

## Twenty Theses on Ecologies of Architecture

### æ01 Irreducible Complexity

The *Ecologies of Architecture* (æ) is a neo-materialist research group of the Theory Chair at TU Delft Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment that promotes a non-reductionist approach to architecture by insisting on the entanglement and irreducibility of the three ecologies, namely the environment, the psyche and the collective. Let none of these registers take a back seat ever again.

### æ02 Posthuman Architecture

The æ distances itself from anthropocentrism, rethinks subjectivity and ethics in terms of ‘inhuman’ forces within the human, emphasises heteropoiesis as the organising power of transversal onto-epistemologies, and explores the political ramifications of these processes for the discipline of architecture. Architecture does not represent culture but *is* a mechanism of culture, the ‘Collective Equipment’. Its ambition is to invent a new collectivity, an as yet nonexistent “people to come”.

### æ03 Logic of Continuity

The æ adopts a ‘minor tradition’ that challenges the logic of discreteness and rejects facile bifurcations such as nature/culture, matter/memory, space/time, object/subject and exterior/interior in favour of a continuum thinking. It strives to overcome the modernist techno-determinism, i.e. dominating abstraction without regressing to the postmodern relativism, i.e. submissive empathy and vice versa.

### æ04 Exteriority of Relations

The æ goes against the grain by reversing the proverbial tendency of privileging homeostatic stability over and above metastable dynamisms. Relations are not derivative of some pre-existing and fully formed *relata*. Difference is not a dialectical *interaction*, but an ontopowerful *intraaction*. Stasis is a special case of movement, as identity is a terminal and hence untenable point of relationality.

### æ05 Associated Milieu

While accepting multiple scales of reality, the æ opposes the alleged primacy of the ‘physical’ world. What one copes with is the *Umwelt*. The emphasis is on the encounter, where experience is seen as an emergence which returns the body to a process field of exteriority. Sensibility introduces an aleatory moment into thought’s development thereby effectively turning contingency into the very condition for thinking.

## æ06 Co-Determination

Neo-materialist conception of materiality expands so as to include the real yet incorporeal domain – a.k.a. agential materiality. For the æ architecture starts from the existential Territory (*Umwelt*) that deterritorialises and expands towards the domain of Universes of values (and references) while the energetic and semiotic Flows that sustain it decodify and so expand towards the ever-proliferating machinic Phylum. Stratification (territorialisation and codification) works in the opposite direction.

## æ07 Braided Causality

The general lesson of the æ's logic of the included middle is that the stable regularities we see in actuality – a.k.a. objects – do not have a specific cause that can be demarcated and isolated, but may only be understood as a dynamic cascade of *multiple* processes operating over *time*. If effects were reducible to their causes, novelty would be impossible.

## æ08 Non-Personal Micropolitics

The ethico-political lesson of æ's logic of intensity is that all things are contingently obligatory and not logically necessary. Therein lies the possibility of pursuing a transdisciplinary project of *defatalisation* (anti-teleology). One must avoid reducing the world to one's own conceptual schemes because they are not abstract enough. Conversely, one has to be "primed for non-recognition". Each concept needs to be related to the variables that determine its mutation.

## æ09 Bare Activity

For the æ singularities come before identities and participation precedes cognition. Therefore, a body ought to be defined not by its form, nor by its organs or functions, but by its capacity for affecting or being affected because the limit of something is the limit of its action and not the outline of its figure. Things are powers, not forms.

## æ10 Radical Empiricism

For radical empiricism thought cannot be richer than reality and non-conscious cognition is not an oxymoron because much more is felt than known. The æ is interested in an encounter between thought and that which forces it into action. Thought cannot activate itself by thinking. It has to be provoked. To think differently, one has to feel differently.

## æ11 Anti-Representationalism

The æ rely on cartography to overturn the theatre of representation into the order of desiring-production. There lies a (r)evolutionary potential in creating the 'new', defined as the circulation of deterritorialised territories and de-coded flows that resist the facile co-option by capturing or overcoding. The potential lies, quite literally, in the pure agency of the difference in itself that relates heterogeneities. The concept of quasi-cause prevents regression into simple reductionism of the sensible to the intelligible, desiring to volition, or significance to signification.

