

Studio Statement, Daisy Ames

Acceleration

We are in a period of time referred to as The Great Acceleration.¹ This period of time, since 1945, is marked by an escalation in the amount and rate by which we have sourced energy, altered climatic ecosystems, consumed natural resources, and shifted our patterns of living. Two ways of understanding what is at stake in The Great Acceleration are the social impacts and the environmental impacts. We will look at the global-scale data together in order to help us understand the scope of our impact, and we will think together about the ways in which a contemporary model of living might be able to respond to these rapid changes. Of interest in this studio is how we design for a future in which clean air, water, and land is of utmost priority as they become even scarcer, especially in urban conditions.

In terms of housing, New York City offers a peculiar stance in the face of growing knowledge of our "acceleration." The five boroughs of the City are comprised of housing typologies which range from luxury co-ops, private townhomes, apartment buildings, high rise condos, industrial loft conversions to short-term shelters. The city is currently balancing the construction of tall and slender skyscrapers for ultrahigh net worth non-residents, while striving to meet government benchmarks to provide affordable housing for existing residents. At present, New York City Housing Authority is being found negligent in assuring adequate heating, clean water, and asbestos and lead-free units for its tenants. Such simultaneities call into question the extent to which environmental and economic initiatives could be compatible, posing unique challenges for architects communicating thoughtful design.

In the Bronx, there are heterogeneous factors that constitute the urban fabric which interweave industrial and architectural elements, making visible some of the essential features of urbanism: transportation (i.e. roads, bridges, buses), clean air (i.e. chimney stacks, filtration systems, ac units), as well as water management networks (i.e. pipes, irrigation, canals, drains). What happens between these elements, metaphorically and literally, is our lived experience of domesticity, labor, and play.

Questions on Acceleration:²

1. Given the fact that our future resources are in dramatic decline, what is at stake in designing a new model for living?
2. If we accept this new human condition of an "accelerated state," what does this mean in terms of how our built environment accommodates the necessities of life? What would need to change? A policy? A network of moving resources? An invention? A pattern of living? A social norm? A new model for living?
3. If our access to knowledge is also accelerating, in what way can we harness this knowledge and integrate it into a design which can sustain future change?
4. Acknowledging that modernist urbanist strategies of Wright's Broadacres City, Le Corbusier's Radiant City and Hilberseimer's Vertical City have fallen short due to this unforeseeable acceleration - how do we establish realistic goals for contemporary urban development?
5. If our knowledge produces awareness, and our ability to procure skills and construct projects is also accelerating, then what future oriented skills are at our service for premeditated design possibilities to help us think through these potentials?

Precedent: This semester, the studio will apply this framework of acceleration to analyzing Paul Rudolph's The Colonnade located in Singapore. The project was completed in 1986 and was born out of ambitions to engaging in emerging prefabricated construction methods. The design incorporated variations in apartment layouts, double height spaces communicating nuanced interior and exterior, as well as nuanced private and public space.



¹ McNeill, John Robert., and Peter Engelke. *The Great Acceleration: an Environmental History of the Anthropocene since 1945*. The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014.

² This Acceleration studio will not participate in "dooms day" scenarios, but on the contrary, use our awareness of our contemporary conditions as motivation to discover and think through design possibilities.

Columbia University
Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation
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Acceleration Bibliography

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2. The Architect's Newspaper: "What do architects want from the Green New Deal" by Antonio Pacheco
<https://archpaper.com/2019/02/architects-green-new-deal/>
3. The Great Acceleration: An Environmental History of the Anthropocene Since 1945 By J. R. McNeill, Peter Engelke