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Footprint no 35: Engaging Cosmotechnical Difference in Architecture and Urbanism

Deadline: Aug 15, 2023

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--- UPDATE: Extended deadline!! Now 15.08.2023 ---
Dulmini Perera and Sam Koh are editing Footprint Architecture Theory Journal, vol. 35, dedicated to 'Engaging Cosmotechnical Difference in Architecture and Urbanism'.

Recently, the philosopher Yuk Hui argued that if we grant the possibility of multiple natures, then it must be possible to speak of multiple technics. According to Hui these technics differ from each other not only functionally and aesthetically, but also ontologically and cosmologically. It is in this context that the framework of cosmotechnics – defined as the unification of the cosmic and moral order through technical activities – makes explicit the inherently cosmological and hence plural nature of technology. This framework has found purchase among a range of scholars and researchers, forming a central theme in a recent special issue of Angelaki, as well as being taken up by theorists pursuing decolonial approaches of computational theory. Cosmotechnical thinking presents a direct challenge to universalist ideas of technology perpetuated by Western modernity. In this way, it's a framework apt to advance the projects of decolonial thought, drawing attention to how certain epistemological and ontological assumptions embedded in technology are exported, internalised, reproduced and thus legitimated through processes of modernisation and globalisation.

Cosmotechnical thinking bears directly upon a range of architectural and urban issues. Architecture and design are characterised by ever-intensifying technical mediation. Cybernetic technologies, platforms and automation increasingly shape the design and management of cities. In this way they are central to the formation and entrenchment of specific modes of technological thinking. As these technologies are exported through modernisation and globalisation, we see an erasure of difference that reproduces forms of colonial expansion and perpetuates homogeneity via norms and codes. Critiques of these processes have been made from the fields of pluriversal design and decolonial design, as well as computational theory. They have also been incorporated into discussions on cities by theorists in urban studies and media studies, urban geography, as well as architecture and urbanism. In the context of Footprint we have seen similar critical examinations of technicity and sociotechnical processes of change, for example in issues 25, 28 and 30.

Understanding technologies as cosmologically bound impels us to grant attention to their local conditions of emergence, as well as their multiple and distinct histories. This decentring of Western modernity offers more than just critique. Rather, it opens the possibility of reappropriating and

redirecting modern technology along alternate trajectories. The fields of architecture and urbanism have yet to adequately reflect upon the ways in which they are implicated in cultivating or suppressing alternative kinds of technological thought and practice. This issue of Footprint aims to expand the purview of architectural discourse to address the contemporary discussions of technological universalism and plurality.

We ask:
- How have established architectural design processes and knowledge production contributed to the erasure of difference and the perpetuation of problematic norms and codes in today's global technological culture? And how might design disciplines figure as a means to remediate this condition?
- How should we think about technological pluralism in the context of urban environments dominated by powerful, hegemonic paradigms, such as smart cities or platform urbanism?
- In what ways have universal understandings of technology historically shaped how intersectional and decolonial politics of urban space are negotiated? What new challenges or opportunities arise for causes of ecological, environmental or social justice as new forms of technologies also engender new forms of institutions and modes of governance?
- How does the cosmotechnical focus upon locality contend with existing understandings in architecture and urbanism of place or territory? How might design practices approach the inherently spatial, geographic and place-bound technologies in highly globalised and interconnected cities?

This call is open for both full articles (6000–8000 words) and review articles or visual essays (2000–4000 words). Authors of research articles are asked to submit their contributions on Footprint's online platform before 30 June 2023. Authors interested in contributing with review articles or visual essays should contact the editors before 30 June 2023 [extended to 15 August 2023] with an extended abstract of their proposal (500 words). Full articles will go through a double-blind peer review process, while the review articles will be evaluated by the editors.

We kindly refer authors to Footprint's Author Guidelines, available at: https://journals.open.tudelft.nl/index.php/footprint/about/submissions

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Reference:

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