

Archined  
*The Persistence  
of Questioning*  
Critical Reflections  
on the Future,  
on Architecture  
and More



‘Is Design Ethics?’

By its long-term multi-project *The Persistence of Questioning: Critical Reflections for the Future, on Architecture and More*, Archined aims to stimulate the debate about important questions in and for architectural practices and culture. In addition to essays and pictorial essays published both online and on paper, the project also includes podcasts and physical meetings. The questions that Archined addresses with *The Persistence of Questioning* have no unambiguous answers, but that does not make them any less important. What is the significance of the profession in and for the future? What is the relation between design and ethics? When do we speak of architecture and what criteria do we use to assess it? What is the value of architecture culture?

In this publication, Pia Prantl, Theo Deutinger, Christopher Clarkson, Marina Otero Verzier, Luce Beeckmans, Markus Appenzeller and Thijs van Spaandonk discuss the question 'Is design ethics?'. What are the consequences of certain design decisions for society, the earth and the climate? In what way and to what extent do architects relate to the world and account for this?

Is Design Ethics?

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## Is Design Ethics?

Archined published its very first article 25 years ago, on 4 September 1996. Rummaging through the substantial Archined archives, the editors discovered – not entirely to their surprise – that certain subjects, like the position of the architect, ethics and design and the spectrum of the discipline, had been readdressed persistently in the past 25 years, although the reasons and arguments for this were different in each case.

If we use the context of the past 25 years to mark off a look back at the profession's recent history, it is obvious that a number of striking shifts have taken place in this period. One of these shifts concerns designers' widely supported and increasing awareness of their ethical responsibility and the recognition that the architectural discipline needs systemic changes to make it more inclusive as well as able to make a positive contribution to the solving of issues of inequality, exploitation, racism and discrimination.

The global impact of the Covid-19 virus on our daily social and cultural lives and on the economy, infrastructure and built environment and their uses is causing a shift in our world view, confronting us with a different reality and

making certain problems more visible. The outrage that followed the murder of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer in 2020 was expressed worldwide by the Black Lives Matter movement; more recently the use of thousands of migrants as geopolitical pawns in a conflict between the EU and Belarus has shown that certain forms of structural inequality, racism and exploitation are still the order of the day. A recent report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) shows – not for the first time, unfortunately – that human-made climate change is leading to unavoidable weather and climate extremes all over the world. We have to look for solutions to these major issues at both a local and a global level. At a local level, they include changing organizational structures on the work floor, changing the political climate and policies surrounding spatial challenges, and creating a different mindset towards devising design strategies for a new demographic reality. On a global level, we need to anticipate the exhaustion of raw materials, significantly improve the working conditions in production processes of (building) materials and drastically reduce waste and CO<sup>2</sup> emissions.

The above issues are connected because the systems in which they become manifest

are interrelated and the ideological grid on which they are based stems from a Western sense of superiority that has legitimized the right to territories, raw materials and the domination of other beings for centuries. Architecture and architects are in many ways complicit in this, because it is a spatial representation of social, cultural, economic ideals and values. Traditionally the architectural discipline moves between different worlds and realities that are not always compatible: architecture is both a cultural expression and an economic product and therefore neither autonomous nor value-free. Architects head artistic practices that are also business enterprises and have to navigate personal ideals, social and cultural views, government policies and regulations, and the wishes of clients. This sometimes makes it hard to define where ethical responsibilities begin and where they end. What are the consequences of certain design decisions for society, the earth and the climate? In what way and to what extent do architects relate to the world and account for this?

The all-encompassing and scale-transcending effect of these confrontational insights and trends provides concrete arguments for changes and shifts. The question

is, however, which directions these will or should take. By its long-term multi-project *The Persistence of Questioning: Critical Reflections for the Future, on Architecture and More*, Archined aims to stimulate the debate about important questions in and for architectural practices and culture. In addition to essays and pictorial essays published both online and on paper, the project also includes podcasts and physical meetings. The questions that Archined addresses with *The Persistence of Questioning* have no unambiguous answers, but that does not make them any less important. What is the significance of the profession in and for the future? What is the relation between design and ethics? When do we speak of architecture and what criteria do we use to assess it? What is the value of architecture culture?

In this publication, architects Pia Prantl and Theo Deutinger (TD), and Christopher Clarkson test the ethical sense of responsibility and conscience of architects by a fictitious Ministry of Ethics, Department of Ethical Design questionnaire. Their image essay, in the form of a government document, traverses architectural practice and asks detailed questions about the various

**distinctions and decisions that contemporary architecture firms (can) make in this respect.**

**In her critical essay ‘Cartesian Enclosures: From Grid to Cloud’, Marina Otero Verzier (Director of Research & Development at Het Nieuwe Instituut and Head of the MA in Social Design at the Design Academy Eindhoven) explains how the work and theories of mathematician and philosopher René Descartes (1596-1650) have deeply influenced architecture. The Cartesian grid in particular covers the discipline as well as society like a suffocating system. How can we free ourselves from this?**

**In her essay ‘Epistemic Justice in Design Processes’, Luce Beeckmans (assistant professor in Architecture and Urbanism, Migration and Diversity and senior postdoctoral research fellow at Ghent University, KU Leuven and Antwerp University) describes the need to bring more justice into the design process, among other things by making urban diversity and inequality the subject of the design assignment. She subsequently asks: What is the transformative potential of architecture with respect to**

**the important social sustainability issues that face cities today? What social contribution can architecture make?**

**Markus Appenzeller (head of the master's programme in Urban Design at the Amsterdam Academy of Architecture and co-founder of MLA+) and Thijs van Spaandonk (head of the master's programme in Urban Design at the Rotterdam Academy of Architecture and cofounder of Bright) close this publication with a 'Manifesto for a Biosphere Ethics', in which they call on and instruct designers to put an end to indifference towards the climate crisis and the exhaustion of the earth.**



Ministry of Ethics

The Department of Ethical Design

Pia Prantl, Theo Deutinger  
and Christopher Clarkson

This image essay, in the form of a government document, traverses architectural practice and asks detailed questions about the various distinctions and decisions that contemporary architecture firms (can) make in this respect.

The form can be downloaded from [archined.nl](http://archined.nl) [↗]





**FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY**

Signature (ethics officer) .....

Place

Date

E.O. Reference No.

**Ethical Architectural Control**

By filling out this form you accept full responsibility for the unethical decisions made in the design process and agree to face the consequences that may result from unethical conduct as stipulated at the end of this document.

**B PARTICULARS OF APPLICANT\*1**

**B1 Identification**

Surname prefix (if applicable)

B1.1 Name (if applicable: surname prior to marriage/ registered partnership)

B1.2 Given names (in full)

B1.3 Date of birth  1.4 BSN Number

B1.4 Country of birth

B1.5 Place of birth

B1.6 Marital Status  Married  Unmarried  Registered Partnership  It's complicated  Single

B1.7 Gender  She/her  He/him  They/them  I prefer not to say  Other, specify

**B2 Personal Principles**

B2.1 Religion, only if you follow its principles  Christian  Hindu  Muslim  Jewish  Other, specify

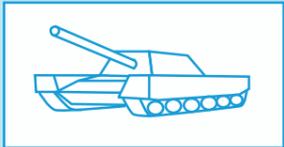
B2.2 Dietary Principles  Vegan  Vegetarian  Pescatarian  None  Other, specify

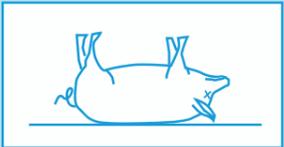
B2.3 Select all typologies you WOULD be willing to design

**A** Prison 

**B** Zoo 

**C** Church 

**D** Military base 

**E** Slaughter House 

**F** Shopping Mall 

B1.1	-
B1.2	-
B1.3	-
B1.4	-
B1.5	-
B1.6	-
B1.7	-
B2.1	-
B2.2	-

	points
B2.3	
A	-10
B	-10
C	-10
D	-10
E	-10
E	-10

\*1 Particulars of applicant holds no bearing on your ethical evaluation, and this information will be used exclusively by the department of ethical design with no third party access.

Σ=



## C OFFICE REGULATIONS AND CONDUCT

### C1 General Information

C1.1 Firm name

C1.2 Why did you study in this field?  
.....  
.....  
.....

### C2 Employment

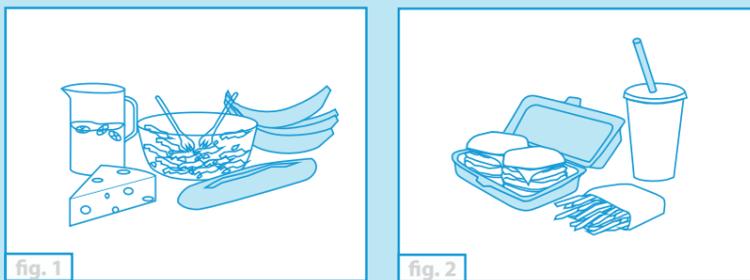
C2.1 Happiness  YES  NO Do you enjoy your job?  
**WHY?** .....  
.....

C2.2 - C2.9

C2.2	<input type="text"/>	How many hours do you work per day?	C2.5	<input type="text"/>	Number of employees
C2.3	<input type="text"/>	What is your monthly salary?	C2.6	<input type="text"/>	BIPOC*1 % of employees
C2.4	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	Are you the employer?	C2.7	<input type="text"/>	Female % of employees
C2.4.1	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	If no, are you paid over time?	C2.8	<input type="text"/>	Minority*2 % of managers
C2.4.1i		If no, why do you still work there? Answer below: ..... .....	C2.9	<input type="text"/>	Intern % of employees

### C3 Workplace Standards

C3.1  YES  NO Is lunch provided?  
C3.1.1  fig.1  fig.2 If yes, does it look more like figure 1, or figure 2?



C3.2 - C3.9	C3.2	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	Do you have a fixed work space?	C3.6	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	Is there an egalitarian hierarchy?
	C3.3	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	Do you have paid leave?	C3.7	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	Are women and men paid equally?
	C3.4	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	Is there an HR department for handling harassment?	C3.8	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	Does the office provide sufficient square meterage per person?*3
	C3.5	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	Are you provided with necessary tools/ computers by the office? ..... .....	C3.9	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	Have there been other unjust workplace experiences? If yes, specify below ..... .....

