

SITUATED ECOLOGIES OF CARE

The 20th AHRA
International
Conference

Oct 25th - 27th 2023

Conference
Proceedings

CONFERENCE PRECEDINGS

Situated Ecologies of Care:
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Conference

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Introduction

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Architecture is always deeply entangled with both 'big' issues and with everyday lives. Architecture's 'produce' directly participates in various intertwined ecologies, including those of the environment, culture, economy, the political, and the aesthetic. Whether we are looking at climate catastrophe, the distribution of wealth or the nature of community empowerment, the transformative power of the disciplines and practices of architecture (and its cognate disciplines) cannot be underestimated. The transformations occur through our ethos and methodologies in encounters – materials, constructions, ideas and concepts – with various pressing situated matters of concern which might be local or shared across the globe.

In the title of this conference, Situated Ecologies of Care, we bring together parts of an 'apparatus' with which to encounter and interrogate various themes. Through the notion of ecologies we understand the complex contingent interrelationships amongst various seemingly separate entities, be they materials, people, constructions, non-humans, concepts, imaginings, speculations. From one perspective, there is only one all-inclusive edgeless ecology. But, in those contingent interrelationships, demarcating different ecologies not only allows us to engage without being overwhelmed by the sheer complexity of it all, but also affords us possibilities to render our own political and ethical positions.

Care, for us, encompasses approaches of pedagogy as well as placemaking, biopolitics in addition to architectural representation, and spatial and performative activism not uncoupled from the more conventional spaces of care. Being care-ful means paying radical attention to one-another, recognising kin in a multitude of forms.

Within the practices and discourses of the crisscrossing transversals of 'architecture' and the 'humanities', the matters of situated ecologies of care make themselves known through various 'cuts'. How does (can?) care inhere in the ecologies of modes of representation that we use to design and communicate architecture? Who is caring for whom/what in activist practices of urban development? How can we understand the very situated (in particular places with particular people in particular contractual relationships) potential of professional practice and its political nature to engender caring forms of 'doing' architecture? What are the expanded ecologies of buildings for care and how do they acknowledge the particularities of users' situations? How might the apparatus situated ecologies of care challenge, through spatial discourses, places, and things, systemised and institutionalised inequalities, whether along dimensions of race, gender, empowerment, or economies?

The conference will perform as a space of care, a care of critique, people, subjects and subjectivities and intersubjectivities. A place for dialogues, conversations and chatter where threads, ideas and performative events are woven together towards the making of a social fabric. It will ask, what is it that is being made through the performativity of these conversations, actions, gestures, mutterings and matterings. What materialises through these exchanges? How does the fabric made through care perform? How is this knowledge made?

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DAY 3

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Dan Dubowitz

Site-Writing and other situated and ethical practices

Jane Rendell

Inhabiting multitudes. Homemaking in more-than-human architecture practices

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Abstract:

The paper investigates the topic of homemaking as a relational space of multispecies cohabitation. The intention is to focus on the networks of care which, starting from a performative lens, enables to arrange crossings not only in a spatial sense, but also in a relational sense. Once a space is performed by more-than-human subjects and agencies, generating a pre-cognitive experience mode, what comes out is a paradigm shift in democratic design: from productive to affective (Di Carlo and Papeschi, 2022).

The intervention focuses on experiences of cohabitation and participation, investigating the permeability of their boundaries from the practices that generated them. Cases involve participatory cohabitation interventions that privilege a more-than-human homemaking perspective, integrated in the discipline of theatre, then in the private space and finally in the public space. With regard to design culture, key is the openness to wild attitudes of marronage (Metta, 2022), an alternative to productive models through nomadic practices of care and design. The arts benefit a privileged scope for redefining institutional spatial models (Caleo, 2021), a potential they retain even when acting on the domestic institution. Detached from the functional impulses of architecture, interventions on space become performative activations capable of reopening given models towards futable, integrated and sustainable perspectives.

The contribution is articulated through the presentation of cases integrating ecosystems in performance (Annamaria Ajmone, *La notte è il mio giorno preferito*, 2021), as well as collective actions of care within forms of systemic inhabitation (OHT, Little Fun Palace, 2018 - ongoing), thus reaching to discursive platforms that embody these legacies (Post Disaster Rooftops, Taranto, 2018 - ongoing). Therefore, the proposal aims to support the need to nurture forms of coexistence through spaces of confrontation, from theatre, to private living and then urban context, thus building generative platforms of care.

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