

## CALL FOR PAPERS

### GAM.17 – Wood: Rethinking Material

In the age of global climate crisis, new meaning is being ascribed to wood as a classic architectural building material. The potential it holds for a climate-friendly construction industry—as an alternative to energy-intensive building materials like steel or concrete—has already been substantiated by numerous studies<sup>1</sup> and by a multitude of projects actualized in urban space. The climatologist Hans Joachim Schellnhuber feels that timber construction provides us with an opportunity to “build ourselves out of the climate problem.”<sup>2</sup> Wooden structures have been proven to ease the strain on the climate, yet the effective marketing of wood as a building material for large-scale projects, such as timber high-rises, is only just now coming to fruition and showing us the potentiality inherent to this material. The flexibility of wood as an organic building material that can be implemented in ways that are elastic and load-bearing, delicate and massive, fascinatingly contrasts with the discourse on timber construction, where discussions ensue about whether wood should be used by itself or also in hybrid combinations with concrete or steel.

Above and beyond its pure material qualities, wood offers possibilities for conceiving this material category as something more than one-dimensional and purely functional, focusing instead on how it is integrated and embedded in cultural history, resource cycles, and hybrid applications. GAM.17 proposes that we take a fresh look at the material of wood, with a view to its multidimensional nature and its systemic correlations: as a renewable resource and industrial building material, as an ecological system and artisan material, as an incredibly versatile raw material, and as part of an ideologically connoted building tradition. The idea is to explore the possibilities that arise when wood is viewed as an open system which gives architecture new options for design and construction, extending far past its long history of building and use.

GAM.17 embraces the task of researching the material of wood in all its complexity, and of redefining it as a highly modern and variable building material in different structural, aesthetic, and cultural-historical contexts. Along the way, GAM.17 pursues questions like the following: How can wood be rethought as an ecologically efficient building material of the future? Which architectural challenges will it inevitably face? How might large-scale timber construction projects work in cities beyond the classic single-family home typology? What potential is awaiting material hybrids using wood? What ideological ascriptions does wood as a material face? GAM.17 invites architects, scientists, and scholars from the fields of forest and environmental science, climate protection, cultural studies, science studies, and material culture to join in answering these questions or others by submitting an abstract on the topic of “Wood: Rethinking Material.” Please send abstracts, along with a short biography, to [gam@tugraz.at](mailto:gam@tugraz.at) by **May 25, 2020**. The submission deadline for the final text contributions is **September 28, 2020**.

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<sup>1</sup> On this, see for instance the research conducted by the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies. An example in the Austrian context is the current cooperative project CAREFORPARIS, which includes the project partners Austrian Research Centre for Forests (BFW), the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences (BOKU), Wood K plus, and the Environment Agency Austria, with the aim of identifying possible climate scenarios for the Austrian forests.

<sup>2</sup> Hans Joachim Schellnhuber in conversation with Joachim Müller-Jung, Antje Boetius, Thomas Stocker, and Gerald Haug, “Klimaschutz ist kein Wunschkonzert,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, October 1, 2018.