C1.1	-
C1.2	-

	Y	N
C2.1	10	-10

range	point
C2.2	
<8	5
>8	-10
C2.3	
<2000	10
>2000	-10

	Y	N
C2.4.1	5	-15

C2.4.1i	±5
---------	----

% range	points
C2.6-2.8:	
<20%	-40
<35%	-30
<65%	20
>66%	-20
C2.9	
<20%	10
>35%	-10
>60%	-30

	Y	N
C3.1	5	-10
C3.1.1	10	-20
C3.2	5	-5
C3.3	10	-30
C3.4	30	-30
C3.5	10	-20
C3.6	30	-20
C3.7	30	-50
C3.8	10	-15
C3.9	-10	00

\*1 BIPOC stands for Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour.  
\*2 What percentage of managers are of a minority group (Religious, gender, or BIPOC, social economic?)  
\*3 Sufficient square meterage per person is anything above 9 m<sup>2</sup> per person.

Σ=



## D TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT OF DESIGN

### D1 Basic Information

D1.1 What is your primary tool for drawing architecture? (Select one of the following options)

A Pencil and paper (Skip D2)  B Computer software (Skip D3)

D1.2 Do you build physical models?  YES  NO (If no, skip D4)

D1.3 Does your office have a second-hand-paper policy?\*1  YES  NO

### D2 Digital Tools

D2.1 How many of the following technologies does your office have?

D2.1.1 Computers per person  D2.1.2 Screens per person

D2.2 Does your office use Macintosh or Windows?  A Macintosh  B Windows

D2.3 Do you turn off your computer?  YES  NO

D2.3.1 If yes, how many hours per day does your computer run for?

D2.4 Do you know where your PC comes from?  YES  NO

D2.4.1 If yes, select the country of origin:  A China  B USA  C Other

D2.5 Does the office have a plan to recycle electric waste?  YES  NO

D2.6 Which CAD software do you use the most?

D2.7 Do you know which company owns the software?  YES  NO

D2.7.1 If yes, select one of the following options:

- A Autodesk (3,2 billion EUR)  D Nemetschek Group (597 million EUR)  
 B Trimble (2,62 billion EUR)  E Other  
 C McNeel & Associates (9,3 million EUR)

D2.8 Do you own a license for the software you use?  YES  NO

D2.8.1 If no, do you feel guilty about having an illegal license?  YES  NO

D2.8.2 If yes, do you really want to support a multi-billion Dollar multinational?  YES  NO

D2.9 What does your storage system look like (select one option)



**fig. 1** You store all your data on a cloud server and have unlimited server space

**fig. 2** You save your data in your office and are the sole owner and guard of your digital property

### D3 Analog Tools

D3.1 Do you know where your pencils and paper come from?  YES  NO

D3.1.1 If yes, specify which companies and forests of origin below:

.....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....

	A	B
D1.1	10	-30
	Y	N
D1.2	10	-10
D1.3	30	-50
range		points
D2.1.1		
x>1		-30
x<1		20
D2.1.2		
x>1		-15
x<1		10
	A	B
D2.2	-10	-5
	Y	N
D2.3	5	-40
range		points
D2.3.1		
x>9		-15
x<8		10
	Y	N
D2.4	10	-20
		points
D2.4.1		
A		-10
B		-10
C		5
	Y	N
D2.5	30	-30
D2.7	5	-5
		points
D2.7.1		
A		-10
B		-10
C		-1
D		-5
E		5
	Y	N
D2.8	1	-1
D2.8.1	10	-1
D2.8.2	-15	15
D2.9		-
	Y	N
D3.1	10	-10
D3.1.1		±15

\*1 A second-hand-paper policy involves systems that ensure that paper is used on both sides before disposal, and is ultimately recycled.

Σ=



## D4 Model Making

D4.1 Which material do you use the most for building your models?

- A Paper & cardboard     B Balsa (wood)     C ABS Filament for 3D printer     D Styrofoam

D4.1.1 If 'C' or 'D', how much material waste do you generate per year from model making?

- A less than 0,5 m<sup>3</sup> of waste     B 0,5 -1 m<sup>3</sup> of waste     C over 1 m<sup>3</sup> of waste

	points
D4.1	
A	10
B	10
C	-40
D	-40
D4.1.1	
A	-20
B	-40
C	-80

THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS CONCERN THE MOST RECENT BUILT PROJECT OR ONGOING PROJECT OF THE FIRM, ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS RELEVANT TO THE SPECIFIC PROJECT IN QUESTION.

## E BUDGET & FEE\*1

E1.1 Total construction costs

E1.2 Architect's fee

E1.3 Does the planning fee cover the workload?  YES  NO

E1.4 How would you spend your revenues? (Select all that apply)

- A Wage increase / bonus for employees
- B Investment in the office
- C Saving money for a rainy day
- D Long vacation
- E Purchasing a new car
  - 1 Gasoline or diesel car
  - 2 Electric car
- F Donation to a charitable project
- G Renew work equipment
  - 1 Ergonomic mice, keyboards, chairs, etc.
  - 2 Programmes and software
  - 3 Books
  - 4 Tools for the model workshop
  - 5 Pens and pencils
- H Throw a party
- I Office outing

E1.1	-
E1.2	-
	Y N
E1.3	10 -10
	points
E1.4	
A	10
B	10
C	-5
D	-20
E1	-40
E2	-5
F	10
G1	5
G2	5
G3	5
G4	5
G5	5
H	5
I	5

\*1 This section is only for the owner of the architecture firm to fill out - please skip this section if you are an employee.

Σ=



## F CLIENT RELATIONS

### F1 Client's details

F1.1 Client's full name

F1.2 Company

F1.3 Gender  He/him  She/her  They/them  Other/unknown

F1.4 Government What form of governance exists in the project location? (Select one of the following)

A Democracy  B Autocracy  C Monarchy

D Communism  E Federation  F Other, specify

F1.4.1 Legal entity What kind of legal entity is the client? (Select one of the following)\*1

A Private party  D NPO (Non-Profit Organisation)

B Investor  E Government/ government official

C NGO (Non-Government Organisation)

F1.4.2 If your client is a government/ government official in an autocratic system, justify your reason for accepting the commission:

.....

.....

.....

F1.5  YES  NO Are any governmental parties or officials stakeholders in the project?

F1.5.1 If yes, how significant is their influence on the project, from 1 to 10\*2

### F2 Client's interests

F2.1  YES  NO Do you share mutual values with your client?

F2.2  YES  NO Is the client interested in the social/ built context?

F2.3  YES  NO Does the client have cultural sensibility for the context?

F2.4  YES  NO Does the client care about the common good?

F2.5  YES  NO Can you come to terms with the client's political mindset?

F2.6  YES  NO Is the client open to using ecological material?

F2.7  YES  NO Does the client's money come from an ethically responsible source?

F2.7.1 Specify the client's financial source: .....

F2.8  YES  NO Does the client think about the whole lifespan of the building?

F2.9  YES  NO Does the client come by public transport?

F2.9.1 If no, what kind of car does the client drive?  A Gasoline or diesel car  B Electric car

F2.10  YES  NO Is the client also the user of the design?

F2.10.1  YES  NO If no, are the future users involved in the design process?

F1.1	-	
F1.2	-	
F1.3	-	
		points
F1.4*1		
A	20	
B	-50	
C	-15	
D	-40	
E	10	
F	±5	
F1.4.1*1		
A	*0	
B	*1	
C	*0.25	
D	*0.5	
E	*2	
F1.4.2	±10	
	Y	N
F1.5*1	*0.5	*0
	range	points
F1.51*1		
x<4	*0.5	
5<x<7	*1	
8<x<10	*2	
	Y	N
F2.1	10	-10
F2.2	20	-20
F2.3	10	-10
F2.4	20	-20
F2.5	10	-10
F2.6	20	-20
F2.7	10	-10
F2.7.1	±20	
	Y	N
F2.8	20	-50
F2.9	20	-20
	A	B
F2.9.1	-20	10
	Y	N
F2.10	5	-5
2.10.1	15	-20

\*1 Questions F1.4.1 and F1.5 do not have any point attributions but each option acts as a multiplier for the points received in question F1.4. For example, F1.4B gives (-)50 points, F1.4.1E is a 2 times multiplier, which would give (-)100 points. The sum total would then be (-)150 points for these answers.

\*2 Where 1 represents minimal, if any influence at all, and 10 being total control.

Σ=



## G LOCATION

### G1 Site

G1.1  YES  NO Do trees need to be removed for construction?

G1.1.1  If yes, how many?

G1.1.2  YES  NO If yes, will they be relocated?

If yes, specify their new location .....

.....

.....

G1.2  YES  NO Is the ecosystem restored after construction?

G1.3  YES  NO Is the site already built upon?

G1.3.1  YES  NO If yes, is the building a Heritage site?

G1.3.2  YES  NO If no, do you demolish the existing building?

If yes, specify WHY? .....

.....

.....

.....

G1.4  YES  NO Has the (future) climate and weather been analysed?

G1.4.1  YES  NO If yes, does the site have any natural hazards?

G1.4.2  YES  NO If yes, are they taken into consideration for design?

### G2 Culture

G2.1  YES  NO Are you designing for a culture foreign to your own?

G2.1.1  YES  NO If yes, are you educated about that culture?

G2.1.2  YES  NO If no, have you had first hand experience with that culture? (living in it for example)

If no, why would you continue with the project? .....

.....

.....

G2.2  YES  NO Is your building a public building?

G2.2.1  YES  NO If no, does your design offer space to the public?

G2.2.2 If yes, what function does the public space serve? (Select all that apply)

A Library       B Cafe       C Garden

D Child daycare       E Museum       F Other, specify

G2.2.3 If no, specify **WHY NOT?** .....

.....

.....

.....

G2.3  YES  NO Does your design improve surrounding public space?

G2.3.1 If yes, what improvement does your design offer? (Select all that apply)

A Sheltered pavement       B Trees       C Open plinth

D Comfortable benches       E Bicycle Parking       F Other, specify below

.....

.....

.....

