

Dialectic X Call for Proposals

Decarbonizing Design / Mobilizing Agency

The issue is that accumulation-based societies don't like the answers we come up with because they are not quick technological fixes, they are not easy. Real solutions require a rethinking of our global relationship to the land, water, and to each other. They require critical thinking about our economic and political systems. They require radical systemic change.

– Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (Michi Saagiig Nichnaabeg)

It is indisputable that the current practice of architecture is inextricably linked to the climate crisis that we as a society face. Our academy recognizes this. Our profession recognizes this. Yet, architecture as it is organized today—a service-oriented, productivity-obsessed, growth-dependent profession—hasn't proven itself able to support the transformative work that is increasingly necessary for the wellbeing of our shared planet. From positions of privilege, architects and scholars of architecture tend to speak of climate change with a detached perspective of comfort, resulting in a conversation that is often insular and constrained. If real solutions require radical systemic change, what and where are the catalysts for such change?

The editors of *Dialectic X* welcome proposals for personal essays, academic articles, interviews, film, audio, or mixed media submissions that consider how contemporary architects and scholars of architecture are using their tools and training to pursue climate equity and environmental justice. Particularly welcome are submissions that reflect on the trials and tribulations of unconventional, radical, and revolutionary architecture-making.

As *Dialectic* looks towards its next decade in a digital-first format, it is our mission to increase the breadth of our engagement: 1) to highlight the expanding range of research architects and scholars now use to explore contemporary issues and 2) to incorporate the contributions of those working to dissolve disciplinary boundaries to spur systemic change.

Even after the collective realization that the modernist architectural paradigm has supercharged the emission of greenhouse gases and the resultant rise of quantitative building performance standards, architects remain complacent and satisfied with incremental improvements. In the academic realm, divergence and factionalism have made commensurability on issues of environmental responsibility increasingly onerous. Prevailing modernist attitudes prioritized

technological solutions and environmental comfort, an insularity that restricts the case studies we learn from. Oftentimes this excludes those directly impacted by our work, including indigenous communities, space-makers, elders, activists or others whose perspectives challenge default architectural “solutions.”

An array of questions has emerged for design practitioners in recent years. Can we mobilize the image-making and visualizing capabilities of design to transform the current political economy? How might an evolution in our cultural imaginaries prepare the way for a resilient, sustainable future? If, as the familiar refrain goes, the most sustainable building is one that is already built, how can adaptive reuse amplify or heighten the capabilities of existent architecture? Must architects place climate equity at the center of their practice, or can it be smuggled in through otherwise conventional work? In which ways should the technocratic values of environmental design be recalibrated?

For scholars and activists, contextualizing architecture may require alternative archives as well as alternative epistemologies. Can design grounded in data be understood in ways that are not constrained by analyses of thermodynamic performance? What might indigenous or decolonizing approaches to knowledge and agency have to teach us about building for climate adaptation?

We must actively examine architecture’s role in our current state of affairs, as well as its potential to revolutionize ways forward. We are, quite literally, out of time. We hope that this issue of *Dialectic* will foster a dialog that accelerates not only research on these pressing issues, but advances new approaches that can truly reimagine the economic and political systems that constrain us.

Please send proposals of 350 words and two-page CVs to issue editors Michael Abrahamson (abrahamson@arch.utah.edu) and Dwight Yee (dwight.yee@gmail.com) by September 1, 2021. Accepted authors will be notified by October 1. Full submissions will be due January 15, 2022 (including visual material, endnotes, and permissions for illustrations). This issue of *Dialectic* is expected to be published in digital-first format by late summer 2022.

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