

Philippe Rahm  
Email: [rahm@philipperahm.com](mailto:rahm@philipperahm.com)

TA: Ray Wang

Email: [ray.w@outlook.com](mailto:ray.w@outlook.com)

## Enlightenment 2.0

### Program

In his article "Why has the critical run out of steam," the French philosopher Bruno Latour states the impotence that postmodern argumentation (subjective and narrative) faces against contemporary crises, including global warming. Against a return of the obscurantism, Latour argues for a revival of the Spirit of the Enlightenment, which can be understood as a return to "reason", objective and universal. By extending the nascent scientific method -free, critical and objective- to philosophy, politics and the arts, the European Enlightenment of the eighteenth century gave birth to the ideas of freedom, tolerance and progressivism. These ideas led to the French Revolution of 1789, the takeover by the people and the abolition of monarchical and religious privileges. The Age of Enlightenment developed throughout the eighteenth century away from Royal courts and power; instead in new spaces for public speaking, which were coffee houses and salons. These new places were invented around the novel intake of tea and coffee which "gently excites the imagination, makes it fruitful in cheerful ideas." The public debate, free, critical and sitting on objective reasons and scientific methods, took shape around the intellectual excitement of coffee and tea. It invented new public space and forms of sociability, of political practice, intellectual and artistic life. Our design studio will pose challenges at the programmatic and formal level. The program will rethink the physical form of public speech, proposing to transform the Hotel de Ville of French regions as a reinvention of the salons and coffee houses of the eighteenth century, inside of the digital and entertainment era. The form will be based on an updated architectural language intensifying scientific principles of energy saving, terroir physical capacity, sustainable development, climate, reaching a new form of beauty.

### Objectives

The building sector is one of the main culprits in global warming because the burning of fossil fuels to heat or cool dwellings is the source of nearly 50% of greenhouse gas emissions. Following some resistance and procrastination the whole industry is now mobilised in favour of sustainable development and arguing for improved heat insulation on outside walls, air tightness, controlled ventilation, the use of renewable energies, consideration for the whole life cycle of materials and more compact building designs.

It is clear that these steps all have a definite objective, which is to combat global warming by reducing CO2 emissions. But over and above that goal, beyond such socially responsible and ecological objectives, might not climate be a new architectural language, a language for architecture rethought with meteorology in mind? Might it be possible to imagine climatic phenomena such as convection, conduction or evaporation for example as new tools for architectural composition? Could vapour, heat or light become the new bricks of contemporary construction?

Climate change is forcing us to rethink architecture, to shift our focus away from a purely visual and functional approach towards one that is more sensitive, more attentive to the invisible, climate-related aspects of space. Slipping from the solid to the void, from the visible to the invisible, from metric composition to thermal composition, architecture as meteorology opens up additional, more sensual, more variable dimensions in which limits fade away and solids evaporate. The task is no longer to build images and functions but to open up climates and interpretations. At the large scale, meteorological architecture explores the atmospheric and poetic potential of new construction techniques for ventilation, heating, dual-flow air renewal and insulation. At the microscopic level, it plumbs novel domains of perception through skin contact, smell and hormones. Between the infinitely small of the physiological and the infinitely vast of the meteorological, architecture must build sensual exchanges between body and space and invent new aesthetical approaches capable of making long-term changes to the form and the way we have to inhabit buildings today.

#### Preliminary Reading List

Philippe Rahm: Constructed atmospheres

Philippe Rahm: Environ(ne)ment: Approaches for Tomorrow

Kiel Moe: Convergence: An Architectural Agenda for Energy

Norbert Lechner : Heating, Cooling, Lighting: Sustainable Design Methods for Architects

David Gissen: Subnatures: Architecture's Other Environments

Jürgen Habermas: The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere

Jared Diamond: Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies

Peter Sloterdijk: In the World Interior of Capital: Towards a Philosophical Theory of Globalization

Peter Sloterdijk: Globe (Sphere 2)

Tristan Garcia: La vie intense