

Building Power

Architecture between Capital, Value, and Desire



Call for Papers

Abstract submission April 30, 2026
Symposium June 5, 2026

CALL FOR PAPERS

From monumental institutions to infrastructures, from domestic interiors to objects, the built environment has consistently operated as a medium through which power materializes in space.

Architecture is never neutral: it structures hierarchies, organizes social relations, and renders authority perceptible.

In the contemporary condition—marked by the financialization of the built environment and the growing centrality of real estate within global economies—architecture is increasingly conceived as value even before it is experienced as space.

Buildings are treated as assets and repositories of capital, whose exchangeability often prevails over their social and territorial specificity. Political, religious, cultural, and institutional authorities may appear distinct, yet their spatial strategies remain intertwined with economic rationalities and processes of capital accumulation. For this reason,

the symposium deliberately addresses power in the singular: not as a multiplicity of autonomous forces, but as a systemic condition whose ultimate horizon is economic. Within this context, architecture and design emerge as strategic fields in which power becomes both visible and operative. They participate in the production and communication of value—economic as well as symbolic—and in the construction of legitimacy, recognition, and desire. Power does not merely occupy space; it organizes and reproduces itself through spatial systems operating at multiple scales, from objects and interiors to buildings, infrastructures, and urban territories.

The contemporary landscape of power can be understood as a system of interconnected environments.

Some spaces remain highly exclusive, functioning as sites where political and economic decisions are negotiated away from public scrutiny: corporate boardrooms, private clubs, luxury hospitality venues, villas, and restricted institutional

interiors such as the Oval Office in the White House. Other environments appear open to the public while operating as carefully designed settings in which authority is communicated and translated into experience. Banks, flagship stores, corporate headquarters, cultural foundations, museums, and large real estate developments frequently function as spaces of representation in which architecture and design contribute to the production of prestige and collective aspiration. These dynamics extend into everyday life through housing and consumption. Residential developments such as New York's Billionaires' Row, or design collections such as *Objets Nomades* by Louis Vuitton, transform domestic space into a device of social distinction.

Likewise, commercial environments and architectures developed for luxury brands demonstrate how architecture participates in corporate strategies of communication and branding. Promotional narratives, visual campaigns, and architectural renderings often operate as extensions of the

project itself, contributing to the production of value even before its realization. Alongside these visible environments, power also relies on less evident infrastructures that are nonetheless fundamental to contemporary spatial systems. Data centers, global logistics platforms, and financial districts such as Canary Wharf in London reorganize territories and redefine relationships between cities, capital, and governance.

Taken together, these environments form a spatial system comparable to a living organism: decision-making spaces operate as the mind, spaces of representation constitute the visible body, while infrastructures and technological networks function as the backbone that sustains its operation.

The symposium *Building Power* invites contributions that critically investigate how architecture and design participate in the construction, representation, and operation of power in contemporary societies. Particular attention will

be given to the ways in which spatial strategies, architectural forms, interiors, objects, and infrastructures intersect with economic logics and processes of symbolic production. The aim is to foster an interdisciplinary dialogue on how architecture and design function as two of the principal media through which economic rationality, spatial imagination, and symbolic construction converge in the production of power.

REFERENCES

Arrighi, G. (1994). *The long twentieth century: Money, power, and the origins of our times*. Verso.

Bauman, Z. (2000). *Liquid modernity*. Polity Press.

Colomina, B. (1994). *Privacy and publicity: Modern architecture as mass media*. The MIT Press.

Koolhaas, R., Boeri, S., Kwinter, S., Tazi, N., Obrist, H. U., Harvard Project on the City, & Arc en rève centre d'architecture. (2000). *Mutations*. ACTAR.

Secchi, B. (2013). *La città dei ricchi e la città dei poveri*. Laterza.

Sudjic, D. (2005). *The edifice complex: How the rich and powerful shape the world*. The Penguin Press.



WHO CAN APPLY

Researchers, scholars, and practitioners are invited to submit original contributions consistent with the symposium's academic scope. Selected papers will be discussed during the symposium, to be held on 5 June 2026 at the University of Genoa, and will subsequently be published in the ADDDOC Documents series, to be issued by Sagep Editori.

MATERIAL REQUIRED

Abstract (maximum 2.000 characters, including spaces), written in English and submitted in Word format.

An essential bibliography must be appended to the ab-

stract, formatted according to APA 7 style and comprising no more than five references.

In the event of acceptance of the abstract:

Full paper (maximum 18.000 characters, excluding abstract, notes, and bibliography), written in English and submitted in Word format.

Images (maximum 10) must be collected and submitted in a .zip folder, named [surname_images].

SUBMISSION

Files, named according to the following format [surname_abstract] and [surname_fullpaper], must be submitted by e-mail to the following address:

bp.symposium@gmail.com

Important Dates



20 March 2026 - Launch Call for Papers

30 April 2026 - Abstract Submission

8 May 2026 - Notification of Acceptance

5 June 2026 - Symposium

10 July 2026 - Full Paper Submission

2027 - Volume Publication

University of Genoa
Polytechnic School
PhD Course in Architecture and Design

Curated by /
F. Paoli, F. Santonicola, C. Tassano

Scientific Advisors /
M. Giberti, V. Pizzigoni, A. Valenti

Coordinator / M. Giberti

Faculty Council, XLI Cycle /
A. Bertagna, E. Bistagnino, P. Burlando,
C. Candito, N.V. Canessa, M. Casamonti,
N. Casiddu, G. Franco, G. Galli, A. Ghersi,
A. Giachetta, M. Giberti, G. Leandri,
C. Lepratti, G. Lombardini, A. Magliocco,
R. Morbiducci, C. Olivastrì, G. Pellegrì,
S. Pericu, K. Perini, M. Pivetta, V. Pizzigoni,
C. Porfirione, P. Rosasco, V. Scelsi,
D. Servente, A. Valenti, R. Vecchiattini

Council (Other Staff, Businesses, Public
Administration, Cultural Institutions, and
Research Infrastructure /
Dott. F. Bonaccorso, Dott. A. Canevari, Dott.
G. Moretta, Prof. A. Markoupoulou, Dott. G.
Spanu e Dott. E. Capasso

Faculty Council, Previous Academic Years /
C. Andriani, R.A. Bobbio, L. Chimenz,
M.L. Falcidieno, F. Mazzino, A.N. Eslami,
E. Nourrigat

Administrative Office / M. Mazzucchelli