	Y	N
G1.1	-10	10
range      points		
G1.1.1		
x<4		-5
5<x<10		-10
x>10		-20
G:		
1.1.2	15	-15
1.2	20	-20
1.3	10	-10
1.3.1	-5	5
1.3.2	-30	30
1.4	20	-20
1.4.1	-10	10
1.4.2	50	-50

G:	Y	N
2.1	15	-15
2.1.1	20	-20
2.1.2	10	-10
2.2	5	-5
2.2.1	30	-30

	points
G2.2.2	
A	10
B	10
C	10
D	10
E	10
F	10

	Y	N
G2.3	10	-30

	points
G2.3.1	
A	5
B	5
C	5
D	5
E	5
F	5

Σ=



G2.3.2 If no, specify WHY NOT? .....

.....

.....

### G3 Politics

G3.1  YES  NO Do local residents and businesses profit from the construction of this building?

G3.1.1 If yes, specify HOW? .....

.....

.....

G3.2  YES  NO Is the building function affordable for local residents?

G3.2.1 If no, specify WHY NOT? .....

.....

.....

G3.3  YES  NO Does the building sell itself based on the function of nearby spaces to compensate for the poor quality of the building itself?

G2.3.2		-
	Y	N
G3.1	30	-30
G3.2	20	-20
G3.3	-30	10

## H DESIGNING AND BUILDING

### H1 Design

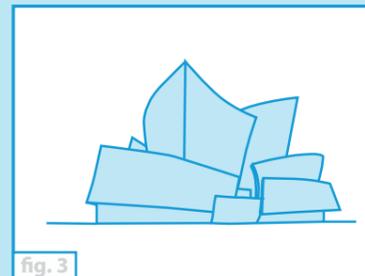
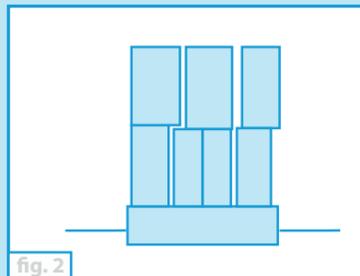
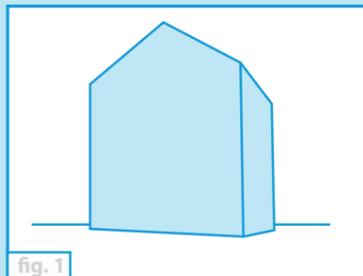
H1.1 Did you, and your office, question the assignment?  YES  NO

H1.2 Which drawing does your design resemble most? (Select one of the following options)

Standard

Standard +

Expressive



H1.2.1  fig. 1 If fig.1, are you sure you are an architect?  YES  NO

H1.2.2  fig. 2 If fig.2, why doesn't your design look like fig.1, and what is your concept? .....

.....

.....

H1.2.3  fig. 3 If fig.3, are you Frank Gehry?\*1  YES  NO

H1.2.3i If no, why do you copy stylistic/ formal characteristics of another architect's work? .....

.....

.....

	Y	N
H1.1	30	-30
	points	
H1.2		
fig. 1		-10
fig. 2		-5
fig. 3		-20

H	Y	N
1.2.1	-20	-20

H1.2.2	±5
--------	----

H	Y	N
1.2.3	20	-40

\*1 Authorship and copying:

With the advent of internet technology, documents regarding other designs and their detailing has become incredibly easy to locate and copy. As such the question of authorship and the rights regarding them is increasingly important. While software such as BIM provides the ability to insert standard elements, your authorship of the design is subsequently less substantial. At the same time blatant stylistic copying of other architects' work is considered as an ethical offence as stipulated in §10.6.1iii of the Building Code.

Σ=



H1.3 What is the design's relation to the ground?

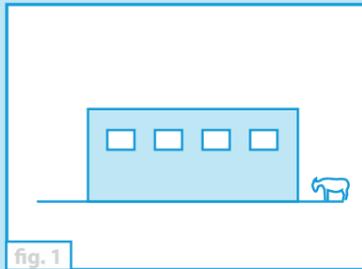
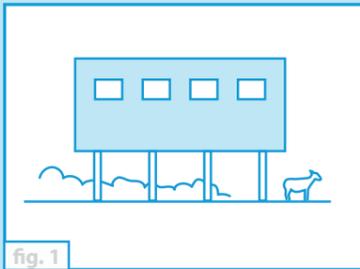


fig. 1 Building is raised and a species ecosystem is still possible

fig. 2 Building sits on the ground and seals the soil

H1.4  YES  NO Does your building blend into the environment?

H1.5  YES  NO Does your design express its function?

H1.6  YES  NO Is it possible to talk to the users/ incorporate users early in the design process?

H1.6.1 If no, why not? .....

## H2 Floor plan and functions

H2.1 What is the total square meterage of the design?  m<sup>2</sup>

H2.2 What percentage of the square meters are pure luxury?  %

H2.3  YES  NO Is high social interaction desired?

H2.3.1 If no, why not? .....

H2.4  YES  NO Is it possible to create communal spaces, terraces or gardens for communal parties and gatherings?

H2.4.1 If no, why not? .....

H2.5  YES  NO Is it possible to introduce semi-public or public space into the building?

H2.5.1 If no, why not? .....

H2.6 Which figure resembles the neighbour's perspective most accurately after construction of your design?

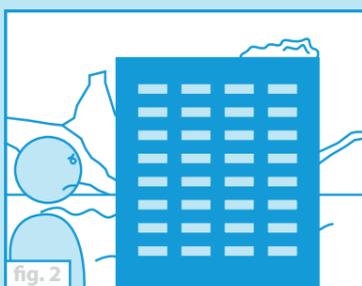
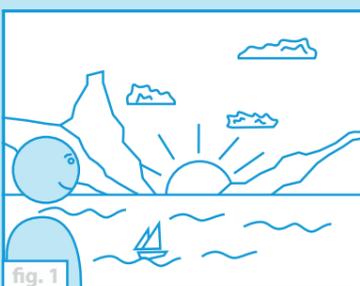


fig. 1 Your design has minimal to no impact on the neighbour's view, or access to sun

fig. 2 Your design blocks views, and/ or reduces access to sun and/ or increases wind

H2.7  YES  NO Does your design afford social interaction on street level, as well as a walkable/ bikeable city?

H2.8  YES  NO Is the area still accesible for the other local residents after construction?

H2.8.1  YES  NO If no, will the area be locked or fenced?

	points	
H1.3		
fig. 1	5	
fig. 2	-5	

	Y	N
H1.4	5	-5
H1.5	5	-5
H1.6	10	-10

range	points
H2.2 x<15	-20

	Y	N
H2.3	1	-1
H2.4	20	-20
H2.5	15	-20

	points	
H2.6		
fig. 1	20	
fig. 2	-20	

H	Y	N
2.7	1	-1
2.8	5	-5
2.8.1	-10	5

Σ=



### H3 Construction

- H3.1  % What percentage of construction workers are from a temporary employment agency?
- H3.2  YES  NO Are proper safety practices implemented at the construction site?
- H3.3  YES  NO Are construction workers invited to the building's inauguration?
- H3.4  YES  NO Are construction workers credited as contributors for the design?
- H3.5  YES  NO Are construction worker's voices heard and taken into consideration for the design?

range	points
H3.1 x>10	<b>-25</b>
	Y N
H3.2	<b>30 -30</b>
H3.3	<b>10 -10</b>
H3.4	<b>20 -5</b>
H3.5	<b>30 -30</b>

### MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

I1.1 Select one of the following materials:

Material properties*1	Primary energy content	Transport route	CO2 emission	Recyclability	Compressive strength/load-bearing capacity	Processing	Indoor climate	Thermal insulation	Sound insulation	Fire protection	Moisture proofing	
<b>A</b> Brick	-	+	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	Mineral
<b>B</b> Areated concrete	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	
<b>C</b> Sand-lime brick	-	+	-	+	+	-	+	-	+	+	+	
<b>D</b> Concrete	-	+	-	-	+	-	+	-	+	+	+	
<b>E</b> Glass	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	+	+	
<b>F</b> Rammed earth	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	Metallic
<b>G</b> Metal	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	
<b>H</b> Wood & wood materials	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	Renewable
Plastic	NOTE: IF YOU USE PLASTIC*2 AS A CONSTRUCTION MATERIAL, PROCEED DIRECTLY TO CHAPTER K EXIT GATE 1. AS PER ARTICLE 239 OF D.E.D. PUBLISHED ON 14-07-2005 PLASTIC USE IS DEEMED AS UNETHICAL.											Fossil Fuel

	points
I1.1	
A	<b>-10</b>
B	<b>30</b>
C	<b>-10</b>
D	<b>-30</b>
E	<b>-30</b>
F	<b>50</b>
G	<b>-30</b>
H	<b>60</b>

I1.2  YES  NO Did you use materials located on site?

I1.2.1  YES  NO If no, do you know where/how the material is sourced?

I1.2.2 If yes, please specify where and how the material is sourced\*3:

.....  
 .....  
 .....

I1.3  YES  NO Is the material chosen abundant and of stable supply?

I1.4  YES  NO Do workers that fabricate the material work under fair conditions?

I1.5  YES  NO Did you factor transport fuel consumption into your choice of manufacturer?

I1.6  YES  NO Can the building and material be easily deconstructed?

I1.7  YES  NO Is the material chosen pollution free in its production AND use?

I1.8  YES  NO Could the material be reused/recycled in the event of demolition or deconstruction?\*4

I1.9  YES  NO Do you have insight into the supply chain of the building material from source to finished product?

	Y	N
I1.2	<b>30</b>	<b>-40</b>
I1.2.1	<b>30</b>	<b>-40</b>
I1.2.2	<b>±20</b>	
	Y	N
I1.3	<b>10</b>	<b>-10</b>
I1.4	<b>20</b>	<b>-40</b>
I1.5	<b>20</b>	<b>-20</b>
I1.6	<b>10</b>	<b>-10</b>
I1.7	<b>20</b>	<b>-20</b>
I1.8	<b>30</b>	<b>-30</b>
I1.9	<b>30</b>	<b>-30</b>

\*1 Where '+' indicates favourable performance, and '-' indicates negative performance within a given parameter.

\*2 Plastic is created from fossil fuels. It is a by-product of the distillation process of crude oil. Plastics are non-biodegradable, and recyclability is limited at best when possible. Recognising the damage that fossil fuels do to our entire planet, the use of plastic is regarded as an inexcusable offence.

\*3 Please be as specific as possible; try to indicate which forest or mine and by whom and with what method.

\*4 Materials and Recyclability:

While recyclability is something an architect should strive for, it must be acknowledged that the material might not necessarily be recycled – it is important to realise the potential damage a design could have on its ecosystem should it be abandoned or demolished and disposed of into a landfill.

