

Making Sense of Ruins: Approaches of Post-War Urban Reconstruction and Dealing with the Past since 1945

Presenter: Gruia Bădescu

Discussant: Hatsuda Kosei (Kogakuin University)



How do cities recover after war? This lecture examines urban reconstruction not only as a technical and architectural task, but also as a social and moral process of coming to terms with difficult pasts. Drawing on examples from Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean, it examines how architects, planners, and communities have negotiated the balance between restoring pre-war urban forms and envisioning new urban futures. From the devastated landscapes of post-World War II Europe to more recent conflicts in the Balkans and the Middle East, decisions about what to rebuild and what to let disappear have reflected changing ideas of memory, responsibility, and collective aspiration. Tracing the evolution of reconstruction debates from 1945 to the “new wars” of the late twentieth century, the lecture shows how rebuilding has always intertwined with memory politics, shaping both the material and symbolic dimensions of urban life. Ultimately, it reflects on how past experiences of societies making sense of their ruins remain relevant in a world still marked by destruction.

Date and time: November 19, 2025 (Wed.) 4:30–5:50 pm (JST)

Venue: Room 712, Building 19, Waseda Campus, Waseda University and Online (zoom)

Language: English

* Advance registration is required.

Please register from <https://forms.gle/e8sKKtNiNtLPaRNK9>

* Zoom URL will be sent by November 18th to those who have registered from the registration form.

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Gruia Bădescu is a Research Fellow in History and Sociology at the Zukunfts Kolleg, University of Konstanz. He holds a PhD from the University of Cambridge and was previously a lecturer and research associate at the University of Oxford. His research examines architecture and cities after war and authoritarianism in Europe, the Middle East and South America, with a particular focus on post-war urban reconstruction and urban memory. Since 2020, he has led a research group at the Zukunfts Kolleg on the reshaping of cities and urban imaginaries after political ruptures. He is a founder and convener of the Memory, Space and Place working group of the Memory Studies Association. (2022)