EPFL

AR-481 | **Architecture in the age of acceleration**

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Cursus	Sem.	Type
Architecture	MA1, MA3	Opt.

Language of teaching	English
Credits	3
Session	Winter
Semester	Fall
Exam	During the semester
Workload	90h
Weeks	12
Hours	**2 weekly**
Courses	2 weekly
Number of positions	

Summary

This course proposes to investigate six strategies for architecture in the age of acceleration: Regionalism, Territoriality, Participation, Transformation, Commonality and Rationality. Anchoring these strategies in recent architectural history, it will explore their relevance for today's practice.

Content

In *Thank You for Being Late* (2016), Thomas Friedman claims that there is reason to describe the past decades as an 'age of accelerations'. In his analysis the convergence of globalization, technology and climate-change makes 'all the difference'. Since the publication in 1972 of the Club of Rome's report *The Limits to Growth*, we have witnessed an era of exponential development: Population increase, agricultural production, non-renewable resource depletion, industrial output, and pollution generation, the 5 variables analysed at the time, have been increasing and continue to do so exponentially (Meadows, 1972). The conclusions of *The Limits to Growth* drew the contours of our age of acceleration and predicted that if no changes to historical growth trends would appear, 'the limits to growth on earth would become evident by 2072, leading to sudden and uncontrollable decline in both population and industrial capacity.' Looking back in time, the Club of Rome was not only right in its predictions, but laid the foundations of what we experience today as climate change, which has accelerated the sudden and uncontrollable collapse of our planetary system (Servigne, Stevens, 2015).

While the world of construction reacts to the current crises essentially from the perspective of sustainable development, a number of engaged intellectuals call for a transversal approach, across disciplinary and policy boundaries. This course starts from the architectural discipline itself. It considers the discipline a rich and varied field of knowledge on which to build possible answers to the current crises and believes the systemic challenges posed by the continued climate crisis, rapid urbanization and globalization, as the starting point for theoretical reflection on architectural design today. The course investigates six distinct strategies - Regionalism, Territoriality, Participation, Transformation, Commonality and Rationality. Looking at their historical roots in the postmodern era and projecting their applicability into the contemporary period, the course allows to uncover both historical continuities and new possible directions.

Students will read for each lecture one text. Texts will be situated and most importantly debated in relation to current architectural practice. Going beyond mere critical re-readings of the recent past, this course proposes to open up a discussion on conditions of acceleration for practice today.

Students will look at specific examples of architectural practices, always from the hypothesis that architects, through the very act of defining and redefining their roles, exert different forms of agency on and beyond the building site. As such, they will rediscover and reinterpret practices in the light of the contemporary context; but might also explore new insights in the relationship of architecture to society and of the architect to the act of conceiving space. Offering new words and understandings and reengaging with existing tools and methods, this course opens up the scope of these students upon what can be called architecture in the age of acceleration.

Keywords

architectural theory
acceleration
postmodernity

environment
regionalism
territoriality
participation
transformation
commonality
rationality
crisis
climate
globalisation
capitalism

Learning Prerequisites

Important concepts to start the course

modernity
postmodernity
acceleration
environment
capitalism
anthropocene
crisis

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, the student must be able to:

- Theorize
- Argue
- Anticipate
- Structure
- Analyze

Transversal skills

- Demonstrate the capacity for critical thinking
- Write a literature review which assesses the state of the art.
- Use a work methodology appropriate to the task.
- Evaluate one's own performance in the team, receive and respond appropriately to feedback.
- Access and evaluate appropriate sources of information.

Teaching methods

The course is composed of a lecture series with reading and discussion seminar.

Expected student activities

Students are expected to attend to lectures, read the written material required for each lecture and actively participate.

Assessment methods

Students will write an essay. The essay will be evaluated following the following criteria : content, argument, referencing, presentation.