

PREFACE

What Commons, for What Socialnesses? Demonstrative Activism in Architectural Critical Practices

Commonness produces the social. Commonness produces the social as both relational and material, as constructed and performed. Commons are spatially constituted, materially set, programmatically unfolded. Commons are enacted through and as architecture. They're never neutral. The account of the commons shows how colonialism, anthropocentrism, racism, hetero-patriarchy, positivism, technocracy, extractivism, and ableism have been intrinsically characterized by how they collaborate with each other. As forces for *Enlightenment*, the academic discipline and the profession of architecture were founded as engines for hegemony-making. Architecture has worked as a force for coordination, delivering the articulation of territories, bodies, technologies, knowledge, practices, and institutions, as the means to accumulate power. But not without resistance, nor without alternative, accident, disobedience, and dissidence. As much a site for hegemony-making, architecture is also (and has been) the site where hegemonies failed and cracked and where they have been ignored, disturbed, and confronted. Architecture is an engine and a force, but it is also the arena where structures of power decay and are subverted. Delineating how the architecture of commonness and the broad spectrum of practices associated with it confront and complicate hegemonies is the focus of this book.

Ultimately, this book claims the inseparability of two inquiries:

1. What commons?
2. (For) What socialnesses?

Our present times are shaped by two interconnected processes: The socio-political distribution of the possibility for survival; and the extreme engineering and reinvention of life. The intersection of climate and ecological crises—with advanced capitalism; surveillance; and border, biological and digital control—all now regulate how the capacity for human and more-than-human survival is distributed. Destruction of habitats, forced migration, warfare, healthcare sequestration, precarity, and growing disputes of land and resources determine the *sacrificability* of human and more-than-human life. This is inseparable from efforts to expand the capacity to selectively design human fertility, health, and longevity; and to scale up and bring constancy into agricultural, stockbreeding, and biomedical production. Situating death and controlling life are terrains where political action is now installed. Politics is now installed in how bodies relate to other bodies, how they infiltrate and are infiltrated by microbes and landscapes, climates and technologies, flows and demarcations. Politics is no longer installed in cities, buildings, or interiors but rather in how different entities participate in the making of heterogenous togetherness. Commonness is heterogenous commonness. It is the ensemble of the heterogeneous. The ensemble of the heterogenous is in itself a political endeavor. Every ensemble is an assembly.

What commons, for what socialnesses? This is the question this book addresses. This convenes a specific mode of inquiry that characterizes a new network of researchers and thinkers gathered in this volume, who are gaining a growing voice in the field of critical architectural practices. If many of their colleagues would claim the history of architecture as their discipline, for the authors this book gathers, the entry point of their inquiries are settings and heterogenous ensembles, not strictly histories. Settings that are relationally constituted and that articulate different times—expanding into past histories, problematic presents, and disputed futures. Where authorship is shared by human and more-than-human interaction. Instead of intentions, it is trajectories, compositions, and participations that are worth tracing. The commons interrogated here are defined by their transitioning in scale, time, physicality, and materiality. They are *transscalar*, *transtemporary*, and *transmaterial*. They operate, for instance, in the way slow geological times affect and are affected by the speedy beat of market transactions, in the interaction between the latency of digital dissemination and the planetary location of data infrastructures. Their work is relational, as the realities they inquire about are relational. There is not much space for critical distancing. For them, research is a form of intervention, truth-setting, and demonstrative activism. Here, criticality is the way to trace how politics are enacted physically, materially, spatially, and programmatically, as much as it is also a way to participate in politics itself. The works gathered here are situated in the cracks of the intersecting systems of segregation. These cracks are where this work exists and grows. And in its growth is the acceleration of its collapse.

These are architectural critical practices, claiming how architecture is now the arena where structures of power decay and are subverted; and where alternatives and dissidence can be worlded.

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