Σ=



**J SELF-ASSESSMENT**

**J1 Perception of Client**

- J1.1  YES  NO Do you have the feeling that the client is honest with their intentions?
- J1.2  YES  NO Are you actually interested in your client's aims?
- J1.3  YES  NO Do you have romantic interests in your client?
- J1.3.1  YES  NO If yes, can you speak openly with your client?
- J1.4  YES  NO Are you related to or a friend of the client?
- J1.4.1  YES  NO If yes, can you speak openly with your client?

**J2 Justifications and Commitments**

- J2.1  YES  NO Do you devote yourself fully to the project?
- J2.1.1 If no, why not? .....
- J2.2  YES  NO Did you accept the project just for financial reasons?
- J2.3  YES  NO Does the project fit into your schedule?
- J2.4  YES  NO Did you accept the project just for prestige?

**J3 Conduct**

- J3.1  YES  NO Do you speak up against misdeeds in the workspace?\*
- J3.2  YES  NO Do you always separate waste?
- J3.3  YES  NO Do you manipulate your coworkers/employees?
- J3.4  YES  NO Do you keep your deadlines and arrive on time?

	Y	N
J1.1	10	-10
J1.2	10	-10
J1.3	-10	10
J1.3.1	20	-20
J1.4	-10	10
J1.4.1	20	-20
J2.1	20	-20
J2.2	-20	10
J2.3	10	-10
J2.4	-20	10
J3.1	20	-20
J3.2	15	-15
J3.3	-15	15
J3.4	10	-10

\*1 Misdeeds include any form of harassment, illegal activity, or otherwise socially amoral activity (racist/ sexist/ ageist remarks etc.)

Σ=

**K EVALUATION** This will be filled out by the authorities.

I, ....., hereby declare that the architect in question has completed the survey and here within are the results of their ethical evaluation. As an ethics officer I confirm having evaluated their answers under free will and intelligently.	Page Number	Page Subtotal
Should there be misjudgements on my behalf I accept any legal consequences that might follow as having acted unethically.	TDED-163-3	Σ=
Place: .....	TDED-163-4	Σ=
Date: <input type="text" value="D D M M Y Y Y Y"/>	TDED-163-5	Σ=
E.O. Ref. no: <input type="text"/>	TDED-163-6	Σ=
<b>SIGNATURE ETHICS OFFICER:</b>	TDED-163-7	Σ=
	TDED-163-8	Σ=
	TDED-163-9	Σ=
	TDED-163-10	Σ=
	TDED-163-11	Σ=
<b>Total</b>		
1957		
<b>Σ=</b>		
-2858		

**Exit Gate 1**

Party has selected a red check box. If the party is a registered architect he/sche will be removed from the Architects Register. The party is expected to cease all building and design activities effective immediately. The party's university degree shall be suspended until such time that the party has followed our Ethical Design Course and passed with a satisfactory score, and retaken final university exams.

**Exit Gate 2**

Party has not met or surpassed the required point score threshold of 0 points: Σ<0  
The party may appeal to court after following TDED's Ethical Design Course and passing with a satisfactory score. This will take up to 6 months to process. Until such time the party is expected to cease all building and design activities and will be removed from the Architects Register if applicable.

**Exit Gate 3**

Party has met the required point score threshold of 0 points: Σ>0  
The party may continue all building and design activities and if registered, may remain inscribed in the Architects Register. The party will however be cautioned to improve their architectural practice, another survey will be sent within the next 6 months to ensure that the firm has not failed to uphold its ethical responsibility.

**Exit Gate 4**

Party has met and surpassed the point score threshold of +1000 points, exceeding standard ethical expectations. The Department will send letter of congratulations to the firm for upstanding conduct, and shall place an agent in the office for a term of no shorter than 4 months to ensure that the survey has in fact been filled out with total transparency. If not the party must cease all design and build activities until such time that the true level of ethical responsibility can be determined and acted upon accordingly.



# **Cartesian Enclosures: From Grid to Cloud**

## **Marina Otero Verzier**

In the last months, I have been increasingly focused on breathing, on the act of breathing and its medium, air. Partially, this interest is the result of the work that, since 2015, I have conducted around labour and exhaustion that manifested in projects such as *Work, Body, Leisure* (the 2018 Dutch Pavilion at the Venice Architecture Biennale) and *BURN-OUT. Exhaustion on a Planetary Scale* (instigating care for multispecies bodies). Yet, my research on breathing and air is possibly also influenced by the Covid-19 pandemic and the experiences I've had while working in increasingly suffocating environments.

I came to identify my quest for *more* air with my growing resistance to the omnipresent *Cartesian grid*. Breathing, after all, is contrary to the compartmentalized world asserted by Cartesians. Breathing is based on interdependence to others and the atmosphere. It implies porosity and indeterminacy. When we breathe, we inhale the life forms that exist in the air, and in doing so, we connect to and become part of other bodies across time and

space. However, as its possibility and quality is unevenly distributed, breathing is also at the centre of contemporary struggles on toxicity and pollution, police brutality and racially motivated violence.

Entrenched in these thoughts I wonder: would a seemingly banal gesture such as breathing – and its conceptualization – help resist the Cartesian logic now materialized in territories, architectures, daily activities and mindsets?

## Grids

Cartesianism, its imperative of rationalization and theory of the animal-machine, drove the mechanical age and the formation of Western capitalism. Influenced by the technical creations of the early seventeenth century, its founder René Descartes (1596–1650) referred to machines as models to explain the functioning of organisms in what came to be known as the Cartesian theory of the animal-machine. Departing from the observation of the parallels between animal movements and automatic mechanical movements (early machines were necessarily ran by humans or animals), Cartesians attempted to explain physical and

biological phenomena solely by technical models. By equating them to machines, Descartes refused to attribute a soul – reason – to animals, and in doing so, he also rendered the human as a unique being, separated from the rest of nature and occupying a superior position in relation to others.

If this was not enough, Descartes also defined the Cartesian grid. This coordinate system, which became one of Descartes's most important legacies, was introduced in *Discourse on Method* and more precisely in one of its three appendices titled *La Géométrie*, published in 1637. The system makes it possible to specify the position of any point or object on a surface using two intersecting axes as measuring guides, and to exactly duplicate geometric figures. An apparently neutral method for categorization based on X, Y, and Z axes, the Cartesian grid enabled the rationalization of space in order to visualize, calculate, draw, optimize, replicate, standardize and, ultimately, control it.

Descartes's work and theories had vast consequences. His prerogative of mind over matter legitimized the Western man as entitled to landscape, resources and other beings' domination. In its objectivation of identity and categorization, Cartesian science supported

the discrimination of entities, bodies and identities (the 'other') for the benefit and privileged of the human (the 'normative one' against whom the 'other' is measured and valued).

These theories influenced and shaped architecture, a discipline founded on the paradigm of Cartesian space, one that praises materiality, functionality and abstraction; one that is largely developed around normative constructions of the human – and particularly the notion of man as a universal, rational subject. Entangled in the space we inhabit, Cartesian dualisms sustain the compartmentalization and instrumentalization of relations, which in turn served to marginalize populations based on their ethnicity, gender and race. They instigate the economic efficacy rationale, too often at the expense of ethical and ecological awareness.

The Dutch landscape, a fully controlled and designed land, organized according to regular lines, clear borders, and an equivalent perspective, is, I would argue, one of the most paradigmatic examples of Cartesianism.

## An Architecture of Lockers and Organigrams

A compact, orange locker room organized the 2018 Dutch Pavilion at the Venice Architecture Biennale, for which I was the curator. The room became the image of the project and an entertaining feature for visitors, who opened and closed doors. Yet the locker also held additional, non-explicitly revealed connotations. It was the image and metaphor of the Dutch landscape: an abstract, normalizing grid that, I thought, could still hold difference. For behind the architecture of orange cabinets, behind each enclosure and compartmentalized world, hid a choice of present and future.

The locker was the Dutch landscape as much as what it actually looked like: a locker. Populating factories, storage facilities, co-working spaces and changing rooms, the locker facilitates the temporal reinvention of space and that of the bodies that inhabit it. The locker is an interface between the labouring and the non-labouring self, if any distinction between the one and the other remains today.

First there were lockers, then came the office's organigram. Grounded on notions of labour-force flexibility, rationalization and objectivity, the organigram allows managers to



Dutch Pavilion *WORK, BODY, LEISURE*. 16<sup>th</sup> International Architecture Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia, FREESPACE. Photo: Daria Scagliola

fit employees' roles into abstract 'seats'. Employees perform roles according to an established category drawn in an organigram instead of their abilities and possibilities. Having to relentlessly adapt to and fit in these categories, bodies come and go, seats – and lockers – nevertheless stay.

The grid permeates interiors and exteriors. Housing blocks and their deceitful image of equality occupy manicured plots of land that soon merge into a sea of data centres, distribution centres and automated greenhouses that cover the Westland. We all fit in there (or learn to pass as if we do fit): humans, orchids, tomatoes, which grow aided



Sea of greenhouses in the Westland, the Netherlands.  
Photo: Thierry Schut



Greenhouse Ter Laak Orchids, Wateringen.  
Photo: Johannes Schwartz

by fertilizers and antidepressants. This landscape is meticulously designed by managers, administrators and engineers, dictated by function and logistical models. Its abstract, data-driven aesthetic stimulates the crudest modernist ambitions, the dreams of mastery of space and time, territory, and resources.

## An Architecture of Plantations and Balance Sheets

Attempting to raise our head above the grid to catch a breath, we find the cloud, one in which grids are broken into zeros and ones. A cloud run by data centres, where the 'immaterial' condition of the digital medium relevels itself in a myriad of cables, servers and large climatized enclosures. These are enclosures where almost no human is present except in the form of stored data; they are architectures that require enormous amounts of energy, physical space and resources, which has territorial and ecological consequences.

We are told that space is so limited that there will not be enough for all if we take more, hence the grids. We are told: 'If you don't like it, you should go.' 'Go' where, one wonders? The grid has already grown inside, its powerful

permeating illusion of order conveying an ontological version of the world, of society, of architecture so perfected that it seems inevitable. A vision not at the service of equality, but primarily of the white masculinist subject who takes the world as his possession.



Fields of young tobacco plants in Deli. Mazaraki, M. KITLV archives.

