology as a meaningful cross section in the history of modernity. Providing a meticulous analysis of architectural and planning documents of seemingly unimportant mass housing complexes, from Sweden to Mexico to Hong Kong, he connects the architectural typology, global processes, and local iterations to shed light on how housing constituted the backbone of the modernist state enterprise and its political consolidation in the nation-state. He brings together modern architecture and modern states to make a brilliant argument regarding the role of modern mass housing as an overarching enterprise for the sake of humankind.

The book's attention to the architectural specificity of each setting, determined by unique political, cultural, technological, economic, climatic, and other considerations of the respective modern states, highlights a certain architectural principle of modernism that remained stable—mass housing—while state involvement and financialization led to deep alterations in its meaning and implications. For instance, Glendinning explores variations in prefabrication technologies for mass housing across time and context. He demonstrates how in Denmark in the mid-1950s prefabrication was a means for introducing better quality in design and construction into the vast scale of mass housing, compared to its use for cost savings and resource management in Hong Kong. As Glendinning shows throughout the book, the architectural typology of mass housing cannot be detached or analyzed separately from its wider political, economic, and cultural contexts.

The book is divided into three parts, with eighteen chapters, an introduction,