

**S17 THE GRAND HOTEL AND THE CITY: GRAND HOTELS AS MARKERS OF EUROPEAN URBAN CULTURE AND IDENTITY**

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**Period:** Modern

**Date:** Thursday, 30 August 2012

**Time:** 11:00-12:30

**Room:** 326

**Description**

A certain universalism is an inherent prerequisite for the identity of grand hotels. Notwithstanding its supranational dimension the grand hotel has always been connected with its locality. In this way two central, historical elements of European urban history meet: the town and the hotel. Most early hotels were founded in capital cities or other wealthy towns and metropolises. The grand hotel as such is a child of European and American culture. It is a service factory, presenting for the first time a set of services under one roof: rooms to rent, a restaurant, a café, a porter, laundry services, etc. In hotels, for the very first time, there were en suite bathroom, hot and cold running water, and even elevators. Grand hotels exhibited international standards of taste in terms of architecture, décor and accommodation which were at the forefront of what might be seen as 'up-to-date' and modern in any given period, sending out messages to the urban populace and visitors from the regions about what was desirable and fashionable. In this sense their 'consumers' were local people as well as international clients. With the development of mass transportation (steam boat, railway) the grand hotel in the heart of a city became a necessity. The first named "Grand Hotel" was in Vienna, Austria in 1870. In Europe grand hotels were constructed between 1850 and 1920 all over the continent, giving every city of note a variety of individual hotels. By 1920 America had over 200 notable hotels, following European standards. In Africa and Asia the hotels rarely reflected the style of local traditions, but satisfied the demand of colonial travellers, thus creating a 'home from home' for Europeans. The hotels' buildings and service spaces formed an architectural, physical whole with in the urban context. The grand hotels became the showcase of the latest innovations and modern life style. They were symbols of great hospitality and urban sociability. Grand hotels formed a part of a city's urban imaginary. Now as in the past, grand hotels attract tourists, artists, writers, the bohemians, aristocracy and business people. Sometimes hotels immortalise famous people, sometimes it is the other way round. The grand hotel as a type has a very particular role in major European city development over time. It may act both as a marker that the city has 'arrived' internationally as a business/tourist destination, and can thus provide accommodation of the standard necessary for the discerning international traveller, but may also provide a central venue, often on a prestigious site in the centre of the city, which is both 'of' the city and cosmopolitan, a meeting-place for different cultures which while rooted in a particular urban milieu, is also open to others. It would be interesting to explore how far such hotels reflected local identities and how far they were rooted in the growing international European culture. The proliferation of grand hotels in most of European capitals and other key centres of population offers opportunities for comparisons across national boundaries: many hotels names such as the "Europe", 'Central' and 'Bristol' were adopted right across Europe,

for example. The way in which hotels were staffed, managed and occupied also says much about expectations of both the local community and the hotel clients; this area provides a rich vein for comparison across time periods and cities.

We hope to receive papers dealing with, for example, the following themes & questions – all from a comparative perspective:

- What kind of role did the grand hotels play in urban economies?
- Hotels and the development of international tourism
- The grand hotel as 'status symbol' for a city – urban identity
- How did the hotel architecture influence the urban structure?
- Spatial dynamics - grand hotels as social focus points
- International vs. local in the décor, style and staffing.

### **Scientific Programme**

**1586 "A LITTLE PARIS"? THE CREATION OF CENTRAL BOULEVARDS AND GRAND HOTELS IN BRUSSELS (1880-1914)**

*Virginie Jourdain* (Université Libre De Bruxelles, Brussels, Belgium)

**1215 A EUROPEAN HOTEL IN NATIONAL CONTEXT: HOTEL KÄMP IN HELSINKI AS SYMBOL OF TRUE METROPOLITAN LIFE**

*Laura Kolbe* (University of Helsinki, History, Helsinki, Finland)

**1123 GRAND HOTELS AROUND THE KVARNER BAY: HOTEL ARCHITECTURE BETWEEN POLITICS AND LEISURE IN THE AUSTRIA-HUNGARY**

*Jasenka Gudelj* (University of Zagreb, Department of History of Art, Zagreb, Croatia)

**954 INTERNATIONAL FEATURES AND LOCAL CONTEST. THE CULTURE OF THE GRAND HOTEL EXPERIENCE IN GARDONE RIVIERA ON LAKE GARDA (1883-1914)**

*Monica Aresi* (Politecnico of Milan - Department of Architecture and Planning (DiAP), Milano, Italy)

**826 GRAND HOTELS IN THE ITALIAN RIVIERA DURING THE BELLE ÉPOQUE: THE CASES OF GENOA AND SANREMO**

*Andrea Zanini* (Università di Genova, Dipartimento di Economia e Metodi Quantitativi, Genova, Italy)