Let me perhaps support this argument with an image. It is one that I borrow from Robin Hartanto Honggare's scholarly work *Architectures of the Colonial Plantations in the Dutch East Indies, 1830–1942*. Dated around 1905, this image shows a Cartesian grid imposed by Dutch colonizers over a hilly

terrain. The grid is there to enable the management of a tobacco plantation. It renders not only order but fear. The fear of the prospect of indeterminacy, the unknown, the other. There is a need to tame it, to impose the Cartesian logic on a territory that does not obey such logic.

This image takes me to many others. To other grids standing as testimonies of the violence unleashed against certain bodies in the name of capital accumulation. Grids that remind, once more, that the category of the human has never applied to the whole of humanity. Consider the bird's-eye view of the Leeverpoel coffee plantation in Surinam. It was included in the Rijksmuseum Slavery exhibition's catalogue *Slavery: An Exhibition of Many Voices* (2021) with the caption 'View of the Leeverpoel plantation, 1772–1792. With such drawings, investors in the Netherlands could form a picture of their future property.' The vast regular grid extended infinitely a la Superstudio until it merges with the horizon, until it imposes order on all scales, from the plantation's ground to its balance sheets and cash books, where the owners meticulously register the crude reality of enslaved people.



View of the Leeverpoel coffee plantation in Surinam, anonymous, c. 1700–1800. Rijksmuseum collection. Purchased with the support of the F.G. Waller-Fonds.

Observations		1822											
		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
1822	1 Jan												
1822	1 Feb												
1822	1 Mar												
1822	1 Apr												
1822	1 May												
1822	1 Jun												
1822	1 Jul												
1822	1 Aug												
1822	1 Sept												
1822	1 Oct												
1822	1 Nov												
1822	1 Dec												
1822	31 Dec												
Totaal		19	19	18	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20

Three people are recorded in a 1822 cashbook from Dirk van Hogendorp's Novo Sion plantation as 'my slaves' with no names given. Slavery exhibition, Rijksmuseum, 2021.

Plantations and colonial factories ooze Cartesianism. As philosopher Achille Mbembe argues, the enclosure was enacted in the categorization of race and the spaces where black bodies have been confined, prevented and exhausted to obtain maximum profit. In *Critique of Black Reason* (2017), Mbembe examines how the notion of race made it possible to represent non-European human groups as a poor reflection of the ideal white subject, and as trapped in a constructed form of belated temporality. These conditions of categorization and containment unleashed by Cartesianism, which allowed the subjugation of the enslaved, the land and ecologies as inhuman property, as we have seen, are still reproduced in contemporary spaces. As testing grounds for life management, surveillance, appropriation and accumulation, the plantations' economies and systems of labour and production were later imported from the 'New World' and the colonies to the European continent and constituted the base for Western economic growth.

At this point, architects would wonder what their role is in all this. And indeed, while architecture – as a biopolitical and normalizing technique – participates in constructing

distinctions and categories, architects might not always have a say in these processes. However, they have an ethical responsibility in perpetuating them through spatial, visual, economic and social orders, through their designs and their working methods, through the exploitative relations created in the architectural studio, through their submission to the market logics. Rationality, I would insist, is not neutral but designed. Enthralled by its hypnotic sublimity, we seem to forget that this legible image of the contemporary is our creation, a reality that we have contributed to shaping and that we might be embarrassed to assume as our own. And more importantly, a reality that is not inevitable.

The discipline can critically reinvent itself and venture beyond its Cartesian postulates. In coordination with other social and institutional techniques (institutional borders, legal constructions, property lines, official identification and traveling documents, social hierarchies, privileges and divisions, gender roles, to name a few), the work of architects produces differential social spaces that either facilitate or prevent their encounter of bodies and their movement. For the work of architects often involves drawing abstract, assertive lines that define insides,

outsides, ups and downs. Lines that support historical forms of exclusion, and discrimination.

Yet, these capabilities, I would argue, could also be deployed to dismantle the boundaries that currently define, enclose and exploit the world and the common interest, to support ecological regeneration, to resist extractivist dynamics. This, in turn, requires imagining other architectures to come. A non-Cartesian architecture that might not be designed to quantify, control, categorize. It is not only wishful thinking. There are examples, even if imperfect.

## Exceeding Categories, Leaving the Canon Aside

Today, we see how historical categories are increasingly contested by radical notions of ethics emerging from queer, decolonial, indigenous and Black feminism studies. While some architects, including indispensable figures like Rem Koolhaas, succumb to the fascination produced by 'hyper-cartesianism', thinkers such as Emanuele Coccia, Patricia MacCormack and Marisol de la Cadena, among others, keep on

offering important avenues for venturing beyond the Cartesian divide.

Breathing, as Coccia argues in *The Life of Plants* (2018), precedes every distinction between soul and body, mind and object enacted by Cartesianism. What Stoic philosophers called breath ('breath of life' or *pneuma*) was a mutual overlap and mixing of elements that served as a generative principle organizing both the individual and the cosmos. This vision, widespread in the Hellenistic world and the Roman Empire, declined around the fourth century AD with the expansion of Christianity.

Equally not abided by binary, Cartesian logics, and in this case grounded in the Peruvian Andes, De la Cadena's theories on indigenous political strategies question modernity and support worlds embodying immeasurability and mutual difference. As we have seen earlier, the categorization of organisms into human, nonhuman and inanimate, has been a tool of colonialism and xenophobic violence. It validated the exploitation and denial of life to others considered lesser beings (as previously explained in Mbembe's work on the notion of race, and also in the work of feminist and human rights advocate Carol Adams,

including ‘The War on Compassion’), as well as the extraction of ‘lifeless forms’ (as unpacked by scholar Katherine Yusoff in *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*, 2018). How then one could exceed these categories?

Exceeding categories implies, De la Cadena argues in *Earth Beings: Ecologies of Practice across Andean Worlds* (2015), slowing down our practice of knowing the world and the organisms that constitute it. It demands bringing the compartmentalization of the world to a halt and, instead, embracing the spaces and ways of being of the ‘between’, and the ‘be with’. In turn, these worlding practices instigate other notions of care, empathy, life-in-common and progress. Other forms of designing architecture would exceed the discipline itself, as an ahuman, non-oppressive architecture is surely a non-disciplined one. How buildings would be designed and built if they were not reliant on the relentless and exploitative work of office and construction workers – often a low-wage workforce, particularly raced and gendered bodies – and to favour the interest of the 1 per cent? How would architecture be conceived and built when mountains

are not only treated as lifeless sources of building materials, but also as earth-beings? What would architecture for the many become when it is not subjected to the radical logic of the market epitomized in the spreadsheet – a contemporary version of the plantation’s cashbook?

Whereas De la Cadena proposes to exceed categories, Patricia MacCormack argues, in *The Animal Catalyst: Towards Ahuman Theory* (2014,) for the extinction of one of them – the human. Ahuman ethics, MacCormack claims, celebrate the death of the human as an act of generosity and affirmation of life. It brings the possibility of a future not forged on human referents and not made according to human thought, and in doing so it opens spaces of creativity never previously accessed. Humans could reimagine what being human might mean and address the purpose of our continuation on Earth ethically by being ‘the species to change the becomings to come’.

Without the human and without its categories, a non-Cartesian order finally emerges. By scarifying human subjectivity, all lives are of equal value. Resource consumption, private property, ecological

**damage, deforestation, economic growth, development and profit would no longer be justified for the sake of serving and preserving the human and human society.**

**The architecture canon could be respectfully put aside. It doesn't have to be erased or forgotten, but rather acknowledged as one that served interests that are no longer pertinent, constructed by means that are not only outdated, but no longer ethically and ecologically tolerable.**

## **Breathing and Breathable Architectures**

**Within grids, I struggle to breath. I search for *more* air while listening to Coccia, de la Cadena, Mbembe, MacCormack and dwelling my thoughts in an architecture difficult to describe under dual categories. An architecture that grows unpredictable environments, structures and relations in the interaction and melting space, data and organisms. A dynamic interconnected world contrary to Cartesian models and fully aligned with the act and notion of breathing. I think I found the seeds of this architecture in one recent experiment, although I assume there are many**

**out there if you look for them. What attracts me to this one is its capacity to challenge the cartesian enclosure, and in particular one of its maximum exponents and a fundamental component of today's political, cultural, socioeconomic system: the data centre.**

**All starts by storing binary data within the DNA of plants and seeds. The information – be it an image, a song, a book, a drawing – is contained in every cell of the host organism. Billions of gigabytes of data could be archived for millennia, and possibly beyond and without the human, in this cloud that is actually an off-the-grid, living cloud. A cloud that transforms solar energy into living matter, into an ever-growing forest that captures CO<sup>2</sup> and creates oxygen.**

**It could be argued that the relation between human and plants that this example proposes is uneven and extractive, and again serving only human needs. Yet, as plants germinate, grow, multiply and even repair their DNA without human aid, human data would not stay unchanged. Errors and mutations would alter the code over time, leaving room for unexpected developments and the production of new**