## **æ12 Morphogenesis**

The ultimate ambition of the æ is to debunk hylomorphism – where form is imposed upon inert matter from without and where the architect is seen as a god-given, inspired creator – and to promote the alternative immanent morphogenetic approach that is at once more humble and audacious. While engineering focuses on solutions, architecture dramatises the problem so that we may stumble upon an emancipatory potential. Problems always have the solution that they ‘deserve’.

## **æ13 Material–Discursive Practices**

For the æ both architectural theories and practices are one. Architecture, as an ecology of material-discursive practices, cuts through the world, reconfiguring it while simultaneously is reconfiguring itself by destabilising itself, opening up to new transdisciplinary trajectories, to an ‘outside’ that even if it is not architectural, shares with it architectural problems.

## **æ14 Transversality**

While interdisciplinary research entails the collaboration among different domains, it does so from a point of integration, where the disciplines involved share methodologies and theoretical frameworks in order to work towards a unified and thus integrated research. The æ’s transdisciplinary research affords the production of methodological, theoretical and conceptual innovations, novel trajectories that emerge in order to address what binds each discipline, i.e. a shared problem. Transversality does not obey the constraints of any discourse, but on the contrary, transforms them to productive chances.

## **æ15 Architectural Assemblages**

Assemblage theory allows for a relational parametricism and not just a parametrisation of the terms. It embraces the truth of relativity and not the relativity of truth. Any assemblage has a fully contingent historical identity, i.e. it is never an essence but always an outcome of productive relations, while simultaneously being an individual entity. From the largest to the smallest, from the planet, to a city, to a person, each is an assemblage composed of and taking part in relations which are contingently obligatory and not logically necessary. Assemblages are always composed of heterogeneous elements. Crucially for the æ, one assemblage can become part of another.

## **æ16 Extended Architectural Minds**

The æ’s architectural mind is not to be placed inside the head, but on the contrary as mere exteriority. It offloads cognitive problems onto the world so that the world will do part of the work for it, allowing it not only to respond in a timely manner but also to attend to other problems, sometimes of higher degree. It is in this relational and technological sense that the architectural mind is always extended.

### **æ17 Minor and Major Architectures**

Different architectural minds, developing different construction techniques also deal with different rhythms and different spaces – the flow and the cadenced, the smooth and the striated. The æ makes a distinction between a minor architectural mind and a major one. A more nuanced view of that field should conceive it as dynamic assemblage itself, continuously undergoing becomings. Understood as such, architectural practices are going through episodes of becoming minor and becoming major.

### **æ18 Micro- and Macro-Architectures**

For the æ the exteriority of relations is not a matter of scale. The technicities of any urban unit can be distinguished to those it partakes in and to those that take place in it. 'Micro-architectures', saturate and compose the urban unit, while the 'macro-architectures' are the relations that comprehend or envelop it. Practices are clusters of action, affectivity and matter which correspond less to formed, distinguishable objects than to a specific 'regime' that inhabits the urban field for a specific time. A regime imposes a certain configuration on a field as it organizes, aligns and distributes bodies, materials, movements and techniques in space while simultaneously controlling and developing the temporal relations between them.

### **æ19 Architectural Technicities**

Technicity is fully relational, abductive and deals with a constant becoming. The autonomy of each technical individual lies in its relational technicity, since technical objects result from an objectification of technicity; they are produced by it, but technicity is not exhausted in objects and is not entirely contained in them. The æ moves from architectural objects to an architectural technicity which operates in terms of reticularity: located within assemblages, reticularity is the immediate relation of events and actions that occur in a given structure which however is understood in terms of its potentials for action, not in its extensive and formal outlines, and have to be studied in ethological, that is affective, terms.

### **æ20 Trans-Affectivity**

Architecture is singular in its production of subjectivities, but it is always plural in its affective assemblages. Any technicity is not only affective, but trans-affective. Architectural technicities as autonomous media of trans-affective manipulations are governed not by a system of judgment but rather by a multiplicity of powers along with their thresholds. The digital binary between 'good' and 'bad' that presupposes that architectural agency lies in the 'correct' decision, can be substituted with the æ's practice of constant ethological diagramming: the intuitive search for assemblages of technicities that may be productive for processes of architectural ethopoiesis.