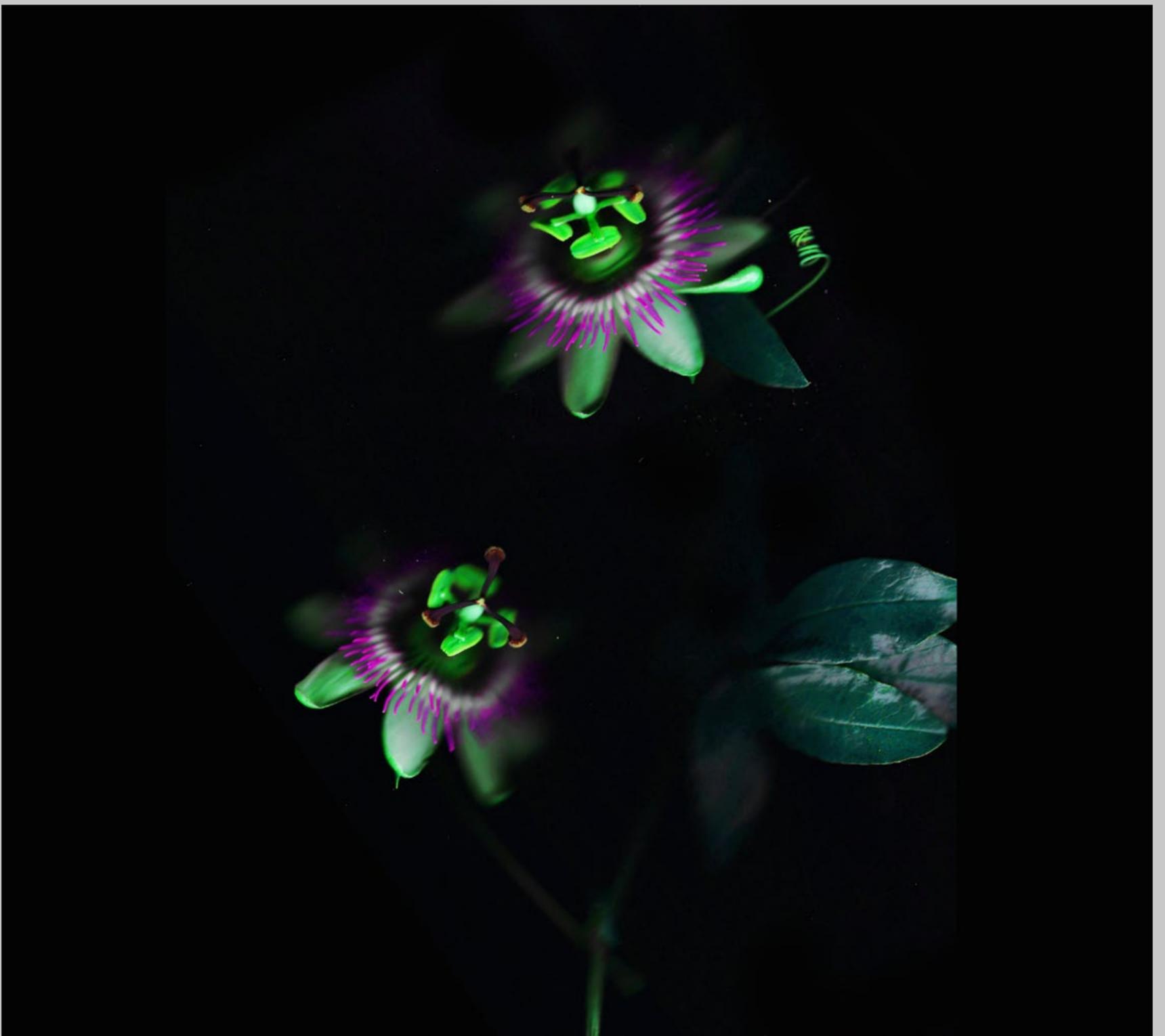
**knowledges. Plants won't only keep, but also rewrite human knowledge.**

**Even if unresolved, this experiment suggests that architecture could be conceived otherwise. It sparks imagination into what the architecture of a data centre, a library, an archive, a museum, a school could be beyond the Cartesian logic. It provides an image and metaphor of a non-Cartesian architectural space. That is, a place shared by all living beings and not defined by distinctions and categories. A space of inhabitation and knowledge-sharing not based on containment; non-dependent on organigrams, borders, fossil fuels, efficacy, or productivity; not defined by walls, or lockers; not propelled by the punitive work of 'the other'.**

**This might not be the example that convinces you. That helps you resist the forces of nostalgia that pull architects backwards. My plea for dismantling the Cartesian grids, one after the other, is in fact an invitation to not be captive of the fear to the unknown. An invitation to imagine a spatial system that grows slowly and opens previously inconceivable futures. That is orchestrated to serve**

**the many. That exists in continuity with  
the environment. That is both alive and  
gives life. That makes breath possible.  
An architecture that breathes and is  
breathed. One that provokes architects to  
rethink their practice.**

**I am emptying my locker.**



**Helena Francis, A cyborg future for the data archive (2020).**



# Epistemic Justice in the Design Process

## **Luce Beeckmans**

Not in Renderings: Living in Diversity

Open a newspaper or magazine today, and you are inundated with advertisements for new housing projects. Renderings show towering residential blocks that make the urban landscape look homogeneous. Take a look at the project developers' websites that highlight new residential projects and at a glance, it is clear that they proffer an exclusive and luxurious way of living for higher income groups. To further increase the prestige of the projects, 'starchitects' are showcased in short videos. To attract investors, these websites not only mention the number of bedrooms, but also the return on investment of the apartments.

While there is a lack of affordable housing in most European cities, many urban development projects target a segment of the population that is not actually facing severe housing shortages. Among other things, this is a strategy to prevent middle-class and high-income groups from fleeing the city, important as it is to the financial foundation of cities. In the long run, the settlement of these

higher-income groups in redevelopment areas often has a gentrifying effect: rents in and around the project sites rise significantly, pushing existing residents to the edge of the city in search of affordable housing. The same applies to many other programmes that are located on former industrial sites: after restructuring has taken place, they are almost always pushed out. Spaces for manufacturing and small-scale industry, artists' studios, places for urban agriculture, affordable storage spaces, migrant churches and so on are no longer available.

What is also striking is that the people – if any are depicted in the renderings at all – often look very homogeneously 'white', vital, young and middle class. We rarely see people with a migrant background, in wheelchairs, adolescents or senior citizens strolling across the visualizations. This representation often contrasts sharply with the demographic diversity of the residents who live and work at or in the vicinity of such projects. As such, they often deny the existing urban diversity and therefore, in a way, are very honest about what the target group of the newly built apartments is. After all, poverty is largely a coloured problem: one that often occurs at the intersection of race, gender, age, functional disabilities and so on.

The 'colour blindness' and social near-sightedness rampant in the visualizations of urban development projects is problematic in several ways. Groups that are systematically unrepresented in these visualizations feel that they, literally and figuratively, do not belong in the redeveloped neighbourhoods, even though they are among the original residents. Moreover, there are many correlations between the things architects and urban designers want to achieve and the ways they subsequently visualize them. The fact that architects 'forget' to take account of the urban super-diversity that is a fact of life in almost all Flemish and Dutch cities today in their visualizations is therefore not just a matter of prototypes in databases of drawing programs that have missed the demographic transition of recent decades. To a large extent, these visualizations also reflect the implicit biases and prejudices of the maker-architects who are still very often 'white', middle-class and male. Indeed, today's urban diversity is not yet well reflected in the architects' corps.

To improve this poor representation, authorities such as the Brussels Government are now considering the introduction of guidelines to ensure an as faithful as possible representation of urban diversity in project visualizations.

However, the problem cannot be solved simply by adding more diversity to the renderings. We also have to take steps to actually make the 'forgotten' groups feel welcome to settle or continue to live in these areas. We need visionary urban policies and strong urban and architectural commissioning that take urban inclusion as a major point of departure. Cities must make maximum use of their unique landholding position to tackle the housing crisis rather than exacerbate it, as they often do today, and develop instruments to achieve affordable housing. Urban development projects can and must offer a much greater diversity of housing types. Architects also have a part to play in this, because their normative approach is not only prevalent in the renders, but also reflected in the housing plans and typologies. How can we prevent architects from producing housing and housing estates that are made to measure up with their own housing cultures and dwelling habits and fail to take into account the housing needs and customs of the eventual residents and users in the story? This is perhaps particularly important for groups who never have the chance to take up the role of client: How can their housing needs find their way into the design?

## Epistemic Injustice and Architecture

Of course, architecture firms have their own economic logic that needs to be taken into account, but the question nevertheless arises whether architects are willing and able to adopt a critical attitude towards the commodification of housing, gentrification of residential areas and financialization of the housing market. Is it possible for them, the executors of such projects, to claim a neutral position in regard to the developments that these projects set in motion on a socioeconomic level at the same time? Can the architects involved in these projects adopt a critical attitude towards the design challenge, the client or the project developer with whom they are dealing and with whom they sometimes even form semi-permanent partnerships? Today, we see architects increasingly assuming a critical role when it comes to developing an ecological agenda for architecture. Or, as professor of urban political ecology Maria Kaika metaphorizes: 'Today's architects act less like Plato's guardians, or as agitators against contemporary mainstream cultural and political life, and behave much more like trains: they only go on rails; they can only follow the tracks and trajectories laid down for them by capital investment.'

The model of the heroic architect who reveled in opposing authority and public norms and his clients, who would dare to get 'derailed' gave way to the model of the conformist architect eager to follow the tracks, keen to please the client, the public and the authorities.'

In this context, it is interesting to look at recent developments in theory of knowledge production or epistemology. This discipline examines how knowledge is produced: what methods are used, which concepts are useful and what ethical dimensions are involved in the knowledge production process. Today, there is a great deal of discussion about what philosopher Miranda Fricker called 'epistemic injustice' in her book *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*. This notion refers to the existence of different levels of inclusion and exclusion in the knowledge production process and how people are differentially treated in their capacity of knowers. Some voices are not heard at all, certain processes and concepts are invisible or not properly represented. Power relations play a decisive role in this process, determining what is communicated as important and what is not. Faced with the very unequal opportunities people have to contribute to the (global) knowledge production process, academics

like Chandra Mohanty and Walther D. Mignolo argue that it is high time for an 'epistemic shift'. By this they mean that if we want to achieve a more inclusive form of knowledge production, we urgently need to disconnect our knowledge production processes from hegemonic, often Eurocentric, knowledge frameworks as well as from their colonial and capitalist starting points.

What will happen if we approach the design process as a knowledge production process and architecture not only as a 'material space' but also as an 'epistemic space'? After all, from the example of the renderings of housing projects we can deduce that they involve different forms and degrees of epistemic injustice. Following French Marxist thinkers, social geographer David Harvey, architect Dolores Hayden and urban designer Edward Soja previously introduced the notion of 'spatial justice'. They use it to point to the need for a just distribution of, and equal access to, quality public spaces, affordable housing and social services across the urban space and its inhabitants. In their work, they extensively problematize the worldwide lack of justice in the production of urban space, especially for vulnerable urbanites and minority groups.

Faced with a multitude of spatial inequalities, the question is what position the architect, as one among many space-makers. Which position does the architect wants to take up and how architects can strive for more epistemic justice in the design process. The question of what epistemic justice means in architecture and urban design is then about which people have a say in the conception and creation of the urban space and which people are excluded. What are the power relations and how are they reproduced in and through the design? Which (normative) concepts do we use and which ones not? In the end, these questions are all about the social role architecture can play and about the transformative potential of architecture in relation to important social sustainability problems cities face today.

Towards an 'Open Architecture'?

In her book *Open Architecture: Migration, Citizenship and the Urban Renewal of Berlin-Kreuzberg by IBA 1984/87*, architect and scholar Esra Akcan investigates an urban renewal project and large-scale housing programme realized in Berlin in the

1980s. On the occasion of the IBA-1984/87 (International Building Exhibition), world-renowned and rising architects from all over Europe and North America were invited to design public housing for the then run-down migrant district of Kreuzberg. Akcan describes the project as one of the last episodes of public housing in the twentieth-century. At the time, both urban designers and architects still believed government-controlled housing could play a major role in the rethinking and improving of the city and society. Her book gives a voice to the residents, often migrants, refugees and what she calls 'non-citizens' (people who are not recognized by the authorities of a certain place, but who nevertheless live and build a life there). In the 1980s, their 'integration' was seen as an architectural project. More than 30 years later, Akcan gives them the opportunity to reflect on the design and construction process, as well as on the manifold adaptations and transformations of the initial designs they executed in their quest to transform their dwellings into homes.

The IBA project was conceived at a time of rampant discrimination in housing legislation and of anti-migration policies. Architects that stepped into the project displayed

varying degrees of complicity, irony and subversion. In the IBA-Altbau neighbourhood, one group of architects mobilized residents' organizations, supported squatters' initiatives and involved refugees and guest workers in the design decisions through a democratic process. Akcan describes how this group discussed and negotiated conflicting and complementary claims of neighbours concerning each building, went door-to-door to gauge housing needs and budgets and hired translators to plan the construction and temporary relocation process with the residents.

Although the architects' individual design ambitions sometimes got in the way of the participatory and democratic design process, Akcan also notices the seed of what she describes as an 'open architecture' in the IBA housing programme in Kreuzberg: 'Open architecture is predicated on the welcoming of a distinctly other mind or group of minds in the process of architectural design.'

According to Akcan, 'open architecture' can be associated with 'flexibility and adaptability of form, collectivity and collaboration, multiplicity of meaning, democracy and plurality, open-sourceable design, the expansion of human rights and social citizenship, and

transnational solidarity. Open architecture goes against the grain of the neoliberal ethos of the open market that closes boundaries for the majority, and it is not synonymous with network architectures.'

Akcan claims that the pursuit of a form of 'open architecture', equivalent to the 'Open City' concept introduced in the book of the same name, is the translation of 'a new ethics of hospitality into architecture'. She refers to a radically different design method and concept, in other words to another epistemology, in which collaboration is central and in which architects share their decision-making space with the users and residents of a site. By doing so, designers also explicitly or implicitly question the preconditions of the design assignment and even rewrite the contours and ambitions of the design project. Working in the current context of urban housing crisis and 'super-diversity', it seems urgent for architects to take up a critical role again, to re-politicize the housing project and make the architecture of housing again a concern in the public debate, as architect and theoretician Nadir Lahiji also advocates in his book *Architecture Against the Post-Political: Essays in Reclaiming the Critical*

***Project.*** This appeal to architecture to, once again, take up a social role and act as an agenda-setter is not new in itself. Plenty of avant-garde architects, like Le Corbusier or the Bauhaus architects, tried to break with the past by depicting a new project for the city and via architecture. Therefore, the fact that architecture seeks to meet urgent social challenges does not need threaten the autonomy of the discipline, on the contrary, it can give rise to innovation and provide a new ground for its *raison d'être*.

How, then, can we concretely contribute to epistemic justice in the design process?

## **VOICES**

If we want to democratize the design process and make it more inclusive, it seems important to question the idealized position of architects as author-experts by seeing them as 'only' one of many space-makers. This broad view of the way space is made could question and undermine the hierarchical and unequal relations in the design process. The architect-expert would no longer be the only one to control the design process – this could be conceptualized as

a co-creative knowledge production process that welcomes the co-ownership of many other actors. This means that a whole set of urban actors are welcomed to have a say in the design process: from policy-makers, civil society organizations, users of the development site, project developers, activist voices, local residents to the 'end-users' or residents. The latter group is hardly or not at all consulted in the design process of many (social) housing projects today. Their participation is not evident in public housing in any case, but it is nevertheless not impossible to achieve, for example via focus groups. This way, the design process is (partially) collectivized and democratized and the diverse group of (future) residents is involved in design decisions.

This radical redesign of the design process can ensure that architects develop more empathy for the needs of a particular location or city and that the premises of the design meet those needs. Today we see this ambition in Flanders and the Netherlands in numerous innovative practices that look for new forms of housing and co-housing, such as housing cooperatives, Community Land Trusts (in which

individual property rights are combined with collective land ownership) and new forms of public and social housing in which residents also have a voice and can claim ownership. In the 'Project Together!', the city and university of Delft under the supervision of Darinka Czischke are looking for new housing forms and coalitions that are based 'on principles of inclusiveness, sustainability and long-term value development'. Although architects already play a part in some of these projects, we often see that there is a focus in these projects on housing governance and that the architecture of housing somewhat stays at the background of the discussion. Architects have, however, a potential important role to play in materialising this innovative thinking in novel housing typologies.

Involving residents in the design process is also a way to question the normative views of designers themselves as it could help them gain a better (inter-sectional) understanding of the way in which certain (capitalist and neo-colonial) power systems affect residents in different ways, depending on their position at the intersections of race, gender, age, disability

and so on. In this co-creative design process, it is of the utmost importance to create the right environments and formats in which such conversations can (literally) take place, to ensure that some groups do not feel excluded from them from the outset. To detect new housing needs and be able to incorporate them into the design, Amsterdam architecture centre Arcam under the supervision of 'architect in residence' Lyongo Juliana organized a workshop with numerous urban actors on what an 'inclusive housing plan' could possibly look like, examining ways in which the changing population compositions can give rise to changing design briefs.

## IMAGES

An inclusive and democratic design process can result in a more 'open architecture', but this also requires a different representation of the architecture. Faced with the static and flat representations of buildings from which the agencies and dilemmas of the design process seem to have been erased, authors such as Bruno Latour and Albena Yaneva argue that there is a need

**to generate more ‘earthly accounts of buildings and design processes’. Rather than removing the controversies, the different claims on the built space and the everyday occupations and the appropriations that take place during the design and construction process from the visualizations, they must literally be brought into the picture.**

**In her book *Diasporic Agencies: Mapping the City Otherwise* researcher Nishat Awan also argues that the standard ways of architectural representation are in crisis today since they homogenize and flatten the diversity of human experiences. In contrast, she proposes a form of mapping that, as opposed to erasing differences, aims to gain a better understanding of the different uses of and claims to space that exist in a given place. ‘Other’ spatial agencies and uses remain often overlooked and invisible during the design process, for example because they do not fit into existing institutional and legal frameworks. The challenge is to use the spatial drawing skills that many architects possess to document the ‘messy reality’ of the built environment and subject it to meticulous analysis.**

**In this context, Japanese studio Bow-Wow launched a practice called ‘Architectural Ethnography’, which uses drawings and visualizations to explain how buildings are (or will be) experienced in an embodied way, how different groups use (or will use) the buildings differently and what the temporality of certain space uses is. This architectural ethnography of the ‘messy reality’ of the built environment should serve as a basis for further design; and should subsequently not be erased from it in the final representations.**

## **WORDS**

**While the visual is a powerful medium to communicate beyond the limitations of language, it is also important to reinvent the conceptual apparatus of architecture. Many of the terms and concepts used in architecture today are normative without necessarily wanting to be so. There is a need to question existing taxonomies and conceptual categories in architecture because they are, sometimes unintentionally, exclusive. Architect and researcher Menna Agha gives the example of the**

**concept of ‘informality’, which in her view ‘must be seen as a marker of institutional blindness, and evidence that the state epistemologies cannot comprehend bodies that exist outside their realm’. Much of what legislation dismisses as ‘informal’ are actually attempts by marginalized groups to build a life in a context of oppression or precariousness. Moreover, the rigid dividing line between informal and formal is much less present in reality and many spatial practices take place in the space in between.**

**Once we, as architects, find the right words to name these practises, we may be able to deal with them in a more productive way than by ignoring, romanticizing or simply operationalizing them in design practice, which is what often happens today. This also requires an awareness of the (colonial) connotations that are attached to certain words so that we avoid to, perhaps implicitly, reproduce (colonial) power relations when using them. Such a new vocabulary also transcends a smooth discourse on diversity and cohabitation, like the one that was occasionally used at the last Venice architecture biennale, ‘How will we live**

**together?', but rather aims to express the complexity of these issues. By visualizing the layeredness of urban space in the design process (IMAGES) and by recognizing a plurality of space-makers and giving them a voice as 'experts' (VOICES), we can arrive at a new conceptual framework to which the residents of today's cities could better connect (WORDS).**



# **Manifesto for a Biosphere Ethics: Ending Indifference**

**Mark Appenzeller**

**Thijs Spaandonk**

This Manifesto emerges from, and reflects on, a series of talks by a diverse group of climate specialists and students that Thijs van Spaandonk and Markus Appenzeller, as heads of Urban Design at the Academies of Architecture in Rotterdam and Amsterdam, organized in the spring of 2021 under the title ‘Beyond Peak Indifference’.

The times in which we live call upon us to start doing almost everything we do in a different way. We have to learn to let go of that which we hold dear; at the same time, we are all partly responsible for the problems humanity is now facing. We, as designers, have to learn to do things differently. The question is: What is this ‘differently’? What will guide us in the future? What is right and what is wrong and who is to say which is which?

We are only on the threshold of what may well become the greatest transformation our generation will ever experience – perhaps even the greatest transformation the whole

of humanity – that is, the whole of the world's population – has ever experienced. While the old order provided us with definite notions of good and bad and a clear moral compass, the new age is terra incognita.

The ethical standards and thought processes of spatial designers are dominated by the central role they assign to human beings. Our anthropocentric ethos has led us to always assess and value everything from our own position. The user of a building is a human being, the pedestrian in the public space is a human being; the infrastructures we have developed are meant to make our lives – the lives of human beings – easier, safer and more enjoyable. This must change. We have to move towards a biosphere ethics in which human beings no longer provide the only frame of reference.

The street is a complex ecosystem in which different types of animals and plants live that all need to be able to thrive. Its users are not only human beings but also, for example, bats, or the bricks and wooden beams (raw materials) from which buildings are made. We have to approach not only the built environment, but also infrastructures more broadly, as beings that benefit the entire planet.

Underpinning this new ethic is a different

attitude, one we designers have to adopt. It is an attempt to translate this new ethic into instructions that we must start to internalize and deepen, all of us, together, now, today.

The world is in crisis and we architects, urban designers and landscape architects must put our indifference aside and act.

## **1 Consider the Entire Biosphere!**

**Embrace a perspective that shows the world and all living beings on the planet as a single, interdependent biosphere. The prosperity of (a part of) humanity has always been at the expense of not only other parts of humanity, but also of all other living beings. All the policies we pursue and measures we take must be based on solidarity between human beings and all other beings in our biosphere.**

Our projects are determined by requirement programmes, local preconditions, client's wishes and budgets. But what is the impact of our projects on the biosphere as a whole? What does it mean that, as of this year, the weight of human-made materials on the planet is greater than that of all biomass combined? Where do the raw materials for our building products

come from and what impact does their extraction and processing have on the biosphere?

## **2 Dump the Ego!**

**Recognize the complexity of the challenge we face! Nobody has the silver bullet. Architects and other designers often claim that their particular vision will yield the solution to this or that complex problem. The fame of individual creative geniuses now rises to mythical proportions. This has led to great deeds, but even greater disasters. In the eyes of many, designers are now immediately suspect. If we set aside our egos and place ourselves at the service of others, we can use our instruments to fathom the complexity of the challenges we face and to develop prospects for action.**

The success of architects is currently measured by the amount of followers they have on Instagram and the number of projects they have published and square metres they have built: more is better, growth is the key! Can we just put our egos aside and appreciate the collective achievement of the profession more? Can we stop taking numbers of square metres as measures of performance and

reduce human beings' impact on the biosphere? And why is the end product of design always a building or some other form of physical plan?

### **3 Design Is Political!**

**Every decision we make, or do not make, represents the balancing of interests. Which principles and values underlie this balancing depends on which ideals we pursue, and making decisions is therefore political. Beyond political preference or moralism, it is important to realize that certain values and interests are not represented in the trade-offs we make.**

The question we constantly have to ask ourselves is: For whom are we working and which values do our actions represent? Our current spatial planning model centres on property accumulation. But our living environment includes many more values than property values alone. These other values almost always lose out to achievable real estate values. Any investment in the living environment depends on the earning model of the property developer involved. So how can we jointly arrive at a different model for spatial development,

one in which a wide range of values is represented and weighed? How can we represent these 'other' values in the interventions that we as designers propose?

#### **4 Don't Despair!**

**People adopt different attitudes in the face of the crisis in which we find ourselves. Denial, ignorance, indifference and cynicism are just a few examples. Once we start to despair, all that is left to us is fatalism. Fatalism will get us nowhere. Yes, the challenge is substantial. Yes, we have to be critical of our mistakes. But above all, we have to continue to search for rays of hope!**

Perhaps we can find those rays of hope close to home, in our immediate environment.

Unconsciously or subconsciously, we may already be contributing to a sustainable future or to 'being ecological', as philosopher Timothy Morton calls it. But we have to start to think beyond the immediate as well, and not shun grand gestures. The challenge is too big to solve with a façade garden here and a PV cell there. The question is: How are we going to approach this challenge? The modernist

approach with its faith in technology alone will not hack it. The challenge we face is primarily social and cultural by nature, so the question is: How do we get society to commit? Are we, as designers, able to come up with an alternative vision of the future? And how do we raise a broad movement of communities committed to working on an alternative living environment? Because we can only make the necessary transition in time if we make it together. After all, 30 years is not much time to realize the climate goals set in Paris and to start doing everything differently.

## **5 Ecology Is Economy!**

**Our current extractive economic system considers the ecological system one that can be exploited as a source of free raw materials. It is an economic system that takes advantage of some part of the ecological system, more precisely: it is an earning model.**

We have to recognize that the damage our economic system inflicts on the ecological system also damages the economic system itself, in the short as well as in the long term. Therefore, we have to stop thinking of

these two systems as opposites.

Economic profit is the motive, profit maximization the goal. As spatial designers, we accept this as a given. We optimize our designs to facilitate economic profit maximization. Can we define profit differently, by prioritizing ways to achieve the best possible results for the environment and society? If we put nature – including people – at the centre of our approach, is there a chance that this will increase economic profits, too? Can we move away from cost reduction and towards the maximization of returns for the environment and the people?

## **6 Design the Preconditions!**

**Laws and regulations are intended to warrant certainties and prevent unwanted behaviour. They are often considered absolute preconditions for the projects on which we work. However, laws and regulations are of human manufacture and can therefore be redesigned.**

Preconditions for the construction of sustainable buildings still have their limitations.

They concern buildings as clearly delineated objects. The immediate environment of the

building, the environment in which the building leaves its footprint through the use of materials and energy, is insufficiently addressed by the preconditions. There ought to be reciprocity between building and environment. In addition, legal standards are too often seen as ends in themselves, rather than as the minimum requirements they are. Laws and regulations also often obstruct radical change. This is partly due to the nature of laws and regulations, which are intended to prevent unwanted behaviour – their starting point being a (justified) distrust in builders, developers and landlords. Can we design a system based on trust that actually starts from and encourages the shifting of boundaries?

## **7 Trigger Design Activism!**

**Spatial design is a powerful instrument to activate people. We should not hesitate to use it unsolicited, to reach large groups of people. If communities succeed in harnessing the interactive, transformative nature of design, this will strengthen their sense of ownership of the enormous challenges we face.**

We have to unhesitatingly open up design activities and design products – open them up in the sense that, as designers, we allow outside input into the process. Sometimes the designer is not the one in charge for a while, sometimes other actors take the lead – preferably from the community for which the designer works. Other beings have to be able to appropriate the product, the design, as well. A design has to have the capacity to develop in the future, also and especially at the time when the original designer is no longer involved. This requires a willingness on the part of designers to share their ownership with others. Can we do this?

## **8 Learn from Failure!**

**The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has indicated that the climate crisis requires the kind of action of which there is no documented example in the history of humankind. This means we have to do something while we do not know how to do it. This calls for experimentation, for a stumbling forward, and it means that we have to accept that things will not work**

**out from time to time, that we will make mistakes. It is imperative that we ensure that we bear the consequences of these mistakes collectively and, more importantly, that we learn from them.**

**Spatial design practice is characterized by competition: competition among firms, to win commissions, but also competition between individual designers, to produce the most projects. Success is measured by competitions won and projects published. Climate change has no precedent and therefore we have to develop a new design culture. One of the great secrets of the success of tech companies is that they are not afraid to take risks. They often fail, but sometimes they create something unprecedented, something that really takes us forward. There is no progress without failure. The best in the business are not only good at achieving success, but also at failing successfully. What the world needs badly now is to learn how to fail and how to draw sound conclusions. How can a professional community of people who constantly take each other to task on, among other things, the working out of details, one that has perfectionism in its DNA, overcome its fear of making mistakes and**

**discuss any made constructively? How do we learn to make mistakes together?**

## **9 Fight Greenwashing!**

**It is impossible to work on our living environment and not have any sustainable ambitions. Unfortunately, we still see too many designers only pay lip service to these ambitions in their projects. We must teach ourselves and others to assess projects on what they actually produce, rather than on what they promise. Nor should we hide behind certificates. We must ensure that we do not indulge in greenwashing. Only if we follow this professional ethic can we, as a discipline, make a real contribution to a just world.**

**Green is good. Everyone is busy adding as many trees, bushes and grass to their designs as possible. They look nice on the renderings and it sells well. In reality, such plans often come to nothing. The omnipresent lush green turns out as puny twigs for budgetary reasons. And green is not necessarily good, anyway. In first instance, a tree on a balcony on a façade**

causes more CO<sub>2</sub> than it absorbs because of the extra structures it requires and the energy it needs to stay alive. Can we, as designers, escape this marketing trend? Might we say that the greenest building is the one that is never built? And what does that mean to our disciplines, which always focus on making?

## **10 Look for a New Aesthetic!**

**Yes, we have to say goodbye to things to which we currently attach great emotional value, such as the aesthetics associated with certain materials and uses. People love beautiful things, and we cherish and take care of that which we find beautiful. Making our living environment more sustainable also offers an opportunity to discover new materials, customs and routines, and thus to develop a new aesthetic. The climate crisis also means that we have to face up to the impact of our use of materials and act accordingly. Some materials will be put on the Red List. With that, the aesthetics that go with these materials may also disappear. It is**

**up to us, designers, to find a new aesthetic. What are the criteria of this new biosphere aesthetic? The quality of the materials? The quality of the details? The timelessness and contextlessness of the design? And what part can the context, the regional, the site-specific play in finding a new aesthetic? Can we develop a vernacular for the twenty-first century?**

## **11 Imagine!**

**Like no one else, spatial designers have the ability to imagine what futures we can want. Showing that a future influenced by the consequences of the climate crisis is primarily different and not necessarily worse, we may be able to more easily part with a past that has brought us much, but has first and foremost taken much from others and from the biosphere.**

**The media show us the strength of imagination every day. A news report with the right image has a lot of impact, even wordlessly. Earthrise, the photograph of the earth as a vulnerable sphere made during one of the first flights around the**

**moon in 1968; Al Gore's 2006 documentary An Inconvenient Truth; Iwan Baan's 2012 photograph of a dark and flooded Manhattan after hurricane Sandy; and the look on Greta Thunberg's face during her speech at the 2019 UN climate summit are just a few examples. But are they images that actually lead to change, or do we absorb them and then get on with our day? The images call for change, but they do not explain how we can bring it about. Are we, as designers, capable of outlining prospects for action? Can we show that a sustainable and durable future is perhaps within our reach, closer than we dare to think? And can we use this skill to impassion the masses, move them and make them act?**

**It is the responsibility of us all to translate the above manifesto into education and into our own professional practice.**



## Colophon

The aim of Archined Foundation is to stimulate discussion about urban design, architecture and landscape architecture as widely as possible through various channels, including the Archined website. Editorially independent, the critical online community-based site has been in existence since 1996. Archined articles are written by designers, academics, students and others active in the field.

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The Persistence of Questioning

Critical Reflections on the Future,

on Architecture and More

‘Is Design Ethics?’

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